

# Ecological culture: sociocultural and legal aspects

*Irina Anatolyevna Umnova-Konyukhova*<sup>1</sup>, *Marina Anatolyevna Vakula*<sup>2</sup>, and *Irina Aleksandrovna Aleshkova*<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>INION RAS, Department of Jurisprudence, Moscow, Russia

<sup>2</sup>RUDN University, Law Institute, Department of Land and Environmental Law, Moscow, Russia

**Abstract.** The study's objective is to identify factors that can have a productive and positive impact on the formation of environmental culture. The authors use an interdisciplinary approach in the study. Thus, the methods of system analysis (methods of integration, convergence, structurization, optimization, etc.) focus on a comprehensive study of contemporary problems of ecological culture. Applying the methodology of legal taxonomy allows outlining the basic principles contributing to the level of ecological culture. Among the special methods, the method of ecologization is of particular importance in the study. The results of the study were the identification of a complex of factors. There are positive and negative factors among them. Negative factors are due to the lack of environmental values in people's minds, the state's perception of environmental relations as insignificant or secondary in the life of society, the rejection of innovative concepts of ecologization of economic activity, etc. Positive factors include the effectiveness of the principles of environmental law, the development of a system of environmental education of citizens, education of environmental responsibility, the collective search for adequate solutions to address the growing environmental risks, etc. The novelty of the work lies in the statement of the problem, which is that the formation of environmental culture is of paramount importance for sustainable development and environmental security of states and the entire world community.

**Keywords:** ecological culture, sustainable development, environmental safety, ecocentrism.

## 1 Introduction

One of the factors that can affect changes in the environmental situation is a high level of environmental culture. Underestimating the importance of forming an environmental culture has led to negative consequences, expressed in the consumer attitude of a person to nature, the deterioration of the environmental quality. At the present stage, general awareness of the urgent importance of environmental problems in the life of current and future generations determines the importance of the study of factors influencing the environmental culture.

---

<sup>1</sup> Corresponding author: [ikonyukhova@yandex.ru](mailto:ikonyukhova@yandex.ru)

The ecological crisis is not only a serious threat to the environment; it also affects various areas of society and human livelihoods, affecting health and food security, the availability and quality of water and other resources, the development of industrial and other activities.

The neoliberal model of globalization has expanded the concept of sustainable development to include a huge number of goals and requirements, making it overloaded and undervalued in terms of its relationship to environmental culture [1-3]. Despite significant efforts in studying such a phenomenon as environmental culture, attention is focused only on such elements as education, training, and enlightenment, and the sociocultural role of the state and society remains of little importance. The movement towards sustainable environmental development depends on a high level of environmental culture and everyone's awareness of the importance of social and legal environmental responsibility. Despite significant attempts to prevent, protect, manage [4], and sustainably use natural ecosystems on their relatively sustainable biodiversity, not enough has yet been done to ensure environmental security and create a favorable environment. One of the reasons is the unappreciated importance of ecological culture in the life of modern society.

In this sense, it is obvious that the state environmental policy should move towards changes focused on the strategy of forming an ecological culture [5].

## **2 Methods**

The authors use an interdisciplinary approach in the study. Thus, the methods of system analysis (methods of integration, convergence, structurization, optimization, etc.) focus on a comprehensive study of contemporary problems of ecological culture. Applying the methodology of legal taxonomy allows outlining the basic principles contributing to the level of ecological culture. Among the special methods, the method of ecologization is of particular importance in the study.

## **3 Results and discussion**

### **3.1 Formation of ecological culture as a sociocultural and legal problem**

The scientific literature pays considerable attention to the study of the concept, functions, and structure of ecological culture [6-13]. At the same time, in terms of the integrative interaction of sociocultural and legal aspects, this concept has not practically been studied, and in this context, the structure of environmental culture has not been adequately developed. In particular, the content of the attributes that characterize the concept of environmental culture does not include such an element as an assessment of the environmental consequences of the activities carried out.

Educational and information and propaganda activities are developing without considering the importance of the environmental component of sustainable development, and, as a result, there is a borrowing of outdated models of legal regulation in the field of environmental protection [14], there are "ideological and practical differences" between the subjects of environmental legal relations [15, 16]. The desire to improve the legal mechanisms of economic development and environmental management is characterized by borrowing models of development and conservation of the natural environment, without considering that there are such components that cannot be tied to any one state, particularly air and water.

The unsystematic nature of measures to form an ecological culture leads to negative consequences. Failure to consider the integrative nature of environmental culture leads to

management difficulties, lack of willingness to take advantage of legal opportunities, inconsistent action, and erratic and non-linear progress in building environmental culture [17, 18].

Scientific studies on the importance of the formation of environmental culture as a process note its duration rather than short-term, as the type of behavior that appears as a result of irrational consumerism to natural resources returns in new and unexpected guises of accumulated environmental damage [19, 20].

Understanding the importance of ecological culture and consistency in its practical implementation objectively depends on the interdependence of society and man's moral, ethical and legal cultures. Moral and ethical culture allows engaging the self-regulating mechanisms of environmental responsibility: caring for nature, preserving its purity, increasing natural objects, educating and promoting an ecological way of life, etc. Elements of legal culture – legal awareness, legal worldview, legal regulation, legal practice, etc. – serve as a means of legal stimulation and legal coercion of a person and social groups to environmentally oriented behavior. By combining both cultures, a level of ecological culture can be achieved that ensures progress in ensuring a favorable environment, ecosystem sustainability, and other ecological challenges and problems.

Thus, when forming an ecological culture, the importance of simultaneous consideration of the legal aspect focused on a positive result in the implementation of environmental legal relations and the sociocultural aspect that characterizes a responsible attitude without coercion to environmental issues should be noted.

Achieving an integrative relationship between sociocultural and legal aspects of environmental culture requires certain measures. In our opinion, firstly, the formation of the concept and, accordingly, the definition of ecological culture, which consistently takes into account the sociocultural and legal aspects that stimulate environmentally-oriented behavior, is relevant. Secondly, the combination of moral, ethical, social, and legal regulators ensures the formation of a new methodology – a taxonomy of ecological culture based on the principles of law and goal-setting. In this case, there is an underestimation of the relationship between the principles of environmental law, the principles of economic and social development, and the final goals (environmental conservation, sustainable development, etc.). Thirdly, it is important to determine how different levels of environmental culture interact (individual, public, national), understanding the assessment of environmental impact and the interaction of environmental, economic, and natural resource relations.

### **3.2 Influence and assessment of positive and negative factors on the environment and the role of ecological culture**

There are several basic approaches to assessing the quality of environmental impact processes, each based on different methodologies.

First, the most common approach is to assess the impact of specific activities and possible consequences regarding their impact on the environment. In many cases, it is the self-assessment of the situation by citizens who interact directly with a particular mechanism of environmental management or those who manage these mechanisms, which have a significant impact on the sustainable development of the environment. A high level of environmental culture allows measuring the quality of activity and establish the degree of social responsibility to current and future generations of citizens.

Second, outcome assessment seeks to measure a process or mechanism against certain criteria or in terms of desired objectives using multicomponent quantitative approaches.

Third, the first two approaches are complemented by the introduction of new assessment technologies. In particular, information technology in a digital society can be a

factor that can provide environmental quality assessments based on local perceptions of environmental priorities and needs.

The limitation of all of the above approaches is that they do little to understand the causal factors of the observed impact. In our opinion, the worldview dominant should be the basis for the formation and development of ecological culture. Environmental education, environmental upbringing, and environmental awareness, forming a professional environmental culture should be one of the public policy priorities, legal regulation, and law enforcement.

A significant factor influencing the formation of environmental culture and responsible attitude to the consumption of natural resources is the activity of public authorities. In this regard, we believe that the principles of natural resource planning, ecologization of economic activity, and reasonable caution in carrying out activities that affect natural ecosystems should be considered in carrying out this type of activity. A significant factor influencing the formation of environmental culture, particularly environmental literacy, is the availability of environmental information. Qualitative studies can capture environmental changes in such a way as to conclude about random mechanisms, but measuring the impact is not always the explicit goal of such studies.

There is almost no productive social system in today's world that can track environmental change as it occurs and demonstrate sustained or changing impacts. Environmental monitoring and conservation measures are in the hands of professionals and government management, indicating a risk of high latency and data distortion. The social participation of citizens in recognizing the importance and evaluating the results of environmental and natural resource activities should be a common cultural element of national state environmental policy. The preservation, rational use, and restoration of ecosystems and their biodiversity can only be possible by minimizing the factors that negatively affect the formation of ecological culture. Hence the importance of developing new approaches based on the principles of coherence, consensus, and consolidation of efforts to protect the environment between people, society, and the state. Accordingly, it is necessary to institutionally reorient the consciousness of citizens toward the importance of environmental conservation and promote and support new initiatives on the part of citizens to protect the environment.

### **3.3 A new approach to the structural understanding of ecological culture**

The scientific literature identifies the elements of the structure of ecological culture – cognitive (knowledge), value (value orientations), activity (skills and abilities) [21]. We believe it is possible to offer other approaches without denying the value of such a structure. In the context of connecting the sociocultural and legal aspects of ecological culture, it is of interest to distinguish two elements: ecocentric ecological consciousness and valuation attitudes. Ecocentric ecological consciousness is an environmentally oriented thinking and worldview that predetermines the content of any human activity. At the same time, ecocentrism implies a bifurcation of the most pressing ecological problems. In essence, the formation of ecological culture should include an assessment of actions caused by interference with the environment and significantly affecting the livelihoods of stakeholders in ecological relations, including those associated with environmental harm. It is also necessary to improve the normative legal framework, actively introducing the principles of environmental law into all sectors of the economy in a systemic relationship.

Ecocentric ecological consciousness implies a more responsible social attitude toward industrial activities that result in high pollution levels of the universal components of nature – water, air, and the environment. The manifestation of an ecocentric ecological consciousness must be accompanied by recognizing the enforcement of unlimited

regulatory compliance through constant monitoring and supervision. This kind of activity should be formed based on the consolidation of efforts on the part of the state and public control.

It is necessary to give a new impetus to environmental education programs that will allow forming a culture to ensure sustainable development [22]. Awareness of the importance of introspection of one's own activities, activation, and strengthening of local and regional advisory environmental forums, monitoring and control by citizens and local communities of decisions on water, air, and environment should be part of environmental policy. Traditional knowledge that is preserved and passed down from generation to generation must be based on the principle of respect for indigenous people, as well as rural communities that know how to conserve and sustainably manage resources and the environment, so their practices and knowledge will be very useful in the dialogue when developing local and regional environmental programs.

We see the priority goals of the formation of ecological culture as:

- promoting the creation of a favorable environment free from pollution;
- creating stable and effective mechanisms for free, effective, meaningful participation of citizens in decision-making in the field of environmental policy;
- proper provision of the right to a favorable environment and increase of sociocultural and legal responsibility for non-fulfillment of the duty to preserve nature and the environment, careful attitude to natural resources.

At the heart of the structure of ecological culture, we allocate the following components – ecological consciousness, ecological thinking, assessment of the committed actions, and understanding the consequences of the committed behavior patterns.

Thus, it can be determined that ecological culture is a combination of sociocultural psychology, ecocentric ecological consciousness, knowledge, assessments of actions performed, an understanding of the consequences of behavioral models performed, and awareness of the significance of the value of a high-quality environment.

Principles are important for the formation of ecological culture. The most important principles that contribute to improving the level of environmental culture are the following: principles of systematic improvement of environmental culture; quality of environmental services; rational environmental policy; social responsibility; synthesis of scientific knowledge (the best scientific knowledge with traditional knowledge accumulated and transmitted from generation to generation); integrated monitoring and integrated environmental management; coordinated attention of public authorities to the needs and requests of communities; environmental education; consolidation of information systems on climate change (support monitoring, assessment and reporting on national goals for mitigation and adaptation); intercultural interaction; respectful coexistence with nature; environmental ethics, environmental ethnicity (considering the experience and knowledge of indigenous and small-numbered peoples); environmental forecasting (aimed at protecting the rights of future generations); ensuring the inevitability of punishment for environmental offenses.

It is especially necessary to emphasize the importance of ensuring the inevitability of punishment for environmental offenses since the institution of legal responsibility is interrelated with the legal culture in general and environmental culture in particular. However, there are certain gaps in the Russian legislation [23], which leads to difficulties in bringing justice for environmental offenses. This accordingly affects the effectiveness of the principle of ensuring the inevitability of punishment for environmental offenses.

*Statistical data:*

*In 2016, 288,200 violations were detected in the field of environmental protection and nature management. In 2017, 283,600 of them were identified. In January – June 2019,*

11,400 environmental crimes were registered, which is 1.7% less than in the same period last year [24].

Many of the above principles are actively studied in the scientific literature [25-29], but they have not found their expression in a single regulatory legal act in a systematic form.

### **3.4 The state of legal regulation of ecological culture in the Russian Federation**

Currently, in Russian legislation, the importance of the formation of ecological culture is emphasized. In particular, in Federal Law No. 7 “On environmental protection” in Chapter XIII – the universality and complexity of environmental education; training of heads of organizations and specialists in the field of environmental protection and environmental safety; environmental education are distinguished.

In the Environmental Doctrine of the Russian Federation (Government of the Russian Federation No. 1225-r of August 31, 2002), among the main factors of degradation of the natural environment of the Russian Federation, there is a low level of ecological consciousness and ecological culture of the population. Similarly, this factor is attributed to the internal challenge of environmental safety in the Environmental Safety Strategy of the Russian Federation for the period up to 2025 (Decree of the President of the Russian Federation No. 176 of April 19, 2017, subclause “n” of clause 20). Both of these documents identified the development of the system of environmental education and enlightenment, professional development of personnel as one of the priority areas of state policy in the field of ecology.

The significant attention paid to culture in general and environmental culture, particularly within the framework of the implemented constitutional reform in 2020, is very promising. At the same time, it should be noted that the draft Federal Law “On ecological culture” No. 90060840-3, initiated in 2009, has not been finalized.

## **4 Conclusion**

Ecological culture has a fundamentally important role in solving current environmental problems and is manifested in the active participation of citizens in the transformation of the environment. The lack of an environmental culture is a serious obstacle to transforming the unsustainable consumption patterns prevalent in certain sectors of society and eradicating various harmful behaviors to the environment.

Part of the difficulty in changing societal attitudes toward the environment is that incorporating the environmental dimension into human life is simultaneously an ethical, sociocultural, and legal renewal. However, ecological culture is called upon to promote ecological values, ensuring harmonization of relations with nature.

## **References**

1. M. Izak, S. Mansell, T. Fuller, *Futures*, **68**, 1-4 (2015).  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.futures.2015.03.006>
2. O. Fitch-Roy, D. Benson, D. Monciardini, *Env. Pol.* **29(6)**, 983-1003 (2019).  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09644016.2019.1673996>
3. A. Flynn, N. Hacking, *J. Cleaner Prod.* **212**, 1256-1267 (2019).  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2018.11.257>
4. V. Jenkins, *J. Env. Law* **30**, 399-423 (2018). <https://doi.org/10.1093/jel/eqy012>

5. M.A. Camilleri, *Sust. Devel.* **28(6)**, 1804-1812 (2020). <https://doi.org/10.1002/sd.2113>
6. I.D. Zverev, *Nature Prot. Env. Edu.* **6**, 30-35 (1985)
7. V.D. Bondarenko, *Kultura obrashcheniya s prirodoi [Culture of dealing with nature]* (Moscow, 1987)
8. E.V. Nikonorova, *Ekologicheskaya kultura i faktory ee formirovaniya (filosofskii-sotsiologicheskii aspekt problemy) [Ecological culture and the factors of its formation (philosophical and sociological aspect of the problem)]*. Abstract of a Doctoral thesis in Philosophy (Moscow, 1994)
9. A.O. Lagutin, *Ekologicheskaya kultura kak faktor ustoichivogo razvitiya obshchestva [Ecological culture as a factor of sustainable development of society]*. Abstract of PhD thesis in Philosophy (Krasnodar, 2001)
10. S.N. Glazachev, *Ekologicheskaya kultura i obrazovanie: otvet na vyzovy globalnykh problem [Ecological culture and education: response to the challenges of global problems]*, in *The origins of unity: the problems of recreating the socio-ecological space of Russia and Belarus* (Moscow, 2002)
11. H. Feder, *Interdisc. Stud. Lit. Env.* **11(1)**, 246-247 (2004). <https://doi.org/10.1093/isle/11.1.246>
12. I.A. Sosunova, O.I. Marar, *Search: Pol., Soc. Stud., Art, Soc., Cult.* **1(21)**, 29-40 (2009)
13. N.B. Melnik, *Ekologicheskaya kultura [Ecological culture]*, in *Environmental safety management system: collected works, The sixth international scientific and practical conference, Yekaterinburg*, **2**, 218-223 (2012)
14. I. Krasnova, *RF, Yearbook Int. Env. Law* **28**, 353-357 (2017)
15. C. Warnock, *J. Env. Law* **32(3)**, 365-389 (2020). <https://doi.org/10.1093/jel/eqaa007>
16. F. A. Mekonnen, *Int. J. Const. Law* **18(3)**, 988-1012 (2020)
17. B.J. Preston, *J. Env. Law* **31(3)**, 399-411 (2019). <https://doi.org/10.1093/jel/eqz029>
18. H. Koff, *Env. Impact Asses. Rev.* **86**, 1-10 (2021)
19. V.P. Zeleeva, E.V. Asafova, *IEJME – Math. Edu.* **11(4)**, 549-558 (2016)
20. A.R. Bagapova, I.V. Abdrashitova, A.B. Abdrashitova, *Revista Publicando*, **4(13(2))**, 1086-1097 (2017)
21. N.M. Stukalenko, *Int. J. App. Fund. Res.* **12(5)**, 929-931 (2015)
22. E.V. Asafova, *Soc. Beh. Sci.* **191**, 2329-2333 (2015)
23. M.A. Vakula, D.A. Dobryakov, T.F. Minyazeva, *Bul. Tomsk State Univ.* **447**, 222-231 (2019)
24. *Kratkaya kharakteristika sostoyaniya prestupnosti v Rossiiskoi Federatsii za yanvar-iyun 2019 goda [Brief description of the state of crime in the Russian Federation for January-June 2019]*. Accessed on: July 22, 2021. [Online]. Available: <https://xn--b1aew.xn--p1ai/reports/item/17732817>
25. D.F. Drake, R.L. Just, *Ignore, Avoid, Abandon, and Embrace: What Drives Firm Responses to Environmental Regulation?*, in A. Atasu (ed.), *Environmentally Responsible Supply Chains* (Springer, New York, 2016)
26. M. Pieraccini, *J. Env. Law* **31(2)**, 213-234 (2019). <https://doi.org/10.1093/jel/eqz002>
27. J. Condon, *J. Env. Law* **32(3)**, 529-557 (2020). <https://doi.org/10.1093/jel/eqaa018>
28. L. Fisher, *Env. Law J.* **32(3)**, 339-343 (2020). <https://doi.org/10.1093/jel/eqaa024>
29. P. Kellert, *Env. Law J.* **32(2)**, 179-194 (2020). <https://doi.org/10.1093/jel/eqz025>