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Environmentally-safe ecological products and economic activities will be brought to the Romanians' attention

The 360 round tour communication consultancy firm PRAIS Corporate Communications launched yesterday "The LOHAS Initiative": Lifestyles of Health and Sustainability, a complete range of PR and strategic marketing services aimed at promoting the market of products and services provided through economically sustainable and environmental friendly business practices. LOHAS -PRAIS initiative will be materialized this year in a series of public debates, national information campaigns, conferences and workshops, in parallel with the development of projects and a national contest.

LOHAS – which stands for Lifestyles of Health and Sustainability, is a term which designates a market segment with a spectacular growth in North America, Western Europe, Japan and Australia. Mainly focused on four different areas – health (*healthy lifestyles*), environment (ecology, *ecological lifestyles*), *personal development* and *sustainable economy* – the LOHAS market is measured and assessed constantly by the Natural Marketing Institute (NMI) from the USA, which created this concept.

A global market of more than 500 billion dollars. The New York Times has described LOHAS as "the biggest market you have ever heard of". International research estimates that the LOHAS market currently accounts for a global value of more than 550 billion US dollars. However, spectacular growths are expected for the following 10 years. Only in the USA, in the LOHAS forum last year, experts revealed that the LOHAS market will increase four times by 2015, up to 845 billion USD.

In Japan, over 65% of the consumers are familiar with the LOHAS term. Estimates indicate that the Japanese LOHAS market exceeds 230 billion USD every year. In the past decade, the LOHAS movement has been embraced and adopted worldwide. In the USA, Europe and Australia, LOHAS is a corporate term, whereas in Eastern Asia and Japan, it is rather a consumer concept.

LOHAS consumers want to know "where does it come from?", "who produced it?", "what is it packaged in?" and "what will happen when I dispose of it?" Also called "the cultural creatives" by the American sociologist Paul H. Ray, they designate a wide segment of educated consumers from Western societies, who make informed buying and investment decisions, based on solid social and cultural values.

"Industries, even traditional ones, start to respond to this trend, continuously diversifying their LOHAS products: large car manufacturers, such as Toyota, Ford, Chrysler, Audi, BMW or Porsche propose hybrid or electric car models – Ford being also one of the traditional participants in and sponsors of the LOHAS Forum in the USA. Multinational food and beverage companies develop full ranges of products – *functional food* – which are healthy for the human body. The cosmetics industry promotes natural active ingredients, and food supplements can be largely found in pharmacies. Travel agencies offer SPA services, rapeseed has become a source of alternative fuels, wind or solar energy starts to be used on a larger scale, and associated

communication convinces us into buying”, declared Silvia Bucur, General Manager PRAIS Corporate Communications.

In 2004, according to research conducted by the Natural Marketing Institute (NMI), LOHAS consumers represented over 27% of the US population (around 55 million people). The American LOHAS market is worth approximately 280 billion dollars a year.

In Germany, 3.67 million consumers (6% of the population) declare being very interested in healthy and sustainable lifestyles (LOHAS), while in Australia the LOHAS market has already reached 12 billion dollars, with over 4 million consumers (26% of Australia’s population).

According to recent market research conducted by NMI, Europeans turn out to be up to 32% more motivated than the Americans when it comes to buying products certified as environmental friendly, authentic and ethical. Europeans also lead the way when it comes to their expectations related to the social responsibility actions of large corporations (25% more demanding than the Americans). The study was conducted in 2007, on line, on a sample of 16,000 persons from 9 European countries and the USA.