



CORPORATE SUSTAINABILITY INFORMATION AND TRAINING IN EUROPE

SITUATION ANALYSIS ON CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY (CSR) ACTIVITIES ON SMEs - 2011

Executive Summary

Bulgaria





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Introduction

The notion of 'corporate social responsibility' started to be acknowledged in Bulgaria in the late '90-ties of the XX century. The initial impetus has been given by the multinational companies (MNC) having their supply chains in Bulgaria. They included in their contracts with the producing factories obligatory clauses related to introducing the respective Code of Conduct, awareness raising, unannounced social audits and social monitoring. The MNCs also encouraged trainings in corporate social responsibility related to human resource development best practices, improving the in-house dialogue between workers and management/owners, introducing transparent and clear payment and benefit systems. The social partners – trade unions and employers' organisations as well as the non-government not-for-profit organisations (NGO) also contributed to the process by providing support, training and awareness raising in the society as a whole.

1. Situation analysis of current CSR training offer

In Bulgaria there are very few universities with courses related to teaching corporate social responsibility - there are courses on business and environmental as well as courses explaining some aspects of CSR such as social auditing, sustainable development, etc. The only comprehensive programme with a target group specialists in human resource development is the Masters programme in the Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski".

There is no standard developed for an occupation related to human resources management, business ethics, environmental management or sustainable development and respectively no VET centre provides training in corporate social responsibility whatsoever.

No VET centre was identified as providing training including subjects related to corporate social responsibility.

There are few NGOs and consulting companies which provide training in corporate social responsibility or in some of its components. These trainings are mainly short-term – 1-2 days maximum and are not made on permanent basis. They are either on demand by certain client for a certain purpose (request by a stakeholder, occurring of a problem which requests training, awareness raising among the staff, etc.). The topics covered are normally of information providing, awareness raising or promotional nature. The target groups are senior managers, middle management, HR specialists, communication and PR specialists, other company officials, etc.

2. Analysis of needs of competences on CSR from SMEs' and VET institutions' perspective.

2.1. SMEs' perspective

One of the main issues of implementing the CSR concept in the operations of an enterprise is the lack of fully fledged strategy and of specially assigned person to do that. 3 of the interviewed companies did not respond to the question whether they have integrated CSR measures in their planning and 1 has responded that they did not. Moreover two of the companies have replied that CSR is responsibility of several persons or is part of every activity which is a sign that the CSR issue is not a priority of itself. Only two of the enterprises have integrated the CSR responsibility in the job description of the HR specialist and two have responded that there is an official planning of the responsible behavior.

Most of the SMEs declare that they have a policy for development of their human resources, for protection of the environment and for being social responsible. That probably is true if a non-written policy is envisaged. The average results from the survey related to the relevance to and the training needs for the core subjects of social responsibility of the respondents is quite high for organisational governance (2,87), labour practices (2,97), consumer issues (2,84) and community involvement (2,83). The average assessment for human rights (2,63) and fair operating practices (2,42) is also above 50% and the lowest average mark for relevance is for environment (2,05).

It should be pointed out that the training needs for every core subject is assessed significantly less than the relevance. The highest score being for community involvement and development and consumer issues.

2.2. VET institutions perspective

Due to the short term of the request the questionnaires were send to certain departments (and individuals) in order to ensure the timeliness of the responses.

Only the Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", Geological and Geographical Department, reported the availability of a little course in CSR. The course is less than 10 and the content is 50% theoretical, 50% practical and includes organisational governance, fair operating practices and community involvement and development. The practical exercises do not involve working with real enterprises and it is noted that the lack of real practice is a disadvantage of the course. The tools include text and manuals and are self-made.

The Elieff Center for Education and Culture is a separate unit of the American University in Sofia. They intend to develop a CSR course but do not have one now. The Centre for Public Administration at the New Bulgarian University has developed a CSR course also but have not started it as part of Human Resource Management programme.

3. Gap analysis on CSR training offer and identified needs on SMEs

It is obvious that there is a huge gap between the demand from SMEs which are aware of the CSR concept and the training which is provided by VET institutions. If the interest and potentiality of the interviewed SMEs in the different aspects of CSR are analysed against the subjects lectured in the Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" (as well as the lack of such subjects in the other two universities) it becomes clear that the needs of the SMEs for training in:

- human rights,
- environment, and
- consumer issues

are not covered at all.

It can be assumed that the issue of labour practices is covered in the subject human resource development. And only the issue of:

- organisational governance,
- fair operating practices and
- community involvement and development

are covered - partially, judging by the number of hours.

4. Recommendations

The desk-top survey and the inquiry among the SMEs and VET institutions on the training needs and offers related to socially responsible behaviour lead to the following conclusions:

- Promotion of the CSR concept among the Bulgarian entrepreneurs using the reputation of the International Standard Organisation*
- Awareness raising within the Bulgarian society about the benefits and crucial role of the Corporate Social Responsibility in improving competitiveness and raising the social standards in the economy*
- Development of plans for encompassing all the aspects and utilization of all the instruments of CSR*
- Including teaching and training in CSR as a special subject in the curricula of training courses and university specialties related to human resource development.*

The **general conclusion** is that in Bulgaria the **necessary pre-requisites** for implementing the ISO 26000 into the business operations of the companies are existing. Some of the **initial and preliminary steps** have been made and **the strive and efforts** to continue should be given the necessary support.

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Glossary of Abbreviations

CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
SME	Small and Medium Enterprise
VET	Vocational and Educational Training
NGO	Non Government Organisation
NACE	Nomenclature générale des Activités économiques dans les Communautés Européennes
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
OHSAS	Occupational Health and Safety Assessment Series
SA	Social Accountability (Standard)
BSCI	Business Social Compliance Initiative