



CORPORATE SUSTAINABILITY INFORMATION AND TRAINING IN EUROPE

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

Executive Summary

Spain





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Introduction

Although CSR is increasingly and widely accepted among companies, very few apply the guidelines from a systemic and strategic point of view. This rate is even lower when talking about SMEs due to the local market they are involved, the scarce resources they apply to non-productive tasks and the limited policy on marketing. However, the SME do practice CSR (even in a higher degree than big companies), for many years now, only that they are not fully aware. At the same time, it is quite evident that most SME in Spain are confused about what CSR really means.

The sort of activities related to CSR where the presence of SME is more evident, are mostly related to their activity and, especially, to their geographical area of influence. This preference responds not only to the presence of customers and clients, but also to the fact that most stakeholders of the SME live in the same area where it operates (employees, owners, clients, suppliers, families, collaborators, etc.). Therefore, the most common CSR activities for SME will be related to local and environment development (promoting and supporting local activities, initiatives or infrastructures), stakeholders' involvement and quality recognition.

On the contrary, voluntary policies related to transparency, accountability, participatory processes, etc., are seldom if not rare when talking about SME, frequently owned by a family.

1. Situation analysis of current CSR training offer

This analysis aims at reflecting the current training offer for CSR in Spain. Business Schools are the institutions offering the widest range of postgraduate courses in this area. However, the CSR impact remains limited in the case of other nonspecific masters, especially in MBA and financial graduates.

VET institutions also offer training on CSR for companies but just a few of them are courses focused specifically on small and medium enterprises. Other institutions, like Chambers of Commerce have training courses and specific support on CSR for SMEs oriented to company managers and owners.

Generally, these tools are open for all kind of profiles, focusing mainly on managers and technicians from SMEs that want to learn about CSR in order to integrate CSR initiatives within the organization. The contents and covered areas are:

- Definition of Corporate Social Responsibility: Vision and Context
- International guidelines and European framework on CSR
- Impulse and direction of CSR in Spain
- Scope, contents and implications of CSR
- Management tools and indicators
- Spanish SMEs in front of the CSR

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

2.1. SMEs' perspective

An interview for SMEs in Spain was conducted with the following outcome:

- Only 27% claim to have a CSR policy in place.
- Main reasons argued: lack of time and resources (36%), lack of know-how and customer demand (18% each).
- Only 36% see CSR as a priority.
- Reasons for implementing CSR actions: market reasons (18%), awareness and ethical consciousness (18%).
- These initiatives are mainly related to labor practices (36%), organizational governance (18%) and community involvement and development (18%).
- 91% of SMEs has never attended a training course on CSR.
- All principles included in ISO 26000 are considered relevant, highlighting "respect for the rule of law".
- The most relevant issue where the need of training is the highest is organizational governance, followed by labor practices.
- A virtual online training would be the most preferred didactic resources for SMEs

2.2. VET institutions perspective

As for the current training offer on CSR, although there is a wide range of courses, just a few of them are targeted to SMEs. As for university offer in Spain, there is no any degree specifically based on CSR; instead of that, several masters have been developed. As for other VET training offer, the offer is wider, despite of the existence of many short courses, or distance courses.

The main didactic resources used are based on text and guides. As well as this, videos and presentations are used, although this option is more limited. According to the analysis, a standardization of materials is demanded, along with new innovative didactic materials, in order to make contents more attractive, visual and easy to understand and remember. In this sense, a complementary virtual training platform would be preferred, as a complementary resource. Methods that can make CSR closer to SMEs would be desirable as well.

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

After having analyzed the SME's current practises and training offer on CSR, some gaps are identified. According to the analyzed answers and point of views, the following ideas can be considered:

- Although there is a wide training offer related to CSR, just a few of these courses are focused or addressed to SMEs targets.
- In general, training materials are not adapted to SMEs targets.
- Current didactic resources are mainly based on conventional materials; new innovative and complementary materials are demanded in order to facilitate the learning. For instance, a virtual platform including a wide kind of resources would be very positive for companies and SMEs.
- Lack of standardization of written materials on CSR.
- There is a strong barrier between SMEs and CSR policies implementation, as a continuous process; this is due to the lack of understanding of the benefits and economic payback of the investment on CSR implementation.
- Lack of practical knowledge on CSR, from the SME's side.
- Lack of CSR awareness raising efforts addressed to SMEs.

4. Recommendations

To sum up, the following recommendations regarding training resources can be given:

- Resources adapted to the situation of SMEs; limited time and funds/resources.
- Flexible resources.
- Unified contents, standardized and adapted to SMEs needs.
- Clear, visual contents, through attractive and easy to use materials; the example of a virtual platform including practical information has been given often.
- Practical cases, showing clear benefits for SMEs. These cases should include contents related to benefit measurements.
- CSR contents linked to a business model within the SMEs.
- Contents adapted to different profiles within the company.
- Motivating resources.

Overall, a specific training following the above recommendations should make CSR friendlier and closer to SMEs.

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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