Summary

Corporate social responsibility

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Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), a movement that has been receiving increasing attention during the last decade, finds its context in the sustainable development that addresses today's needs without endangering the needs of coming generations.

It is considered "a process of continuous improvement in which companies voluntarily an systematically integrate economic, environmental and social considerations into the overall business operations". Transparency and consultation with company stakeholders is a part of the process. Stakeholders include shareholders and directors, but also employees, employee representatives, suppliers, buyers, customers, consumers, the local community in which one does business, the government, environmental associations and other NGO's.

A study of fourteen companies shows that there is always a combination of motives behind a commitment to CSR: the potential to make a positive contribution and reflect positively on the company, but also economic opportunities or possibilities to retain or improve market position. In addition, at some companies, explicit value-driven motivations play a role in contributing to an improved and sustainable society: for example in the choice of services, products and processes; in the approach of personnel; in relationships with external stakeholders; in the area of environmental initiatives.

CSR is a somewhat new concept and its implementation is still a learning process for most companies. CSR is still not yet present in all domains. Most companies implement aspects of CSR. The starting point for some is a fully integrated vision that addresses all three dimensions. Others implement the framework, but do not (yet) use CSR terms. Some companies have already implemented supporting instruments and reporting on CSR initiatives. These are used in conjunction with new of existing analysis, monitoring and reporting systems.

CSR related to ecology and external stakeholders such as the community receives significant attention, as do topics related to the company's economic reality, since the raison d'être and the survival of the organisation are mutually dependent. CSR initiatives related to internal stakeholders – i.e. employees – present in HR policy receive less attention. Is that because many organisations, under the influence of the human resources movement, consider this a self-evident part of corporate policy? SCR is placed on the agenda of management-labour consultations in the works council and the committee, but CSR and social dialogue sometimes appear to be two completely different worlds. It is not always clear wether integration with the traditional consultative bodies is pursued.

For all parties, it is a question of getting used to CSR, but since CSR cannot survive without contributions from different parties, participation in one way or another is highlighted. Companies indicate that more and more time is being spent on communication and reporting.

In further developing a CSR policy, a specific manager is often appointed to coordinate and communicate on CSR. CSR brings with it greater transparency and stronger accountability with respect to

corporate policy. Once the ball is rolling, the company, with a view toward the continuity and credibility of the initiatives, continues on the road already travelled.

Leen Baisier (2010), Maatschappelijk verantwoord ondernemen "Duurzaam zaken doen duurt het langst". StIA/SERV, Brussels, December 2010