



Report overview # 4

Towards Greater Responsibility – Conclusions of EU-funded Research (2009) - European Commission

Research Purpose

This paper is a policy review building on a European Commission-funded Academic research project. The projects and the paper aim at developing a better understanding of CSR public policies, from formulation to impact; and identifying gaps as well as research topics to help fill these gaps.

The Academic project comprised of 4 projects (ESTER, CSR PLATFORM, RARE & RESPONSE), and involved 31 institutions in 13 countries. It was achieved in 2007.

ESTER, CSR PLATFORM, RARE & RESPONSE focus

The focus and leading institutions were, for each project:

Table 1 – Projects' focus

CSR PLATFORM (EABIS)	European Platform for Excellence in CSR Research
ESTER (Univ. Bordeaux 4)	Social regulation of European transnational companies
RESPONSE (INSEAD)	Understanding and Responding to Societal Demands on Corporate Responsibility
RARE (Ökö-Institut)	Rhetorics and Realities - Analysing Corporate Social Responsibility in Europe

CSR public policy styles

The public policy styles identified through the projects are summarised in Table 1.

Table 2 - CSR Public Policy Styles

Model	Characteristics	Member States
Partnership	Partnership and strategy is shared between mostly governmental sectors for meeting employment challenges	Nordic countries + NL: Denmark, Finland, Sweden and Netherlands
Business in community	Soft intervention policies to encourage company involvement in challenges affecting the community through encouraging entrepreneurship and voluntary service	Anglo-Saxon countries: United Kingdom, Ireland
Sustainability and citizenship	Updating of existing social agreement and emphasis on a strategy of sustainable development	Continental: Germany, Austria, Belgium and Luxembourg
Agora	Creation of discussion groups for different social actors striving for greater public consensus on CSR	Mediterranean: France, Italy, Spain, Greece and Portugal



Source: Towards Greater Responsibility – Conclusions of EU-funded Research 2009 p.28 - Adapted from Albareda et al. 2007, p.401

Main Projects Findings

Public policies

ESTER seems to recommend a 'regulated CSR' approach, but moreover points out that IFA (International Framework Agreements) and other voluntary standards have become paralegal. RARE advocates a 'stimulated CSR' regulatory approach, which relies on incentives, public private partnerships and stakeholder dialogue, putting forward that it may be more efficient than a classical regulatory approach.

RARE and RESPONSE call for a shift in business management of CSR, from wide stakeholder engagement to more selective ones; and for stronger focus on internal change and strategic processes. By building on these and on objectives, CSR public policies could gain in efficiency.

RESPONSE points out the need for a specific attention on SMEs, and on the link between CSR, innovation and success.

RARE, RESPONSE and ESTER both advocate for the global dimensions of CSR.

Research areas for the future

CSR PLATFORM focused on designing a research agenda for the future and identified 11 areas for future research:

1. Developments in global governance as related to CSR;
2. Development of new forms of collaboration, partnerships, clusters and alliances;
3. Emerging economies and societies;
4. Diversity of CSR across Europe;
5. Competitiveness and CSR;
6. Practices of change inside companies;
7. Strategy and corporate governance;
8. Managerial skills and organisational competencies;
9. Sector specific implementation studies;
10. CSR and SMEs; and
11. CSR's contribution to sustainability.

Paper Conclusions on Future Research

Building on public policies gaps identified, future research should aim at understanding:

- The mainstreaming of CSR in firm's strategic processes including SMEs;
- The linkage between CSR and innovation;
- Performance and impact indicators; and
- Global supply chain management."

To achieve this, it is suggested that research methodology may beneficially evolve from pure Academic style to hybrid-style Academic-businesses cooperation. Understanding of public policies and their efficiency should also be pushed further.

Next European Commission-funded CSR research project: IMPACT

On 26th March 2010, the "Impact Measurement and Performance Analysis of CSR" (IMPACT) project was launched. It is a sort of follow-up of the projects mentioned in this overview. Funded within the EU 7th Research Platform Scheme, it will investigate and evaluate the impact of CSR on EU economies and societies, and companies as well. More information will come soon on this project.

References

Towards greater Corporate Responsibility - Conclusions of EU-funded research
http://ec.europa.eu/research/social-sciences/pdf/policy-review-corporate-social-responsibility_en.pdf

CSR PLATFORM <http://www.eabis.org/index.php?id=111&uid=7>

ESTER <http://ester.u-bordeaux4.fr/index.htm>

RESPONSE <http://www.insead.edu/facultyresearch/research/doc.cfm?did=38420>

RARE <http://www.rare-eu.net/index.php?id=8>