

Initiatives of CEEP on CSR in 2007-2008 and proposals on key issues and initiatives for 2009 and beyond

CEEP as a cross-sectoral social partner in the European Social Dialogue and as representative of employers and enterprises providing Public Services is naturally interested in and committed to promoting CSR and increasing its members' awareness of CSR.

CEEP is active in CSR with a transversal Working Group specialised in this topic. On top of collaborating with European institutions on CSR (including socially responsible investments, production and consumption), CEEP had launched the projects "Discerno" in 2005 to promote and encourage CSR towards enterprises and companies of all sizes with missions of general interest, and to support these companies in taking into account CSR principles in their daily management choices. The current project "Discerno 3: Analysing and fostering CSR Practices" aims, for 2009 and beyond, to continue the promotion of CSR via, among others, the "CEEP-CSR label" to reward the observed good practices.

CEEP welcomes the organisation of the Multi-Stakeholder Forum on CSR as a way to exchange and discuss on this issue of great importance. It welcomes also the opportunity to present and exchange some of its outcomes.

CEEP's Working Group on CSR

A working group on CSR has been active in CEEP since several years and has participated in many of the colloquiums and seminars organised by the Presidencies, the Commission and other European CSR stakeholders. The working group has also worked on CSR in enterprises with public service missions.

The Working Group has continued to work on CSR and to promote the voluntary convergence and harmonisation of methods and tools. CEEP member enterprises have been involved in these objectives as the Working Group approved a free and voluntary process for enterprises and underlined the specific situation of enterprises, whether public or private, providing services of general interest.

These enterprises are connected with local, regional or national public authorities and they often practice CSR without calling this process as such. They are mainly involved in regional developments and environmental protection. Their own interest is also to associate all partners and all stakeholders in public services.

In conclusion, CEEP is eager to promote CSR good practices among its members and to express CEEP's point of view in the numerous meetings or colloquiums which

took place. CEEP also produced an opinion on the European Commission's Communication on *"Implementing the partnership for growth and jobs: making Europe a pole of excellence on CSR"* (available on www.ceep.eu).

DISCERNO II: Promoting Corporate Social Responsibility

CEEP partners from various Member States launched a project called "DISCERNO II" to promote and to study the implications of CSR in practice especially for public enterprises and Services of General Interest (SGIs).

The project, co-funded by the European Commission, aims at promoting CSR, including socially responsible investments, production and consumption, in European companies whether public or private. The Project not only targets public or mixed SMEs, but also companies of all sizes with missions of services of general interest, to support these companies in taking into account CSR principles into their daily management choices, on top of developing expertise and exchange of information on sustainable economy of public services.

Through the research conducted for DISCERNO II project by experts, an online self-assessment tool was implemented to evaluate their level of and how SMEs comply with CSR principles on a daily basis. This self-assessment tool is an evaluation process for which SMEs, depending on their results, will receive the **CEEP-CSR label**. This label certifies that SMEs have successfully integrated CSR into their business operations.

This project involved enterprises and specialists working in 7 main sectors:

- Transport,
- Water supply management and waste water treatment,
- Energy,
- Waste collect and management,
- Construction,
- Social Housing management and urban planning,
- Tourism.

This project stemmed from ideas collected during a previous project coordinated by CEEP. Its objective was to constitute an international benchmark to assist both European governments and Local Public enterprises in improving the way they perform their corporate governance and CSR practices. The specific objective of the pilot project "DISCERNO I" was to provide knowledge and develop better practice to those targeted Public SMEs on CSR principles following indications from the European Union, the United Nations and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

This entails a two-fold commitment: supplying a basis of reference for studies on Corporate Social Responsibility and disseminating and promoting a culture based on company ethics in relation to the UN, OECD and EU principles by highlighting the most virtuous cases.

The main results of this project was the production of awareness material and the “training of the trainers”.

Issues and initiatives of CEEP for 2009 and beyond: Discerno3 and other ideas

CEEP, as the cross-sectoral social partner representing services and enterprises of general interest, has a natural interest in CSR and wishes to continue to be involved constructively in the European drive to put CSR at the heart of the process of achieving a sustainable balance between social, economic and environmental progress.

CEEP would like to highlight the need to take into account the specificities of SGI providers as their enterprises supply key services to the population. CEEP would also highlight the importance to inform the enterprises and especially the smaller ones on key and practical measures they could adopt to implement CSR into their daily management.

As follow-up to the above-mentioned project, Discerno 3 was started to foster, among others, these ideas. The main activities of the project will be to:

- Continue and promote the “**CEEP-CSR Label**”. This tool is developed to evaluate the enterprises that comply best with CSR and to raise their corporate image;
- Disseminate and promote the best practices of CSR by the use of a tailored-made booklet on observed practices;
- Develop curricula for schools and universities.

The knowledge of the practical and potential impact of CSR on the business life of enterprises will also be improved through specific research.

The improved self-assessment tool will start in March 2009 and last for 12 months. All enterprises are welcomed to take part in this assessment in order to evaluate their compliance with CSR principles; those who have the best results and after an evaluation by a jury, would have the opportunity to receive the “CEEP-CSR Label”.

The whole project is due to last for 18 months and will be concluded by a conference and a ceremony to award the label to nominated enterprises and to celebrate best practices.

Presentation of CEEP

CEEP represents the public employers in various forms and sectors as well as enterprises providing Services of General Interest regardless whether they are public or private.

CEEP represents enterprises employing 25% of the European workforce. As public employers’ organisation recognized by the European Commission as a cross-sectoral Social Partner, it takes part in the European cross-sectoral Social Dialogue.

CEEP, and its General Secretariat, represent the interests of its members to the European institutions. CEEP is regularly consulted by the European Commission on draft regulations, directives and all initiatives of interest to its members. Its mission is therefore both to defend its members' interests with regard to proposals or decisions that concern Services of General Interest (SGIs), and to promote the latter by taking initiatives or tabling innovative proposals. CEEP is in regular contact with Members of the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) and the Committee of the Regions about decisions affecting CEEP members.

For more information on this question, please go to: www.ceep.eu or www.discerno.eu.

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