Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

According to European Commission, CSR is a concept whereby companies integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operations and in their interaction with their stakeholders on a voluntary basis. To be social responsible means not only to satisfy all the legal requirements but even to go beyond them by investing in human capital and environment as well as in the relationship with all the stakeholders.

In other words, SR is companies’ ideology, politics and practice when they voluntarily follow the principles of human, society and environment respect in the relations of all the stakeholders from society, business and government. The concept of social responsibility is a broad process involving all the product or service manufacture and development cycles with all the related environmental, social, economical and ethical aspects.

Formalisation
Since the early 1990s, there has been a high explosion of codes of conduct, standards as well as principles related to business activities. Today's codes of conduct expand companies' explicit responsibilities to multiple stakeholders and nature. Many of them are company specific and were developed by business associations or multistakeholder coalitions.

One of the best known today are the 10 principles of the United Nations (UN) Global Compact, which focus on human rights, labour rights, environmental sustainability and corruption, originally launched in 2000 by then UN Secretary General Kofi Annan.

The first responsibility assurance standard AA1000 was launched in 2003 to create credible means of verifying the information reported in companies’ environmental, social and governance reports.

The other widely accepted standard on SR, which focuses predominantly on labour issues is a voluntary international management standard SA8000, launched by Social Accountability International organization in 1997.

ISO 26000
There was a strong demand for a globally acceptable standard that would outline a generic approach in the area of SR. Hence, in responding to that need, the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) initiated the development of ISO 26000 - an international standard for SR. Guidance on social responsibility in 2004, scheduled for release in 2010.

ISO 26000 is voluntary standard, therefore it is not intended or appropriate for third-party certification purposes or regulatory or contractual use. ISO 26000 addresses 7 general principles of social responsibility (see picture): Accountability, Transparency, Ethical behaviour, Respect for stakeholder interests, Respect for the rule of law, Respect for international norms of behaviour and Respect for human rights.

APINI activities

- M.Sc. course "Corporate Social Responsibility"

Projects

- (2010 - 2012) Corporate Sustainability Information and Training in Europe (CSI EU)
- (2012 - 2014) Developing Sustainable Regions through Responsible SMEs (DESUR) (more info)

Publications


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