

## Xertatu

Xertatu wants to be the framework for cooperation in the field of Corporate and Social Responsibility (CSR), hosting the different organisations and institutions involved in the promotion of this concept in Bizkaia. Its aim is to be the shared, unifying platform, from which initiatives can be taken on and coordinated to cover a large part of the field that comes under CSR.

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### 1. Who is involved?

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The Bizkaian Provincial Government, Innovation and Economic Development Department. Beyond the central role of the Biscayan Provincial Government, the agents that are currently involved in Xertatu and that have given it impetus are: Novia Salcedo Foundation, the University of Deusto and The Bilbao Chamber of Commerce. This group has increased in numbers recently with the addition of new members when the Xertatu workgroup was formed.

### 2. The Drivers

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The responsibility of achieving a more just society that respects values of solidarity and sustainability is the right of all citizens and organisations. Likewise, Biscayan firms can and should play an important role in building a society that is sustainable economically, environmentally and socially. Society as a whole is beginning to consider firms as fundamental players in not only economic, but also social development. A wide range of stakeholders play their part in the firm, not only the owners or shareholders, but also the workers, the customers, the suppliers, the local community and public institutions. Companies have taken on a series of challenges in the last few years to improve their systems and processes (quality management), to bed in health and safety policies and to integrate environmental awareness into their activities. Now a new challenge faces them: to open themselves to building a fairer and more sustainable society, maintaining and improving their competitiveness.

### 3. The Strategy and Activities related CSR

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A platform that projects a global image intended to promote, not only responsible behaviour in the relevant areas, but also a genuine change in the enterprise culture. The program's focus

can be characterised as follows: Participation, Integration of CSR into firms' strategic focus, flexibility, realism and voluntariness.

In line with the overall aim of "creating a shared platform, from which initiatives can be taken on and coordinated to cover a large part of the field that comes under CSR", Xertatu is structuring its activity along certain lines of action, which differ according to which phase of the project we look at. In the first phase, already completed, Xertatu initiated awareness raising activities to create expectation amongst firms in Biscay; it created awareness of CSR and spread information amongst firms and other interest groups; it developed the Biscayan CSR web page; it formed the Xertatu workgroup. In the second phase, currently in progress, Xertatu's activity is centred on development and consolidation of the program. We are considering measures intended to energise and spread CSR practice throughout the Biscayan enterprise sector. So this phase has the following main objectives: spreading knowledge of CSR amongst firms; encouraging the exchange of good practice between firms; providing services to firms to help them establish good CSR practice. Finally, in a third and future phase, the Biscayan program will consider activities aimed at rooting socially responsible management amongst firms, as well as spreading awareness and giving social recognition to firms' efforts in the field.

#### **4. The Challenges**

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One of the problems experienced by the Provincial Government in putting the program into practice reflected the core nature of democratic government. Inevitably, elections momentarily slowed activities.

One of the elements that moved matters forward was precisely the open, public character of the Provincial government. This encouraged other agents working in the field to come forward and get into contact with the Administration in order to share experiences and search for ways of co-operating.

#### **5. The Results**

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Up till now, we only have the results from the initial phase of Xertatu. We will have to await sustained progress in the other two phases mentioned, before coming to any overall conclusions. As to the results from the first phase of the program, it's fitting to note that Xertatu has fulfilled the majority of its aims, successfully helping to raise awareness amongst firms and other bodies interested in the field. As proof of this, we can point to the growing number of firms and other bodies that have approached the Biscayan Provincial Government with a view to obtaining information or participating in the program. Likewise, the Xertatu web page and the workgroup of the same name are tangible realities for all those interested in the program. So, we can conclude that the program is having positive results. The current advance began from a

base of considered analysis, and up till now we have not detected any situations that hadn't been foreseen beforehand.

The greatest benefit that society obtains from measures such as these is that of having companies that reflect its values, beliefs and priorities. In other words, companies' enterprise is adapted to their social environment, a culture, which as several pieces of research have demonstrated, rewards stability and better long term results. The fact that a firm finds itself in harmony with the community, in an open and flexible interplay, creates a clear competitive advantage for the firm. This is beneficial to both parties.

## 6. Why is it CSR?

The Department of Innovation and Economic Promotion will contribute, in a marked way, to the process of building Biscay as a modern and globally competitive society, that is fair and respects values of solidarity and sustainability at the local level.

With this objective, a change in the enterprise culture calls for a significant, sustained effort. The Provincial Government's commitment and that of the other participants is firm and for the long term.

## 7. The Future

Currently, the program is in the second developmental phase, preparing for what will be the third and final phase. The second phase involves developing activities aimed at helping SME's integrate CSR into their internal culture and core, as well as providing tools to help with this. The third phase will give pride of place to support services for firms in the sphere of corporate and social responsibility, as well as to other measures that arise from joint reflection within the Xertatu workgroup. The preparatory phase is critical: good planning and clear objectives that dovetail with those of the organisation in question. Also, there must be co-operation between public and private sectors to push matters forward.

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