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CSR VADEREGIO

"CSR and regions in action"

Summer news on CSR and the regions in action

As you plan your summer break, CSR Vaderegio partners offer you opportunities to look forward to on your return.

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First we would like to thank all those who responded to our first newsletter. Several organisations – both public and not for profit – have expressed interest in joining the Vaderegio Community. We look forward to working with you all in the months to come. In early December we plan to welcome you to the Vaderegio event "Local meets Europe". This will give you a chance to network with others involved in promoting CSR at local and regional level through public policies and practices. It will give us the opportunity to open the platform of CSR Vaderegio to an extended community and to launch on-line sustainable tools for your use.

We should tell you some more about what is happening between now and then... The Vaderegio partnership, with continuing support from DG Employment and Social Affairs, has been consolidated in 2005. From June a steering group of four not for profit organisations has been complemented with a reference group of local authorities. The steering group of Novia Salcedo Fundación (NSF); AGENDA: social responsibility in Scotland; EURO Associazione; and Open Estonia Foundation Responsible Business Forum are jointly coordinating work to make accessible information about CSR activity in the regions. Ibon Díaz de Rada Quintana of NSF says " We have worked with twelve regions to identify important initiatives promoting CSR. Now we are making this information available to a wider group of regional and local authorities. All the regions are at different stages and have varying priorities in developing approaches to CSR but we are all at early stages. There is much to gain from sharing experience. The Vaderegio website and database will form a platform for a growing network of active players across the regions of Europe."

The reference group of public bodies initially consists of the regional Government of Andalucia and the authorities of Nord Pas de Calais. These representatives will be keeping the partnership up to the mark on the ways we can best add value. They bring the vital perspective of engaged practitioners from the local government sector. Together these working partners are developing a website and channels for exchange of information and experience, to enhance local developments and to open opportunities for collaboration. From December there will be the chance for others to use, and to contribute to, the information exchange.

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News Snips:

A UK-Spain bilateral on CSR was hosted by the British Council in Edinburgh in May 2005. This unique network, fostered by Schroders in Madrid, enabled young professionals to engage in discussion and networking on CSR.

The G8 meeting has raised awareness of different contributions to "Make Poverty History", including the role of business. The challenge of meeting the Millennium Development Goals invites response from public, private and not for profit organisations. AGENDA held a discussion and a report will be available at:
www.agenda-scotland.org

The past 26th of May, Noviasalcedo Foundation arranged an event with the aim to promote the corporate volunteering in the Basque Country. Initiatives from different Spanish regional authorities were presented in this event supported by the Basque Government.

Events coming up include the EC Conference "Desperately looking for the Responsible Consumer" on 26 September. Meet Vaderegio partners there!!

Comments from new partners

Mrs. Elina Rääsk, Responsible Forum in Estonia:

As the Open Estonia Foundation and Responsible Business Forum in Estonia we are extremely excited about joining this project. It gives us an opportunity to project Northern European & Baltic reality in the project as well as further Corporate Social Responsibility on a local community dimension. We believe our unique contribution to the project could also be sharing the perspectives of the newly joined countries of the European Community. For Vaderegio we will include a special focus on the North East region which faces particular economic and social challenges.

Briefly about us:

Responsible Business Forum in Estonia is an initiative under Open Estonia Foundation which aims to promote responsible entrepreneurship and corporate social responsibility among different stakeholders in Estonian society. We are to deliver a report on CSR in Estonia based on multistakeholder discussions and input from various key players on the ground. Through 2005-2006 we are creating a virtual interface (www.csr.ee) promoting CSR and engaging all interested parties in the process as well as linking up and participating at various external events to promote the Forum. The main focus through 2006 is to carry out multistakeholder discussions and dialogue to define the opportunities, threats, and needs for CSR in Estonia.

Mrs. M^a José Gómez, Junta de Andalucía:

Andalusia has recently created, in the framework of the 6th Social Agreement signed by the regional Government economic and social partners, a task force that will develop the binomial employment-Corporate Social Responsibility, as we understand that CSR is the ideal tool to create better levels of employment in our region.

In this sense, we are aware of the importance of joining the CSR-VADEREGIO project, as it means being ahead in the adoption of CSR policies in Europe and in the attainment of its objectives.

At the moment, we are organising the 1st Andalusian Congress on CSR that will take place next autumn. This meeting will try to make businesses, social stakeholders, institutions and mass media conscious of the great importance of CSR.

First rule of thumb:

Involve as many relevant stakeholders as possible

In the past newsletter, CSR-Vaderegio presented 10 rules of thumb for those regional authorities which want to promote CSR. In this and future issues of the newsletter, we will explain these rules one by one.

Let's tackle the first rule: "*Involve as many relevant stakeholders as possible*"

The participation of all relevant stakeholders in the creation and implementation of actions is very important. Getting everybody's point of view and consulting on draft strategies before rolling out any action is a critical success factor and reduces problems in the activity phase of CSR development. Which stakeholders are to be involved depends on the challenges in any particular region. The business voice definitely needs to be represented and some at least of their stakeholders. The range of partners is certainly broader than the classical stakeholders of workers or shareholders. Others such as consumer organisations, NGO's and representatives of local society can give the additional input to succeed in a broad strategy. In some cases it is difficult to be sure how representative any particular group may be of the interests they purport to represent – and even among business there is no monolithic voice. For CSR to be credible it must reflect a wide range of interests and public authorities need to take the time to involve them.