

Let's talk about CSR Vaderegio.....

"It's an amazing grass roots network built up over time....."  
It's the result of the work carried out by different regions  
to find out how can they help each other.  
...I think It's a very good example to follow..."

--- Dominique Be

*DG Employment and Social Affairs  
(European Commission)*

"Don't wait for anyone to tell you what you  
should do, just get on and do it.  
In fact, in what are you doing in this project;  
you are helping to tell us  
what we should be doing".

--- Richard Howitt

*European Parliament*

"It shows we are not alone. Vaderegio's ten golden  
rules help us check if we are on the right track.  
And Vaderegio strengthens our commitment to  
CSR".

--- Eva Armesto

*Biscay*

"CSR is the main instrument, along with techno-  
logical innovations, which would allow improve-  
ments to be made in enterprise management  
and would make traditional businesses able to  
compete in the international markets".

--- Giuseppina de Lorenzo

*Tuscany*

"It is not an easy task to find inspiring and  
good examples of regional policies promoting  
CSR.  
Vaderegio will be a great source...I'll sign up..".

--- Alex McGillivray

*Accountability*

"Vaderegio allows us to identify useful tools for  
our region..... is a tool for cooperation and for  
bringing efforts together"

--- M<sup>a</sup> José Gómez

*Regional Government of Andalusia*

"Vaderegio shows that local authorities have a  
strong role to play and the  
Vaderegio website is an extremely useful  
instrument".

--- Eric Kniaz

*Regional Government of  
Nord Pas de Calais*

"When I first heard about CSR back home, it all seemed to  
me as a nice "Chat Room". But now I don't think like this  
anymore. I believe that through unions and associations in  
Estonia we could take forward these experiences. Perhaps  
we could organize similar sessions on our local level, about  
experience sharing etc. We need to point out that thinking  
differently is possible and through that you can even  
achieve something...and raise your competitiveness."

--- Märt Moll

*Authority of Local And Rural  
Municipalities, Estonia*

# "Local Meets Europe"

Launch of the CSR Vaderegio Network for regional and local authorities  
**9th February 2006 – BRUSSELS**

European Parliament  
**Room A3-G3 ASP BUILDING**

On 9 February 2006, the CSR Vaderegio Network and the web site [www.csvaderegio.net](http://www.csvaderegio.net) were launched at an event in the European Parliament. The occasion was an excellent opportunity to highlight the role of local and regional authorities in promoting Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).

It also offered a welcome forum for discussion about the relationship between CSR and regional matters, including such important subjects as regional competitiveness, innovation and learning processes.

## **Speakers:**

Ms. Kyla Brand, AGENDA Social Responsibility in Scotland and CSR Vaderegio member.

Mr. Dominique Be; DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities (European Union).

Mr. Richard Howitt; European Parliament.

Ms. Eva Armesto; Regional Government of Biscay.

Ms. Giuseppina de Lorenzo; Regional Government of Tuscany.

Ms Susan Shippey; City of Edinburgh Council.

Mr. Alex McGillivray, Accountability.

Ms. M<sup>a</sup> José Gomez, Regional Government of Andalusia

Mr. Eric Kniaz; Regional Government of Nord pas de Calais.

## **Moderator**

Peter Lacy, Executive Director of the European Academy for Business in Society.

## **Content of the event**

Ms. Kyla Brand, a representative of CSR Vaderegio, **introduced the network**. Kyla explained the history and the current status of the partnership, focusing on the framework developed to facilitate information sharing between regional entities. She presented the CSR Vaderegio web-site and invited potential partners – both present and absent - to take part in future stages of the project.

▶ [CSR Vaderegio presentation](#) (EN PDF 770 KB)

Mr. Dominique Be focused on **the role of public authorities in promoting CSR** and explained the “*new partnership between the state and the enterprise*”.

▶ [The role of public authorities in promoting CSR](#) (EN PDF 390 KB)

Ms. Eva Armesto talked about **how the Biscayan regional government has approached CSR**. Eva explained the strong governmental commitment to CSR as a result of a positive evaluation of the concept: “*CSR is a source of wealth*”. Biscay has developed a range of CSR policies which include tools aimed at SMEs. All the Biscayan CSR activities have a bottom-up focus with strong participation from the main stakeholders.

The **Fabrica Ethica** initiative from the Tuscany region was presented by Ms. Giuseppina de Lorenzo. She pointed out the important role of CSR in promoting competitiveness in the traditional manufacturing sector.

▶ [Fabrica Ethica: Tuscany and the Corporate Social Responsibility](#) (EN PDF 357 KB)

Ms. Franceska van Dijk presented **research on CSR developed by the Edinburgh City Council** on behalf of Susan Shippey. The research showed the CSR perspectives of businesses in Edinburgh and the kind of support they sought from the City Council.

▶ [The Edinburgh Perspective: Business - Society - Responsibility](#) (EN PDF 54 KB)

**The relationship between competitiveness and CSR** was the topic of the keynote speech given by Mr. Alex McGillivray. He stressed the significant role of local and regional authorities, showing examples of local public policies from different countries. He highlighted the economic and social benefits of CSR initiatives.

▶ [Responsible competitiveness “Why local authorities promote CSR”](#) (EN PDF 485 KB)

**The main reasons of the Andalusia region for joining Vaderegio** were explained by Ms. M<sup>a</sup> José Gomez who remarked the importance of stakeholder management.

▶ [Razones por las que pertenecer a la Red VADEREGIO-CSR](#) (ES PDF 53 KB)

Mr. Eric Kniaz **described the experience of Nord pas de Calais** with regard to CSR built on sustainable development principles.

### **CSR-Vaderegio Debate**

CSR-Vaderegio Network made use of a voting system to encourage the audience to take an active part in the discussion. Consisting of a series of “provocative statements” or hypotheses, and three coloured cards to show the opinion of participants (green card = agreement; yellow card = no opinion and red card = disagreement); this system was managed with great energy and good humour by the moderator, **Peter Lacy**. Peter introduced each one of the statements and invited the audience to vote with the coloured cards. Participants were then given opportunity to explain their votes..

The first hypothesis was about the role of public authorities on CSR:

**“Public authorities should only become involved in CSR once business has taken a lead and interest in it”.**

The majority of the audience disagreed with the statement , expressing opinions such as: *“Even if enterprise is the agent which plays the most important role, we also need the involvement of public authorities. Public authorities must push CSR in order to get better results”* (Independent consultant).

The keynote speaker, Alex McGillivray, pointed out that in some contexts where there are few big companies, CSR can become an additional burden for SMES: *“I’m very worried about the areas of Europe”... that are currently uncompetitive where local small business are suffering and will be unlikely to take on CSR*. “He felt that in such situations *“You need some energy from regional authorities”*.”

Kyla Brand said: *“It depends a lot on the relationship between enterprises and local authorities...if enterprises look on public authorities as an opponent, then public involvement can be a waste of money and time...If they look on them as a partner, the CSR relationship is positive and can help to answer the necessities of the region”*.

The interregional learning process was the second topic discussed in the debate session:

**“Regional and local authorities are too diverse in culture, economy and society to learn useful and practical lessons from each other in how to implement CSR”.**

Views on this topic varied, but in general the audience considered diversity as an important learning factor: a region can learn more from a very different region than from a very similar one. Some did see diversity as an obstacle, as time is needed to understand the different cultural, social and economical aspects related to CSR in different European contexts (Scandinavian, Mediterranean, British).

Alex McGillivray took a different view on diversity and learning processes. He saw the competitive attitudes amongst similar regions as a very tough obstacle which explains why it is easier for some regions to collaborate with distant ones than with those that are neighbouring. In con-

sidering how to collaborate without getting involved in an interregional competition some participants mentioned that good and bad practices have to be shared without making critical comparisons amongst regions. But the big questions of “what is a good practice?” and “how can we assess the impacts of these practices?” were not fully resolved. The audience remained divided in their judgements on this hypothesis.

The third statement concerned specific levers to promote CSR:

**“Business will never adopt CSR unless public authorities offer real financial incentives” .**

Tom Dodd from the DG Enterprise of the European Commission pointed out how some studies have shown that it is entrepreneurial values and not public incentives which mainly push enterprises to get involved in CSR. Pierre Echard (CSR Europe) and Jorge Berezo (Biscayan Regional Government) supported Tom’s comment and added that there are more important reasons than financial initiatives like values, competitiveness or stakeholders’ pressure that explain the business engagement in CSR.

The Estonian Responsible Forum representative and CSR Vaderegio member, Triinu Groon, stated that in some contexts like Eastern Europe financial initiatives are needed to allow businesses to cope with likely CSR costs.

In summarising the debate Peter Lacy concluded that the exchanges demonstrated already the value of a network such as CSR Vaderegio focused on the role and relationship of public authorities with CSR. Many aspects would bear further consideration and this discussion was just a starting point. Other provocative hypotheses could now be debated on-line at [www.csvaderegio.net](http://www.csvaderegio.net). He commended the network to others with interest in local and regional development of CSR.

**CSR Vaderegio** is a network which







- ❖ Recognises the key role of governments and public authorities at local and regional level in defining the framework that promotes responsible business practice or Corporate Social Responsibility
- ❖ Highlights current experience and brings together examples of local practice for all to draw on
- ❖ Builds dynamic connections for mutual support, learning and development
- ❖ Opens new opportunities for recognising good practice

CSR-Vaderegio has been developed as a European Platform over five years. During this time the network has:

- ❖ Agreed the scope and definition of CSR and the role of public authorities
- ❖ Described and compared the experience and ambitions for CSR in a range of different economic, cultural and political environments
- ❖ Exchanged CSR good practices, drivers and priorities of the regions
- ❖ Disseminated CSR information through:
  - Hosting and participating in regional and EU based events
  - Writing reports
- ❖ Built an on-line database to facilitate gathering and exchange of information about CSR activities among project partners. Currently on-line database contains more than 180 regional experiences recorded
- ❖ **Developed CSR-Vaderegio Website.** An on-line tool where local and regional authorities can find a channel to share information and develop new approaches.

In accordance with the essence of our project, the design and implementation of all the activities has been based on the CSR-Vaderegio partners' coordinated work.

**Current CSR-Vaderegio partners:**

 NoviaSalcedo Fundación	 AGENDA Social Responsibility in Scotland	 AVATUD EESTI FOND	 EUROASSOCIAZIONE
Nord Pas de Calais	 RÉGION NORD PAS DE CALAIS	 JUNTA DE ANDALUCÍA	Junta de Andalusia