

1. Sector-specific Corporate Responsibility in Europe: Introduction

Thomas Beschorner, Thomas Hajduk, Samuil Simeonov

1.1 Introduction

Corporate responsibility (CR) is a tricky notion. Its prominence among practitioners and scholars alike has grown over the last two decades. So have various attempts to define responsibility. The endorsement of the ISO 26000 norm has been the most comprehensive step so far towards pinning down the essence of CR. Yet even this common understanding of the social responsibility of organisations cannot go beyond being a general blueprint for CR since “it is an individual organisation’s responsibility to identify which issues are relevant and significant for the organisation to address, through its own considerations and through dialogue with stakeholders” (ISO 2010: vi). In other words, if CR is to be made concrete and applicable, it needs to be boiled down to the concrete circumstances of an individual company. Each company and, more generally, each organisation has not only its own non-arbitrary responsibilities, but also its own issues, needs and capabilities – all of which need to be taken into consideration.

Making CR concrete and applicable

However, building a concept of CR merely upon individual firm perspectives seems neither theoretically adequate nor sufficient for CR practices. *Firstly*, business responsibilities are not arbitrary but, rather, need to be connected to some general moral norms in order to be both effective and credible within society. *Secondly*, even the largest corporation – let alone any small or medium-sized enterprise (SME) – cannot live up to the entire range of sustainable-development challenges that come along with its responsibility. Indeed, the problems are simply too complex and interrelated to be sufficiently tackled by a single company, whatever its size may be. *Thirdly*, since enterprises in market economies compete with each other, they sometimes cannot easily adopt measures that might risk creating competitive disadvantages (Fairchild 2008). While we do not regard business logic as the “ultima ratio” for CR (Beschorner 2004), we assume that chances of implementation are

Individual firm perspectives are not enough to substantiate CR

higher when businesses cooperate. For this reason, CR concepts need to consider an institutional level – the rules of the game – as an important part of their architectures. *Fourthly*, in recent years, it became clear that fruitful CR practices could especially be realised through collaborations (Wettstein 2012) between a set of different actors with diverse resources and capabilities. Hence, interactions between businesses, NGOs, political actors and other organisations seem to be a crucial aspect of CR in the 21st century.

Need for a new approach
to CR

What is denoted here is the search for a concept of CR analysis and practice that allows for dealing with and connecting CR to the activities of individual companies as well as the institutional arrangements they operate under. This leads to two important actors in the field: businesses and political actors.

1.2 On businesses and political actors

Governance in the age of
globalisation

Globalisation is a fact of life for most people. The flow of capital, goods, people and information around the globe offers opportunities for unprecedented economic growth, but it also gives rise to an unknowable degree of risks. Whereas the advantages and disadvantages of globalisation are subject to (normative) debate (see, e.g., Stiglitz 2002; Baghwati 2004), there is a strong consensus that it has brought serious challenges to the nation-state. Governments, as the traditional source of governance, are faced with complex and interconnected problems that they can no longer deal with on their own (Rosenau and Czempiel 1992; Zürn 1998). The deficient governance of common goods, such as water or the climate, are examples of governments' limited problem-solving capacity vis-à-vis such challenges, the biggest of which is sustainable development.¹

Sustainable development
challenges

The intergovernmental debate about economic growth and whether it can be reconciled with environmental limitations and social concerns began as early as in the 1960s (Schrijver 2010). The United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (1972), the World Commission on Environment and Development (the "Brundlandt Commission") (1983–1987) and the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (1992) mark important steps in governments' process of recognising the global challenges linked to human development and the need to make economic growth more compatible with social and environmental considerations. However, these events also indicate the limitation of government action. The scale of sustainable-development challenges cannot be merely addressed by the command-and-control mode of governance characteristic of traditional bureaucracies.

¹ They include organisational leadership challenges, human rights, workplace practices, environment, operational and business practices, consumer concerns and community.

At the same time, as governments' governance capacity is diminishing (although not vanishing), businesses assume privileges once exclusively held by governments. The often-cited East India Company, which had its own army and ability to mint money, can be considered the first multinational enterprise (MNE) to exert state-like power (Robins 2006). Although this is an extreme example, MNEs and their remarkable economic, technological and political capabilities have a significant influence on globalisation and, indeed, one that equals or surpasses the capabilities of many (developing) countries (United Nations 1973; Dunning and Lundan 2008: 636–665). Consequently, MNEs around the world can have a significant positive and negative impacts on the countries in which they operate.

Multinational enterprises and globalisation

But MNEs are only one part of the economy. In terms of the number of entities and their employees, SMEs form the backbone of economies. Furthermore, since they are run by entrepreneurs, they play a crucial role in bringing about the innovations that fuel the economy in developed and developing countries in addition to being needed for sustainable development (OECD 2011). Since they are linked by the Internet and global supply chains, many of today's SMEs are as globalised as MNEs were in the past.

The role of small and medium-sized enterprises

In fact, business has already shown interest and commitment in dealing with the vital questions of sustainable development. In the 1970s, when governments began to discover the concept, businesses were rather reluctant, and the atmosphere was one of confrontation rather than cooperation (Segafi-Nejad and Dunning 2008). This changed in the 1990s, when business representatives found a more welcoming atmosphere in formerly critical corners of the United Nations and the developing world. Business was actively involved in the U.N. Conference on Environment and Development held in 1992, the same year that the predecessor of the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD) was founded. With the term "eco-efficiency" (Schmidheiny 1992), economical thinking was reconciled with sustainable development – at least with respect to the environment.

Business acknowledges sustainable development

Governments' and businesses' shared interest in sustainable development led to increasing cooperation in the 1990s and 2000s, most prominently in the form of the U.N. Global Compact (UNGC) initiative, which was launched in 2000. The UNGC and business-driven initiatives, such as the European Alliance for CSR and the WBCSD, have been and continue to be instrumental in raising awareness and disseminating norms concerning sustainable development and what companies can do in this regard. In essence, they foster CR, which is deemed a company's (or organisation's) contribution to sustainable development (ISO 2010: xi). However, to a certain extent, such initiatives still have limitations when it comes to implementing the CR concepts they champion.

Shared interest in sustainable development

The historical perspective described above is also reflected in two different concepts in the debate on business ethics: One, which is especially present in the European debate, extends business ethics to economics ethics by introduc-

In need of new governance mechanisms

ing the level of political order as an analytical concept (Homann 2005). According to this concept, CR takes place under certain rules of the game, and it is the nation-state that performs its classical role by setting these rules through laws and regulations. The other approach questions the efficacy of nation-state regulations in an era of globalisation, emphasises the role of businesses as political actors (Palazzo and Scherer 2007) and regards new forms of regulation in a “postnational constellation” (Habermas 2001) as promising. In recent years, quite a number of publications have stressed such new governance mechanisms under labels such as “soft law”, “private authorities”, “global standards” or “private regimes” (Cutler et al. 1999; Teubner 2002, 2004; Rasche 2009; Beschorner et al. 2011; Rasche and Gilbert 2012).

Introducing the industrial sector as new perspective on governance and CR

These latter ideas on new forms of governance, in particular, are related to this book. In it, we suggest connecting the level of individual firms with an institutional perspective by focusing on industrial sectors, in an approach that can be viewed as a blind spot in the academic literature. There are many case studies situated in specific industries (e.g., Cuesta-González et al. 2006; Biedermann 2007; White 2007; Lee and Kohler 2010). By contrast, work that is more conceptual in the way it considers the relevance of industries is still in its infancy (e.g., Lund-Thomsen and Nadvi 2010; Martinuzzi et al. 2010; Timonen and Luomaaho 2010). Consequently, the literature on the role of government in promoting CR also shies away from sector-specific CR (see the overview in Moon et al. 2012).

1.3 Sector-specific Corporate Responsibility: a framework

Industrial sectors make CR clearer and more substantial

The underlying assumption of this study is that, in order to better understand and thereby improve CR practices, it is necessary to bring in a sector view that considers the relevance of concrete actions while reflecting their embeddedness in institutional and cultural settings. Analysing industrial contexts in which CR is embedded can help us grasp its essential features and dynamics, which are easily overlooked when CR is treated as a uniform, one-size-fits-all concept. Thus, sector-specific CR is not a self-serving exercise of introducing yet another CR concept. Rather, it marks a step forward in terms of harnessing businesses’ potential to contribute to sustainable development. By analysing them within specific industrial sectors, the relation between business operations and their impact on society can be identified in more detail. The idea of sustainable development, which is often more abstract than concrete, becomes more tangible and practical as huge challenges become sector issues, as the “global economy” is reduced to a number of firms and as abstract responsibility turns into concrete and manageable responsibilities. As such, sector-specific CR serves as the link between global societal challenges and business responsibility.

Industrial sectors as cultural forms and contexts

In this volume’s final chapter, we will suggest a road leading from CR blueprints to culturally embedded responsibilities while understanding industrial

sectors as cultural forms and contexts. Likewise, it is important to note that this classification according to different industrial sectors is historically grounded. The division of labour resulted in a variety of industrial sectors. This begins with the very abstract differentiation between primary (retrieval of raw materials), secondary (manufacturing) and tertiary (services) sectors, and it may end up in very specific industries, such as coal-mining, watch-making or reinsurance.

Industrial sectors became more institutionalised over time: Sector-specific vocational programmes were developed, associations were founded, entrepreneurs and employees sometimes developed a specific habitus (e.g., hard-working miners, clean chemists), which partly even resulted in certain “professions”. Against this background, it can be assumed that, firstly, actors within an industry consciously identify with their respective sector and, secondly, every industry encompasses a number of companies dealing with similar stakeholders, issues and challenges. These two aspects constitute a sectoral culture, in general, and a sectoral CR culture, in particular.

On an analytical level, we reconstruct the sectoral cultural contexts with strong orientations towards the relevant actors in the respective fields. Sector-specific CR is understood as network-like relations between a set of distinct actors in a particular sector on CR issues. The relevant actors are companies and business associations in the relevant sector as well as non-economic actors (e.g., governmental organisations, NGOs and research organisations) that constitute a so-called “organisational field” due to the flow of information between them (DiMaggio 1991; Beschorner 2004; Beschorner et al. 2004). To a certain extent, these actors are only loosely coupled, but they do share certain assumptions about the sector and the CR issues related to it. In contrast to stakeholder approaches, the organisational-field perspective focuses on the interactions between a set of organisations and the institutional dynamics between them (Beschorner 2004; 2011).

Since actors have similar perceptions of their organisational environment (e.g., competition, regulations), it is very likely that there are also similar understandings of CR in a given industry, such as on the materiality of issues, the legitimacy of stakeholder demands and the role of governments. This means that individual companies can relate to a larger, yet still practical aggregation of companies and other actors without losing sight of the distinct features of their business.

Apart from constituting an organisational field and thereby determining a set of actors with shared responsibilities, the common understanding in an industry also offers other advantages. For example, the focus on particular sectors allows for downscaling, whereby responsibility can be identified and thus made clear and manageable for companies and other actors. This sectoral downscaling can be applied with respect to at least four additional dimensions:

Industrial sectors provide shared identities

Industrial sectors constitute network-like relations between businesses and non-economic actors

Common understanding of CR is more likely in industrial sectors

Downscaling effect in four dimensions

- Challenges to society become sector-specific *issues* as they are refined and scaled down within an organisational field. Abstract challenges, such as “climate change”, turn into more concrete issues, such as the CO₂ footprints of certain products and services, and can therefore be tackled more easily by businesses and other actors.
- Industrial sectors consist of clearly identifiable *actors*. Instead of talking about business and stakeholders in general, concrete actors can be named, such as trade associations, a group of sector leaders, sector regulators or affected interest groups. This clarification allows for actually addressing responsibilities.
- Industrial sectors can assume a *spatial dimension*. This matters because, these days, politics and economics are usually perceived as being global, which blurs the actual places in which globalisation happens. With the spatial dimension, the cultural conditions of the cities, regions and countries in which companies operate become relevant and shape the form of their responsibility.
- Collective action between sectoral actors requires different *forms of collaboration* in order to cater to the specifics of the sector in question. Four modes were defined for this project: awareness-raising, partnering, soft law and mandating (see below).

1.4 Sector-specific Corporate Responsibility and the role of governments

Sector-specific CR is no business-only concept

Given the collaborative nature of sector-specific CR and the problem-solving potential resulting from collaborations, a theoretical perspective that includes interactions between varieties of actors seems to be crucial. Likewise, since (as previously discussed) sectors are understood as being organisational fields in which companies *and* other actors are linked with each other by their shared ideas, sector-specific CR should not be viewed as solely a business-related concept. Indeed sector-specific CR is often about public-private collaboration.

New role of governments

In this research project, we are particularly interested in exploring the (new) role of governments in promoting CR in specific sectors while building upon earlier, more general work on the topic (Peters and Röß 2010, Welzel et al. 2007). By tradition, governments are supposed to deal with all challenges to society, including sustainable development. However, governments cannot solve problems of a global scale by themselves. Indeed, governments and businesses need to rethink their traditional roles as mere political or economic actors, respectively. They need to collaborate with both each other and other actors. In fact, businesses are one of governments’ most important partners, as can be seen in the large number of CR-promoting public policies and initiatives (Welzel et al. 2007; Knopf et al. 2011; Moon et al. 2012). From a public perspective, it would be desirable if governments recognised the relevance of sector-

specific CR and adjusted their policies to match the distinctive aspects of individual industrial sectors.

While several sector-specific initiatives already exist, it is surprising how little attention they have gained in the general CR debate so far. In discussions between companies, governments, civil society, academia and other actors, CR is still treated as a matter of principle and with regard to the whole economy rather than as a principle that needs to be fine-tuned if it is going to matter. Examples of explicit sector-specific perspectives can be found in multi-stakeholder forums deliberating on CR (e.g., the European Multi-stakeholder Forum) or public CR agendas (e.g., Germany's CR "Action Plan"; see Bundesregierung 2010). But these pay little or no specific attention to industrial sectors, and there are only a few of them in total. There are more examples of sector-specific initiatives, however, on both the national and international levels (see Ch. 3 to 11).

Despite the limited public debate and the research gaps, there are already well-known examples of sector-specific CR at the international level, such as the sector supplements of the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) framework, the Equator Principle in the financial sector, standards like those set by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) and the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC), and some initiatives of the European Commission (see Ch. 3.1).² There is also scattered evidence of initiatives at the national and regional levels, but there has been no reliable overview and analysis of such initiatives.

The relevance of the other, non-business actors depends on the specific sector. However, we assume that governments can play a key role in every industry. In fact, there are a number of reasons why including government adds value to sector-specific CR:

- Collective problems (including those related to sustainable development) are always problems of public authorities, for it is first and foremost the responsibility of public actors to deal with societal problems. Since all matters of sustainable development are of public interest, government involvement is desirable so that it can emphasise the public case for sector-specific CR.
- As the financial crisis has shown, market self-regulation is highly risky and may even not work after all. A certain degree of governmental intervention might be necessary in order to balance private business interests with legitimate public interests. There are different ways in which governments can ensure that the business case for CR is complemented by the public one. For example, in addition to playing their traditional role as legislators and sources of public funding, governments can also support sector-specific initiatives as moderators and communicators of societal problems (see Ch. 12.5).
- Governments are already involved in promoting general CR concepts. Such approaches could be more effective, however, if they were adjusted to the actual needs and issues of specific industries.

Sector-specific CR not part of the broader CR agenda yet

Examples of international sector-specific initiatives and instruments

Government involvement adds value to CR

² An overview of sector-specific initiatives can be found in the annex to ISO (2010: 93–97).

Sector-specific CR substantiates CR and frames collective action

To conclude so far, sector-specific CR might contribute to the CR debate for two particular reasons: On the one hand, it substantiates general CR concepts and makes them more manageable in terms of issues, actors, locality and modes of collaboration. On the other hand, sector-specific CR takes place in organisational fields that are ideally suited to tackling complex problems by collective action, particularly those related to sustainable development.

Main research questions

Our research project aims to fill the gap in both the practical CR debate and the academic literature. It does so by reviewing sector-specific CR in eight European countries and five industrial sectors while being guided by four questions:

1. What is the state of sector-specific CR across Europe and how do governments across Europe promote sector-specific CR?
2. How do sector-specific initiatives work in their respective contexts, and which role do governments play in these examples of collaborative action?
3. When do sector-specific initiatives perform well and what are the criteria for good performance?
4. What are the theoretical implications of sector-specific CR?

In order to answer these questions, the study draws on rich empirical evidence and the expertise of numerous CR and industry experts, as the following research design shows.

1.5 Empirical research design

Qualitative research design

The thesis of this book – namely, that industrial sectors matter for CR – rests on the premises of a cultural perspective that emphasises the contextuality of actions. A key element of this perspective is an interpretative concept whereby actors interpret and frame social constructions of reality. Thus, rather than being regarded as an external contextual factor, culture is based on a theory of action according to which actions are simultaneously embedded in a web of shared meanings. To capture such meanings and the cultural differences in various industries and places, a qualitative research design was set up. It determined both the selection of empirical evidence and methods.

Sample of industrial sectors

Two notions are at the heart of our research: industrial sectors and sector-specific CR initiatives, respectively. Since the aim was to study five industries in detail, we chose sectors that have a broad range of differences (in terms of business models, economic structures, consumers and other factors). Moreover, they had to be significant to their country's economy (understood as a share in the country's GVA).³ The final sample of industries was chosen ac-

³ The statistics were taken from the OECD National Accounts (OECD 2010). Given their high degree of aggregation, they had to be complemented by other sources, with sometimes differing definitions and counting methods. Readers should keep in mind that all statistical data given throughout this book represent orders of magnitude rather than exact figures.

cording to the United Nation’s International Standard Industrial Classification (ISIC) Revision 3.1 (see Table 1.1).

Table 1.1: Sample of industrial sectors

Sector	Definition
Chemicals and chemical products	“transformation of organic and inorganic raw materials by a chemical process and the formation of products” (U.N. 2002: 87)
Construction	“general construction and special trade construction for buildings and civil engineering, building installation and building completion” (ibid.: 125)
Wholesale and retail trade (WRT)	“(sale without transformation) of any type of goods, and rendering services incidental to the sale of merchandise” (ibid.: 127)
Information and communication technology (ICT) ⁴	“activities of the production and distribution of information and cultural products; the provision of the means to transmit or distribute these products, data or communications; information technology activities; the processing of data and other information service activities” (U.N. 2008: 290)
Financial services ⁵	“financial transactions, i.e., transactions involving the creation, liquidation or change of ownership of financial assets” (U.N. 2002: 146)

It is noteworthy that the five sectors are on a fairly high level of aggregation, which noticeably differs from the everyday use of these terms and sometimes even from companies’ understanding of them. For example, financial services include financial transactions as well as insurance and pension funding, while chemicals and chemical products includes the pharmaceutical industry. The reason for using these sector definitions despite their practical shortcomings lies in their heuristic value.⁶ By helping in efforts to compare industrial sectors in various countries, they offer an alternative to national statistics that are defined in different ways.

“Sector-specific CR initiative” is the second key term in the research design. It describes the different empirical forms of public-private collaboration⁷ on CR situated in industrial sectors. The notion “initiative” was chosen because it is widely used by practitioners and can be used to denote different forms of collaboration. A sector-specific CR initiative marks the beginning of a collective endeavour between businesses and other actors in the sector to tackle a given problem. It relies on the goodwill and commitment of its actors rather than on authority and pressure. For this reason, it also stresses the in-

Limitations of the sector classification

Sector-specific initiatives as modes of public-private collaboration

⁴ In ISIC Rev. 3.1, this sector is “communications”, which we abandoned in favour of “information and communication technology”, which was introduced in ISIC Rev. 4 (U.N. 2008: 290–291).

⁵ This sector is originally called “financial intermediation”, but we have renamed it to increase its heuristic value.

⁶ Please see Chapter 13.4 for more information on the shortcomings of industry classification.

⁷ Public-private collaboration, referred to as “governance *with* government”, represents a broad variety of governance mechanisms and institutional arrangements in which public and private actors collaborate towards creating common norms and rules or providing public goods. They vary from public adaptation of private regulation (e.g., through the social partners in corporatist dialogues) to consultation of private actors. They also differ from traditional public regulation (“governance *by* government”) and private self-regulation (“governance *without* government”) (Börzel and Risse 2005).

novative nature of CR, which sees companies not only complying with requirements, but also actively devising their own, non-standardised solutions.

Modes of collaboration

Although such initiatives are not predisposed to any particular type of collaboration, certain modes can be identified in both practice and the academic literature. In general, there are three ways of coordinating action: by market transactions, by authority and by cooperation. Sector-specific initiatives are based on cooperation rather than on market transactions and authority, although they can include elements of both of the latter. This can be seen in the practical and well-established typology of four modes of public-private collaboration that was chosen to classify sector-specific initiatives (Peters and Röß 2010) (see Table 1.2).

Table 1.2: Modes of public-private collaboration

Mode of collaboration	Definition
Awareness-raising	initiatives that disseminate the idea of CR and provide incentives for business to adopt it (e.g., award schemes, conferences, information platforms, campaigns, training and capacity-building measures, toolkits)
Partnering	initiatives that combine the expertise, competencies and resources of business with those of the public sector and other societal actors to address action areas within the CR agenda (e.g., public-private partnerships, multi-stakeholder initiatives)
Soft law	non-binding initiatives that promote CR (e.g., corporate governance codes, codes of conduct, implementation of international principles, guidelines for CR reporting, tax exemptions for philanthropic activities, linking CR aspects to public procurement procedures and export credit boards)
Mandating	initiatives with a binding element that sets and enforces minimum standards in CR-relevant areas while leaving the mode of implementation to business (e.g., regulations for pension funds, stock exchange regulations, laws on CR reporting,)

Awareness-raising,
partnering and soft law

Awareness-raising and partnering are usually based on cooperation. However, some awareness-raising initiatives (e.g., consumer labels) may combine elements of cooperation and market transaction. Likewise, some soft-law initiatives employ both authority and market transaction. For example, sustainable public procurement employs authority when requiring companies to meet certain criteria in order to qualify to participate in public tendering processes. Likewise, those companies that are awarded a contract naturally also benefit from a market transaction.

Difference between
mandating initiatives and
laws

Furthermore, mandating initiatives combine authority with cooperation. However, even though they set binding goals, they do not specify the exact form of compliance and usually have no provisions for sanctioning non-compliance. Instead, they rely on companies' ingenuity to meet the goal in question. For these reasons, mandating sector-specific initiatives should not be confused with conventional laws and regulations touching upon aspects of CR. Such laws and regulations prescribe both the aim and the means for

reaching it in addition to requiring compliance from companies (“corporate accountability”) and having sanctions for non-compliance.

Within the applied typology, initiatives may sometimes combine several modes of collaboration. For instance, a partnership may be formed to launch a sectoral CR award. In this case, the logic of partnering and awareness-raising are combined. However, the purpose of the initiative is decisive for our final classification. In the aforementioned example, this would be awareness-raising because the partnership is formed to increase awareness through an award.

The focus of the project lies on the context and impact of industrial sectors. Although a specific industry in different countries will probably have more similarities than differences, one should not expect it to be uniform in all of those countries. Given these considerations, the theoretical sample of countries was determined on the basis of political and socioeconomic differences in Europe and the consequently different approaches to CR. It includes seven EU member states (Denmark, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Poland, Spain and the United Kingdom) and one member of the European Free Trade Association (Switzerland). These countries represent different types of market economies (Hall and Soskice 2001) and modes of governmental CR action (Albareda et al. 2007).

Given the emphasis on meanings and culture in industries and countries, a qualitative mixed-method design was deemed most suitable for the empirical research. It falls into two steps: one concerning expert perceptions of sector-specific CR, the other relating to examples of sector-specific initiatives. In the first phase, CR and industry experts were asked about the state of sector-specific CR. The aim was to gather initial information about existing initiatives, in general, and about the experts’ perceptions and experiences, in particular. An online survey, a snap poll and telephone interviews were used during this phase. In the second phase, examples of sector-specific CR were studied in more detail. Scholars in the field conducted face-to-face interviews with the person(s) in charge of the corresponding initiative and wrote case studies. Desk research was conducted in parallel with these phases.⁸

The online survey addressed national CR and industry experts in the eight countries. The aim was to gather information about sector-specific initiatives in the countries while grasping the experts’ perception and knowledge of the field. After being identified during desk research as well as by the local project partners (see below), 310 experts were invited to participate in the online survey. In total, we received 42 valid questionnaires, or ones from 13.5 per cent of the invited experts.

Since trade associations play an important role in sector-specific CR, they were polled with regard to their views on CR via an online survey. The trade associations representing the five industries of this study were identified for each of the 27 EU and the 4 EFTA member states. Overall, 183 associations were invited, of which 34 (or 18.6 per cent) participated in the snap poll. The

The purpose determines the type of initiative

Sample of countries

Qualitative mixed-method design

Online survey

Snap poll

⁸ Unless otherwise noted, information for this study is from May 2012.

respondents were asked about the importance of CR in their industry, about the most relevant challenges and issues their industry faces, and about their preference regarding certain types of government involvement.

Telephone interviews

As sector-specific CR is not limited to this study's eight-country sample, telephone interviews with international CR and industry experts were conducted in order to grasp an international perspective, as well. The experts come from the European Commission, the International Labour Organization (ILO) and European trade associations and CR networks. An open interview guideline was used and contained questions regarding the state of the art, issues, success factors and trends of sector-specific CR. In total, 16 telephone interviews were conducted.

Case studies

The second part of the research focused on examples of sector-specific initiatives and the way they work. A close collaboration with leading European CR scholars in the relevant countries of this research project could be realised for this purpose. These scholars included: Marta de la Cuesta González and Eva Pardo (National Distance Education University Madrid) for Spain; Tobias Goessling (Tilburg University) for the Netherlands; Janusz Reichel (University of Łódź) for Poland; Julia Roloff (ESC Rennes School of Business) for France; Anja Schäfer (The Open University Business School) for the UK; Steen Vallentin and Andreas Schmiegelow (Copenhagen Business School) for Denmark; and Christoph Weber-Berg, Sabrina Stucki and Sandra Huber-Ingold (HWZ University of Applied Sciences in Business Administration, Zurich) for Switzerland.

Based on the findings of a first workshop amongst members of the extended research team, these experts identified existing sector-specific initiatives in the respective countries. Initiatives had to meet four necessary criteria before being studied in detail: They had to be sector-specific, represent public-private collaboration, constitute collective action and have an effect on their subject matter. The scholars then interviewed representatives from those initiatives that had fulfilled these requirements and been eager to cooperate with them. For each initiative covered by this study, at least one face-to-face interview was conducted with the help of one common interview guideline. The guideline was open so as to be easily adjusted according to the interview, and it covered such aspects as the development, implementation, sector focus and performance of the initiative. The interviews were conducted in an official language of the country and documented with English summary notes and postscripts. Preliminary results of the case studies were discussed amongst members of the extended research team during a second workshop.

Limitations of this study

A few limitations are tied to an emergent field of research and the use of qualitative data. This study is not meant to be representative or exhaustive. Instead, it is about reconstructing and understanding a new phenomenon before deriving practical and theoretical lessons. In doing so, the project draws heavily on the knowledge and perceptions of experts. Therefore, rather than reflecting the perspectives of all actors involved, the empirical evidence is usually biased towards the points of view of business and government.

1.6 Structure of the book

This book is divided into 13 chapters. After this introductory section, Chapter 2 presents the results of the surveys and interviews with CR and sector experts in the eight countries as well as on the European and international levels. The aim is to grasp expert views on sector-specific CR before continuing on with a more detailed analysis of the current practice in the subsequent chapters. In Chapter 3, an overview of CR on the EU level is given, followed by more information on the five industries investigated in this study. The country reports in Chapters 4 to 11 offer a description of the general CR context in the country and subchapters on CR in the five industrial sectors. In addition, each country profile contains three case studies with illustrative examples of sector-specific initiatives.

Chapter 12 offers a review of the empirical findings of sector-specific CR at the national level. It outlines three institutional approaches used by policy-makers to promote sector-specific CR and four roles that public actors play in such initiatives. After reviewing the general patterns of sector-specific CR, the chapter identifies the strengths and limitations of different types of sector-specific initiatives by introducing five performance criteria and applying them to the illustrative examples presented in the country reports.

The final chapter discusses theoretical considerations by applying a cultural perspective in business ethics and drawing on selected empirical findings, and it outlines some aspects of potential future research. We have added two appendices. The first contains concise information on the 65 sector-specific initiatives identified during the course of the project. The second presents a detailed evaluation of four sector-specific initiatives based on the criteria identified for good performance. These appendices are meant to serve as a reference for readers interested in examples and the working of sector-specific CR in specific countries and/or industries.

In conclusion, this research project has involved conducting the first empirical, comparative study to focus on sector-specific CR, in general, and the role of government, in particular. By exploring this new field, we hope to open up new avenues for research while simultaneously encouraging practitioners to discover sector-specific perspectives on CR.

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