

Workshop "societal responsibility of the economic actors"

(SREA)

Gathering at Dourdan, France, on September 30 and October 1, 2003

Report of the gathering

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Workshop coordinator

Methodological note

Many things were said during the meeting of Dourdan, but which have less importance at this stage according to the final decisions made by the Steering Committee (SC) .
These minutes thus only report on the principal points in their globality, as well as on the decisions taken.

Unfolding of the workshop

The coordinator first reminded the contents of the initial project. The two studies were then presented.

Following these stages, a first sharing showed that the situations as regards SREA were very different according to the continents. And, therefore, the concerns of the participants in the SC also were at different levels.

It was thus decided to separate in three geographical sub-groups ("South", Europe, and North America) and to work on common questions:

- Problems related to SREA in our part of the world
- How the dialogue can help to answer these problems
- Which added value the workshop can bring to the reflexion and the activities of the pole

Result of the work in sub-groups

The "European" sub-group did not really treat these questions but directly discussed a program which could collect a consensus in the SC.

Here its proposal in two phases:

1. a preliminary phase of research in 3 stages
 - which is our vision on the SREA (companies, trade unions, NGOs, consumers organizations, local communities, the authorities)
 - what is necessary to create the conditions which will favour the emergence and the taking into account of CSR (one reduces the field to the companies alone)
 - what is the state of the art in the various parts of the world as regards dialogue between the various stakeholders
2. an experimental phase within the groups of dialogue

The sub-group "North America" stated that their world was not at all on the same level as Western Europe on these questions of CSR. The dialogue is not institutionalized at all there, the mood is still very conflictual and thus the question is not "how to better dialogue?" but rather "how to enter spaces where, possibly, a dialogue could be established?" or "how to draw up bridges with other areas on the questions of SREA or the footbridges between the economic actors?".

The "Southern" sub-group (Africa, India, South America) synthesized the results of its work in an Excel spreadsheet (attached). Preliminary remarks had expressed that "the South" did obviously not reach the stage of development of Western Europe : they have few big size companies but mostly SME, and

a weak and often not respected regulation. The companies established in these regions thus do not have CSR like concern. Nevertheless, the dialogue was unanimously regarded as important in this sub-group, with the following reasons, extracted from the Excel spreadsheet:

HOW The DIALOGUE CAN HELP The PROMOTION OF The SREA?

- To increase the awareness of the existence of the questions raised in the various lobbys
- To deal with the misunderstandings
- To define a common action plan
- Good publicity for the economic actors in term of marketing
- the economic actors take part in the campaigns against poverty
- Exchanges of information
- Facilitation of the national cohabitation and the positive management of the conflicts

Continuation of work in sub-groups

Confronted to the apparent divergence of these situations, the SC asked the three sub-groups rapporteurs to meet and propose a common solution to the SC. This proposal appears in the synthetic Powerpoint presentation realized by Aurélien, attached, and entitled "Towards a common diary for the workshop".

This synthesis exposed the following concerns:

- as it is not easy to reconcile the concerns, the workshop could initiate a research on the dynamic into the various contexts as regards SREA, in order to learn the lessons necessary to promote the responsibility of the economic actors
- the concept of the dialogue between the various stakeholders constitutes then a strategic assumption
- the theme of the dialogue could be the principal variable

This synthesis continued with the following proposal:

- to start with a state of the art in the various areas/contexts (situational diagnosis) starting from terms of reference: which are the experiments, the initiatives which exist as regards SREA? Who are the involved actors, what is their strategy, their force and weakness, opportunities and threats, etc.
- To produce the documents and meet in a workshop to exchange and orientate starting from the analyzed experiments
- To plan the following stages

The SC discussed again into plenary this proposal and the result is the following proposal¹ which collected a consensus:

Strong times of the workshop

1. A research on the "state of the art" in the various contexts of the SREA (but not exhaustive, framing) not in a "country" perspective, but with a broader perspective

Delimitation:

- North America
- Latin America
- Africa
- Asia
- Europe

2. A meeting to exploit the results of the research

To be produced

- A synthesis document
- The identification of experimentation projects

3. Launching of the experimentation projects

4. Meeting of synthesis and capitalization

¹ extracted from the synthesis written by Aurelien

5. Development of the end product (synthesis document and summary of our work to be published/diffuse)

Research on state of the art will have to lead to a standard document.

Structure of the document (terms of reference)

1. Context

- Description of the SREA in the concerned area
- institutional Contexte (green lbook of the UE, Accord of Cotonou, ALENA, WTO..etc)

2. The SREA by category of actors

The point is to identify the practices of societal responsibility related to some actors and to analyze how each one of these actors considers the societal Responsibility.

The following groups² are to be privileged

- companies³ (multinational, national companies and SME)
- Organizations representing civil society⁴, special interest groups and media (like relay)
- political decision makers, development agencies and big international organizations (WTO, UNO,EU)

NB: It is asked to study 10 cases representative if possible of the three categories above taking into account the scales: national, sub-regional, international

3. Our SREA vision starting from the studied cases

4. What are the needs for the studied area, proposals, strategies

Timing

Various assumptions were put forth during the meeting (4-5 month to one year of research). The SC did not make a firm decision⁵.

Budget

The workshop as decided by the SC comprises two major phases: a phase of research-action (a planetary inventory of the SREA) and an experimental phase. **Only the first phase was identified in budgetary terms.**

On this level, the group identified for the period post-Dourdan the following parameters:

- to carry out the first research-action will require, for each researcher, 40 working days.
- the group will need a coordination which will represent a work equivalent to one research-action (mission: to manage the contents of all the studies, to ensure the translations, to make that the deadlines are respected, to ensure the distribution of the documents, to organize and animate the meetings, etc...)
- a meeting of the SC could take place with the World Social Forum, January 2004 (advantages: various participants are there already on other budgets, and the FPH could finance the other participants on the basis of another budge; disadvantage: it is very fast concerning the studies which will not be finished at this stage).

According to these elements, the SC charged Vincent to discuss with the PSES the financial needs for the workshop.

² a complete list of the actors can be found in the Excel spreadsheet, to which will added the local communities

³ including financial institutions

⁴ (NGOs, trade unions, consumers organizations)

⁵ the coordinator will then make proposals after a while

Others

The group found a person who is voluntary to coordinate the research on each geographical area.

- North America: Corinne and Pierre
- Latin America: Romulo⁶
- Africa: Aurélien
- Asia: Ramesh
- Europe: Vincent

The SC wished to entrust the general coordination of the project to Vincent.

Participants

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Interprètes

HOYOIS	Christophe	Belgique
LEMAIRE	Jean-François	Belgique

Excused : Benjamin Quinones, Michel Capron, Meredyth Ailloud...

⁶ gave his agreement after the gathering, having consulted partners