



## SOCIALSME NEWSLETTER

Sustainability and social responsibility through learning in SME

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*This free newsletter is published quarterly. If you find it useful, please tell your colleagues and friends about it*

### ☀ Why Socialsme?

*Big and multinational companies* have clearly understood the new trend: they present themselves as companies having adopted Corporate Social Responsibility as a mission, towards their employees as well as towards consumers and the society as a whole. *SME's and micro enterprises* are dealing with the same group of socially sensitive consumers as well as potential employees, therefore more and more of them have to deal with this new concept, if they want to preserve their market and their relation with local communities. However SME's and micro enterprises are short on resources. Therefore they need tailored support to implement a socially responsible learning strategy. In many cases SME's already have social responsible activities with regard to their workforce but a lack in discovering and promoting them in a systematic way.

*What's why we have decided to propose to improve the level of social responsibility in businesses in the most simplest and systematic way as it is possible.* It will take a small effort, but will have a big effect. EVERY business can do it!

*The SOCIALSME process* focuses not on doing something in addition to what is there but on improving and systematising what is already done in SME. The 6x3 (6 workshops of 3 hours each) process will facilitate the reflection of the situation in the company and guide common strategy building using tested and reliable methodologies, specifically designed for the needs of smaller companies.

### ☀ Socialsme project online

You can find more about Leonardo da Vinci Transfer of innovation project "Sustainability and Social responsibility through Learning in SME" in project website:

<http://www.socialsme.org/>



### ☀ Kick-off meeting of Socialsme: what has been decided?

Kick-off meeting of Socialsme project took place in Vilnius on 5-6 of December, 2008. The situation of social responsibility in SME in partners countries (Bulgaria, Cyprus, Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Spain) has been presented and that confirmed the need of Socialsme product in nowadays situation and in long-term context as well. Alexander Krauss from ISOB (Institute for Socio-Scientific Consultancy) has acknowledged with innovations that will be the background for Socialsme product which will be adapted, tested and produced in all partners languages.

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 **The first product of Socialsme: conclusions**

The first product is Socialsme Requirement Analysis Synthesis Report "*SME in Search for Feasible Concepts for Systematic Social Responsibility in Times of Crisis*" (March 2009).

*Several conclusions from this report:*

- Implementation of SR in SME still moderate but underreported since companies do not perceive socially responsible activities in the framework of the concept.
- The current economic and financial crisis is a dominating context factor that can be an obstacle but also can increase interest in new and more sustainable models of business conduct.
- SME need more strategic planning, improved management and strengthened relationships with employees, customers and communities.
- Practical, down-to-earth approach in consulting SME and simple but flexible guidelines needed.
- High level of interest in further cooperation with SOCIALSME

On the whole the results of the requirement analysis validate the hypotheses that were the backbone of the SOCIALSME projects approach and planned activities and products. The current crisis can prove to be a decisive factor in the implementation, but it is unclear at this point if the crisis is just an obstacle or also an opportunity. SOCIALSME partners and SME representatives and experts in the fields obviously are willing to answer the challenge of the crisis in a positive and constructive way.

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 **To be responsible in times of crisis: opinions****From speech of Günter Verheugen, Vice President of European Commission, in CSR Forum (10 February 2009):**

Let me offer some reasons why the crisis we are currently experiencing demands an ever more serious and strategic commitment to CSR.

The main one is trust. According to the 2008 Edelman Trust Barometer, about 70% of Europeans trust business less now than they did last year. No doubt this is true for some kinds of enterprises and some sectors more than others. I suspect that trust in SMEs remains relatively high. Nevertheless, this trend is worrying for us all.

I have argued for some time that Europe can only flourish, and can only meet its objectives of sustainable development in all three pillars – competitiveness, environmental protection and social inclusion – if enterprises are trusted and actually trustworthy and valued for their contribution to society. This argument has never been more relevant than it is today.

The task of rebuilding trust in business has to start now. It has to be a priority for the business community. And it has to include a deeper understanding of the purpose of business in society. ([http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/csr/documents/csrforum\\_speechgv.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/csr/documents/csrforum_speechgv.pdf))

**From interview with Lyra Jakuleviciene, Head of United Nations Development programme in Lithuania (19 of March, 2009)**

Crisis is the excellent opportunity for responsible business.

It seems that danger for social responsibility which is quite "young" in Lithuania has occurred in today economic recession. Bigger taxes stipulate the temptation of the black business possibility and that is not fit with social responsibility. Though this threat can be envisaged in case of social business responsibility is identified with philanthropy, the tribute for society and nation but not with the business essence, reputation and existence assumptions.

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Of course, the understanding that social responsibility could be useful for business in Lithuania has to cross several stages of development. On other hand, its is excellent time to create, even hardly, the background of success – the trust and respect from employees, the loyalty and appreciation of customers, the solidarity and intention of clients to use products and services of companies that concern about society expectations.

Social responsibility is not the luxury, it is the necessity. Enterprises that will understand this will go out of crisis quicker and those which will try to use old methods will not have the future.

(<http://vilniaus.diena.lt/dienrastis/nuomones/krize-galimybe-atsakingam-verslui-207345>)

### **From speech of Noeleen Heyzer, vice secretary-general of the United Nations (9 April, 2009**

Amid the current economic crisis, the world's attention is gradually turning to corporate social responsibility. Companies protecting their employees from the widespread "wave of layoffs" are winning universal praise.

It is a need as well as a must for companies to fulfill their social responsibilities, to facilitate, rather than hinder, businesses recovery.

Companies, as participants in socio-economic activities, can only thrive as long as they work together with other players, including consumers, investors and the government.

Their willingness to perform due responsibility, especially under the current situation, will help improve their image, build public trust and enhance core competitiveness in future development.

At the core of the crisis is a collapse of trust in the capital markets. To regain public trust, firms must start "shifting their focus from short-term profit considerations to long-term sustainable value creation. Instead of cutting down on corporate responsibility spending, companies should be investing in it heavily.

([http://www.china.org.cn/china/opinion/2009-04/09/content\\_17578054.htm](http://www.china.org.cn/china/opinion/2009-04/09/content_17578054.htm))

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### **☀ It is worth to work with Socialsme product: invitation for consultants**

We are inviting to be a part of social business and join us in Socialsme project! You will have possibility to use project results in your activity.

*The direct target groups* of the project are consultants and trainers from training and consulting institutions, SME owners and managers, management staff from SME, social partners within SME.



If You find our project interesting and see any gaps in Your company's social responsible activity or want to consult SME using our innovation, write to us:

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This project has been developed through the Leonardo da Vinci Community Vocational Training Programme - Transfer of Innovation AGREEMENT No LLP-LdV-TOI-2008-LT-0021