



## ENWHP Briefings

**No. 7**

### **Corporate Social Responsibility - with socially and environmentally compatible business practices for sustainable success in European enterprises**

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is becoming increasingly important for the competitiveness and sustainable success in every branch and every size of European enterprises. They are becoming increasingly aware that above average social and environmentally friendly business practices result in direct economic value and play an active role in shaping social, economic and ecological change.

But what exactly does CSR mean? In the European Community “Green Paper 2001”, CSR is defined as a concept that serves as a basis for enterprises in voluntarily integrating social issues and environmental responsibilities into their company activities and in the interaction with their stakeholders (e.g. employees, shareholders, investors, consumers, public authorities, non-governmental organisations, etc.). Being socially responsible means not only meeting legal requirements, but going one step further and investing in human capital, the environment, and in relationships with other stakeholders.

There is an internal and external dimension to the concept of CSR. The internal dimension relates primarily to the employee. It involves the management of human capital, safety and health at work, dealing in a socially responsible manner with global change and handling natural resources that are used in production in an environmentally friendly manner. The external dimension relates to the integration of enterprises with local environments, business contacts, suppliers and customers, human rights and the global protection of the environment - both within and beyond national and European boundaries.

The decisive reasons why enterprises should develop social responsibility are as follows:

- There has been a shift in what consumers, citizens, public authorities, and investors expect from companies in the context of globalisation and industrial change.
- Social criteria increasingly influence investment decisions by both individuals and organisations, in their respective roles as consumers and investors.



- There is increased concern about environmental damage caused by business activities.
- Business activities are becoming more and more transparent due to modern information and communication technologies.

The European Union has adopted social responsibility in enterprises as a matter of concern. The Union is of the opinion that CSR can contribute towards achieving the aim set out by the European Council in Lisbon in 2000 of turning the Union into the “most competitive and most dynamic knowledge-based economic area in the world” by 2010.

The ENWHP also attaches great importance to social responsibility in enterprises. In drawing up the ENWHP quality criteria for workplace health promotion, six areas of criteria were determined. Together, they provide a comprehensive picture of the quality of workplace health promotion measures. As the success of workplace health promotion depends on whether and how enterprises deal with their responsibility in handling natural resources, social responsibility is considered to be a decisive criterion.