

Procedure file

Basic information		
INI - Own-initiative procedure	2012/2098(INI)	Procedure completed
Corporate Social Responsibility: accountable, transparent and responsible business behaviour and sustainable growth		
Subject		
3.45 Enterprise policy, inter-company cooperation		
3.45.01 Company law		
4.10 Social policy, social charter and protocol		
4.15.12 Workers protection and rights, labour law		
4.15.14 Social dialogue, social partners		
5.05 Economic growth		

Key players			
European Parliament	Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
	JURI Legal Affairs		23/05/2012
		PPE BALDASSARRE Raffaele	
		Shadow rapporteur	
		S&D COFFERATI Sergio Gaetano	
		ALDE TAYLOR Rebecca	
		Verts/ALE LICHTENBERGER Eva	
		ECR KARIM Sajjad	
		EFD SPERONI Francesco Enrico	
	Committee for opinion	Rapporteur for opinion	Appointed
	AFET Foreign Affairs		26/04/2012
		PPE GRZYB Andrzej	
	DEVE Development		25/01/2012
		Verts/ALE GRÈZE Catherine	
INTA International Trade		10/10/2012	
	S&D LANGE Bernd		
EMPL Employment and Social Affairs (Associated committee)		17/11/2011	
	S&D HOWITT Richard		
ENVI Environment, Public Health and Food Safety	The committee decided not to give an opinion.		
ITRE Industry, Research and Energy	The committee decided not to give an opinion.		
IMCO Internal Market and Consumer Protection	The committee decided not to give an opinion.		
CULT Culture and Education		10/11/2011	
	ALDE LØKKEGAARD Morten		

European Commission

Commission DG

Commissioner

[Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs](#) TAJANI Antonio

Key events

25/10/2011	Non-legislative basic document published	COM(2011)0681	Summary
24/05/2012	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
24/05/2012	Referral to associated committees announced in Parliament		
22/01/2013	Vote in committee		
28/01/2013	Committee report tabled for plenary	A7-0017/2013	Summary
05/02/2013	Debate in Parliament		
06/02/2013	Results of vote in Parliament		
06/02/2013	Decision by Parliament	T7-0049/2013	Summary
06/02/2013	End of procedure in Parliament		

Technical information

Procedure reference	2012/2098(INI)
Procedure type	INI - Own-initiative procedure
Procedure subtype	Initiative
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 54
Other legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 159
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	JURI/7/09590

Documentation gateway

Non-legislative basic document		COM(2011)0681	25/10/2011	EC	Summary
Committee draft report		PE500.415	08/11/2012	EP	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE500.760	30/11/2012	EP	
Committee opinion	AFET	PE496.505	05/12/2012	EP	
Committee opinion	DEVE	PE498.153	18/12/2012	EP	
Committee opinion	CULT	PE497.789	19/12/2012	EP	
Committee opinion	INTA	PE497.944	15/01/2013	EP	
Committee opinion	EMPL	PE498.079	15/01/2013	EP	

Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading	A7-0017/2013	28/01/2013	EP	Summary
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading	T7-0049/2013	06/02/2013	EP	Summary
Commission response to text adopted in plenary	SP(2013)304	28/06/2013	EC	

Corporate Social Responsibility: accountable, transparent and responsible business behaviour and sustainable growth

PURPOSE : to present a renewed EU strategy 2011-14 for Corporate Social Responsibility

BACKGROUND : the European Commission has previously defined Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in its [2001 Green Paper](#) as a concept whereby companies integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operations and in their interaction with their stakeholders on a voluntary basis.

The Commission details the progress made since its Green Paper and a [business-lead initiative called the European Alliance for CSR](#). Indicators of progress include:

- the number of EU enterprises that have signed up to the ten CSR principles of the United Nations Global Compact has risen from 600 in 2006 to over 1900 in 2011;
- the number of organisations with sites registered under the Environmental Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS) has risen from 3 300 in 2006 to over 4 600 in 2011;
- the number of EU companies signing transnational company agreements with global or European workers organisations, covering issues such as labour standards, rose from 79 in 2006 to over 140 in 2011.

In spite of this progress, important challenges remain. Many companies in the EU have not yet fully integrated social and environmental concerns into their operations and core strategy. Accusations persist of the involvement of a small minority of European enterprises in human rights harm and failure to respect core labour standards. Only 15 out of 27 EU Member States have national policy frameworks to promote CSR. The Commission has identified a number of factors that will help to further increase the impact of its CSR policy, including the need to better clarify what is expected of enterprises, and the need to promote market reward for responsible business conduct, including through investment policy and public procurement.

The Council and the European Parliament in its resolutions of [2007](#), and [2011](#) have called on the Commission to further develop its CSR policy. Furthermore, in the Europe 2020 Strategy, the Commission made a commitment to renew the EU strategy to promote Corporate Social Responsibility. In the Single Market Act it stated that it would adopt a new communication on CSR by the end of 2011.

The economic crisis and its social consequences have to some extent damaged consumer confidence and levels of trust in business. They have focused public attention on the social and ethical performance of enterprises. By renewing efforts to promote CSR now, the Commission aims to create conditions favourable to sustainable growth, responsible business behaviour and durable employment generation in the medium and long term.

CONTENT : the Commission presents a modern understanding of CSR, including an updated definition, and a new agenda for action. The main features are as follows:

Definition: the Commission puts forward a new definition of CSR as the responsibility of enterprises for their impacts on society. Respect for applicable legislation, and for collective agreements between social partners, is a prerequisite for meeting that responsibility. To fully meet their corporate social responsibility, enterprises should have in place a process to integrate social, environmental, ethical, human rights and consumer concerns into their business operations and core strategy in close collaboration with their stakeholders, with the aim of:

- maximising the creation of shared value for their owners/shareholders and for their other stakeholders and society at large;
- identifying, preventing and mitigating their possible adverse impacts.

The complexity of that process will depend on factors such as the size of the enterprise and the nature of its operations. For most small and medium-sized enterprises, especially microenterprises, the CSR process is likely to remain informal and intuitive.

The new definition is consistent with internationally recognised CSR principles and guidelines, such as the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises, the ISO 26000 Guidance Standard on Social Responsibility and the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.

Agenda for action: the new CSR policy puts forward an action agenda for the period 2011-2014 covering 8 areas. This agenda contains commitments from the Commission itself, as well as suggestions for enterprises, Member States, and other stakeholder groups. In implementing this agenda, the Commission will at all times take account the particular characteristics of SMEs, especially their limited resources, and avoid creating unnecessary administrative burdens.

Enhancing the visibility of CSR and disseminating good practices: by giving public recognition to what enterprises do in the field of CSR, the EU can help to disseminate good practice, foster peer learning, and encourage more enterprises to develop their own strategic approaches to CSR.

The Commission intends to:

- create in 2013 multi stakeholder CSR platforms in a number of relevant industrial sectors, for enterprises, their workers and other stakeholders to make public commitments on the CSR issues relevant to each sector and jointly monitor progress;

- launch from 2012 onwards a European award scheme for CSR partnerships between enterprises and other stakeholders.

Improving and tracking levels of trust in business: there is frequently a gap between citizens expectations and what they perceive to be the reality of business behaviour. This gap is caused partly by instances of irresponsible behaviour by some enterprises, as well as by cases of some enterprises exaggerating their environmental or social credentials. The Commission intends to:

- address the issue of misleading marketing related to the environmental impacts of products (so-called "green-washing") in the context of the report on the application of the Unfair Commercial Practices Directive, and consider the need for possible specific measures on this issue;
- initiate an open debate with citizens, enterprises and other stakeholders on the role and potential of business in the 21st century, with the aim of encouraging common understanding and expectations, and carry out periodic surveys of citizen trust in business and attitudes towards CSR.

Improving self- and co-regulation processes: the Commission will launch a process in 2012 with enterprises and other stakeholders to develop a code of good practice for self- and co-regulation exercises, which should improve the effectiveness of the CSR process.

Enhancing market reward for CSR: this means leveraging EU policies in the fields of consumption, investment and public procurement in order to promote market reward for responsible business conduct. The Commission will:

- facilitate the better integration of social and environmental considerations into public procurement as part of the 2011 review of the Public Procurement Directives, without introducing additional administrative burdens for contracting authorities or enterprises, and without undermining the principle of awarding contracts to the most economically advantageous tender;
- consider a requirement on all investment funds and financial institutions to inform all their clients (citizens, enterprises, public authorities etc.) about any ethical or responsible investment criteria they apply or any standards and codes to which they adhere.

Improving company disclosure of social and environmental information: one source estimates that about 2,500 European companies publish CSR or sustainability reports, which puts the EU in a position of global leadership. However this is still only a small fraction of the 42,000 large companies operating in the EU. In order to ensure a level playing field, the Commission will present a legislative proposal on the transparency of the social and environmental information provided by companies in all sectors.

Further integrating CSR into education, training and research: the Commission will explore opportunities for financing further research and innovation on CSR, and supporting CSR principles and guidelines in research funded still under the 7th Framework Programme, as well as under its successor, Horizon 2020, and in building the European Research Area. It intends to provide further financial support for education and training projects on CSR under the EU Lifelong Learning and Youth in Action Programmes, and launch an action in 2012 to raise the awareness of education professionals and enterprises on the importance of cooperation on CSR.

Emphasising the importance of national and sub-national CSR policies: the Commission intends to create with Member States in 2012 a peer review mechanism for national CSR policies. It invites Member States to develop by mid 2012 their own plans or national lists of priority actions to promote CSR in support of the Europe 2020 strategy, with reference to internationally recognised CSR principles and guidelines and in cooperation with enterprises and other stakeholders, taking account of the issues raised in this communication.

Better aligning European and global approaches to CSR: the EU should promote European interests in international CSR policy developments, while at the same time ensuring the integration of internationally recognised principles and guidelines into its own CSR policies. The Commission intends to monitor the commitments made by European enterprises with more than 1 000 employees to take account of internationally recognised CSR principles and guidelines, and take account of the ISO 26000 Guidance Standard on Social Responsibility in its own operations. Furthermore, it invites all large European enterprises to make a commitment by 2014 to take account of at least one of the following sets of principles and guidelines when developing their approach to CSR: the UN Global Compact, the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises, or the ISO 26000 Guidance Standard on Social Responsibility.

The report further notes that improving the coherence of EU policies relevant with business and human rights is a critical challenge. The Commission intends to:

- work with enterprises and stakeholders in 2012 to develop human rights guidance for a limited number of relevant industrial sectors, as well as guidance for small and medium-sized enterprises, based on the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.
- publish by the end of 2012 a report on EU priorities in the implementation of the UN Guiding Principles, and thereafter to issue periodic progress reports.

Lastly, it invites EU Member States to develop by the end of 2012 national plans for the implementation of the UN Guiding Principles.

Corporate Social Responsibility: accountable, transparent and responsible business behaviour and sustainable growth

The Committee on Legal Affairs adopted the own-initiative report by Raffaele BALDASSARRE (EPP, IT) on corporate social responsibility (CSR): accountable, transparent and responsible business behaviour and sustainable growth.

The Committee on Social Affairs, exercising its prerogatives of an associated committee in accordance with [Rule 50 of Parliaments Rules of Procedure](#), was also consulted for an opinion on this report.

The two committees have decided to work together closely in order to ensure that a cogent approach is taken in establishing Parliament's position on the renewed EU strategy 2011-2014 for corporate social responsibility. In pursuit of this objective and fully in keeping with their respective responsibilities, the two committees have decided to draw up, under Rule 50 of the Rules of Procedure, two own-initiative reports, each covering a separate area : the second report concerns Corporate Social Responsibility: promoting society's interests and a route to sustainable and inclusive recovery [see [2012/2097\(INI\)](#)].

Members call for a modern understanding of CSR. They strongly advocate corporate social responsibility (CSR), and take the view that CSR if implemented correctly and practised by all companies, not only larger firms can make a great contribution towards restoring lost confidence,

which is necessary for a sustainable economic recovery, and can mitigate the social consequences of the economic crisis. This is why they believe that making CSR part of a sustainable business strategy is in the interest of businesses and of society as a whole.

Members believe that in cases where a business is in difficulty, excessive bonuses, compensation and salaries paid to managers are incompatible with socially responsible behaviour.

The report states that a business tax policy should be considered part and parcel of CSR and that socially responsible behaviour consequently leaves no room for strategies aimed at evading tax or exploiting tax havens.

Overall, Members endorse the new definition of CSR put forward by the Commission, which does away with the dichotomy between voluntary and compulsory approaches which has hitherto polarised debate on CSR.

Strengthening the links between CSR, the general public, competitiveness and innovation: Members consider that the Commission should take the initiative on this issue. They call on the Commission to:

- promote innovative, along with the national authorities, business models designed to forge closer links between businesses and the social environment in which they operate;
- consider the current discussions taking place with regard to the review of the Accounting and Transparency Directives so that the new proposed CSR strategy would complement the revised Directive;
- raise CSR's profile and disseminate best practice;
- introduce a European award scheme for CSR firms and partnerships and consider, among other actions, whether an European social label could be introduced to this end;
- support the efforts of the CSR Europe network, seeking first and foremost to strengthen cooperation between business and Member States;
- carry out periodic surveys of public trust in business and public attitudes towards CSR strategies implemented by businesses and link the content of these surveys with the revision of the sustainable consumption and production action plan, with a view to identifying barriers to more responsible consumption.

Making CSR policies more transparent and more effective: the report urges the Commission to draw up specific measures to combat misleading and false information regarding commitments to corporate social responsibility and relating to the environmental and social impact of products and services. The issues of filing and considering complaints on the basis of an open and clear procedure and initiating investigations should be examined. The report considers not only that greenwashing is a form of deception that misleads consumers, public authorities, and investors, but that it also reduces trust in CSR as an effective means of promoting sustainable and inclusive growth. Members agree that greater account should be taken of social and environmental considerations in public procurement and calls, in this connection, for the lowest price no longer to be used as an award criterion and for greater accountability throughout the subcontracting chain. Further initiatives should be taken to unlock and strengthen the potential of CSR in tackling climate change (by linking it to resource and energy efficiency), e.g. in the processes companies use to purchase raw materials.

Members stress that Socially Responsible Investment (SRI) is part of the implementation process of CSR in investment decisions. This should combine investors financial objectives with their concerns regarding social, environmental and ethical (SEE) and corporate governance issues. They acknowledge the importance of businesses divulging information on sustainability such as social and environmental factors, with a view to identifying sustainability risks and increasing investor and consumer trust. The report also stresses that stringent respect for human rights, due diligence and transparency must be maintained in order to ensure CSR along the whole supply chain.

Members state that corporate responsibility must not be reduced to a marketing tool, and that it should be embedded in a company's overall business strategy. They call on the Commission and the Member States to introduce corporate stewardship codes that reflect the importance of responsibility for all in the company.

In addition, Members advocate the adoption of a legislative proposal on the transparency of the social and environmental information, provided by companies allowing for high flexibility of action, matched by a sufficient level of comparability to meet the needs of investors and other stakeholders as well as the need to provide consumers with easy access to information on businesses impact on society.

Other proposed measures include: (i) the need for increased, more inclusive and more transparent monitoring of CSR principles in EU trade policy; (ii) the provision of concrete information on and education and training in CSR, so that enterprises can take full advantage of CSR and implement it in their organisational culture; (iii) further consideration to be given to both binding and non-binding measures to facilitate the recognition and promotion of efforts by businesses in connection with transparency and the disclosure of non-financial information.

Members are opposed to the introduction of specific parameters, such as EU-wide performance indicators, which could give rise to unnecessary red tape and inefficient operational structures.

As regards auto-regulation: Members welcome the Commission's intention to launch a Community of Practice on CSR which must be complementary to a code of good practice for co-regulation and self-regulation. In this respect, they call for the full and active consultation and involvement of representative organisations, including trade unions.

Whilst acknowledging the substantial value and potential of self-regulation and co-regulation instruments, Members are opposed, however, to the introduction of a single approach that fails to take account of the specificities of each sector and the specific requirements of businesses.

Members support the Commission's proposal to require all investment funds and financial institutions to inform every customer (citizens, businesses, public authorities, etc) about any ethical or responsible investment criteria which they apply or any standards and codes to which they adhere. They call for the CSR policies of companies in the relevant sectors (such as travel, insurance, accommodation and telecommunications) to include positive and practical strategies and structures to support victims of crime and their families during a crisis.

CSR and SMEs: putting theory into practice: Members draw attention to the special features of SMEs, which mainly operate at local and regional level inside specific sectors. They call for the think small first principle to be strengthened. They oppose all measures that could result in additional administrative or financial constraints for SMEs. Members call on the Commission, in collaboration with Member States, SME intermediary organisations and other stakeholders, to devise strategies and measures to help SMEs pool best CSR practice. Development and support strategies aimed at disseminating CSR among SMEs should also be devised and specific measures should be drawn up for small and micro-enterprises.

On an external note, Members stress that, following the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, Parliament is to be fully informed on how the findings of Sustainability Impact Assessments (SIA) of agreements are incorporated into negotiations. They stress that future bilateral investment treaties signed by the EU must guarantee that a fair balance is struck between the need to protect investors and the need to allow for state intervention, especially with regard to social, health and environmental standards.

The report also calls on the Commission to raise awareness at corporate level concerning the importance of CSR and the consequences of non-compliance. The Commission should encourage EU companies to take initiatives aimed at promoting CSR and to exchange good practices with their partners in other countries.

To conclude, Members emphasise the need for any regulatory measures to be drawn up within a robust legal framework and in line with international standards, in order to avoid disparate national interpretations. They encourage the Commission to continue its efforts to promote CSR in relations with other countries and regions around the world and call for greater efforts to make reciprocity a central tenet of trade relations. They reaffirm the belief that the development of CSR should be driven primarily through the multi-stakeholder approach. There is a need for targeted measures and approaches for the development of CSR among SMEs.

Lastly, the report notes that the current Commission strategy for CSR covers the period 2011-2014. It calls on the Commission to ensure that an ambitious strategy is adopted in good time for the period after 2014.

Corporate Social Responsibility: accountable, transparent and responsible business behaviour and sustainable growth

The European Parliament adopted by 553 votes to 41, with 38 abstentions, a resolution on corporate social responsibility (CSR): accountable, transparent and responsible business behaviour and sustainable growth.

Parliament calls for a modern understanding of CSR. It endorses the new definition of CSR put forward by the Commission, which does away with the dichotomy between voluntary and compulsory approaches which has hitherto polarised debate on CSR.

Parliament also believes that in cases where a business is in difficulty, excessive bonuses, compensation and salaries paid to managers are incompatible with socially responsible behaviour. The resolution states that a business tax policy should be considered part and parcel of CSR and that socially responsible behaviour consequently leaves no room for strategies aimed at evading tax or exploiting tax havens.

Strengthening the links between CSR, the general public, competitiveness and innovation: Parliament considers that the Commission should take the initiative on this issue. It calls on the Commission to:

- promote innovative, along with the national authorities, business models designed to forge closer links between businesses and the social environment in which they operate;
- consider the current discussions taking place with regard to the review of the Accounting and Transparency Directives so that the new proposed CSR strategy would complement the revised Directive;
- raise CSR's profile and disseminate best practice;
- introduce a European award scheme for CSR firms and partnerships and consider, among other actions, whether an European social label could be introduced to this end;
- support the efforts of the CSR Europe network, seeking first and foremost to strengthen cooperation between business and Member States;
- carry out periodic surveys of public trust in business and public attitudes towards CSR strategies implemented by businesses and link the content of these surveys with the revision of the sustainable consumption and production action plan, with a view to identifying barriers to more responsible consumption.

Making CSR policies more transparent and more effective: to combat misleading and false information regarding commitments to corporate social responsibility and relating to the environmental and social impact of products and services, the following initiatives are also called for: (i) combating greenwashing; (ii) account to be taken of social and environmental considerations in public procurement. Plenary insisted for the lowest price no longer to be used as an award criterion and for greater accountability throughout the subcontracting chain; (iii) strengthening the potential of CSR in tackling climate change by linking it to resource and energy efficiency, e.g. in the processes companies use to purchase raw materials.

Parliament stresses that Socially Responsible Investment (SRI) is part of the implementation process of CSR in investment decisions. This should combine investors financial objectives with their concerns regarding social, environmental and ethical (SEE) and corporate governance issues. Members acknowledge the importance of businesses divulging information on sustainability such as social and environmental factors, with a view to identifying sustainability risks and increasing investor and consumer trust. The resolution also stresses that stringent respect for human rights, due diligence and transparency must be maintained in order to ensure CSR along the whole supply chain.

Members state that corporate responsibility must not be reduced to a marketing tool, and that it should be embedded in a company's overall business strategy. They call on the Commission and the Member States to introduce corporate stewardship codes that reflect the importance of responsibility for all in the company.

In addition, Parliament advocates the adoption of a legislative proposal allowing for high flexibility of action, in order to take account of CSR's multi-dimensional nature and the diversity of the CSR policies implemented by businesses, matched by a sufficient level of comparability to meet the needs of investors and other stakeholders as well as the need to provide consumers with easy access to information on businesses' impact on society. It considers that information on sustainability should also cover, where appropriate, the subcontracting and supply chains and should be based on globally accepted methodologies such as those of the Global Reporting Initiative or the Integrated Reporting Council which offer a simplified framework to be applied to SMEs.

Other measures are proposed in the resolution such as further consideration to both binding and non-binding measures to facilitate the recognition and promotion of efforts by businesses in connection with transparency and the disclosure of non-financial information.

SMEs and micro-enterprises: Parliament voices its opposition to all measures that could result in additional administrative or financial constraints for SMEs but calls for support of measures enabling SMEs to take joint action. It calls on the Commission, in collaboration with Member States, to devise strategies and measures to help SMEs pool best CSR practice. Members call for the think small first principle to be

strengthened.

As regards auto-regulation: Parliament welcomes the Commissions intention to launch a Community of Practice on CSR which must be complementary to a code of good practice for co-regulation and self-regulation. In this respect, it calls for the full and active consultation and involvement of representative organisations, including trade unions. Whilst acknowledging the substantial value and potential of self-regulation and co-regulation instruments, Members are opposed, however, to the introduction of a single approach that fails to take account of the specificities of each sector and the specific requirements of businesses.

Members support the Commissions proposal to require all investment funds and financial institutions to inform every customer about any ethical or responsible investment criteria which they apply or any standards and codes to which they adhere. They call for the CSR policies of companies in the relevant sectors (such as travel, insurance, accommodation and telecommunications) to include positive and practical strategies and structures to support victims of crime and their families during a crisis.

Compliance issues and relations with third countries: Parliament stresses that, following the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, it is to be fully informed on how the findings of Sustainability Impact Assessments (SIA) of agreements are incorporated into negotiations. It stresses that future bilateral investment treaties signed by the EU must guarantee that a fair balance is struck between the need to protect investors and the need to allow for state intervention, especially with regard to social, health and environmental standards. Parliament also calls on the Commission to raise awareness at corporate level concerning the importance of CSR and the consequences of non-compliance. The Commission should encourage EU companies to take initiatives aimed at promoting CSR and to exchange good practices with their partners in other countries.

To conclude, Parliament emphasises the need for any regulatory measures to be drawn up within a robust legal framework and in line with international standards, in order to avoid disparate national interpretations. It encourages the Commission to continue its efforts to promote CSR in relations with other countries and regions around the world and call for greater efforts to make reciprocity a central tenet of trade relations. Members reaffirm the belief that the development of CSR should be driven primarily through the multi-stakeholder approach. There is a need for targeted measures and approaches for the development of CSR among SMEs.

Lastly, the report notes that the current Commission strategy for CSR covers the period 2011-2014. It calls on the Commission to ensure that an ambitious strategy is adopted in good time for the period after 2014. It should be noted that a parallel resolution on promoting societys interests and a route to sustainable and inclusive recovery in the framework of CSR was adopted on the same day [see [2012/2097\(INI\)](#)].