



## **Accelerating Corporate Social Responsibility in the new EU Member States and Candidate Countries to promote harmonization, competitiveness, and social cohesion**

---

**PEER GROUP VISIT TO LONDON, UK 27-29 January 2008**

### **FINAL REPORT**

Peer group visit to UK has been being organized as part of a regional CSR project<sup>1</sup>. Britain, especially London, has been the hive of innovation in CSR since the mid-1990s thanks to the number of organizations and business companies involved in the business of “changing the game”. “Changing the game” is also relevant to the Project countries as integrating social and environmental issues into development agenda is the challenge of our times, which requires not only willingness to do it, but also cutting edge knowledge and deeper understanding of how things work.

Purpose of the study visit was tailored the goal of CSR peer groups, which is to create national CSR agendas in their countries to accelerate the positive changes. Consequently, the aim of study visit to UK was to equip members of peer groups with ideas, knowledge and tools to carry out this assignment as well as provide networking possibilities with their peers in UK. UK Global Compact Network has been the local partner in implementing this project activity.

Agenda of the visit was divided into two parts. During the first part of the day, participants heard presentations and had discussions with representatives from Government, NGO and business sectors. The second part of the day was devoted to company visit, namely Royal Mail, which was concluded with an interactive learning session led by a facilitator. Participants also had possibilities for informal networking.

Regional CSR delegation to UK consisted of 13 representatives from business sector, Government and civil society. During the study visit participants met their peers in UK working in the field of CSR from such organizations as International Business Leaders Forum (IBLF), Business in the Community (BitC), Trades Union Congress (TUC) and WWF (formerly known as World Wildlife Fund). They heard about Government’s role in promoting and accelerating CSR practices as well as met business companies such as Consortium, Rio Tinto, Cisco Systems and Royal Mail to learn about concrete environmentally and socially responsible practices ingrained in every day business life. A special session has been designed to facilitate discussions how UK’s experience is relevant to CEE and what can be taken away as beneficial, applicable and feasible examples

The visit was opened by Mr. Michael Spenley from UN UK Global Compact and Ms. Indre Kleinaite from UNDP Lithuania. Mr. Spenley told about UK Global Compact and commented CSR trends in UK. Ms. Indre Kleinaite welcomed the participants, explained why UK has been chosen for a study visit, thanked partners in UK for organizing the visit and introduced to the agenda.

---

<sup>1</sup> The project is funded by the European Commission and UNDP. Project website: [www.acceleratingcsr.eu](http://www.acceleratingcsr.eu)

Ms. Amanda Bowman from IBLF talked about business and sustainable development, growing corporate responsibilities, CSR trends and IBLF activities. She argued that corporations face rising expectations from consumers, investors, employees, governments, NGOs and shareholders and that CSR emerged from risk mitigation to new opportunities, from quick-fix image making to earned reputation, from reactive to proactive behavior, from philanthropy to core business/strategic investment, from top-down to values driven.

Mr. Nick Baker talked about Government's role in accelerating CSR and presented the position of Foreign and Commonwealth Office, that is to improve business standards internationally on key issues in high impact sectors the keys issues being human rights, child labor/forced labor, environment and corruption and high impact sectors being extractives, construction, finance, pharmaceuticals and retail.

Mr. Oliver Greenfield from WWF talked about "constructing a new economic system" and "changing paradigm". He argued that there is a strong business case for adapting CSR principles in the companies and that connecting with science is important in driving CSR agenda. Ms. Joanna Daniels from Business in the Community presented the organization and shared its experiences in promoting CSR. She argued that leadership is an important factor in accelerating CSR practices as well as enabling legal frameworks.

Ms. Janet Williamson from TUC shared TUC's perspective on CSR and suggested that much time has been wasted in the debate whether CSR performance counts only when it is above legal requirements. She argued that it is both constructing laws that ensure environmental protection and social justice as well as innovations in best practice. Government's role in CSR is ensuring enabling environment for best practice. She shared her unease with the companies that subscribe to CSR agenda and yet do not recognize trade unions. According to her, a good way to start CSR agenda within the company is to start engaging employees.

Mr. Mark Barnett from Consortium represented SMEs and stressed that it was important to cultivate people and innovation come from people, not management. He said that in their company they don't call it CSR, but responsible business that that being a SME brings both advantages and disadvantages in introducing CSR agenda within the company. He shared his experience in starting up CSR initiatives within Consortium. Ms. Tara Hopkins from Rio Tinto presented company's sustainable development strategy and practices, gave concrete examples about the implementation challenges. Mr. Mark Emanuelson from Cisco Systems presented business case for CSR from three perspectives: environment, education and social inclusion exemplifying each perspective with concrete examples carrying out at Cisco Systems.

Participants actively engaged into discussions by asking questions, commenting and sharing their views.

In the afternoon the group travelled to visit Royal Mail and meet Ms. Jane Smith, Engagement and Inclusion Manager and Dr. Martin Blake, Head of Sustainability. They shared company's CSR practices and commented on the decisions made within the company. Ms. Jane Smith told more in detail about company's approach to people and how certain new practices they introduced contributed to better employee motivation, lower absenteeism rates, higher morale and saved costs related to people management. Dr. Martin Blake shared more about how environmentally sound practices contributed to bottom line, what their sustainability targets are and what it is being done to achieve them.

The day was closed with reflections facilitated by Ms. Sue Wolstenholme.

Prepared by: Indre Kleinaite, UNDP Lithuania E: [indre.kleinaite@undp.org](mailto:indre.kleinaite@undp.org) T: +370 5 210 7 417