



P R E S S R E L E A S E

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FIRST REGIONAL PROJECT LAUNCHED BY UNDP TO ACCELERATE IMPLEMENTATION OF CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY IN 8 EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is launching the first regional project aiming to promote and support the integration of sustainability principles into the business strategies. The Project is expected to contribute to regional cohesion among old and new EU Member States and candidate countries. The project is funded by the European Commission.

The beginning of 2007 marks the start of a new and first of this type regional project aimed at accelerating the implementation of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) practices in new EU Member States and in candidate countries: Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, Lithuania, Macedonia, Poland, Slovak Republic and Turkey. Business networks in Spain, UK and Germany will also be involved in the Project by contributing to exchange of experience and good CSR practices. The project addresses the practices of companies (both local and foreign enterprises), but also intermediaries like business and professional associations, local and national governments, trade unions, academia, non-governmental organizations and the media in the Project countries. The Project will be implemented by UNDP Offices in Project countries in cooperation with national and regional partners.

“The main objective of the Project is to accelerate the implementation of CSR practices in new EU region, which is seen as a vehicle for EU harmonization, improving competitiveness and social cohesion. This is expected to be achieved by comprehensively mapping out the CSR activities and actors, identifying capacity gaps and areas where support to both business and the governments is needed, exchange of experience and good practices, awareness raising and supporting national stakeholders”, says Ms. Lyra Jakuleviciene, Regional Project Leader from UNDP Office in Lithuania.

There is a broad consensus in Europe about the definition of CSR, which is 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 European Commission supports this project as it is important to improve awareness and knowledge about CSR in several new Member States and to facilitate the exchange of experiences and good practices, what is precisely the aim of UNDP with this project.

The Project covers three main components:

1) **Situation analysis of CSR in the Project countries.** A baseline study among all stakeholders in each project country will identify actors and assess their engagement in promoting CSR, the level of business engagement in CSR and collect examples of good practices, tools and recommendations for CSR in the region. European report will be presented at regional conference in mid-2007 and discussed at national and local level in Project countries.

2) **Promotion of multi-stakeholder dialogue** to enhance awareness and exchange good practices for CSR advancement. The Project will support the dialogue between the different stakeholders,

encourage joint CSR activities, as well as provide a multi-stakeholder platform to discuss and exchange views on business cases, tools, reporting and possible economic incentives for company engagement in CSR. Round tables, exchange visits and peer groups will be organised.

3) **National and local capacity building** to promote and implement CSR. This is foreseen to be carried out by familiarizing the stakeholders with concrete CSR implementation tools and their use in specific circumstances, exposing to concrete CSR practices and case studies on CSR mainstreaming.

Project duration is 18 months. Total budget of the Project is 1.36 million USD (775 636 Euro). The contribution from the European Commission stands at 620 199 Euro, while UNDP is contributing 155 437 Euro to the Project.

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