

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY INTEGRATION IN CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY POLICIES WITHIN B.R.D. - G.S.G. ROMANIA

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ABSTRACT: *Corporate Social Responsibility can be an opportunity for integration and approach of issues related to Occupational Health and Safety, seen from a broader perspective than that of mere correlation with legislation. The present paper aims at analysing the way the growing interest, in terms of Corporate Social Responsibility, can contribute to improving the implementation of appropriate systems to prevent accidents at work within Romanian organisations. The case study that illustrates the good practices of BRD-Groupe Société Générale revealed the role of the instruments analysed as catalysts for improving the activity of occupational safety and health.*

KEY WORDS: *Occupational Health and Safety (OHS), Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), sustainability, bussines, integration.*

JEL CLASSIFICATIONS: *J24, J28, M14.*

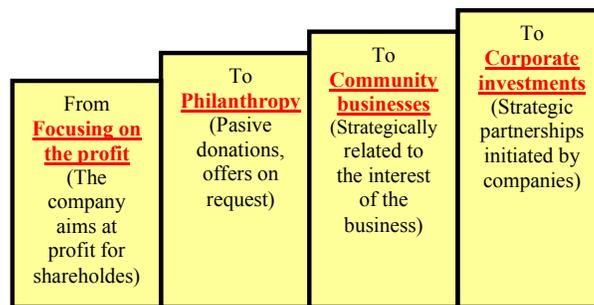
1. INTRODUCTION

Corporate social responsibility is a moral value that exists for centuries, to do well to others. But the new approach-is to do well in a way that brings mutual benefits. Beyond the minimal moral duty to make legal profit, a company must assume: 1) firstly, the obligation not to harm through its products and activity; when evil is necessary, the company must recognize it publicly and minimize it; 2) secondly, the obligation to prevent an evil, when it is possible, when it finds itself in the proximity of evil and, especially, when it is the only organization that can do this; 3) and finally, the obligation to do good. *It is more justified, for instance, to ask a company to give up a part of the profit in order to minimize or prevent evil than to give up a share of the profit to do a social good* (Oancea & Diaconu).

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The responsibility of corporate governance is thus to harmonize the objectives and the actions of the corporation with those of environmental topics, as a condition of its sustainable development. From the relation to include the social economic system into the social one, one can determine that the social performance system of the company also incorporates the economic performance, an important obligation to investors. As a result, the level and the sustainability of the social performance depend especially on the economic performance. Without economic performance corporations would not be able to assume social responsibilities (see fig. 1).

Corporate social responsibility has become "much more than an equation of profit, in accordance with the law and philanthropy: the need to understand the communities in which they operate tends to become a vital need for companies. In a constantly changing global environment, social aspects of businesses take increasingly large proportions and become more diverse, like business ethics, responsibility towards society, investments in community and standards of good practice in the work area" (Oprea, 2005).



Source: Edward Clarence Smith „Why it is important that SMEs should implement CSR programs”, www.responsabilitatesociala.ro)

Figure 1. Evolution of the concept of CSR

Definitions of CSR appeared in the specialized literature, especially in the late 1970s, and the common idea that can be drawn from most approaches is that, regardless of the economic-financial performance achieved, no company can afford to take action against the society (Bradu, p.2). Incidentally, there already exists a number of approaches in the specialized literature that attempt to analyze and quantify the relationship between social and financial performance of the company (Smeureanu, et al., 2011).

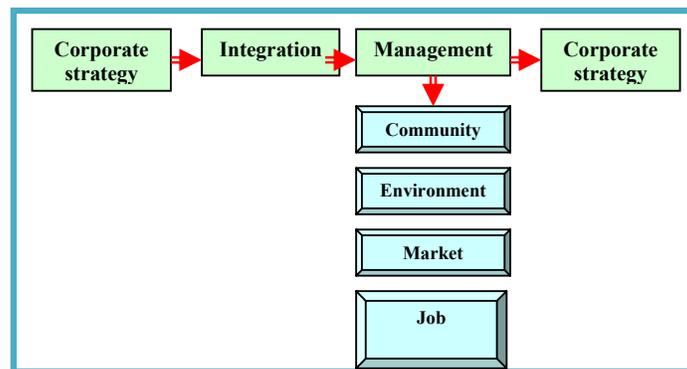
One of the most known and used definitions of CSR belongs to A.B. Carroll (1979, 1991) who defines the responsibility of any type of economic organization in relation to the four main areas of action: *economic, legal, ethical and discretionary (or charitable)*. More recently, Kotler and Lee (2005) defined the term CSR as "a commitment which contributes to the well-being of the community through discretionary business practices and by allocating corporate resources". In this approach, the authors referred to establish a direct relationship between CSR and *corporate social initiatives*, understood as "the main activities carried out by a

corporation in order to support social causes and to fulfill undertaken corporate social responsibility commitments" (Iamandi, 2010).

ISO has developed "ISO standard 26000 for social responsibility" in order to determine the main axes of the level of social responsibility of an organization. According to ISO, "this standard is addressed to all types of organizations, from both the private and public sectors, in developed and developing countries" (Smeureanu, et al., 2011).

2. APPROACHING OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY AS A PILLAR OF SUSTAINABLE BUSSINES MANAGEMENT

Occupational health and safety can be "seen" within an organization as a concept that is implemented and, within certain limits, manageable, or it can be considered as a **functional foundation** of the objectives and values of the organization. One of the methods that materializes the second definition is incorporating OSH in the culture of the organization, which in its turn, depends on global governance that includes corporate social responsibility (CSR), social responsibility (SA-Social Accountability) and corporate sustainability (CS). One of the main components of the governance is Corporate Social Responsibility, being highlighted more than corporate sustainability and social responsibility. Practicing CSR does not constitute a mere public relations exercise but, rather, a way in which both the company and the community can prosper. This statement is particularly valid when CSR is designed as an action plan on a long term. If OSH will be included in the overall governance of an organization, it will have to be integrated into a culture of responsible risk taking.



Source: EASHW, (2010) *Mainstreaming OSH into business management*, Luxembourg, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, ISBN 978-92-9191-298-8

Figure 2. Corporate Responsibility index „Business in Community”

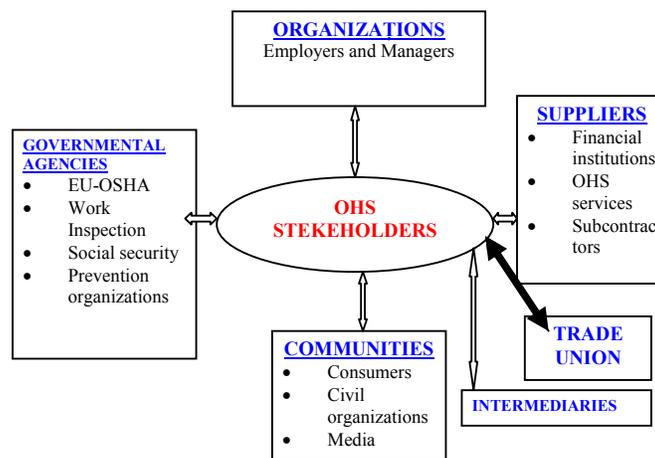
Safety and health, as a process become more and more visible in the companies, including in Romania, as it is increasingly included in annual reports and data on OSH performance is still extensively used in CSR initiatives. In all cases, the implementation and development of CSR should be carried out using a **structured and**

specific approach for each organization. Figure 2 summarizes the links between governance, culture and OSH, illustrating the fact that governance (corporate strategy) directly affects the way management operates, the management, in its turn, influencing performance.

Culture, at individual level, organizational or social, is essential in terms of progress or deceleration of change. "An appropriate culture without a management system is better than a well-documented system, which no one uses." (Moraru & Băbuț, 2012).

On the other hand, Hopfl (1994) highlighted the problems associated with connecting the corporate culture (which, in its turn determines the organizational culture) with the culture of security in an organization. Hopfl concluded that "the two types of culture will remain separate unless the fundamental problems of both will be approached hand in hand" (Hopfl, 1994). Currently, there is the tendency to consider safety as an organizational priority, and not as a value. It is crucial that safety be converted into value, through leadership, education, and measuring performance and validation. These stages are more tangible if individuals know better the culture of the organization. It lies with the management to define the level of quality that can be accepted.

Assuming an economic organization from Romania wishes to improve its social reputation, with more developed OSH issues are within their own CSR instruments, the more the organization is considered to take into account OSH in decision-making processes ("push" strategy). On the other hand, in terms of OSH there are several things that can influence the reputation, demonstrating that a firm cannot be identified on the market unless adequate attention is paid to the creation of healthier and safer jobs ("pull" strategy). In any case, CSR philosophy itself, which generates all these instruments, is based on predisposition to multilateral dialogue within the organization (figure 3).



Source: European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, Corporate Social Responsibility and Occupational Safety and Health. Facts n. 54, 2004

Figure 3. Categories of factors affected by/ interested in SSM

This trend looks positive, because it can help overcome the tense climate that can often be felt among the various stakeholders within the field of prevention.

3. ANALYSIS OF OHS INTEGRATION IN CSR POLICIES AT B.R.D.-G.S.G. ROMANIA

BRD-Groupe Société Générale ranks the second among the banks in Romania considering the total assets and has the second market capitalization on the BVB (Bucharest Stock Exchange). BRD is part of the Group Société Générale, one of the largest financial services groups in the Euro area, the services of which are used by 27 million customers worldwide. BRD-Groupe Société Générale is present in all the counties of Romania through a network of **930 agencies**. The Call centers of the bank and the commercial network counts over **8,500 employees** who form the BRD team. All BRD staff are qualified, authorized and trained for the activities they carry out.

As Adela Jansen, Human Resources Executive Director of the company specifies *"We wish to make, through sustainable social responsibility projects, our contribution to the development of communities in which we live, in terms of culture and education, sports or social life. We also want to ingrain, in our employees, a culture of responsibility for the issues that surround us and allow us to find solutions to improve them"* (<http://www.responsabilitatesociala.ro/companii/brd-groupe-societe-generale.html>).

In order to adapt the strategy of Société Générale to the Romanian characteristics, BRD has chosen to support the sectors of sports, cultural and social life, completing thus the picture of an actor actively involved in the development of the Romanian community. The sponsorship budget of BRD is allocated, in most part, to partnerships in the field of:

- culture (national/international festivals and famous traditional performances, classical music, guitar and piano concerts);
- Sports (rugby, tennis, cycling);
- followed by **projects in support of education** (high schools/high school

As of 2006, BRD-Groupe Societe Generale has allocated from the budget for sponsorship, special funds to support projects designed to protect nature and for environmental conservation. BRD has organized in 2013 and 2014 **career counseling** for students from middle school and high school.

The bank has provided numerous opportunities for its employees to reveal their potential and for **career development**. Staff training was accomplished during 246 courses and seminars both internal and external, which have included 2567 participants, each worker attending on average, 4-7 days of instruction. In 2013, 59% of the total number of employees was trained by BRD-GSG. The key points of professional training in 2013 include a budget of 5 580 000 lei, more than 4,700 trained employees, over 400 participants in management seminars, 80 participants at the seminar "Occupational Safety and Health 2014" held in May at Predeal Training Center (with lecturers from the University of Petroșani).

The main results of the study carried out on integrating OHS in the policies, organizational culture, philosophy, principles, procedures and activities of the company, from the perspective of CSR, can be summarized as follows:

A. Organizing the occupational safety and health activity within the BRD-GSG. This was approved by decision of the Steering Committee, in accordance with the provisions of article 19 and article 14, b) and (c)), from H.G. 1425/2006, as follows:

- *the Internal Service for Prevention and Protection (SPP)* set up at the level of Call centers, which ensures all specific activities within the centers and coordinates the activity of prevention and protection throughout the entire Bank; the SPP department counts 4 employees with specific training (3 experts and an OSH technician);
- at the level of the 20 groups within the network there were appointed and trained as OSH technicians, 55 designated workers who are hierarchically subordinates to group directors and functionally to the SPP in terms of safety and health at work;
- *The Committee on Occupational Safety and Health (CSSM)* set up at the level of the call centers.

The policy of BRD-Groupe Société Générale in the field of occupational safety and health lies in ensuring the necessary measures for the fulfillment of legal requirements, in order to eliminate or minimize the risks of accidents at work and occupational diseases. Thus, the main directions of action aim at:

- a) ensuring safety and health for employees;
- b) the prevention of occupational risks;
- c) informing and training of employees;
- d) ensuring organizational framework and the means necessary for occupational safety and health.

In this respect, the Bank's normative documents and the collective labor contract lays down the provisions related to occupational safety and health, in order to elaborate the legislation applicable in the field, provisions that are binding for all employees of the Bank.

B. Evaluating the risk of occupational accidents and diseases. An assessment has been made of the risks for safety and health at work of the main activities carried out within the BRD. The I.N.C.D.P.M. Bucharest method has been applied and it was approved by the Ministry of Labor and Social Solidarity. This assessment represents the starting point for the optimization of the activity of preventing work accidents and professional diseases and it allows prioritizing risks according to their size and efficient allocation of resources for priority measures. Due to the nature of the activity, the following risk factors have been identified in many workplaces:

- physical assaults on employees (tellers, ATM operators, customer advisors, bank executives);
- musculoskeletal disorders (personnel carrying out office activities);
- ophthalmic diseases (employees who work intensively with video terminals);

- traffic and route accidents.

The resulting values classify the positions within the BRD in the category of those with *an acceptable level of risk*. As a result of risk assessment a **Prevention and Protection Plan** has been drawn up, which includes technical, organizational and hygienic-sanitary measures, human and material resources necessary to carry them out, which are annually updated.

C. Layout of the workplace. The workplaces within the BRD-Groupe Société Générale are standardized and appropriate for the activities carried out and have the following main characteristics:

- *Lighting*: mixed and artificial; Noise: within acceptable limits;
- *Thermal environment*: temperature is between 21-25 ° C, without currents over the normal range or temperature differences as effect of external thermal variations between the periods of summer and winter;
- *Chemical agents, carcinogenic, mutagenic and biological agents*: it is not the case;
- *Industrial ventilation*: all BRD buildings are equipped with air conditioning systems, while the call center buildings have Building Management System (BMS), i.e. an automated management system of the building (a software that controls, monitors and programs the heating, air-conditioning, ventilation, lighting and the security system);
- *Layout of the workplace*: ergonomic requirements are met;
- *Layout of work spaces*: in accordance with the legal provisions; employees have at their disposal adequate hygienic-sanitary spaces, rooms specifically intended to serving meals, water dispensers;
- *Fire and explosion*: the legal requirements are met regarding prevention and firefighting;
- *Electrical Safety*: that complies with legal requirements; PRAM checks performed within the established terms, maintenance contracts for electrical installations;
- *Work tasks*: are appropriately appointed;
- *Movement, horizontal and vertical risks*: in compliance with legal requirements;
- *Collective and individual protection*: according to legal requirements and work tasks;
- *Administering first aid*: first aid teams are trained, all workplaces are equipped with first aid kits; in the premises of the call centers there are medical offices with permanent medical assistance during working hours.

D. Monitoring the health of employees. In accordance with the provisions of H.G. No. 355/2007 on monitoring the health of workers and of the Law on Occupational Safety and Health no. 319/2006, the monitoring of the health of BRD employees includes all medical services that ensure prevention, diagnosis and curing of illnesses and diseases related to the profession, as well as maintaining health and work

capacity. In this respect, the Bank has signed contracts for occupational medical services which include the following:

- employment medical check;
- regular annual inspection;
- medical checks during work and resumption of work;
- participation in the evaluation of the risks of accidents and occupational diseases;
- maternal risk assessment.

E. Ensuring maternity protection measures at work for the youth and persons with disabilities. The workplaces of the BRD are equipped taking into account the presence of specific risk-sensitive groups, i.e. pregnant women, women in postpartum period or who are breastfeeding, young people, as well as persons with disabilities. Within the BRD, the provisions of the Emergency Ordinance of the Government no. 96/2003, approved with amendments and completions by law 25/2004 on the protection of maternity at work must be met. Doctors of occupational medicine, after inspecting the workplaces and analyzing information from the occupational risks description, from the job description and from the evaluation form of risk factors at the workplace, shall draw up reports on maternal risk assessment and information on the protection of maternity at work. In this manner, every pregnant employee or in the period of breastfeeding is informed about:

- her rights under legal provisions;
- the outcome of the maternal risk assessment at the workplace;
- additional measures that are to be taken by the employer at the doctor's recommendation (granting breaks during the program, change of job or changes in working conditions, the reduction of working hours by a fourth, etc.);
- obligations incumbent on the pregnant woman.

F. Training and further training of specialists in the field of safety and health at work. Members of the Internal Service for Prevention and Protection, representatives of employees in the Committee of Occupational Safety and Health and the workers in the Bank attended training courses and staff training in the field of safety and health at work, with the help of institutions authorized by the National Council for Professional Training of Adults and recognized by the Ministry of Labor and the Ministry of Education. The period of the course and training shall be considered work time and necessary expenses shall be borne by the Bank. The interval between two courses of training/retraining in the field of safety and health at work shall not exceed 1 year.

G. The program for the evaluation of compliance with the legal provisions of OSH. For 2014 the BRD-Groupe Societe Generale developed the *Program for the evaluation of compliance with the legal provisions and other requirements* set out in table 1. Tables 2, 3, and 4 show the results of the last evaluation carried out selectively by the internal service for prevention and protection.

Table 1. The program for the evaluation of compliance with the legal provisions 2014

No	Department/ Workplace	Ongoing month											
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1.	Front-office	x											
2.	Back-office		x										
3.	Bank executors			x									
4.	IT activities				x								
5.	Administrative activities					x							
6.	Payment management						x						
7.	Security system management							x					
8.	Archive management								x				
9.	Call-center									x			
10.	Internal audit										x		
11.	Professional training											x	

Table 2. Report on corrective/preventive actions

Indicator	Description of non-compliance	Corrective/ Preventive actions	Responsible	Deadline
A.4.	Risk assessment does not include groups susceptible to them	Professional risks will be re-evaluated taking into account the presence of susceptible groups (pregnant women, persons with disabilities)	Chief of Preventive and Protection Service	31.03.2014
A.15.	In the case of some construction works, there are no security plans for the project, but only in the phase of execution of works	Draftsmen will be required to elaborate health and security plans since the project stage and they will be handed in to the general contractor before starting construction works	Coordinator of investment projects within the Real Estate Directorate	permanent
A.20.	Testing of workers on the level of knowledge shall be carried out at random	Implementation of an e-learning module of OSH via the internal computer system (Intranet), finalized through testing	Preventive and Protection Service	31.03.2014
B.3.	Not all workers comply with all procedures and internal rules of health and security at work	Complying with the training-testing program in the field of OSH	Workplace managers	permanent
		Complying with the program of internal controls in the field of OSH and checking at least once per year, in each BRD location, the way in which preventive measures are put into practice	Nominated workers within the PPS	permanent
B.4.	Accidents have been recorded as a result of disobeying traffic rules	Complying with the training-testing program for people who drive employer-provided vehicles	Workplace managers	permanent

Table 3. The general level of compliance – OSH management datasheets

Datasheets code	Description	Score		Level of compliance
		maximum (PM)	obtained (PO)	
A	Obligations of the employer	153	142	92%
B	Rights and obligations of workers	99	87	87%
TOTAL				NC_e
		252	229	90%

Table 4. Level of general safety – Specific risks

Code	Description	Score		Level of compliance securitate	Nivel de risc
		maximum (PM)	obtained (PO)		
A	Obligations of the employer	366	350	95%	Small risk
B	Rights and obligations of workers	99	87	87%	Medium risk
C. General requirements					
C.1	Minimum requirements for safety and health at work	579	561	96%	Small risk
C.2	Minimum requirements for safety and/or health signs at work	186	186	100%	Small risk
D. Specific requirements					
D.1	Minimum requirements to use access roads, circulation areas and lifts	132	126	95%	Small risk
D.2	Requirements for the use of equipment with a viewing screen	96	96	100%	Small risk
TOTAL				NS_e	NR_e
		1665	1637	98%	Small risk

4. CONCLUSIONS

The development of a suitable environment for safety and health at work and the promotion of a culture of risk prevention, are two of the main social responsibilities of a company and, as a result, they constitute an integral part of Corporate Social Responsibility. The Romanian society undergoes, at present, an intensive development of initiatives that aim at promoting corporate social responsibility. There is no doubt that the development of a suitable environment for Occupational Safety and Health and the promotion of a culture of risk prevention are two major social responsibilities of a company and, therefore, an integral part of CSR. Overcoming conflicting positions in OSH debates will the reposition of the issue to prevent accidents in a setting that is rich in ideas and strategies be possible? Can the CSR approach, with concepts such as

voluntary work, involvement of affected factors and new management tools, provide a framework that stimulates compliance with legislation and allow companies to go beyond obeying minimum legislative requirements? Here's a question that arises.

Certainly, the concern for the well-being of employees should constitute one of the main components of the social responsibility of any economic organization. In the field of prevention of accidents at work and occupational diseases, the CSR can be conceived as a voluntary commitment the objectives and actions of which should always be directed towards overcoming the minimum requirements for the protection of workers imposed by the national and the European legislation.

Assuming an economic organization of Romania wishes to improve its social reputation, the more OSH aspects are developed within its own CSR instruments; the more the organization will be considered to take into account the OSH in the organizational processes. However, although CSR may accelerate the development of OSH issues in business management systems, there still remain many things to do.

The analysis was completed with an empirical case study that illustrates the good practices of the BRD-GSG. It highlighted the role of the instruments analyzed as catalysts for improving the activity of safety and health at work.

As a general conclusion, it can be asserted that there is a need for a better integration of the concerns in the field of OSH into practical CSR developments. At the same time, the development of CSR will require proposals on how managers and workers should approach effectively the issue of OSH. Progress on these two fronts will determine, to a large extent, the social evolution in this field.

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