

Website of Öko-Institut project on Corporate Social Responsibility now online

The EU funded project “Rhetoric and Realities – Analysing Corporate Social Responsibility in Europe” (RARE) goes online at <http://www.eu-rare.net>

RARE is a three year research project under the European Union’s 6<sup>th</sup> Framework Programme which aims to make a substantial contribution to the development of a European approach to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). The project seeks to improve the understanding of the effectiveness of CSR as a policy instrument and how CSR can in practice benefit sustainable development in the EU. Under the leadership of Öko-Institut, the project is being carried out by a multi-disciplinary team of 16 researchers, scientists and consultants from seven leading research institutions from across the EU.

The project includes:

- Understanding and researching CSR
- Developing a CSR Impact Assessment tool
- Analysing and researching CSR in four sustainable development areas: environmental protection (climate and chemicals policies), resource management, gender equality and countering bribery
- Surveying CSR in three business sectors: the oil industry, the banking sector and the fisheries and fish processing industries
- Researching and developing in-depth case studies on CSR impact
- Carrying out an SME study
- Assessing the political and public policy dimensions of CSR
- Providing recommendations both to the EU, national governments and to companies

The new website [www.eu-rare.net](http://www.eu-rare.net) in English language gives information on the project’s objectives, its design, on expected results and its funding. Background information is provided on the trend towards CSR and the necessary contribution to sustainable development of all societal sectors including business. A separate sub-site presents the seven research partners and their particular contribution to the overall project. Addresses and contact persons are given so that interested readers may inquire for more detailed information. The website also provides for the free download of documents from the RARE project. Under the heading of “News” short reports on current affairs will be put online. A further section notifies on project-related events.

Within the next weeks, the researchers will finalise the methodological basics of the project, i.e. the CSR Impact Assessment framework and the modelling of causes and drivers of high CSR impact. The CSR Impact Assessment is a tool to analyse to what extent CSR standards in corporations lead to changes both in corporate strategies and practices, and subsequently to tangible impacts on the environment, resource management, gender equality and the fight against bribery. The model of CSR impact drivers will serve to explain why some companies achieve substantial improvements regarding these four areas of sustainable development, while others are less successful. The research team will embark on the empirical phase in late

spring, starting with sector surveys of CSR in the European oil industry, the banking sector and the fisheries and fish processing industries.

The project “Rhetoric and Realities – Analysing Corporate Social Responsibility in Europe” (RARE) started in June 2004. It is funded within the EU’s Sixth Framework Programme, Sub-programme ‘Citizens and governance in a knowledge based society’ (CIT2-CT-2004-506043). The research consortium consists of: Öko-Institut e.V. (coordinator, Germany; <http://www.oeko.de>), Fridtjof Nansen Institute (FNI, Norway; <http://www.fni.no>), Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI, Sweden; <http://www.sei.se>), Fondazione Eni Enrico Mattei (FEEM, Italy; <http://www.feem.it> ), Budapest University of Technology and Economics (BUTE, Hungary; <http://www.kornygazd.bme.hu/eng/index.html>), the Institute for Socio-ecological Research (ISOE, Germany; <http://www.isoe.de>) and Peter Wilkinson Associates (United Kingdom), Project Consultant to Transparency International for the “Business Principles for Countering Bribery” (<http://www.transparency.org>). *fwo*

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