

COGITA Press Release

2.5M€ across Europe to raise the potential of CSR

13 European regions came together in Lower Austria to launch a new European initiative on Corporate Social Responsibility.

COGITA is a new, interregional project, bringing together 13 regions covering the whole of Europe with a budget of €2,547,790.71, which promotes social and environmental responsibility within SMEs across Europe.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), as defined by the European Commission, is “the responsibility of enterprises for their impacts on society” (COM(2011) 681). CSR has become part of the debate on the role of companies in society, on challenges to the welfare state, on governance and socio-economic development. Many public authorities have recognised CSR’s potential and have placed it on their political agendas.

However, the impact of CSR has been limited by a lack of coordination. Indeed, although official definitions highlight a joint social and environmental approach, public policy often divides CSR into disconnected segments, with separate, uncoordinated management that leads to inefficiency and duplication.

The COGITA project therefore intends to identify and implement tools that public authorities and other public stakeholders can adopt in their regional economic policy, in order to promote an approach that combines social and environmental responsibility in SME support. Within this integrated concept, COGITA considers 5 sub-themes: raising CSR awareness and capacity; CSR in public procurement; CSR criteria in public funding; inter-firm collaboration and local supply chains; communication/ branding.

The project kicked off on March 07th in Krems, in Lower Austria, where the different backgrounds, approaches and priorities by different partner regions laid the foundation for a fruitful collaboration in this field.

COGITA will combine interregional exchange with local stakeholder involvement, in order to ensure that the project is in line with local priorities. The project will support regional development with tools that promote CSR as a tool for competitiveness, growth and more and better jobs in our SMEs. The COGITA project is co-financed by the ERDF and made possible by the INTERREG IVC programme.

Engagement with local stakeholders will be ensured from the very first steps, by the setting up of Regional Steering Committees that will help keep the project in line with local priorities and will also provide a communication channel to disseminate the project within the partner regions. Local stakeholders are welcome to express their interest in joining the RSCs and take part in making SMEs aware of the added

value of CSR as a competitive driver and able to integrate CSR concepts and tools into their strategies, processes and products.

Facts about COGITA - *Corporate Social and Environmental Responsibility through public policy*:

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Partnership:

- CISE - Centre for Innovation and Economic Development – Agency of Forlì-Cesena Chamber of Commerce (IT)
- Lower Austrian Government, Dept. Economic Affairs, Tourism, Technology (AT)
- Bretagne Development Innovation (FR)
- Cyprus University of Technology (CY)
- Entreprise Flanders (BE)
- Birmingham City Council (UK)
- Athens University of Economics and Business –Research Centre / Business Communication Laboratory (EL)
- Green Network (DK)
- Local Development Agency Ltd. Gliwice (PL)
- Agency for the Support of Regional Development Košice (SK)
- Kaunas University of Technology (LT)
- Eindhoven City Council (NL)
- General Council of the Catalan Chambers of Commerce (ES)