

**Conclusions of the 10th IRDO international conference:  
»Social responsibility and the current challenges 2015:  
PLANNING AND REPORTING ON SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY«**

**145 participants of the 10th IRDO international conference, held on 18-19 March 2015 in Maribor, Slovenia, passed several conclusions. The shared message of all of them says that the values of bosses are critical for implementation of social responsibility, i.t. one's responsibility toward society, in enterprises and other organizations; one must start an early and life-long education on social responsibility and measure them on a long-term basis. Strategy concerning social responsibility that does not yet exist in Slovenia would be very welcome.**

The Institute for the development of social responsibility – IRDO sponsored in cooperation with supportive partners on 18-19 March 2015 the already 10th international conference **»Social responsibility and the current challenges 2015: PLANNING OF AND REPORTING ON SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY«**. Its honorary patron was the President of the Republic of Slovenia Mr. Borut Pahor. It attracted 75 presentations of 128 authors from eight countries. Dr. Miro Cerar, president of the government of Slovenia welcomed the conference via a written message and his state secretary, too.

University of Maribor was the scientific partner of the conference, the College of accountancy was its professional partner, The Public agency SPIRIT Slovenia and Ministry for economic development and technology of RS were its national partners. The IRDO Institute sponsored the conference in cooperation with supporting partners, which are: International Academy for Systems and Cybernetic Sciences, Vienna (IASCYS), European Academy for Sciences and Arts, Salzburg, CSR Europe - Enterprise 2020, Employers' Association of Slovenia, Association Manager, The Chamber of economy of Styria, Maribor, DOBA Faculty of applied business and social studies, Maribor, Association CAAP so.e., Prizma Foundation for improvement of employment possibilities, Slovenian Standards Institute (SIST), Slovenian association for quality and excellence, Public relations society of Slovenia (PRSS), Society for marketing of Slovenia. Press Clipping was the clipping partner. Media partners: TSmedia d.o.o. (planet.si, najdi.si), Večer, časopisno založništvo podjetje, d.d., Radio Marš, RTV Slovenija - TV Maribor, Radio Maribor in Med.Over.Net. Sponsors of the conference: Prohit d.o.o., Medis-M d.o.o., Identiks, kartični sistemi d.o.o., Etika d.o.o., Intera d.o.o., Vino Frešer, and Pohorska kavarna. Donators of the conference: Lidl Slovenija d.o.o. k.d., Tiko-Pro d.o.o. and Zadruga Dobrina. Nova KBM d.d. was the general sponsor of the conference.

The conference attracted scientists, researchers, entrepreneurs, professionals, students and many others. After presentations and discussions in several sections the speakers and other participants of the conference passed the following conclusions.

**The conference conclusions:**

**1. The personal and social responsibility makes a part of everybody's life.**

- a. Self-responsibility is a concept that does not enter one's life from one's environment; it cannot be encouraged by an outer force. It is an internal perception that one understands when one contacts one's own essence, one's nature.
- b. The spiritual level of social responsibility is its under-estimated aspect. This viewpoint enables humans to attain a higher level of one's cultivation, from the smallest to the

oldest ones, from the smallest to the biggest ones. Making individuals and groups aware of their need for artistic services, cultural goods in their daily lives increases the presence of this important part of social responsibility in the every-day life.

- c. Individuals, enterprises and other organizations and the government are the main pillars of social responsibility.
- d. Social responsibility must be promoted on local, national, European and global levels.
- e. Social responsibility tackles various organizations and various spheres of activity, be them local communities, tourism organizations, media industries, financial sector, political organizations and others.

## **2. Corporate social responsibility depends on bosses' values, first of all.**

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- a. Corporate social responsibility depends on bosses' values, first of all.
- b. The managers' / bosses personal engagement concerning the (personal and/or corporate) social responsibility shall belong to preconditions for application for the managerial job (with the required references concerning the (personal and/or corporate) social responsibility).
- c. The socially responsible behavior of the organization shall belong into the obligatory organizational development plan; the applicant for the manager's post must it, as a rule, and present in his or her application (and include it in the corporate strategy). The same rule shall apply to re-election; references must cover the very recent mandate period and prove the applicant's personal engagement and corporate behavior under his or her leadership exposing the developmental orientation; hence there is no room for repetition of the old stories, but the new socially responsible contents are required.
- d. In the social responsibility toward employees one must practice 'CSR + HR = (people, planet, progress)'. Employees are the main source of knowledge; managers must recognize the employees' potentials and know how to encourage these potential and lead ones' employees in terms of the socially responsible behavior.
- e. The practice of so far stressed inclusion of social responsibility with a bottom-up approach, which proved to not work, if there is no top-down approach too. Hence we urge decision-makers in the entire hierarchy-vertical to more actively engage in the implementation of the requisitely holistic development strategies, which are based on potential of the local environment and include tradition, knowledge and experience; they shall help youngsters in the labor market to attain more social responsibility.
- f. Entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial spirit are not conceptualized with requisite holism; motivations for innovative approaches are frequently managed as temporary rather than permanent activities; therefore one should inform both youngsters and adults more holistically, including the responsibility of becoming/being an entrepreneur.
- g. Organizations and the general public do not know well the concepts such as social innovation and social business. The social innovation differs from innovation at large; hence one must make various target groups aware of this. Values of organizations impact the innovation-related policies less than the market.

## **3. Planning of and reporting about the social responsibility generates competitive advantage of enterprises and other organizations.**

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- a. Social responsibility enables a long-term benefit for everybody; therefore the socially responsible enterprises more easily compete with enterprises in European Union and elsewhere.

- b. Corporate social responsibility (CSR) can act as an innovation in the crisis time, since people tend to search for something else beyond covering their own needs at the lowest prices.
- c. We see that the sustainable development is in a vicious circle. Unfortunately, the capital keeps controlling the development, despite the theory saying the opposite. Solution lies in the eco-systemic approach.
- d. CSR is an officially advised, but free-will based approach to sustainable solutions for all stakeholders. Socially responsible reporting belongs to it. It should be based on ISO 26000 and other legal bases. The yearly report includes also the CSR principle of transparency and the volunteering work, recommended by EU, in one's daily life.
- e. A list of organizations working on SR is needed. So is a list of all certificates, guidelines and recommendations concerned with SR; they should be compared for the strong and weak attributes of each one of them to be exposed, and experiences to be contested.
- f. A platform of good enterprises' and other organizations' CSR practices would be welcome, e.g. HORUS club + good practices of other organizations. Two professional meetings a year should take place about a certain good CSR practice for organizations to present their best working practice in more details.
- g. A club should be established to enable enterprises, actually endorsing CSR, to choose in the multitude of enterprises in the market the partners and suppliers sharing and promoting the same values. Endorsement of SR must be upgraded for the entire value chain from suppliers of the office material on to embrace CSR. Making links and cooperation is the best action of the micro and other enterprises for a better society. The club should reach beyond a paid membership toward high standards to reach its objectives.

#### **4. Setting measurable objectives and measurement of social effects are necessary for the development of social responsibility.**

- a. The concept of SR is broadly defined, difficult to measure, but also increasingly popular, hence very vulnerable in terms of abuse for marketing purposes. One must more clearly differentiate the SR that is included in the entire business process and stemming from the enterprise governance directly, from the SR that is generated by the marketing department for its specific needs.
- b. What matters are the effects of the SR practices, be it the promotion of good practices in local communities, the effects of social entrepreneurship of social benefits, media literacy of citizens, regulation issues, etc.
- c. Enterprises should define measurable objectives about SR. They avoid this definition because they fear to not match the objectives. Enterprises should free themselves of the fear of failure.
- d. On the other hand, CSR involves social effects that are difficult to measure on their own, as well as for their being long-term ones and demanding monitoring and analysis in a longer period of time. Measuring of effects of CSR practices is a demanding and very important support mechanism for development of the socially responsible business practice in both social and traditional enterprises and other organizations.
- e. Inter-organizational cooperation is crucial for a high-quality implementation of SR. It requires a profound analysis, state assessment, planning and realization – resulting in more activities, better recognition of SR, upgrading of activities and development (formation of shared recommendations, new approaches, new included users, larger range...).

- f. SR is perceived as action that considers interests of stakeholders and organizations to the benefit of society and environment. Self-evaluation is welcome to assess the given state and acquire suggestions for quality improvement. A questionnaire (e.g. the one for the HORUS award) or a survey can help a lot as a basis for upgrading one's work, including SR topics. Interdependence belongs to bases of SR.

**5. Linking of the theoretical and practical knowledge is urgent for the development of a responsible individual.**

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- a. Transparency and reliability in working and reporting should be the practice of social responsibility that makes sense also in economic terms.
- b. Linking of the theoretical and practical knowledge is urgent and can be attained by interdisciplinary and problem-based learning (real problems from ones' environment and practical experiences); this generates the development of a responsible individual. It is important to introduce this practice in as many organizations as possible and to show the good practices of SR in the community. Finally, new jobs can be generated; the stress on green job, cooperatives and social entrepreneurship.
- c. The need to include the first aid, SR and sustainable reporting into all levels of education was identified.

**6. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) should introduce social responsibility into their practice and supporting networks.**

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- a. NGOs have along with their usual, purposed activities the task to introduce/consider SR.
- b. It is especially important to promote SR in NGOs and to encourage organizations to practice SR. Big effects grow from the small ones; hence it matters that NGOs promote introduction of SR in every organization, especially in the networked supporting organizations, which can systemically inform and introduce SR in their member organizations.
- c. SR is exceptionally important in the preventive work; e.g.: up to 90% of accidents could be prevented by a correct behavior. Therefore preventive workshops in all areas are very important.
- d. Curing medication is another important aspect of SR, e.g. the socially beneficial work that enables individuals to 'make up' for their wrong deeds and hence to become active members of the society.
- e. Co-working of individuals and interest groups is a new form of social engagement that needs an active promotion
- f. Conference participants supported the suggestion to establish a foundation for employment of youngsters to who it could offer moral, professional and financial support. The need to link youngsters from the entire Slovenia was stressed: knowledge and experience transfer, education and co-working.
- g. We see that the educational system is too rigid and non-responsive to the need for an open educational environment. Everything is too much closed in the written rules; too much work is done to meet the rules; benefit, usability, efficiency are not considered. SR, as a life content is too poorly present in education.

## **7. The Integral green Slovenia can be a new, socially responsible model of sustainable development.**

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- a. The Integral green Slovenia is a new socially responsible model of sustainable development; it provides the real response to the burning social challenges. It is well grounded theoretically and contains persuasive practical cases and cultural heritage, such as the tradition of cooperatives (with Krek and Gosar), shared/community management of natural resources and sustainable agriculture.
- b. Establishment of Slovenia's own economic model that builds of self-supplying, especially ecological agriculture (acknowledging the importance of small farms) and exposes the social, knowledge-based economy, actually presents one's right of cultural heritage; it means development matching Slovenia's cultural heritage. The development and implementation of various models of cooperatives establishment, social entrepreneurship and economic democracy, which generate jobs along with other effects, can be supported by purpose-oriented European means.
- c. Slovenia already has, or sees development of, several successful smaller and bigger cases of the integral economy and integral inside the framework of all four economic approaches, which include principles of inter-generational cooperation, bio-dynamic agriculture etc. all way to the globally most up-to-date theoretical contributions and movements, such as the theory of network society (by M. Castells) and creative industry of the surfacing new sharing economies (e.g. »co-working« and »crowdfunding«).
- d. Linking of the already existing single elements of the integral model into a dynamic balanced entity and the implementation of EU policies of sustainable development and their prudent integration, can receive an important contribution from the strategic estimation of one's impacts over environment, too. This is already applied in development of several key-plans and programs. This estimation must be upgraded, including the estimation of financial plans.
- e. Integral green Slovenia provides a case of the alternative to the economic policy of saving; it is at the same time aimed at creation of knowledge, sustainable development, and generation of new sources of survival. In this way Slovenia, a small country in the heart of Europe, can be made a pilot case of the integral green economy with a genuine identity. Slovenia has all potentials to evolve as a case of a good European practice; other too can learn from Slovenia.

The jubilee conference was accompanied by the book – biography of the Emer. Prof. DDr. Matjaž Mulej titled 'Življenje je učitelj: od figalam do družbene odgovornosti'; the book was published by IRDO - Institute for the development of social responsibility as a part of celebration of its ten years of existence.

In Maribor, 18- 19 March 2015

On behalf of speakers and participants of  
The 10th IRDO international conference

The Program and Organizational committees of the conference