


Corporate Responsibility Takes Root in Poland

Communication at foundation of process



October 7, 2002—At first glance, Poland seems an unlikely place for a multi-stakeholder dialogue on corporate social responsibility (CSR) to take root. The Polish economy is often lauded for its growing competitiveness, but not as much for its social vision or environmental consciousness. But a few months ago, the World Bank Office in Warsaw, jointly with IFC and a local NGO called the [Forum of Responsible Business](#), started forming a CSR Advisory Group to promote the concept of corporate social responsibility among businesses operating in Poland. The group consists of a number of the private sector representatives, academics, government officials, think-tanks, NGOs, and the media.

Among the participants are Andrzej Brzozowski, Senior Vice President and Country Sustainability Controller of ABB Poland and Przemek Pohrybieniuk, Director of Marketing Communication at Price Waterhouse Coopers. They and others last month adopted a communication strategy to promote the CSR in Poland.

Poland's main newspaper, *Rzeczpospolita*, has agreed to publish a series of articles explaining the concept and the role of the private sector in supporting sustainable development. TVN, the largest Polish private TV station and a member of the Advisory Group, started introducing the concept of CSR to the broader public in its economic programming.

This joint initiative has also attracted the interest of Poland's two largest organizations of business owners, the Polish Business Center Club and the Polish Confederation of Private Employers. These two, which together represent more than 2,500 firms, both Polish and foreign-owned, have agreed to serve as proponents of the CSR concept with their respective constituencies as part of the broader effort to raise awareness among private sector entities of the concept of ethic of corporate social responsibility.

The level of interest was high enough that the country office included the CSR concept in the CAS consultations earlier in the year. Mr. "The broad interest in CSR can certainly contribute to Poland's adoption of best practices in the European and Global business environment and further enhance Poland's attractiveness to investors and commercial partners," said Roger Grawe, the Bank's Country Director for Central Europe.

The Polish example can be adapted easily in other EU pre-accession countries. EXTCD/Envcom, which is working on guidelines for promoting CSR and multi-stakeholder dialogue, plans to organize, together with the World Bank Office in Warsaw, IFC and members of the CSR Advisory Group, a Regional CSR Conference for the EU Pre-Accession Countries focused on practices.

Useful links: For more on CSR and the World Bank go to www.worldbank.org/business/. For additional information, contact lgrenna@worldbank.org or pmazurkiewicz@worldbank.org, and on the Polish case jwojciechowicz@worldbank.org or arewucka@ifc.org

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