

EU INITIATIVES Utilities pushed Corporate Social Responsibility in Rome

Discerno Plus is a project promoted by European Commission, proposed by the European Center of Enterprises with Public Participation and Enterprises of General Economic Interest (CEEP) and scientifically supported by Standard Ethics (AEI). The main scope of the project is to encourage the European Union's public utilities to act with Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR.)

New Europe was present in Rome at the Auditorium of Ara Pacis, for the award ceremony concluding the one day conference early last week which awarded 36 European enterprises that held the highest score in the self-assessment tool and gave a special award to five enterprises that best comply to CSR.

France, Germany, Italy and Poland are the countries from which come the five companies that won the European Award, as they reached the highest levels of ethics and social responsibility in the four monitored areas: market, environment, corporate work and local development.

Two hundred and sixty nine companies took part in the controls, out of which 74 have been nominated and among which 36 have been awarded the CEEP ABEL, that is to say the possibility of showing the label which demonstrates their respect of European standards of ethics and social responsibility. In the ceremony, Richard Howitt, MEP, European Parliament Rapporteur on CSR talked about the contribution of Public Enterprise in CSR in Europe.

As did the President of CEEP Caspar Einem, "Our aim is to extend these worthy practices to the medium and small enterprises, helping them to face and be fully aware of the problems which bigger enterprises are used to, which are difficult for them for lack of extra staff. That's the reason why I have spoken of a management culture to be attainable by the small operators as well. We have to help them to realise that ethical management means good management."

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is a growing issue in the field of enterprises; it is usually interpreted as "how organisations integrate social, environmental and economic concerns into their values, culture, decision-making, strategies and activities, beyond legal obligations and in a transparent way." To tackle this very important issue for public enterprises and Services of General Interest (SGI), CEEP launched a project called "DISCERNO" to promote and to study its implications in practice. The project is co-funded by the European Commission and aims to further promote CSR, including socially responsible investments, production and consumption, in European companies whether public or private.

The project targets mainly public or mixed SMEs, but also companies of all sizes with missions of services of general interest. As well as to support these companies in taking into account CSR principles into their daily management choices, on top of developing expertise and exchange of information on sustainable economy of public services.

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