

Abstract: „Stand und Entwicklungsperspektiven des Corporate Social Responsibility Reporting in ausgewählten Ländern der Europäischen Union“

Companies recognize increasingly, that an illustration of financial key data is not enough to meet the ascending requirements of their stakeholders. In response to this fact the publishment of sustainability reports was intensified. Beside an illustration of the economic benefit, these reports also consider social and environmental aspects of the companies' task.

This thesis tend to create an overview of the state-of-the-art of Corporate Social Responsibility Reporting, to show gaps, which arose from the development process and to deduce some future prospects out of it. The first part deals with a short historical abstract of the development of CSR and CSR-Reporting, with the finding of an appropriate definition and the presentation of the European Unions' CSR-draft. In the paper this concept constitutes a reference framework and was chosen because of its strong interdependence concerning the subject. In the second part the current legislation of CSR-Reporting will be presented. Furthermore some reasons were disclosed, which lead companies to publish sustainability reports without any obligation.

The core of this thesis is a comparison of the reporting practices in four selected EU Member States. This analysis should point out potential parallels and differences in the reporting practices in these Member States, from which three States have an obligation to publish such information and one State has not. In particular the focus lies on the choice of adequate indicators and the constitution of a measurement system, which lead to better comparability of the reporting performance. Finally, referring to the gained findings, concrete development prospects should be mentioned.

In the course of dealing with the subject, it can be concluded that reasons to create CSR-Reports in EU Member States without any obligations are multifarious, whereas legal requirements are still at the beginning of its history of development. The motives of companies range from theoretically based aspects like a higher legitimacy quest to an increase of reputation or rather of competitive ability. Legal requirements are mostly based on an extension of the Modernization Guideline of the year 2003, which offers the EU Member States different areas of discretion because of its phrasing. Thus a further developmental need can be suggested.

As a result of the country comparison, for which Germany, Austria and Sweden were selected as countries with existing legal requirements to publish CSR-Reports and Spain without such legal requirements, the best CSR-Reports can be located in that country, which publishes its

Abstract: „Stand und Entwicklungsperspektiven des Corporate Social Responsibility Reporting in ausgewählten Ländern der Europäischen Union“

sustainability reports completely voluntarily. Characteristic key aspects in the reporting practice are environmental aspects in all analyzed EU Member States, whereas in most cases social and economic indicators are obviously underestimated because of the absent concretion of these dimensions. Spain stands out because of its beginning stakeholder engagement and the disclosure of realized measures and projects.

Finally it can be mentioned, that this kind of reporting constitutes a new instrument of communication. Despite continuing developments this instrument is still in its early stage. Because of the fact, that in the future this reporting form will gain importance, companies should increase their efforts to raise the awareness of the relevance of a credible and efficient CSR-Reporting. Beside the necessity of stronger legal requirements there will be a challenge to develop further instruments and methods, which leads to higher comparability and credibility of the reporting contents.