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The presence of Corporate Social Responsibility in times of crisis: The case of Greece and the key point of lignite production

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Abstract

Corporate Social Responsibility could be a global, overall need, and has gotten to be indeed more "precious" within the advanced period we live nowadays, which is tormented by emergencies of different sorts, financial, social and the most recent wellbeing emergency of Covid-19 and the implications to everyday life it has brought and continues to bring to our lives. Due to these emergency situations, there has been arised an unpreventable require for the survival and improvement of society and commerce and for the combination of a corporate's benefit and well-being. The require of Corporate Social Responsibility has been made dominantly clear, concerning the companies of Greece and the ones that have a dynamic presentation within the range of Western Macedonia. In this matter of speech it has been made clear that a research concerning the activities that have been made in Greece and Western Macedonia, regarding CSR, ethics and commerce morals must be made. This research will examine Greece's SCR in times of need and will have a closer look at case ponders that have happened in Western Macedonia.

Keywords: *CSR, time of crisis, development, Greece, Western Macedonia, profit.*

1. Corporate social responsibility and benefits

With the term "Corporate Social Responsibility" we allude to the company's deliberate commitment to alter their personalized profit and will to earn more money with the benefit to social and natural activities, that are past from the legal prerequisites. These activities can all in all influence their actions towards their workers, shareholders, accomplices, providers, financial specialists, buyers, and the communities that are nearby and all over the world, not only the people but also the environment [1]; [2]. CSR usually combines with the concept of "ethics" and numerous analysts claim that social obligation cannot comply with a company's will to pick up benefit and profit, hence the activities aren't being made as deliberately because it is assumed to be. Therefore, CSR is, for many researchers, forced by enactment, showcase rules and liabilities to a company's third parties. It is additionally forced by the commitment of a company to maximize its benefits combining with the positive impacts on society and minimize the negative impacts to both the company and the society as well. It is made as an analogy that companies are "entities" that are inseparably linked to their social part and their "thesis" within the community, especially the community in which they work and they have an impact as well as being affected by the community and its people. Hence, they must recognize their duty towards society and the environment by regarding the standards and the values which characterize our culture, meaning, regard towards people, advance break even with openings, regard for the environment and the commitment to move forward the living measures and quality of life [2]; [3].

Society requests that the presence of CSR is within the display of a long time and it has numerous positive impacts to a company's notoriety and of how the society sees it, meaning its social "picture", its profile in expansion to their customers' devotion. Effective companies take into thought the trinity: planet, people and profit, in this way the triple P of planet, people and profit works as a guideline for companies. Of course, a company's intrigued and has a vast need to pick up its benefit, that is still the driving force that controls a company's will to act in social responsibility. In any case, long-term advancement happens when the company's need to gain profit is intrigued and permeated with the fulfillment of ethical,

social and natural issues. As it were on the off chance that these compliances are satisfied, as it were at that point the companies are able to pick up the consideration of society and fulfill the request for open straightforwardness [4]; [5]. These days, CSR is characterized by its social and political activities that comply with the European Commission, which points to make CSR a more prominent political perceivability by making the companies to fulfil their obligation to making activities in the region they are and by empowering them to require greater activities. So within the European Union, there's a framework of laws and rules that companies must comply, in order to secure the environment amid the people's ethical and social needs and all in all to ensure and advance the human respect. The combination of environment, culture and corporate acts is the premise in which the standards of corporate social duty emerges, which are shaped by standards of behavior from which companies and organizations back up and promote their objectives, methods and activities with respect to the ways they see their activities by the implies of CSR [6].

2. Corporate social responsibility in Greece.

In times of an occurring crisis, the challenges a society goes through has negative impacts in each perspective of our society and daily life and the emergency influences a company's development and success. Going through troublesome circumstances show coherently the shortcomings of each company's procedures and its off-base or deceptive moves. At the same time, each company must guard its will to protect its well-being and presence within the trade environment. Within the past, the term of CSR was not a term that was basic for a company's presence and the companies that had paid consideration to being social dependable were few. The current financial and trade proposal is based on a framework of values, which in hone cruel that a company must advance the social benefit more than that of the company [7].

Greece has been a country that has foreseen the need to promote CSR and therefore many companies over the years, even the memorandum years that have made a negative impact for the economy of the country [8]. But as the table that is placed above shows, Greece has not stopped being a country that has shown great value in CSR. Moreover, the steady financial and hygienic crisis that has stirred the past decade has made unused conditions in which companies must adjust, in order to proceed to existence and thrive. This troublesome circumstances has lead the companies to undertake and discover arrangements with long-term outcomes leading them to actions that alter their attitude towards CSR and company ethics and receive a framework that incorporates both these terms and activities of duty and morals. Nowadays, more than ever, is the correct time to actualize these activities and the part they play in a company's uprising and it will be updated and gotten to be more unequivocal. CSR comes with the acknowledgment that the world confronts an emergency and that it is the combination of social, financial and environmental issues. Hence, the activities that must be taken incorporate the regard for human well-being, the regard and conservation of nature and culture, the arrangement of rise to openings, and the change of a quality of life [9].

CSR applications makes the companies to depend on a code of ethics and morals, codes that are regarded and acknowledged by all the society, and will result within the improved relationship of society and the advancement of ecologically capable items and administrations. Especially in times of crises CSR points at accomplishing adjusted benefit and maintainable advancement. At first, an acknowledgment of a company as socially dependable makes a difference, as CSR promotes inner cohesion among workers, whereas expanding their efficiency. In expansion, shopper certainty will be reinforced and mindfulness will be raised. After all, the company's commitment to the social and physical environment strides the relationship of belief to companies, for which they serve as a provider or "accomplice" of some kind, as well as promoting a positive frame of the company at a sectoral and worldwide level. Therefore, all these actions conclude in fetched investment funds in expansion to guaranteeing the efficiency of ventures within the environment contribute emphatically to the commerce [10]; [11]. CSR makes the companies to depend on a code of morals, codes that are regarded and acknowledged by all, and will result within the improved relationship of society and the advancement of ecologically actions and points at accomplishing adjusted benefit and maintainable advancement. At first, an acknowledgment of a company as socially dependable makes a difference it to move forward inner cohesion among workers, whereas expanding their efficiency.

Moreover, consumers' certainty and belief towards the company will be reinforced and mindfulness will be raised. After all, the company's commitment to the social and physical environment responds to the relationship of belief in a company and investment funds guarantee the efficiency of ventures within the environment and contribute emphatically to the commerce invest in CSR programs. That shows that companies understand the importance of CSR and therefore they maintain or even increase spending money on CSR programs [12].

According to a research that was conducted by the CSE Sustainability Center in 2014[1] , regarding CRI, throughout the time of economic crisis, there has been found that 67% of companies in Greece retained their costs for CSR actions, while 16,5% increased them and only a number of 16,5% decreased them. When asked about future actions that would be taken, concerning CSR actions, 83% of companies stated that they intend to maintain CSR and, moreover, 17% are willing to increase them. In the same research there have been findings that identify possible obstacles that may occur to the implementation of CSR actions for the period of 2012-2014. More specifically, there has been concluded that one of the main obstacle is the lack of measurement of the quantitative effects and benefits of each CSR action. Furthermore, the amount of money that are spent annually by companies in Greece amounts to EUR 55 million, not a particularly high amount, but there should be noted that the companies that implement CSR programs in Greece are more than 42, that are the sample of the particular research. In conclusion, the amount of money that is spent on CSR actions is much bigger as the companies in Greece are many more than these 42.

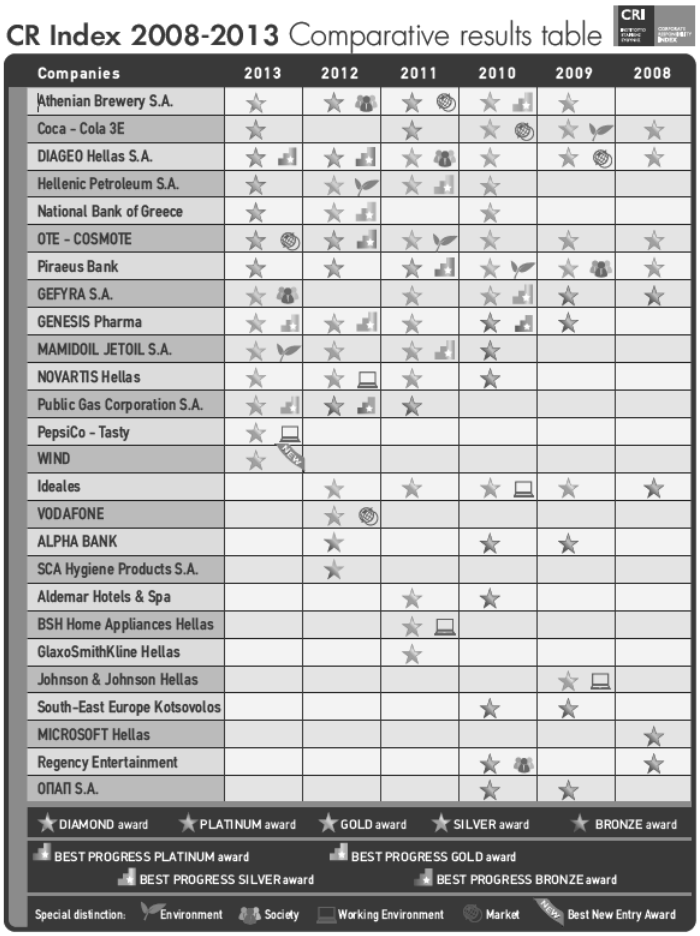
As a conclusion, it comes as a basic requirement for companies to require up activities and procedures that comply with CSR, to which a company will adjust and contribute to acts that back up to the social "battle" to overcome a time of crises, such as Covid19 and financial-economic crises but particularly concerning the well-being emergency that has had a coordinate effect on the money- related quality of companies. Therefore, companies must seize each opportunity to rebuild and alter their operations and increment their capacity to retain the systemic budgetary emergency. That can happen through the re-commitment of the company for CSR procedures and the acknowledgment of related exercises that will make the company able of making strides its characteristic quality, meaning its representatives and work environment, but the outside level of actions taken too, such as the society and the environment. Being that as it may, it could be fundamental to undertake modern thoughts and ways to bargain with CSR issues in emergency circumstances, such as COVID-19, which must center on activities that will improve the company's thriving, customers'' belief and a sense of collectivity and social status among individuals. Another CSR procedure that has to be performed is to guarantee that companies and administrations are "educated" and take into consideration issues and choices related to people's health, prevailing socio-economic conditions and collective activity, in arrange to extend their status and their flexibility to risky circumstances, in order to illustrate versatility, basic capacity and common wealth, through techniques such as "RISE" (Flexibility in Upsetting Occasions), which includes the quick and 24-hour mental and enthusiastic bolster to representatives from different wellbeing specialties [13]; [14]; [15].

The methodology of "social commitment" is of serious significance at a national and worldwide level as well, because it promotes society as the foremost vital column of the activities of both businesses and the everyday activities of the citizens of a nation. In emergency times the adaptive and straightforward activities of a company at the side the dynamic cooperation of workers and citizens in common can contribute emphatically in evacuating the spread of COVID-19 but work emphatically in terms of participation and social belief. In this way, the improvement of CSR programs will conclude in ending society needs and all in all get to be a "win-win" outcome [16]. Many companies have demonstrated CSR by focusing on contributions related to the strengthening of a country's healthcare but also in the struggle to find a vaccine, through donations and health resources, such as the creation of ICUs, masks, sterilizers, etc. Companies are positive about CSR actions addressing the effects of Covid-10. In particular, the actions of companies in terms of human resources and society occupy the largest place in the actions and the overall budget of companies and in several cases a separate CSR department has been created in the company, which manages respective periods of crisis. Regarding the cost percentages of companies, most companies state that the costs for CSR actions related to the fight against COVID-19 occupy a percentage

[1] http://www.csringreece.gr/files/general_news/GN-1417084733.pdf, retrieved 22/07/2021

ranging from 5% to 25% and in fact 1 in 4 companies even reaches a percentage of 60 %, with CSR practices related to the provision of training programs and equal opportunities in their workforce but also systems of quality assurance of products for the social good. In fact, the contribution to the collective good is for most companies a very important goal of the company's CSR [1] .

Table 1: comparative results with the companies that have participated in 2008-2013 in the CR INDEX evaluation. Retrieved 24/08/2022 from http://www.cri.org.gr/Contents.aspx?lang=gr&CatId=84&View=8



3. CSR in Western Macedonia

Taking the search in a more local aspect and especially the region of Western Macedonia it has been concluded that in Western Macedonia there have been many actions taken. The majority of these actions comply with the principles of CSR, as many companies have shown their social profile. Researches that have been conducted have demonstrated that during the health crisis of Covid-19 many companies that have a national background, such as the electric company “DEI” demonstrate their social profile. In particular, “DEI” has made many efforts to reduce the environmental impact of the use of electricity. Furthermore, “DEI” provides information in its website and bills that have to do with ways to save energy with clever advice in order to save electricity. Regarding that effort the company has created LED energy saving lamps, energy class A + and not only they

save up energy but “DEI” provides these energy saving lamps for free to families with many members and to small islands’ residents. In addition, “DEI” has made a complete plan of an educational program entitled "Learning how to save energy", a program that serves as a part of the actions of the Annual Energy Saving Target in the End Use of PPC SA[1].

Apart from the national company “DEI” another well-established company in the providence that also practices CSR strategies is the “TAP consortium”. This company is responsible of preparing important actions for the region of Western Macedonia, by carrying out seventeen projects. These projects have a budget of 7.6 million Euros and they are a part of the well-being of the community due to the fact that the natural gas pipeline will pass through Western Macedonia. Therefore, the “TAP consortium” shows its ethics and CSR, as it emphasizes in the fields of Environment, Education, Training and Energy saving, emphasizing mostly in the promotion of the rural economy and the provision of quality of life in the region. To the field of education, it finances a postgraduate study program on energy and natural gas provided by the University of Western Macedonia and also the company has undertaken the construction of the "Giole" stream bridge and the paving of the road that passes through the areas Militsa - Ampelokipoi and Amyntaio. As long as the environmental issues the company has offered 19 four-wheel drive vehicles for forest and civil protection. Moreover, the program that is called "EUDOKIMI GI", will be educating citizens to the importance of agriculture by creating scientific training programs that apply to farmers and stockbreeders of Northern Greece[2].

A well-known program in the region that is called “REBORN” program aims in promoting the well-being of the citizens and enhancing the strategies of CSR of the enterprises of Western Macedonia and aims to highlight all the ethical and moral practices that are already applied by the companies of the region. Program “REBORN” aims in contributing to European competitiveness and in accelerating the economic development of Western Macedonia. It will also help the improvement of the entrepreneurship-related policy instruments and business start-ups, with the use of measures and actions that will lead in the prevention of the loss of support in small and medium sized Enterprises, thus enabling them to take part in the development of the regional, national and also the international markets. Furthermore, the program will have a great contribution to gaining investment programs for growth and jobs and European Territorial Cooperation, increasing the competitiveness of enterprises and particular small and medium-sized enterprises. That is quite important as, in many cases, these sorts of enterprises do not acquire the required financial resources and therefore are not sufficiently aware of the establishment of sustainable practices. That is happening not because the company don’t want to comply to CSR but due to the fact that they strive to survive through the difficulties and inequalities. These companies will be provided with the means to participate in the training of good practices and business ethics and perform SCR activities and actions related to innovation, public recognition of the company’s profile by given a “logo”, a certification mark or providing them with means to reward ethics [3].

4. Conclusions

In conclusion, it has appeared that in urgent times , urgent measures must be taken in order to discover ways to overcome the impediments and emerge to profit, victory and benefit in order to enhance the society’s well-being. The same applies to companies that face economic troubles and attempt to outlive and prosper at any risk. The significant and promising truth is that the companies recognize the reality that Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has the control to lever the company to benefit particularly in troublesome times.

Therefore, CSR methods and tactics with inventive, unique, ethical and responsible acts, will, in the long run, raise the company’s profile within the eyes of the world and their customers and therefore will raise their productivity and the relationship between the company and the customer will be fortified. In addition, social obligation and the corporate’s volunteering actions have become progressively important in recent years and companies more and more acknowledge the “power” that acts of CSR provide to their profiles and sustainability.

[1] https://www.dei.gr/el/i-dei/etairiki-koinwniki-euthuni/param/t/ECPrint.aspx, retrieved 24/08/2022
[2] https://www.epilogic.gr/dytikh-makedonia-17-erga-etairikhs-koinwnikhs-efthynhs-apo-thn-tap/, retrieved 24/08/2022
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