

## **5A - Corporate social responsibility in Latin America**

The presentation, which focuses on Latin America, started with a study on this topic conducted by Forum Empresa. Later on, the company Horizontes Nature Tours, based in Costa Rica, showed an example from practice. The conference ended with a presentation of FEMSA about its own CSR Model.

The Forum Empresa is an organization founded by 150 business and civic leaders in Latin America in the 90s to make companies more aware of the issue CSR. The final objective of the Forum Empresa is to make companies economically more successful, who care a lot about ethical values, people and the environment. The study presented has been made with the help of over 3400 companies from 17 different Latin American countries. Generally speaking, the study showed that the biggest obstacle for CSR in Latin America is the lack of trust or confidence that consumers have towards the intentions of the companies. Although over 73 % of executives perceived that they are heading towards the right direction concerning CSR, only 54 % of the consumers were thinking the same. This gap is partly explainable due to the lack of trust mentioned above. From 2009 to 2011 several improvements have been realised. The number of companies aware of CSR is increasing steadily which explains the rise of 47 % in published sustainability reports in the last two years. Furthermore, 55 % of executives reported that they have introduced a public policy in the company. The acceptance of products produced under CSR standards has increased on the side of the consumers, although many also mentioned that the consumers in their country are not ready to buy these products now. Measures that have to be taken to increase consumer's trust would be to introduce stricter environmental rules and legislations according to the presenter.

Horizonte Nature Tours made the second presentation. Horizonte is a company from Costa Rica specialized in ecotourism. This means that they put lots of effort into sustainability in order to be economically successful on the one hand but also respecting the environment they are living in. The company has been able to win the CST already twice, which is a certificate of sustainability in the tourism sector. The goal of Horizonte is to combine transport, accommodation, tourism and alimentation in the most sustainable way and to distribute the wealth in the best possible way between the community and employees.

The last presenter was FEMSA. The company is one of the biggest companies in Latin America, starting as a small beer producer to ending as the largest bottling producer in the world. They are also running fair trade supermarkets serving 9 countries and over 215 millions of people. The main goal is to create value through social investment and innovation. FEMSA is convinced that CSR can create economic and social values, but cooperation is needed and the challenge is to work together with allies into the same direction. The CSR Model of FEMSA is of 4 points: Quality of life, Health and wellness, environmental care and community investments. Thanks to their work over 93.000 people in 75 communities have now access to safe water and sanitation. They believe that the biggest problems in Latin America are the lack of national identity; the lack of solid institution, past government paternalism and budget deficits of the countries but that everything can be resolved with strong cooperation. The key points of the presentation are to help communities, go beyond economic value and that social investment is essential for success and sustainability of the communities.