Corporate Social Responsibility in the European Context:
The Role of Government

This study tour aims at providing the students with an overview of the French and, more broadly, the European approach to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). More specifically the course will explore the role of government in CSR, sustainability and responsible management.

While CSR is a challenge for companies and organizations in all parts of the world, the way these principles are implemented within organizations differ between countries since they are influenced by legal, economic, social and cultural contexts. Matten & Moon, by introducing the concept of implicit and explicit CSR, highlight in particular the difference between the European and the North American approach to Global Responsibility.

The study tour will focus on the role of government at the international, the national and the local level in encouraging CSR, sustainability and responsible management. The French context is particularly interesting from this point of view, since France was the first country in Europe that introduced mandatory non-financial disclosure. The European Union is also host to a range of CSR initiatives and strategies which will be explored.

Throughout the study tour, the students will attend seminars with professors specialised in different aspects of CSR, who have developed extensive research in the areas of sustainability, governance, cross-sector collaboration, responsible leadership, and diversity. Each of them will focus on a specific feature of CSR in the European context and the role of government within that context. In parallel, the students will visit several companies that have implemented innovative strategies in the field of CSR and will have the opportunity to discuss issues and challenges with managers in the field.

Mandatory readings prior to the study week


Students will receive a more extensive recommended pre-reading list prior to the course.

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Seminar descriptions

1. Introduction to the Role of Government in CSR
This introductory session will consider the voluntary and regulatory aspects of CSR and explore the relationship between government and business in the context of CSR. Specifically, the session will cover trends, changes and a range of different roles which Government can take.

2. EU Perspective on CSR
The European Union is involved in a wide range of CSR strategies and initiatives. This session will introduce some of today’s most pressing sustainability issues and give participants the opportunity to explore the different viewpoints and interests of relevant stakeholders, and the steps the EU has taken to address them.

3. The Impact of Legislation on CSR Reporting
This session is intended to show the history and trends of the most important CSR disclosure standards and regulations in Europe, to outline different reporting regimes by showing the cross-national differences but also to encourage a discussion around the future directions of CSR reporting.

4. The Impact of Legislation on Diversity Management
Clearly linking HR theory to the work environment, this seminar explores Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Equality and Diversity. Special attention will be given to the impact of legislation on Diversity Management. A comparative viewpoint shall be adopted throughout the seminar.

Team projects
Before, during and after the study week, the students are asked to work in teams on different consulting projects in the area of CSR. Each project is related to a specific company visit during the study week.

The students are required to do some readings and research prior to the study week and present their preliminary findings on the first day of the course. The seminars and visits will allow students to build on their initial research and develop their projects. Students have one month after the study tour to complete and submit an electronic version of their 10 to 15 page report to their tutor by April 12th 2019.

Course Assessment:

Class participation 20% (individual grade)
- Participants are expected to share their ideas, experience, insights and questions during class discussions and company visits, and to make active contributions to team work.

Presentation 20% (group grade)
- Grading: clarity, relevance, depth and breadth of research, team participation

Report 60% (group grade)
- Grading: writing style and presentation; depth and breadth of research; analysis of government role and impact; creativity and strategic content of recommendations