Press release

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Cegos 2023 International CSR barometer

Corporate Social Responsibility: what is happening in the organizations?

Only 33% of employees believe that their organisation's commitment to CSR meet today's major global challenges (climate change, diversity and inclusion, energy efficiency, etc.).

As a worldwide leader in Learning & Development, the Cegos Group unveils the results of its survey untitled *"Corporate Social Responsibility: mobilise, involve and train to increase commitment and action"*, and carried out in May 2023 among 3,802 international employees and 556 international CSR Directors or Managers, in 8 countries in Europe (France, UK, Germany, Spain, Portugal, Italy), Asia (Singapore) and Latin America (Brazil).

As a reminder, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is defined by the European Commission as "the contribution of enterprises to sustainable development", which implies *"the voluntary integration of social and environmental concerns into their business operations and their interaction with their stakeholders"*. The aim is for organisations to have a positive impact on society as a whole, while remaining economically viable.

The purpose of this barometer is threefold: to understand how employees perceive the challenges of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), to identify the stakeholders involved in their organisation's approach, and to survey CSR departments on their commitments and actions in this area.

THE KEY FIGURES

I - Corporate Social Responsibility: commitment and convictions, but only half-hearted involvement

- While 73% of international employees are aware of CSR, 46% do not know what it actually means and 37% do not know whether their company has a dedicated CSR function.
- According to 85% of employees and 98% of CSR managers, CSR is a major challenge for companies.
- It is a lever for mobilising teams, with 59% of employees declaring themselves to be "promoters" or even "militant" in this area, compared to 31% who are "indifferent". It is also a source of professional motivation (more than 6 out of 10 employees) and a source of confidence in the future of the organisation (71% of employees).
- More than half of employees are not directly involved or do not feel involved in the company's CSR policy, while CSR managers face a number of difficulties in implementing their actions.

II - Organizations are under pressure with ever-increasing internal expectations on CSR

- 77% of international employees acknowledge their company's commitment to CSR, even though 33% of them believe that this is a forced commitment.
- Employees rate this commitment at 6.1 out of 10, compared with 8.1 for CSR managers.
- Only 33% of employees believe that this commitment meet the major global challenges facing us today (climate change, diversity and inclusion, energy efficiency, etc.). Conversely, 55% of them expect their company to make a stronger commitment to meeting these challenges, and 38% even consider the CSR initiatives implemented by their organisation to be ineffective.

- For 72% of employees, their direct manager is not committed to the topic of CSR: only 28% of them consider their direct managers to be active (24%) or transformer (4%) in this area.

III - Communicating, training and supporting to increase the effectiveness of CSR policies

- While CSR Managers consider that employees are well informed about their company/organisation's CSR approach (average of 8), the feeling is very different among employees (5.7).
- 82% of CSR managers claim that their organisation offers training on the subject, whereas only 38% of employees declare to be aware of this.
- Among employees who have already received CSR training, only 7% have taken a course on how to integrate CSR into their job.
- Health, safety and quality of life at work, as well as environmental issues (impact reduction, regulations) lie at the heart of employees' training expectations. In fact, these are the training courses that are most frequently delivered by companies/organisations.
- More than one employee in two expects further action and support to become more involved within the company; for 55% of employees, their organisation should support local managers to help them better embody and steer CSR issues with their teams.

I - Corporate Social Responsibility: commitment and convictions yet only half-hearted involvement

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is defined by the European Commission as *"the contribution of enterprises to sustainable development"*, which implies *"the voluntary integration of social and environmental concerns into their business operations and their interaction with their stakeholders"*. The aim is for organisations to have a positive impact on society as a whole, while remaining economically viable.

CSR is now very much highlighted in the public sector, as well as in companies operating in France and worldwide. It is becoming increasingly standardised with the introduction of labels and certifications such as. BCorp, as well as strengthened European regulations with harmonised reporting requirements on sustainable issues (Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive, CSRD).

CSR is poorly understood by employees, yet it is seen as a major challenge, a vehicle for mobilisation, professional motivation and confidence in the future.

Although 73% of employees said they were familiar with the concept of CSR, 46% of them did not know what it actually meant (with significant differences according to status: 44% of executives vs. 18% of workers, 43% of managers vs. 19% of non-managers).

CSR spontaneously brings to their mind social impact (41%), ethics (37%) and quality of life at work (36%).

It should be noted that **the CSR function needs to raise its profile**, as 37% of respondents do not know whether their company has one (47% in companies with over 2,000 employees).

However, awareness is growing as 85% of employees and 98% of CSR managers believe that CSR is a major issue for companies.

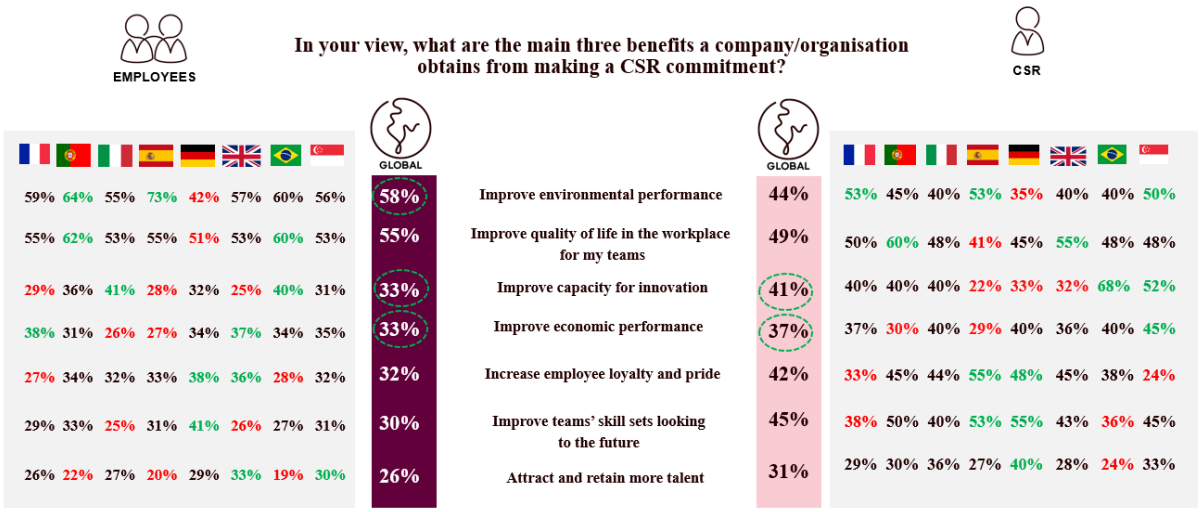
Furthermore, CSR knows how to mobilise teams, with **59% of international employees declaring themselves to be "promoters" (53%) or even "militant" (6%) of CSR-related issues, with an over-representation of executives, managers and 18-30 y.o.** It should be noted, however, that 31% say they are "indifferent" to these issues, particularly among non-graduates or those with little academic qualifications.

As the quest for meaning is getting stronger, CSR is also a lever for professional motivation for 63% of employees and, in the longer term, **a source of confidence in the future of the organisation for 71% of them (79% among 18-30 y.o).**

At the heart of the priority action areas: quality of life and environmental issues

Employees and CSR managers agree that improving environmental performance (58%, 44% respectively) and quality of life at work (55%, 49%) stand among the main benefits for organizations in making a commitment to CSR.

It is interesting to point out that CSR managers also highlight improved skills (45%) and a greater capacity for innovation (41%).



When asked what the three priority areas for action should be if their company/organisation were to make a stronger commitment to CSR, employees are most in favour of what impacts their day-to-day lives:

- Quality of life at work **41%**,

- Health and safety at work **32%**,

- Reduction of environmental impact **28%**.

CSR managers, on the other hand, give priority to environmental issues:

- Reducing climate/carbon impact **49%**,

- Energy transition **47%**,

- Reduction of environmental impact **44%**.

Yet employee commitment remains limited

Although CSR is emerging as a motivating concept, more than half of employees hardly take action within the company:

- 22% of them get informed about the subject without getting directly involved in the organisation's CSR policy;

- 32% do not feel particularly involved; this is particularly true among 46-60 y.o. (39%) and in companies with over 2,000 employees (38%).

On the other hand, a significant part of employees (32%) say they take action at a personal level.

This lack of involvement is perhaps fostered by the bunch of difficulties that CSR Managers seem to encounter in implementing their actions, whether it be establishing monitoring indicators (28%), evaluating the impact of the actions implemented (28%), having dedicated financial resources (28%) or reconciling short- and long-term objectives (28%). It should be noted that "the lack of involvement from senior management" is not mentioned as one of the main difficulties (21%).

Carole Deschaintre, Offer & Expertise Manager, Quality-Security-Environment & Sustainable Development, Cegos Group, explains:

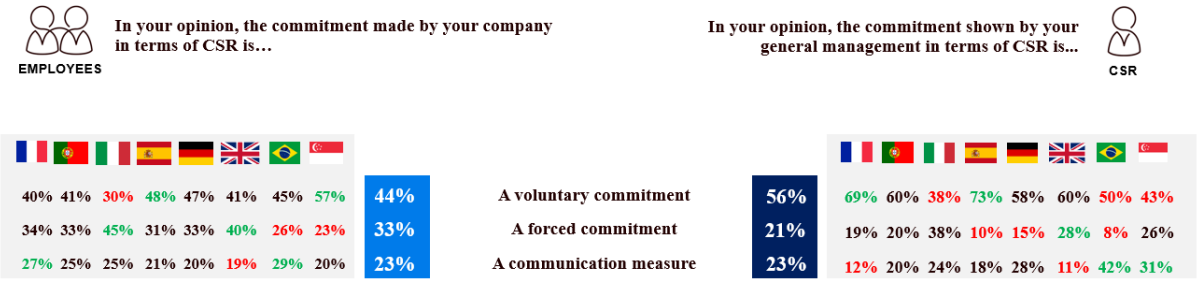
"We can only be satisfied with the fact that CSR is now viewed as a major issue by employees: it is both a vehicle for mobilisation and professional motivation and a source of confidence in the future of their organisation. There is a rising awareness with 85% of employees believing that CSR is a major issue for companies. However, there is still a way to go: to encourage their teams to take action, companies need to make further efforts to inform, communicate, train and mobilise employees around CSR".

II - Organizations are under pressure with ever-increasing internal expectations on CSR

While companies' commitment to CSR is now widely acknowledged, it needs to be stepped up to meet today's challenges and become more effective.

The good news is that 77% of employees and CSR managers now recognise their company's sincere commitment to CSR, compared with 23% who see it as a PR measure (and only 19% of 18-30 y.o).

Even so, **33% of employees and 21% of CSR managers consider this commitment to be 'forced',** because it is primarily a response to unavoidable regulatory requirements, an economic necessity or a challenge regarding attractiveness.



Employees take a fairly harsh view of their company's level of commitment (6.1 out of 10, compared with 8.1 for CSR managers) as well as of the actions implemented, that 38% of them consider to be ineffective.

As a result, 55% of employees expect their company or organisation to make a greater commitment to meeting the major global challenges of our time (climate change, diversity and inclusion, energy sobriety, etc.). It is interesting to note that of the 33% of employees who feel that their organisation's commitment is at the right level, managers and 18-30 y.o. have a more positive view.

All in all, **there is a discrepancy between the level of expectations of employees in terms of CSR** (6.4 out of 10 overall) **and the level of performance** claimed in this area by CSR Managers (7.9).

Direct management hardly plays its role to the full: 72% of employees point to its passivity and lack of involvement in CSR.

Even if companies "can and must do better" according to employees, they acknowledge the "significant" impact (51%) of their organisation's CSR approach on their day-to-day professional activity. This impact is stronger among supervisors, 18-30 y.o. and companies with 50-99 employees.

Although this impact is concrete, it is not linked to direct management, which is still considered to be poorly involved in CSR by a large majority of international employees (72%). **For instance, only 28% of employees view direct managers as playing a role (24%) or as genuine drivers (4%) in this area.**

Catherine Jacquet, Projects Director, Cegos Group, adds:

"CSR is finally proving to be a key issue for companies as 77% of employees acknowledge organisations' commitment in this area. Employee expectations are rising as environmental and social

issues become stronger at national and international levels. This force companies to go further on these issues and legitimising CSR as a vehicle for action. However, as sustainable development issues are not yet sufficiently central to business models in most organisations, managers find it difficult to get involved in these topics, which do not yet impact their day-to-day work. This is going to be a major challenge in the years to come, given the changing regulations and the skills required to meet these challenges."

III - Communicating, training and supporting to increase the effectiveness of CSR policies

A lack of communication seems to be hampering the effectiveness of CSR initiatives within companies

Despite its legitimacy, there is a lack of visibility and communications on CSR: employees say they are poorly informed about their company's approach, with an average score of 5.7 out of 10. This is not shared by CSR managers, who rate the level of information of employees at 8.

There are also different perceptions on CSR training: 82% of CSR Managers state that their organisation offers training on the subject, whereas only 38% of employees seem to be aware of it. This lack of information, which is even stronger among employees aged 46-60 and non-managers, may be linked to the poor involvement of direct managers who are supposed to supervise the training of their teams and delliver information on this topic.

The catalogue of CSR training courses already proposed by companies focuses on two main themes: health, safety and quality of life at work on the one hand, and the environment on the other hand.

In addition to the training already in place, the top 5 training courses that are declared to be planned include managing psycho-social risk (25%), energy transition (23%), business ethics (21%), reporting CSR/ESG indicators (19%) and raising awareness about the fundamentals of CSR (19%), thereby echoing the priority areas for action identified by employees.

CSR training is set to develop at all levels of the company and to be more integrated into business.

Although almost 9 out of 10 employees claim to have received CSR-related training in the last three years, topics covered are still far off business and the field:

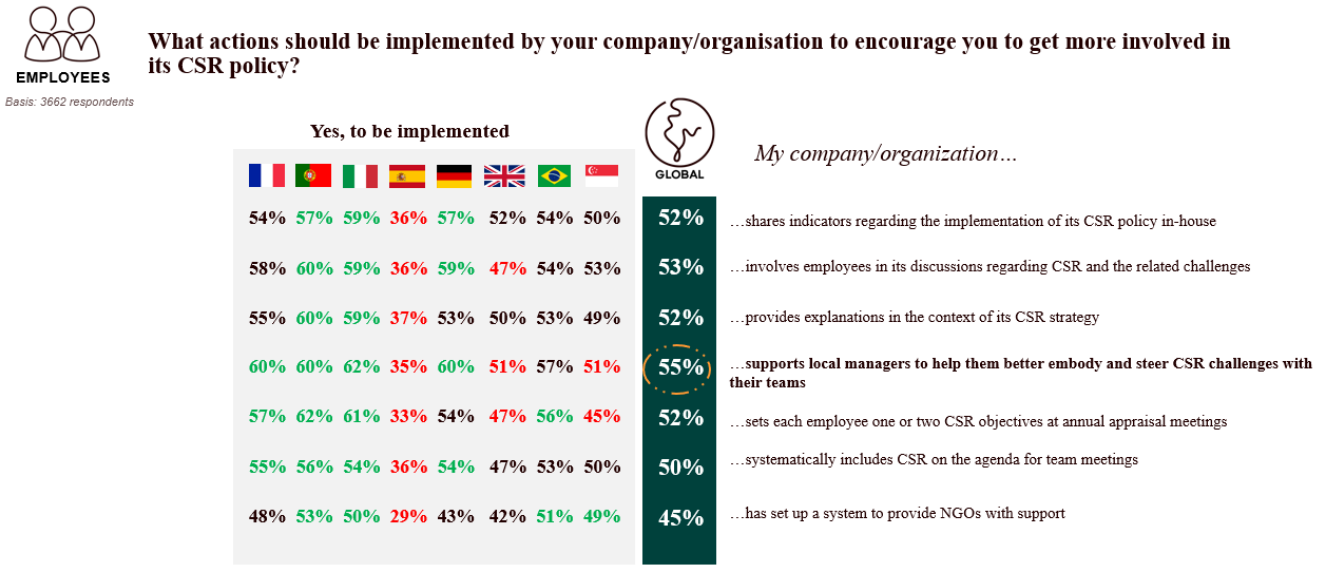
- 30% of employees have received very general training on CSR (major issues, the company's commitment, etc.);
- 48% of employees have received training on just one aspect of CSR, such as ethics, safety, responsible recruitment, etc;
- 18% have received training on all the major CSR issues;
- Only 7% had received training on how to integrate CSR into their job (17% of non-graduates).

To improve the effectiveness of the CSR policy, more than ¾ of employees believe that their company/organisation should set up specific training courses at all levels of the organisation. They are in favour of training for executive managers (80%), local managers (79%), employees (78%) and in each business line (76%).

To become more involved in their company's CSR approach, employees express a greater interest in training related to quality of life at work (83%)**, health and safety at work** (81%) **and the various environmental issues** (reducing environmental impact at 78%, reducing climate/carbon impact at 75% and environmental regulations at 75%).

Employees are waiting for concrete, visible action to get more involved

Companies are urged to do more to involve their teams in CSR issues



More than one employee in two wants to be more involved in the company's thoughts on CSR and its challenges (53%), to have access to the indicators enabling the implementation of its CSR approach (52%) and to benefit from more education to explain the organisation's strategy in this area.

It should also be noted that **55% of them believe that local managers should be better supported in order to better embody and manage CSR issues with their teams.** In fact, this action comes on the top of the list of actions to be implemented to increase the effectiveness of CSR policies, illustrating once again the key role of direct management in making the approach visible, understandable, acceptable and involving employees.

Catherine Jacquet, Projects Director, Cegos Group, adds:

"To be transformative, CSR must not just be a matter for specialists: it must involve all the stakeholders of the organisation and expand throughout all the business and operational departments so that they change their practices over the long term. Our study shows that only 7% of the employees who have already taken CSR-related training have been trained on how to integrate CSR into their day-to-day work. This is unfortunate given that employees are quite prepared to become more involved."

Benoit Felix, Chairman of the Cegos Group, comments on the 2023 edition of the Cegos International Barometer:

"This barometer shows that employees - whatever their country, profession or age - are now aware of the great challenges companies need to meet in terms of sustainable development. They consider their organisations' CSR initiatives to be legitimate, but not enough to meet these challenges. Whereas they are often already committed at a personal level, they are ready to do the same at work. They therefore expect their organisation to provide them with practical support, whatever their job, on the way to responsible performance. Training is obviously an extraordinary driver, and at Cegos we are on the front line alongside our clients to help them raising awareness of CSR, helping managers to include these dimensions into their jobs, or supporting everyone in dealing with the impact of CSR in their day-to-day lives... Once again, revolution in practices will be based on skills development!"

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About the Cegos Group - www.cegos.com

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With 1,500 employees and more than 3,000 partner consultants, the Group trains 250,000 people around the globe every year and generates sales of €236 million.
Cegos deploys a global offering, including turnkey and tailored training and development, operational consultancy, Managed Training Services and international training projects. Its "blended learning" approach aims to provide the most suitable and competitive learner experience, by combining multiple learning formats (classroom training, e-learning modules, videoconferences, webcasts, e-training programmes and more).
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