

The Role of SME's in a Resilient of Society



Data of Your Paper



Topic

- Resilience
- Lifestyle
- Building
- Resources
- Tourism
- Energy

Title of the Paper

The Role of SME's in a Resilient of Society

Form of Presentation

- Poster
- Presentation

Short Description (maximum 2500 characters)

Small and Medium Sized Enterprises are important economic and social players at the local and regional levels. Characterised by innovativeness, flexibility and a proximity to local and regional demand, as well as being the most important employers at these levels, a strong SME sector can contribute to a resilient society in many ways (e.g. by keeping local populations, improving employment opportunities, providing produce which fits local and regional demands, etc.).

While it is generally accepted that SME's are more responsible than large, multinational corporations by nature, there remains much contention about the basic utility, meaning and value of the notion of social responsibility in the SME sector. Understanding is growing that the raft of corporate environmental and social management tools which have arisen over the last decade are primarily geared towards the multinational/larger company, and have less utility and applicability to the smaller company. This is despite the fact that majority of literature and research consistently reports that SME owner-managers take social responsibility seriously and that SMEs contribute significantly to the economy and social welfare (UNIDO, 2002) and that they employ a range of environmental management tools. Literature and the limited empirical surveys conducted to date on this topic tend to suggest that SMEs should not be treated as "little big firms" (Tilley, 2003) and that a unique SME perspective on CSR along with a different understanding of CSR tools, metrics and even definitions of the meaning of CSR in SMEs needs to be developed (Moore, 2006).

Data for the empirical research component of this paper is based on a large scale electronic survey of approx. 300 small and medium sized companies from varying sectors of industry.

In line with international literature our survey shows that CSR in SME's is an 'undercover' activity: managers often do not explicitly aim at social or environmental issues. However, they are still often preoccupied with the well-being of their employees, customers and broader stakeholder groups. This results in a less structured handling of social and environmental issues than in big multinational organisations. Nevertheless, SMEs can benefit from CSR activities in many ways: e.g. better employee relationships

result in smaller turnover, while an active cooperation with customers contributes to a long lasting business success.

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