

GOOD_ELEPHANTS

Transnational companies challenged by diverging societal contexts: social performance and CSR between Western, Eastern European, Central Asian Areas and China

A short overview on a multinational research and practice project Zurich, November 2006

1) Summary of the idea

The objective of the project GOOD_ELEPHANTS is to provide new knowledge and instruments that can be used for societal and economic development and corporate governance strategies. They will be elaborated for actors of the private sector and public audiences concerned with the various societal models, which are rooted in the different historical developments in Western and Eastern Europe. The project proceeds along *a research line* focused on societal models and social corporate responsibility emerging in the big transnational companies and enterprises. A framework is developed explaining how the big companies can contribute to the societal development in the various European and Asian areas. On the background of world system dynamics and the role of civil drives in modern societies, the emergence of new models and practices of corporate governance and responsibility in the pan-European economic area are highlighted. The research project emphasizes the transnational companies and their interactions with the societal environments under a comparative perspective; it profits from a consortium representing eight EU-members and associated countries and four NIS-countries which will be completed by relations already existing to Central Asian states and China (see under 4). The project initiates a change from a mostly transitional oriented research of post socialist countries to an interaction-approach between East and West. By this *innovative development line* the best societal models, policies and tools joining economic and sustainable development are searched for, supported by the big companies in the context of smaller sized enterprises. It looks for new multidisciplinary knowledge focusing and comparing the cultural diversities and disparities between the different parts of Europe and Asian contexts. The consortium involves different disciplines, sociology, political science, economy, psychology and comparative cultural and historical science. The results contribute to the scenarios and developments relevant for the international, national and local level of the emerging pan-European area of competition and cohesion. An essential role will play the workpackage 7 and 9 creating platforms for the practice and communication (see under 3) where international organisations as well as companies will be involved.

2) Start, steps and agenda

The GOOD_ELEPHANT has started with the LOCLAB–INTAS project. It functions as a pilot- and exploration project; we realised five case studies about the local labour markets and the role of companies in Stupino (Russia), Pernik (Bulgaria), Siematycze (Poland), Chop (Ukraine) Skidel (Belarus). But GOOD_ELEPHANT enlarged substantially the participation by the Western partners, transnational companies and institutional networks. In several international meetings we develop and enrich the tasks by new partners, ideas and relations to companies and organisations engaged in corporate social responsibility as a practical issue.

The project is work-in-progress and developed according to the priorities and contribution of the partners in the next months.

- *Initial phase: Development of a first draft research project under the acronym „GOOD_ELEPHANTS“ defining nine workpackages (see graph under 3); the initial project was created by Dr. Hans-Peter Meier-Dallach, President of WORLD_DRIVES association and World Society Foundation in cooperation with Prof. Fred Manske, ITB Bremen.*

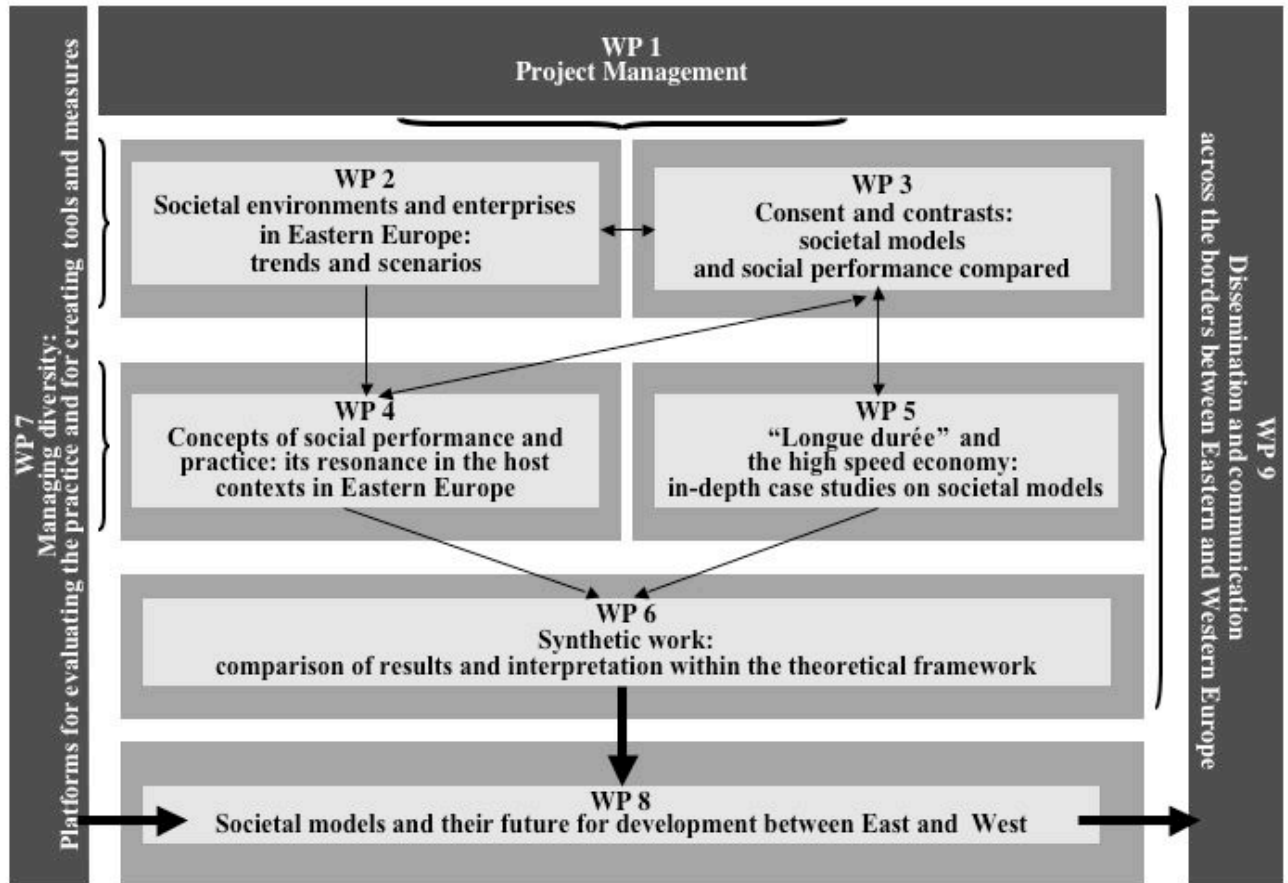
- *International conference in Lyon about Corporate Social Responsibility organised by ISEOR (in three continents, 17th – 20th of October 2005; presentation of concepts and meetings under the network partners. (publications available).*

- *International workshop at the ITB Bremen (May 2006); Presentation of papers by different partners of the network and of the case studies “Corporate Social Responsibility – made in China” (publications available).*

- *International meeting of the Eastern European Network of WORLD_DRIVES association (29/9 – 2/10 06 - in Stupino (near Moscow) discussing the results of the five case studies in regard to GOOD_ELEPHANTS; visits in Western companies in Stupino and discussions of results with community leaders and the administration of Stupino.*

3) The six workpackages of GOOD_ELEPHANTS

The project embraces six workpackages described in detail in the project.



4) The network Participants of the network:

Nr Participant	Participant organisation name	Participant org. short name
1 (Coordinator)	WORLD_DRIVES. International Centre of Competence for Practice and Social Research, Zurich, Switzerland	WORLD_DRIVES
2	Institute for Technology and Education, University of Bremen, Germany	ITB
3	Publications et formations socio-économiques, Lyon, France	ISEOR-PUFOMASE
4	Human Factors. Consultation company in organisational psychology with close academic links, Norway	HUMAN FACTORS
5	Department of Economics, University of Athens, Greece	DEP-ECON
6	Institute of Eastern European Studies of the FU (Freie Universität Berlin), Germany	IEES
7	Université de Fribourg, Ressources Humaines et Organisation	RHO
8	Centre for Research and Social Initiative, University of Bialystok, Poland	BOBIS
9	Centre for Regional and Global Development, Bulgaria	REGLO
10	Centre for Sociological and Political Research, Belarusian State University, Belarus	CSPR-BSU
11	Georgian Opinion Research Business International, Georgia	GORBI
12	Levada-Centre, Russia	LEVADA-CENTRE
13	Center for Social and Political Investigations, Ukraine	SOCIS
14	Network YOUTHLAB (Caucasian Central-Asian countries)	YOUTHLAB
15	CHINA partners of the case study (CSR made in China)	

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