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PRESS RELEASE

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Corporate social responsibility awards tackle sustainable growth and provide societal benefits

The 60 winners of the inaugural European Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Award Scheme today celebrated their achievements at a special ceremony in Brussels. Responsible and sustainable business practices are increasingly important during this economic downturn. As Europeans have less confidence in business than some years ago, it is crucial that the business community makes the restoration of trust and legitimacy a priority. Renewed focus on products and services that address environmental and social needs is a viable route back to growth and job creation. This pan-European award scheme aims to inspire CSR excellence in partnerships, with particular emphasis on collaborative programmes that tackle sustainability through innovation. Successful projects represent a variety of business sectors, ranging from banking to pharmaceuticals.

European Commission Vice President Antonio Tajani, Commissioner for Industry and Entrepreneurship, said: *"The remarkable work of the winning partnerships highlights the best in corporate social responsibility practices in Europe today. It shows that a strategic approach to CSR is increasingly important to the competitiveness of SMEs and large companies. It also encourages more social and environmental responsibility from the corporate sector at a time when the crisis has damaged consumer confidence and the levels of trust in business."*

[European CSR Award Ceremony](#)

More information

[MEMO/11/730](#)

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Diverse CSR winners

In Bulgaria, Piraeus Bank ensured stable financial support and developed a donations campaign for UNICEF in its work to provide humanitarian assistance to children. Guna, the Italian homeopathic medicine company, worked with development NGO COOPI to help revitalise ancient medical traditions in Paraguay, while boosting employment in indigenous groups. A Biotech and agriculture company in Denmark, BioCover A/S, used attributes of various existing fertilizer products as part of a new process control, in which the individual products' negative qualities effectively cancel each other out, creating a sustainable organic fertilizer in combination with conventional fertilizer – something that has never been done before. ([link to webpage containing 60 award winners](#))

CSR excellence through innovation

The European award scheme for CSR partnerships between enterprises and other stakeholders was launched in 2012. The awards are organised by the European Commission together with CSR Europe, and the winning partnerships of business and non-business organisations were selected for national awards in two categories: small and medium enterprises, and larger companies.

Two organisations that support responsible business practice, CSR Europe (CSRe) and Business in the Community (BITC), were selected to coordinate the organisation of the national CSR award schemes together with national award partners. The national awards are held in advance of the European CSR Award Ceremony and are awarded to at least two different categories, small and medium-sized enterprises and large companies in partnership with at least one non-business stakeholder.

CSR and the EU

CSR underpins the objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. The strategy defines CSR as the responsibility of enterprises for their impacts on society. It seeks to create and exploit win-win situations for enterprises and for society at large. For example, by promoting sustainable consumption and asking for business concepts to commit to the considerate use of limited resources, enterprises can contribute to the creation of an online community which continues to develop and assess sustainable start-up ideas. By investing in eco-innovation and energy efficient production processes, businesses can save money and also reduce their negative impact on the environment.

Given the current economic climate, the European Commission published "[A renewed EU strategy 2011-14 for Corporate Social Responsibility](#)" on 25 October 2011. By renewing efforts to promote CSR, the Commission aims to create conditions favourable to sustainable growth, responsible business behaviour and generate durable jobs in the medium and long term.