

## **Corporate Social Responsibility: the role of Private- Public Partnership**

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The trend, of what we called in the present research “ the new social partnership”, is spreading throughout Europe and more recently across Italy too. Several phenomena like economic globalization, the crisis of the welfare state, the strengthening of the socio-economic role of business actors within all the European countries, and the consequent awareness of the civil society about all the ongoing changes created a widespread consciousness on the need to provide new forms of collaboration among actors coming from different sectors of society and from different backgrounds in order to face in a more complete way the mentioned challenges. Notwithstanding all the obvious differences of approach, in every European Country one thing is well known and largely shared: all these challenges can be met in an effective way only through the combination of efforts that are able to bring innovation, not only in the economic realm, but also in the social, environmental, cultural and political fields through a multilevel cooperation. The synergy, these actors would like to achieve, has the target to ensure a lasting and complete answer to the many changes caused by the new socio-economic needs that characterize our society and that require innovative and multilevel approaches. These new approaches can merge the knowledge and the abilities of different actors in a complementary way, offering comprehensive and long term solutions. This challenging context has led to the spread of partnership’s phenomenon in Italy too, as a possible tool to face the requests, coming from the stakeholders, in a more exhaustive and multidisciplinary way. Following these considerations we tried to analyse in detail the approach Italian companies and local governments demonstrate toward partnerships. The data concerning the modalities companies’ behaviour were collected with the support of twenty-two companies that shared with us their experience. The key findings of the research are:

- The most active subjects within partnerships are the companies based in Northern Italy ( 68%);
- The Bank sector is the most active actor in partnerships ;
- General orientation for the tripartite partnership (involving companies, public bodies and civil society);
- The main reasons for establishing a partnership with partners coming from different sectors are : better knowledge of the social and cultural issues; better operativity at the local level; institutional credibility; and greater capacity to respond to Stakeholders’ expectations;
- The role of driver, in the partnership, is equally shared by public bodies( 32%), companies( 36%) and civil society( 32%).
- In the research a particular attention was devoted to the organizational process of partnership, in order to understand how the different partners work together and which contributions they give to the initiative. In this regard we noticed a diffused balance among all the partners during the operational phases of the cooperation, while for the economic aspects, the role of companies is quite evident and predominant . Furthermore the actors, we questioned, prefer long-term partnerships that aim at a complete and mutual understanding. The chance to work for a considerably long time together becomes a tool through which all the partners can overcome those obstacles, that appear to be frequent, during the implementation of the various forms of collaboration, such as the lack of communication, organizational difficulties and differences of approaches. All these issues are due to the different contexts the actors belong to, that inevitably have an influence on the implementation of the different plans and projects. Only a well consolidated and lasting dialogue can bring the parties to transform their own differences into proactive and positive elements.