

Call for Papers

Private Corporations as Norm-entrepreneurs in the EU and beyond *Investigating political, societal and economic driving forces of private self-regulation*

Workshop, Darmstadt, 01-02 June 2007

Private actors – and corporations in particular – are playing an increasingly important role in regulatory policy-making within the EU and beyond. New modes of governance, such as private self-regulation, are becoming common practice in the European context. A growing number of private companies engage in governance processes of norm-formation and norm-development. They take on the role of norm-entrepreneurs in different, formerly only state-regulated, policy areas. This phenomenon is most common in the areas of human and labour rights, environmental protection and anti-corruption, often referred to as corporate social responsibility (CSR).

The workshop aims to assess the current situation regarding CSR in European and non-European contexts and to identify driving forces in the company environment and on the company level determining the degree to which companies engage in these new modes of governance. At the same time, the effectiveness and legitimacy of such private self-regulation schemes will be investigated. The overarching questions the workshop seeks to address are:

Why and under what conditions do companies contribute to governance through engagement in processes of norm-formation and norm-development? What are the main driving forces of private self-regulation in the field of CSR and other policy areas? Do these forces differ within the EU and beyond the European Union?

In order to answer these questions, the workshop aims to analyze whether and how a) the political environment, b) the societal environment, and c) the market environment and other economic factors have an influence on the degree of corporate contributions to governance. Furthermore, the workshops focuses on normative aspects (d) by analyzing in how far such

policy arrangements are effectively filling regulatory gaps and in how far they can claim legitimacy.

a) The political environment as a driving force

The political environment refers to the amount and depth of regulations companies have to comply with while doing business in a given state territory. It includes legal obligations imposed by the EU, home or host states, as well as softer modes of governance. This theme also refers to general modes of coordination and cooperation between politics and business in a given country as well as to the political importance attached to issues of CSR and asks how all these aspects influence company behaviour towards CSR issues.

Relevant questions might include: Are EU member states more likely to set incentive structures for company involvement different from those set in other countries? Does the highly regulated EU context influence the behaviour of an EU-based company even when operating in other countries? In how far do companies change their behaviour when doing business in weak zones of governance? What are the lesson to be learnt for the emerging CSR agenda in the European Union?

b) The societal environment as a driving force

Questions concerning the societal environment refer to the role of civil society actors, the public and the media in influencing company behaviour through societal pressure. In general, companies are aware of the risk of being targeted by NGO campaigns and afraid of a possibly resulting loss of reputation that might negatively affect their business performance.

Relevant questions might include: Do national or transnational advocacy networks have an effect on the willingness of companies to contribute to governance? Does this effect differ within and beyond the EU? Are there special forms of NGO pressure that can be identified within the European context? Is there a tendency of (European) NGOs becoming more cooperative towards companies, if yes, why so?

c) The market environment and other economic factors as a driving force

The market environment as well as organisational attributes of a company might determine the level of engagement of companies in governance processes. The market environment includes factors such as the structure of the market a corporation operates in or the type of

products a company produces. Furthermore, companies can be further differentiated according to a number of characteristics (e.g. ownership structure), which might influence their willingness to engage in self-regulation. Related questions might include: Does the Single European market induce different company behaviour than national markets would do? Do the different organisational structures that exist within the EU make companies more prone to engaging in governance processes? Does a company's market share influence its willingness to contribute to self-regulation?

d) The normative dimension

In order to fully evaluate the scope of private self-regulation a set of related normative questions have to be addressed that refer to the legitimacy (input and output) of corporate contributions to governance. Related questions might include: How can the quality of voluntary private self-regulation be analysed? What are the crucial factors determining the legitimacy of private self-regulation? How can it be measured? Does self-regulation conform to expected levels legitimacy? If and under what conditions should corporations be considered to be legitimate actors in new modes of governance?

The workshop will take place in Darmstadt, 01-02 June 2007. It will consist of a maximum of 15 paper givers, with additional interested participants.

Deadline for paper proposals (max. 500 words): 9th March 2007, Papers due: TBA

Please direct all enquiries and papers to both the following addresses :

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