



OBSERVATÓRIO  
PORTUGUÊS  
DE BOAS PRÁTICAS  
LABORAIS

PORTUGUESE  
OBSERVATORY  
OF GOOD LABOR  
PRACTICES

# OPBPL Electronic Papers

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## Objectives

The Electronic Papers published by the Portuguese Observatory for Good Labour Practices (OPBPL) main goals are to confer the accessibility and high-speed readability of essential information and good practices in regards to work organisation, collective bargaining, human resources management, labour relations, inclusion and sustainability, corporate social responsibility, and labour market statistics.

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**Labour Relations Specificities (II): corporate social responsibility**

## Labour Relations Specificities (II): corporate social responsibility

Author: Fátima Silvério

### Abstract

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The changes in the environment, new forms of labour and employment resulting from a more informed but also more competitive society, changes in patterns of social relations together with the current financial and economic crisis all mean that Social Responsibility has become vitally important to the consolidation and sustainability of the economy and society in the medium and long term.

Social Responsibility is by definition characterised by the organisations' integration of social, environmental and security concerns in their operations and interaction with other stakeholders.

# 1 | Social Responsibility in Organisations and the path to Sustainability

Over the past decades many initiatives have strived to “regulate” these changes in an attempt to eliminate underlying injustices: in 1948 with the UN General Assembly proclaimed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; in 1989 the United Nations adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child; in 1998 the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work was adopted, among others.

Although different approaches can be taken to Social Responsibility, when it is seen as a goal in pursuit of sustainability and taking into account its application and practical implementation in enterprises and organisations, we adopt the triple bottom line concept (PPP - Profit, Planet, People) as the basis of the Management Systems of Social Responsibility. This presents sustainability as an aggregator: sustainability is when the three vertices of the triangle – Planet, People and Profit – are coherently and harmoniously interconnected but it is crucial to ensure that this happens transparently and underpinned by ethical principles – the field of Corporate Social Responsibility is indeed a concept based on a medium and long term strategy.

## Benefits for the organisation

Organisations today recognise the need to consider the potential effects of political and corporate activities on their reputation and market.

All organisations seeking to contribute proactively to the development of society and the economy should give careful consideration to the social impact of their operations as well as to the conditions in which their employees and business partners operate.

This means controlling and putting into practice the respect and promotion of human rights for all employees along the value chain and interacting with all parties involved.

In short, an organisation with concerns in the field of social responsibility:

- a) Ensures greater stability and enables it to deal with unforeseen circumstances.
- b) Ensures its medium and long term sustainability.
- c) Improves internal organisational relations through its concern with labour relations.

d) Enhances its image and reputation among the public, employees, public authorities and society in general.

Certification is one way of being recognised by others. This is a challenge that few organisations dare to accept; indeed, Social Responsibility is first and foremost a question of Attitude!

This process can only take place in an organisation with a culture and mission that is focused on sustainability!

The management of behavioural change in terms of employees and their managers is a key factor in the whole process.

Currently, the *Sindicato Nacional dos Quadros e Técnicos Bancários* (SNQTB) - National Union of Banking Professionals and Technicians - is initiating its social responsibility certification process; this follows a successful experiment on the path towards excellence in service provision as a pioneer in the certification of its service for the management of members' and beneficiaries' reimbursements for health expenses.

The SNQTB is a success in the application of Good Practices of Social Responsibility; we highlight three of its distinguishing features:

#### 1 – Policy on Communications with Members

With the goal of maximum transparency in the information for members, SNQTB implemented an information system on an Oracle platform developed for SNQTB; this gives members fully integrated and updated access to information. The Member Portal is currently close to completion.

#### 2 – Policy on the Social Integration of Immigrants in Portugal

The SNQTB has a total of 140 employees. It follows a social integration policy and currently employs citizens of six different nationalities (Brazil, Cape Verde, Mozambique, Ukraine, Moldova and Romania). Not only are the conditions created for them to be given the right training for their integration in day to day tasks, but they are also encouraged to continue their studies either at polytechnic or university level.

These measures are being developed in close collaboration with the Institute of Employment and Vocational Training.



### 3 – Family and Education Support

The SNQTB supports its employees in accompanying their families and their education.

In many cases, employees are given flexible timetables so that they can accompany family members in need of support during working hours.

In addition to flexible working hours for family assistance, SNQTB encourages employees to continue their studies by providing conditions for employees to attend any necessary training.

These are some measures that stand out from what is common practice in organisations.

## 2 | Knock on effect in the Portuguese economy

We believe that the implementation of social responsibility in organisations will generate an overall positive effect with social and economic impact; it will lead to sustainable and socially responsible organisations in which employees are more motivated and engaged in their organisation' s mission!

In Portugal, there is little tradition of social expectations in relation to companies and the population have always had very high hopes for social services from the public sector. However, social responsibility is the “mission” of everyone for the common good; so organisations should foster the development of a new awareness by involving all stakeholders and promoting joint actions to develop medium and long term measures that bring about a change in attitudes.

All stakeholders are involved in the implementation of a social responsibility system and this will have a knock on effect in the environment because all actions taken by the promoters lead to the mandatory pursuit of its policy by the various stakeholders in the processes.

In a Social Responsibility Policy, everyone has to interact; everyone has to feel that they are part of the solution. This attitude is crucial; for example, the fight against poverty can only be sustained in the long term through endogenous economic growth.

We will have to (re) learn how to walk along the sustainability path. It is our duty as citizens to promote and ensure the durability of the activities undertaken without ever forgetting the transparency of processes and ethical relations.

This is how to implement change in attitudes!

## 3 | Further reading

**SITES:** <http://opbpl.cies.iscte.pt> ; <http://gestorio.com/>

**BOOKS:**

- Harvard Business Review on Corporate Responsibility by Harvard Business School Press
- The Soul of a Business: Managing for Profit and the Common Good by Tom Chappell
- Capitalism at the Crossroads: The Unlimited Business Opportunities in Solving the World's Most Difficult Problems by Professor Stuart L. Hart
- The Triple Bottom Line: How Today's Best-Run Companies Are Achieving Economic, Social and Environmental Success—and How You Can Too by Andrew W. Savitz and Karl Weber
- The Sustainability Advantage: Seven Business Case Benefits of a Triple Bottom Line (Conscientious Commerce) by Bob Willard



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## Environmental Policy

The Electronic Papers published by the Portuguese Observatory for Good Labour Practices (OPBPL) are CO2 free; all the OPBPL labour practices respect the environment and go towards sustainability



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