



Macroeconomics

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**THE HISTORICAL ECONOMIC
AND SOCIAL DIMENSION
OF CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY
(THE CASE OF THE FURS SECTOR)**

Abstract

Kastoria and Siatista two of the most historical regions of Western Macedonia with rich cultural, commercial and craft-based activity, are the only regions in Europe that managed to survive the whirlwind of globalisation and still maintain fur manufacturing alive even though significantly smaller. Based on the facts that we have available up to date, fur manufacture and trade in these regions are dated from the 15th century, and both activities have brought forth many achieved tradesmen with rich offer as benefactors and sponsors not only in their mother country, but also in their places of residence. Of course back then the term corporate social responsibility was unknown but the love for ones country, patriotism, benefaction, and any other act of social contribution and pure patriotism, were itself another form of expression, that resembled more that of «the social corporate responsibility» instead of the corporate social responsibility. These therefore, the economic, social and charitable acts of people from another time we will be discussing in order to prove that, the current activities of enterprises

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on environmental issues, social sensitivity, culture, training etc, did not emerge out of nowhere, but in reality pre-existed from the older years. They were simply presented and characterized differently, as different were the needs of each time. Beyond this however, we will also be referring on the necessity for the craft-based sector of fur manufacturing, to organise a network in order to both continue with the tradition of their predecessors and also further develop this value adding activity as much for the whole industry but also for the end-product itself.

Key words:

Furs and leather processing, Western Macedonia, corporate responsibility.

JEL: L67.

1. Kastoria and the manufacture of furs-leather

Kastoria and Siatista are two of the few remaining regions, not only in Greece, but also in the entire Europe where the processing of fur and skin is still alive. As it is reported in the «*DICTIONARY of FUR*» Kastoria who is the capital of the prefecture of Kastoria, is also the most beautiful fur-making city in the world. The history of furs and leather treatment technique seems to have started when some citizens from Kastoria transferred the related know-how from Constantinople (Istanbul) during the 15th century. The broader region around the lake is inhabited since 5.500 B. C., but the foundation of Kastoria itself is dated in 840 B. C. Although the art of furs and leather treatment may have started with imported knowledge from Istanbul, the specialized treatment of furs clippings, like legs, heads and tails is a technique developed especially in the region by the kastorian craftsmen.

2. The economic crises in the sector of fur

Historically it has been proven that, there were economic crises in the sector of fur from the older years. Such crises emerge from various reasons and factors, such as new discoveries, changing fashion trends, wars, social agitations, international competition, production surplus, ecological movements, hot winters etc. The first crisis was reported already in the Neolithic era, where men

learned to cultivate, raise animals, etc. As a result, both the linen and wool dominated and the costume of fur-making went into recession.

For another crisis that is owed in the change of fashion, we are informed by Skarlatos Byzantios between 1825 and 1850.

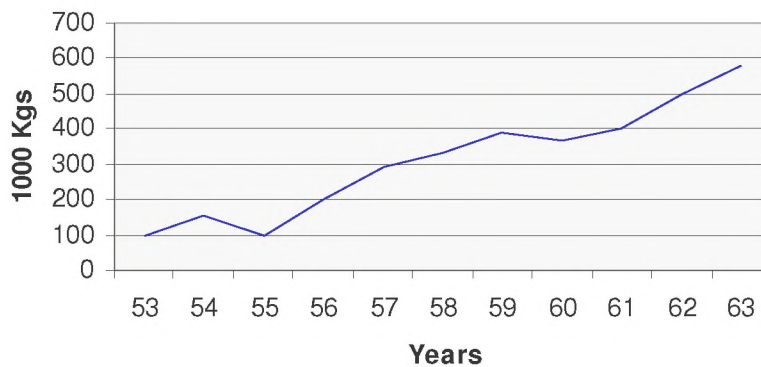
After that, a «blossom» in the economy can explain the heavy construction of many mansions between 1860–1880, followed by a period of decline and the immigration of kastorians in northern America and mainly in N. York. Another crisis followed the fall of the Ottoman Empire, during the First World War and the Asia Minor destruction, which influenced the manufactures of Thessalonica, Giannena, Filippoupoli, Andrianoupoli, Chios, Kozani etc because they did not have commercial relations with countries outside of the Ottoman sovereignty, unlike Kastoria and Siatista.

Other economic crises, called circular were present in the decade of 1960s. At the decade of '50s because of the reconstruction of Western Europe and more generally the western world following the 2nd World War there was a rapid growth without important fluctuations as it is shown in fig. 1. During the 60's however, we have two important fluctuations, in 1963 and in 1967 and one smaller in 1970, as it is shown in fig 2.

These figures show imports of raw material of furs the corresponding periods, which coincides with the circular fluctuations of the economic crises in the western societies of this time.

Figure 1.

**Imports of raw material (Chordas) from 1952 to 1963 in Kastoria
(in 1.000 Kg.)**



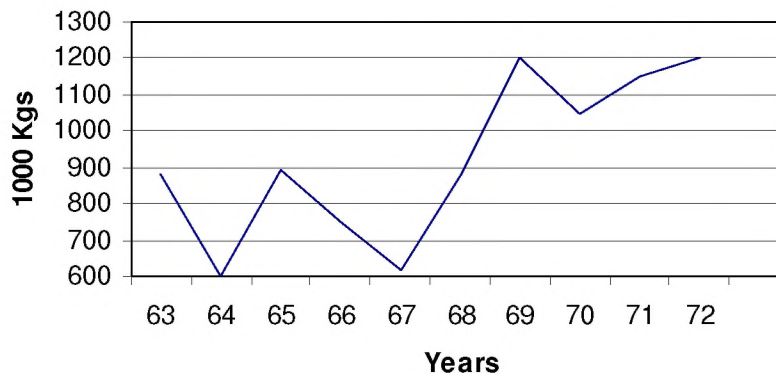
Source: L. Pouliopoulos, pg. 80.

A big extended crisis existed after 1987 up to 1992 roughly, which for Kastoria and Siatista, was overcome provisionally with the opening of the market of the Eastern countries and mainly Russia. Another big crisis that influenced fur-making was in 1998, with the depreciation of rouble in Russia, which was overcome much faster compared to that of 1987. Another crisis was observed (in Greece) in 2006–7, where the sales declined because of the high temperatures during that winter and the prices of fur skins were found for a little time in a free fall, mainly in the auctions of winter and the beginning of spring. Afterwards the prices of fur skins (raw material) began to increase dramatically alongside oil prices, because of the big demand from Chinese businessmen. As fur itself is considered to be a luxury product (at least in countries that do not have heavy winters), it was inevitably affected by the big financial crisis of 2008. This financial crisis that began from the USA, was already present earlier in 2007 through the minor originally «falls» of Stock Exchange indicators which climaxed on 18/10/2008, when we had not only the rapid fall of all Stock Exchange indicators, but also the collapse of banks and other companies.

Naturally during this crisis the fur industry was highly affected despite the fact that its major consumer is no longer the USA and Western Europe but rather Russia. The first reaction from consumers was to cancel all orders and from the suppliers to admit liability in financing their obligations. All of the above forced a lot of enterprises to reduced production and personnel downsizing.

Figure 2.

Imports of raw material from 1963 to 1972 in 1.000 Kg.



Source: Spanos M. (Kastorian CCI) L. Pouliopoulos, p. 81/

3. What is the CSR?

The corporate social responsibility is substantially a means by which the companies decide willingly to contribute for a better society and a cleaner environment. Most definitions describe the CSR as a means according to which the companies incorporate voluntarily, social and environmental concerns in their enterprising activities and their contacts with other interested parts.

The Greek Network for the CSR reports that, it is the willing engagement of the enterprises to integrate in their enterprising practices social and environmental actions, that are beyond and above those imposed by the legislation and have direct relation with all parties influenced by them: workers – shareholders – collaborators – suppliers – investors – consumers – communities in which they activate and more.

The CSR Europe, the network for the CSR in Europe reports that the CSR refers to the way by which an enterprise manages and improves its social and environmental repercussions, so that it adds value as much in the shareholders, and to all interested parties, through strategic, organizational and operational innovations.

The world council on the sustainable growth reports: CSR is the commitment of enterprises to contribute in the viable growth via the collaboration with their personnel, the local societies and the society in general so that they improve the quality of life for everybody.

The last decades mainly in the developed countries, the interest for the social and ecological obligations of enterprises has increased; a fact that is owed partly in the action of ecological movements and organisations of consumers and to the requirements generated by our socio-political system itself. The allegations that the enterprises should allocate a part of their economic resources in activities of social content have not always been easily accepted. The writers that dealt with the particular subject disagreed, as per the ability or the purpose of the companies dealing with any social act or if that should be an obligation only of the state.

This conflict had lasted a lot of years and it has been crystallized in the work and in the thoughts of two important writers, honoured with reward Nobel Milton Friedman and professor of University of Arizona Keith Davis, who separated the CSR in three levels, i.e. that of social obligation, of social responsibility and of the social response. In this point we clarify that, various statistical tables that are published in various newspapers or other forms as the one that we mention below, concern first degree SR that is the social obligation. Therefore, the whole dimension of CSR is not considered complete but even is partial execution or operation, is a first step for a future complete application.

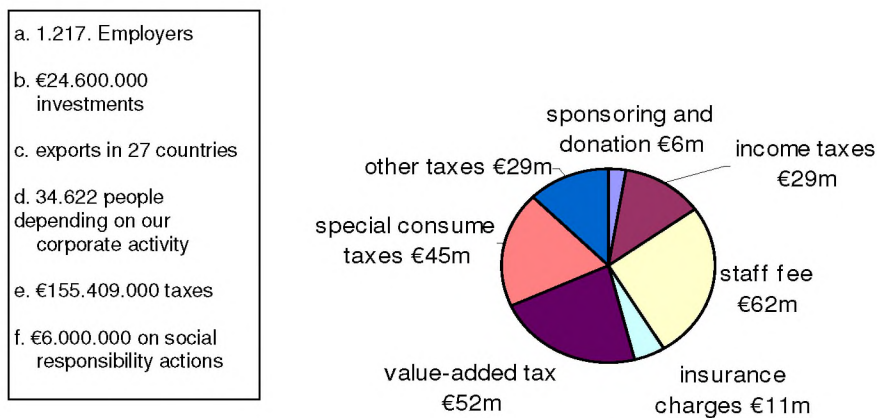
In the following figure 3, we can see a distribution of resources and activities of a medium big enterprise, mainly in this first degree of social responsibility

that is characterized as social obligation. This degree of course cannot be included entirely in what is called CSR because in the bigger part it includes operations or obligations that are not voluntary but obligatory as egg the yields in direct and indirect taxes etc What however we observe is that the action of social responsibility amount in the sum of € 6 millions, which is big, if it is really used only in voluntary hence not obligatory action S. R.

Figure 3.

Informative type of a company related to the CSR

The contribution of corporate action in the greek society and economy



In order for someone to imagine how much the perception, the mentality or the psychology of our society ha changed toward the subject of SR. I will report an example from the Greek reality. When singer Markos Bambakaris died in 1972, his family was borrowed 30 thousands drachmas (then 1.000 dollars USA), in order to cope with the expenses of his funeral, expressing her disappointment for the indifference of the state and the private sector. Today of course many companies of the entertainment industry line-up in order to undertake such an obligation of even much bigger scope.

The average distrustful citizen today, would say that, they make these (the social work) the enterprises, so that they gain more either because of tax exemptions, or for certain other reasons. But is it so, or could this be an exaggeration? Of course a lot of researching has been made in this direction and today

we know a lot of things, about what the citizens know, or which opinion they have for the CSR and a lot of other facts.

In other countries that have great tradition in the social state another question arises. If that is to say instead of corporate social responsibility, should we speak perhaps of social corporate responsibility. (GUV) (Gesellschaftliche Unternehmensverantwortung). We here cannot enter in such details but only underline and stress that, the CSR as an operation in an enterprise is essential, socially imposed, it creates surplus value in the enterprise and alas in those enterprises, that will see and face it as a public relation element, in order to generate only short-term profits.

All researches and the studies have proved that, if CSR is dialled with as an act of social responsibility, in the mission and in the strategic planning of an enterprise, then so much the shareholders and the entire society, including also consumers, will appreciate and reward with their trust and their preference in the products or their services. Moreover is not accidental that big enterprises in Greece, not only adopted CSR, but also advertise it via the press. As an example I report one from the thousands cases, a company of mobile telephony, which committed, for each point of the basketball player and our fellow-citizen Dimitri Diamantidi, to attribute 100 Euros in the Prefectoral Association of People with special needs of Kastoria.

4. The CSR in the branch of Fur

Questions that should be answered here are the following: Can this operation be used in the branch of fur? Are the enterprises of fur so big and robust to invest in an activity where the profits won't be immediately visible? The answer is of course YES, because CSR it can be included in each enterprise, depending on the size and can begin from the simple sponsoring and the organisation of athletic events, up to the training, the prevention, the education and a pile other environmental and social activities. However as mentioning before, can the enterprises of fur function under one institution, or one existing, as the already existing network CSR or create a new institution or even the already existing institutions as the SGK(Furmaker Association) assuming they include in their statement of mission, the CSR as strategic henceforth planning in their objectives. The CSR in the branch of fur should be applied for all reasons that are in effect for the other enterprises plus one additional, that we will explain afterwards.

4.1. Greek benefaction

The sponsorships, the benefactions, the charities and other actions of social sensitivity, are not a modern phenomenon. In Greece the institution of sponsoring, benefaction and other social actions in favour of the society are known from the ancient years. The Olympic Games that were carried out in Greece by 7th century B. C. were organised with the help of sponsors. Consequently CSR as we know it in its current form, passed a lot of stages of development, in order to reach thus its present state today.

Greek benefaction constitutes a phenomenon with a particular place in the Modern Greek history. The operation of benefactors was historically progressive and decisive, for the constitution of government owned institutions and the predominance of the amounting working class. In the new conditions that imposed the social transformation, the benefactors undertake, via the big fortune that they had, social undertakings with terms of individual work. From this corner, the idea of benefaction represents a leading event social, national and cross-cultural conscience, which by bypassing in many cases the weakness of the government concern, proved the strategic supremacy of anthropocentric dimension of social life.

The difficult economic, political, demographic and living conditions as well as the big pressure from the Turkish conquerors led the Greeks at the last quarter of the 17th, 18th and to the beginning of 19th century to emigrations. The hope for a better life abroad, the trade and the thirst for learning were the more important reasons of immigrations. The trade constituted the most important factor in the foundation of new Greek communities. The growth of economic relations between east and west offered the possibility to the Macedonians, Epirotes and remaining Greeks of migrating and with their hard work to acquire big fortunes. The regions that assembled a lot of Greeks were mainly central Europe, northern Balkan and Russia.

Is characteristic the report of Emil Brass in a book of 1925 where he is reporting the activity of Greek fur traders in Leipzig at the 18th and 19th century and among many he writes the following:

... as long as it concerns Germany, the center of fur that time, was Leipzig. Certainly Greeks were not absent from there not to mention the western Macedonians, kastorians etc, who with their graphic costumes revived the streets of Leipzig mainly at the duration of the Fur Fair, since from the total 300 tradesmen, the 100 were Greeks.

The Greek emigrants, despite the unfavourable conditions acquired big economic surface and power and thus they could help their countries which were under the Turkish domination and benefit their homeland, as Nikolaos [Doumpas] from Vlasti, who was born in Vienna and rescued from the dissemi-

nation the bigger part of Franz Schubert compositions and gave them away to the Municipality of Vienna.

Equally decisive was his contribution, in the materialisation of the magnificent hall of «Friends of Music», the famous «Musikverein». For all this the Municipality of Vienna gave in this street his name, Dumbastrasse. He was close friend of Richard Wagner, Johann Strauss, Johannes Brahms. He played a leading part in the construction of statues of big personalities of Vienna (Beethoven, Rantetski, Mozart, Schubert, Siler, Brahms). His contribution in building construction was also major in Vienna but also in Athens.

The economic activity of benefactors was a common phenomenon in the Greek and more generally in European reality, because it was part of a new urban class, which gave them power and «wealth» of new perceptions, which they brought with them when they returned to their mother country together with, revolutionary ideas and wealth.

4.2. The social sensitivity of furmakers in the passage of centuries

In the sector of fur there were, still are and will continue to be too many entrepreneurs and companies, who made great social work as benefactors, which undoubtedly falls within the CSR.

Manolakis the Kastorian or Manolakis George Manos, referred to the Dictionary of Fur as a fur merchant and supplier to the palace of Mehmet D in 17th century. He had the title of «the first furmaker» and spent huge sums for the rebirth of the Greek nation. The Co-op of the furmakers of Istanbul which Manolakis attended on 19th century maintained the great school of the nation otherwise known as traditional patriarchal academy. Manolakis and The Co-op of fur in Istanbul finance and undertake the payroll of the Holy School in Kastoria in 1715. Manolakis financed the construction of the famous school of Patmos, the school of Victor in Chios (1660) and the School of Arta (1669). Also under the protection of fur Co-op was the school of district (Istanbul) of Palinou. Moreover it is no coincidence that the Co-op (tradeunion) of furs mentioned even today in the Patriarchate of Constantinople.

Other benefactors of that time were acknowledged kastorians Kastriotis George and Kyritsis George. Kastriotis (who probably is not related to the famous George Kastriotis or Skentempei) in 1705 as the official ruler of Constantine Oungrovlachias Basarampa Bragkovanou, founded a school in Kastoria, for the maintenance of which he made a money deposit in Venetian Tsekos. Deposits amounted to about 14,000 Duke from the interest of which, amounting to 370 Duke a year, he would pay 20 Duke to the Commissioners of St. George (the linear) of Venice (for the management of interest and the remaining

350 Duke would be sent to the school in Kastoria. Out of these, 80 Duke go to the first teacher, 40 to the second teacher and the remaining 30 are allocated to the 10 students minus 10 to be saved for various repairs and renovations. Also the letter stated that the the commitment of most interest to commence on 1 June 1708 and payment by 19 January 1709, because by then he had prepaid all the expenses of the School.

A few years after the founding of the school of Kastriotis, another wealthy kastorian merchant named Kyritsis., son of kastorian Lord Demetrius Kyritsis reinforced the economic foundation of the «Greek School», realising therefore the decision taken by the kastorians on August 1711. This school was to be maintained by interest funds, he had deposited in Venice and would be managed by the Christians of his homeland. Dimitrios Kyritsis, father of George, with a will made on March 3, 1697, to the public notario of Corfu Spyros Asimakopoulos, left to his son George 8000 realia for charity. 6000 Duke of those submitted on September 28 1700 in Venice with a 3.75% interest per annum. George Kyritsis's will appointed commissioners for the collection of interest and selecting a tutor, who will seek to establish in Kastoria a school, where 24 students would be attending. In a second will drawn up on January 11, 1716 G. Kyritsis has donated substantial sums to the Mount Athos monastery in Sinai, for the prisoners, the poor and the churches of Kastoria.

It is important to mention here that the donor or benefactor dictated details and procedures for choosing the Commissioners who will be collecting the interest from Venice and how the will, will be managed. Of the 225 Duke of annual interest, the teacher will be paid at 150 per year to teach 24 students and reward the best of them «to the best in mind and knowledge», with the sum of 18 silver Duke each year for 7 years. The remaining balances of interest ordered to be used to repair the building and for any emergency. The last clause of this will dictates, as case kastorians show any disrespect, school must remain closed for two years and interest on deposits is to be received by the clergy of the church St. Athanasius Mitropoleos in Ioannina for the school and the teachers of the city: January 15, 1715.

Of course beyond the known and officially recorded beneficence, sponsorships, etc. there were many other acts of social sensitivity that had more relationship with the homeland and the nation because times were different back then and acts of solidarity of social sensitivity and responsibility were focused on the homeland and the fellow citizens of the benefactor. We can not know all the hidden and informal perhaps patriotic acts, of national and social responsibility and sensitivity, because of the Ottoman sovereignty. But we are mentioning one of them, which is the case of furtrader Kostaki Pouliopoulou, who during the Macedonian Struggle (1900-1912) he would hide boots and other articles intended for the needs of Macedonian fighters, in parcels of raw material fur (strings), which were sent from London in Kastoria, put. [1].

Naturally back then, beneficence was done more for patriotic or national reasons but it was of significance as, some things were tolerated by the Otto-

mans and considered legal or acceptable, but there were acts which could be misunderstood by them and endanger the benefactor. So, there were acts of social sensitivity, which could endanger the «donor», to the point of having to pay with his own life.

For the history, the information we have is from the testimony of the daughter of Kostakis Pouliopoulos Mrs Kalliopi Dai, who was born in 1904 and remembers that at their home in Ntoltsso there were secret meetings, which are said to have been involved and Germanos Karavangelis [1].

This means that a moral act, may not have been legitimate and could jeopardize the «donor-benefit» which means that social sensitivity and social responsibility in different conditions and seasons had a different meaning and value than in the current time which may involve communicative or other purposes. But it must be stressed that CSR was existing since ancient times, was just under different circumstances and ways because there were different needs on each era.

Today of course there are too many donors and benefactors of small and large scale known and unknown named and anonymous. Among many and varied acts and actions of social responsibility and sensitivity we can distinguish that one of the brothers Papageorgiou from Siatista (the second fur-city after Kastoria in Greece). The international standing and reputation furtraders from western Macedonia, who trade mainly active in Germany and manufactured in their hometown Siatista, winning a lot of money from this activity, that all furmen inherited from their ancestors, built the Papageorgiou Hospital in Thessaloniki, engaging 20 years ago the amount of 6 billion drachmas, or 18 million euro.

5. Practical applications

The implementation of CSR can be done at many levels. The most usual of course is sponsorship which does not require any organizational structure. Another act that could happen is the non-use of printed advertising material, together with clear communication on how many trees are saved and do not harm the environment. Another very important activity that creates high added value of social capital for an institution or company, is organizing sports events, attracting sponsors and co, as local sports organisations, etc.

The areas in which a body such as S. G. K. could then be engaged in are:

- Mere occasional or permanent sponsorship.
- Organized sports tournaments and other events.
- Reduced papers for no charge and protect the environment.
- Cooperation with NGOs for adoption or other charitable acts.

- Additional environmental and social activities.
- Commitment that a percentage of the selling price of a product will be attributed to vulnerable groups, etc.

5.1. The reasons for the acceptance and operation of the CSR

The reasons for which CSR is essential to the operations of the fur industry is the same as those applied to other industries or other industrial or craft or service. But there is an additional reason why the industry should implement CSR which of course we will explain. We all know that the fur industry for many years has received many reactions, or even <War> from various environmental organizations, which do not accept the fur of animals, whose skin is used for the clothing of humans. Many enterprises from the sector in the past and present, used and use the squirrel or beaver as a mark of their business as if companies had fur animals. Fortunately, some companies understood it even later and they don't use them as their mark anymore.

Craft fur should separate their activities from the farmers of fur animals, because they are not farmers, and secondly because it does not coincide with the farmers. There are currently too many furmakers dedicated to leather goods, which means that their products come from animals raised for food while their skin is used for clothing. This raises a question. Perhaps the industry should be classified as a processing industry furskin and then left only of the skins to separate themselves entirely from the fur skins, which are primarily kept for their fur, not for their meat? This as a reflection and not as position.

Of course as far as the fur of animals and the killing, the circumstances and the methods used have no relation to the past, since the law was very strict and the countries that are suppliers, are a role model in ecological sensitivity and they are civilized people, who have nothing to do with a few isolated incidents that everybody publicly condemn. So then why should the industry show more social and ecological sensitivity, through the adoption of CSR, there should be neither communicative reasons nor reasons of guilt. Instead it should be a holistic approach to life and the environment and through this activity to show that although an unfortunate fact led us to exercise a profession considered by some today anti-ecologic, the furmen not adhere it but show their perception in corporate and environmental responsibility to offer and to inform the world, both for the truth about their partners or participating, and their philosophy towards life and the ecosystem. So taking the function of social corporate responsibility and not just CSR will be consolidated and will be realized as a different vision for the sector, which will not be as vulnerable to the opponents of the industry since

social and ecological sensitivities of the furmen will be such that at least mitigate the reactions of most of the people.

5.2. Implications and future developments

It is true that CSR today is a function which evolves increasingly and it is being adopted by most enterprises, while the EU has established rules, directives, declarations, etc. (egg Green Paper). Also they have created networks of CSR mainly from large companies in most countries in Europe and discussions both in business and academic level converge to provide a more organized and systematic implementation of CSR. What does this mean? It means that in schools and universities there should be a new direction, perhaps comparable to T.Q.M. or even marketing, but which can create value for each entity. How to create this value depends on many factors, both internal and external.

But it is important for businesses and society, not only for the company to be accepted, because of CSR, by the society, and therefore consumers, but that there could be institutionalized rules for assessing CSR, on which companies would receive favorable financing arrangements, etc.

What then can be the benefits that can accrue to the company in the future if the EU accepts some statutory incentives? Some of these could be:

- Incentives to implement a CSR system (egg as happened with the ISO).
- Assessment of the CSR for financing.
- Incentives in any type of organizations of middle size companies that promote and implement CSR in accordance with a framework of principles and rules.

Other benefits of a voluntary and non-institutionalized CSR could also be the following:

- Improved market value and reputation.
- Positive image in its relations with key stakeholders and others.
- Positive image to all investors and relations with trust with the shareholders.
- Possible inclusion in specific securities and banking assessment indices.
- Great visibility in society and sustainable development.
- Better working conditions.
- Employee satisfaction, willingness to work for this company.

- Good relations with government and local communities.

In addition, risks hamper CSR strengthen the company and certainly contribute to profitability. In particular:

- Infringement and trademark reputation
- The loss of consumers
- The probability of the firm to lose opportunities
- The loss of staff
- The loss of investors and funds
- Involvement in court cases and legal problems

The existence of foreign stock indices like the (FTSE 4 Good) in Britain (Domini 400) in America and many <green> funds in Europe and America support the belief that CSR and financial performance go hand in hand.

Beyond the general benefits that apply for each firm specifically in the fur industry the operation of CSR can be useful in the following possible approaches.

- Community support to a cottage industry threatened by extinction
- Engaging into the craft of leather goods under certain social historical and geographical circumstances.
- The region of Western. Macedonia, the last production center in Europe.
- A tradition of 500 years created by knowledge and skills that constitute social capital for local residents.
- Linking crafts – industry by using knowledge of the academic community will enhance the product and the availability and visibility.

6. Conclusions and recommendations

In conclusion, as many companies seek to be competitive and profitable in the long term, they should include in their strategy practices of CSR, not only for the company but also for man and society, and as it is an activity affecting everyone. Summarizing we note that CSR:

- Offers Opportunities.
- Restrain threats.
- Is linked to the profitability of the company.
- Opens new horizons and prospects for the institution or enterprise,

But the question for our case is, whether the fur companies and organizations, can implement and in what extent, CSR. The answer is that they can but not to the extent of a large enterprise. But what can be done with success, is to create a network of CSR, which will express the whole industry, both firms and institutions. The proposal is for the stakeholders to proceed in the creation of an independent network of CSR to have as many as possible operators to participate for the reasons mentioned above.

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