

Corporate **Social** Responsibility

# CSR: a strategy for business sustainability



The social responsibility of a company goes far beyond backing a certain NGO or planting trees. **Nadia Sawyer** looks at how important it is to organisations to include their role in the world outside their door in their business practices

**T**O define corporate social responsibility (CSR) would require a long thesis – it is, after all, a very broad subject that is included in Business and Management degrees, taught either as specific standalone modules or embedded into other academic subjects. The European Commission, though, has defined CSR as ‘the responsibility of enterprises for their impact on society’ and says that companies can become socially responsible by following the law and integrating social, environmental, ethical, consumer and human rights concerns into their business strategies and operations. The Commission believes that the actions of companies have significant impact on EU citizens and for this reason it has, over the years, introduced to EU member states a mix of voluntary and mandatory actions to support CSR.

In Cyprus, there is also an independent corporate network called CSR Cyprus, which promotes the concept of CSR and sustainable business practices not just for the

for the benefit of company stakeholders, but for the lives of future generations. Is progress really being made on the island though or are large companies using cam-

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paigns to merely give their brand a better image?

“The truth is that when we began to set up the network here in Cyprus, the major challenge was to change corporations’ understanding of what CSR actually is.



I think what we have managed to do in the last couple of years is to get most of our members to realise that CSR is much more than some sporadic actions for the environment or supporting an NGO. What we have managed to make clear is that CSR is not charity and that CSR is not sponsorship,” Chairman of CSR Cyprus and an assistant professor in the

school of business at the University of Nicosia Alexandros Antonaras said. “The main challenge for organisations is to put CSR into their strategy. It is not just an independent activity that the marketing department designs or sets up for other reasons. It needs to come from the core business strategy of the organisation. If it is not there, then it is not going

to be designed and implemented properly.”

In order to achieve this CSR Cyprus has implemented a series of workshops to show the strategic role and importance of CSR. “We need to see CSR as corporate sustainability and responsibility. It is not just about the organisation

TURN TO PAGE 18

# Lidl Cyprus: a mission for a better tomorrow

**L**IDL Cyprus takes care of customers by contributing decisively to strengthening and supporting the society in which it is active. Its actions aim at sustainability and the daily provision of high quality products, safeguarding the company's momentum in the future.

There are five main pillars of activity: Society, Environment, Products and Human Resources, as well as both External and Internal Associates.

## Society



Under the slogan 'Our Mission is a Better Tomorrow,' Lidl Cyprus is a strong participant in social contribution through social responsibility activities in collaboration with established organisations. From time to time social activities have been jointly implemented with various organisations, while the funding of the Health Education programme took place in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Culture. In addition, support for Anatolia College's Centre for Talented Youth (CTY) Greece continued. Anatolia College offers scholarships to talented Cypriot students. Also a new course will be added to the Centre for Talented Youth (CTY Greece) curriculum in summer 2019, with the support of Lidl Cyprus. The course, titled Nutrition: Highway to Health, will be offered to students in lower and upper secondary schools who are selected to participate in the Centre's summer programmes. The new course will focus on both food chemistry and the principles of healthy nutrition. Also, for the last six years in recognition of the social work carried out by the Arodaphnousa Palliative Care Centre, Lidl Cyprus has undertaken not only the operational costs for the beds there but also the provision of foodstuff needed by the sufferers/guests at the hospice. Lidl also covers salaries and whatever other operational costs are necessary so as to ensure daily

healthy and delicious meals to patients. Through implemented social actions, Lidl Cyprus also seeks the active participation of its consumers by creating a chain of love and social contribution.

On January 29, Lidl Cyprus announced the cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Culture for the academic years 2018-2019 and 2019-2020. The partnership falls under Lidl Cyprus' main Corporate Social Responsibility pillars. As part of the arrangement and through the Home Economics course, lower secondary school students will have the opportunity to attend the Lidl Food Academy and take part in cookery classes taught by chefs, and to receive advice on nutrition from specialist nutritionists/dietitians. The students will have an enjoyable morning, as following the lecture part of the course they will be divided into five teams to prepare something on their own. Lidl believes that the results of this particular action will be very positive and will serve to improve the quality of the children's lives, particularly by shaping a balanced nutritional consciousness. Finally, the company supports the activities of the Cyprus Red Cross Society, which are basically dictated by its raison d'être, which is none other than the endeavour to alleviate human suffering throughout the world, especially the CRCS Children Therapy Centre Stella Soulioti. The Centre operates a special school for children of school age, offering special education, therapy, psychological support and more.



## Environment

In the environment at field, Lidl Cyprus acts responsibly since



the long-term goal set for high quality services and efficiency can only be achieved within a healthy natural environment. Lidl Cyprus implements this on a daily basis by applying environmentally friendly innovations such as optimal energy efficiency for its installations, the production and use of renewable energy sources and best use of recycling. Lidl is committed to reducing plastic material, by setting three important goals:

- (1) To withdraw plastic bags from its stores as of February 28;
- (2) To reduce the use of plastic material by at least 20% by 2025; and
- (3) To ensure the 100% use of recyclable materials on label packaging by 2025.

## Products



quality and source of production.

Lidl Cyprus supports local producers and offers high quality products at competitive prices, while it systematically checks the quality and source of production.

## Associates



Lidl Cyprus employees enjoy a stable work environment that rewards individual responsibility, teamwork and high performance. The company ensures stable and secure work, even at difficult times, and provides attractive salaries and benefits. Continuous education is provided at national and international level

to ensure a good work environment that will positively affect the performance and productivity of employees and attract new associates in the long run and through its support for new work positions during the same period.

## External Associates



The main objective is corporate, long-term relations with Lidl Cyprus associates based on transparent quality standards with the aim of achieving sustainable cooperation.

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# cyta

# We create a better future

CYTA is the leading provider of integrated electronic communications in Cyprus and provides a broad range of reliable, innovative telecommunication services and solutions, both to households and businesses

Since February 2004, Cyta has been the exclusive partner of Vodafone in Cyprus and, at the same time, a member of the biggest family of mobile telephony in the world.

## We care for the people

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) safeguards and protects society and the environment. For Cyta, CSR constitutes an essential expression of its responsibility towards its stakeholders. It relates to the way it operates in every business activity and its relations with all those it affects with its actions.

## We embrace the society

In the field of CSR, Cyta embraces all sectors of society with a full sense of responsibility to its customers, the staff, associates and suppliers, as well as the broader society, the state and the environment.

In 2004 Cyta signed the Sustainability Charter of the ETNO (European Telecommunications Network Operators Association), with the commitment to offer products and services that provide significant environmental, social and economic benefits as well as targeted solutions for vulnerable groups.

## We care for the children

- Solutions for safe use of the internet, such as the Cytanet 'Safe Internet - for home' and 'Safe Internet - for schools' service, as well as the application safeMobile for mobile phones and tablets.

- Seminars and lectures at schools to educate children, parents and the public for the correct and secure use of the internet.

- Creation of the HFC Beat Bullying app in cooperation with the non-profit organisation Hope For Children. The application allows children to communicate anonymously with the relevant authorities to report cases of bullying.

## We believe there should be no barriers to communication

For Cyta everybody must be able to communicate through telecommunication products and services. This is why Cyta offers specially designed products and services for people with disabilities, impaired vision, hearing or mobility. Additionally, in an effort to provide substantial assistance and make life and communication easier, it offers reduced rates to some 36,000 citizens whose income is below the poverty line as well as to groups of citizens with special needs.



## We care for the environment and the planet

The commitment to the long-term pledge on environmental issues has been practically proven for another year by Cyta, as an organisation that sends zero waste to landfill. Since 2016 it has secured the certificate **Zero Waste to Landfill** from TÜV Cyprus Ltd. This certification is issued when an organisation recycles more than 95% of its waste. In 2018, Cyta, through its unwavering environmentally friendly policy, managed to re-use or recycle 97.3% of its waste.

Cyta's waste that is re-used or recycled includes paper, plastic, cables, aluminum, batteries, printers, vehicles,

organic waste, poles, ink cartridges, tyres, wood and more. Consistently and responsibly, Cyta wants to further reduce the proportion of waste that cannot be re-used or recycled, aiming at 0% waste to landfills.

Cyta was awarded the **Golden Environmental Protection Award** and at the same time secured a Special Honors Award for the Highest Score at the 2018 Environmental Awards for Organisations and Businesses.

The Golden Protector of the Environment award is the most important environmental distinction in Cyprus and is awarded to companies or organisations that manage environmental issues as an integral part of their business policy.

Cyta has also been awarded the **1st Prize in the Green**

Cyta was awarded with the Golden Environmental Protection Award and at the same time secured a Special Honors Award for the Highest Score at the 2018 Environmental Awards for Organizations and Businesses



**Public Procurement Competition CY GPP AWARDS 2018.** The award consisted of the Green Public Procurement Integrated Policy, as well as Awards in four (4) of the twelve (12) subcategories, namely: Award in the category Computer Equipment/Domestic Appliances, Award in the Vehicles category, Award in the Photocopying/Printing paper and prize in the category Air conditioners.

The **Environmental Awards**, at which Cyta gained the **Gold Award**, aim at creating conditions of noble competition for the promotion of environmental sensitivity, highlight social contribution and reward good practices for the protection of the environment and sustainability, as well as innovative, viable 'green' projects, technologies or programmes that contribute to a healthy environment and economic development, by companies and organisations.

Cyta is the first Cypriot organisation that has secured the certification of environmental quality **Green Office** for all its shops, its headquarters and Cyta Support Center with regard to the quality of their environmental administration and operation. Green Office is the pioneering, pilot programme of environmental quality for buildings and offices that is administered by the Cyprus Marine Environment Protection Association (CYMEPA).

## Protecting biodiversity

Cyta is the first strategic partner of the Cyprus Forest Association for the Protection of Biodiversity in Cyprus.

Some of the actions held through this collaboration include:

- The installation of an online adjustable camera system in a refuge cave for the observation of *Miniopterus schreibersii* bat; one of the most important cave species



of Cyprus and of Europe.

- The installation of GPS Tracking systems on Fruit bats (*Rousettus aegyptiacus*).

- Cooperating with Bird-Life Cyprus to offer shelter to the swifts of Cyprus. Swifts spawned the interest of many nature lovers around the world due to their unique features. They are the only birds that do everything in flight mode: they mate, sleep and drink in the air while they clean it by consuming huge quantities of insects. They arrive on our island in February to nest and return to Africa by the end of July to spend the winter.

## Sustainable development

For the protection of the environment, the policy implemented relies on the provision of products and

services that contribute to sustainable development and the minimisation of the negative consequences on the environment from their functioning. At the same time, Cyta has included in its priorities, scheduled tree-planting in all towns of Cyprus to reduce the carbon footprint. In the framework of this objective, one tree is planted for every 10 new connections of the Cytavision service. Cyta also constantly pursues actions for reducing the use of electrical energy, water and fuel.

For more information:  
[www.cyta.com.cy/corporate-social-responsibility](http://www.cyta.com.cy/corporate-social-responsibility)





because it is good for the environment," Antonaras emphasised.

"There is a huge difference between how a mining company destroys the environment and how an accounting firm impacts the environment. Both of them have a negative impact but definitely it's not the same. I expect a mining company to plant trees, but I would not expect an accounting firm to plant trees. There are other things that I would expect from a financial institution. For example, educating people on how to economise, or educating people on how to spend wisely, or advising them not to borrow money if they can not repay their loans. So perhaps these types of actions and activities are more important for the financial institution than planting trees," he explained.

But does the company itself see any benefit from this? "Perhaps it's reputation, improvement in customer relations, perhaps they are financial benefits for the organisation in the long-run because of an action," Antonaras

suggested. "But we also need to be able to define what the benefits are for the stakeholders and for society in general".

The next six months will see CSR Cyprus organise a workshop on how a good CSR activity can be designed and implemented.

Of course the customer is only one of an organisation's stakeholders but possibly among the most important as they are key to its sustainability, so a company not only needs loyalty from its customers but should also set up a dialogue with them. "Talk to them and educate them," Antonaras said. "We try to emphasise that it is important to have well informed customers. This is the only way to build a relationship with them to ensure the business' financial sustainability. We are trying to make the shift. You don't design CSR actions for others. You design CSR actions for the organisation's sustainability."

Indeed, Antonaras advised that a company's reports on its sustainability initiatives are just as



important to potential investors as its financial reports. He believes that if the shareholders in Cypriot companies realise this they will understand that when they are looking for investors they need to start caring about sustainability. He explained that huge, multi-national corporations are interested in the sustainability of their supply chains, setting strict sustainability criteria for their supply chains, includ-

ing sustainability audits.

"At some stage in the future, companies in Cyprus will be requested to prove that they are implementing socially responsible and sustainable business practices," he warned.

It is not just down to companies though as citizens too have a role. "We should not only be talking about corporate responsibility but also about citizens' responsibility," said Antonaras, advising

that if a customer thinks that a company they are buying goods or services from is not acting in a socially responsible way they should bring it to the attention of the person responsible for CSR in the organisation. For those companies that are already members of CSR Cyprus, the name and contact details of the appropriate person can be found on CSR Cyprus' website <http://www.csr-cyprus.org.cy>.



**VASSILIKO CEMENT WORKS**  
PUBLIC COMPANY LTD

Since 1963

## Doing the right thing

**C**ORPORATE Social Responsibility constitutes one of Vassiliko Cement Works' principles; it is embedded in the company's mindset, governing all its business activities through initiatives aimed at improving and upgrading living standards, caring for and protecting the environment.

Vassiliko Cement shares a common vision, which guides it in managing all activities in strict adherence with a code of ethics and in a socially responsible way.

Having incorporated the Sustainable Development Goals into its Strategy, Vassiliko Cement takes bold and transformational steps towards a sustainable and

resilient path.

The aim is to be a successful company with an increasing value, operating under full transparency and with respect to people, stakeholders and the wider community.

In the context of this policy, it has established and consolidated a co-existence relationship between its activities and the local community, setting conditions of trust and understanding with all associates.

Consequently, it has assumed a commitment to follow and respect the CSR principles and values across the spectrum of its daily activities. The company adheres to five values: People, Health & Safety, Environment, Quality and Integrity. It treats CSR separately from the concepts of charity and monetary giving. CSR reflects the mindset, the seriousness, the ethics and the sound principles which the company adopts and follows.

One of its more recent actions is the creation of the 1st Corporate Summer School (in Zygi area), a two-month summer school for children aged 6-12 years old whose parents work at Vassiliko and those of neighbouring communities. Fifty-five children were enrolled in July/August 2018, under the supervision of four teachers, fully trained



who undertook a variety of classes and field trips, as well as cared and looked after them.

The Talents Academy, launched in 2013, continues with the employment of young, unemployed university graduates and non-graduates, outside and separate from recruitment needs, for an on-the-job training for six to 12 months. The purpose is to enable those young people to acquire work experience (with full remuneration) in one of the heaviest industries in Cyprus. During their training, individuals have the opportunity to develop and apply their education and skills in specific jobs, as well as to learn and understand the general feel of the work environment. They can thus, then move on with work experience to support their educational qualifications.

Ethos is at the top of Vassiliko Cement's culture

and as such the company has adopted practices to combat corruption, and boost transparency, in parallel to the implementation of the Code of ethics. For this activity, it was honoured with the Business Ethos Award in 2018.

The support of the Sophia Foundation for Children was another of the company's corporate social responsibility programmes through the charity event Let's Hippo for children.

Vassiliko Cement Works is officially a Certified Equality Employer, since November 2018, as a result of the application of an integrated system of gender equality at the work place, through actions and policies that promote respect for all, while keeping at the same time the balance between family and professional life.

Its immediate future actions in terms of CSR involve upgraded and continued business transparency

and open dialogue with a wider group of stakeholders. The goal is the introduction and application of additional and new practices for the benefit of society, employees, customers and natural environment.

CSR lies at the heart of Vassiliko Cement Works and begins inside the company from top management right down to all its employees. The company invests continuously in its personnel training on topics of Culture Improvement, Sensitisation and Respect vis-à-vis the Environment and Fellow Citizens.

As typically mentioned by Vassiliko CSR Team: "CSR is a piece of a 'pie' that never ends". There are many ways to define it, all of them ending up to the same conclusion that CSR constitutes an integral part of a company's daily operation. In simple words, it means doing the right thing.

