

SENSITIVITY OF DIRECTORS TO WORKPLACE WELLBEING AND RISK MANAGEMENT: EVIDENCE FROM SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES IN BELGIUM

Isabelle Alphonse, University of Valenciennes (France)
Claire Dupont, University of Mons (Belgium)
Ferauge Perrine, University of Mons (Belgium)
Sylvie Scoyez, University of Valenciennes (France)

ABSTRACT

This research analyses small and medium enterprises directors' sensitivity to CSR, and more specifically to workplace wellbeing and risk management. We conducted a questionnaire survey of 1,800 directors of Belgian small and medium enterprises to determine their perceptions and actions regarding these two aspects. According to Beaupré et al. (2008), these notions can form part of socially responsible human resources management. The 220 directors who answered our survey feel that good relations with and between their employees, as well as clear objectives, contribute to workplace wellbeing. Although 85% of directors view employee wellbeing as an objective for their small and medium enterprise, just 68% assess occupational risks, the motivations being to comply with the regulatory framework but also to improve working conditions.

JEL: M1, I3, L2

KEYWORDS: Wellbeing, Risk Management, Small and Medium Enterprise (SME), Sensitivity, CSR

INTRODUCTION

Although large companies have been involved in CSR for several decades (CIDD, 2006, Martinet and Reynaud, 2004), small and medium enterprises (SMEs) are also striving to make achievements in social responsibility, which is continually gaining ground in this sector under the impetus of various national and European institutions (Oueghlissi, 2013, Berger-Douce, 2008). Accounting for 99.8% of businesses in Europe (Eurostat, 2015), SMEs are key participants in the economy. They play indeed a role in job creation, producing products and services for society, and economic growth (Hasle and Limborg, 2006). SMEs are therefore a key field of research. In recent years, and particularly since 2006 (Louche and Michotte, 2011), the volume of research conducted into CSR in SMEs has continued to grow (Oueghlissi, 2013, Berger-Douce, 2008, Paradas, 2008, 2006). Furthermore, the numerous social responsibility support tools offered to SMEs are evidence of the interest in sustainable development and highlight the benefits of adopting socially responsible strategies (Quairrel and Auberger, 2005). Although CSR practices are not absent from the SME world, they are more intuitive than they are strategic or formal (Louche and Michotte, 2011). They are also less investigated and structured than the largest companies' practices. SMEs can act as the driving force behind sustainable solutions and progress at various levels (social and environmental) (Forget, 2011). According to Wolff and Bosia (2014), SMEs' involvement in a socially responsible approach is not necessarily prompted by a desire to improve their reputation or brand image. Instead, it may be due to an intention to motivate or retain their personnel, or to ethical arguments (Jenkins, 2006). Both strategic and intrinsic (philanthropic) motivations could therefore lead SMEs to engage in CSR (Fitjar,

2011). Oueghlissi (2013) and Perrini et al (2007) also believe that SMEs, without even realising it, are usually involved in CSR initiatives.

The distinguishing characteristics of SMEs' responsible engagement (compared with large companies) are primarily linked to internal management constraints: lack of time, lack of human and financial resources, lack of appropriate skills, poor communication, etc. As a result, small businesses engage in sustainable, informal practices (Battaglia et al, 2014, Oueghlissi, 2013, Russo and Tencati, 2009, Jenkins, 2006). Nevertheless, despite certain weaknesses, SMEs also have certain strengths that enable them to respond to sustainable development challenges. As such, Forget (2011) stresses their potential in terms of local job creation and proximity to their business environment and stakeholders. This geographical and interpersonal proximity (Torrès, 2000) therefore fosters strong local integration that encourages a CSR approach. In a quantitative study of 84 SMEs, Berger-Douce (2008) highlights the fact that local development is one of the major strategic concerns for 76.2% of these companies. Their small size also enables SMEs to leverage a greater ability to react and adapt to change (Oueghlissi, 2013, Berger-Douce, 2008). Several drivers can prompt SMEs to invest in CSR practices. They may engage in response to certain constraints imposed by their stakeholders or simply in response to their director's ethical convictions (Oueghlissi, 2013, Brodhag, 2011). Our research will focus on SME directors and their sensitivity to the labour aspect of CSR. We investigate the perceptions that this can generate in relation to workplace wellbeing and risk management. These aspects can form part of socially responsible HR management. We also explore any initiatives implemented in these areas. The first part of this article will focus on reviewing the literature. We will then explore the methodology used. Lastly, we will present and discuss the results of our survey.

LITERATURE REVIEW

CSR Directors: A Key Participant in the CSR Approach

Directors play a central role in the decisions made within their company (Julien and Marchesnay, 1988). These decisions are heavily influenced by their personality, values and perception (Spence et al, 2007). According to Wolff and Bosia (2014), Louche and Michotte (2011) and Spence et al (2007), it is primarily these values, rather than an instrumental and strategic view of CSR, that lead an SME director to engage in a CSR approach. As such, *"SME directors are more likely to develop ways of thinking about CSR which are more ethical than economic in nature"* (Kechiche and Soparnot, 2012: 99). Depending on their ethical mindset, directors are more or less inclined to initiate this type of approach. As such, after reading work on CSR in SMEs, Mhissen Mhedhebi et al (2015: 5) note that *"the entrepreneur is considered the linchpin in the firm's engagement and everything depends on their vision"*.

Nevertheless, we cannot ignore the interactions between directors and their environment and the consequences of these interactions. Both the individuals that surround them and the surrounding organizational structure, as well as their professional networks, external resources (trainers, accountant, etc.), etc., could impact their perception and practices. Despite SME directors' engagement and their convictions about introducing an ethical approach, it is nevertheless difficult for them to implement this approach (Berger-Douce, 2008) either due to a lack of knowledge, unavailability, indifference or the absence of resource persons. However, Luetkenhorst (2004) shows that businesses that engage in a CSR approach make gains in terms of competitiveness, reputation, retention and relations with institutions.

From CSR to Social Responsibility

According to Saulquin (2004) and the French National Institute for Statistics and Economic Research (INSEE) (2012), depictions of CSR from companies are largely dominated by labour concerns. In the context of SMEs, several authors stress the predominance of personnel, and therefore the labour dimension, when it comes to addressing CSR. As such, Cornet and El Abboubi (in Imbs and Ramboarison Lalao, 2013)

stress that CSR in SMEs is liable to be characterised by involvement in local communities and the improvement of employee wellbeing or safety. Labelle and St-Pierre (2010) also point out that SME directors are highly sensitive to social objectives concerning their personnel. It appears that internal stakeholders, including personnel, are the main driving force behind CSR in SMEs (Louche and Michotte, 2011). As such, employees and suppliers are understood to have replaced customers as SME directors' central concern in terms of CSR (Gendre-Aegerter, 2008).

According to Hammann et al (2009), two reasons may explain why it is important for SMEs to develop socially responsible practices aimed at employees. Firstly, SME directors have a very close relationship with their employees and developing CSR practices aimed at them could generate benefits for the SME. Secondly, as a result of their socially responsible behavior, SMEs could have an advantage in terms of recruiting labour, particularly because staff are usually geographically close to them. In addition to the fact that an SME's personnel are one of its most influential partners and in addition to the benefits that can result from a CSR approach, INSEE (2012) provides another explanation for this high level of interest in the labour aspect of CSR in SMEs: it may also be due to the need for companies to meet certain legal obligations and the existence of various consultation bodies within companies (health, safety and working conditions committee etc.). As such, the relationship between a director and his/her personnel is thought to be at the heart of CSR issues. Given that, in SMEs, the director is usually responsible for HR management issues (Mahé de Boislandelle, 1988), it is clear just how important the director can be in circulating CSR within his/her company and instilling socially responsible HR practices.

Workplace Wellbeing and Risk Management

According to Danna and Griffin (in Delobbe et al, 2009), these two notions do not need to be approached separately in the sense that worker health and safety risk factors can be viewed as the background to workplace wellbeing. Furthermore, *"the dynamic system of risk management is characterised by the fact that it plans prevention and the implementation of the wellbeing policy by aiming to control risks to worker wellbeing by detecting and analysing them and establishing concrete preventive measures"* (Belgian General Directorate for Humanisation of Work, 2013: 9). Workplace wellbeing and risk management are thought to strengthen a socially responsible HR management approach that aims in particular to protect employees (Beaupré et al., 2008). Indeed, examining the links between HR management and CSR, Barthe and Belabbes (2016: 107) conclude that *"responsible human resources management results in the implementation of tools and practices that foster maximum wellbeing for all employees by protecting them and fairly recognising their values"*.

The study by Pez  (2010) shows that improving employee wellbeing is a concern for SME directors, whose main driver is not so much stress management per se as achieving a more general state of wellbeing, or at least satisfaction, in the workplace. This focus is not simply a declaration of good intention; it is supported by concrete actions involving the achievement of "good" working environments. Meanwhile, Gendre-Aegerter (2008) observes that SME directors feel very responsible for their employees in terms of workplace safety and health issues, as well as in terms of staff motivation, satisfaction and low turnover. Furthermore, Co del et al (2015) and Kechiche and Soparnot (2012) add that a hands-on management style, involving dialogue between director and employees, could lead to a more effective consideration of their wellbeing. It is clear that in terms of wellbeing, SMEs, far more so than large companies, can count on close relationships that could contribute to wellbeing by fostering the circulation of information, the creation of a specific working environment, the clarification of each person's roles, etc. which all lay the foundations for workplace wellbeing (Delobbe et al, 2009).

As far as workplace risk management is concerned, this is the company director's legal responsibility. In Belgium, it was the subject of the act of 4 August 1996 concerning employee wellbeing during the conduct of their work. In 2014, this was supplemented by new legislation introducing the notion of workplace

psychosocial risks (including stress and burnout) and emphasising the necessary prevention of these risks. These regulations refer to *"the probability that one or several worker(s) suffer psychological damage, which may also be accompanied by physical damage"* (Lo Giudice, 2014: 42) following exposure to a work situation that includes a hazard.

According to the Belgian General Directorate for Humanisation of Work (2013), five categories of factors on which employers can have an impact may also cause a work situation deemed hazardous: the organization of work (the company's policies, working procedures, employee independence, etc.), working conditions (training opportunities, ability to reorganise working time, salary, etc.), working life conditions (physical demands, exposure to noise, lighting, etc.), the content of work (workload, information about the task to perform, involvement in decisions, etc.) and interpersonal relations at work (quality of relationships, management style, work atmosphere, etc.). As such, employers are obliged to identify risks that are liable to emerge in their business, to analyse them and to establish an appropriate action plan. Although this analysis does not appear to pose problems for employers, it seems that transitioning from the analysis phase to developing an action plan is more problematic for companies that do not necessarily know which actions to develop or that lack resources.

As such, a study conducted by Hansez in 2006 (in Lo Giudice, 2014) found that one company in two has not drawn up an action plan. In France, INRS (2011), the French National Safety and Research Institute for occupational accident prevention, conducted a survey of 1,000 directors of (very) small businesses and found that 19% of these directors consider psychosocial risks to be the most significant risks in terms of workplace health and safety. On this subject, directors of very small businesses tend to consider stress to be the most significant risk. Nevertheless, the study observed that the theme of workplace health and safety is not the number one concern of all of the directors surveyed, who are more concerned about commercial and financial matters. According to Flohimont (in Lo Giudice, 2014), the new Belgian legislation aims to go further than complying with legal obligations by making workplace wellbeing and the consideration of psychosocial risks a genuine company development plan. This framework ties in with the fundamental meaning of socially responsible approaches. It highlights the possibility that legal constraints can represent a real opportunity for SME directors to invest in CSR.

In terms of standard industry practice, it would be beneficial to seek to gain a better understanding of SME directors' sensitivity to workplace wellbeing and risk management. With this in mind, the structure of our questioning will involve two parts. The first part will examine the notion of workplace wellbeing, while the second part will draw a connection between workplace wellbeing and risk management. We feel that this analysis is original in several respects: to our knowledge, it has not yet been conducted in the Belgian context. Furthermore, it has the merit of not only examining the practices put in place by SME directors, but also investigating their perceptions of workplace wellbeing and risk management in their establishment.

DATA AND METHODOLOGY

Our exploratory study is based on a quantitative analysis of data collected via a questionnaire sent to directors of Belgian SMEs. The sample of companies to which we sent this questionnaire was created using Belfirst, a Belgian database that represents the economic fabric of Belgian and Luxembourg companies. The company profile defined to create the sample was primarily based on the staff headcount criterion. As such, the small and medium-sized enterprises chosen for the sample meet the staff headcount criterion of the European definition, namely fewer than 250 employees (recommendation 2003/361/EC of 6 May 2003, in effect since 1 January 2005). Note that we did not exclude micro-enterprises from our survey (fewer than nine employees), which account for 93% of companies in the European Union (Russo and Tencati, 2009). This sets us apart from various studies on CSR in SMEs, which excluded this type of company due to their low staff headcount (Johnson, 2015, Russo and Tencati, 2009, Jenkins, 2006). As such, our sample is comprised of 1,800 SMEs in the Belgian region of Wallonia.

The questionnaire we sent to the SMEs contained multiple-choice questions and questions using five-point Likert scales. It was distributed in paper format in 2015 (along with a pre-stamped envelope for returning the questionnaire). It also contained a link so that directors wishing to do so could complete the survey in electronic format. We received a total of 220 usable questionnaires (12.22% response rate). The analysis of the results is based on a descriptive statistical analysis conducted using the SPSS software.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

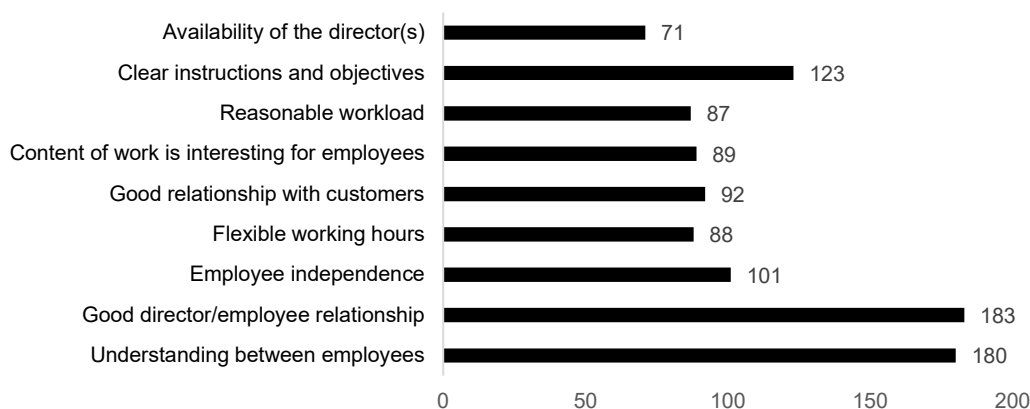
The results enabled us to gain a better understanding of SME directors' sensitivity to their staff's wellbeing and to risk management, and to ascertain their practices in these areas.

Workplace Wellbeing

To gain a better understanding of the notion of wellbeing, we felt it was useful to examine how the directors in our sample view this notion. We asked them to look at a series of items and indicate the main elements that they felt characterise workplace wellbeing (multiple choices were possible). Figure 1 shows that for the majority of directors (at least 180 respondents out of 220), workplace wellbeing is mainly defined by good relations between staff and the company's director. Other elements (at least 101 respondents out of 220) such as, firstly, staff autonomy and, secondly, clear instructions and objectives also characterise workplace wellbeing, according to the directors.

The fact that good relations between a director and their staff are considered, by over 80% of our respondents (183 out of 220) as a factor that contributes to workplace wellbeing is in line with the findings of Coëdel et al (2015) and Galabova and McKie (2013). Indeed, the latter believe that a hands-on management style involving dialogue between director and employees can help to factor in staff wellbeing. However, it might seem paradoxical that although many directors draw a connection between the good relations they may have with their staff and wellbeing, far fewer believe that their availability contributes to wellbeing. It is also worth noting that clear objectives and instructions are considered by Pez  (2010) to be a primary prevention action that helps to develop a "good" working environment. Galabova and McKie (2013) believe that placing importance on the content of work and making it interesting, or paying attention to workload could be a way to prevent monotony at work and compensate for the lack of career prospects in SMEs.

Figure 1: Definition of Workplace Wellbeing (N=220)



This figure shows the main elements that characterise workplace wellbeing for the directors (based on a series of items and with multiple choices possible).

We then investigated directors' sensitivity to the question of wellbeing, in the specific context of SMEs. We asked them to say whether or not they agreed with a series of statements to assess their sensitivity relative to the size of the company (SME versus large company). The first two items in Table 1 indicate that the majority of directors do not seem to associate sources of stress and workplace wellbeing with the size of a company. These results appear to be in line with the observations of Pezé (2010), who observed that SME directors do not consider stress to be one of their main concerns and say that their staff experience little negative stress, although this does not mean they are not sensitive to how their employees feel. Conversely, over 64% of respondents (third item) seem to think that a smaller sized company makes it easier for staff to blossom.

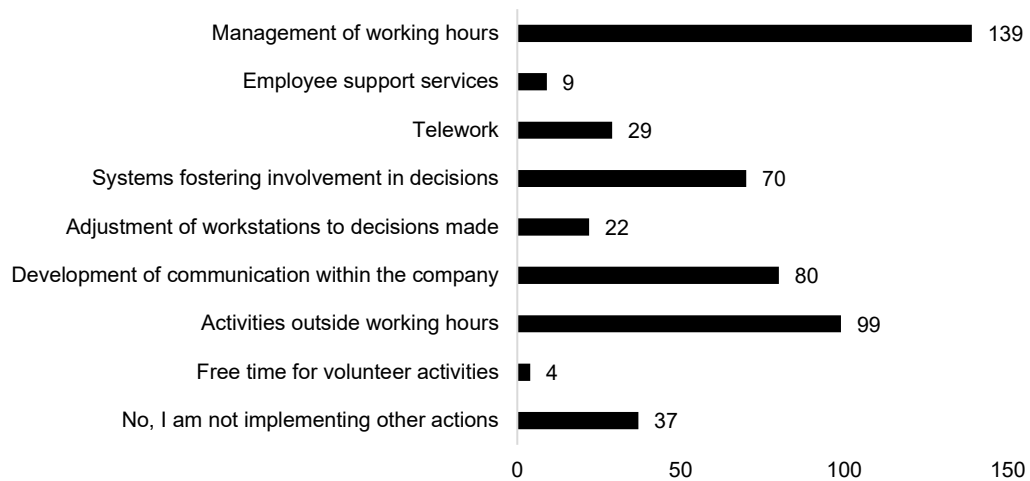
Table 1: Director's Sensitivity to the Issue of Wellbeing in the Specific Context of Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SME Versus Large Company) (N= 220)

	Strongly Disagree/ Disagree	Neutral	Agree/ Strongly Agree
There are bigger sources of stress in SMEs than in large companies	105	53	60
Large companies are more attentive to staff wellbeing than SMEs	127	51	41
It is easier for staff to blossom in SMEs	25	54	141
SMEs foster a connection between people	8	19	189
The director's availability fosters staff wellbeing	9	36	175

This table shows if the directors agree or not (from strongly disagree to strongly agree) with a series of statements to assess their sensitivity relative to the size of the company (SME versus large company). The results are presented in three columns for a better visibility.

In table 1 we also examined the notion of proximity, which is one of the major specific characteristics of SMEs. This highlighted two findings (fourth and fifth items). Firstly, over 87% of respondents think that small companies foster proximity. Secondly, over 79% of respondents believe that by being close to their staff they foster their wellbeing. This supports the finding that good relations between staff and directors, highlighted in figure 1, are considered by our respondents to be a contributing factor to workplace wellbeing. However, this result might seem paradoxical given that just 32% of the directors surveyed associated their availability for staff with their wellbeing. We then asked the study's respondents how their sensitivity to workplace wellbeing translates into concrete actions within the company (multiple choices were possible). Figure 2 shows that 63% of respondents have implemented a working time management system (organization of working hours) that is liable to foster employee wellbeing (Dex and Scheibl, 2001). Over 31% of the respondents have also introduced activities outside working hours (teambuilding, meals, etc.), developed communication within the company and put in place systems that enable their employees to participate in decision-making. According to Delobbe et al (2009), these factors are liable to contribute to staff wellbeing. Some of them (staff events, work-life balance) also correspond to socially responsible practices identified by Jenkins (2006) in the UK. According to Perrini et al (2007), these CSR practices call for employee involvement at various levels of an SME.

Figure 2: Actions in Favor of Staff (N=220)



This figure shows how the sensitivity to workplace wellbeing of SME directors translates into concrete actions within the company (based on a series of items and with multiple choices possible).

Lastly, we wanted to investigate the sensitivity and willingness of directors in terms of corporate social responsibility. In response to the statement "a company must be socially responsible to ensure staff wellbeing", we asked the directors to position themselves on a five-point Likert scale (from strongly disagree to strongly agree). Over 67% responded positively. Secondly, using this same scale, we assessed a statement that considers workplace wellbeing to be a central concern for a company: "my staff's wellbeing is an objective for the company". As such, 85% of the directors consider wellbeing to be a company objective. These two statements will be analysed in greater depth in the following section (alongside risk management).

Workplace Risk Assessment and Management

We asked the directors whether they had conducted an assessment within their company of the risks to which their staff are exposed. 68% (147 out of 219) answered 'yes', while 32% answered 'no' (72 out of 219). Note that risk management is a legal obligation for Belgian employers. By failing to meet this legal obligation, these 32% of respondents could match the profile of eco-defensive companies (Gondran, 2001, in Callot, 2014), which tend to ignore this issue and not comply with the law. The following Tables 2 and 3 aim to compare director sensitivity to wellbeing and the implementation of a risk assessment practice.

Table 2: Risk Assessment * "a Company Must Be Socially Responsible to Ensure Staff Wellbeing" (N=216)

		A Company Must Be Socially Responsible to Ensure Wellbeing			Total
		Strongly Disagree/Disagree	Neutral	Agree/Strongly Agree	
Risk assessment	No	2	16	51	69
	Yes	8	43	96	147
Total		10	59	147	216

This table compares director sensitivity to workplace wellbeing and the implementation of a risk assessment practice. It shows if the directors agree or not (from strongly disagree to strongly agree) with the item "A company must be socially responsible to ensure wellbeing" depending on if the enterprise sets up a risk assessment practice. The results are presented in three columns for a better visibility.

Table 3: Risk Assessment * "My Staff's Wellbeing Is an Objective for The Company" (N=218)

		My Staff's Wellbeing is an Objective for the Company			Total
		Strongly Disagree/Disagree	Neutral	Agree/Strongly Agree	
Risk assessment	No	2	8	61	71
	Yes	6	16	125	147
Total		8	24	186	218

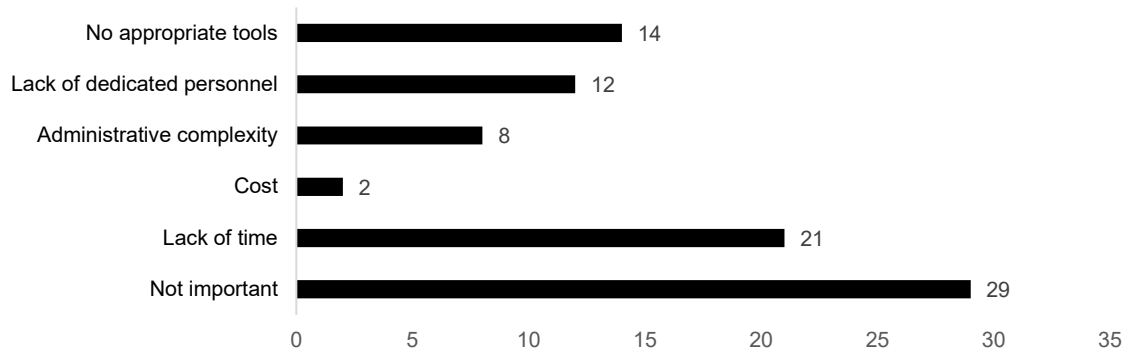
This table compares director sensitivity to workplace wellbeing and the implementation of a risk assessment practice. It shows if the directors agree or not (from strongly disagree to strongly agree) with the item "My staff's wellbeing is an objective for the company" depending on if the enterprise sets up a risk assessment practice. The results are presented in three columns for a better visibility.

Several observations can be gleaned from table 2. Although 147 respondents seem aware of the importance of being socially responsible to foster staff wellbeing, just 96 of them (64%) assess risks within their company. Conversely, some directors (8 respondents) who do not appear to be sensitive to social responsibility implement risk assessment practices. We can draw the same observations as in table 3. Although 186 respondents consider workplace wellbeing to be an objective for the company, 61 respondents do not assess risks. The observations gleaned from the cross-tabulations 2 and 3 are striking. It would therefore be beneficial to gain a better understanding of the reasons behind the introduction or otherwise of risk assessment within companies.

As such, we wanted to determine why some of our respondents (73 out of 220) did not assess risks. Figure 3 shows that the main reasons are: the directors feel it is unimportant (29 out of 71), a lack of time (21 out of 71) and a lack of available tools (13 out of 71). These results do not tally with the observations of Kechiche and Soparnot (2012) or Jenkins (2006), who say that the financial or practical materials for implementing a CSR approach are limited. Consequently, although many of our directors (just over 85%) view staff wellbeing as an objective for the company, this does not necessarily translate into the consideration of workplace risks. According to Martin and Guarnieri (2008), this could be due to the fact that directors believe that occupational risks are primarily linked to employee behavior and carelessness, and therefore do not fall within their remit. These two authors refer to a study conducted by Eakin in 1992, noting that directors who believe that their company does not pose any specific workplace risk (notably connected to health and safety) have not yet experienced serious problems in these areas.

Conversely, those that have had more negative experiences took the issue of workplace risks more seriously. Fitjar (2011) also agrees with this finding, observing that a lack of staff specifically dedicated to CSR and a lack of time can lead to SMEs responding more reactively than proactively to CSR issues. Connections can also be drawn with the findings of Hasle and Limborg (2006), who reveal an interesting paradox that we can connect with the information provided by SME directors concerning wellbeing: according to these authors, small businesses usually have the best psychosocial workplace environment, characterised by close relations and stemming from the director's values. However, these companies also encounter the most workplace risks and have the most difficulty controlling these risks. Could the importance that directors in the sample place on good relations with and between their staff cause them to play down the management of workplace risks? Note that the factors mentioned by our respondents match the hurdles identified by Louche and Michotte (2011) and Fitjar (2011) in implementing a responsible approach within SMEs and tally with the results of a study conducted by the INRS (2011) into occupational risks in SMEs.

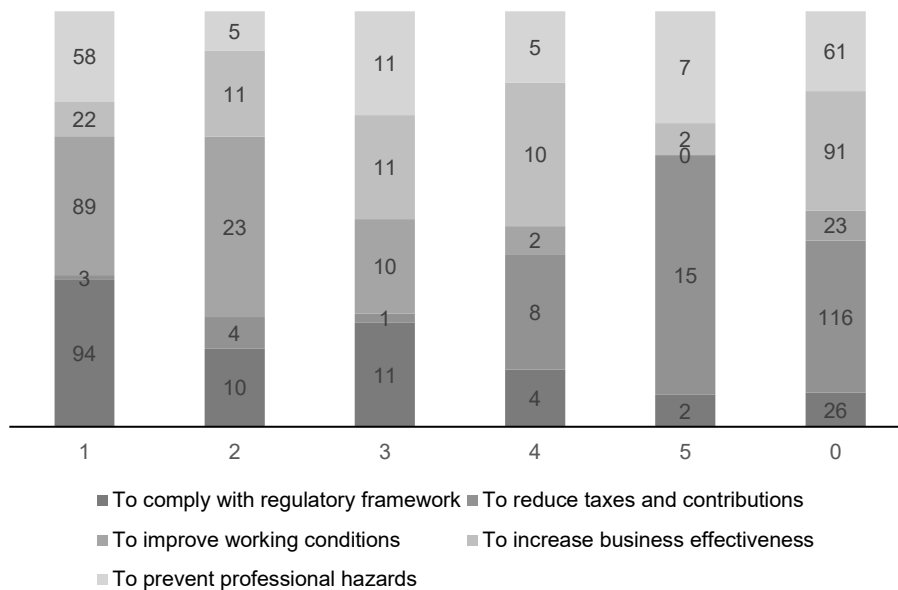
Figure 3: Reasons for the Non-Assessment of Risks (N=71)



This figure shows the main reasons for the non-assessment of risks within companies (based on a series of items and with multiple choices possible).

Furthermore, the study also shows that in the case of companies that have assessed risks (147 out of 220 respondents), a variety of reasons, at different levels of importance, motivated their choice. Figure 4 shows which factors were prioritised (1 representing the highest-priority factors, 5 the lowest-priority and 0 the non-priority) by SME directors to encourage them to implement a risk management policy. The main motivation prioritised in risk assessment is compliance with the regulatory framework (cited 94 times as priority 1). This is followed in turn, as priority 1, by improving working conditions (cited 89 times), professional hazards (cited 58 times), increasing business effectiveness (cited 22 times) and reducing taxes and contributions (cited 3 times). We can see that the items that are not at all considered to a factor in encouraging risk assessment concern the ability to increase business effectiveness or reduce taxes.

Figure 4: Reasons for the Assessment of Risks (N=147)

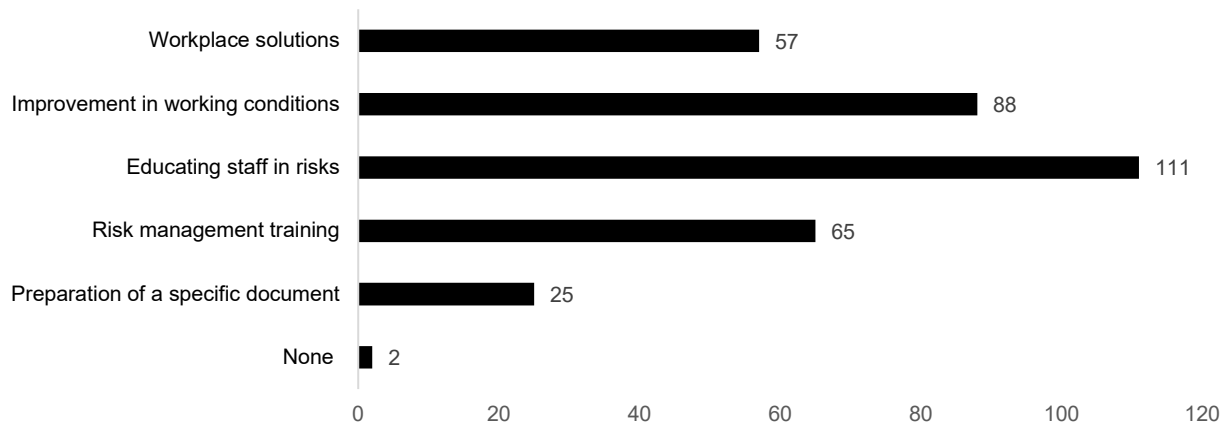


This figure shows the main reasons, at different levels of importance, for the assessment of risks within companies. It shows which factors were prioritised (1 representing the highest-priority factors, 5 the lowest-priority and 0 the non-priority) by SME directors to encourage them to implement a risk management policy.

Lastly, we asked the respondents how they implement this risk management. Figure 5 shows us that the risk management implementation methods identified by SME directors are to raise staff awareness of risks (77% of directors), improve working conditions (62% of directors) and provide risk management training

(45% of directors). These results partially tally with the trends observed by the INRS (2011) in terms of risk prevention in SMEs.

Figure 5: Risk Management Implementation Methods (N=145)



This figure shows the risk management implementation methods identified by SME directors (based on a series of items and with multiple choices possible).

CONCLUSION

Our research examined SME directors' sensitivity to the labour aspect of CSR. We examined two themes that can form part of a socially responsible approach: workplace wellbeing and risk management. These aspects can form part of socially responsible HR management. We also explore any initiatives implemented in these areas. To achieve this, we made an exploratory study based on a quantitative analysis of data collected via a questionnaire sent to 1,800 directors of Belgian SMEs (Wallonia region). This survey allows us to gather their insights into these two themes and find out about the actions developed on this subject. To our knowledge, our study is the first Belgian study to examine the perceptions and actions that SME directors can develop in the field of CSR and more specifically workplace wellbeing and risk management. Furthermore, although these topics appear to have been the subject of research in large companies, they seem to have received less coverage in the context of SMEs.

Many of 220 respondents of the study believe that good relations with staff contribute to workplace wellbeing. This sentiment is confirmed by the recognition of the role that a close relationship between directors and staff plays in creating this workplace wellbeing. What's more, 85% of our respondents view the latter as an objective for their company. In terms of actions aimed at their personnel, over 50% of our respondents mentioned systems that allow personnel to organise their working hours. We also observed that although workplace wellbeing is an objective for the vast majority of our directors, just 68% of them assess workplace risks, even though this is a legal requirement stated in legislation on employee wellbeing. This is even more paradoxical given that a lack of importance is the primary motivation for directors who say they do not conduct this risk assessment. Meanwhile, directors who do conduct this assessment attribute it to the legal obligations they are required to meet, as well as, to a relatively similar extent, their desire to improve working conditions. Could this desire prompt a director to initiate a socially responsible approach?

We are aware of certain limitations of our research: we can wonder about the representativeness of our respondents sample (12.22% response rate). Moreover, we cannot rule out the respondents are probably more sensitive to CSR and workplace wellbeing issues. Nonetheless, in terms of managerial involvement, our study highlights a significant proximity effect in how SME directors define workplace wellbeing. Although the majority of SME directors surveyed said that this is an objective, the fact remains that much progress needs to be made on risk management and assessment. This raises some questions: do SME

directors not draw a connection between workplace risk management and wellbeing? Could the lack of importance placed on workplace risks be attributed to the fact that directors feel that the small size of their organization and their proximity to employees shield them from potential workplace risks?

These questions could indicate that work needs to be carried out on educating directors in workplace risk management and the resulting effects. They can also be further investigated in our upcoming research, notably by creating segmentations, like Russo and Tencati (2009), based on the size of companies that respond to our survey. Jenkins (2006) also called for research that, more than differences in terms of size and sector, highlights the labour prospects resulting from different forms of SME depending on whether they belong to a family, their type of growth, etc. Given that we have data on how our SMEs perceive their HR management, we hope to be able to contribute, in our upcoming research, to developing knowledge that better reflects the diversity of SMEs.

REFERENCES

- Barthe, N. and K. Belabbes (2016) « La « GRH socialement responsable » : un défi pour les entreprises engagées dans une démarche RSE », *Management&Avenir*, vol.1(83), p. 95-113.
- Battaglia, M., Testa, F., Bianchi, L., Iraldo, F. and M. Frey (2014) “Corporate Social Responsibility and Competitiveness within SMEs of the Fashion Industry: Evidence from Italy and France”, *Sustainability*, vol. 6, p. 872-893.
- Beaupré, D., Cloutier, J., Gendron, C., Jimenez, A. and D. Morin (2008) “Gestion des ressources humaines, développement durable et responsabilité sociale”, *Revue internationale de psychosociologie et de gestion des comportements organisationnels*, vol. XIV(33), p. 77-140.
- Belgian General Directorate for Humanisation of Work (Direction générale Humanisation du travail) (2013). *Guide pour la prévention des risques psychosociaux au travail*, 23 september.
- Berger-Douce, S. (2008) “Rentabilité et pratiques de RSE en milieu PME. Premiers résultats d’une étude française”, *Management&Avenir*, february, vol. 15, p. 9-29.
- Brodhag, C. (2011). “Responsabilité sociétale et développement durable : un enjeu pour les PME”, *Rapport de recherché*, From <http://www.brodhag.org>.
- Callot, P. (2014) “La difficile appropriation du concept de RSE par les TPE. Le cas de la viticulture”, *La Revue des Sciences de Gestion, Direction et Gestion*, 269-270, september-december, p. 129-137.
- Commission Interdépartementale du Développement Durable (CIDD) (2006). *Cadre de référence. La responsabilité sociétale des entreprises en Belgique*, From <http://www.cidd.be/FR/publications/>
- Coëdel, D., Sobczak, A. and E. Rozière (2015) “Les compétences nécessaires au développement d’une démarche RSE : une étude dans les TPE et PME de la région Pays de la Loire”, *9^{ème} Congrès de l’Académie de l’Entrepreneuriat et de l’Innovation*.
- Delobbe, N., Van Tolhuysen, L., Berck, V. and F. Wattiaux (2009) *Bien-être au travail et performance de l’organisation*, Etude réalisée à la demande de la Direction Générale Humanisation du Travail, SPF Emploi, Travail et Concertation Sociale, january.
- Dex, S. and F. Scheibl (2001) “Flexible and Family-Friendly Working Arrangements in UK-Based SMEs: Business Cases”, *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, vol. 39(3), p. 411-431.

Eakin, J.-M. (1992) “Leaving IT Up to the Workers: Sociological Perspective on the Management of Health and Safety in Small Workplaces”, *International Journal of Health Services: Planning, Administration, Evaluation*, vol.22(4), p. 689-704.

Eurostat (2015). *Statistiques structurelles sur les entreprises, vue d'ensemble*.

Fitjar, R. D. (2011) “Little big firms? Corporate social responsibility in small businesses that do not compete against big ones”, *Business Ethics: A European Review*, vol. 20(1), january, p. 30-44.

Forget, V. (2011) “La RSE : une stratégie profitable pour les PME ?”, *Symbiose*, vol. 1, mars, p. 18-19, AgroParisTech Alumni.

Galabova, L. and L. McKie (2013) “The five fingers of my hand: human capital and well-being in SMEs”, *Personnel Review*, vol. 42(6), p. 662-683.

Gendre-Aegerter, D. (2008). *La perception du dirigeant de PME de sa responsabilité sociale : une approche par la cartographie cognitive*. Thèse de l'Université de Fribourg.

Hammann, E.-M., Habisch, A. and H. Pechlaner (2009) “Values that create value: socially responsible business practices in SMEs – empirical evidence from German companies”, *Business Ethics: A European Review*, vol. 18(1), january, p. 37-51.

Hasle, P. and H. J. Limborg (2006) “A Review of the Literature on Preventive Occupational Health and Safety Activities in Small Enterprises”, *Industrial Health*, vol. 44, p. 6-12.

Imbs, P. and L. Ramboarison Lalao (2013) “Opérationnaliser la RSE dans les PME : quelles pratiques de GRH socialement responsables ?”, *Management&Avenir*, vol. 1(59), p. 35-55.

INRS (2011). *Les PME et les risques professionnels*. Rapport d'étude n°1188, january.

INSEE (2012). *La responsabilité sociétale des entreprises : une démarche déjà répandue*. INSEE Première, n°1421, november.

Jenkins, H. (2006) “Small Business Champions for Corporate Social Responsibility”, *Journal of Business Ethics*, vol. 67, p. 241-256.

Johnson, M. P. (2015) “Sustainability Management and Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises: Managers' Awareness and Implementation of Innovative Tools”, *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management*, vol. 22, p. 271-285

Julien, P.-A. and M. Marchesnay (1988). *La petite entreprise : principes d'économie et de gestion*, Paris: Edition Vuibert.

Kechiche, A. and R. Soparnot (2012) “CSR within SMEs: Literature Review”, *International Business Research*, vol. 5(7), p. 97-104.

Labelle, F. and J. St-Pierre (2010) “Les déterminants institutionnels, organisationnels et individuels de la sensibilité des PME au sujet du développement durable”, *10^{ème} Congrès International Francophone en Entrepreneuriat et PME*.

Lo Giudice, C. (2014) “Comment prévenir les risques psychosociaux au travail”, *HR Square*, vol. 1, december, p. 42-46.

Louche, C. and E. Michotte (2011) “La Responsabilité Sociale des Entreprises dans les Petites et Moyennes Entreprises : Revue de la littérature 2006-2009 et stratégies de recherche”, *CEB Working Paper*, n°11/003.

Luetkenhorst, W. (2004) “Corporate Social Responsibility and the Development Agenda – A Case for Actively Involving Small and Medium Enterprises”, *Intereconomics*, may-june, p. 157-166.

Mahé de Boislandelle, H. (1998). *Gestion des Ressources Humaines dans les PME*. Paris : Economica.

Martin, C. and F. Guarnieri (2008). *Pratiques de prévention des risques professionnels dans les PME-PMI*. Editions Tec&Doc.

Martinet, A.-C. and E. Reynaud (2004) “Entreprise durable, finance et stratégie”, *Revue Française de Gestion*, september-october, p. 121-136.

Mhissen Mhedhebi, I., Gherib, J., and S. Berger-Douce (2015) “Logique d’action du dirigeant et engagement RSE global en PME”, *XXIVème Conférence Internationale de Management Stratégique*.

Oueghlissi, R. (2013) “La RSE et les PME. Analyse descriptive à partir de l’enquête COI 2013”, *Revue Française de Gestion*, vol. 236, p. 163-180.

Paradas, A. (2008) “Le dirigeant comme levier de la RSE en TPE. Approche exploratoire basée sur l’utilisation de récits et d’une cartographie cognitive”, *Revue internationale PME*, vol. 20(3-4), p. 43-66.

Paradas, A. (2006) “Perception du développement durable par les dirigeants de petites entreprises: résultats d’enquêtes”, *8ème Congrès International Francophone en Entrepreneuriat et PME*.

Perrini, F., Russo, A., and A. Tencati, A. (2007) “CSR Strategies of SMEs and Large Firms. Evidence from Italy”, *Journal of Business Ethics*, vol. 74, p. 285-300.

Pezé, S. (2010) “Les représentations du stress des dirigeants: quelles implications pour la gestion du stress au travail ?”, *21ème Congrès AGRH*.

Quairel, F. and M. N. Auberger (2005) “Management responsable et PME : une relecture du concept de responsabilité sociétale de l’entreprise”, *Revue des Sciences de Gestion, Direction et Gestion*, vol. 211-212, p. 111- 126.

Russo, A. and A. Tencati (2009) “Formal vs. Informal CSR Strategies: Evidence from Italian Micro, Small, Medium-Sized, and Large Firms”, *Journal of Business Ethics*, vol. 85, p. 339-353.

Saulquin, J.-Y. (2004) “GRH et responsabilité sociale : bilan des discours et des pratiques des entreprises françaises”, *15ème Congrès de l’AGRH*, p. 2477-2495.

Spence, M., Ben Boubaker Gherib, J. and V. Ondoua Biwole (2007) “Développement durable et PME. Une étude exploratoire des déterminants de leur engagement”, *Revue internationale PME*, vol. 20(3-4), p. 17-42.

Torrès, O. (2000) “Du rôle et de l’importance de la proximité dans la spécificité de gestion des PME”, *5ème Congrès International Francophone PME*.

Wolff, D. and E. Bosia (2014) “RSE et gestion des PME : contribution à la constitution d’un tableau de bord synthétique”, *Gestion 2000*, vol. 3(31), p. 33-49.

BIOGRAPHY

Isabelle Alphonse-Tilloy is lecturer at University of Valenciennes and Hainaut-Cambrésis. Her research fields are Small and Medium Enterprises' international strategy, Small and Medium enterprises' Human Resource Management, corporate social responsibility, Health Management. She can be reached at isabelle.tilloy@univ-valenciennes.fr

Claire Dupont is Associate Professor at Warocqué School of Business and Economics (University of Mons). Her research fields are human resource management (HRM) and the links between HRM and corporate social responsibility. Her researches appear in journals such as *International Journal of Manpower*, *International Business Research*, *Journal of Corporate Ownership and Control*, *International Advances in Economic Research*. She can be reached at claire.dupont@umons.ac.be

Perrine Ferauge is a Teaching Assistant at Warocqué School of Business and Economics (University of Mons). She works in the Micro Economics Department. Her research fields are sustainable development, corporate social responsibility, Small and Medium enterprise. She can be reached at perrine.feraude@umons.ac.be.

Sylvie Scoyez Van Poppel is lecturer at University of Valenciennes and Hainaut-Cambrésis. Her research fields are Small and Medium enterprises, health management, Management instrumentation and emotional dissonance in the distribution. She can be reached at sylvie.scoyez@univ-valenciennes.fr