

COMMUNICATIONS IN THE SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATIONS AS PART OF THE MEASURES OF CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY IN THEIR ACTIVITY OPTIMIZATION

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Introduction

The dynamic environment of the companies and institutions is characterized by rapid technology development, implementation of innovative approaches and solutions to problems, change in the nature of labor and new forms of employment. These changes also reflect to the corporate social responsibility, which now has new functions.

This article presents the corporate social responsibility as a necessity realized by the social security administrations in their interaction with customers and institutions. The article puts an emphasis on the necessity of stimulating the communication between social security institutions and stakeholders as a main form of corporate social responsibility in these administrations. It presents the guidelines of communication of different countries' social security administrations, developed by the International Social Security Association. Based on this, it outlines the advantages of intensive communication in optimizing the cooperation between institutions and all stakeholders.

The current article is inspired by the idea that implementation of corporate social responsibility by the social security administrations is a relatively new and under-studied problem.

The research is expected to clarify the need of corporate social responsibility measures in the social insurance institutions, to be used in favor of the effective dialog between them and their clients.

Methodology of the research

This study aims to present the good practices in the active and effective communication of the social security administrations, as being main part of the corporate social responsibility in these institutions.

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The research has the following tasks:

1. To study the need of communication encouragement measures in the field of social security.
2. To present the communication guidelines in the social security administrations, developed by the International Social Security Association.
3. To outline the communication benefits for the social security institutions.

We believe that the problem of corporate social responsibility and in particular the effective communication in social security administrations is important because of the large social security systems' scope and the number of people affected by social risks. The increasing exchange of information between stakeholders determines promoting the processes of communication and optimization of the administration.

These guidelines could be useful to the persons who need help and wish to be informed on their social rights and responsibilities in order to take informed decisions regarding their social status. They could as well be useful for all other interested parties of the social security process.

In order to achieve those goals, the traditional scientific methods are used—analysis, induction and deduction.

The result of the current research is expected to prove the high need of implementation of policies for CSR by the social security administrations, which would improve their capacity and would increase the trust in their activities and in the social security system stability.

The research is conducted with the following restrictions:

1. Emphasis on the guidelines and recommendations of stimulating communication between the social security administrations as one of the most effective examples of corporate social responsibility in the institutions.
2. The focus is on the CSR features only in the administrations for social security. However, they could as well be adapted and implemented in other institutions.

Corporate social responsibility in social security administrations

In the last years corporate social responsibility (CSR) is implemented in more and more companies, government and non-government institutions, non-profit organizations, professional organizations that have realized the need of sustainability in their actions in the social and environmental sphere. Some researchers consider that “corporate social responsibility is established as the core of sustainable development” (Бакърджиева и ко, 2017, с.78). Although adopting practices of CSR by the social security administrations is not yet popular, it is an initiative quite useful for the participants of the social security process, as well as for the employees of those institutions and other related individuals.

These administrations should be active in communication with their customers by informing them about their rights and responsibilities and supporting them in taking informed decisions regarding the long-term consequences of their choice.

According to the definitions of the European Commission corporate social responsibility is “a concept whereby companies integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operations and in their interaction with their stakeholders on a voluntary basis” [1].

This is a voluntary act that goes beyond the frames of mandatory engagements of companies in their daily routine [4]. This process serves to accomplish social and environmental goals, as well as to improve the image of the companies, corporations and institutions applying it. Advantages of CSR are multidimensional. The companies benefit from greater trust from their clients and partners, have better corporate reputation, gain loyalty from their employees who are even more motivated and attracted to the labor process.

We could agree with some authors' opinion that „in its essence, social responsibility is related to ethical behavior carried out for the benefit of society” (Пейчева, 2019, с. 19).

The public benefit from CSR is in the fact that the people live, work and raise their children in a better, healthier and more sustainable environment, where the resources are enough to meet the current needs, without overspending them.

Other authors consider that "social responsibility is not only corporate. Social responsibility is personal, responsibility of the state, the party, the administration, non-governmental organizations, civil societies. Part of it is in every profession—the profession of police officer, fireman, security guard, teacher, doctor, marketing specialist, computer specialist, auditor and all other professions. Social responsibility is not a label, it is a behavior that should be brought up from childhood" (Пейчева и ко., 2016, p. 17).

Due to the urgency of the problem and the need of content and scope regulations of corporate social responsibility, it is the subject of many strategies at the international and local level, such as the EU strategy 2011-2014 for Corporate Social Responsibility, National CSR Strategy 2019-2023 and many more [2], [5].

To complete their corporate social responsibility engagements, enterprises should complete the process of social, environmental, ethical integration, human rights and consumer concerns into their business operations and core strategy. According to EU strategy for Corporate Social Responsibility 2011-2014 this should be done with the aim of [2]:

- Optimizing the shared value for their owners and shareholders, for their other stakeholders and the society;
- Finding, preventing and decreasing their potential adverse impacts.

The government has a very important role in setting good practices for CSR – through applying proper policies and measures companies and institutions

are encouraged to achieve greater social sustainability and beneficial cooperation between them, their clients, partners, employees and other interacting subjects. Although CSR is a voluntary act, the government could stimulate it by providing options of reliefs, conducting informational campaigns, popularizing of good practices, intermediation in setting partnerships, providing support in ensuring sources of finance, etc.

Through CSR managers take commitment to guarantee that all their decisions and acts will be led by the specific interests of their clients, partners, beneficiaries, consumers, employees, society and environment in which the company is functioning. In order that the corporate social responsibility is successful, it has to be governed by the principle that the company should do the right things in every step of its everyday operations, and not only the ones that would be visible to the public. Along with that, the companies should comply with the important requirement that they have to fulfill all their legal obligations such as paying taxes and social contributions, salaries, payments to partners, suppliers, banks, etc.

Nowadays CSR is inherent not only for corporations and enterprises, but also is it more frequently used in government and non-government bodies and organizations, schools, professional organizations, employers' organizations, syndicates, administrations, etc. They realize the need of more effective communication and improvement of the relationship with their clients and partners, institutions, with the other members of society. This leads to them more often taking measures of optimizing cooperation between all the participants in the social security process.

Alike all other institutions, social security administrations have increasingly important role in the society due to the wide coverage of the social security systems and the great number of participating individuals. They help individuals when they need support or advice because the administrations are a connection between the insured people and the state. People should know how and where to find support in the field of social security system, what their obligations, responsibilities and rights are.

The participants in the insurance process should be supported by the social security administrations in decision making process because of its long-term consequences. They should disseminate the information to their clients timely and in an understandable manner.

In the digital age, people are used to having access to information 24 hours a day. They are in permanent contact with the institutions, including social security administrations. That is why it is very important to know how to get the necessary information, what are the provided services, responsibilities and rights that they have by participating in the social security system.

According to International social security association the successful social security institution is based on the effective collaboration between the various par-

ticipants in the insurance process – the insured people, beneficiaries, insurance funds and companies, employers and other contributors, trade unions, employers organizations, people that work in the social security system, government, etc. They all should be active participants in the social security process sharing “information, knowledge, expertise, experiences and opinions, and ultimately create added value for the benefit of all parties involved” [3].

Guidelines on communication as a part of CSR activities of the social security administrations

The Guidelines on communication by social Security administrations are made by the International Social Security association in 2016 [3]. They are a general framework for the good governance and management of communication practices between the participants in the social security process.

These Guidelines have the following objectives:

- To provide information to the ISSA member institutions about how communication of all its levels, forms and channels could be useful and support the institutions in their everyday work.
- To improve the quality of administrations' work and to make the services more accessible, comprehensive, understandable and useful while reducing the expenditures. Digital technologies have become widespread in people's lives and it is completely natural for them to be implemented in social security administrations by improving the access and quality of their services. This will facilitate self-service and will decrease administrations' needs of front-office employees that communicate with clients. These workers can be moved to other job positions and given the opportunity to retrain if necessary which could optimize the personnel and the salary costs.
- To improve administrations' image among different participants in the social security process. Communicating to each other they could be involved into institutions' spirit, mission, vision and values.
- Through successful communication, administration bodies can identify, resolve and prevent a number of important issues related to the institutions' activities which are proper both to its employees and to external entities. The effective communication at all levels and aspects could identify potential problems from customers', employees' and other partners' perspective before they appear.

The guidelines relate to: elaborating an effective structure of the communication process, finding and building a highly qualified team of communication specialists, choosing and implementing the appropriate communication tools and achieving a high level of communication.

The Guidelines on Communication by Social Security Administrations made by ISSA are organized in five different parts and are:

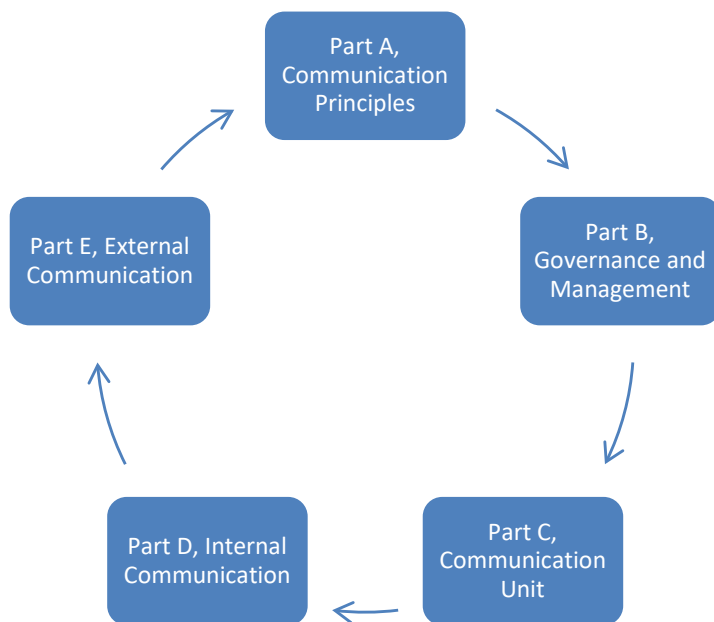


Fig 1. The Guidelines on Communication by Social Security Administrations made by ISSA

- Part A, Communication Principles. In that part the institution's guiding principles on communication are defined.
- Part B, Governance and Management. This section provides guidance on identifying policies and best practices for the implementation of consecutive steps related to communication.
- Part C, Communication Unit. This section provides guidance on the basic elements of the communication process and its main functions.
- Part D, Internal Communication. It provides guidance to clarify the overall goals and challenges of the team.
- Part E, External Communication. Contains guidelines for communication with clients and other external entities.

Each part of the guidelines is structured in three sections – Guideline, Structure and Mechanism that clarify the guidelines' nature, the appropriate structure that support guidelines' implementation by institutions' management. The mechanism gives additional information about the way of the guidelines' implementation. Institutions' internal or external employees responsible for

guideline's implementation are also pointed. These functions may also be delegated to contracted entities outside the firm.

Self-assessment tool for social security administrations, example of good practices and technical references are also included in the guidelines.

The Guidelines on Communication by Social Security Administrations made by ISSA have the following content:

Part A. Communication Principles

According to these principles, institutions must complete their commitments related to the implementation and management of communication process. This part consists of five guidelines:

- *Guideline 1.* Communicating the institution's mandate.

It is necessary to set up a communication framework that clarifies the mission and vision of the institution regarding the effective communication promotion. Measures, strategies, action plans must be envisaged to help achieve the objectives.

- *Guideline 2.* Values and ethics in communication

The requirements for the information provided are pointed in this section. It should be accurate, clear, verifiable, relevant and timely. Personal information should be protected and used only for its intended purposes. Social security institutions collect and process a big amount of personal information databases that must be strictly protected.

- *Guideline 3.* Communication as a leadership tool

Communication at all levels motivates employees to coordinate their actions and achieve better results.

- *Guideline 4.* Consulting and engaging with stakeholders

The insurance institution must be in constant contact with its clients and employees, to create a sense of security and trust within them. They should have the feeling that the social security institution is successfully adapting to the changing environment. This should be accompanied by establishing a consultative framework that is based on the parameters of effective cooperation between insured persons and the administration. The framework also includes the communication channels between the participants involved, provision of financial, information and human resources, deadlines for achieving the objectives, feedback, exchange of information and other important steps in achieving effective communication.

- *Guideline 5.* Segmenting stakeholders into groups

Stakeholders with similar characteristics are divided into different groups in order to increase the effectiveness of communication process.

Part B. Governance and Management

This part is related to social security administrations that should accept appropriate measures and policies to have an active communication with all participants in the social security process. These policies aim to make the communication strategy adequate to the social security administrations objectives and to harmonize the accepted standards with the activities in the communication process.

The implemented communication management should be based on the principles of accountability, transparency, predictability, participation and dynamism. Adherence to these principles will lead to practical implementation of the communication strategy in the social security institutions. When discussing fundamental issues that are crucial to an institution's activities, timely and proactive communication is required to clarify the main issues for stakeholders.

In order to achieve the goals of the communication strategy, it is very important that the management of the insurance administration is aware of its benefits and is effectively involved in its implementation.

This part consists of six guidelines:

- *Guideline 6. Meeting statutory requirements*

Administrations' activity must comply with all legal requirements for collection, storage, access and disclosure of information.

- *Guideline 7. Communication and strategic planning*

The common vision of goals, work process, prospects, and achievements of the social security institution are an important part of the developed strategy. It gives an idea of the support from internal and external entities. The time horizon facing this strategy is medium-term, between three and five years.

- *Guideline 8. Monitoring and cost control*

These two elements are very important for the strategy's succession because they monitor compliance with the financial framework in the activity of the social institution. The achievement of the goals must be in the most balanced, cost-effective and way.

- *Guideline 9. Environmental scans*

Among the huge flow of information that reaches the administration, only one that directly relates to its activities or affects its clients should be selected.

- *Guideline 10. Strategic use of new communication technology and social media*

The new communication platforms, information systems, databases, social media must be used rationally in the daily activities of security administrations and facilitate contacts with their clients and partners.

- *Guideline 11. Crisis management and communications*

Crisis management in an institution, regardless of its nature, is an important stage in its activity, in which it must justify the trust of its clients, partners,

employees and all stakeholders. It must strive to maintain its reputation and trust to itself, to avoid disturbance of the working rhythm. In case of potential threats, the institution must be stable them in a timely and adequate manner, to prevent the tension escalation and the problems worsening.

Part C. Communication Unit

- *Guideline 12. Place of the Communication Unit in the institution*

In order to achieve effective communication in the administration it is necessary for the head of the Communication Unit to be competent, responsible and able to make the right management decisions.

- *Guideline 13. Roles and responsibilities of Communication Unit*

The roles and responsibilities of Communication Unit must be specified very precisely in the communication strategy developed. They need to be defined very precisely in the communication strategy so that the unit can be well received by those who work there.

- *Guideline 14. Client-centric information*

In order to increase the credibility of the institution, it is necessary to satisfy in a timely manner the client's needs for accurate and accessible information about the products and services provided.

- *Guideline 15. Corporate design and branding*

The Communication Unit aims to develop a corporate design of the institution in accordance with its mission and vision.

- *Guideline 16. Accessible, inclusive and non-discriminatory communications*

The language used in the administration must be understandable, tolerant and well-intentioned.

- *Guideline 17. Qualities and skills of communication professionals*

In order to promote communication within the administration, it is recommended to develop a specialized program to enhance communication professionals' skills.

- *Guideline 18. Information and communication technology as an enabler of communications*

Digital technologies could be used appropriately to cut the costs and to improve the institutions' interaction between them.

- *Guideline 19. Service level agreements*

The Communication Unit sets out internal rules for interaction with other departments of the social security administration.

- *Guideline 20. Effectiveness of communication tools*

In order to improve strategy effectiveness it is recommended to develop evaluating criteria for the communication tools and methods between all participants in the social security process.

Part D. Internal Communication

- *Guideline 21. Purpose of internal communication*

Corporate culture, a sense of being part of the institution, acceptance of the common goals could be achieved through active internal communication between management and employees. Using a variety of tools, such as promoting teamwork and work performance, staff motivation, etc., the institution enhances employees' sense of belonging to corporate values.

- *Guideline 22. Change management and communication*

Innovations introduced in the security administrations must be accompanied by active communication between the stakeholders. They must be informed on the specific changes, the needs and benefits of them, planned implementation time and more. This would make the transition smoother and well received by all persons.

Part E. External Communication

- *Guideline 23. Informing the citizen/client about benefits and services*

Information for the services, measures and programs implemented by social security administrations should be clear, reliable and accessible. The role of the Communication Unit in verifying and guaranteeing information is very important because good and efficient communication will reduce the number of direct inquiries and visits by citizens, reducing the errors and omissions by employees. The information provided through different communication channels should have the same content and not be misleading to the users.

- *Guideline 24. Relations with the media and the press*

Good cooperation with media is a key factor for communication strategy's success. Social security schemes are often complex to understand, so it is important that they are presented to the community in a professional and accessible manner through the informational channels of the press and the other media.

- *Guideline 25. Developing a social security culture*

Promotion of the social security system is essential for its acceptance by the insured persons so communication strategy will help accelerate this process.

The results of the good communication between different participants in the social security system could be found in different areas:

- Making social security administrations more popular among the insured persons, beneficiaries and the society that could facilitate the collaboration between them;
- Informing people about the characteristics of the social security system;
- Improving citizens' awareness about their social rights and obligations. People should be informed about their contributions, the accumulated social rights, the amount of the pensions that they are entitled to receive;

- Facilitating access to the information. People could receive an adequate information 24 hours a day and could adapt it to their specific needs.
- Improving social security's transparency that will increase individuals confidence in the system;
- Increasing the correlation between social security contributions and payments. This way people will be informed about the contributions they have accumulated and they will be able to estimate the amount of the insurance payment due;
- Using digital data-bases, electronic registers, virtual platforms and other devices social security administrations could cut their cost and save a great amount of money that could be invested in optimization of social security administrations activities, staff trainings, etc.

Conclusion

In conclusion of the current analysis, we could state that the need of stimulating communication between the social security administrations and stakeholders is certain, in light of the increasing role of the public social security system in forming the incomes of the population at retirement age. The people would be more and more dependent on the social security payments due to aging of the population and the more frequent realization of social security risks. Active communication is one of the most important forms of manifestation of corporate social responsibility in the administration which leads to increasing trust in it and optimizing its activities.

By realizing the benefits of improving communications between different subjects of social security, institutions could be even more effective in their work and to optimize their costs. The positive effect of the guidelines for communication developed could also be used in other administrative bodies in their aim to improving their activities and to expand the reach of the corporate social responsibility in public institutions.

Notes:

- [1] European commission (2001), Green paper Promoting a European framework for Corporate Social Responsibility, COM (2001) 366;
- [2] European commission (2011), EU strategy 2011-2014 for Corporate Social Responsibility, COM (2011) 681
- [3] International social security association (2016), Guidelines on Communication by Social Security Administrations
- [4] Икономическия и социален съвет на България (2009), Корпоративната социална отговорност – някои подходи и добри практики;

[Economic and Social Council of Bulgaria (2009), Corporate Social Responsibility – some approaches and good practices]

[5] Министерство на труда и социалната политика на България (2019), Стратегия за Корпоративна социална отговорност 2019-2023

[Ministry of labor and social policy (2019), Strategy of Corporate Social Responsibility 2019-2023]

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Abstract

Nowadays corporate social responsibility takes an important role in companies' and institutions' management. From an occasional activity and an act of employers' goodwill, now it is becoming a social image etalon. The levels and forms of its implementation become more diverse, including the field of social security.

The goal of the current research is to present the good practices in the active and effective communication of the social security administrations, as being main part of the corporate social responsibility in these institutions. These guides could be useful to the persons who need help and want to be informed on their social rights and responsibilities and to all other interested parties of the social security process.

As a result of the research is expected to prove the thesis that the social security administrations should implement CSR policies and practices in their activities that would increase the trust in the institutions and in the social security system at all and would improve administrations' capacity.

This features and guidelines could as well be adapted and implemented in other institutions in order to expand their implementation in the practice.

Key words: corporate social responsibility, social security administrations, communication

JEL: M14, L380