

Under the content of Enhancing Corporate Social Responsibility in Iran and Turkey Project, first roundtable meeting between Iranian and Turkish Business People was held on 24th October 2009 in Istanbul.

CSR Turkey and CSR Iran Associations started the project in January 2009 to raise the awareness of human rights, labor rights, corruption and environmental issues (as the main themes of CSR) throughout society and among key stakeholders; as well as to develop international partnerships for dialogue and understanding between Turkey and Iran.

The participant associations of the project have hitherto strengthened their connection with meetings and written connections. Additionally the project consider the CSR baseline reports for two countries as the most important step to establish a basis for better understanding and comparability.

Both CSR Turkey and CSR Iran Associations completed their first drafts of baseline reports before the first roundtable meeting. Although this report will become the second country baseline report of CSR Turkey, unlike the CSR Iran which is composing the first country baseline report of Iran, despite the thematic differences of them, two reports have the same key points, themes and emphasis.

Considering these reports as a starting point to discuss the CSR related issues of Turkey and Iran, a group of 16 business people from various sectors also involving civil society members and academics from Iran and a similar group from Turkey came together. Before the roundtable meeting Iranian group also attended to CSR Solutions Marketplace Event on 23rd October 2009 in Kadir Has University, which also organized by CSR Turkey.

Moderated by Assoc.Prof.Sema Aşçıgil from Middle East Technical University, participators from both sides stated their pleasure about the roundtable meeting. Some points highlighted in the meeting can be summarized as below:

- In both countries CSR applications are mostly related with philanthropies, similarly cultural and religious background of the countries play crucial role for the understanding of CSR.

- Despite the modern CSR applications are put in progress with different pathways, the contemporary understanding of CSR by large segments of the society share similarities.
- In Turkey the applications of multi national corporations are very significant for the recognition and best practices of CSR. However in Iran, because of the high proportions of the public corporations the recognition of CSR was provided by different channels.
- The role of CSR as an umbrella term covering worker and human rights, transparency, accountability, gender equality and anti-corruption have to be emphasized more clearly and deep way for better CSR understanding in both countries.
- In both countries, the role of government about CSR issues is still ambiguous.
- Participators from both sides asserted the importance of stakeholder analysis for CSR applications. It is stated that in this way the confusion about considering CSR as a marketing tool can be overcome.
- Similarly participators from each side presented their gratification about gradually civil society organizations and also universities generate more interest about CSR related issues.

The roundtable meeting was also essential for the prepared country baseline reports. Participators' vision and the examples given by them about CSR were important about the content of the reports.

The second CSR roundtable will be held in Tehran in December again with Turkish and Iranian participators from business environment, civil society and academia. After the second roundtable meeting event, both CSR Turkey and CSR Iran Associations will publish their country baseline reports about CSR in January.

As CSR Turkey, we would like to invite all interested business people, civil society members, other professionals and members of academia to participate second roundtable meeting of the project, which will be held in Tehran in December 2009. Please get in touch with us.