



*CHRONICLE OF THREE YEARS
OF STRUGGLE OF THE
SOCIALIST DEPUTIES*

FOR PUBLIC CERTIFICATION OF SOCIAL
PERFORMANCE AND
ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE OF
COMPANIES

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CHRONICLE OF THREE YEARS OF STRUGGLE OF THE SOCIALIST DEPUTIES:

FOR A PUBLIC CERTIFICATION OF THE SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE OF COMPANIES BY DOMINIQUE POTIER, ON 12 . 12 . 2019

Dominique POTIER, Thursday, December 12, 2019 in Public Session

"The present bill is part of the struggle led by the left, by the socialists, to have the duty of vigilance recognized, especially through the law of March 27, 2017 on the duty of vigilance of parent companies and companies that give orders, resulting from the proposed law on new companies and new governance, which we defended, Boris Vallaud, all the deputies of the socialist, environmentalist and republican group and myself, in January 2017. I am also thinking of the struggle we led during the review of the PACTE law, on the growth and transformation of companies. It was a matter of launching a real reform of business and not just an illusion of reform.

So we continue the fight now with CSR - social and environmental responsibility. This consistency is based on thinking that is rooted in intellectual, academic, business and trade union circles. The left is tackling the immense task of renewing 21st century business by approaching it through the duty of vigilance, on the French and European scales but also from a universal perspective. It is in this spirit that we are tracing the path of social and environmental responsibility that has emerged from the archaism of the Stone Age, where it has been confined for the past few years.

French-style CSR, which is beyond the law and not below it, certainly finds its roots in the 19th century in the forms of charity specific to employers, designed to deal with the misdeeds of industrialization. Much later, it found an extension in the Rio movement, with the declarations of 1992 taking into account the effects of the activity on ecology and the threats to the anthropocene. It was not until 2001 that companies with more than 500 employees were obliged to draw up a declaration on their extra-financial performance.

Finally, the idea was born that beyond simple accounting, other data inform about the reality of the company. There is a profusion of certification bodies, from

labels; the reporting is constantly being enriched as the texts are written. With each event, each emotion, each French or universal awareness, criteria are added to the extra-financial reporting.

In this context, we are faced with a kind of paradox: all these efforts are leading us to a certain stagnation. All CSR experts consider that we are ending up going around in circles that our world is becoming more and more like Babel, with the multiplication of declarations by companies themselves, and the confusion of the languages used by certification bodies. As a result, extra-financial performance is weak.

It is therefore time to create a new age of CSR. Why? For a simple reason that we have all understood: standardized accounting as it was conceived a century ago is incapable of reflecting the reality of a company; it gives us, with only the presentation of liabilities and assets, a blind vision of it. Moreover, we know that CSR, according to the reporting in force - or according to the labels intended for companies other than those obliged to make a declaration of extra-financial performance, or DPEF -, gives us a blurred vision, therefore incapable of clearly revealing the truth of a company. A blurred and blurred vision does not allow us to imagine what a good company is in the 21st century.

More broadly, we are witnessing a form of major privatization and concentration of the standard on a French, European and global scale. This is evidenced by the advertising and propaganda budgets that are exploding: 17 billion euros in our country, financed by the French themselves - a kind of servitude to the factory of the image of what a good society is. Beyond advertising aimed at consumers, colossal efforts are being made by brands and multinationals to tell us their vision of the world, of society, of mankind. There is a discrepancy, a distortion of power through the manufacture of the standard which is a danger for our societies. I am thinking here of two recent events: the takeover of one of the last French and European rating agencies worthy of the name, Vigeo, by an American operator; and then the takeover of Yuka by Alibaba - which I do not know whether it is completed or under discussion. We are facing a process of concentration either American or Chinese of the factory of the standard and data management tools.

In short, there is a danger for the sovereignty of the European Union. Will it be able tomorrow to enact its own standards, to guarantee certification, to tell the truth about its exact vision of the company? This is the challenge we have to meet. It is a European issue that is telescoping the evolution of companies. We are absolutely convinced that a very strong CSR ambition is an element of consolidation for the company. Indeed, being clearly informed, for the stakeholders, especially for the constituent parts that are the employees, of the reality of value sharing, the quality of labor relations, the quality of governance, the company's relationship with the territories, its relationship with its

subcontractors and its suppliers, the environmental impact of its activity - particularly carbon - is likely to consolidate the safety of the company itself.

The same is true for the duty of vigilance, which operators - multinationals
– who have sometimes fought against it now admit that it is becoming for them a kind of seat belt, a useful beacon, in the darkness of a sometimes savage globalization, to shed light on potential dangers.

So there is an issue of European sovereignty, as I said, an issue of consolidating the company's roots. At the same time, it's a question of giving the company wings to expand into the markets of the future. There is a vision of the European company that is responsible, fair, fiscally loyal, capable of co-determination.

– i.e. the involvement of the constituent parts in the governance of the company. This European model of the enterprise should represent a force in globalization, an ethical compass that takes us away from Asian capitalism and Anglo-Saxon neo-liberalism.

That is the ambition of this bill, which simply aims to provide us with a common language. That, I sense, is all that will distinguish us from the executive and perhaps from the majority. Indeed, we consider that our society has been too contemptuous of the issue of enacting standards. It is a blind spot in social democracy and more generally in our democracies.

The hyper-concentration of the manufacture of images, of the manufacture of symbols, of what is good, of good life, is a danger for our democracy. On the contrary, we need to create a common language that reconciles business and society. In short, through a public CSR label, it is a question of giving every citizen the ability to influence the economy as a consumer, a saver and simply as a potential collaborator.

I am very sensitive, like you, in being with the climate generation, the rising generation, our children's generation, to the considerable importance of the question of meaning in professional commitment. A whole generation of future leaders, future decision-makers, will want to know which company they want to work with, and in this context, CSR will be an essential factor of discernment. CSR aims to give back to the citizen the power to influence the economy. Therefore, the proposed legislation, if passed, will create a process that we wanted to be moderate, gradual. Moderate because it takes into account the constraints of companies and is based on voluntary work, on the wager that today, in the world of SMEs, in the world of trade unionism, in the world of the social economy and in the world of public accounting, we have discovered dozens of allies who, like us, believe that we must come out of Babel, out of the lie, and that we must re-establish a common language. This language must allow the return of democracy in business and, more broadly, in a society that wants to have an impact on the economy, an economy that cannot have as its goal only the lure of short-term gain and the concentration of its resources on a single goal.

data and values, but which must allow everyone to flourish and protect our common goods. This is the meaning of this text that we are proposing as the launch of a process in which we can involve all the stakeholders and through which we must be able to dialogue and come together. »