The Ethos Initiative anti-corruption task force

Introduction
The Ethos Initiative’s main objective is to lay foundations for fairer and more sustainable practices of governance in Slovenia through creation and transfer of knowledge and good practices, taking into account characteristics, needs and development of the Slovenian social, political and economic environment. In order to achieve that, the Ethos Initiative has been developing tools and programmes for enhancing knowledge and understanding of threats corruption presents to integrity and good governance of businesses and has been promoting and facilitating dialogue and debate among relevant stakeholders.

Challenges
Corrupt practices have seemingly become an integral part of many economies, as in Slovenia. Until recently, the impact that corruption had on businesses and the society as a whole was never seriously debated and tackled by any institution, not even those promoting responsible management for years. When the Commission for the Prevention of Corruption showed that how much the progress of businesses in Slovenia depends on the politics and, consequently, how strongly it is creating less favourable environment for competitiveness and honesty the focus of attention shifted significantly. The worldwide economic crisis had by no doubt contributed integrity and honesty, when doing business an important point on the agenda of numerous events.

Responsible management, as a rule, entails promotion of honest, sustainable public-political and corporate practices, of which a common denominator is doing business with integrity. In order to promote such practices and encourage businesses to engage in them, a group of experts have set up a working group within the Global Compact Network Slovenia called the Ethos Initiative. It promotes the implementation of the Ten Principles of the Global Compact, which commits its participants (and calls upon all other members of business and society at large) not only to avoid bribery, extortion, and other forms of corruption, but also to develop policies and concrete programmes to address corruption. All in all, the Global Compact calls upon all stakeholders to promote “honest business as a factor of growth and the driver of change.”

Actions taken
The Ethos Initiative began in 2010. Its members include representatives of both public and private sector entities who recognise the importance of empowering businesses with knowledge on the fight against corruption and enhancement of integrity of both businesses and their employees.

To date, the Ethos Initiative has promoted honest business practices at different events, either organised by the Global Compact Network Slovenia or institutions participating in the Ethos Initiative, with the aim to promote integrity and zero tolerance to corruption as integral parts of sustainable and responsible business environment. In order to help businesses to openly promote and implement their core anti-corruption values and principles, different tools and programmes have been developed. They were designed to equip them to be able to identify corrupt practices that are damaging to the quality of their business, progress and competitiveness as well as to the prosperity of the society as a whole.
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To date the following have been developed:

- Preparation and promotion of the “Declaration on Honest Business”, introduced to the public with a high profile business event, “Fairness as a Source of Sustainable National Competitiveness,” in January 2011, attended by 130 top level executives and decision makers. The Declaration has since gained 45 signatories (privately owned companies, non-profit organisations and public companies).
- Organisation of a conference by the UNGC Slovenia and the Commission for the Prevention of Corruption on “Corrupt practices in business environment” for privately owned companies
- A round table organised by the Global Compact Network Slovenia, the Ekvilib Institute and the Managers’ Association of Slovenia on »Honest Business as a Factor of Growth and the Driver of Change« in December 2011
- A conference organised by UNGC Slovenia and the Commission for the Prevention of Corruption on “Identify the Corruption risks” in November 2012
- A discussion organised by the Commission for the Prevention of Corruption and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia on the “Impact of Corruption on the Slovenian Economy” in 2013
- Presentation of the Ethos Initiative and its objectives at the international conference “Social responsibility and Current Challenges 2013,” organised by the Institute for the Development of Social Responsibility (IRDO)

Main goals of the Ethos Initiative for the future are:

- To raise awareness and understanding on the importance of integrity and honest business in wider society, including entities of the public and private sector
- To educate on anti-corruption practices and honest business
- To impact policy-making and guidelines on integrity and honest business at the state level as well as at the level of different organisations sharing common business interest
- To develop a certificate on integrity plans and/or anti-corruption compliance programmes and to issue them

These goals shall be realised through:

- Active participation at and organisation of events, publication of expert papers, organisation of trainings and workshops for relevant stakeholders, including youth
- Regular update of the Ethos Initiative website
- Preparation of news for the signatories of the declaration and members of Global Compact Network Slovenia,
- Preparation of drafts and proposals to policies and guidelines in the area of honest business and affecting different bodies and interest groups
- Preparation and implementation of a programme for certifying and maintaining requirements provided for in the certificate for integrity plans and/or anti-corruption compliance programmes
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The Ethos Initiative is committed to making the most of circumstances in which businesses are aware that their progress, reputation, even existence, are at stake and call for immediate (re)action from managers and the economy. Such initiatives are becoming part of responsible management, a reaction to current situations in the economy and society as a whole.

The mission of project is to establish mechanisms, processes, and know-how with which the economy would be able to proactively and, following their own initiative (without pressure of repressive organs), fight corruption and increase compliance to ethical and legal norms.

The role of PRME/sustainability principles

- Taking the dialogue a step further – into action
- Participation of very different stakeholders enables us an unbiased view of the playing-field
- Multi-sectorial structure facilitates design of sustainable tools for all players