Master´s Thesis Evaluation by the Opponent

Title of the Master´s Thesis:

CSR in rural areas. The Case of SMEs in Central Bohemian Region

Author of the Master´s Thesis:

Bc. Sárka Nováková

Goals of the Master´s Thesis:

Analysis of corporate social responsibility with special regard to small and medium enterprises in Central Bohemia

Evaluation:

	Criteria	Description	Max. points	Points
Content 70%	Output Quality	The results of the thesis correspond to the requirements of a master thesis at CEMS. However, from my point of view the results of the thesis could be more concise, since • a lack of understanding of the CSR concept by SMEs • the use of CSR primarily as PR tool • a lack of control and checks • insufficient alignment of EU and government strategies with with the needs of businesses and • a lack of governments and municipalities to exhibit socially responsible best practices are quite divers and distinct findings. Many of the results are neither based on or at least connected to theory, nor sufficiently substantiated by empirical findings (anchor examples from the interviews). Nevertheless, the conclusions can have practical relevance insofar the recommendations, i.e. • education of business owners and political representatives on CSR • better alignment of action plans and strategies with the needs and expectations of the targeted groups • implementation of best practices by municipalities and the government would become a foundation for the development of rural areas in the Central Bohemian Region.	20	20

	Goals	The goals of the thesis are sufficiently evident and accomplished according to the standards applied at CEMS. However, for me it was not perfectly clear whether the author wanted to find out • what the perception of CSR by SMEs in the CBR is • how CSR is implemented by these SMEs • how the implementation of CSR could improve the situation of these SMEs (attraction of loyal and quality employees, efficiency of production, access to EU funding etc.) • how the implementation of CSR by SMEs in rural areas could benefit these non-urban regions • how policies on the EU and government level could be more effective • how NGOs and different governmental levels (EU, state, region and municipalities) could contribute to the (understanding and/or implementation of) CSR of SMEs in Bohemia? The formulated research question reflects this variety of goals: „What is the perception of CSR by SMEs in the context of declining rural areas, and what steps could be done in order to strengthen it?" albeit the word „it" might moreover suggest some ambiguity: Does it refer to the perception, the understanding, the implementation, the benefit for SMEs or the benefit for the declining rural areas?	10	10
	Methodology:	The method used (content analysis) is in principle adequate. However, since there were no transcripts of the interviews and even no anchor examples in the text it is hard to evaluate whether the author indeed applied the described method of content analysis and interpreted the text in order to find patterns or whether she rather took the statements of her interview partners at face value. Additionally, it is not really clear whether she choose the different groups of interview partners to answer the same (aspect of) the research question and what kind of patterns where detected (especially across groups of participants). Finally, it remains somewhat unclear, in how far the lengthy elaborations on the development of rural areas, the EU support and the barriers were really necessary to answer the research question („What is the perception of CSR by SMEs in the context of declining rural areas, and what steps could be done in order to strengthen it?"). Furthermore , if it was a semi-structured interview the guideline of the interviews (appendix 1) remains somewhat fuzzy in respect to the relevance of the questions for the intended goals.	20	18
	Theory/ Conceptualization:	The author demonstrates an in-depth understanding of the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility and can distinguish key concepts. The knowledge shown about literature, terminology and definitions is comprehensive. Unfortunately, she doesn't apply theory in the narrow sense of the term in order to explain or predict certain phenomena. This would have been worthwhile and given the thesis more clarity and rigour.	20	20
Formal requirements 15%	Structure:	Notwithstanding the fact that the relevance of some elaborations is not always clear, the thesis has a golden threat and well structured division of chapters.	3	3
	Terminology:	Linguistic and terminological level of the thesis are appropriate.	4	4

	Formalities:	Formal layout and requirements, extent and abstract meet the expectations.	4	4
	Citing:	Quality of citations and reflection of Ephorus results are in line with the criteria of CEMS.	4	4
Delivery 15 %	Presentation document:	Is the presentation itself structured in a clear way? Is it appealing and easy to follow? Does it convey the message efficiently?	5	
	Presentation skills:	Are you conveying the message efficiently and timely? Do you use appropriate words, speed, tone of voice, gestures, movement etc. to express your thoughts in a clear manner?	5	
	Argumentation:	Are you able to readily and briskly react to questions or comments? Are you able to explain unclear parts and connect comments to relevant places in your presentation or parts of particular analyses? How well are you able to defend to your ideas and recommendations?	5	
			100	0

Other comments:

I tried to grade according to CEMS standards, but gave indications to room for improvement.

Questions or comments to be discussed during the thesis defence:

Methodology

The name of the **Opponent**:

Prof. Dr. Michael Zerr

The employer of the **Opponent**:

Karlshochschule International University

Date 31. 5. 2019

Signature of the **Opponent**: