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21 Ireland

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Abstract. This chapter provides insight into Ireland's business environment aligned with Corporate Social Responsibility observed from the point of view of future job seekers. Through a survey, the value ascribed by respondents to these CSR strategies is presented. In general, the results show that future job seekers focus on companies that offer personal career development and a good working environment, while, giving less importance to the dimensions of socio-ecological responsibility and ethics and governance.

21.1 Country data – National context

21.1.1 Political and socio-economic conditions

The island of Ireland is located on the north-western edge of Europe and has a landmass area of 7,027,308 hectares. Politically, the Republic of Ireland consists of 26 counties while the remaining six northern counties all form Northern Ireland, which is part of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Where the word “Ireland” is used in this chapter, it is to be taken to mean the “Republic of Ireland”. Ireland has been a member of the European Union (EU) since 1973. According to the Central Statistics Office (2016), Ireland has a population of 4.7 million with an average age of 37.4 years and approximately 7 per cent between the ages of 19 and 24 which is the typical university going age group. The religious makeup of the country is predominantly Christian, particularly Roman Catholic, which accounts for more than 84 per cent of the population. There is a small but rapidly growing population of Muslims due to immigration. About 4 per cent of the Republic of Ireland has no religion, compared to 14 per cent in Northern Ireland. There is also a small Jewish population (Central Statistics Office 2016).

Ireland has a world-renowned educational system. Education is compulsory for children in Ireland from the ages of six to sixteen or until students have completed three years of second-level education (Department of Education 2018). In Ireland, all children are entitled to free primary and post-primary education. Most primary schools are funded by the State and most children attend these schools. Higher education in Ireland is provided mainly by 7 Universities, 14 Institutes of Technology, and 7 Colleges of Education. Most undergraduate students attending publicly funded third-level courses qualify for funding towards tuition fees under the Department of Education and Skills free fees schemes. To qualify for tuition fee funding a student must be a first-time undergraduate, hold EU/EEA or Swiss nationality and have been resident in these states for at least three of the five years prior to starting their course. Concerning postgraduate courses, students must pay fees, however financial assistance can also be sought under the Student Grant Scheme. In 2017/2018, there were 231,710 enrolments in higher education in Ireland of which 79 per cent were full-time, 17 per cent were part-time and 3 per cent remote (Higher Education Authority 2018).

The country has transformed itself from a traditional dependence on agriculture and then manufacturing to a knowledge-based, high value-added, service-led economy. Education is an important component of such a knowledge-based economy, playing a vital role in its transformation over the past number of decades and contributing to future economic success by helping to foster a culture that is conducive to innovation and enterprise. The Irish government has begun to focus on the development of smaller domestic firms as a source of future growth, which makes sense given the relevance of enterprise to the Irish economy.

The Irish economy grew significantly from 1995 to 2008, benchmarked against international standards (Ní Chonail 2009). The associated property and credit boom were attributed to the unsustainable domestic imbalances (Woods and O'Connell 2012). This economic growth heralded dramatic changes in Ireland's demographic structures attributed to Irish emigrants returning to the country and new immigrants entering Ireland (Mottiar and Walsh 2012). According to the Central Statistics Office, 11 per cent of the population in Ireland were immigrants in 2006 and despite the intervening banking and financial crisis (2008 to 2012), the numbers of immigrants increased to 17 per cent of the total population by 2011 (Central Statistics Office 2006; 2011).

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) have played a key role in the generation of an enterprise culture in Ireland in recent decades; however, Ireland has not always been an encouraging environment for the establishment of such enterprises. Prior to the early 1980s the Irish government's policy was mainly focused on attracting Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) to encourage new business development and those with the initiative to establish their own enterprise had to emigrate to receive the assistance they needed (Business 2000). However, government attitudes changed dramatically once they realised that FDI was not secure in terms of investment as Multi-National Corporations (MNC's) closed their subsidiaries in Ireland (IDA Ireland n.d.). Thus, the Irish government shifted its focus to developing SME's as a key source in the development of an enterprise environment and employment. Nowadays the government recognises the importance of SMEs and their contribution to economic growth, social cohesion, regional and local development, to enhance the development of enterprise in Ireland.

In 2018, Ireland saw 26,900 people start a new business, which equated to 2,250 per month, with 61 per cent being male entrepreneurs and 39 per cent women entrepreneurs (Fitzsimons

and O’Gorman 2019). The rate of ‘Early-stage entrepreneurship’ in Ireland puts it in 5th place (9.6 per cent) when compared to the European average, somewhat behind the Netherlands which is at 12.3 per cent (Fitzsimons and O’Gorman 2019). Furthermore, the rate at which people start a new business in Ireland is on par with the norm across Europe, whilst the rate of nascent entrepreneurship increased slightly year on year and Ireland is now ranked 4th in Europe (Fitzsimons and O’Gorman 2019).

The number of people employed in Ireland reached a record high at the end of 2018 as there was an annual increase in employment of 2.7 per cent or 50,500 in 2018, resulting in more than 2.28 million people employed in the Irish economy (Hamilton 2019). This figure has risen again as of quarter 3, 2019 there are 2,326,900 persons employed in Ireland (Central Statistics Office 2019). As of October 2019, the total number of persons unemployed in Ireland is 117,300 (Central Statistics Office 2019).

21.1.2 Cultural values

It is a challenge to define ‘Irish culture’ but there are a few symbols, which are unique to Ireland. Ireland is often called the ‘land of saints and scholars’ referring to the golden age of monastic learning, or ‘the emerald isle’ referring to the green landscape. Irish citizens exhibit great respect for traditions, and this is often displayed through their song, dance, and poetry. A vital element of the Irish culture is the use of humour in all situations, including business contexts. Humour is used in the form of self-depreciation or irony. Humour is a way to test people to see if they can be trusted and if they can get along (Communicaid 2018). The family is an integral part of Irish social structure and strongly influences how people live their daily lives. Loyalty and commitment to family members are essential. Religion has played a big role in politics in Ireland and most notably the War of Independence between Catholics and Protestants. The War of Independence deeply affected Irish people, their cultural values and social norms giving society a more traditional and conservative perspective.

In applying Hofstede’s model to Ireland (Hofstede Insights n.d.), Ireland scores 28 on power distance, which indicates that inequality in Irish society is minimised since equity in society is valued. Extending this analysis to businesses and their operations, managers are always accessible, and they rely on individual employees and teams for their expertise. Both managers and employees expect to be consulted and information is frequently shared. At the

same time, communication is informal, direct, and participative. Ireland scores high on individualism (70) indicating that Irish people tend to be independent. They tend to assume personal responsibility and achieve things on their own without having to depend on others. In the business world, employees are therefore expected to be self-reliant and display initiative and hiring, and promotions are based on merit or evidence of what one has done or can do. Ireland is deemed a 'masculine society' (68) and with such a high masculinity index this refers to clear distinct gender roles. Irish society and culture are geared towards the role of parenthood and women have support. With such a high masculinity rating, conflict is often resolved at the individual level and the goal is to win. Lastly, Ireland scored 35 on uncertainty avoidance. This means that Irish citizens are not rule-oriented and thus the culture is less standardised and formal, and risk is more likely to be accepted. This is reflected in the business domain through creativity and Irish businesses are always looking for new ways to approach problems.

Ireland's clean, fresh air and lush green landscapes attract millions of visitors every year and its natural, unspoilt environment is famous throughout the world. Caring and protecting Ireland's natural resources and habitat is important for the citizens of Ireland as observed in actions such as the 2002 ban on single-use plastic bags and echoed more recently by the findings of a study conducted by the European Commission in 2014 (European Commission 2014). Of the 1,005 respondents, 96 per cent of the Irish respondents believed that they personally have a role to play in protecting the environment compared to the EU average of 85 per cent (European Commission 2014). The biggest environmental worry for Irish people (57 per cent) is water pollution, with the growing amount of waste (53 per cent) and air pollution (47 per cent) also being identified as concerns. When asked about what environmental actions they had taken during the previous month, it was found that 84 per cent of Irish respondents (4th highest in the EU) said they separated their waste for recycling compared to 72 per cent of EU respondents. Some 27 per cent of Irish respondents have chosen a more environmentally friendly way of transport. Regarding product purchases: 37 per cent of Irish respondents compared to 35 per cent of EU respondents have chosen local products, whilst Irish respondents are more inclined to reduce waste compared to their EU counterparts, by avoiding over-packaged products and buying products with a longer shelf life (42 per cent and 33 per cent respectively). Purchasing an environmentally friendly product

with an associated environmental label is favoured by 27 per cent of Irish and 21 per cent of EU respondents.

21.1.3 Institutional embeddedness and CSR performance of companies

In 2017, the Irish government published its 'National Action Plan on Corporate Social Responsibility' (Department of Enterprise and Innovation 2017). It proposed the establishment of a Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) stakeholder forum so that business, government, state agencies and the community can come together to drive action, create awareness, and achieve the stated vision of corporate responsibility in Ireland. Additionally, the plan contained four core dimensions of CSR: the community; environment; marketplace and the workplace. The 'Community' dimension highlights that businesses are part of the community they operate in and often share the concerns of that community. It encourages businesses to support community engagement initiatives and give back to society through funding community projects; sponsoring clubs and employees volunteering in outreach activities during work hours. The 'Environment' dimension encourages businesses to develop a culture of sustainability and realise the impact of the business on the environment. It encourages respect for biodiversity; climate change mitigation; environmental protection strategies and resource efficiency. Regarding the 'Marketplace' dimension, it signals how organisations should conduct their business and it reflects their ethical intentions. The 'Workplace' dimension encourages a commitment to good workplace practices through considering the conditions of employment; work-life balance, employee health and wellbeing for example. On reviewing the top 10 companies in Ireland (Bank of Ireland 2020), it is evident that they have adopted a CSR strategy as all had their strategy prevalent on their webpages, they highlight their corporate activities both internally and externally that aids in sustainable practices in the organisation. Furthermore, the National Plan on CSR aims to fulfil the vision of Ireland being a *'fairer Ireland, with a strong, sustainable economy, full employment, and a better quality of life for all Irish citizens'* (Department of Enterprise and Innovation 2017, p. 5). The top 10 companies in Ireland all have adopted a CSR strategy that aims to lead to the accomplishment of this vision.

21.2 Country data - Institutional context

21.2.1 Waterford Institute of Technology

Waterford Institute of Technology was founded in 1970 in the southeast of Ireland as a Regional Technical College. In 1998, it was awarded Institute of Technology status by the Irish government and now confers its own awards from Higher Certificates to Ph.D. In its short history, Waterford Institute of Technology has matured immensely and today boasts a campus community of over 10,000 full-time and part-time students and 1,000 staff members, which is the highest number of students outside of Dublin. It offers a wide range of academic programs covering the Humanities, Health and Nursing, Science and Informatics, Business and Education and Engineering and Architecture.

In terms of ranking, Waterford Institute of Technology is ranked by Unirank as the 10th best institution for higher learning in Ireland (out of 32) and the top Institute of Technology (except for Dublin Institute of Technology) (Waterford Institute of Technology 2018a). Waterford Institute of Technology features regularly as one of the higher-performing higher education institutions in Ireland with the annual Sunday Times rankings. The mission of Waterford Institute of Technology is to “provide vocational and technical education and training for the economic, technological, scientific, commercial, industrial, social and cultural development of the State with a particular reference to the region served by the college” (Waterford Institute of Technology 2018a).

21.2.2 Sustainability education

Waterford Institute of Technology offers a major concentration in sustainability, though not in the business domain. For example, the Bachelor of Engineering (Hons) Sustainable Civil Engineering recognizes that civil engineers must work in a ‘cost-effective, environmentally protective and socially responsible manner’ (Waterford Institute of Technology 2018b, p. 1). In order to achieve this goal, there are modules which focus on Sustainable Heat and Power, Hydrology for Sustainability and Sustainable Energy. Graduates from this program can go on to complete a Master of Science in Sustainable Energy Engineering, which aims to provide expertise in terms of energy use, environmental performance and sustainability in the design and operation of buildings and their associated facilities and services systems.

Corporate social responsibility can be found as part of the Human Resources curricula where lecturers both research and teach on the subject area. In 2013, a student from Waterford Institute of Technology was awarded the 2013 Sisk Award for Excellence in Project Management and Research. The award was given to a project focused on corporate social responsibility in the construction sector. Corporate social responsibility is also taught as part of the Accounting curriculum.

Finally, research centres within Waterford Institute of Technology have sustainability in their research agendas. For example, within the Eco Innovation Research Centre, research in the Sustainability Forestry Research Group centres around the 'establishment, management and protection of forest resources and investigates novel methods of carrying out these operations in order to enhance the future viability of this resource in an eco-friendly and sustainable way' (Waterford Institute of Technology 2018c, p. 1). The Sustainable Marine Research Group conducts research on marine resources, with the main aim to increase the value and sustainability of these resources and the Sustainable Agricultural and Food Research Group researches a wide variety of areas aiming to enhance sustainability and biosafety in agricultural systems (Waterford Institute of Technology 2018c).

21.2.3 Institutional support for sustainability

In September 2016, Waterford Institute of Technology was granted the ISO50001 Standard for best practice energy management systems. This was awarded on the basis of meeting the requirements for making the most effective and efficient use of all its resources, encouraging all stakeholders of the Institute community to develop an ecologically sound approach to contribute at local, regional, national and global levels to the sustainable use of natural resources. Waterford Institute of Technology has an Energy Advisory Group that is comprised of both staff and students with the remit to foster a research driven agenda in the area of energy demand and supply, and to develop links with the wider community and to encourage energy awareness with the staff and student community. Additionally, Waterford Institute of Technology is legally obliged to manage the waste it generates every day in an appropriate and suitable manner. It is the Institute's policy to promote good environmental practices and to this end, Waterford Institute of Technology has implemented a Waste Management Program. Finally, Waterford Institute of Technology holds a 'Green Day' once a year with the

aim of promoting energy awareness at home and at work and to encourage engagement by members of the community.

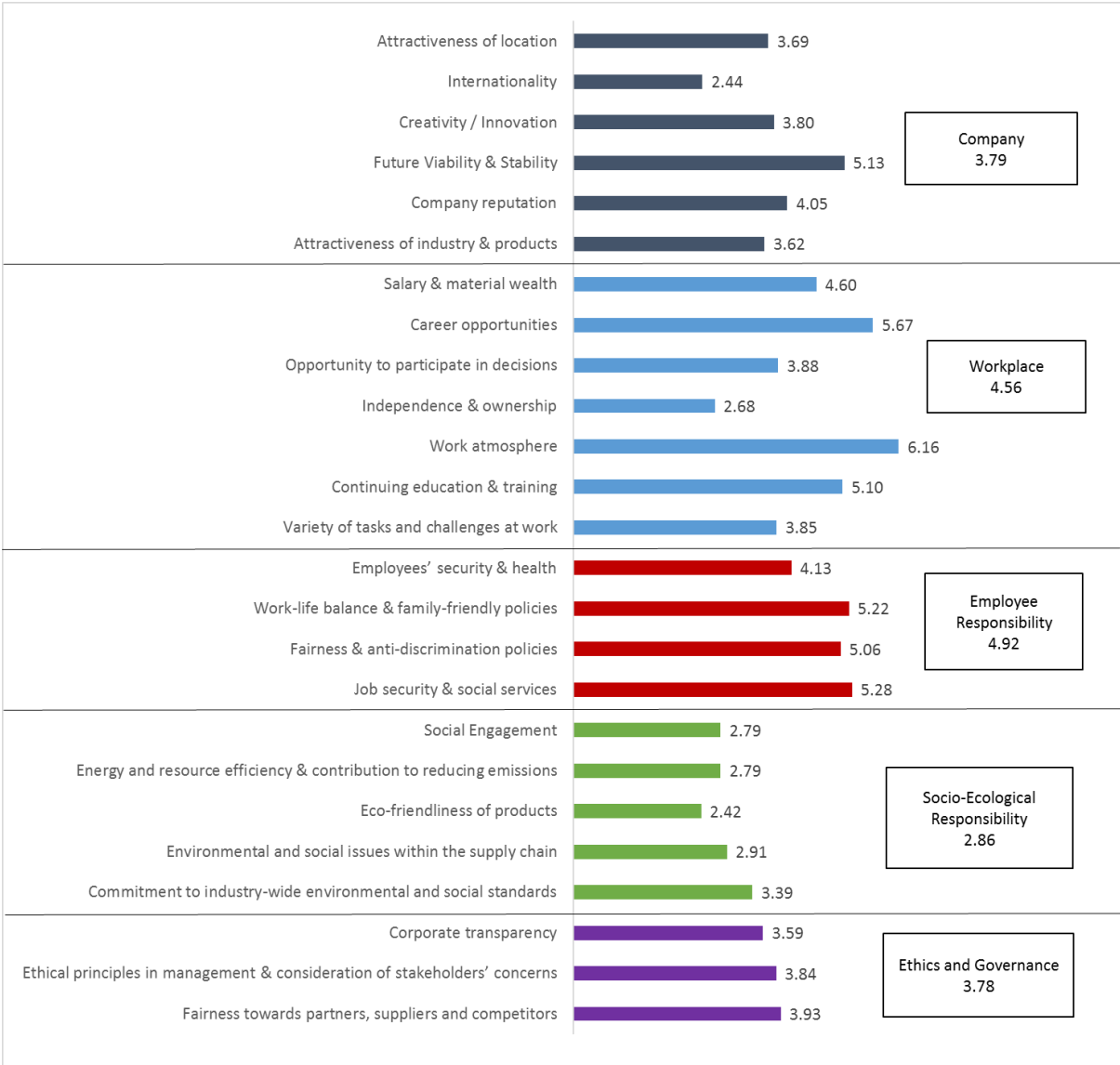
21.3 Irish Case Study: Students' expectations on employers' CSR performance

As part of the overall study included in this text, Irish students were questioned on the relative importance of 25 CSR and non-CSR related employer and workplace attributes for their employer choice, their basic value orientations as well as demographic characteristics (e.g. gender, age) and prior experiences (e.g. volunteering, completion of modules or elements connected to CSR or Sustainability Management). The 25 attributes in the survey were grouped into five dimensions or categories: two non-CSR dimensions "Company" and "Workplace" and three CSR dimensions "Employee Responsibility", "Socio-Ecological Responsibility" and "Ethics and Governance". Conjoint analysis was used to generate average relative importance values for the 25 attributes and five dimensions that are presented and discussed throughout this chapter (see Chapter 4 for further details about the methodology employed).

For Ireland, there were 50 respondents with most respondents being male (56 per cent). A large majority were of Irish citizenship (78 per cent) and the majority in the 21-25 age category. In most cases, the respondents had less than one-year's work experience (60 per cent); 16 per cent had between one- and two-year's experience, 12 per cent had between two and five year's experience, and 12 per cent had five or more year's experience. In relation to the respondents' education, the majority (50 per cent) have been studying for three years with a little over a quarter having completed four years of study. Most respondents are completing an undergraduate degree program (80 per cent), with economics/business administration being the most popular subject area being completed (54 per cent), engineering sciences being the second most popular (30 per cent) and 'Other' counting for 12 per cent. The remaining four percent were studying either science/mathematics or were within the humanities and liberal arts field. The majority (82 per cent) have completed a module or elements that are connected to CSR or sustainability management. Looking at volunteering, 46 per cent indicated that they have volunteered in the past. What is interesting is that more females (57 per cent) have volunteered than their male (43 per cent) counterparts.

The Irish respondent’s sensitivity to the 25 employer and workplace attributes as well as the five associated dimensions or categories is illustrated in Figure 21.1. Four of the five categories are scored three or above, except for socio-ecological responsibility. In hierarchical importance, employer responsibility to employees was the most important (“Employee Responsibility”), followed by workplace attributes (“Workplace”), the company’s own characteristics (“Company”), “Ethics and Governance” and then finally “Socio-Ecological Responsibility”.

Figure 21.1. Average relative importance values for attributes and dimensions



The “Employee Responsibility” grouping encompasses company features that relate to employees’ security, fairness and health. In a more detailed review of the average relative importance values for the 25 attributes, as demonstrated in Figure 21.1, the dominant

features in this leading category are job security and social services (5.28) and work-life balance and family-friendly policies (5.22), suggesting that individual concerns overshadow the wider environmental and societal concerns for Irish respondents.

However, the two most important attributes across all are found within the second category “Workplace”. From Figure 21.1, work atmosphere and career opportunities are the key features driving the high score for workplace, the former achieving 6.16 and the latter 5.67. Overall, aspects of the workplace can relate to the personal career concerns of the employee (career potential and the lived experience of work) and underline the individualistic theme of the employer’s responsibility to employees.

The “Company” category is of moderate concern (in third position) to Irish respondents, with the attribute “Future viability and stability” scoring the highest within the category. This attribute represents the permanence and sustainability of the company and could be seen to relate to the stability of the respondent’s employment, linking this category to the “Workplace” and “Employee Responsibility” categories. The “Company” category generally is composed of attributes that capture the attractiveness and internationality of the company and sector. Finally, “Ethics and Governance” and “Socio-ecological Responsibility” are the two dimensions that beside “Employee Responsibility” relate to CSR and are ranked fourth and fifth in importance to the respondents. With the exception of “Employee Responsibility”, in general the results suggest that CSR issues are subservient.

Next, the five dimensions were examined in relation to the demographic profile of the Irish respondents, including age and gender, as well as their experience profile, including prior volunteering and studying a CSR-related program. The statistical relationship between the dimensions and the demographic and experience profile of the respondents based on ANOVA analyses are presented in Table 21.1 below.

Table 21.1. CSR and non-CSR dimensions and the future job seekers demographic and experience profile

		Company	Workplace	Employee Responsibility	Socio-Ecological Responsibility	Ethics and Governance
CSR-related study program	F stat	.113	2.777	.375	3.172	.257
	Sig.	.738	.102	.543	.081	.615
Age*	F stat	.429	.360	.155	.729	2.110
	Sig.	.516	.551	.696	.397	.153
Gender	F stat	.617	1.214	338.00**	.815	1.139
	Sig.	.436	.276	.588**	.371	.291
Volunteering	F stat	.003	4.696	.016	2.159	244.00**
	Sig.	.959	0.035^	.899	.148	.196**

Note: ^ Statistically significant at the 0.05 level.

*The dummy variable for age initially employed was based on two groups, above and below the mean age of 23.46 years and generated groups of 11 and 39. As one of these groups is less than 15 in number, an ANOVA cannot be applied using this measure of age and the median age was employed in lieu, using ANOVAs. As a robustness test, a non-parametric Mann-Whitney U test was applied using the mean age and there is no evidence to support a difference between each of the five dimensions and the two age mean-based groups (results not reported).

**The ANOVA assumption of equal variance was violated for Ethics and Governance when comparing those students that volunteer and those that do not volunteer. A non-parametric Mann-Whitney U test was employed as an alternative statistical measure and there is no evidence to support a difference between Ethics and Governance scores for the two groups (U = 244.00, N1 = 23, N2 = 27, p = .196, two-tailed). The ANOVA assumption of equal variance was also violated for Employee Responsibility when comparing the gender of students. A non-parametric Mann-Whitney U test was employed as an alternative statistical measure and there is no evidence to support a difference between Employee Responsibility scores for the two groups (U = 338.00, N1 = 22, N2 = 28, p = .588, two-tailed).

It is evident from the analysis of variance in Table 21.1 that workplace was the only dimension that showed a significant difference between the volunteering group and the non-volunteering group (p<0.05). Preliminary correlation analysis demonstrated a negative and significant relationship (Pearson's correlation coefficient = -.30, p-value = 0.035) between workplace and volunteering. A comparison of means shows that, respondents without volunteering experiences had a higher mean value in the workplace dimension than respondents with such experiences (4.74 and 4.35, respectively). The other characteristics

(CSR-related study program, gender and age) does not appear to influence the five dimensions according to Table 21.1.

Comparing the results of the Irish sample with the global average (see chapter 5 and 23) yields insights into potential peculiarities of preferences of Irish respondents. Overall, Irish scores for the different attributes are more or less in line with the global ones. However, three of the attributes related to employee responsibility (all except employee security and health) as well as the attributes “career opportunities” and “attractiveness of location” are markedly more important to Irish students than to the global average. In contrast, attributes related to the corporate ecological responsibility as well as the attribute “internationality” and “independence and ownership” are less valued by Irish respondents. Especially the last observation is surprising given the pronounced self-expression values (Inglehart et al. 2014) and high degree of individualism (Hofstede n.d.) in Irish culture.

21.4 Conclusion

On both a societal and commercial basis, Ireland has demonstrated an appreciation of the need to embrace CSR strategies to ensure a lasting, sustainable economic, social and commercial legacy for future generations. For example, Ireland has established its National Plan on CSR in 2017 to fulfil the vision of Ireland being a *‘fairer Ireland, with a strong, sustainable economy, full employment, and a better quality of life for all Irish citizens’* (Department of Enterprise and Innovation 2017, p. 5). The top 10 companies in Ireland all have adopted a CSR strategy that aims to lead to the accomplishment of this vision.

This survey exposes the value ascribed by future job seekers to these CSR strategies. What emerges from this study is that future job seekers tend to focus on the employer and workplace attributes first that relate to their personal career development and their lived experience of work. In addition, a difference between respondents with and without volunteering experiences was found for the workplace dimension.

Given the strong ‘individualism’ cultural score identified by Hofstede (n.d.), Irish future job seekers analysed in our sample can be generally characterised as independent and self-reliant and realise that future hiring and promotions are based on merit. In addition, Ireland’s high masculinity index (Hofstede n.d.) suggests that career development aims to ‘win’ and is underscored by competitiveness and personal effort on behalf of these future job seekers. On

balance, companies that offer explicit commercial opportunities and company policies to ensure a good working environment and boost the individual's career progression will be valued more highly than companies that stress sustainability over career enhancement. This conclusion fits well with the Irish survey results that highlight the subordinate role that the "Socio-ecological Responsibility" and "Ethics and Governance" dimensions of CSR play in the decision-making process of future job seekers. Overall, we can conclude that Irish respondents place limited emphasis on the CSR policies of a company that do not directly relate to their personal benefits, when possibly choosing it as a future employer.

It is important to note, the limited sample size in Ireland inhibits general propositions. It is, however, a good starting point for future research on the socio-economic embeddedness of employer preferences.

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