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Emerging business sustainability in Europe: Its education, practice and research implications

Business sustainability has advanced in the past decade from branding and greenwashing to strategic imperative with its integration into corporate culture, business models, corporate governance and managerial decisions. Business sustainability focuses on financial activities that generate long-term economic sustainability performance (ESP) to create shareholder value as well as non-financial activities that result in the achievement of environmental, social, and governance (ESG) sustainability performance to protect interests of all stakeholders. More than 15,000 companies worldwide are now reporting on some dimensions of their sustainability performance by disclosing both financial ESP and non-financial ESG sustainability performance information. Analyses of the Global Reporting Initiative database on sustainability, reporting, and assurance from 2005-2016, show that quantity and quality of sustainability reporting and assurance have significantly improved in Europe in the past decade. More than 6,000 European companies are required to disclose environmental, social and governance (ESG) sustainability performance information in their 2017 annual financial reports and onwards.

Primary objectives of this presentation are:

1. Examine four themes of corporate sustainability including the focus on stakeholder aspect, the main objective function of creating shared value for all stakeholders, multidimensional and time horizons.
2. Discuss all five dimensions of sustainability performance including economic, governance, social, ethical, and environmental (EGSEE).
3. Present corporate sustainability theories, standards, guidelines and best practices.
4. Examine corporate sustainability risks including strategic, operation, financial, compliance, and reputation and cybersecurity risks.
5. Discuss management role in integrating sustainability performance and reporting into corporate culture, business environment, strategic decisions and corporate reporting.
6. Present research opportunities in corporate sustainability performance, reporting and assurance.
7. Discuss the integration of sustainability education into the accounting and business curricula.
8. Present the status of integrated/sustainability performance reporting and assurance globally and in Europe.

Biography

Zabihollah Rezaee is the Thompson-Hill Chair of Excellence, PhD coordinator and Professor of Accountancy at the University of Memphis and has served a two-year term on the Standing Advisory Group (SAG) of the Public Company Accounting Oversight Board (PCAOB). He received his BS degree from the Iranian Institute of Advanced Accounting, his MBA from Tarleton State University in Texas, and his PhD from the University of Mississippi. Dr. Rezaee holds ten certifications, including Certified Public Accountant (CPA). Professor Rezaee has published over 220 articles and made more than 230 presentations, written 11 books and been invited as keynote speaker on business sustainability, corporate governance and Forensic accounting. His two recent books on *Corporate Sustainability* were published in November 2012 by John Wiley and in October 2015 by Greenleaf Publishing. His most recent book on *Audit Committee Effectiveness* was published in three volumes by Business Expert Press in July 2016.

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