

## **Sharing Ideas and Best Practices in Business Ethics**

### **29-30 January 2004 in Paris**

Four business ethics organisations joined forces to create the first ever European conference for ethics and compliance practitioners, *Sharing Ideas and Best Practices in Business Ethics*, which was held at the Conservatoire National des Arts et Métiers (CNAM) in Paris, France, on 29-30 January 2004. The event organisers were the Cercle D'Éthique des Affaires - Cercle Européen des Déontologues (CEA-CED) of France, the Ethics Officer Association (EOA) of the United States, the European Business Ethics Network (EBEN), and the Institute of Business Ethics (IBE) of the UK.

Almost 100 corporate ethics practitioners from nine European countries\*, the U.S., and Japan attended the one and a half day event. The conference provided an opportunity for ethics and compliance practitioners to meet their counterparts, share ideas and best practices, and form the basis for a continuing dialogue among ethics and compliance professionals in organisations. The participants came from a range of industries, including information technology, telecommunications, oil and gas, defence, banking and finance, utilities, automotive, retail, and healthcare.

The overwhelming majority of the delegates gave the event a high rating and voted in favour of having another conference no later than 2005. In addition, a number of people asked to register for the meeting after it was fully subscribed. As a result, the hosts of the event committed to organising a second conference to take place at some point next year and possibly sooner if there is sufficient interest.

The conference was designed to allow maximum time for discussion, debate, and networking. A few short plenary and panel discussion sessions set the scene for in-depth deliberations during a series of breakout groups. Each breakout session had a moderator, who in turn appointed a *rapporteur* (reporter) to present a summary of the group's discussion during subsequent report-out sessions for all participants. This approach ensured that all attendees could hear and discuss the main points from each of the workshops.

The opening plenary on the first day addressed the issues of the differences in business ethics language, meaning, and approach in diverse countries. It also included a presentation by François Loos, French Minister of Foreign Trade. A plenary on the second day addressed the role of public authorities in business ethics. Speakers and panel members included representatives from Baxter International, Bertelsmann, Daimler Chrysler, Dow Corning, Statoil, and Zurich Financial Services.

The breakout sessions addressed a number of key business ethics issues facing today's organisations, as follows:

- The job description and responsibilities of a corporate ethics practitioner
- How to embed values into an organisation
- Cross-cultural issues
- The relationship of ethics to other business functions
- Ethics training and communication
- Implementing a code of conduct or ethics

- Internal ethics and compliance auditing
- Whistle blowing and investigations

Breakout session moderators were representatives from AES Corporation, Bertelsmann, General Electric Medical Systems, O2, PricewaterhouseCoopers, Sun Microsystems, and Total. *Rapporteurs* were from AGF, Alcoa, CEA/CED, Diageo, Dow Corning, DVV, Hewlett-Packard, and Zurich Financial Services.

Key themes that emerged from the conference included values-based versus rules-based approaches to ethics; how multinational companies can implement ethics programmes globally; approaches to ethics training; and how to measure and monitor performance.

\* Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Switzerland, United Kingdom.