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Areas: Corporate Responsibility and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in global markets;

**Corporate Social Responsibility and Corporate Family Responsibility: Reflections in theory  
and practice  
The case of Elica Group: "the best Place to Work"**

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*"Trust each other is a beginning, staying together  
is a progress, working together is a success" (Elica Group)*

**Abstract**

The present work examines the relationship between governance systems and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) policies toward labor and employees, particularly focusing on Corporate Family Responsibility (CFR). Through which CSR practices do companies assume responsibilities towards their employees? How do CSR practices impact on employees, their work, and their family life? How effective are these practices, and how can they positively impact on the difficult "work-

life balance”)? To respond to these questions, this paper analyzes the case of Elica Group, a large, multinational Italian family company that has been named one of the “best places to work” in the national and European contexts. The points of reflection that emerge from this qualitative study are centered on the factors that induce the company to adopt such policies, and the factors that impact their effectiveness. The results reveal that a robust ethical foundation on the parts of the company’s founder and of its management, as well as their commitment to sharing values and objectives with the entire organization, are keys to Elica’s success and render it a public globalized company centered on the person that aims to carry out a holistic development (economic, social and environmental development). This stems from the fact that it is based on strong, essential, authentic values, which are the product of a particular cultural fabric that the company - despite its presence in a number of foreign countries - has been able to preserve, enrich and adapt to the diverse cultural contexts in which it finds itself.

**Keywords:** Corporate social responsibility, corporate family responsibility, employees, family-work balance, governance, holistic development, human resource management, mission, values

## 1. Introduction

Over the past decade companies have been facing growing pressures to address social and environmental issues (Young & Marais, 2012; Arvidsson, 2010; Kolk & Pinkse, 2010) and to take into account the conformance to economic, social and ethical expectations from diverse stakeholders groups (Freeman et al., 2010) as well as their impact on society.

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) can be broadly defined as the extent to which firms integrated on a voluntary basis social and environmental concerns into their ongoing operations and interactions with stakeholders (Godos-Diez et al., 2011; Uhlaner et al., 2004; Maticena, 2005; Sacconi, 2005; Arena, 2006;).

There are many different ideas, concepts and practical techniques that have been developed under the umbrella of CSR research, including corporate social performance (Carrol, 1979; Wood, 1991); corporate social responsiveness (Ackerman, 1973); corporate citizenship (Waddock, 2004); corporate governance (Jones, 1980; Freeman & Evan, 1990); corporate accountability (Zadek et al., 1997; Gray et al., 1996); sustainability and triple bottom line (Elkington, 1994) and corporate social entrepreneurship (Austin et al., 2006). Such a broad theme - due to the fact that the issues of corporate social responsibility are so vast - in the past decade has attracted the attention of researchers from diverse disciplines, as well as policy makers and economic operators (Garriga & Melé, 2004).

Different theories attempt to explain CSR practices within a more systems-orientated view of the organization and society (stakeholder theory, legitimacy theory, and political economy theory)<sup>1</sup>. Some researchers take a behavioral approach and identify several behaviors through to represent CSR, including conformance to ethical and legal expectations (Carrol, 1998), philanthropic and community involvement (Dutton, 1997) and social entrepreneurship (Prabhu, 1999) aimed to enhance social welfare (Collier & Esteban, 2007).

Particularly, a number of scholars have approached the concept of CSR from a corporate governance (CG) perspective, shifting the focus of the research around the ways to govern the complex system of a firm and articulating the concept of CSR as a method for corporate governance (intended as the system by which companies are directed and controlled - Cadbury, 1992) dealing

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<sup>1</sup> “The role that one envisages for CSR depends upon one’s view of how the organization-society relationship operates, and how one would like it to operate” (Gray et al., 1996: 62).

with the organizations of the relationship between shareholders, boards of directors, management and other stakeholders of the corporation (Jo & Harioto, 2012).

Many studies underline the strong influence of national institutions in shaping CSR behavior (Jamali & Neville, 2011). CSR motives can arise at multiple levels (transnational, national, organizational, and individual levels) and both formal (e.g., government initiatives) and informal institutions (e.g., culture and history) can be regarded as antecedents to CSR orientation and CSR reporting practices (Young & Marais, 2012). Different national and institutional environments (Aguilera et al., 2006, 2007) impact on CSR domains of action. These include finance, principles of governance, formalization of the CSR policy, organizational structure of CSR, and dialogue with stakeholders. Among CSR systems several authors (Morgan et al., 2009; Sharma, 2000) include training programs for employees, building of a socially responsible culture among employees, support of CSR internal entrepreneurship, involvement of the employees in the construction/evaluation of the CSR communication (reporting) and in the CSR audit/control of the enterprise.

With specific reference to the European system - which is oriented toward the objective of making Europe a center of excellence in the realm of CSR -, among the internal and external dimensions of CSR, two in particular address the issue of the firm's employees. Along with ensuring workers' safety and security of employment, emphasis is placed on human resources management policies, which have to be oriented towards: ensuring continual formation and instruction along the entire lifetime of employees; pursuing the best equilibrium between work, family, and free time; including employees in the company's management and benefits; informing them of the company's activities so as to stimulate their sense of belonging by fostering a shared set of values; enhancing personnel's responsibility; applying the principles of equality in salaries and in the perspective of career for women; attracting and retaining qualified workers; hiring the disabled, women, and people who are otherwise unemployed. The positive direct and indirect results of these practices are emphasized since they increase the effectiveness of human resource management. Sustainable growth and larger and better employment are two challenges to confront for safeguarding the European model of society (EU Commission, 2001, 2002, 2006, 2010), which is based on equal opportunities, a high quality of life, social inclusion, social cohesion and a healthy environment. Enterprises, as the engine for economic growth, job creation and innovation, are key actors in delivering these objectives and a specific emphasis is put toward the role of SMEs (particularly of family SMEs) in the entrepreneurial fabric and in the socio-economic framework of Europe (IFERA, 2003).

Stemming from this premise, the present work intends to address aspects of a firm's CSR-orientation that touch on its relationship with its employees, identifying the instruments and the areas in which they are applied which impact both work and life, and to list the factors (mission and governance) that render those instruments possible and efficacious with particular focus on CSR project oriented to the family conceived as stakeholder (Corporate Family Responsibility - CFR). To this end, the motivations and values that induce the business's leaders to adopt CSR policies towards its employees will be identified. Ethics are an important guiding element of the managerial mission for every type of company, public and private, both for SMEs as for public companies (Longenecker et al., 2006). The philosophy and policies that orient businesses' behaviors towards adopting CSR-oriented practices and tools influence the company' mission, as well as its governance and accountability (Matacena, 2010). CSR "enters" into the company's mission through the direct involvement of the owner and the managers, and is carried out through organizational processes and policies that are integrated with its corporate strategy, modifying corporate culture and corporate governance - in a way that favors processes of "democratic stakeholding" and the orientation towards the common good (Zamagni, 2006, 2007; Caselli, 2007, 2013). This orientation could also consider the expectations of the family itself, rarely considered by the companies' policies as a stakeholder (Saraceno, 2003; Donati, 2003, 2007; Donati & Prandini, 2006, 2008; Bruni, 2011).

In terms of theory and praxis CSR orientation is particularly widespread in family businesses (which often have small dimensions) and more generally in companies which pursue goals of holistic development, that is to say multi-dimensional objectives (economic, social, ethical and environmental) (Sorci, 2005, 2007; Elkington, 1994) which places the person and relationships in order of importance (Lamont, 2002; Spence et al., 2004; Peredo & Chrisman, 2006; Tencati & Zsolnai, 2008; Del Baldo, 2010).

On the one hand, scholars have started only recently to study this issue of CSR in the context of family business (Dyer Jr., 1986; Flören and Wijers, 1996; Vyakarnam et al., 1997; Chrisman et al., 2003; Uhlener et al., 2004; Gallo, 2004; Deniz & Cabrera, 2005; Niehm et al., 2008; Collier et al., 2007). Even if specific works on the topic of family businesses and CSR are limited, the empirical studies show that the family business tends to have a different, more personal relationship with employees and clients when compared with the non – family business. In family companies among the main motives of this orientation there are family and/or religious values (Wood, 1996; Corbetta, 1995; Corbetta & Minichilli, 2011). Furthermore they show that family business owners have a tendency towards greater personal commitment to the firm and its success and to employees' well-being, increased likelihood of long-term strategies in terms of the future impact of decisions regarding treatment of employees (and their place within the corporate governance system) and clients and more direct contact with clients (Lyman, 1991; Lorraine et al., 2004; Collier et al., 2007).

On the other hand, very few studies addressed the issue of Corporate Family Responsibility (IESE, 2008; ISFOL, 2009; AIDP, 2010; Fondazione Vigorelli, 2012; WEF, 2010; Strandberg, 2009).

The following work develops these concepts (CSR-orientation and Human Resource Management – HRM, CSR employees and family CSR-oriented actions) in two parts which methodologically follows the so called “abductive approach” combining the deductive and inductive models of proposition development and theory construction (Denzin, 1978). Its aim is to bridge the gap and open up a new line of research and contribute in particular to studies of CSR, family businesses and organizational studies with relevance to the theme of human resource management.

The first part synthesizes the theoretical context in which the empirical analysis is found and develops the theme of CSR and human resource management and corporate family responsibility. The second part analyses the specific policies of CSR geared towards employees that were successfully implemented by one large-scale Italian firm, Elica Group. This company has for years been distinguished for its best practices regarding HRM and work-family balance, which are the result of a value-based system and of a model of exemplary governance. It is an “extreme case” that is particularly significant and helps develop reflections on the importance of embracing the cultural and anthropological roots of CSR. A discussion and concluding reflections follow.

## **2.The theoretical framework**

### **2.1 Corporate Social Responsibility, ethical orientation, and HR Management**

“CSR’ expresses more than simply the requirement that business should be conducted ethically – it refers to the notion of responsibility for the impact of corporate activity on the wider body of stakeholders, both internal and external stakeholders, and both economic (employees, customers, banks, suppliers, competitors and social stakeholders (family members, the physical environment, the government, trade and business association, etc.) , and it is this attribution of responsibility that underpins the willingness of society to legitimate business” (Gray et al., 1996).

Despite the presence of diverse interpretive positions, in the last years there has been a strong re-evaluation of the role of ethically connected values inspired by the managers and firms’ governing bodies, diffused and shared in the company. The principles and instruments of CSR compel corporations to conduct forms of “humanistic management” (Zamagni, 1995; Argandoña, 1998,

2003, 2008; Melé, 2002; 2009; 2012) and humanistic governance (Pirson & Turnbull, 2011) and make them (and the subjects that they govern) agents of civilization (Röpke, 1960; Novak, 1996; Bruni & Zamagni, 2004).

“But companies will fail to convince stakeholders that they are serious (in terms of “authentic”) about CSR unless they can demonstrate that their policies consistently achieve the desired social, environmental and ethical outcomes” (Collier & Esteban, 2007: 19). An integrated CSR culture is possible and effective where external-led policies and actions used to support reputation and stakeholder engagement are matched by internal business strategies and decisions driven by social and environmental principles (Hancock, 2005).

Employees are among the key stakeholders for the development of any CSR strategy or program. As afore said the EU green paper (EC, 2002) places the actions addressed to employees among the key internal dimensions of CSR. Their commitment and motivation is fundamental in companies’ implementing CSR programs and policies, particularly when companies operate globally in multicultural contexts (as in the case presented in the second part of the paper)<sup>2</sup>.

CSR initiatives and policies impact on the organizational context, shape employee perceptions, affect employee commitment and hence motivation. The organizational culture, or “how work gets done around here”, is a key dimension of any strong CSR agenda. An organization’s reputation for social responsibility was one of the top 10 engagement drivers, along with senior management’s interest in employee well-being, opportunities to improve skills and capabilities and input into decision-making (European Alliance for CSR, 2008: 11).

It is expected that as CSR becomes an acknowledged component of employee engagement and therefore driver of business value, CSR alignment will become a more critical tool for fostering company success over time (Melcrum, 2009)<sup>3</sup>. Furthermore, best practice CSR firms have programs and initiatives underway to support employees and their families learn about, and take action on, their social and environmental concerns at work, at home and in their communities (as in the following empirical case).

Human Resource Management drive policy development and program implementation in HR areas that can support CSR values. Wellness, diversity, work-life balance and flextime policies are CSR programs directly within the HR manager’s purview. Wellness programs can become a platform for engaging employees in discussions about “personal sustainability” and provide support for employees in the areas of stress management, spirituality at work, health and fitness, healthy lifestyles, etc. Employee volunteering programs are also within the HR mandate, and can help build out the employee value proposition and employer brand while concurrently delivering on the firm’s CSR goals for community engagement and investment<sup>4</sup> (CBSR, 2003; Mees & Bonham, 2002; Aguilera, et al., 2007; Koos, 2012). HR function contributes to the establishment of effective CSR policies by delivering on the responsibilities that companies have to their employees as stakeholders (Collier & Esteban, 2007; Mees & Bonham, 2004). The HR department is responsible for many of the key systems and processes (e.g. recruitment, training, communication) on which their effectiveness depends (Rugiadini, 1979; Cafferata, 1984). Getting the employment relation right is a precondition for establishing effective relationships with external stakeholders (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development – CIDP, 2003).

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<sup>2</sup> “As it is the employees – rather than the board or the consultancy firms – who carry the main burden of responsibility for implementing ethical corporate behavior in the daily working life of the company, the achievement of those outcomes will largely depend on employee willingness to collaborate” (Collier & Esteban, 2007: 19-20).

<sup>3</sup> At this regard, the Melcrum employment engagement pyramids (Melcrum, 2006:9) shows three different level: from the first level “I’m aware of the message” (in which employees are familiar with the CSR strategy and how it helps the company meet its objectives) to the second stage “I understand the message” (wherein employees learn the reasons behind the company’s CSR objective and begin to understand their role in making the company successful) and finally to the bottom stage “I’m committed to act” (employees act in ways that help the company reach its goals).

<sup>4</sup> A related policy could be the development of an unpaid leave program for employees to pursue personal projects aligned with company values.

Organizations can opt for ethics programs that rely on codes (seeking to regulate the behavior of employees) and compliance (i.e. ISO 28000 and the Global Compact principles) and/or those that emphasize identity, vision and values (Di Toro, 1993; Rusconi, 1997; Donaldson, 2000; Ferraris-Franceschi, 2002; Cavalieri, 2002; Catturi, 2003, 2007; Molteni, 2009). Notwithstanding the growth in the use of codes as a benchmark for employee behavior, there appears to be a widening gap between a company's stated values (mission statements and codes of ethics) and principles and their relevance to organizational practice (Webley & LeJeune, 2005). Ethics programs seem to be 'decoupled' from, as opposed to integrated into, every day practices and procedures (Weaver et al., 1999)<sup>5</sup>. Bringing together several strands in the literature that bear on the question of the effectiveness of CSR policies Collier & Esteban (2007) underline how existing research emphasizes two levels at which effectiveness is determined: firstly the range of organizational practices and procedures designed to create 'an ethical culture' across the organization; secondly the enthusiasm with which employees espouse the organization's attempts to counter the effects of 'negative externalities' by ensuring that their activities create social, environmental and economic capital.

The effective delivery of corporate social and environmental responsibility initiatives depends on employee responsiveness which, in turn, depends on motivation and commitment. The concept of motivation and commitment are related but they have been developed independently in organizational literature (Meyer et al., 2004). The persistence of motivation is sustained by affective commitment (driven by attachment to the organization and based in personal identification and value congruence with the target); normative commitment (grounded by organizational socialization and a feeling of obligation for benefits received) and continuance commitment (related to the perception that it is more beneficial to remain with the organization than to leave). (Meyer & Allen, 1991; Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001). High commitment' human resource practices and trust in management have a major impact on building employee commitment (McElroy, 2001; Whitener, 2001). Employee perceptions of justice and fairness are strictly concerned with the ways in which organizations treat employees (Buckley et al., 2001; McElroy, 2001; Whitener, 2001; Weaver, 2004).

Principle-based or benevolent climates tend to trigger employee identification with values of responsibility and concern for others and hence elicit greater employee commitment (Cullen et al., 2003). On the one hand, if culture is "integrative, shared meanings are held in common and there is consensus, consistency and clarity and. On the other hand, organizational 'climate' depend to a large extent on the quality and stance of management and on the values to which it subscribes (Denison, 1996; Trevino et al., 1998).

"Corporate culture flows from and is the consequence of corporate identity (...). the fundamental style, quality, character and personality of an organization, those forces which define, motivate, and embody it, its unique history, business mix, management style, communication policies and practices, nomenclature, competences, and market and competitive distinction (Downey, 1986: 7). The promotion of an 'ethical culture' - which encompasses both culture and climate - depends on how 'ethics' is embedded in the organization (Clarke, 2004). "Salient behaviors – awareness of ethical issues, commitment to the organization, integrity, willingness to communicate openly about problems, to seek advice and reduced unethical conduct, improved decision-taking generate employee behaviors" (Collier & Esteban, 2007: 26).

Leadership has a crucial role in shaping ethical organizational culture through leaders' moral behavior, corporate mission, vision and values, ethical criteria for recruiting/selection/promotions, evaluation processes and monitoring, ethical training programs, applying ethical values to decision making and in intra-organization procedures and structures. Particularly, personnel policies and practices is a way to bring ethical values into everyday routine (Melé, 2009: 235-236). A fundamental element for the effectiveness of ethical commitments and the development of internal and external trust lies in a strong 'steer' from the top (Collier & Esteban, 2007: 29-30). Ethical

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<sup>5</sup> "What is necessary is a an integrative CSR culture where social responsibility becomes a central plank in the collaborative search for the common good and a sustainable future (Collier & Esteban, 2007: 31).

leadership requires personal attributes (honesty, ability to listen allowing others autonomy of choice, openness, willingness to consult and to learn) and manifests itself in a series of executive behaviors (i.e. gaining a real understanding of the culture; building ethics and values into 'hearts and minds' by means of ethics training programs; building ethical achievement into performance evaluation, creating channels of communication between the company and stakeholder groups, departing from employees) (Schein, 1983; Trevino & Brown, 2004; Coda, 1988; Catturi & Di Toro, 1999; Baldarelli, 2005; Sciarelli, 2007; ).

Successful CSR programs depend on enlightened people management practices which can lead to including family CSR-oriented practices.

## **2.2 CSR and Corporate Family Responsibility**

The theme of corporate family responsibility is not particularly developed in the business economics literature and has emerged only recently after the affirmation of CSR theories. This topic crosses diverse disciplines and diverse points of view (economic, sociological, ethical, organizational, legislation, and anthropological) and is significant on both the theoretical and practical levels, because the need to balance work and family must be responded to with concrete instruments and policies aimed at improving the relationship between quality and satisfaction in both work and life.

More generally, there exists a gap that only recently economic researchers have begun to address - the consideration of people not only as economic operators but in their integrity, that is, as immersed in the rich fabric of interpersonal relations, and the consideration that such relations are the fundamental object of analysis for understanding the logics of operating and developing a business (Faldetta, 2008). Considering the family as a stakeholder of the firm means stressing the advantages that come to the firm from employees' assets inserted in cohesive social contexts, to the highest level of solidarity and social control, and can guarantee a stable social fabric that is economically and culturally rich (Hochschild, 1997; Donati & Prandini, 2008; Donati, 2007; Aa.Vv., 2003).

Effective policies concerning the work-family balance are linked to higher quality and satisfaction of people both in their work and in their private life (Kapitàny et al., 2005; Prandini & Tarroni, 2005; Bould & Crespi, 2008; Crespi & Bould, 2008).

Different studies (Kodz et al, 2002; Yeandle et al., 2002) reveal the necessity to project and carry out effective policies to reconcile work with familial responsibilities (Fischer et al., 2000; Cartwright & Holmes, 2006). The need for balance, which is associated with a higher quality of life (Greenhaus, 2003), is rendered even more acute in recent years, which have been associated with an increase in female employment (Catalyst, 1998) and address such factors as the family's life cycle (Waismel-Manor et al., 2002) and the job's characteristics which require an equilibrium between work and family responsibilities.

At the same time, businesses have become more understanding in recognizing that the effective implementation of such practices requires a change in culture, values, and behaviors (Bond et al., 2002).

However, there are still many challenges. The obstacles are linked to the fear of carrying out these policies on the perspective of career and payoffs, to the dominant culture in the different work environment and to the lack of support from the management. And on the concept of the efficacy of these policies there is no connection between points of view of employees and employers due to a trade-off between what is requested and needed by employees, and a company's diffuse cultural orientation (Desrochers et al., 2004).

*Interpretative Models on work-family balance policies*

From the theoretical point of view, different models describe and interpret the relationships between work and family (Zedeck & Mosier, 1990).

According to the spillover theory, there exists a type of correlation of cause and effect between work and family: that which a person lives in his work is reversed in his private life.

Compensation theory argues that people search in one of two places (work or life), and that which they cannot find in one they find in the other; segmentation theory considers the two environments as separate and without reciprocal influences: the family is the site of affects and relationships; work is the site of payments and capital.

But according to the instrumental theory, one environment should be the instrument for obtaining results in the other. Finally, conflict theory argues that the search for satisfaction in one of the two environments can only be achieved by sacrificing the other.

In searching for a perspective that can reconcile work with private life, that is, work with responsibility toward one's family (Werbel & Walter, 2002), the diffusion of CSR policies and practices therefore becomes important for effective work-family balance policies.

The demand for such policies – which can be classified in diverse ways (see Bombelli, 2003; Ponzellini & Tempia, 2003) is rising, especially for flexible hours, part-time work, understanding and trust (toward colleagues), flexibility in emergencies, paid or unpaid leaves of absences.

#### *Work-family balance policies from different Countries*

Researches on the conflict between work and family in different industrialized countries are limited, and there are few comparative studies developed with respect to the specific political, normative, economic, social, and cultural contexts that characterizes each country (Todd, 2004; Hofstede, 1980; Rudd, 2003).

The available data reveals similar situations among different countries (including the EU, U.K. and United States) and highlights the need for greater flexibility in the workplace, especially regarding women (Reynolds, 2004).

In the European Union (Todd, 2004) employees would prefer to work less; they also prefer a more flexible job, and greater autonomy in organizing their work. In the U.K workers tend to work more than they are contractually bound. In Australia, satisfaction regarding the work-family balance decreases at the same rate as the amount of hours per work increases.

In the USA one tends, on average, to work more than in other industrialized countries. This increases the feeling of being overloaded with work, and requires the need for flexible hours.

The policies adopted by various states are diverse: the United States favors research and development of instruments on the market; in Japan policies for the family has registered a notable development in recent years. In France, paid maternity leave was legislated as early as 1913 (while in the United States, workers in large firms were only granted paid maternity leave in 1993). (Fagan, 2003; OECD, 2002-2005, 2007).

Policies regarding the family in Western Europe generally fall in one of two broad models. In the first, the system of social assistance offers a complete range of benefits and services for families (Scandinavia and France, where there are high levels of employed women); in the second, benefits are not given to all and in general have lower economic value, health care services for children and parents are scarce and inadequate, leave is granted more often than access to health services, and there are more stay-at-home mothers (Germany, Italy).

In 2008 IFREI research (International Family Responsible Employer Index) held by IESE Business School (Spain), introduced a new on-line system which allows public or private companies to make an assessment as to what favours a balance between work and family (AIDP, 2010; EURISKO, 2009; EU, 2010). A model was proposed which defined four levels of organization regarding the corporate and social model: “Systematically enriching corporations” are those characterized by a responsible family culture: “Discretionally enriching corporations” are those in which some balance policies and practices are present; “Discretionally polluting” companies are those in which some policies exist but are rarely applied; finally “Systematically polluting” companies are those in which responsible family policies are absent.

In 2009 the Italian Ministry of Equal Opportunity began adjustments to the IFREI in Italy, including specific Italian cultural realities. The research, which involved 216 businesses (SMEs and large enterprises) highlighted how most of these companies fall into the “discretionally polluting” category and only 2% fall within the category of top “systematically enriching” companies. In 2010 data confirmed the delay compared to other countries: the European average of enriching companies is 39%, in America 34%, Asia 55% and in Africa 62%.

There are other cases of corporate family responsibility practices in Italy at a regional and local level (Tuscany, Veneto and Piemonte) which have been developed under the General Directorate for Social Welfare and Family Policies. One such example is the region of Lombardy.

The Lombardy Region has placed the issue of reconciliation between family and work at the centre of its policy agenda, in explicit recognition of the urgent challenge it represents to citizens’ well-being and the sustainable growth of society as well as an opportunity to deal with complex issues characterizing the reform of the welfare system and of the modernization of labor market. The early involvement has started with the Green Paper on reconciliation of family and work life, issued by the regional government on November 2010. Taking into account these results, Lombardy Region (2011) formulates the White Paper as a Roadmap for reconciliation of family and work life. Change is to be promoted at both the cultural and organizational levels by focusing efforts in two main directions: considering the "reconciliation value chain" in its entirety: family mainstreaming and multi-level governance; and further the interconnection of people, ideas and resources: networks and pluralistic governance, implemented in all 12 Provinces of Lombardy.

#### *Research on the positive effects of work-family balance policies on businesses*

In the research on corporate responsibility regarding families, there are few quantitative studies focused on the correlation between the needs for these policies and the improvement of firm performance (Greenblatt, 2002; Glass & Finley, 2002). More often the focus is on equal opportunity policies more so than those of responsibility toward the family.

On the one hand, there seems to be a link between formal instruments, such as the availability of benefits to support family needs or flexible work hours, with informal organizational factors, such as the organizational culture, the support of the owner or of the management, amount of autonomy that employees enjoy (Allen, 2001; Anderson et al., 2002; Behson, 2002, 2005).

On the other hand, indexes measuring the personnel’s morale, commitment, production, absenteeism, and turnaround, demonstrate that there exist economic benefits that derive from the implementation of work-family balance instruments. Managers seem to understand this better than their employees.

Among the benefits that derive from the implementation of work-family balance instruments one can enumerate (Bevan et al., 1999): the increase in assistance for illness (Rode et al., 2002), in employees’ pay and productivity, in the length of employment (loyalty), in the effectiveness of personnel selection and hiring procedures. The policies in use are oriented toward resolving short-term problems and immediate needs; thus, it is difficult to identify precisely what their longer-term economic benefits are.

The initiatives of Corporate Family Responsibility (aimed at both men and women) potentially have a more significant impact on women and their integration in the economic framework. Beyond benefits for workers, the application of such initiatives implies several important benefits at an organizational level (AIDP, 2010): minor resistance to change on the part of human resources; creativity and individual contribution to the process of innovation; - attractiveness (in terms of employer branding) and reduction of turnover; reduction of costs and increase in the productivity of employees thanks to the promotion of a culture of performance; reduction of reintegration time after a long absence (such as maternity leave).

Other studies that have gathered information on the employers reveal that family policies have significant effects on their needs (Dex et al., 2001), though not always positive and therefore of limited success. The studies that have focused on workers have produced different results and do

not correlate with the former. Furthermore, those centered on economic performance only examine the results of work-family balance initiatives and not the policies themselves (Gray, 2001). The relationship between economic performance and work-family balance policies is certainly not clear, nor easily analyzable; nor can the opportunity to implement such policies able to be determined only by economic reasoning (Butler et al., 2004).

The theoretical usefulness and advantages can be evaluated only in the long term and are therefore difficult to measure only from the economic-financial point of view. The case is different for companies that wish to assume the responsibility of providing for the well-being of its employees based on ethical motivations, and thus do not consider these policies merely as investments to evaluate only through cost/benefit analysis. This helps affirm that such policies posit a supportive corporate culture, one that can understand and meet the needs and expectations of its carriers of interests and can recognize the centrality of the human element. Such a corporate culture finds fertile ground in companies that propose social responsibility at the center of their strategic design and which consider human capital, trust, and reciprocal loyalty (Roehling et al., 2001) as drivers of social and economic value. In other words, it founds its framework in the orientation toward the holistic development, a concept discussed in the following section.

### **3. The case of Elica: a family friendly company**

#### **3.1 Methodology**

The empirical research presented here is qualitative in nature and has been undertaken through the case study method (Yin, 1994, 2003).

The study examines governance systems and CSR policies toward labor and employees, and the processes of corporate family responsibility adopted by a company. The research questions aim to understand: What are the CSR practices addressed toward employees? How do CSR practices impact the labor force, their work and their family life? What is the effectiveness of these practices and who can they positively affect the work-life balance relationship?

In order to provide answers to such questions, the analysis first focuses on the mission (the values incorporated within corporate orientation) and on the system of governance with the purpose of identifying the drivers of CSR practices and their impact on governance. Secondly, the analysis extends to CSR practices and focuses in particular on those aimed at employees as well as the good practices of Human Resource Management (i.e. in Education and Training). Within the latter, the analysis concentrates on the practices of corporate family responsibility and work-life and work-family balance of employees, who are considered as individuals and therefore as holders of expectations which go beyond those relative to their professional role and hence addressed to their family conceived as stakeholder.

The case study tries to respond to the afore mentioned questions, privileging qualitative approaches (Eisenhardt, 1989). This deep analysis is largely concerned with the context of studies on CSR, to meet both intellectual goals as well as normative ones - that is, to suggest possible actions that give voice, even though the narrative approach (Bebbinghton et al., 2009), to successful entrepreneurial experiences (Craig, 2003). Recently scholars have called for a return to in-depth methods that look at the process, such as case studies and research cases (e. g., Gartner, 2007; Van de Ven & Engleman, 2004; Naumes & Naumes, 2006) considering them important on the scientific level to generate theoretical propositions (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007) - that can be tested through more amply designed quantitative research - concerning how and why firms adopt CSR policies and tools.

From a methodological standpoint, the case study is used in scientific research by activating a set of techniques and procedures (Corbetta, 2003; Platt, 1992; Silverman, 1993, 1997) which focus attention on an exemplary situation, even if it is not representative of the entire system. Results are therefore not generalizable, as in a quantitative-based research approach. Analysis by business cases

may relate to the observation of an individual company (as in our study) or multiple cases, depending on the research goals. In our empirical study we observe the phenomenon by examining a large number of relevant variables that correspond to the characteristics of the mission, of the governance system and of CSR practices. Thus, the case study method is appropriate in the circumstances (such as the one in question), which examine a range of contemporary events and variables possessing little control over them. The single case study is similar to the isolated experiment and it makes sense when it represents a critical case in testing a well-formulated theory or in generating theoretical propositions. It is also used when we are in the presence of an extreme or unique case (as the case of Elica), unrepeatably or never presented before or when it is a revealing case<sup>6</sup>. Finally, the case study can be distinguished, depending on the mode of analysis of the object or objects chosen, in exploratory or descriptive case study. The first is used to introduce a specific study, seeking to clarify some key aspects of the research, which is carried out at a later time, while the descriptive case study is chosen to examine the whole field inherent in the research and the object of interest, and allows a better understanding of recent phenomena and still poorly understood. We therefore consider our analysis a study of descriptive character as it has the purpose of observing and describing CSR practices addressed toward employees, the implementation of CFR practices and how these can positively affect the work-life balance relationship, without having the ambition or purpose to generalize the results obtained.

Qualitative research utilizes the “theoretical sampling” model, privileging the relevance of the case rather than its representativeness (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Taylor & Bodgan, 1984; Flick, 2009). The study draws upon theoretical frameworks that consider the holistic development goals of a company a key element for the success of CSR action directed toward its dependents and of practices of corporate family responsibility aimed at improving the quality of life and work.

The research design consists of several steps: deciding which business to examine; delineating corporate area and the corporate interlocutors to interview; identifying the instruments to use to collect data (questionnaires and interviews) and how they will be collected (telephone conversations, mail contact, visits to the business); identifying the documents to analyze; collecting data (recording interviews, writing field notes, evaluating interview transcripts), and archiving the results.

The Elica Group was selected for three main reasons. First and foremost, it is among the top-rated companies in Italy and Europe for its CSR practices and for the attention it gives to its workplace environment, and has received numerous awards to this effect.

Second, it is part of a field of over 200 businesses in the Marche region that have been rated “excellent” in terms of quantitative and qualitative performance (monitored for over 30 years). It took 5<sup>th</sup> place among the 10 best Marchegian firms (ISTAO, 2010). Elica is, furthermore, one of only a few large-scale Italian firms. In 2005 only 3,215 large-sized firms were present in the Italian economy, i.e. 0.1% of all firms (Calcagnini & Favaretto, 2011)<sup>7</sup>.

Third, Elica falls within a sub-field of “spirited” Marchegian businesses that have been previously examined in an explorative study, selected for their explicit orientation toward sustainability and CSR that combines high levels of social and intangible capital linked to specific qualities of the region’s culture in which it is a part. These firms are developing a very particular model of territorial social responsibility (Del Baldo & Demartini, 2012). The Marche region is famous for its diffuse entrepreneurial and rural fabric and for the presence of relevant industrial

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<sup>6</sup> A single case-study can also be used as a pilot-case which is the first part of a multiple-case analysis, as in our future research steps. Furthermore, the single case may be holistic or integrated, depending on whether it is decided to examine one or more entities (one or more departments, functions, and persons). In the case of Elica we deal with an integrated case.

<sup>7</sup> Large-sized Italian firms only employed 18,3% of all employees, as opposed to almost 50% of employment in businesses with fewer than 10 employees; almost 99% of Italian firms had fewer than 50 employees).

district. Celebrated in the work of Fuà and Zacchia (1983) and known as “Third Italy”, it is characterized for a high degree of socio-economic and environmental development and for the present of a remarkable level of preserved social cohesion. Different national study that analyzed the geography of sustainability in Italian provinces in economic, social, and environmental terms, found the Marche in the top level, with points of excellence for social cohesion and with superior value on all three fronts (Unioncamere, 2003, 2007, 2010).

The research - which was conducted between May 2011 and May 2012 - is based on the triangulation of sources (semi-structured questionnaires, direct interviews, documentary analysis, focus groups, participant observation) and was carried out in two phases. In the first phase, a questionnaire was mailed out to the highest levels of the firm (Chairman), members of the Board of Directors (Chief Executive Officer, Executive Director, Independent Director) and those responsible for key functions (Chief Financial Officer; Sales Director; Chief of Human Resources; Investor Relations Manager), in addition to four employees (2 office workers and 2 factory workers). This was followed by interviews (which lasted on average an hour; recorded, transcribed and evaluated) with a total of 12 people during 6 site visits. These forms of primary source information were then combined with secondary data elicited from an analysis of the company’s website (online material taken from the firm’s website, which provided extremely rich documentation on its Group Profile, Brands, Investor Relations and Press Reports) and several types of documents: annual reports, ethical code, statute, internal dealing code, documents on social organs, shareholding and equity and shareholders meeting rules, corporate governance reports, corporate governance and ownership structure report, financial data (budget and reports, key-ratios, analysts coverage), presentations (results conferences, Star Conference Milan, Interim report conference call presentation, London Star Conference presentations, quarterly statements), press kits, videography. Finally, other internal documentation, such as reports and publications, were acquired during company visits.

## 3.2 Data

### *Brief Overview and Company Profile*

The Elica Group is a multi-national group that originated as a family business. It was founded in 1970 by Ermanno Casoli at Fabriano (its headquarters), a city in the North-East of Italy. Listed on the Star segment of the MTA Italian Stock Exchange since 2006, Elica is today the global leader in terms of units sold (17%) and European leader in the design, manufacture and sale of motors for home appliances and central heating boilers (41%). The Elica name is synonymous worldwide with the notions of efficiency, innovation and design in the production of cooker hoods.

By 1978, Elica had 130 employees and revenues of 3.5 billion euros. After the premature passing of Ermanno Casoli, his son joined the Group, actually Chaired by Francesco Casoli and led by Chief Executive Officer (Andrea Sasso).

With 2,966 employees (year 2011), of which 1.512 are abroad and 1.454 in Italy<sup>8</sup> and an annual output of approximately 18 million units of kitchen hoods and motors, the Elica Group has 9 plants - of these, 4 are in Italy. The structure of the Group, of which Elica S.p.a. (Ancona, Italy) is the leader, is described below (Tab. 1). Its Latest Financial Highlights are presented in Table 2.

The Group is organized around two principal Business Units: the Range Hood Business Unit and the Motors Business Unit and different brands (Elica, Gutmann and Turboair, FIME, Ariafina, Jetair, Arietta and Puti) which serve the needs of the specific geographic areas: Japan, the Russian Market, the North America and the Chinese market.

From the end of the 1990’s, thanks to the entrepreneurial spirit and long-sighted developmental plan which guaranteed stability and competitiveness, the Elica Group began a developmental phase

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<sup>8</sup> 1.720 men and 1.246 women, distributed between 36 executives, 646 white-collar and 2043 blue-collar. Degree holders 436, diploma holders 1.097, other titles 1,433 and others 191.

based on a growth strategy of acquisitions and partnerships, consolidating its position as a global player.

Tab 1. Elica Group

<i>Controlling group</i>
ARIAFINA CO., LTD (Sagamihara-Shi, Japan)
Elica PB India Private Ltd.
Zhejiang Putian Electric Co. Ltd Shengzhou (China)
Airforce S.p.A. (Fabriano, Italy)
Elica Group Polska Sp.zo.o (Wroclaw, Poland)
Airforce Germany Hochleistungs- Dunstabzugssysteme GmbH (Stuttgart, Germany)
Elica Trading LLC (Saint-Petersburg, Russian Federation)
ELICAMEX S.A. de C.V. (Queretaro, Mexico)
Elica Inc (Chicago, Illinois -USA).
Exklusiv Hauben Gutmann GmbH (Mülacker ,Germany)
<i>Associated group</i>
I.S.M. Srl
Cerreto d'Esì (AN).

Tab. 2 - Latest Financial Highlights

	2010 (million Euros)	2011 (million Euros)
Consolidated Revenues	368,3 million Euro	378.4
EBITDA	26.2	26.5
EBIT	10.6	12
Group Net Profit	4.3	4,2
EPS (Earning per Share)	7.5	6.9
ROCE (Return on Capital Employed)	4.1	5.3
Cash/Net Debt	34.9	68.8

Source: Elica Group annual report, 2011.

### *Mission and Values*

The following values (Tab. 3) represent the strong reference points for all the activities, together with the commandments (Tab. 4) of the founder and of the current Chairman.

Tab. 3 – Elica Group’s guiding principles

Love your customers – put passion into working for them
Use innovative thinking
Make it easy for everyone to be involved in their own work
Employ and communicate total energy
Identify new objectives and achieve them
Stay curious and never stop learning
See change as an opportunity
Fight to reduce costs and simplify your work

Source: Internet [www.elicagroup.com](http://www.elicagroup.com) (Company Profile)

#### Tab. 4 - The inspiring principals for Elica Group's work

- 01 Manage people so that they can manage their work
- 02 Delegate, delegate, delegate
- 03 Work towards objectives
- 04 Persevere, persevere, persevere
- 05 Reward the acceptance of risk and responsibility
- 06 Establish self-managing teams to solve problems
- 07 Try to achieve the impossible, communicating a zest for challenge to the people you work with
- 08 Don't get tangled up in a bureaucratic mentality
- 09 Communicate, communicate, communicate
- 10 Don't make the company too complicated – keep it simple, smart

Source: Elica Group Annual Report, 2011, p. 18.

#### *Governance*

The Group's ownership structure is characterized as majority family-owned<sup>9</sup>. The Group is managed by a Board of 8 members: the Chairman, the CEO, a female executive director, and 5 directors, 4 of whom are Independent directors (two are members of the Committee for Internal Control and two are part of the Committee for remunerations).

The Elica Group considers the development of the Internal Control System and the corporate governance system in its totality as an issue of prime importance. Therefore in 2008 Elica introduced the organizational model of management and control that was planned by the Italian law 231 in 2001 (which introduced the framework of administrative responsibility for crimes committed by employees and collaborators). In addition to applying the criteria established under the legal framework (Self-Governance Code promoted by Borsa Italiana SpA), in 2012 it will implement the new version of the Ethical Code issued in December 2011.

Elica S.p.A. provides complete disclosure on the corporate governance system adopted, available on the website of the company<sup>10</sup>.

In 2011 different renewed choices have impacted the organizational structure (i.e. the increase in the number of independent directors; the appointment by the Board of Directors of a new member of the Supervisory Board who undertakes also the role of Internal Audit Manager of the Group) and the structural developments (i.e. the management of Financial Disclosure risks, the implementation of a project focused on the complete and updated mapping of the processes and controls concerning administrative-accounting information flows).

#### *CSR practices: the Focus on Human Resources – Human Resources Management in Elica*

The Elica Group has always placed a strong focus on its employees, in order to guarantee the strategic development objectives. The policies put in place and the management and support activities for human resources ensure employee performance through combining the qualities of the individual with the Group culture and values.

Elica's CSR orientation and its particular attention to human resources is solidified by a plurality of instrument; those that place the work-family balance at the center are presented below in the following sections. In the face of a continuing and authentic commitment toward the improvement of professional and personal development of employees and their families, Elica has obtained a number of awards and recognitions which are briefly described as following. These recognitions formally acknowledge Elica's genuine commitment to human resources, better still, to individuals and their complete ("holistic") development, that is as holders of needs and expectations within and outside the company. These awards also recognize the notable work the company has carried out in recent years, as well as the continuity and the bounty of these processes. They are an addition to

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<sup>9</sup> Shareholding and Share Capital are available on the web site.

<sup>10</sup> See [www.elicagroup.com](http://www.elicagroup.com), Investor Relations/Corporate Governance section; corporate governance and shareholder structure report.

awards obtained for other strong points such as the commitment to innovation and research as well as the quality of product and process (the Manufacturing Standards) and such recognition makes Elica a leader in international Italian excellence focused on design, sophistication and eco-sustainable innovation.

In 2009 Elica received the “Ethics and Business” Award, in the Social Responsibility - Collective Agreement category. In 2011 the German subsidiary Gutmann, was awarded by the “Giove d’Oro Economics Award” which recognized the work carried out in Germany constantly establishing a perfect balance between the results of the business and the social needs of the region in which it operates. Brief mention must be made of the awards given to Elica as Top Employers and Best Place to Work, and will be described below.

Since 2007, Elica won the award as the leading “all Italian” workplace and since 2010 Elica is among the leading attractors of talent in Italy. Elica is therefore fully a part of the prestigious club of 32 top Italian firms, serving as a significant and meritorious example in the entrepreneurial panorama for having demonstrated great skill in valorizing its intellectual capital, thanks to effective strategies and management policies by its human resources department.

For three consecutive year, Elica was included in the Top Employers Italy and awarded in 2011 as the best Italian companies to work for. This was recognized by the CRF Institute, an independent international organization which from 1991 evaluates and certifies over 2,500 companies in 12 countries and on 3 continents, which recognized Elica as “a company excelling in the management of human resources” (CRF, 2012). The survey, carried out according to strict standards established by the Top Employers HR Best Practices Survey, extensively evaluated the Human Resource Management system of Elica S.p.A. Elica Group Polska, a subsidiary of the Elica Group, was also awarded the prestigious Top Employers Polska 2011 certificate. Elica was therefore included in the list of the best places in the world to work. The “excellent” rating (which consists of a points scale from 1 to 5, indicated by stars) was given for its payroll policies (five stars); work conditions and benefits (4 stars), corporate culture (5 stars), education and development (4 stars), and career opportunities (5 stars). The certification reveals Elica’s points of excellence: corporate value coupled with social commitments; corporate welfare and work-life balance; transparency, opportunities to grow, career advancement and the valorization of diversity, innovation and creativity, and organizational well-being.

Moreover, Elica has been recognized as among the best large companies to work for in Italy and in the international context and was awarded (“Best place to work 2011 Italy and Europe”) by the Great Place to Work Institute, which evaluates over 1,000 businesses throughout Europe to identify the best work environments. In 2011 the company was awarded first place in the “Inspiring special category”, which concerns not just the communication of corporate values to business partners, but also all activities undertaken to create awareness around the particular importance of the work carried out: the people who work with Elica understand the significance of their work in reaching the organization’s results and for the wellbeing of the Company and are always involved in corporate processes.

In 2010 Elica signed the Charter for Equal Opportunity in the Workplace, promoted by Sodalitas, under the patronage of the President of Italian Republic, in order to contribute to the establishment of an inclusive corporate culture and policies, free from discrimination and prejudice, evaluating abilities in all their diversity.

In the realm of corporate family responsibility-oriented practices, Elica was awarded the “NOI awards” for businesses that reconcile work and family.

To point out these aspects, some quotes derived from the interviews to the managers are cited:

*“We are very proud of these awards, which recognize the bounty and continuity of the work that we’re doing. The first objective of human resources management is to give support to the company in order to create for its people the best conditions for personal and professional development and provide the necessary tools for them to become the main actors in their own growth with the same willingness dedicated to the group’s growth” (E. Zampetti, HR Manager, 12 June, 2011).*

*“For us, human capital is a competitive edge of the highest quality; it’s fundamental for overcoming the challenges of international competition. Elica is for us an engine through which passion, experience, innovation, well-being and listening to internal and external needs can create an impression on our surrounding environment” (F. Casoli, President of Elica Group, 27 May 2011).*

*“The best talent as such does not exist for us, but rather the ability to interpret in the best possible way our values and philosophy. We like to think of ourselves as a booster company and to consider ourselves a school for talent: we do this so that people can become talented and we provide every educational opportunity to make this happen. We are proud of our system of management and selection of personnel which we are pleased to share with others” (M. Scippa, HR Manager, 7 May, 2012).*

### *The Social Responsibility Projects in Elica Group*

The Group’s activities of Corporate Social Responsibility aims to improve skills, the well-being of employees and their families, of the local community, and to safeguard the outside environment. They are divided between internally addressed initiatives and externally addressed initiatives. Both categories, outlined in following tables (Tab. 5-6), contain the most relevant initiatives and there follows a detailed examination of the most significant concerning the work theme.

Table 5 - The main Externally addressed CSR Initiatives in Elica Group

<p>Certifications Environment and Safety</p>	<p>In all of the Italian Group factories and the Mexican factory in Queretaro, an Integrated Quality &amp; Environmental Management System certified according to the UNI EN ISO 9001:2008 (Quality) and UNI EN ISO 14001:2004 (Environment) Regulation was implemented. The next step of the Company is to extend the environmental certification also to the Polish factory. In 2011, Elica was awarded by the National Customs Authority, being among the very few in Italy and the only company in the Marche to receive the certification of Full Authorized Economic Operator at AA level for Customs Simplifications and for Security with international validity in all countries of the European Union. Elica was accepted by the EU certification program and was recognized among operators for its reliability and security within the supply chain.</p>
<p>World Class Manufacturing</p>	<p>From 2010, Elica adopted the World Class Manufacturing program (WCM) implementing a change in the logistical productive process to render it quick, reactive, non-wasteful and under close control. In 2011, the company also joined the World Class Manufacturing Association (WCMA). Among the tangible results achieved we report those concerning "Environment &amp; Security": the considerable improvement in accident frequency, reducing by 27% on the previous year to 17.5 events per million work hours; the improvement of the workstation ergonomics.</p>
<p>Industrial Relations</p>	<p>The industrial relations of the Elica Group are founded on an integrated system which maintains correct and transparent relationships with the trade union organizations. The Group recognizes the Trade Union Organizations as a principal interface with the collective corporate interest.</p>
<p>Social initiatives</p>	<p><i>The collaboration with SOLIDORO</i>, a social cooperative whose goal is to secure jobs to disadvantaged and marginalized people. Elica's collaboration has allowed for SOLIDORO to regularly employ 13 people. Elica has been listed in the <i>World Food Program (WFP)</i>'s 2013 Excellence Club.</p> <p><i>The Jonathan Project</i> For Elica, being socially responsible involves responsibility also towards the local communities. The Elica Group therefore supports the Jonathan Onlus association created by a rescue community in the province of Naples. The Jonathan Project involves the placement of juveniles who have served detention for a period in businesses in Italy, with the dual objective to create a social return and assist the development of a collective conscience in relation to respect, trust in others and discipline.</p> <p><i>The Ermanno Casoli Foundation</i> Dedicated to the memory of the founder of Elica, was established in 2007 in order to strengthen the link between the worlds of the arts and industry, promoting initiatives in which contemporary art could act as a development tool and one through which a greatly innovative workplace environment is allowed to thrive.</p> <p><i>The Charter for Equal Opportunity</i> During the 2010 Elica signed the Charter for Equal Opportunity in the Workplace, promoted by Sodalitas, under the patronage of the President of the Italian Republic, in order to contribute to the establishment of an inclusive corporate culture and policies, free from discrimination and prejudice, evaluating abilities in all their diversity. The theme of diversity was in fact one of the principal internal communication themes, thanks also to the "We are different we are together campaign".</p>

Table 6 - The main Internally addressed CSR Initiatives in Elica Group

Elica Life	Elica Life is a project which includes a collection of tools and actions aimed at reaching the well-being of employees within and outside the working environment, thereby promoting a philosophy of life.
Internal Communication Activities	<p>They include a number of tools and projects with the following purposes: to promote internal knowledge of the company reputation; contribute to the knowledge of employees concerning corporate strategies; to strengthen the sense of belonging and responsibility in relation to the work carried out and the results achieved. Some example are:</p> <p><i>FACE-to-FACE</i>: periodic meetings of all employees with the Chief Executive Officer and/or the Chairman. It is among the principal instruments used, which help to improve the relationship between people who live the same working reality from different points of view as well as improve the corporate atmosphere. Hence an opportunity is created for direct comparisons between realities and in which questions can be answered, doubts cleared up and suggestions put forward by Elica employees discussed.</p> <p><i>The company Intranet</i>: it provides information relating to the organization, certifications, duties and other issues;</p> <p>Official communications: through the calling by the Chief Executive Officer of a plenary meeting in Piazza Elica for all employees for important communications of an extraordinary nature, such as acquisitions</p> <p><i>ElicaNews house organ</i>: a bi-monthly publication (created in the 1970) sent to the house of each employee and aimed not only to communicate information, but also the philosophy of the Group and to involve all employees all over the world.</p> <p><i>Internal communication campaigns</i>.</p>

Within the second category (externally addressed initiatives), the system of industrial relations represents a specific model of Elica’s corporate excellence.

Elica Group’s industrial relations are based on a participatory system. For Elica, trade union organizations are the principle interlocutors with whom they can follow a process of raising the well-being of all of its employees. Elica Group has instituted a series of annual meetings with the trade unions and with the organization of foreign unions to update them on the past year’s work and objectives for the new year. Held outside of the firm, these annual meetings are characterized by an extremely informal climate and are not influenced by the classic business/union dynamics. The meetings are an occasion for sharing corporate strategies and to try to improve relations between all parties through educational and role-playing activities.

One result from this way of operating is the agreement Elica’s 2010 “plan for occupational sustainability”. In the wake of the international economic crisis, the company pledge to minimize the social impact of the crisis on the surrounding territory by utilizing all available instruments to avoid layoffs. This type of accord, which is extremely innovative, has called for investments and educational opportunities in a territory experiencing an enormous crisis, where the majority of businesses are talking about closing factories and restructuring; it now has been adopted by other local businesses.

The model of industrial relations (adopted since 2009) is synthesized into 8 points, below specified (Tab. 7).

Table 7 - The Elica Model of Industrial relations

1) Participatory Method	The creation of informational entities to make employees' and collaborators to the Commission effective in their participation Corporate Commission for Security in the plant Territorial Commission for Training Commission for Equal Opportunity, Diversity, and Integration of Foreign Workers
2) System of Communication	The parties structured a system of industrial relations aimed at responding to the problematic and to identify communal solutions that are undertaken on two levels: territorial (processes of territorialization and de-localization, occupational development, etc.) and plant-wide
3) Industrial relations	The participatory spirit of the accord aims to consolidate the system of union relations. The parts are busy preventing all situations of conflict by researching instruments favoring participation., and whenever difficulties arise, adopt a manner of reconciliation.
4) Organization of Work and Employment	Ample attention is dedicated to making employees understanding participants of the changes introduced in the organization, with full respect to them and their needs. For example: - non-overlapping shifts are mandated for husbands and wives, breaks in certain plants (assemblage) where the "turns" are applied. - in terms of formation and placement, every year a meeting between the corporate directors and union representatives of every plant is planned, to verify the company's responsiveness and executive duties undertaken, and to evaluate its polyfunctionality. - in terms of contracts and flexibility the relationship between work and undetermined time is recognized as a contractual form of reference for the company, which has, in recent years, signed terminal contracts to favor the flexible management of productive activities. - part-time work is allowed
5) Quality	Quality is an instrument of long-term competitiveness and, for sustaining client loyalty.
6) Environment and Security	Elica Group aims to become a "green" business, carrying out policies of sustainable production and consumption, developing the market for "green" products, promoting recycling systems in both the offices and the factories. Close attention is given in promoting health, understood as psycho-physical wellbeing, to improving the places and conditions of work, and to prevent potentially dangerous accidents.
7) Elica Company Welfare And Corporate Family Responsibility	A number of initiatives that valorize and pay close attention to human resources that ensure better treatment than provided in collective contractualization, including: Family leaves permits; Elica for Family: Parental leaves, Maternity leaves and childcare, Wedding Bonus, Alcoholism and drug addiction care; salary advances, discounts on products from Gruppo ELICA S.p.A, and ELICA LIFE.
8) Rewards System	Programming to improve corporate performance is considered an essential factor for improving the total competitiveness of the Group. Elica has instituted: -an award for results linked (up to 40%) to the profits of the Group (EBIT) and reaching the objectives of individual attendance (60%). - a production bonus given monthly as a fixed part of the salary and distributed based on the worker's position. - a bonus for old aged employees.

Elica's best practices in industrial relations have even been exported to Poland; Elica is the only Italian company to have signed an agreement with the largest Polish trade union, Solidarność. It thus has put social dialogue, the improvement of workplace conditions, development, and education at the center of its interests.

Finally, we mention the attention paid to the Group to Human Resource Education and Training (whose related activities are included among the internally CSR-addressed initiatives). Investing in human capital, people and their thoughts, is considered strategic. Over the years, Elica has carried this practice along with it as it spreads abroad.

In Mexico, Elica has been awarded by the *Instituto Nacional para la Educaciòn de los adultos* for its work in improving the scholastic education of those who work with ElicaMex. In addition, a

formative system for the top management has been put in place. For a number of years the Group has collaborated with top business schools (such as Bocconi University) for recruiting, employer branding and education. A summary of the projects and initiatives are provided in Table 8.

Table 8 - Elica Group Education and Training

Language education	Programs of secondary language education for all employees, both manual laborers and administrators: every year Italian courses are organized for foreign employees who work in Italy, and English courses are offered for workers as well.
WCM for the plant	theoretical course for introducing the Kaizen method at the factory level.
Information systems education	A basic course providing proficiency in information systems is offered to factory workers
The New Mind program	Started in 2008 It is an international in-house mini masters which involves 20 high potential managers from both the Italian off ices and the foreign Group offices, carried out in collaboration with the ISTUD foundation and the University of Rome 3. The program of learning is based on active methodologies such as <i>project working &amp; team working</i> , face-to-face and through distance learning, <i>action learning</i> , internal testimonials, <i>business games</i> , and visits to other virtuous Italian companies
“Doing business China”	Particular attention was placed on the Elica structure in China, Zhejiang Putian Electric Co. Ltd., recently acquired by the Group and therefore subject to the integration process: this course is dedicated to middle management, educating on the culture of the east and in particular China. Mental mapping and the importance to “train” soft skills, necessary for an intercultural approach, allowing over the long-term the development of a sense of belonging, not just locally, but with an international outlook, also in the corporate world.
Other training activities	-The “tools” course, aimed at newly-hired employees; -The ad hoc “Elica and Unions” program to communicate the corporate culture through knowledge sharing activities and to allow the sharing of objectives between the production sites and the corporate off ices. -The EBIT (Elica Business International Tour) introduced in 2011: the company, selected an Elica employee, chosen after passing an internal competition to participate in a one-month business tour in Toledo, Ohio, undergoing an important workplace experience at an international level. All of the Elica community could follow the experience through periodic updating in the house organ or through an online diary.

### *Corporate Family Responsibility in Elica Group*

The first category (CSR internally addressed initiatives) includes the Elica Life project which incorporates the work-family balance policies and the initiatives addressed to the employees’ families (Corporate Family Responsibility). These are in fact included again in the section called “Corporate Social Responsibility” contained in the group’s annual report. The group has not up to now adopted a sustainability or social balance but has included in the consolidated report a specific section dedicated to employees and collaborators and their families.

Created in 2006, Elica Life represents the syntheses of Elica’s human resource policies. The principle initiatives of work-life balance and CFR are summarized below (Tab. 9).

Table 9 - Elica Life Initiatives

<p>The “Member Card” and the Member Card Postepay 2011</p>	<p>A card, provided to all Group employees, utilizable by all of the family - which grants access to a series of subsidized services and discounts for a number of activities within the commerce, services and healthcare area. In 2011 -through an agreement with Poste Italiane - it became also a “Postepay” (credit) card. The aim is to facilitate employees when making private purchases, even online, and help them in their quality of life by making each employee feel “special”.</p>
<p>Elica for Kids</p>	<p>This initiative provides funding towards purchasing scholastic books for all employees’ children. Elica therefore favors the dissemination of culture, but particularly supports employees in a significant area of their private lives (the educational management of their children).</p>
<p>“I AM” and “I AM POLAND”</p>	<p>Having always understood that a group’s development, wherever it is found, is linked to the formative development of the younger generation of the territory that hosts, Elica began the internationalization program “Elica I AM” in 2007 (and in 2011 in the subsidiary Elica Group Polska) a study abroad program and English language courses for its employees’ children to improve their English language skills and to develop their capacity to engage with different places and cultures and to communicate to family members a open and multicultural ideas. Through this project the company supports the employees at times when the maintenance of their family could be at risk and provides help with the care of their children during the summer period when the company is closed. The project is coherent with the strategic assets that top management wishes to develop and sustain (internationalization and innovation). Each year some of Elica’s suppliers contribute financially by participating in the project as partners, thus sharing with the company the recognition of training and education as key factors in success and investment in the growth of new generations in a unique opportunity of “conjoined” growth.</p>
<p>Work Life Balance agreement and Sustainability Plan</p>	<p>The company has identified in the transformations of its contracts from full-time to part-time upon the request of employees, the possibility for its many female workers to better balance their working activities and their personal life. Different grants are granted: -unpaid family leaves for foreign employees who must return to their country of origin; - paternal leaves to all new fathers after the child’s birth; - maternity leaves and child care are given to all new mothers at the end of the optional post-partum leave; - further unpaid leave within the first year of the baby and the possibility to choose a daily start time - monetary bonus for all employees on the birth of their first child; - wedding bonuses; -6-month unpaid leave of absence for treatment for dependents affected by alcoholism or drug addition; - advance payment of the retirement allowance.</p>
<p>Elica Fitness and wellness</p>	<p>Aerò, the Elica gym, was established in 2010 to promote the philosophy of wellbeing and quality of life, and a culture of incorporating healthy and wellbeing lifestyle choices (i.e. physical exercise and correct nutrition, specialist visits, and Sports medicine, etc.). “The fitness project was created as a response to the needs and requests expressed by our dependents, who asked for an exercise space. Currently representatives from all of the company’s professional community are registered: managers, professionals, administrators, workers, men and women, the very young and the not-so-young” (CEO).</p>
<p>Diving</p>	<p>Elica, for the 5th consecutive year organized for its employees and for “friends of Elica” (relatives, friends, and professional partners) a scuba diving course to bring people out of their comfort zone and to develop</p>

Elica's work-life balance policies are renewed yearly, adding on or improving the initiatives aimed to promote the quality of life of its workers, transferring and consolidating entrepreneurial strategies and values to them.

To point out these aspects, some quotes derived from the interviews to the managers are cited:

*“Considering our employees in their totality safeguards their life inside and outside of the firm. It's for this reason that we work towards a perspective that is both organizational and individual. The business is involved in favoring the development of instruments and actions linked to reaching well-being as a condition to be established, both in work and outside of work - that is, a philosophy of life; we ask each employee, however, to work with understanding and passion towards the success of each single initiative, so that they can become carriers of these ideas and propositions”* (Chief of Human Resources, 11<sup>th</sup> March, 2012 ).

*“Excellence cannot be created if we do not live in a workplace which practices excellence in the care of the individual, both within and outside the workplace environment. From this starting point, Elica Life was created, whose objective is to provide to employees a series of services in line with their needs, to improve their lifestyle and to create a direct contact with the company – establishing more than a mere professional relationship. In this context, the welfare and the work life balance initiatives drawn up by Elica are placed”* (CEO, 10 September 2011).

<p><i>“The policies of work-family balance are considered expressions of our values and business culture”</i> (HR Specialist, 11<sup>th</sup> March, 2012).</p>
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<p><i>“In Elica there is the conviction that the bases for healthy economic growth are in the diffusion of cultural values, which are first of all ethical and present in a good quality of life at all levels. “Culture spreads through contamination” is a recurring concept used by our President. Beginning with the spread of our corporate values throughout the plant, from the directors to the plant workers. These values are shared by all of the collaborators at diverse levels and every activity linked to individuals find in themselves bases, inspiration, and constant transmission. Education frequently is inspired by one or more corporate values then multiplies and transfers itself coherently to the guiding strategies and to the objectives of the group to favor the comprehension, spread belonging, and consistency in the core even during changes. Everything in Elica is studied and desired to have been spread the business' culture. Even into physical spaces. In sum, Elica's business culture is based on passion (in being, giving, obtaining), on flexibility and fantasy, on listening and attention, on innovation and internationalization”</i> (Independent Director, 11<sup>th</sup> March, 2012 ).</p>
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Furthermore answers to some of the key questions asked to employees are reported and these highlight their perception of the corporate leaning to CSR especially the policies of work-family balance.

“What are the tools through which you perceive the willingness of your company to support you in moments of personal difficulty, such as family illness, births, weddings etc....? What special programs does your company offer its dependents to help reconcile their working life with that of their private or family life?”

*“Among the most significant initiatives which meet my expectations and which I appreciate the most as a concrete sign of the esteem the company has for its personnel are the changes in production working hours at the beginning of the school year (from nursery school to junior school); for some of my colleagues the chance to telework from home; job sharing – the sharing of the same job by two workers and the planning of working hours with colleagues, particularly requested by women like me who have just had a baby and seek a more flexible part-time arrangement. In general I appreciate the possibility of working part-time and the maximum amount of flexibility on the rules regarding leave for the care of children and family members. The company provides for periods longer than required and unpaid leaves that are not in the contract, in the moment in which a particular problem emerges. Elica is one of the few companies to apply these opportunities and this is, due to its family atmosphere, historical reasons and cultural factors, positively familiar. Elica manages to unite the spirit of the small-medium-sized company to the culturally evolved spirit of the multi-national corporation. And this results in an almost personalized management of peoples’ expectations and needs” (11th May, 2011).*

“What is your opinion about the policies of HRM adopted by the company and applied to the contract?”

*“It is a contract which makes us equal but different at the same time. The same because it gives us a set of rules, as in all other companies, which defines a system of modern trade union relationships. Different because we were the first to put a Welfare system into the contract, such as special leave for new fathers, a prize for newly weds, extra support for young mothers, longer leave for foreign workers who live far from their families. I have really appreciated such initiatives and generally speaking I can say that a sense of belonging has grown in time, a sense of pride at belonging to the company and part of a great family” (15 September, 2011).*

“Did the idea for these initiatives come from personnel, management or a sense of obligation?”

*“There are programs with a big commitment on behalf of the top line (chairman, CEO and board directors) and are kept alive by meeting the needs of employees expressed in feedback reports or direct contact with the support team which are HR figures committed to listening to people in the company” (12 January, 2012).*

## **5. Discussion. Elica: the Italian business “where people work better”**

The discussion is structured in relation to research questions which aimed to understand: what are the CSR practices addressed toward employees, how do CSR practices impact the labor force, their work and their family life and to appreciate the effectiveness of these practices in their affecting the work-life balance relationship.

With reference to the first question, from an analysis of this rich set of data (a richness that is complemented by a richness of values and of the value of this firm), one finds Elica’s approach to CSR integrated, shared, effective, since it addresses all aspects of corporate activity, both the strategic as well as the operational levels (Hancock, 2005).

In particular, the tension toward the multidimensional development touches on all dimensions: ethical, economic, social and environmental (Zamagni, 1995; Faldetta, 2005; Sorci, 2007). The root of this “force” must be identified in the value recognized primarily in the individual, in his/her totality and in his/her diverse dimensions of professional and family life (person-centered approach, Melè, 2002, 2009; Argandoña, 2008). In Elica, the strategic approach to holistic development is reflected both in its mission (value asset) as well as in its government (management instruments and methods based on transparency and sharing the firm’s decision with its stakeholders and in particular with its dependents). Based on a cohesive corporate culture, the activities of stakeholder dialogue and engagement are numerous and systematic and present elements of excellence with specific reference to its employees, in terms of which the Group has developed an extremely rich network of initiatives and programs, aimed at raising the value of human and professional growth (Kodz et al, 2002; Yeandle et al., 2002; Kapitány et al., 2005; Isles, 2004).

The practices aimed at employees and presented in the previous sections enable Elica's points of excellence to emerge. These lie in corporate values and social commitment; in the promotion of corporate welfare and the work-life balance; in transparency; the ability to offer opportunities for development and career progress and in the importance given to diversity (Bevan et al., 1999; Rode et al., 2002).

In light of these Elica can be considered a "spirited business" (Lamont, 2002) or, in other words, a collaborative enterprises (Tencati & Zsolnai, 2008; Del Baldo, 2010, 2012). Its model of industrial relations is a clear example of how workers represent the primary value of a corporate organization and is a concrete example of democratic stakeholding. Elica is also an example of a pathway to sustainable development that is juxtaposed with the model of "turbocapitalism" (Matacena, 2010; Matacena & Del Baldo, 2009), centered as it is on soft and intangible elements (social, intellectual, and relational capital).

In Elica the authentic adherence to the philosophy of CSR signals the passage from a type of management centered on entrepreneurial objectives and shareholder interests to a multi-polar model that considers all stakeholders and opens the field to a more ethical form of governance founded on trust, relationships, transparency and communication, which confirm the hypothesis that a robust ethical and value-based perspective of the entrepreneur and his management team, that is diffuse within the organization guides the company toward the adoption of socially responsible management practices which favor holistic growth, reducing conflicts, reinforcing social cohesion and corporate culture, and which translate into reciprocal benefits for the firm and the community inside and outside (Donaldson, 2000; Roehling et al., 2001; Collier & Esteban, 2007).

With reference to the second research question, among the HRM policies and CSR actions, the policies of corporate family responsibility touch on all of the different ways of reconciling work and life and they are effective and numerous because they are the result of a great capacity to listen, and of a "passion" for people that characterizes the Group (Allen, 2001; Anderson et al., 2002; Behson, 2002, 2005; Faldetta, 2008). It is this strong anthropological framework that constitutes the primary strength of the company, starting with the values that the founder and the upper-level management have been (and are) capable of transmitting and of reinforcing, through authentic relations with, and management of, diversity (ethnic, cultural, professional), which is considered an asset. All of this finds official recognition in the awards given to the Group for being "a best place to work".

Elica is aware that excellence cannot be created if we do not live in a workplace which practices excellence in the care of the individual, both within and outside the workplace environment (Fischer et al., 2000; Cartwright & Holmes, 2006; Hochschild, 1997; Donati & Prandini, 2008). In this context, the welfare and the work and family-life balance initiatives drawn up by Elica are placed. From this starting point Elica Life was created, to provide to employees a series of services in line with their needs, to improve their lifestyle and to create a direct contact with the company - establishing more than a mere professional relationship. The objective of the Elica Life program is indeed to make available to employees a number of services aimed at improving their lifestyle by creating direct contact between the company and the employee, which goes well beyond professional and merely economic performance (Dex et al., 2001; Butler et al., 2004). Employees are asked to work with awareness and passion in order to be successful in what they do and to be the holders of ideas and suggestions.

Adopting a model of a more humanistic governance (Pirson & Turnbull, 2011) Elica sees the relationship with its employees as one of reciprocal collaboration: the employee becomes an active partner that shares in the firm's operational objectives and satisfies higher, collective interests, thus). This is because Elica sees its employees as whole people and wishes to protect their lives both inside and outside the company, therefore taking into account the expectations and needs of their families. In other words, the philosophy which inspires the practices of HR Management and CSR, aims at the well-being of employees implied as a philosophy of life, a condition to reach for, both in the company and outside of it, swayed according to an organizational and individual perspective (Mees & Bonham, 2002, 2004; Koos, 2012).

With specific reference to the effectiveness of work-family balance policies which are represented by the presence of a tendency toward the corporate family responsibility, the Elica model falls into the “systematically enriching” companies” (IFREI, 2008; AIDP, 2010) as proposed in a model which defines four levels of organization regarding the corporate and social model: the “systematically enriching” companies.

In Elica, CSR is not perceived as an added cost but as an investment and a resource. Its core philosophy is that CSR is part of this firm’s DNA. This orientation is not decoupled’ from or opposite to, but is however integrated into, every day practices and procedures (Weaver et al. 1999 Roehling et al., 2001). “What is necessary is a an integrative CSR culture where social responsibility becomes a central plank in the collaborative search for the common good and a sustainable future (Collier & Esteban, 2007: 31). This is an approach to CSR that expresses a socio-competitive synthesis (Unioncamere, 2003). The correlation between corporate performance and social commitment is driven by Group’s values and capacity to “card” relationships. The philosophy and practices of CSR (and of CFR) help improve its performance in that they firstly raise the value of intangible resources - that is, the organizational capital, human capital and relational capital - which are the true core of the company’s success in the long term.

To understand which are the drivers of the orientation which lies under these practices some reflections can be formulated.

First, attention must be paid to the system of traditional values of the family business model (that is so diffuse in Italy and so often criticized), which includes an attachment to the territory, to local institutions, and to dependents. Elica Group demonstrates the strength and validity of a familial matrix that has a determinant impact on the business. In this case the local context and the family unit work as a “felt system,” that is, with a positive impact. The family is therefore not a constraint or a source of conflict, but the primary source of intangible resources. In the same way, the territory of origin is not a limit or boundary, but the source of legitimization, of cohesion, of social capital, from which it derives energy and resources. The leading role of the entrepreneurial family in the governance and in inspiring the company mission can be supposed as correlated to the attention of the family as a stakeholder also with reference to employees (Lyman, 1991; Wood, 1996; Lorraine et al., 2004; Collier et al., 2007). In other words, since the family represents the primary social cell for the entrepreneurial and managerial team, this consciousness translates into the attention to the family and to the work and family balance toward all employees. Since Elica remains, despite its large dimension, a family business, it relates in special ways to various stakeholders within and outside their companies due to the family aspect of the business, and particularly with employees (Downey, 1986; Uhlhaer et al., 2004).

A second area of reflection regards the importance of the presence of charismatic leaders, capable of nurturing and presiding over changes in value. The interpretive key of a family business is found in its ‘cultural models’: a series of tacit convictions, aspects and values that are closely interrelated and that evolve over time, influencing the various stages of the business’ own life cycle (Dyer Jr., 1986). The leader presides over changes in values (Schein, 1983) and plans the “organizational culture”. New values do not exclude or cancel out preceding ones, but are integrated and enrich them. The leader’s values that the founder of Elica has injected into the business are a strong work ethic, and the importance given to individuals, to human resources and to their families. These values have been part of the Marchegian cultural heritage and traditional of the religious and rural culture (Wood, 1996) . The current Chairman has known how to reinterpret these in a dynamic way through managing the diversity of the Group’s stakeholders and employees. In the Elica Group, the managerial and entrepreneurial team possesses not only leadership capabilities, but also charisma, and is able to develop talent and virtue among its collaborators. In other words, it is able to “bring out the best in people” because it believes in people and in creating trust (Röpke, 1960; Novak, 1996).

In Elica the conviction lives that the bases for healthy economic growth are in the diffusion of cultural values, which are first of all ethical and present in a good quality of life at all levels. Elica is

a multicultural company and an engaged global community, based on a continuous cultural exchange, which takes place with respect for local traditions and for differing social conditions throughout the world. Elica is an industrial culture, a collective involvement to enhance constructive know-how, relations are established - without barriers - between workers who communicate with managers, designers who meet with the prototype developers, and engineers who interact with artists. This is made by people who travel and who meet to improve the production and the life of those who produce in all regions in which the Group is present. The philosophy of Elica brings Aria Nuova (New Air) to the world, continually offering the latest developments to all levels and partners - from clients to suppliers, to investors, to employees, right up to the local communities which host the Group throughout the world. This approach to thinking and working within Elica is coupled with a constant striving for the best quality in life, in relationships, in products and processes.

Thirdly, a distinctive attribute of Elica Group is its capacity to listen, to communicate, and to create relationships. “Culture spreads through contamination” is a recurring concept used by F. Casoli, the President of the Elica Group. Beginning with the spread of corporate values throughout the plant, from the directors to the plant workers. These values are shared by all of the collaborators at diverse levels and every activity linked to individuals find in themselves bases, inspiration, and constant transmission. Education frequently is inspired by one or more corporate values then multiplies and transfers itself coherently to the guiding strategies and to the objectives of the group to favor the comprehension, spread belonging, and consistency in the core even during changes.

Elica enjoys an authentic rapport with its stakeholders centered on reciprocity: that is, a capacity to converge, or to go in the same direction and to enter into harmony. Goals, expectations, visions, values are constantly reinforced through diverse channels of communication (direct relations, organizational practices, processes of governance (transparency, sharing, democracy), inside and outside the firm, and through a plurality of forms of stakeholder dialogue and engagement and commitment. Its cohesive organizational climate and its flexible organizational structure make possible a decision-making process, which is based on trust, collaboration, participation and sharing (Zamagni, 2006).

Finally, a last area for reflection regards Elica’s capacity to stimulate and contribute to the progress of individuals and the socio-economic contexts in which the Group is present (Matacena & Del Baldo, 2009). The rootedness in its territory of origin is not an anchor, holding it in place, but rather a jumping off point for confronting the world armed with a collection of authentic values, which guide the business in its acts of decision-making. The Elica Group has not forgotten its roots promoting the development of a business culture which is increasingly “glocal”. Precisely because these values have an anthropological foundation, they are “universal” and find points of contact in diverse cultures and in the relationship with diverse geographic areas. The will to “infect others” and “to be infected”, help marry local and global, and to reinforce cohesion and a sense of belonging to diverse territories (Del Baldo & Demartini, 2012).

## **5. Final remarks and conclusions**

This work has attempted to contribute to the practical point of view of promoting an understanding of best practices for implementing corporate family responsibility tools, as well as tried to provide reasons for their effectiveness. In summary, in our work we tried to seat the bases for further theoretical development of the corporate family responsibility field of research by applying the ethical and multidimensional development perspective.

From the scientific point of view, the work has attempted to propose reflections on the relation between the themes of corporate social responsibility and the reconciliation of professional and familial responsibilities, opening lines of inquiry that are currently underdeveloped on the theme of work-life balance and of corporate family responsibility and trying to seat the bases for

further theoretical development of the CFR field of research by applying the ethical and multidimensional development perspective.

Identifying the factors that are at the base of a successful CSR model that contributes to the valorization of employees, the empirical analysis underscores the importance of policies reconciling work and life, which are centered on respect for, and the valorization of, the individual and his/her family. These policies are positively linked to the firm's intangible assets (reputation, productivity, loyalty, legitimacy).

The study shows how effective tools and actions of CSR addressed to employees can be developed on solid ground if they find their own roots in cohesion around shared values and objectives which render the firm as a community of person (Melé, 2012), and nurture processes of multidimensional development which place at their core the "person", its needs and attitudes, thus suggesting concrete pathways which other companies can adopt to introduce instruments through which synergies in relationships between employees and the firm can be created. It also elicits the challenge to render CSR concrete and effective and ensure sustainability, and helps underscore the importance of "soft" factors that can explain the success of firms such as Elica. Among these, the Elica nature of family business and its authentic CSR orientation.

The paper combines a deductive approach with an inductive one. Then, the conceptual framework has been integrated by the analysis of a case study aimed to enrich the proposed conceptual arguments with empirical evidences. The purpose of this case example was to provide empirical evidences to be integrated with the proposed theoretical framework. The conceptualizations provided in the paper can represent useful insights for further research and studies. The empirical work is based on an interpretation of CSR tools and actions addressed to employees; its nature is mainly explorative and intends to provide an interpretive platform for understanding Corporate Family Responsibility.

The empirical analysis help formulate the following propositions: on the one hand, that the nature of family business can be considered as a factor which facilitates the family friendly company (strengthening the relationship "family business and family friendly company"; on the other hand, that the orientation toward the holistic development (economic, social, ethical and environmental development) influence the adoption of corporate family responsibility-oriented practices.

These propositions can then be tested in a further phase of this study, using broad-based qualitative (through multiple case-study) and quantitative research designs aimed at analyzing other companies, both of larger and smaller size, belonging to the same country (Italy) or to different ones. The qualitative study could then be accompanied by a quantitative research aimed at verifying specific hypotheses drawn from the propositions. This study is in fact part of a larger research project that has been undertaken for several years on the theme of CSR in a multisectoral field of Italian firms located in regions characterized by a high concentration of SMEs and hosting a number of industrial districts in which even large-scale firms are found.

Nevertheless, the paper intended to be a preliminary step and we are aware of its limitations. Some of which could be overcome at later research stages. Firstly, we mention that the limitations are mainly related to the fact that the empirical study is qualitative in nature and is based on the analysis of a single case study. Thus, the results cannot be generalized, as specified in the methodological section. In addition, the investigation carried out on a single exemplary case, with the aim of showing the essential feature of the phenomenon, cannot be considered exhaustive. More research, as already stated, is needed in the future. Since this is an ongoing research, it has not been possible in this first stage of the study to assess the return in economic terms of Corporate Family Responsibility practices as Elica does not produce a social or sustainability report, neither does it operationalize benefits through specific indicators (KPI and indicators of a qualitative as well as a quantitative nature are not stated). Further theoretical and empirical development will give more insight.

We conclude by proposing a research agenda in which propositions shall be converted into testable hypothesis.

One line of inquiry could be that of the correlation between CFR praxis and policies concerning work-family balance, and economic outcomes, with ethical and social goals.

Moreover, a further area of future research could be addressed to analyze the efficacy of such corporate policies in relation to the organizational culture that distinguishes the company due to the specific nature of family business. Research in this field will aim to verify the relationship between its being a family business and attention paid to the family considered as a stakeholder in its role as educator, producer of values, energies and resources, and an essential element in the well-being of its employees.

A further step would be to deepen the study of the process of corporate family responsibility in the different subsidiaries of the Elica Group by paying attention to the cultural differences in different Countries; we are aware of the importance of taking them into account as they are key to the organizational change and culture.

Finally, these possible lines of research can be studied with reference either to a single territorial context, or by adopting a comparative perspective in examining different regions or states characterized by different institutional contextual factors. A specific attention should be placed to a comparative analysis taking into consideration other case-studies both relative to large multinational companies and to small and medium-sized firm in different countries.

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