

Strategic Awareness in “Società Benefit” A Pilot Study from Italy

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ABSTRACT

This study presents the preliminary findings of ongoing research on a specific type of hybrid organisation: the Italian Società Benefit, introduced by Law No. 208/2015. The research draws on data from the non-financial disclosures of these enterprises. This legal business model is designed to integrate profit-making objectives with the pursuit of a common benefit. This refers to creating a positive impact, or mitigating a negative one, on individuals, communities, local areas, the environment, cultural and social heritage, public and private entities, and other stakeholders.

By law, profit and common benefit purposes are required to be balanced, with neither prevailing over the other. These dual aims are embedded in the company's bylaws, making the hybrid nature of the organisation a permanent and irreversible feature.

The complexity inherent in this hybrid model requires a specific level of strategic awareness to align profit goals with those of the common benefit effectively. Formalised planning helps to mitigate potential conflicts between these objectives.

Società Benefit are also subject to specific legal obligations, including the annual publication of an impact report. This document must outline the common benefit objectives pursued and assess the results achieved.

Given this reporting requirement, a pilot study was conducted on a limited sample of Società Benefit to identify indicators capable of capturing key features of these entities, particularly their level of strategic awareness and their inclination towards planning and programming in quantitative terms. The authors intend to present the preliminary findings of this investigation.

Keywords: Benefit corporation; Common benefit; Impact reporting; Corporate purpose; non-financial disclosure.