

How CSR managers use public policy to strengthen their roles: Juggling between student activism and internal resistance

Susana Esper *IESEG School of Management*

Gustavo Birollo, *FSA ULaval*

Maria Castillo *IESEG School of Management*

Preliminary Abstract

Recently, the “ecological transition” of French higher education institutions (HEI) became a target of public policy. Studies on corporate social responsibility (CSR) and government have extensively analyzed how governments shape the CSR and sustainability activities of organizations through public policy with diverse levels of regulatory strength. However, we know less about the micro-level dynamics that governmental policies trigger within organizations. To address this gap, we look into the roles of a specific group of individuals operating in HEI in France: CSR managers. Through interviews and participant observation, we investigate how CSR managers use public policies to bring forward their roles. Our preliminary results suggest that CSR managers in HEI use public policy to strengthen their roles by performing three actions: (1) *using public policy to secure commitment*; (2) *bringing into play the hard facet of soft law*; (3) *engaging with vocal stakeholders*. We intend to contribute to the literature in CSR and government, by exploring the intra-organizational dynamics and inter-individual interactions that governmental CSR policies trigger.