

Business ethics as a field of Training, Teaching & Research in Europe

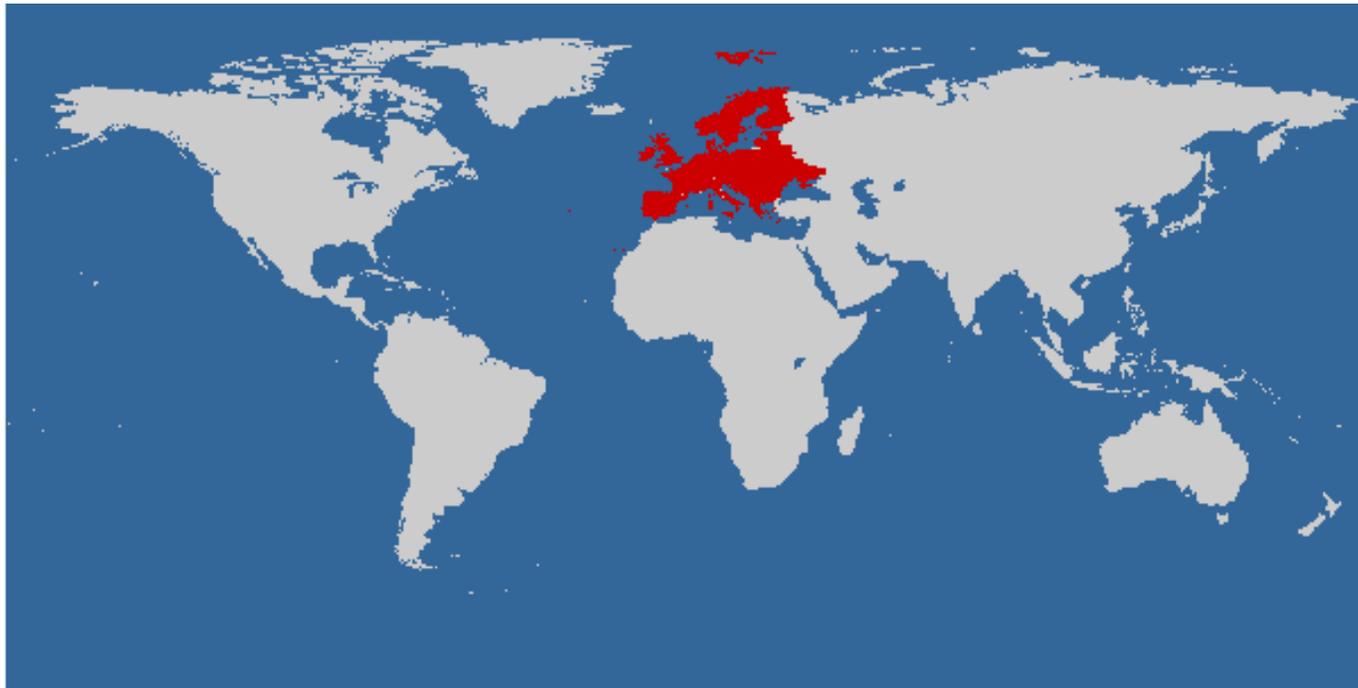
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Europe

- 25 Countries
- Research Team
 - Luc Van Liedekerke & 65 Students from Master program in Economics, KULeuven



History

- Long history of critical reflection about the economy and economic transactions, mainly by theologians and philosophers. Exported worldwide through colonial history. Deontological courses in e.g. Jesuit schools and protestant ethics, often form the historical origin of business ethics.
- 60 and 70's dominated by (Marxist, structuralist) social ethics often very critical of the market
- 80 and 90's introduction and expansion of American style business ethics
- 21st century strongest expansion period. Introduction of CSR, 3P, integrity training in consultancy, business and government policy. Research dominated by social sciences

Terminology

- Business ethics: micro and meso
 - Economic ethics: larger, micro, meso, makro
 - Management ethics: part of business ethics
- Unique features
 - Government involvement (policies and first legislation)
 - Rapid expansion of CSR and business ethics issues (anti-corruption, environmental concern) inside industry. Europe is probably leading the CSR revolution.

Prevalance and distribution of business ethics

- Strongest presence in Western European countries: UK, Germany, Netherlands, Belgium, Italy, Spain...
- Rest of Southern Europe catches up quickly (Greece, Portugal, Malta, Cyprus,...)
- Eastern Europe is starting, but lags behind
- Presence in Northern Europe is remarkably small, most of the business ethics issues are legally taken care of

Focus areas in business ethics

- Theoretical foundations of business ethics
- Critical theory of the market
- CSR research, supply chain analysis
- Ethical management, Leadership, Integrity
- Corporate Governance
- Financial ethics, Socially Responsible Investments SRI
- Fair Trade, Ethical Labels
- Sustainability, Compliance, consumer ethics

Training on business ethics

- CSR training: training on social and environmental issues in the management of the firm
- Integrity training: concentrates on ethical decision making in management
- Compliance, anti-corruption, whistleblowing
- Governance and leadership training

Teaching on business ethics

- Main themes
 - Theoretical foundations of business ethics, markets and social ethics
 - Stakeholder relations
 - CSR and sustainability
 - Ethical management, integrity, leadership
- Teaching takes place at all levels, under and postgraduate, strong presence in business schools
- Courses are predominantly electives

Research in business ethics

- Extensive research on CSR related themes. European funding for large, European wide research projects on CSR
- More limited research projects, mainly in philosophy or theology departments, concentrate on foundations of business ethics, capitalism, social market (economic system)
- Business schools concentrate on leadership, governance, ethics management and CSR
- Clear implication of mainly large companies in the research
- Strong rise of qualitative research in social science departments
- Case studies (companies, themes, developing countries)

Major issues over next 5 years

- Place of business ethics in educational profile of (business) schools and economics departments
- Climate challenge; financial ethics; ethical leadership
- How to create a sustainable economy after crisis
- How to mainstream business ethics issues inside large and mainly small companies
- Global governance, development of a social market economy
- Implementing sustainable ethics and integrity management in organizations

Conclusions

- Strong expansion of business ethics and CSR teaching, research as well as practice in Europe but Eastern Europe remains a challenge
- Increasing number of networks and clearly expanding. Largest networks involve over 1000 researchers and practitioners each (EBEN, EABIS, DNWE ...)
- Most networks remain nationally organized (language remains a barrier)
- Stronger involvement of governments certainly with respect to CSR policy and research
- Growing interest of European Union
- CSR, Sustainability issues, compliance issues, anti-corruption and human rights issues are increasingly integrated in the management of large companies. Still a challenge for SME's.