



THE ECUMENICAL COUNCIL FOR CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITY

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NEWS RELEASE

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Banks should address full range of social responsibility concerns, says new report

While the banking crisis has exposed risks of financial system instability, a new report published this week claims that banks need to address a far broader range of social, ethical and environmental concerns.

In its report ***The Banks and Society: Rebuilding Trust***, church-based research and advocacy group the Ecumenical Council for Corporate Responsibility (ECCR) documents concerns about leading banks' direct and indirect impacts on customers, employees, and local and national communities at home and abroad.

Among the issues that the report discusses are financial exclusion, responsible credit, gender equity in employment, project financing, asset management, lobbying, money laundering, tax avoidance, developing country debt, commodity speculation, board governance, risk management, remuneration and transparency.

An adequate response on all these issues is required if banks are to regain public trust, ECCR argues.

'Many banks recognise some responsibility in these areas. But most do not integrate social and environmental issues effectively into their business activities or behave with enough transparency for outsiders to make informed ethical judgements,' says Suzanne Ismail, ECCR's Researcher and the report's lead writer.

Drawing on work published by other civil society organisations as well as new research, ECCR's report profiles the main UK and Irish banks and offers questions that people can ask banks about how they operate. It makes recommendations to improve banks' corporate responsibility performance and provides sources of further information.

ECCR says that it intends the report to inform and empower investors in, and customers of, banks, as well as those advocating and working for a more socially responsible financial sector.

Charity fund managers CCLA Investment Management have sponsored the report, which is published in association with the Better Banking Campaign.

The Better Banking coalition has welcomed the report. Its spokesperson Damon Gibbons of the Centre for Responsible Credit said: 'Banks need to respond positively to the challenges outlined in ECCR's report and provide clear information on how they will support economic recovery at both the national and local levels.'

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Endorsing ECCR's report on behalf of the US Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility, Seamus Finn commented: 'US faith-based investors understand all too well how unregulated banking practices can destabilise markets with devastating impact, particularly on the most vulnerable. ECCR's report provides accessible and practical tools to promote transparency and reform.'

ECCR is submitting *The Banks and Society* to the UK Government's [Independent Commission on Banking](#), whose second round of consultation is due to begin following publication of its interim report in April.

The Banks and Society: Rebuilding Trust is available for download at www.eccr.org.uk/Reports.

ECCR will launch the report with a public panel discussion at Wragge's Banking Hall, Birmingham, on 1 March. Details at www.eccr.org.uk/Events/BanksandSociety.

Notes for editors

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ECCR is a registered charity (No. 1139618) working for economic justice, human rights and environmental stewardship, and a Body in Association with Churches Together in Britain and Ireland.

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Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility (ICCR)



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