

Brussels, the 18th of September 2009

Registered letter with acknowledgment receipt

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Att: Mr Bertil Törsäter
CEO Regional Development
Västra Götaland Regionen
Regionsutvecklingssekretariatet
Regionens Hus, Box 1091
405 23 Göteborg, Sweden

Dear Sir,

On the 9 of February 2009, my organization (The Social Capital Foundation, TSCF) and your organization (Västra Götaland Regionen, VGR) signed a contract in view of the preparation of a conference on social capital and urban policies, to be held in Lidköping and Gothenburg, Sweden, on 24-26 September 2009.

You solicited our help to select the international presenters, and to support and advise you along the process of preparation of the conference. You were responsible for operating the conference, and selecting the participants presenting in languages other than English.

We were alerted by the case of an applicant speaker whose submission had been rejected and who despite this rejection was asking for travel arrangements.

It appeared that you were recruiting international presenters to the conference parallel to the normal procedure, and were accepting even those applicant speakers whose submission, not meeting TSCF's quality standard, had been rejected by us.

In addition, we were strongly surprised by your updated program, which mentioned speakers who were unapproved or rejected, and claimed to be endorsed by TSCF.

You also transmitted such misleading information to external conference websites and third parties.

This is clearly a misuse of our name and reputation.

This also constitutes a blatant violation of our contract of the 9th of February 2009, which stipulates, in its article 3, that TSCF shall assess the international submissions in English (while your organization shall be responsible for the evaluation of the local applicants), and in its article 4, that TSCF shall be responsible with no recourse for the evaluation of the international papers/projects submitted in English for presentation at this conference.

In any properly organized international conference, all presentations are submitted and evaluated. If you did not accept this principle, why did you want to work with us? TSCF is known for its intellectual probity.

Imagine that your Region launches a call for proposals according to a standard procedure and that it does not award subsidies to certain operators, due to quality problems. For all that, would it be legitimate to grant them these subsidies out of any procedure? Such practice would be considered as absurd, unfair and morally lax.

I tend to think that VGR's behavior is not only linked to laxity and amateurism on the part of your collaborators. You started very late with the publicization of the conference compared to its actual date, despite our repeated warnings - an international conference must be prepared in advance. As a consequence, the number of international submissions was lower than expected, despite the fact that, this conference being widely subsidized by the Swedish taxpayers, you could offer financial support to quite a number of participants.

The responsibility of this situation falls solely on you. It does not constitute an acceptable reason to desperately take any applicant who may show up according to your convenience. Your collaborators, panicking at the idea of getting few international speakers, chose to sign up any applicant speaker whether qualified or not with the intention to create an international impression at the risk of a breach of contract.

We tested further your intentions, and found out that you were adding new conditions or putting into question points or modifications that had been agreed during the life of the contract. Your tactical and unconvincing responses showed us that you did not have the intention to execute the contract fully and in good faith.

The organization of this conference was hampered by confusion of the responsibilities on your side. One of your collaborators who had been active at the initial point during the preparation of the conference simply disappeared. The person who was in charge of the conference did not have appropriate authority to do so. As a reaction to our requests, you delegated - very late in the process of the conference preparation - to a collaborator who did not know the project and indulged into petty negotiation tactics. Your collaborator even mentioned in his last message that he could use speakers that we have not selected. This, once again, is incompatible with the letter and the spirit of our agreement, and with any acceptable standard of quality.

This is not the way in which TSCF expects to work, and this is not the behavior TSCF expects from its institutional partners.

The trust of our relationship being irreversibly damaged, our contract is cancelled.

You will have to withdraw our name from all programs and conference proceedings.

This letter will be posted on our website for the information of the public.

Sincerely,

Patrick Hunout