

CSR Ready

green, fair & competitive businesses



**Why Corporate Social
Responsibility is a Core
Element for Some Irish
Businesses**



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Sustainability has always been a key plank of good business behaviour in Ireland it is now important that businesses go up a notch to incorporate CSR. CSR is increasingly seen as being a core element to elevate businesses front of mind for both their consumers and the communities they inhabit. More than ever it is important they are seen as doing good not just for society but also because consumers are demanding it.

In addition to Environment and Sustainability, the policy document '[Ireland's National Plan on CSR](#)' lists three other core CSR dimensions:

- Community – interaction with local community partners and organisations.
- Workplace – supporting and engaging with employees.
- Marketplace – interaction with local community partners and organisations.

[Business in the Community Ireland](#), the group that encourages corporate CSR activity, defines CSR as companies taking responsibility for their impact on society. It is a concept whereby enterprises integrate social and environmental concerns into their mainstream business operations on a voluntary basis.

Philanthropy matters too. [Rethink Ireland](#) is currently raising funds to assist charities, social enterprises and community organisations with cash grants and business supports. Every euro raised is matched with government funding. The recent first call for the organisation's [Innovate Together Fund](#) received 480 applications for the 50 grants available. The second call in August has been boosted with €500,000 support from Zurich Insurance.

According to Terence O'Rourke, chairman of Rethink Ireland: *"There is obviously a huge need for support amongst Ireland's social innovation sector. As the country begins to open up again I am asking companies and individuals who are able to do so to consider donating to the fund."* In the latest review of the National CSR Plan, minister Heather Humphreys commented that customers, investors and job seekers are more conscious than ever of the ethical record of companies.

"It is important that businesses large or small realise that placing CSR at the core of their business is a strategy that is good for their business. "It is the collective response of businesses that will have an immensely powerful impact in our economy and our society," the minister stated. CSR has been practiced by companies throughout Ireland for many years. The breadth of CSR activity is widespread, and examples of best practice are detailed in the CSR Project resources. Covering countries across Europe and all CSR dimensions if you are a SME ready to try implementing CSR then this is a good place to start.

To explain it in simple terms, CSR is when a company does something that – on the face of it at least – appears to be aimed at contributing something positive to the community or wider world, other than, of course, economic activity.



Taking Diversity and Inclusion as an Example Why CSR is important to Irish SMEs and Business Landscape

CSR initiatives focused on employment can be among the most rewarding for businesses and individuals. As well as providing career opportunities for marginalised or disadvantaged groups in Irish society, employers get to see tangible and immediate results from their socially minded efforts. Business in the Community Ireland (BITCI) specialises in sustainability and CSR advisory, and the organisation runs a range of employment initiatives. They aim to promote integration and social inclusion for immigrants and refugees; people emerging from homelessness and/or addiction; individuals with mental health problems; long-term unemployed; and women returning to the workforce or entering it for the first time.

Seventy-six percent of millennials consider a company's social and environmental commitments when deciding where to work and 64% would not take a job if a potential employer didn't have strong corporate social responsibility practices in place.

The EPIC programme works with people from migrant or refugee backgrounds and features preemployment training, one-to-one guidance and opportunities for work experience. EPIC provides six weeks of preemployment training for participants, covering topics such as job-seeking skills and CV and interview preparation. One-to-one support is also provided by career counsellors. Companies that have participated in the programme include Enterprise Rent-a-Car and eBay. And most recently, KPMG provided virtual mentoring and career advice during the Covid-19 lockdown.

Ready For Work In this programme, employers assist people with disabilities and health challenges by providing guidance, work experience and in-work supports. The programme has helped more than 800 people, 70% of whom found employment since completing the programme's work experience module, which usually lasts for four weeks. Participant companies have included Lidl, Boots, Dalata Group and Luas operator Transdev Dublin. RISE The Refugees Integration, Skills and Employability programme (RISE) helps refugees and asylum seekers with work permits to integrate into society and progress into employment or education. Seven weeks of preemployment training is provided, and the scheme encompasses business visits and support from business volunteers

Women@Work The Women@Work programme supports women in returning to the workforce or entering it for the first time by connecting with businesses. It also helps women who have already

participated in employability programmes to find suitable employment. BT Ireland is one of the employers involved in the programme and during the Covid-19 lockdown, the company provided a virtual workshop to the female participants, covering CV reviews and feedback, as well as tips on how they could stand out during the recruitment process. The Department for Employment Affairs and Social Protection provide funding for 'Ready For Work', while the Department of Justice and European Social Fund support BITCI's work with ethnic minorities. The organisation's 'Inclusive Employer' blueprint is a 'how-to' guide for companies on how to be authentically diverse and inclusive. For more information on the programmes, see bitc.ie

"Being a good employer has always served companies well in terms of recruitment and retention, now those practices can also yield broader positive business benefits," said Alison DaSilva, former Executive VP of CSR Strategy at Cone Communications.

There are so many ways CSR can be strategically implemented into a business particularly in the area of employment and inclusion. In the blog above we have demonstrated how it can protect and grow your biggest asset – your employees. In addition, engaged employees are more likely to stay with a company longer, reducing attrition cost. Eighty-eight percent of millennials say their job is more fulfilling when they are provided opportunities to make a positive impact on social and environmental issues. These initiatives can range from paid time off for volunteering to company-wide days of service to skills-based virtual volunteering opportunities.

Source of quotes [Global Giving](#)

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