

# CSR Ready

green, fair & competitive businesses



## CSR-Ready Project Newsletter

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# About the project

Nowadays, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) constitute more than half of the businesses of the European Union (EU). Although their environmental footprint is relatively limited, SMEs aggregate environmental impact accounts for roughly 70% of the total EU environmental footprint (Quintás et al. 2018). Nonetheless, SMEs struggle to get a business approach to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). They mistakenly believe that CSR is an area reserved only for large businesses, that dispose of greater human and economic capital, and they are generally unaware of the direct economic benefits of CSR.

Our Erasmus+ funded Interactive Corporate Social Responsibility SME Readiness Project (CSR-Ready) has been created with a clear goal: to enhance implementation of CSR strategies in SMEs, by showing SME decision-makers the specific effects and benefits. The CSR-Ready Project will equip SME owners/managers with the knowledge and tools to understand the impact and importance of CSR, to develop CSR strategies and to increase comparative advantages deriving from CSR transition. Additionally, The CSR-Ready Project aims to create a lifelong environmental impact, by disseminating scientific knowledge amongst HEIs and VET. In this way, HEI students and (future) entrepreneurs will be more aware of the environmental and economic benefits of CSR. At the same time, future Entrepreneurs and StartUps are trained to implement CSR Strategies directly from the start – helping them to avoid future transition costs and allowing them to directly create CSR based competitive advantages.

In doing so, this project is in line with the goals of the European Green Deal and will have an impact on the achievement of its objectives by increasing the implementation rate of CSR in SMEs and thus improving the social, ecologic and economic footprint of the SME sector in Europe.



# THE CONSORTIUM

The CSR-Ready project unites 5 partners from universities, businesses, start-ups, and networks from 5 EU Member States, whose experience and expertise provide an ideal foundation to achieve the project's objectives.



The Vision Works GmbH – Project Coordinator  
Haale (Saale), Germany



European E-learning Institute  
Copenhagen, Denmark



Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Services  
and Shipping of Spain  
Madrid, Spain



University Industry Innovation Network  
Amsterdam, The Netherlands



Momentum Marketing Services Limited  
Leitrim, Ireland



# WELCOME TO OUR NEWSLETTER

The global challenges of the 21st century are manifold. Neither politics, business nor civil society will be able to solve climate change, poverty reduction or human rights protection on their own.

As companies or organisations, we do not act in a vacuum - through our actions we influence the living conditions of a large number of people in a direct or indirect way and on many levels. This applies to international corporations as well as to small and medium-sized companies. Those have, due to their resources, capacities and competences, but also due to their political and social influence on regional level, a great potential, but also a great responsibility to contribute effectively to society.

Even though a large number of small and medium-sized companies is aware of this responsibility, too few currently implement it professionally and comprehensively within the framework of holistic corporate social responsibility (CSR) strategies. As a result, not only is potential lost for society - the companies also give away potential competitive advantages. Small companies in particular can, for example, make their production more efficient, gain reputation among customers and employees or increase their

With the CSR-READY project, we want to make a contribution so that more and more small and medium-sized companies understand social responsibility as part of their corporate strategy and develop and implement comprehensive CSR strategies - thereby gaining innovative strength and competitiveness and at the same time making an important contribution to solving the current challenges.

*We hope you enjoying reading the second issue of the CSR-Ready newsletter!*





# News from the project



# CSR-Ready training package

## A look into the VET training package

As part of the project, Momentum, together with partners has developed the VET training package, which main aim is to Impact, Equip and Enable VET Educators, management and start-up consultants, teachers to assist SME with CSR Implementation under three specific strategies:

- **IMPACT** SME CSR practices so they are more competitive and sustainable in their local, regional and global marketplaces. This will be achieved by increasing CSR education and the implementation rate in SMEs and Start-Ups.
- **EQUIP** VET trainers, management consultants, teachers, start-up consultants etc. with a much-needed (now more than ever!) SME focused VET Training Package that they can easily integrate into their existing and future educational offers, courses and training programs.
- **ENABLE** them to be able to expand their offer around the central topic of CSR implementation in SMEs in a highly transferable way.

All partners are playing an important role in developing the VET Training Package in the form of continuous discussion, guidance and



The VET training package will be structured as follows:

**Module 1:** Introduction to SME Corporate Social Responsibility

**Module 2:** CSR Human Resource Management

**Module 3:** CSR Management and Culture Adaptation

**Module 4:** CSR Risk and Impact Management

**Module 5:** CSR Adaptation to Circular Innovation and Digital Technologies

**Module 6:** CSR Leveraging Local, Commercial and European Engagement

Each Module will be highly practical and flexible containing dynamic content and formats, including:

- Multimedia Resources e.g. Video, Animation Trainers Guide
- Case Studies and Best Practice Approaches
- Further Reading Resources and Background Information
- Workbooks, Quizzes and Tests
- VET trainer guidelines

Finally, to enhance the impact of the training package, each module will be translated into 4 partner languages: Dutch, English, German, and Spanish.

*Author: Laura Megan, Momentum.*

# An introduction to IO3

## The CSR-Ready self-assessment and feedback generator tool



With our CSR-Ready project, we not only sensitise small and medium-sized enterprises to CSR, but also actively support them in implementing CSR activities in their companies. Our CSR-Ready assessment is an essential building block in this process. The assessment is aimed at SME-owners and managers or staff responsible for CSR who would like to deal with the topic more intensively in order to make their contribution to a more sustainable environment. It is structured according to company divisions along a typical value chain. In doing so, we are guided by the well-known model of "Porter's value chain" - a model that has been popular in management literature for a long time. Specifically, we ask questions about concrete measures in the following areas of the company:

- Firm Infrastructure
- Human Resource Management
- Technology Development
- Procurement
- Logistics
- Operations/Production
- Marketing, Sales & Service

Simply carrying out the assessment already has a learning effect: users are made aware of topics that belong to CSR and which measures are possible at all. But that's not all: at the end of the questionnaire, users can download an individualised feedback report. This report contains comprehensive knowledge of CSR and highlights areas where action is still needed, where room for improvement was identified, and where the company is already well positioned. Concrete steps for the successful implementation of further CSR measures can be derived from this report.

At the moment, the assessment is still in the test phase, but we are sure that we will be able to inform you about a finalised and published CSR-Ready Scorecard in the next newsletter!

*Author: Julia Grey, tww.*



# An introduction to IO4

## The CSR-Ready knowledge exchange platform

To ensure the full exploitation of resources and products developed with the project, the CSR-ready project is developing a learning exchange platform that enables wider access for VET professionals, SME owner/manager, start-ups, and policy makers. The overall goal is to encourage SMEs to enhance implementation of CSR in SMEs.

To achieve this, EUEI is coordinating partners' work to adopt project activities and results as Open Educational Resources and supplement them with new content, to then establish a virtual learning and knowledge exchange platform. Such platform will:

- Facilitate collaboration, promote communication and encourage cross-project fertilisation of ideas to accelerate learning.
- Promote ongoing knowledge exchange – online and mobile – within project participants and across the regions.
- Facilitate opportunities for peer-to-peer learning through a chat-based workspace.

Further, to enhance the learning experience, the platform will also include the following features:

- It will be fully mobile optimised for learning 'on the go' to fit in with the time and place during which end users want to learn
- It will enable communication with content creators which will provide guidance to the end users.
- It will include a virtual collaboration and a peer learning space and tools to effectively promote active learning.

Finally, the overall architecture of the OERs, additional learning resources and materials will be modular and independent from each other to enable end users to choose content that exclusively attract their interest.





# Featured articles



# CSR for SMEs

## Advantages of its application

In recent years, a trend has developed that seeks to make companies aware of the importance of carrying out socially responsible policies that seek on the one hand, to care for the environment and, on the other, social recognition as a sign of their commitment. We are talking about Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).

First, we must know the meaning of this term, as well as its origin: according to the Observatory of Corporate Social Responsibility, CSR is defined as "a way of managing companies based on the management of the impacts that their activity generates on their clients, employees, shareholders, local communities, the environment and society in general". The term originates from the book *The Living Company* by Arie de Geus, published at the end of the 20th century.

Today, all companies are to a greater or lesser extent socially responsible: some do so because of their commitment to the environment and others because of their public image.

In terms of its application, some of the most outstanding advantages are the following:

- Improved product quality: thanks to a more natural and efficient production, consumers feel more satisfied and remain loyal to their consumption.
- Increased employee motivation and

commitment: employees who feel identified with the company's policies and values are more motivated and committed to their work.

- Better public image: derived from social recognition thanks to the policies or actions carried out by the company, for example: donations for charitable causes, production policies committed to the environment, etc.
- Encouraging innovation: companies work to find new ways of obtaining more sustainable products and producing more sustainable services that are socially recognised and therefore socially responsible.
- Advantages in financing: socially responsible companies find it easier to obtain financing. Thanks to their policies, they generate greater credibility and trust among potential investors.

As we can see, there are many advantages to implementing socially responsible policies. For a CSR policy to be successful and effective, each one of the company's employees must be convinced of its effectiveness and use.

*Author: Elia Retamosa, Camara de Comercio*



# How to make your SME more sustainable?

## Tips from our Spanish partner



account for 99.9% of the business fabric, create 66% of industrial employment and represent 62% of GDP. They are, therefore, the backbone of the Spanish productive fabric and play a key role in the path towards sustainability.

The size of the company is not incompatible with proper waste management. That is why, if you manage one of them, it is important that you know how you can implement small measures in your business that will contribute to making your company more sustainable, bearing in mind the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) included

in the 2030 Agenda, such as SDG 15 on "Climate action"; number 3, referring to "Health and well-being"; goal number 5, on "Gender equality" and those referring to "Responsible production and consumption" (SDG 12) and number 7: "Clean and non-polluting energy", among others.

Sustainability means adjusting the different processes and ways of working in your company. But how can you achieve this? Here are some ideas.

### **Control and reduce energy consumption**

It is important to turn off equipment when it is not in use, you should adjust the temperature of air conditioning, install energy-efficient lighting and take advantage of natural light.

A practical tip is to check your electricity, water and gas bills to be able to monitor your company's consumption, at what times of the day consumption is concentrated and to check the contracted power to see if it meets the needs of your business.

Depending on these factors, you will be able to make decisions to change the company's habits, modify the power or even change the contracted tariff.

### **Work with responsible and close suppliers**

Hire suppliers who are committed to sustainability, so that your company's production process is in line with the Sustainable Development Goals. In addition, it is a good idea to use local suppliers to avoid long journeys and thus generate fewer emissions.

### **Manage waste**

You should always take into account the policies of reducing the volume of waste generated, reuse and recycling of leftover materials. There are several environmental quality management companies that...



can help you in this task.

### **Digitise the company**

You should try to digitise all the administrative functions of the business. Say goodbye to paper and use all kinds of applications. From tools to organise tasks, to those designed to store documents in the cloud and thus avoid paper printouts.

### **Integrate sustainability into your value chain**

Remember to keep sustainability objectives in mind throughout the company's production process. From the creation of the product to the end of its useful life, paying attention to the use of renewable materials, low energy consumption, biodegradable packaging...

### **Employee training**

Employees must contribute to the optimisation of business results through continuous learning on issues such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance) criteria or those related to the environment.

The United Nations (UN) has established various programmes that support companies in adopting sustainable measures. The Global Compact is an example of this and already has more than 10,400 companies that work towards sustainability through corporate social responsibility.

### **Are you a Spanish SME?**

The Spanish Chamber of Commerce offers grants for actions related to energy efficiency, carbon footprint measurement, circular economy and Agenda 2030. The aim of the programme is to improve the productivity and competitiveness of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises with the adoption of a culture in favour of permanent innovation to achieve sustainable economic growth. Don't miss it!

*Author: Elia Retamosa, Camara de Comercio*



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## CONTACT US

David Blunck  
Project Director, tww GmbH  
[blunck@thevisionworks.de](mailto:blunck@thevisionworks.de)

Mario Ceccarelli  
Dissemination & Outreach, UIIN  
[ceccarelli@uiin.org](mailto:ceccarelli@uiin.org)

[CSRready.eu](http://CSRready.eu)



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