

CSR Ready

green, fair & competitive businesses

CSR-Ready

Project Newsletter

Issue 5 – July 2023

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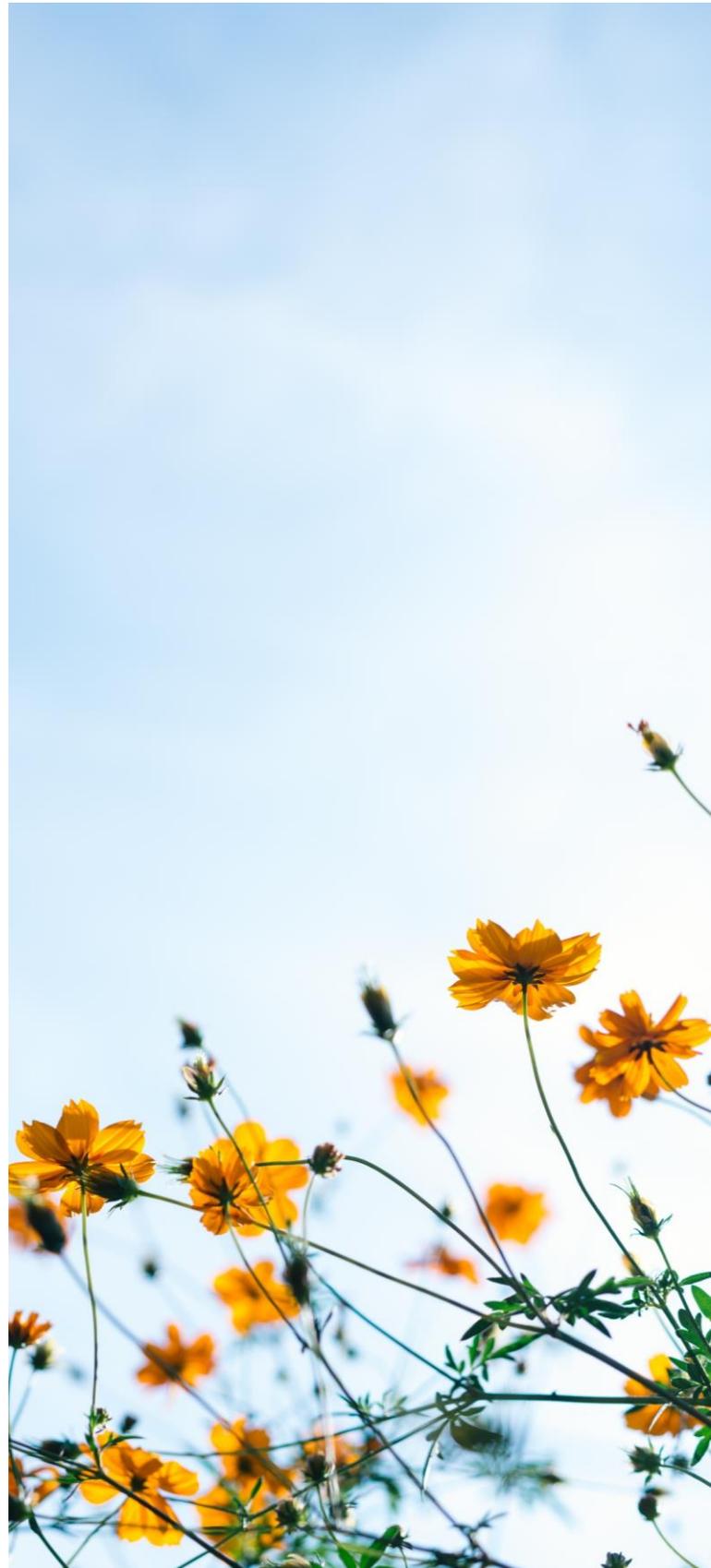
SMEs CSR adaptation to circular economy innovation

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.

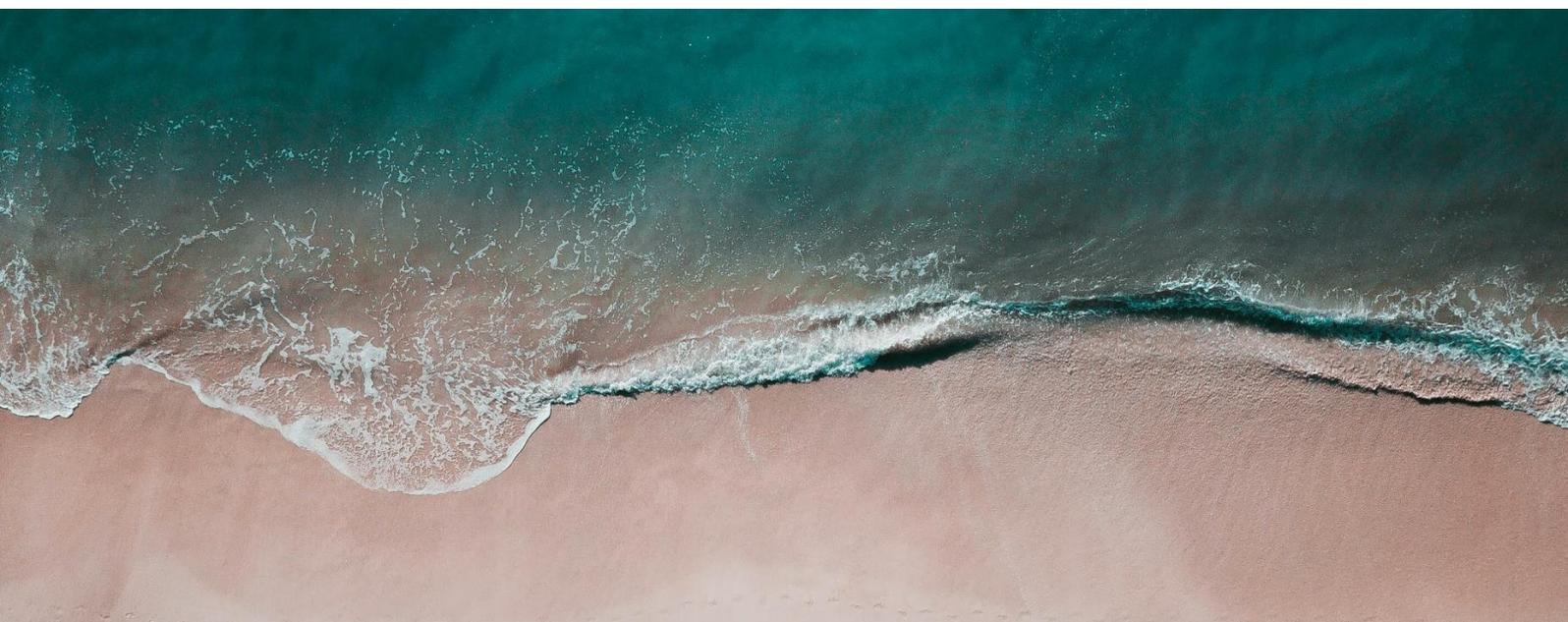
As companies or organisations, we do not act in a vacuum - through our actions we influence the living conditions of a large number of people in a direct or indirect way and on many levels. This applies to international corporations as well as to small and medium-sized companies. Those have, due to their 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 innovative strength.

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 fifth issue of the CSR-Ready newsletter!





News from the project

Case Studies Collection

In our previous newsletter, we provided an overview of the VET training package. We are happy to inform you that all the case studies are now available for download on our Knowledge Platform. These case studies offer a wealth of knowledge and insights, shedding light on exemplary CSR practices by small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) throughout Europe.

Delve into our collection of enlightening case studies, which showcase the successful implementation of sustainable and ethical practices by a diverse range of businesses. These real-world examples demonstrate the extensive potential of CSR within SMEs. Each case study highlights the unique challenges faced by these companies and the innovative strategies they employed to overcome them.

Discover the inspiring stories of European SMEs that have transformed their operations, making a tangible impact on society and the environment. Not only have they enhanced their brand reputation, but they have also secured long-term success. By exploring these case studies, you can gain valuable insights into unlocking the full potential of CSR within your own organization.

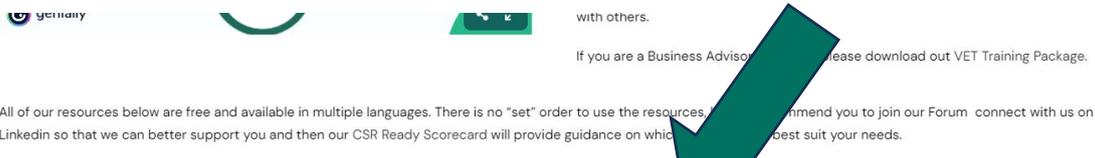
On the following page you will see an overview of all Case Studies in our Collection.

Who will benefit from these case studies?

These thought-provoking and illuminating examples are tailored to benefit a wide range of professionals. This includes SME owners who hold a pivotal role in shaping the trajectory of their businesses. Additionally, VET trainers, management consultants, teachers, start-up consultants, entrepreneurs, and SME owners will find immense value in these carefully selected case studies.

By immersing themselves in these real-world success stories of CSR implementation, readers can deepen their understanding of sustainable growth and ethical practices. Armed with this knowledge, they can steer their businesses towards positive change. SMEs and start-ups will not only benefit from the expertise of trained professionals but also leverage the valuable lessons derived from these case studies to create a positive impact on society and the environment. In doing so, they can enhance their brand reputation and ensure long-term success.

Unlock the potential of CSR in your organization today by exploring these transformative case studies. Visit our [Case Studies Collection](#) to access these invaluable resources and embark on a journey towards sustainable and ethical business practices.



CSR Ready Scorecard



Case Studies



Online Course



CSR Ready CASE STUDIES

green, fair & competitive businesses

MODULE 1

M1 - Introduction to SME Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

MODULE 1 Case Study 1 Phoenix Design (Communications)	
MODULE 1 Case Study 2 Uhrenholt (Food Solutions)	
MODULE 1 Case Study 3 Troltekt AS (Manufacturing)	
MODULE 1 Case Study 4 Saltá Kvarn (Organic Food)	
MODULE 1 Case Study 5 DHR Communications (PR)	
MODULE 1 Case Study 6 3fe Coffee (Coffee Roasters)	
MODULE 1 Case Study 7 Doolin Hotel (Rural Boutique Hotel)	
MODULE 1 Case Study 8 Marino Software (Software)	
MODULE 1 Case Study 9 TEG (Aviation Engineering)	
MODULE 1 Case Study 10 Viva Green (Environmental)	
MODULE 1 Case Study 11 IED Electronicity (Electronic Solutions)	
MODULE 1 Case Study 12 Johan Cruyff (Education)	
MODULE 1 Case Study 13 Tonys Chocolonely (Confectionary)	
MODULE 1 Case Study 14 Holland Recycling (IT)	
MODULE 1 Case Study 15 De Klokk Banden (Automotive)	
MODULE 1 Case Study 16 The Lekker Company (Skin Care)	
MODULE 1 Case Study 17 Copper8 (Construction)	
MODULE 1 Case Study 18 Creativhotel Luise (Hotel)	
MODULE 1 Case Study 19 Florida Eis (Icecream)	
MODULE 1 Case Study 20 Märkisches Landbrot (Bakery)	
MODULE 1 Case Study 21 Neumarkter (Beverages)	
MODULE 1 Case Study 22 Scheplast (Plastics)	

MODULE 2-3

M2 - CSR and Human Resource Management for SME Sustainability

M3 - Implementing CSR HR to Maximise European CSR SME Potential

MODULE 2-3 Case Study 1 Neumarkter Lammsbraus (Organic Brewery)	
MODULE 2-3 Case Study 2 TEG (Aviation Engineering)	
MODULE 2-3 Case Study 3 (Multiple Examples)	
MODULE 2-3 Case Study 4 (IT & Technical Consulting)	

MODULE 2-3 | CSR SUPPORTS
HRM Supporting Organisations and Networks

MODULE 4-5

M4 - Embracing CSR and Cultural Change Transformation (Short-Term Strategy)

M5 - Embracing CSR and Cultural Change Transformation (Long-Term Strategy)

MODULE 4-5 Case Study 1 (Multiple Examples)	
MODULE 4-5 Case Study 2 Tico (Mailing Company)	
MODULE 4-5 Case Study 3 Scheplast (Plastics)	
MODULE 4-5 Case Study 4 Mayflow (Automation)	
MODULE 4-5 CSR SUPPORTS Culture Change Management	

MODULE 6-7

M6 - Adopting a CSR Framework to Mitigate Risk and Impact

M7 - Implementing the ISO 26000 Framework to Mitigate Risk and Impact

MODULE 6-7 Case Study 1 TEG (Engineering)	
MODULE 6-7 Case Study 2 (Multiple)	
MODULE 6-7 Case Study 3 Florida (IceCream)	

MODULE 6-7 | CSR SUPPORTS
Risk and Impact Management

MODULE 8-9

M8 - CSR Adaptation to Digital Tools and Technologies

M9 - CSR Adaptation to Circular Economy Innovation

MODULE 8-9 Case Study 1 Creativhotel Luise (Hotel)	
MODULE 8-9 Case Study 2 Märkisches Landbrot (Bakery)	
MODULE 8-9 Case Study 3 (Multiple Examples)	
MODULE 8-9 Case Study 4 Leveraging Connections	
MODULE 8-9 Case Study 5 (Multiple)	

MODULE 8-9 | CSR SUPPORTS
Digital Technologies and Circular Economy

This symbol represents CSR SUPPORTS section

Co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union

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CSR for Small Businesses – Online Course

Course Overview

We are excited to introduce the modules of our innovative online course designed to meet the unique needs of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and start-ups, focusing on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). Our course is aimed at empowering business owners and professionals to effectively integrate CSR practices into their enterprises, thereby fostering a sustainable business landscape.

Throughout this course, learners will gain deep insights into the principles and strategies of CSR implementation. By doing so, they will be equipped to guide their businesses towards sustainable growth, ethical practices, and positive societal impact. We have carefully curated the course to provide a comprehensive understanding of CSR and its potential benefits for enhancing brand reputation and long-term success.

Key Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, learners will:

- Gain a thorough understanding of the principles and implementation strategies of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)
- Recognize the role of CSR in promoting sustainable business practices in SMEs and start-ups
- Understand how to effectively integrate CSR strategies into existing business models
- Grasp the potential benefits of CSR for enhancing brand reputation and long-term success
- Realize the importance of teaching and promoting CSR for creating a responsible and ethical future for businesses

Course Features

Our course comprises nine comprehensive modules, ensuring a well-rounded learning

experience. The self-paced learning structure allows learners to progress at their own convenience, while the engaging content and case studies provide practical insights. To accommodate busy schedules, we have optimized the course for mobile and tablet devices, enabling on-the-go learning. Additionally, learners will gain access to our vibrant CSR READY online community, fostering networking and collaboration opportunities.

Who should take this course

This course is specifically designed for

- **Entrepreneurs** seeking to enhance their understanding of CSR implementation.
- **SME Owners/Managers** aiming to integrate sustainable practices into their businesses.
- **Future Entrepreneurs** who wish to incorporate CSR principles from the outset.
- **SME Support Providers and Consultants** interested in assisting businesses with CSR integration.

Educational Problem Addressed

This course addresses the pressing need for a comprehensive and accessible resource on CSR that business owners and professionals can readily utilize. By equipping learners with the necessary knowledge and tools, we aim to empower them to integrate CSR into their business strategies, ultimately fostering a more responsible and ethical business landscape.

We invite you to check out our [online course](#) and embark on a transformative journey towards a sustainable future for your business. Together, let us shape a responsible and ethical business community.

CSR for Small Businesses – Online Course

Module Overview

CSR Ready

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MODULE 1	MODULE 2	MODULE 3	MODULE 4	MODULE 5
				
INTRODUCTION TO SME CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY (CSR)	CSR AND HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT FOR SME SUSTAINABILITY	IMPLEMENTING CSR HR TO MAXIMIZE CSR SME POTENTIAL	EMBRACING CSR AND CULTURAL CHANGE TRANSFORMATION – SHORT TERM STRATEGY APPROACH	EMBRACING CSR AND CULTURAL CHANGE TRANSFORMATION
<p>1.1 Introduction & How SMEs Are Already Driving European Sustainability</p> <p>1.2 Reasons Why SMEs Should Adapt A CSR Strategy</p> <p>1.3 SDGs and How SMEs are Uniquely Positioned to Generate SDG Impact</p> <p>1.4 Conclusion and What You Have Learned</p>	<p>2.1 Introduction & SME CSR and Human Resource Management</p> <p>2.2 HRM lies at the Heart of Embedding CSR in an SME, through employees</p> <p>2.3 Benefits of Integrating CSR and HR into SMEs</p>	<p>3.1 How to Implementing an SME CSR HR to Support Your CSR Cultural Change Management Strategy <i>This full section focuses on 5 key areas that should be first addressed for the successful integration of CSR HRM Management Strategies</i></p> <p>3.2 Learning Outcomes</p>	<p>4.1 Introduction & SME CSR Cultural Change Management & How the Appetite for Adaptation is Stronger Than Ever</p> <p>4.2 How CSR Innovation Should Be Front and Centre of a Company's Culture</p> <p>4.3 Dig Deeper into the Benefits of SME Cultural Change Management</p> <p>4.4 Activating CSR Cultural Change Management – Short-Term Strategic Approach</p>	<p>5.1 Implementing CSR Cultural Change Management – Long-Term Strategy Approach</p> <p>5.2 How Long-Term Top-Level Leadership is a Powerful Motivator and Critical to CSR Implementation</p> <p>5.3 How to Assess, Develop and Decide on Different CSR Priorities to Drive the Long-Term Strategy</p> <p>5.4 Develop Your CSR Vision and Engage Your Workforce</p> <p>5.5 Conclusions</p>

CSR for Small Businesses – Online Course

Module Overview

MODULE 6	MODULE 7	MODULE 8	MODULE 9
			
<p>ADOPTING A CSR FRAMEWORK AND SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY TO MITIGATE IMPACT AND RISK</p>	<p>IMPLEMENT THE CSR SUSTAINABILITY ISO 26000 FRAMEWORK</p>	<p>CSR ADAPTATION TO DIGITAL TOOLS & TECHNOLOGIES</p>	<p>CSR ADAPTATION TO CIRCULAR ECONOMY INNOVATION</p>
<p>6.1 Realize the Benefits, Growth Opportunities and Advantages of Adopting a Globally Recognized CSR Framework (Using ISO 26000)</p> <p>6.2 ISO 26000 7 CSR Core Subjects Covering Key Challenges That Should Be Addressed by SMEs</p> <p>6.3 ISO 26000 7 CSR Core Principles That SMEs Should Take Into Account When Shaping their CSR</p>	<p>7.1 Adopting the Roadmap on How to Implement CSR Sustainability and ISO 26000 Strategies</p>	<p>8.1 CSR Adaptation to Digital Technologies is the Right Move for SMEs</p> <p>8.2 Examples of CSR Adaptation to Technology</p> <p>8.3 12 Cost Effectively Ways SMEs can Adopt CSR Technologies Affordably and Quickly</p>	<p>9.1 Understanding Circular Economy Measures and How it Encapsulates CSR Activities</p> <p>9.2 Join the Global Circular Economy Effort and Conversation</p> <p>9.3 Implementing Circular Economy Models</p>

Co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union



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Featured articles



Between credibility and greenwashing: communicating CSR measures skillfully

How do I find suitable skilled workers and retain them in the long term? How do I manage to motivate my existing employees? A possible answer to these questions could be: through strategically designed CSR measures. Beyond the implementation of CSR, a well-thought-out way of communicating the measures within the company is needed - internally as well as externally. Transparency, credibility and continuity are the keywords to watch out for. But beware of more communication than actual action: Greenwashing can cause lasting damage to your company.

CSR in a company refers to both external processes, such as the procurement of raw materials from environmentally compatible sources, and internal processes, such as the individual organisation of working hours for an improved work-life balance. Besides the responsible external communication, a climate of responsible action should be created within the company. Internal communication can take place, for example, through the following areas:

1. Living corporate values

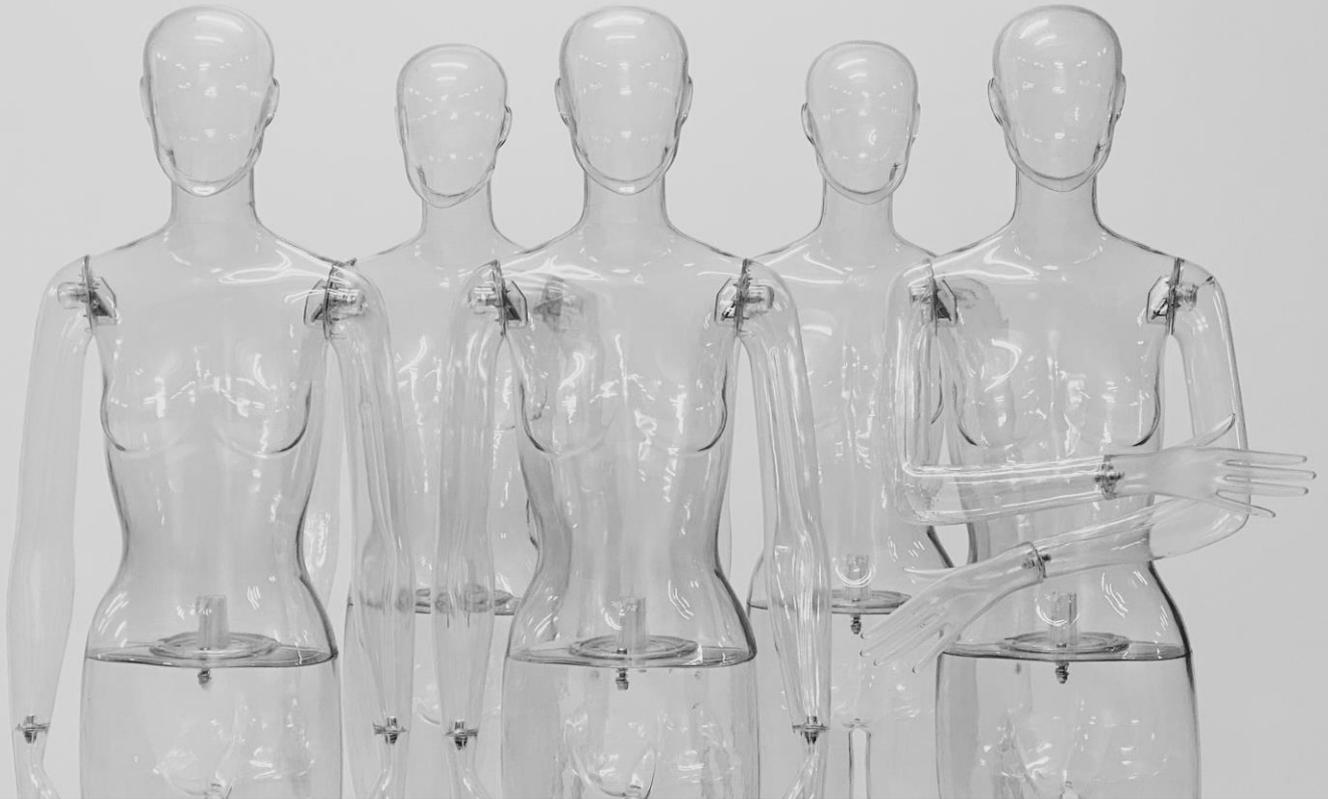
Use your corporate mission statement and define your core values. Don't just write them down in a document, but live them in everyday interaction in your day-to-day business. The value of respect is an integral part of your company's value system? If so, you should not denounce employees for mistakes in a meeting, but find out how such incidents can be avoided in the future in cooperative collaboration with the people concerned.

2. Involving employees

Actively involve your employees in the development of the CSR strategy! They are the experts in their field of activity and know best the respective pitfalls and weak points. The participative approach also radiates appreciation and increases the acceptance of the strategy, which can give the CSR measures adopted a meaningful character. Employees who are convinced of your company's measures become credible CSR ambassadors to the outside world. Use this opportunity to advertise your concerns!

→





3. Credibility, transparency & continuity

SMEs communicate less frequently about CSR than large corporations. Besides the scarcity of resources in SMEs, another aspect comes into play: environmental sustainability is often not the main characteristic of the products. But that is not necessarily the point. Transparency at this point can mean reporting on your journey towards more CSR activity and increased environmental sustainability - and not on the "perfect product". Think of CSR as a cross-cutting issue that needs to be a permanent part of doing business - move away from the idea of CSR as just another project. This creates real continuity in responsible action. Coupled with transparent reporting, this increases the authenticity of your corporate communication.

4. Beware of greenwashing

Strategic communication always means tactics: even if you do not intend to use your CSR activities solely to enhance your reputation, it can still

happen that excessive reporting diminishes credibility. Also, carefully analyse which key figures and areas of activity actually have an impact on your sustainability goals. Which processes in the company have the greatest negative consequences for people and the environment? Which adjusting screws make a relevant improvement possible? If communication in this area is too offensive, stakeholders will become critical. The result can be damage to the company's reputation, which in the worst case threatens the basis of the business. Therefore, focus on transparency, address existing weaknesses yourself and present a differentiated picture of CSR in your company.

Author: Elaine Voigt, TWW.



SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS TRANSFORMATION IN SPAIN

Forética

Forética - is the leading organization in sustainability and corporate social responsibility in Spain. Its mission is to integrate social, environmental and good governance aspects into the strategy and management of companies and organizations. It is currently made up of more than 200 members.

European regulatory advances in social matters accelerate sustainable business transformation.

The combination of the geopolitical situation and the cost of living crisis (both in the top 3 short-term risks according to the World Economic Forum report for 2023) together with the need for acceleration of climate action and the integration of technology, generates a high risk of causing transition gaps for the most exposed and least prepared groups.

All this in a context in which some 400,000 new people are at risk of poverty or social exclusion in the last year, according to the European Network to Fight Poverty (EAPN). In addition, specifically in terms of employment, in 2022 some 2,000 million workers had informal employment in the world, according to the International Labor Organization. Global unemployment is expected to increase slightly in 2023, by about 3 million unemployed, to reach 208 million. Beyond the employment deficit, the quality of jobs continues to be a fundamental concern.

Faced with these urgent challenges, Ricardo Trujillo, Manager of Forética's Social Impact Cluster, stresses the need to promote business action in this area: "To tackle the economic and social repercussions of the pandemic, the war in Ukraine and the current situation of cost of living, it is necessary to accelerate the ecological and digital transition, also reinforcing ambition in social matters and promoting a greener social axis. From the Social Impact Cluster and the Spanish Business Council for Sustainable Development we work to promote the social axis in sustainability strategies and generate a positive social impact".

The implications for Spanish companies of European regulatory advances in social matters

At the European level, very relevant regulatory advances have recently taken place in relation to non-financial reporting, on the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD) and the new sustainability reporting standards (ESRS) that it proposes. As Forética points out in its analysis on this topic, the new rules will expand the number of companies required to publish information on sustainability to more than 50,000 from the current 12,000. In social matters, they must report from 2024 on matters related to their workforce, the workers in their value chains, the communities affected by their operations and the consumers of their products or services.

In addition, one of the latest reporting measures approved within the European Commission proposal is more equal gender representation on the boards of directors of listed companies, according to which by 2026 they must incorporate that at least 40% of non-executive director positions or at least 33% of the total director positions, executive or not, are held by persons of the underrepresented sex. A very relevant advance in a context in which 31.5% of the members of the boards of directors are women, and only 8% of the boards of directors are chaired by women, despite the fact that around 60% of new university graduates in the European Union are women, according to data from the European Institute for Gender Equality.

<https://foretica.org/>



SMES CSR ADAPTATION TO CIRCULAR ECONOMY INNOVATION

For European SMEs to keep ahead of market trends, demands, and expectations it is important they adopt CSR circular economy innovation and a CE model framework approach that work in alignment with CSR and their company objectives.

[Module 9](#) of the CSR READY Modules explains how Circular Economy complements CSR measures, digital innovation, and responsible SME advancements assisting businesses to move away from a resource-hungry linear model where virgin materials are extracted, used, and discarded at the end of their life; to one which focuses on raw material reduction, retention, and reuse.

What does Circular Economy Look Like for European SMEs?

The circular economy is a [model of production and consumption](#), that involves sharing, leasing, reusing, repairing, refurbishing, and recycling existing materials and products as long as possible. In this way, the life cycle of products is extended. The key difference is that the linear economy focuses on profitability, irrespective of the product life cycle, whereas the circular economy targets sustainability

SMEs are key to fighting [climate change](#). That's why they must continue the shift from a linear to a

circular economy to make sure society progresses in a way that is environmentally friendly. The planet's resources are finite, so it's crucial that people, governments, and companies work together to use them more responsibly. Enter the circular economy, a new model that offers an alternative to the traditional linear economy.

Benefits of Circular Economy to Companies, People, and Planet.

Circular Economy Activities benefit not only companies but people and the planet. The benefits are endless such as; achieving cost savings, increasing competitiveness, stimulating innovation, reducing pressure on the environment, improving the security of the supply of raw materials and boosting economic growth for Ireland.

Currently, the production of materials we use every day in Europe this accounts for 45% of the CO2 emissions.

Waste prevention activities, [ecodesign](#) and re-useability could save companies money while also [reducing total annual greenhouse gas emissions](#).

→



Widespread adoption of the circular economy results in increased Gross Domestic Product (GDP)—with a reported €4.5 trillion in economic benefits until 2030. But this does not only provide a general economic boost. Individual businesses that practice a circular economy can also reap the monetary benefits.

Take the consumer goods industry. There is €3.2 trillion worth of materials used in this sector alone each year, yet only [20 per cent of those materials are recovered](#).

The ability to reuse materials in the production of new products instead of sourcing new materials can, in the long run, reduce operational costs. Reusing existing materials also takes away from an industry's dependency on resources that are otherwise volatile, whether in price or availability.

[Module 9](#) explains how Circular Economy is the perfect tool that can advance businesses forward by moving away from a resource-hungry linear model to a model that has little impact, is

sustainable and extends product life cycles. CE is a bit complex but well worth the investment, especially since being reactive doesn't work anymore given our predictable vulnerable world. This module uses strategies that are aligned with global agenda items, future regulatory frameworks, and climate change measures that will inevitably be part of our living systems so we can protect our planet and prepare for future generations.

Download [Module 9](https://www.csrready.eu/download/4229/?tmstv=1688402262) <https://www.csrready.eu/download/4229/?tmstv=1688402262>

Be inspired by other CSR SMEs across Europe <https://www.csrready.eu/case-studies/>

Check out any of our other 9 Modules for CSR inspiration, expertise, and guidance.

<https://www.csrready.eu/vet-training-package/>



CSR Ready

green, fair & competitive businesses

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