



green, fair & competitive businesses



CSR-Ready

Project Newsletter

*Issue 6 – August
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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 grater 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 Vison Works GmbH – Project Coordinator
Halle (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.

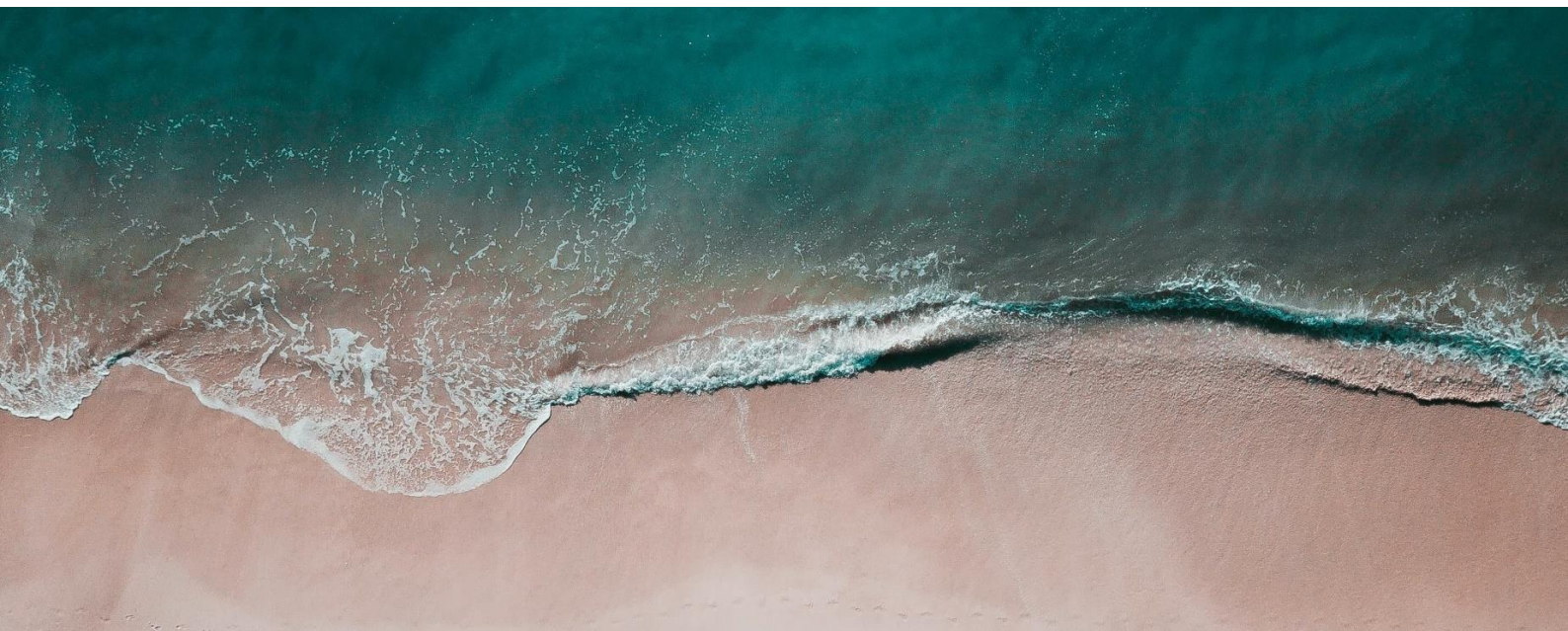
As companies or organisations, we do not act in a vacuum - through our actions we influence the living conditions of a large number of people in a direct or indirect way and on many levels. This applies to international corporations as well as to small and medium-sized companies. Those have, due to their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





News from the project

CELEBRATING OUR CSR-READY JOURNEY

As our CSR-Ready project draws to a close after three years, we look back with great pride at the progress we have made in the realm of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs). This newsletter marks the conclusion of a journey that is not just about the end result, but about the invaluable impact we have achieved along the way.

CSR-Ready set out with a clear mission: to help SMEs understand and implement CSR practices in their operations. SMEs are the backbone of Europe's economic growth, creating jobs and driving progress. But they have also become increasingly aware of their ecological and social responsibilities, prompting our project to address this pressing need.

One of our key findings was that many SMEs still viewed CSR as something reserved for larger companies. They are often not aware of the real benefits CSR could bring to their businesses, leading to low adoption rates. Our project has aimed to bridge this knowledge gap and equip SMEs with the tools they need to embrace CSR effectively.

We have achieved four significant results that contribute to this mission:

INTERNATIONAL SME CSR-READY IMPACT FRAMEWORK: Our international study on CSR implementation among SMEs has shed light on the challenges, benefits, and best practices. It lays the groundwork for the rest of our project, offering valuable insights into CSR for SMEs.

CSR-READY VET TRAINING PACKAGE: This resource package equips VET trainers and business advisors with a collection of open educational resources (OERs) to teach CSR Readiness as part of business development programs. Our materials empower and enable these professionals to effectively integrate CSR implementation in SMEs and start-ups, ultimately

leading to positive change and fostering a sustainable business landscape.

INTERACTIVE CSR-READY ASSESSMENT: Building on the insights from our Impact Framework, we have developed a tool for in-depth analysis of CSR Readiness. This assessment's primary goal is to pinpoint opportunities for your company to enhance its CSR efforts. Structured around typical value chain divisions, we inquire about specific CSR-Ready actions within each division. Upon completion, you will receive a personalized, in-depth feedback report, empowering you to identify actionable steps for increasing your company's social impact and minimizing its environmental footprint.

CSR-READY KNOWLEDGE PLATFORM AND OERs: To ensure widespread accessibility to our resources, we have created a knowledge platform. It takes the core elements from the first three results and supplements them with additional materials, forming a self-directed learning course in the form of OERs, all accessible through a user-friendly digital platform. It also offers the opportunity for exchange and networking.

As we celebrate the conclusion of this Erasmus+ project, let us be aware that our journey is far from over. The impact of our collective efforts will continue to resonate throughout the SME community, promoting sustainability, social responsibility, and economic growth. We hope that the knowledge and tools we have developed will serve as practical guides, helping SMEs build a more responsible and sustainable future.

Thank you for being part of this journey towards a more responsible and sustainable future for SMEs across Europe!

WHAT HAS THE CSR-READY PROJECT MEANT TO THOSE INVOLVED?

TWW

"Working together for a green, social and fair future motivates us every day. This is precisely why CSR-Ready has held a special place in our company's mission right from the outset. Collaborating with international partners spanning Europe on this topic has been an exhilarating journey, one that has left a huge footprint - in a positive sense!

This collective effort has not only broadened our understanding of the ever-evolving field of CSR within SMEs but has also yielded a wealth of invaluable resources. We are firmly convinced that these resources will prove indispensable to a diverse and extensive audience, making a significant contribution to the advancement of CSR practices in SMEs."

EUEI

"Working on this project has been a great experience, thanks to committed team members like Julia, who's been an excellent project manager. Here at EUEI, we've also enjoyed working with wonderful colleagues from Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, and Spain. We strongly think that the results of this project will help many organisations.

We're eager to see the good changes it could bring. We've also learned a lot about how small and medium-sized companies are doing with CSR right now. This shows that we need to keep working on better training and advice."

UIIN

"It has been a pleasure working alongside dedicated individuals throughout the lifetime of this project. We firmly believe that the outcomes generated will significantly benefit organizations, and we are excited to see the impact it might have. Furthermore, this collaboration has provided us with invaluable insights into the current state of CSR measures in SMEs, highlighting the pressing need for enhanced training and advisory support structures which development needs to be continued."

WHAT HAS THE CSR-READY PROJECT MEANT TO THOSE INVOLVED?

Momentum

"Participating in CSR Ready Erasmus+ project over the last couple of years has been a transformative experience for me, my company (MMS), the partnership, and a broad spectrum of both European and Irish SMEs. It has not only broadened our Corporate Social Responsibility horizons but has also enriched our research, teaching, and development in ways that surpass my expectations. CSR Ready has definitely enabled the further and more aligned and practical adaptation of CSR initiatives, policies and activities in Ireland in a way that incorporates the important SDGs and future evolution. Throughout the project we have all learned and are receiving valuable feedback from our stakeholders, both SMEs and VET who are now in a much better position to position themselves as CSR leaders. They are now collaborating with other esteemed CSR leaders from diverse companies, particularly across Ireland and Europe. Through these collaborations, I have engaged in fruitful learning exchanges, knowledge exchange, meaningful collaborations, exchange of ideas, and shared best practices. The program has not only facilitated SME and VET capability, policy, local adaptation, and project partnership cultivation but has also sparked interdisciplinary dialogues that have enhanced the quality and depth of Europe towards a better CSR success story.."

Camara

"The experience of the Spanish Chamber of Commerce in the CSR-Ready project is very positive. Projects such as CSR-Ready are very important because information and training work in this area is still necessary, especially in smaller companies. We believe that more CSR is applied in SMEs than it might seem, not only are they the ones that contribute the most to the economy and the creation of jobs, but also, SMEs maintain closeness and a more personal relationship with the different agents. economic, while at the same time, their flexibility gives them value to adapt to social changes. The CSR-Ready Project contributes to helping SMEs implement CSR, to greater knowledge, guides them in useful tools and instruments and allows them to see different perspectives on aspects related to CSR, new forms of collaboration and work, different methodologies and, above all, establish new priority contact networks in this field."



Featured outputs

FAMILIARISE YOURSELF WITH CSR

CSR Framework and Assessment

CSR Framework

Our CSR FRAMEWORK builds on the existing CSR theory and initially research on challenges and gaps helps explain the low implementation rate in SMEs. Specifically, our CSR FRAMEWORK considers the benefits and challenges of implementing CSR in SMEs, the drivers of CSR in SMEs and obstacles to their CSR implementation. We also present cases of good practice and conclusions and recommendations for the promotion of CSR in SMEs.

In addition to SMEs and Start-Ups, our CSR FRAMEWORK will be of particular interest to VET organisations, management consultants, entrepreneurship and SME support bodies and regional and national organisations responsible for Entrepreneurship policy.

For whom: SMEs, Start-ups, VET organisations, management consultants, entrepreneurship and SME support bodies, policy officers

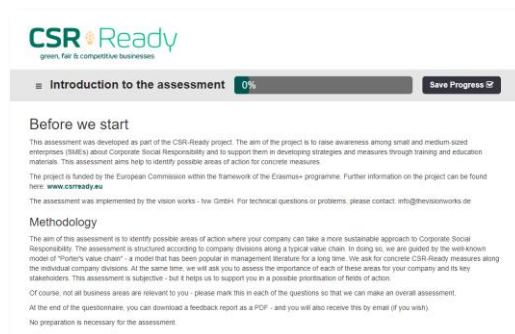


Self-Assessment

Our CSR-Ready Assessment is tailored to meet the unique needs of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Recognizing the distinct challenges SMEs face in implementing corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives, as well as their considerable impact on the environment, society, and economy, we help SMEs create company-specific CSR strategies and actions based on a comprehensive analysis of their specific impact areas and potential benefits.

The assessment requires approximately 30 minutes to complete. We encourage you to allocate sufficient time to thoughtfully respond to each question and to be candid about your company's current state. This transparency ensures your feedback report yields valuable insights from which you can develop targeted, effective measures. To further enrich your understanding, we recommend coupling the assessment with our modular training course, which will provide you with a more profound grasp of CSR implementation within your organization.

For whom: SMEs



INTEGRATE CSR PRACTICES INTO YOUR ENTERPRISE

Online Course and VET Training Package

Online Course

VET Training Package

Online Course

Our innovative online course offers a comprehensive collection of open educational resources (OERs) on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) tailored to the unique needs of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and start-ups. We aim to empower a wide range of business owners and professionals to effectively integrate CSR practices into these enterprises, fostering a sustainable business landscape. Learners will gain deep insights into CSR and its implementation, helping them guide their businesses towards sustainable growth, ethical practices, and positive societal impact.

Our learners are business owners and professionals who play a crucial role in shaping the trajectory of SMEs and start-ups. They seek to leverage our curated resources to deepen their understanding of CSR implementation and guide their own and other businesses towards sustainable growth and ethical practices.

For whom: Entrepreneurs, SME Owners/Managers, Future Entrepreneurs, SME Support Providers and Consultants

VET Training Package

Click on the tabs below to discover our 9 modules, which are full of engaging content, learner exercises/quizzes, case study additional materials and multimedia content. Educators are free to adapt the materials to their own teaching needs. Then scroll down to download our complete VET Training Package

For whom: VET trainers, management consultants, teachers, start-up consultants, and even entrepreneurs



Modules

Module 1: INTRODUCTION TO SME CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY (CSR)	Module 2: CSR AND HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT FOR SME SUSTAINABILITY	Module 3: IMPLEMENTING CSR HR TO MAXIMIZE CSR SME POTENTIAL
Module 4: EMBRACING CSR AND CULTURAL CHANGE TRANSFORMATION - SHORT TERM STRATEGY APPROACH	Module 5: EMBRACING CSR AND CULTURAL CHANGE TRANSFORMATION	Module 6: ADOPTING A CSR FRAMEWORK AND SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY TO MITIGATE IMPACT AND RISK
Module 7: IMPLEMENT THE CSR SUSTAINABILITY ISO 26000 FRAMEWORK	Module 8: CSR ADAPTATION TO DIGITAL TOOLS & TECHNOLOGIES	Module 9: CSR ADAPTATION TO CIRCULAR ECONOMY INNOVATION

ONLINE COURSE SNEAK PEAK

Module 1: Introduction to SME Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)



- Access the module content
- Access related case studies
- Navigate between the modules



Case Studies



Denmark Case Studies



Ireland Case Studies



Spain Case Studies



Netherlands Case Studies



Germany Case Studies

Modules

Module 1: Introduction To SME Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

Module 2: CSR And Human Resource Management For SME Sustainability

Module 3: Implementing CSR HR To Maximize CSR SME Potential

Module 4: Embracing CSR And Cultural Change Transformation –short Term Strategy Approach

Module 5: Embracing CSR And Cultural Change Transformation

Module 6: Adopting A CSR Framework And Sustainability Strategy To Mitigate Impact And Risk

Module 7: Implement The CSR Sustainability Iso 26000 Framework

Module 8: CSR Adaptation To Digital Tools & Technologies

Module 9: CSR Adaptation To Circular Economy Innovation

ENHANCE YOUR LEARNING EXPERIENCE

Knowledge Platform

Knowledge
Platform



On our Knowledge Platform you will find extra resources to enhance your learning experience. You can discover our vast collection of case studies, special interest groups, virtual talks, blog posts, and join the CSR-Ready Forum.

The CSR-Ready Forum, a dynamic online community filled with like-minded individuals, all passionate about Corporate Social Responsibility. Here you can discuss ideas, ask questions, share resources, and much more! You'll find interesting

discussions around CSR strategies for SMEs, sustainability practices, case studies and success stories. So, why wait? Jump in and contribute to the conversation today!

There is no "set" order to use the resources, but we recommend you to join our Forum connect with us on LinkedIn so that we can better support you and then our CSR Ready Scorecard will provide guidance on which resources will best suit your needs.



CSR Ready

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CONTACT US

David Blunck
Project Director, tww GmbH
blunck@thevisionworks.de

Fleur Schellekens
Dissemination & Outreach, UIIN
schellekens@uiin.org

CSRready.eu



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@ReadyCSR