

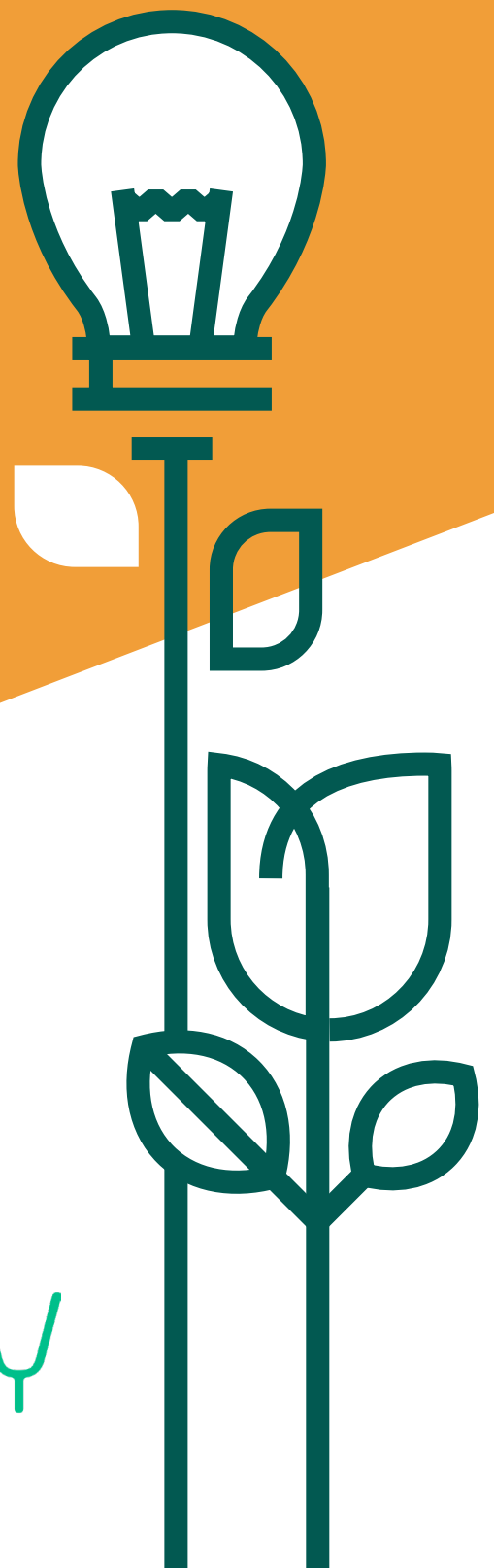


# CSR-READY Project

Footprint Strategy

Internal Strategy

**CSR**  Ready  
green, fair & competitive businesses



# Preamble

The topic of corporate social responsibility (CSR) has gained in importance in many industries in recent years, at least in the external presentation of the companies. Sustainable investors and other stakeholders such as customers, employees and non-governmental organisations are increasingly demanding that companies contribute to the sustainable development of society.

With CSR, organizations take responsibility for the impact of their activities on customers, employees, shareholders, communities, and the environment in all aspects of operations. This effort extends beyond simply obeying local laws, as organizations voluntarily take steps to improve the quality of life for employees and their families, as well as society at large.

With the CSR-Ready project, we as a consortium contribute to the implementation of CSR strategies in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

We are aware that our responsibility, however, goes beyond the development of content, learning resources and strategies to communicate the topic in SMEs. As a joint project, but also as individual project partners, we are becoming aware of our responsibility.

This responsibility is the subject of this internal strategy paper. It pursues two central objectives:

- 1. To define the concrete CSR strategy and its implementation in the CSR-Ready project
- 2. To provide the individual project partners with approaches and recommendations for developing and implementing their own CSR strategies and measures.

The consortium is very diverse in terms of the sizes and structures of the partners. The consortium also has different levels of formalisation with regard to their already existing CSR strategies. Since there are no one-size-fits all CSR strategies and in order to take the diversity of the partners into account, the recommendations and approaches presented here can only be general and need to be adapted by the individual partners.

The Project Consortium



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## Definitions

The term Corporate Social Responsibility, or CSR for short, refers to the social responsibility of companies in the sense of sustainable economic activity. CSR goes beyond the legal requirements (compliance) and takes general interests into account. According to ISO 26000, CSR is defined as “the responsibility of an organisation for the impact of its decisions and activities on society and the environment through transparent and ethical behaviour”.

The social objectives of a company are significantly influenced by the expectations, interests and needs of its stakeholders. Stakeholders demand that companies contribute to social responsibility. The terms corporate citizenship and corporate sustainability are often used in this context.

Stakeholders are defined in ISO 26000 as “persons or groups that have a legitimate interest in a decision or activity of the organisation because they are affected or potentially affected by it”. Stakeholders include, for example, employees, customers, suppliers, and partners. Employees are of particular importance among the stakeholders of a company, as they will ultimately perceive and implement the CSR measures.

## Project Objectives



Enable SMEs to analyse the impact of CSR on their company and to implement concrete actions



Increase the Social impact of VET and SMEs by increasing the awareness for CSR



Professionalise training and advisory support structures and increase the CSR impact of their services



Provide policy makers with up-to-date in-depth knowledge

## 1. CSR AS PART OF THE STRATEGY

To unleash the benefits and potential of CSR, it must become part of the overall strategy and culture of the organisation. The commitment to one's own responsibility affects all actions and all areas of the organisation and starts with the full commitment of the organisational leadership.

The first step is to formulate the goals and present the corporate culture. For example, in a mission statement or a voluntary commitment. Those include commitments to goals such as quality, environmental protection or diversity.

Organisations should publicly acknowledge this and communicate it. In this way, they show that they want to actively shape the future of society. The publication is a statement internally and externally and signals transparency and verifiability. It is a clear sign that the measures are not merely communicational, but a lived organisational culture.

## CSR-Ready Vision:

Entrepreneurship is both: the source of prosperity, participation and freedom, but also the cause of pollution and numerous societal challenges.

Through their outstanding innovative strength, Europe's small and medium-sized companies have the power to shape a socially just, economically successful and at the same time ecologically sustainable future.

## CSR-READY MISSION

1. The CSR-Ready project supports small and medium-sized companies in implementing CSR strategies and thus fulfilling their social and environmental responsibilities in the best possible way while increasing their innovation potential and becoming more competitive.
2. To achieve this goal, we develop innovative approaches, comprehensive learning resources and serve as a platform for direct exchange between all stakeholders.
3. We advocate for corporate social responsibility of SMEs with all relevant stakeholders and continue to drive the topic forward also at the level of the European institutions and local authorities.
4. As a project consortium but also as individual partner organisations, we are aware of our responsibility and set a good example.

## 2. CSR-CONCEPT

The development and implementation of the CSR strategy should be based on an integrated concept. This means deriving clear goals and measures from the vision and mission and formulating and communicating them clearly.

This concept should include how the CSR strategy is integrated into the central corporate activities and how they are linked to the core business. How can the organisation support social and environmental goals through its products, services and know-how? How can the targeted product and service quality contribute to this?

### Implementation in the CSR-Ready project:

In companies, for example, concept development can be oriented towards the value chain. With regard to the implementation in the CSR-Ready project, the work packages and the intellectual outputs serve as a structure. For these, concrete CSR-related objectives are derived in the following dimensions:

## CSR-READY CONCEPT: DIMENSIONS



Quality and User  
Orientation



Environmental  
Protection



Diversity



Working  
Environment



Transparency and  
Communication



Social  
Relevance

Naturally, not all dimensions are equally relevant for all work packages and outputs of the project.

### WP1: Project Management

For legal reasons, project work is based on individual contracts and the framework of the Erasmus+ programme. However, our common understanding of cooperation goes far beyond this legal basis. We not only want to develop high-quality and innovative resources, but also see this project as an outstanding opportunity for our own organisational and personal development.

The fundamental core of our cooperation in the CSR-Ready project is a cooperative management approach that gives all project partners involved equal scope for active participation and for contributing their competences.

All partners have constant access to all important documents and resources, and by integrating digital collaboration tools, the agendas of our meetings and project development can be collaborative and transparent. All partners commit to establish a productive and solution oriented discussion culture and to address problem areas early and openly in order to develop and implement joint solutions.

The project does not have its own legal form and does not have own staff employed - the respective partner organisations are responsible for ensuring the diversity of their staff and a pleasant working atmosphere against the background of their respective legal frameworks in their jurisdictions.

However, as a project we stand by the commitment to equally respect and integrate all partners involved in the project and their staff and without restriction based on origin, gender, religion, sexual orientation or other diversity characteristics.

Much of our project work takes place in a virtual context. However, we are well aware that virtual work also takes up physical resources. Increasing internet use leads to rising energy consumption and already causes about the same amount of carbon dioxide as air travel.

We respond to this by trying to make our virtual work as resource-efficient as possible. We especially do this by keeping data volumes as small as possible. Files are only saved virtually in their latest version and are not additionally attached to emails. In our virtual meetings, we avoid video streaming as far as possible and mostly use only voice connections. Video transmissions are carried out at low resolution. Files are only printed out when really necessary. Moreover, we handle most of our internet searches through Ecosia, an ecological search engine that donates 80 per cent of its surplus revenue to non-profit conservation organisations.

### Exemplary measures implemented by the project partners:

Despite that, the partners have different structural/organisational possibilities to implement measures beyond this. TVW, for example, obtains green electricity from the regional energy supplier, which, as a municipal company, also makes an important contribution and implements numerous social projects regionally. Furthermore, TVW compensates not only for business trips but also for its entire annual CO2 footprint. Even though TVW cannot be a formal member due to the size of the company, the company is also committed to the ten basic principles of the UN Global Compact and has publicly anchored this in its company vision.

EUEI offices are located in a modern new build with the highest levels of insulation and efficient heating, powered by on-site solar energy panels. Resource use is kept to an absolute minimum with no photocopier, use of recycled printer and toner for printing and a limit of one ream of paper per month strongly encourages judicious printing and maximises paper reuse.

Furthermore, EUEI is working towards being carbon neutral in its website servers. Its main data centre is iomart.com in London. They are not Carbon Neutral but they do have a strong environmental policy as a stock market listed company. They have hot/cold aisles in the data centre so hot air from the servers is recycled to heat offices in winter and help extract hot air to save on cooling in summer. Servers in EUEI's fleet are all less than two years old so have power supplies that are intelligent and ramp up power when needed and ramp down to minimum when not needed.

EUEI's 3 month roadmap for its new local data centre has it installing solar panels on the roof so it can have six months of day running from the panels (late spring, all summer and early Autumn) and it enhancing its UPS batteries to charge from the excess power from the cells to give overnight runtime from stored solar energy.

As an organisation, EUEI calculates their carbon footprint using Leading Online Carbon Calculation Tools to measure the Greenhouse Gas emissions and is implementing a variety of measures to offset this at 110% by investing in high quality international carbon reduction projects including:

- » Tree Planting reducing deforestation in Brazil and an
- » Efficient household cookstove project in Kenya

UIIN has a strong focus on diversity. The team is integrated by people from 8 nationalities and when presenting the office externally, they present their multiculturalism as something to be proud of.

To protect the environment, UIIN employees separate trash in the office, try to reduce the carbon footprint by not flying unless necessary and for conferences, they provide the attendees with cups and bags that are produced by using sustainable materials.

When the Covid19 pandemic started, UIIN shipped working equipment to the team's houses to help them set up a healthy and safe working space, allowing them to stay home and work in the same conditions as in the office. They encourage the team members to work from home whenever possible. This is actually the case for all partners.

Furthermore, UIIN engages in social issues by donating furnitures to primary schools and supporting industries in need during the pandemic.

They understand partnering with companies that demonstrate their social responsibility and put it at their core as something of strategic importance. As an example, chocolate, very popular amongst the team members, is bought from one of the most committed organisations in the world in terms of fair trade and fight against child labour: Tony's Chocolonely.

The Spanish Chamber of Commerce, through its various internationalisation, competitiveness, training and entrepreneurship programmes, helps companies, particularly SMEs, to meet the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) defined by the UN. The action of the Spanish Chamber of Commerce, therefore, is embedded in the fulfilment of the SDGs, particularly in Goal 8: decent work and economic growth, but also in

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|-------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| » Goal 1: end poverty                           | » Goal 10: reducing inequalities                |
| » Goal 4: quality education                     | » Goal 13: climate action                       |
| » Goal 5: gender equality                       | » Goal 16: peace, justice & strong institutions |
| » Goal 6: clean water & sanitation              | » Goal 17: partnerships to achieve the goals    |
| » Goal 7: affordable & clean energy             |                                                 |
| » Goal 9: industry, innovation & infrastructure |                                                 |



## WP2: Project Meetings

We already reduced the number of physical transnational meetings to an absolute minimum during project planning and the project application. Furthermore, we designed the meeting calendar in such a way that meetings are arranged according to the outputs, which minimises the number of necessary participants. The partners who host the meetings are also responsible for the completion of their outputs. In this way, you as the host can also involve all relevant staff without having to travel.

If the respective structures and administrative requirements allow it, the partners also compensate for their travel. This is the case with TVW and EUEI.

In the context of our Transnational Meetings, it is also important for us not only to do internal, project-related work, but to broaden our horizons and get to know different perspectives. We therefore create space for external guests who, for example, present regional projects and initiatives and thus enrich our work.

For local and international travel, use of public transport is prioritised. EUEI, for example, endeavours to minimise international travel as part of their project delivery and is trialling a unique “one meeting” project approach, which if successful will be rolled out on a widescale basis.

## WP3: Quality Management and Evaluation

Our quality management approach ensures that we develop our resources at the best possible qualitative level. Integration and interaction with our target groups is an essential part of this approach. We ensure this through focus groups and extensive pilot tests, among other measures. When selecting the participants of the focus groups and test persons, it is important to us to reflect the diversity of our target groups as much as possible. This is defined in the respective test methodologies for our outputs and implemented as best as possible by the partners at regional level.

Furthermore, we also implement our Social and Environmental Impact in our internal evaluations. There, our measures and their impact are regularly questioned, processed and discussed in order to draw conclusions and implement adjustments.

#### WP4: Dissemination

Project communication and dissemination of our results is as barrier- and discrimination-free as possible. We pay attention to gender-neutral language in terms of tone and wording and try to reflect the diversity of our target groups as much as possible. We promote networking between all relevant stakeholders and act as a catalyst for international knowledge exchange and cooperation. We also use our communicative reach to provide a platform for positive examples and best practice approaches.

#### WP5: Sustainability and Exploitation

Within the project, we strive for sustainability on two different levels. On the one hand, we want to ensure that the resources developed are used as widely and permanently as possible by our target groups and that we can thus achieve the most far-reaching and sustainable impact possible. We ensure this through our quality strategy and our target group-oriented communication. Also, we are committed to make the developed resources freely accessible via the project website for at least three years after the funding phase.

This CSR strategy also serves to ensure sustainability in ecological terms. In addition, tvw as project leader commits to hosting the website for these three years with a provider that guarantees CO2 neutral web hosting.

## Impact of Intellectual Outputs

The resources of our Intellectual Outputs support SMEs in implementing CSR strategies. In this way, the CSR-Ready project is already making an important contribution to the development of a sustainable, climate-friendly and socially fair economy in Europe:

### IO1

IO1 is a central component of our impact model. We generate impact already during the creation of the study by involving central target groups directly in the creation process. We confront these target groups with innovative questions and thought-provoking impulses even before the first output has been completed, thus creating a changed perception of the topic.

Once finished, we expect the output to have the following (measurable) impact: 500 organizations receive the Framework through direct distribution and online downloads and of these we expect 90% to experience a change in their understanding of CSR in general, impact areas for SMEs and actions to implement CSR. All target groups will have up-to-date knowledge and providers will update their curricular provision.

As a result, VET will offer more relevant, practical skills training for businesses and will better fulfil their mission of providing education suited to real world needs. It is in the nature of CSR, that some effects start to realize impacts in the short term (quick wins – often with regard to reducing waste of resources) and some have a long-term effect which results in a change of mindset and a CSR culture.

Direct impact will first be realized on local/ regional level – long term impact will also affect national and EU-level.

### IO2

IO2 generates direct impact through its use by SMEs and future entrepreneurs, who will be able identify the benefits of CSR for their company and learn how to implement CSR strategies actions.

Impact will first be realized in the specific companies and then – due to the nature of CSR – impact directly on the local environment and society.

In the medium term, a multiplier effect is created by VET professionals, consultants, teachers and trainers incorporating the resources into their services - generating a sustainable effect on the corporate social responsibility and the impact of SMEs on the European economy, society and environment.

### IO3

IO3 generates a direct impact on the users of the Web-APP. These can be either directly the owners/managers of SMEs, or VET professionals, business consultants or other SME support structures who integrate the resource into their service offerings and share the tool with their customers.

As a result, SMEs will be able to identify their CSR Readiness, Impact Areas and strategies and actions to implement CSR in their company. In this way, CSR-READY makes an important contribution to the implementation rate of CSR in SMEs leading to direct impact on the social and ecological

## Summary

footprint of SMEs in the short and long term and also helping to make SMEs more competitive and sustained. This impact will firstly arise in the direct local environment of the specific SME but will also have effects on national and EU-level – especially supporting the goals of the EU-Commission to develop a strong and vibrant economic base and the goal of building a climate-neutral, green, fair and social Europe.

### IO4

IO4 will impact on all target and stakeholder groups, including VET-Professionals, SME owner/manager, StartUps, and policy makers to maximise impact beyond project participants. The impact on learners who will not only benefit from the adaption of resources from IO1, IO2 and IO3 as OERs and 6-8 newly originated learning modules, but also from the opportunities to engage with peers to develop cross-regional communities of learning and access a wider range of learning materials, advice and mentoring from experts across the sector. Thus, the platform will significantly enrich the learning experience of all participants.

The impact on policy makers is also important, and the platform provides an opportunity to access and influence policy makers at regional, national and international levels and beyond the immediate reach of the project. Sustaining the longevity of the platform beyond the lifespan of the project will also increase the enduring impact of project results and outcomes.

CSR-READY will develop highly professional resources that will have a sustainable impact on the target groups described below, subsequently leading to an increased CSR implementation rate in SMEs and impacting on the social, economic and ecologic footprint of the SME sector.

In summary, the CSR-READY project will

- professionalise VET providers, entrepreneurship education and consultants and provide highly professional resources in order to extend their range of services with highly relevant content and boost their impact on CSR implementation in SMEs and StartUps
- provide SMEs and StartUps with the knowledge, tools and resources to implement CSR Strategies, Structures and Measures in their businesses
- provide SMEs and StartUps with an interactive analysis tool providing a detailed scorecard about the company specific impact areas, benefits and challenges and providing specific actions and guidelines
- sensitize the target groups about the importance of CSR

The project thus makes a sustainable contribution to the overall implementation rate of CSR-Strategies in SMEs and StartUps and thus positively impact on the social and ecological footprint of those. By not just focussing on current SMEs but also on students and the next generation of entrepreneurs, we will generate a long-lasting, sustainable impact.



# CSR Ready Partners

The CSR-Ready Project unites 5 partners representing SMEs, learning providers, networks and public institutions from 5 EU Member States. Their experience and expertise provide an ideal foundation to achieve the project's objective.



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