



Corporate Sustainability Information and Training in Europe

Progress Report

Public Part

Project information

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Executive Summary

This interim report addresses active in the European corporate sector both managers, board members, facilitators and other professional staff as well as researchers, opinion formers and policy-makers in the field of Corporate Social Responsibility and Sustainable development in general.

Objectives

The main goal of the CSI EU project is to develop a web-based learning platform for learning and establishing the concepts of Social Responsibility in accordance to ISO 26000 guidelines. This tool is aimed at helping the corporate sector to implement theory in practice and to further develop best practices regarding Social Responsibility.

Approach

The work programme encompasses activities in 6 Work Packages (WPs). Besides Project Management (WP1), other activities are being realized in:

WP2 – Dissemination

WP3 – Situation analysis

WP4 – Development of a Web-based learning platform

WP5 – Piloting and adaptation

WP6 – Quality and Evaluation

Current status

Majority of the activities in WP3 and WP4 have been concluded by now. The in-depth analysis about the situation of training offer on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), with a special focus on SMEs was carried out. The web-based learning platform has been established and is available in the form of a prototype/demonstrator. Considerable effort has already been put into the activities regarding dissemination (WP2), resulting in a “visibility” of the CSI EU project. Besides these, several activities in WP1, WP5 and WP6 bound by their deadlines have already been concluded by now.

Future plans

The project consortium will strive further in realizing all the project objectives and remaining activities within the given timeframe by a devoted and professional teamwork.

Table of Contents

- 1. PROJECT OBJECTIVES 5
- 2. PROJECT APPROACH 7
- 3. PROJECT OUTCOMES & RESULTS..... 10
- 4. PARTNERSHIPS ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
- 5. PLANS FOR THE FUTURE 13
- 6. CONTRIBUTION TO EU POLICIES 14

1. Project Objectives

The main objective of the CSI EU project is the development of web-based learning platform – a common tool for promoting, learning and establishing the concepts of Social Responsibility in SMEs based on ISO 26000 guidelines. This tool is aimed at helping the corporate sector to implement theory in practice and to further develop best practices regarding Social Responsibility. The web-based platform and trainings will enable the corporate management to continually assess and improve their performance towards sustainable development. In addition, the concept of web-based tool will provide the corporate management with cost-effective and excellent services.

To execute the above objective to its full extent, the more specific objectives of the CSI EU project are:

- *To perform a situation analysis regarding training offer on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), with a special focus on SMEs.* The aim of this state of the art analysis is to identify: the existing SMEs' activities, needs and perspectives, along with vocational education and training institutions and universities' training offer, and materials in the field of CSR. A special focus on ISO 26000 issues will be made during all the analysis.
- *To establish an easy-to-maintain and easy-to-adjust internet platform for trainers and training participants to support the attendance training.* A platform based on Moodle - a software package for producing Internet-based courses and web sites - will be developed containing different modules (i.e. forum, glossary, lessons, etc.). The modules will enable easy-to-follow and self-contained training experience.
- *To develop versatile and concise training materials embracing the concepts of ISO 26000 guidelines for outstanding web-based training experience.* The materials covering opening questions, contents, case studies/examples, exercises, video clips, dilemmas etc. will directly solve the need for clarifications of ISO 26000 standard.
- *To develop a practical guidance and trainings for SMEs willing to implement ISO 26000 and execution of pilot trainings.* Stakeholders must be provided with successful problem-free training opportunities, so they will be able to implement the ISO 26000. For this reason, testing of the platform and compiling a comprehensive User's/Training's guide is a necessity. 25 enterprises from different sectors from different European countries led by initial group of trainers are expected to undergo pilot trainings.
- *To ensure that at "the end of the day" the SR platform is widely used in Europe, especially by SME's.* A vital objective of the project is that the

resulting web-learning platform is recognized and widely applied by in Europe, especially by SME's. Identifying all potential stakeholders that might have an interest in using the outcome of the project, both from a top-down (originations, institutions etc.) and from a bottom-up perspective (local communities, business and learning institutions) is paramount. Publishing the news about the progress and results of the CSI EU project on the official web page, through RSS feeds, disseminating the know-how on conferences etc. will be an integral part of the CSI EU communicating to the world.

2. Project Approach

The first step was to conduct some **preliminary research** in order to identify the existing practices and to determine current needs and problems. On the basis of the results, the consortium tailored the envisaged content of training measures to the **actual needs of the main target groups**. By comparing the outcomes with best practices, the analysis will help to create an **in-depth understanding of best practices in long-term** (the corporate sector, stakeholders and policy makers) and short-term target groups (owners, managers and staff).

The main groups will be reached through **dissemination and learning measures and by pilot, evaluation and adaptation activities**. The most important dissemination tool will be the **web-based learning platform** with materials for self-evaluation, self-education and case studies. The platform will not only increase the awareness of SR and promote the implementation of the standard, but also serve as a place for exchanging ideas, experiences and best practices (even beyond the lifetime of the project). Face-to-face training opportunities, such as different workshops conducted within the framework of the project, will equip entrepreneurs and their staff with knowledge and skills required for a successful implementation of the ISO 26000 standard. Other important dissemination tools are **information leaflets and promotional brochures published in the languages of all partners**.

The activities have been realized within **6 Work packages** (WPs):

1. **Project Management:** is intended as planning, monitoring and control of all aspects of a project and the motivation of all those involved in order to achieve project objectives on time and in line with the specified costs, quality and performance. It embraces the following activities/tasks: collecting partnership agreements, providing administrative support, coordinating project activities, keeping frequent contact with project partners, preparing and implementing the project workplan, preparing internal project progress reports in collaboration with partners, preparing and implementing workpackage workplan, collecting workpackage progress reports prepared by partners, preparing final project reports to be submitted to the European Commission in collaboration with partners, monitoring budget spending, preparing and submitting final financial reports to be submitted to the European Commission, organizing (in cooperation with partners) and coordinating project meetings, writing up minutes of partner meetings.
2. **Dissemination:** is to ensure that at “the end of the day” the SR platform is widely used in Europe, especially by SME’s. The WP2 is identifying all potential stakeholders that might have an interest in using the outcome of the project, both from a top-down (originations, institutions etc.) and from a bottom-up perspective (local communities, business and learning institutions). The challenge is to find the proper measures that fit the needs of different stakeholders and to find the level of communication in order to be

sure that the message is received and understood. The project website will give access to the public and will also include a Wiki-like approach which opens up for innovative processes among partners during the project and which will also be beneficial for the platform outcome. This WP involves partners from the project start, allowing the incorporation of their knowledge from the beginning and ensures that dissemination at the end fits local needs. The advantage of this dissemination approach is that there already are strong links between the partners since many are already members of the PREPARE - an European network, which has existed for more the 20 years with focus on sustainability - and many have been involved in the development of the ISO SR guidelines. This will increase the quality of the dissemination. Following activities/tasks are (to be) carried out: identifying stakeholders and analyzing their needs in order to select proper communication measures, developing a dissemination management plan including responsibilities among partners, designing a project website with a public part and a confidential partner part for innovation purposes, circulating a Newsletter and disseminating leaflets and brochures about the resulting SR platform.

3. **Situation analysis:** the project has started with a short situation analysis to identify existing materials on the subject and the needs experienced by companies and by vocational education and training (VET) institutions. The situation analysis was used to inform the development of the project training materials, ensuring high quality, relevance and appropriateness, as well as a source of information of the state of the art development of social responsibility that will be made available to a wide spectrum of stakeholders through dissemination activities. The Situation analysis has embraced the following activities/tasks: review of training materials and other sources which are relevant for CSR in the partner countries, review of vocational training offers on CSR and what extent are the environmental and social dimensions covered, analysis of needs of competence on CSR from companies' perspective and VET institutions' perspective and a report of the situation analysis.
4. **Development of a Web-based learning platform on SR tools: ISO 26000:** the goal of WP4 is to develop an easy-to-maintain and easy-to-adjust internet platform for trainers and training participants to support the attendance training by providing additional materials for self-study, exercises and case studies (fostering the use of modern communication and training opportunities). Activities/tasks carried out are: discussions about and decision on requirements for a web-based learning platform, working out a concept for a e-learning platform on the internet, integration of elements of the training materials in the platform, development of the tutorial element, and development of a testing module.
5. **Piloting and adaptation:** the main objective of this WP is to provide stakeholders with successful training opportunities, so they will be able to implement ISO 26000. Success means that not only the demo project within CSI EU is completed, but also internal competences are built for the future, contributing to the ISO standard realization in companies. The demo projects

are expected to result in interesting case studies to be included in the project website and in new products serving as show cases for the dissemination of the project. Activities/tasks included in the WP: testing developed Platform, Training Guide and Web-based Learning Platform in real enterprises (25 enterprise) from different sectors (at least 3 sectors) in different countries (6 countries: Bulgaria, Denmark, Lithuania, Poland, Slovenia and Spain), training (online) an initial group of trainers (at least 11 trainers) for the implementation of the Training Guide as well as for the Web-Based Learning Platform in 6 countries, to identify problems, bugs, deficits in the developed Training Guide and Web-based Learning Platform and to fine-tune them and adapt them to the specifics of the sectors and countries.

6. **Quality and Evaluation:** The activities are intended to support the project management with the evaluation of quality and planning carried out and evaluation of project activities, results and outcomes.

3. Project Outcomes & Results

The most significant achievements of the CSI EU project at this interim reporting stage is the in-depth analysis carried out about the situation of training offer on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), with a special focus on SMEs. The analysis was performed by the 8 partners included in the project consortium situated in 7 different European countries: Austria, Bulgaria, Denmark, Lithuania, Poland, Slovenia and Spain.

The situation analysis comprised the following activities:

- Review of training materials and other sources which are relevant for CSR in each partner country.
- Review of vocational training offers on CSR and what extent are the environmental and social dimensions covered.
- Analysis of needs of competence on CSR from SME's and VET institutions / Universities' perspective. To that aim, two different surveys have been elaborated and sent to selected SMEs and VET institutions / Universities.

As part of this 3rd work package, the following deliverables were released:

- Situation Analysis on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities on SMEs – 2011 (Progress Report).
- 7 National Reports, one per country.
- 7 Executive Summary Reports, one per country.
- The Situation analysis Report and the Executive Summary Reports are available for download at CSI webpage (<http://www.prepare-net.com/project/csi-eu>).

The main conclusions drawn from the analysis is that the development and the implementation of CSR initiatives is quite different depending on which country we focus on, and depending on the dimension of the company or organization. In addition, in all partner countries the necessity to release CSR from its niche existence and to establish it as an essential part of a modern market economy has been identified.

In context of project activities, the situation analysis is used to guide the development of the project training materials, ensuring high quality, relevance and appropriateness in order to make recommendations for the future development of the CSR integrated electronic platform.

As a result, an easy-to-maintain and easy-to-adjust internet platform for trainers and training participants to support the attendance training has been established. The platform is a Moodle platform on a virtual server with the following list of modules:

- **Forum Module:** as communication platform
- **Glossary Module:** for all definitions
- **Lesson Module:** the varying issues and subjects could be managed in lessons, as the core of the training. The contents, which are yet to be

integrated in the module, will include resources provided by project partners. Each partner was assigned to prepare materials for a SR principle, a SR core subject and on a integration of ISO 26000. The materials comprise of:

- Opening question
 - Contents/What it's about
 - Case studies/examples
 - Exercises
 - Video clips
 - Dilemmas
 - Intraorganisational level
- **Resource Module:** intended to structure and store the resources provided by project partners.

The platform has the form of a prototype/demonstrator and it can be assessed from at: <http://moodle.bac.com.pl/>.

A vital goal of the project is that the resulting SR toolbox is recognized and widely applied by in Europe, especially by SME's. This ambition requires clever planning and communication. For this reason, a stakeholder list has been prepared serving to identify potential national stakeholders and their needs.

To make the CSI EU visible to interested parties, a project web page has been launched (<http://www.prepare-net.com/project/csi-eu>.) The web page includes functionalities as Project Blog, Project Calendar and the option to subscribe to the project **Newsletter** as **RSS Feed**. Newsletters are currently on a regular basis with news about the project related content (links, news, other projects etc.) from the world that relate to CSI EU project.

In addition, a dissemination plan including an action plan (what, how, who and when) and the dissemination measures (newsletter, papers, web etc.) to be applied in order to ensure that the "message" is received and understood has been developed.

4. Partnerships

This consortium consists of different partners (higher education, consultancy, training institutions, etc.), which play a major role in providing practical guidance and enabling SMEs to implement theory in practice by developing a web-based learning platform. The activities of the partnership are aimed at supporting attendance training by providing additional materials for self-study, exercises and case studies (fostering the use of modern communication and training opportunities) on ISO 26000 – Social Responsibility.

In the CSI EU project – most of the institutions selected have worked together previously on different projects. Experiences with previous international projects assure successful realization of the project. Features of the partnership are the following:

- The CSI EU project is based on the previous collaboration between partners (PREPARE Network) and projects. For this reason, the consortium is extremely dedicated to the realization of the project.
- The consortium consists of some of the best institutions in the field of ISO 26000 –certain partners even helped to develop it.
- The project consortium, apart from assuring a good transnational EU coverage, also fully fits the interdisciplinary approach. Partners come from different lifelong learning sectors, i.e. higher education, research, consultancy and vocational training, and offer a wide range of specialized knowledge, such as eco-innovation, eco-efficiency and social rights.

All partners have been involved in horizontal activities in order to share responsibilities between the project coordinator and partners.

Partner institutions are the following:

- University of Maribor, Slovenia (coordinator)
- PROSPEKTIKER, Spain
- STENUM, Austria
- SERC, Bulgaria
- ATMOTERM, Poland
- CIRCE, Spain
- APINI, Lithuania
- University of Aalborg, Denmark

5. Plans for the Future

Piloting and adaptation of the web-based learning framework are top priorities of the CSI EU project consortium. Within this scope, the consortium will consolidate the training materials, which are already under development, integrate the consolidated materials into the platform, compile a comprehensive User's Guide, and launch pilot trainings.

The User's Guide is envisioned to support the trainers in the training of specialists from the SMEs in implementing ISO 26000 in their business. The Guide is intended as a practical manual for the trainers. It will include curricula and pedagogical guidelines, case studies, examples, discussion topics, tests, etc. for the training of trainees from specific sectors and countries. The User's Guide will be available in electronic version in 7 languages.

Actions will be taken to identify potential problems, bugs, deficits in the developed guide and Web-based Learning Platform and to fine-tune them and adapt them to the specifics of the sectors and countries.

Pilot training will include initial training where the trainees from the relevant country are gathered at the training premises of the partner-organisation and an induction training is conducted – explanations of the objectives of the training, the methodology, the time-schedule, curricula, outcomes of the training, etc.

We have a wide range of dissemination activities planned to ensure the widest possible audience. Publishing the news about the progress and results of the CSI EU project on the official web page, through RSS feeds, disseminating the know-how on conferences etc. are planned.

The activities intended to support the project management with the evaluation of quality and planning carried out and evaluation of project activities, results and outcomes are planned for the remaining period of the project.

In addition, future plans for the consortium as a whole are to preserve the partnership for future projects, to apply for other EU funds, to bring added value to the EU community in the field of sustainability, to implement the developed innovation in the CSI EU project and apply for the Transfer of Innovation funding.

6. Contribution to EU policies

Europe currently faces challenges such as intensified global competition, high number of low-skilled workers and an ageing population. Therefore, vocational education and training is vital to prepare individuals for the needs of modern society and to ensure Europe's competitiveness and innovation.

CSI EU contributes to the following EU policies:

- *Contribution to the development of quality lifelong learning and to promote high performance, innovation and a European dimension in systems and practices in the field.* The CSI EU develops a blended learning approach in a combined effort of key European experts in sustainable development and corporate social responsibility, organizational change management, and innovation management. The blended learning platform includes approved tools and instruments and an overview of pan-European good practices.
- *Encouraging the best use of results, innovative products and processes, and to exchange good practice in the field covered by LLP in order to improve the quality of education and training.* CSI EU combines a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the current situation in SR education and training for SMEs and VET institutions with the development of a practicable blended learning platform based on the needs identified. The combined effort of European partners and the dissemination of good practices create a competence network for future action to improve the contribution of VET to meeting the Lisbon goals.
- *Supporting improvements in quality and innovation in vocational education and training systems, institutions and practices.* CSI EU aims at quality improvement by combining expert knowledge for the definition of contents. The combination of SME-training and ISO26000 is a novel one. The testing module provides for quality of the course by supplying an evaluation tool to check the qualifications of the participants upon completion of the programme in a standardized way and documenting the results.
- *Improving the quality and to increase the volume of cooperation between institutions or organisations providing learning opportunities, enterprises, social partners and other relevant bodies throughout Europe.* CSI EU provides the thematic focus for an intense cooperation of institutions known for their background in sustainable development and corporate social responsibility, organisation and change management, and innovation management. This increased volume of cooperation creates strong ties between these experts and develops an approach to solve key European problems (sustainable development, increasing the competitiveness of SMEs) through the development of a high-quality learning platform.

- *Facilitating the development of innovative practices in the field of vocational education and training other than at tertiary level, and their transfer, including from one participating country to others.* CSI EU develops novel contents for a blended learning approach. This approach seeks to increase the involvement of people employed in SMEs, organisations and people looking for new qualifications in innovative SR management and change management. The development of a web-based learning platform supports the E-learning and self-study competencies and increases the commitment of SMEs to international guidelines according to ISO 26000 on European level.