

Interreg Europe – Proposal: CSRD @ SMEs through regional agencies

Europe's commitment to combatting greenwashing and achieving climate neutrality by 2050 is underscored by deploying the **Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD)**. This directive will elevate corporate accountability by obliging organizations to yearly disclose information on their societal and environmental impact. Sustainability is therefore not only about **managing business risks and measuring the impact of internal operations on climate change or carbon footprint; it is also about how these risks and opportunities are embedded in the business**, shared externally and adopted by stakeholders.

The journey to implementing CSRD properly can be a long one and the **timetable is challenging**. Therefore, this project will focus on knowledge acquisition and dissemination on CSRD compliancy, with two primary objectives:

1. Establishing a **learning network between government and non-profit agencies** for internal CSRD reporting as well as for assisting regional SMEs in their CSRD reporting.
2. **Implementing a sustainability office** within government/non-profit organizations with an ambassador role for the region.

The core phase of the Interreg program, spanning the initial three years, prioritizes the learning and exchanging experience. Both online meetings and physical site visits among all partners, focussing on **developing a robust learning network**, will be set up on a monthly basis (depending on the group's needs). PXL, the university of applied science and art, has extensive expertise and profound knowledge on sustainability in general and CSRD in particular and will act in this project as an in depth knowledge transfer facilitator to this learning network.

Top priority is however establishing **sustainability ambassadors** within regional government or non-profit entities. These ambassadors will not only backup internal CSRD reporting of the agencies but also support SMEs in their CSRD reporting. All partners will therefor participate in bi-weekly or monthly online or physical gatherings (tailored to the group's requirements), co-creating and testing checklists and specialized tools, out of the lessons learned and partner collaboration. These checklists & tools will be, together with dedicated training material and instructor trainings, made available on an **online learning** platform, developed by PXL, which will act as a catalyst and will be freely accessible and deployable in supporting the different stakeholdergroups which include the regional SMEs.

During the **fourth and last year, i.e. the follow-up phase**, emphasis shifts towards applying acquired knowledge and tools in the local context, monitoring SME support, and facilitating partner collaboration through monthly meetings. Dissemination events will also be held during this phase to share project outcomes and insights.

To convert this proposal into a concrete project application, we are still looking for partners. To be a valid partner in the learning network, these partners are mandatory CSRD compliancy.

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