



Results of the European funding programme “Mainstreaming CSR among SMEs”

From 2006-8 the European Commission co-financed 14 successful projects that in different ways supported the uptake of corporate social responsibility (CSR) amongst small and medium-sized enterprises. Besides the immediate impact on the 3000 or so SMEs that participated directly, these projects have significantly increased the capacity and motivation of many organisations across the EU to work with small businesses on CSR issues.

Key numbers at a glance:

- 14 successful projects
- 75 organisations as formal project partners
- 450 other organisations involved
- 300 seminars and other events organised
- 3000 SMEs directly assisted
- 11 surveys and country analyses
- 2 curricula on CSR for further education
- 3 training modules for business advisors
- 5 CSR guides for SMEs, in 12 languages
- 370 case studies of CSR in SMEs
- €3 million total EU budget

“SMEs are the beating heart of Europe, both economically and socially... Although the terminology of CSR may be new to many SMEs, the concept of behaving responsibly and contributing to society is not. But more can and should be done.”

*Gunter Verheugen,
Vice-President of the European Commission,
Address to the closing conference of the
project run by the European Association of
Craft, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises
(UEAPME), July 2008.*

Highlights

✓ TRAINING BUSINESS ADVISORS

Mainstream business advisors have huge potential to support CSR in small business – provided they have the necessary knowledge and skills. [EUROCHAMBRES](#) trained 50 advisors from Chambers of Commerce across the EU, who then tested their learning by advising at least 4 SMEs each. The [Institute of Business Consulting \(UK\)](#) and the [Maribor Chamber of Commerce \(Slovenia\)](#) also developed and tested training modules on CSR for SME advisors.

For **more information** about any of these projects, see the links in this document, or send an email to entr-csr@ec.europa.eu

✓ SMEs IN THE SUPPLY CHAIN

Large company buyers can also help support CSR amongst their SME suppliers, but this needs to be done in an intelligent and sensitive

way. The [Danish Commerce and Companies Agency](#) facilitated buyer-supplier partnerships for sustainable competitiveness between Hewlett-Packard and 15 of its SME suppliers in Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic. A key outcome was a set of guidelines for multinational companies showing how best to manage CSR supply chain requirements in a way that maximises the benefits for buyers and SME suppliers alike.

✓ CSR AND INNOVATION IN SMEs

Can CSR be a route to innovation for SMEs? The [University of Girona \(Spain\)](#) studied the experience of 60 innovative SMEs in Scotland, Spain and Italy, and concluded that CSR can indeed be a route to innovation and value creation. The project partners developed a CSR-Innovation model that allows SMEs to implement CSR practices as value adding activities, as well as a series of case studies, teaching materials and academic papers.



✓ CSR AND COMPETITIVENESS IN SMES

Based on 35 in depth case studies, the [Austrian Institute for SME Research](#) and partners from Finland, Germany, Norway, Poland, Romania, and Spain have published comprehensive reports on the links between CSR and competitiveness in SMEs. The project partners also published a shorter version of their findings specifically for SMEs themselves.

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Better company image, higher customer loyalty and an improved employer-employee relationship seem to be the most important intermediate effects of CSR contributing to an increased competitiveness.

Austrian Institute for SME Research

✓ CSR IN INDUSTRIAL CLUSTERS

Industrial clusters, combining geographical proximity and a common sector focus, should provide good conditions for supporting the uptake of CSR in small business. This assumption has been tested by the [Scuola Superiore Sant' Anna](#) in a project that worked with clothing, tanning and paper clusters in northern Italy. Key outputs include agreed CSR policies and sustainability reports for each of the 3 clusters involved.

✓ INTEGRATING CSR IN EDUCATION

For CSR to become mainstream business practice, it needs to be integrated into relevant educational courses. Two projects, [GILDE](#) (a German economic development agency) and [UEAPME](#) (the European Association of Craft, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises), developed and tested teaching modules on CSR for further education.

✓ INSPIRATIONAL EXAMPLES

The single most important influence on SMEs comes from their peers, other similar SMEs. Many projects published descriptions of good CSR practices in small businesses, including [UPJ](#) and [GILDE](#) in Germany, the [Institute of Business Consulting](#) in the UK, the [Irish Exporters Association](#), and the [Latvian Chamber of Commerce](#).

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We took a slightly new approach towards good practice examples, providing practical easy to copy single activities, which have already been implemented by SMEs, instead of describing the full range of CSR-related activities of a single business, which is generally difficult to reproduce.

UPJ, Germany

✓ BETTER BASELINE DATA

Policy-makers and organisations seeking to support CSR amongst SMEs need good baseline about CSR in SMEs in different European countries. Some projects carried out new surveys in countries where information has previously been lacking, for example Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia ([Latvian Chamber of Commerce](#) project), and in Greece by the [Hellenic Network for CSR](#). The project coordinated by the [Euro-Info Centre Viborg](#) (Denmark) analysed the status of CSR in SMEs in six European regions in Denmark, UK, Ireland, Hungary, Lithuania and Poland.

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CSR is perceived as a strong tool to resolve the problem number 1 of Baltic enterprises: the attraction and retention of qualified workforce.

PWP Partners, Estonia

✓ HOW-TO MANUALS FOR SMES

A number of projects reported the need to move from simple awareness-raising to practical advice for SMEs on how improve their CSR performance. Some project beneficiaries developed new CSR guides for small businesses, such as the [Hellenic Network for CSR](#), [UEAPME](#) (in 7 countries including Lithuania, Portugal, Bulgaria and Romania), the [Irish Exporters Association](#), and [UPJ](#) in Germany.



Project websites

CSR and competitiveness – European SMEs good practice

KMU Forschung Austria (Austrian Research Institute for SME research)

<http://www.csr-in-smes.eu/index.php?tab=1>

CSR in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania: measurement, dissemination, awareness

Latvian Chamber of Commerce and Industry

www.formanagement.eu (Note: website currently unavailable – for information contact entr-csr@ec.europa.eu)

CEASAR: CSR relays in Chambers of Commerce

EUROCHAMBRES

eurochambres.eu/activities/CAESAR.htm

CO-OPERATE – Companies OPERating in a Responsible Area and with Transparent Ethics

Scuola Superiore Sant’Anna, Italy

www.cooperateproject.sssup.it/index.htm

Mainstreaming CSR among SMEs

Institute of Business Consulting, UK

www.buildingbusinessresponsibly.org.uk/

Small suppliers in global supply chains – Partnerships for sustainable competitiveness

Danish Companies and Commerce Agency

www.eogs.dk/graphics/publikationer/CSR/Small%20Suppliers%20in%20Global%20Supply%20Chains.pdf

Supporting enterprises in their CSR orientation through business development and qualification

GILDE, Germany

<http://www.csr-mittelstand.de/welcome>

Responsible and sustainable innovation for European SMEs: RESPONSE

University of Girona

www3.udg.edu/cid/response/#

Responsible business management in German SMEs – Raising awareness, technical training and practical support of SMEs in respect of CSR

Bundesinitiative “Unternehmen : Partner der Jugend” (UPJ), Germany

www.verantwortliche-unternehmensfuehrung.de/index/110560.0

Integration of social responsibility principles and practices in SMEs

Hellenic network for CSR

www.csrhellas.org/csr_last2/portal/en.php

Corporate Social Responsibility – Communicating to SMEs

The Irish Exporters Organisation

<http://www.csr4u.org/>

Responsible Entrepreneurship in SMEs

European Association of Craft, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (UEAPME)

www.csr-for-smes.eu/



For a full description of each project, with details of funding, objectives and activities, see:
http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/csr/ms_sme_projects.htm

Direct links to key outputs by category

1. Case studies and descriptions of CSR good practice in SMEs

➤ **UPJ, Germany**

www.verantwortliche-unternehmensfuehrung.de/index/110185

➤ **Institute of Business Consulting, UK**

www.buildingbusinessresponsibly.org.uk/case.htm

➤ **GILDE, Germany**

Best practices Germany: www.csr-mittelstand.de/best_practices

Best practices International: www.csr-mittelstand.de/best_practices_international

➤ **The Irish Exporters Association**

www.csr4u.org/sh1102y.html

➤ **Hellenic network**

http://www.csrhellas.org/csr_last2/portal/images/stories/files/KATALOGOS_KALON_PRAKTIKON_MME.pdf
(in Greek)

2. Surveys and base-line data on CSR in SMEs

➤ **Austrian Institute for SME Research (includes good practice descriptions)**

European report: www.kmuforschung.ac.at/de/Projekte/CSR/European%20Report.pdf

Austria: www.kmuforschung.ac.at/de/Projekte/CSR/Report%20Austria.pdf

Finland: www.kmuforschung.ac.at/de/Projekte/CSR/Report%20Finland.pdf

Germany: www.kmuforschung.ac.at/de/Projekte/CSR/Report%20Germany.pdf

Norway: www.kmuforschung.ac.at/de/Projekte/CSR/Report%20Norway.pdf

Poland: www.kmuforschung.ac.at/de/Projekte/CSR/Report%20Poland.pdf

Romania: www.kmuforschung.ac.at/de/Projekte/CSR/Report%20Romania.pdf

Spain: www.kmuforschung.ac.at/de/Projekte/CSR/Report%20Spain.pdf

➤ **Latvian Chamber of Commerce**

Latvia: currently unavailable online – contact entr-csr@ec.europa.eu for a copy

Lithuania: currently unavailable online – contact entr-csr@ec.europa.eu for a copy

Estonia: www.csr.ee/orb.aw/class=file/action=preview/id=4117/CSR+in+Estonian+SMEs+Quant_Research_Report.pdf

➤ **Hellenic Network for CSR**

Greece: www.csrhellas.org/csr_last2/portal/en/misc/108oz_20071101108.php3b

➤ **GILDE**

France, Poland and Germany: <http://www.csr-mittelstand.de/mittelstandsbefragung>



3. Training material on CSR for advisors of business advisors

➤ **IBA Development Services**

www.buildingbusinessresponsibly.org.uk/Adviser_Training.htm

4. CSR guides and manuals for SMEs

➤ **Irish Exporters Association**

www.csr4u.org/downloads/1202901665/Final_version

➤ **European Association of Craft, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (UEAPME)**

Belgium (NL): http://csr.schnittsteller.de/uploads/media/EEN_MAATSCHAPPELIJK.pdf

Germany: http://csr.schnittsteller.de/uploads/media/Guide_CSR_Germany_01.pdf

Portugal: http://csr.schnittsteller.de/uploads/media/Guia_RSE_Portugal_02.pdf

Romania: http://csr.schnittsteller.de/uploads/media/CSR-Guide_Romania.pdf

Lithuania: http://csr.schnittsteller.de/uploads/media/CSR_Manual_LT_edition.pdf

Bulgaria: <http://csr.schnittsteller.de/uploads/media/pomagalo-2.pdf>

➤ **UPJ, Germany**

www.verantwortliche-unternehmensfuehrung.de/index/110230

➤ **Hellenic Network on CSR**

On-line self assessment (Greek):

http://www.csrhellas.org/csr_last2/portal/gr/deltia/711oz_20080605711.php3

Guide (Greek): www.csrhellas.org/csr_last2/portal/images/stories/files/CSR_SME_BROCHURE_gr.pdf

Guide (English): www.csrhellas.org/csr_last2/portal/images/stories/files/CSR_SME_BROCHURE_eng.pdf

➤ **Austrian Institute for SME Research**

English: www.csr-in-smes.eu/downloads/brochure_english.pdf

Finnish: www.csr-in-smes.eu/downloads/brochure_finnish.pdf

German (Austria): www.csr-in-smes.eu/downloads/brochure_austrian.pdf

German (Germany): www.csr-in-smes.eu/downloads/brochure_german.pdf

Norwegian: www.csr-in-smes.eu/downloads/brochure_norwegian.pdf

Polish: www.csr-in-smes.eu/downloads/brochure_poland.pdf

Romanian: www.csr-in-smes.eu/downloads/brochure_romanian.pdf

Spanish : www.csr-in-smes.eu/downloads/brochure_spanish.pdf

5. CSR in supply chain

➤ **Danish Companies and Commerce Agency**

www.eogs.dk/graphics/publikationer/CSR/Small%20Suppliers%20in%20Global%20Supply%20Chains.pdf

6. Promoting CSR amongst SMEs in industrial clusters

➤ **Scuola Superiore Sant' Anna**

www.cooperateproject.sssup.it/Report%20altre%20esperienze%20sulla%20RSI.pdf



7. CSR and innovation in SMEs

- **University of Girona**
www3.udg.edu/cid/response/#

8. Teaching material and education curricula on CSR

- **GILDE, Germany (3 teaching case studies)**
http://www.csr-mittelstand.de/projektangebote_hochschulen_und_weiterbildungseinrichtungen
- **European Association of Craft, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (UEAPME)**
<http://www.csr-for-smes.eu>
- **University of Girona (case studies and other material)**
<http://www3.udg.edu/cid/response/#>