



European Framework of Competencies to implement the SDGs in SMEs

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Supporting the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in Small and Medium sized Enterprises through VET



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SME Green Skills HUB

Supporting the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in Small and Medium sized Enterprises through VET

www.smegreenskillshub.eu

Intellectual Output 01

European Framework of Competencies to implement the SDGs in SMEs

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Foreword

The international community has a crucial challenge to meet by following the UN's 2030 Agenda and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to transform the way we live and do business and change the course of the environmental, social, and economic problems of our time. The private sector is an essential part of these solutions and SMEs, which represent 99.8% of business in Europe, are a key part of this sustainable change but often lack the tools and knowledge to make it happen.

SME Green Skills HUB is an Erasmus+ project aimed at assisting and guiding Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals by fostering green sectorial skills through innovative and new generation training methods using gamification and workplace learning pedagogies with the guidance of VET teachers, trainers, and mentors. SMEs will experience sustainable change as a result of this, moving from transactional to transformational partnerships, exploring new methods and approaches to measuring impact or finding meaningful ways to collaborate with local communities.

SME Green Skills HUB provides companies and educators with a compendium of innovative new generation tools to make the leap to sustainable development. The first of these tools is the European Framework of Competencies to implement the SDGs in SMEs. This Framework of Competencies has been designed to meet the needs of Vocational Education and Training (VET) teachers, trainers and mentors working to support SME staff in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It provides a reference on the implementation of the SDGs in small and medium-sized enterprises through VET, using a common language to describe competences, skills, knowledge, and levels that can be understood across Europe.

Furthermore, the European Framework of Competencies aims to serve as a common basis for the development of educational materials across Europe. It comprehensively describes what learners need to learn and the knowledge and skills they need to develop to be able to act effectively in support of the implementation of the SDGs in SMEs through VET. To do so, it provides the means for educational administrators, course designers, teachers, teacher trainers, examining bodies, etc. to reflect on their current practice in order to situate and coordinate their efforts and ensure that they respond to the real needs of the learners for whom they are responsible.



Terms of reference

Business development

Business development comprises the ideas, activities, and initiatives that are undertaken to improve a business, in terms of sales growth, business expansion, establishment of new partnerships, or increased profitability.

Business model

A business model is a company's core strategy and high-level plan for making a business profitable. It generally includes a description of the products and services to be sold, target markets, anticipated expenses, and sources of revenue.

Business plan

A business plan is a written document that presents a detailed description of business objectives and the strategy to achieve them, usually comprising marketing, financing, and operational perspectives.

Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) standards

The GRI Standards provide a common language for organisations to report on their sustainability achievements and impacts in a consistent, credible, and accountable way.

Green skills

Green skills refer to the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to live in, develop, and support social, economic, and environmental sustainability within business, industry, and the community.

Quality assurance strategies

Quality assurance strategies are a combination of techniques and actions that aim at preventing, detecting, and correcting problems in the quality of provided services and products.

Outreaching activities

Outreach activities refer to the use of several communication and dissemination means with the aim of engaging a large audience and bring knowledge and expertise on a particular topic to the public in general.



PDCA cycle

The Plan-do-check-act (PDCA) cycle is an iterative four-step model used as a project planning tool for carrying out change towards continuous improvement.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The SDGs are part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by the United Nations in 2015. They are 17 global life-changing goals that works as a shared blueprint for a global partnership amongst all countries, businesses, and communities, towards reaching for peace, prosperity, and global sustainability by 2030.

SDGs indicators

The SDGs indicators are a global indicator framework that helps monitoring progress, informing policy, and ensuring accountability of all stakeholders in what concerns the accomplishment of the 17 SDGs.

Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs)

SMEs are businesses that maintain revenues, assets, or a number of employees below a certain threshold, which varies across countries.

Strategic action planning

Strategic action planning is the process of setting goals, deciding on actions to achieve them, and mobilising the resources to undertake those actions. The resources and the way they will be used to achieve those goals are described in a strategic plan.

Sustainability

Sustainability focuses on meeting present needs without compromising the possibility of future generations to meet their own needs then. It is composed of three pillars: economic/profits, environmental/planet, and social/people.

VET professionals

Any trainer, teacher or mentor working in the field of VET (i.e., Vocational Education and Training) in Europe.



Synopsis

This document presents the European Framework of Competencies to implement the SDGs in SMEs, developed within the scope of the Erasmus+ project “Supporting the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in small and medium sized enterprises through VET” (or SME Green Skills HUB for short).

Chapter 1 introduces the framework, briefly defining its aims, objectives, and functions, and presenting a descriptive scheme of its structure, unveiling the competences that VET professionals and consultants are required to effectively support SDGs implementation in SMEs.

Chapter 2 expands on the framework development, in the light of the overall SDGs policy in Europe and national policy and guidelines in involved partners’ countries - Ireland, Italy, Portugal, Spain, and Turkey. It also sets out the criteria which the framework should satisfy.

Chapter 3 explains the six units of competence covered by the framework and presents the matrix of consistency, as well as the core concepts and principles followed to identify and select the factual, conceptual, procedural, and attitudinal knowledge corresponding to those competences.

Chapter 4 details each unit of competence in terms of related aims and learning outcomes, those defined in line with the EQF level 5 and ECVET principles, and covering the structure of related knowledge, skills, and attitudes.

Chapter 5 outlines the implementation roadmap, expanding on the stakeholders who will benefit from it and related processes and means, with detailed considerations for VET professionals and consultants, as main targets of the framework. The potential of the framework to support training, consulting, and assessment processes is further explained within the scope of this chapter.

Chapter 6 develops on the content to be covered in the design of training paths for VET providers’ implementation and Consulting services to enterprises. Innovative pedagogies for workplace learning are also mentioned across the chapter, helping to forecast implementation pathways for both VET providers and Consulting services.



Chapter 1: About the framework

The European Framework of Competencies to implement the SDGs in SMEs provides a common basis for the development of training curriculum and materials across Europe. It was developed in the scope of the Erasmus+ project "Supporting the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in small and medium sized enterprises through VET" (or SME Green Skills HUB for short), implemented in collaboration with partners from five European countries – Ireland (INQS), Italy (FRI), Portugal (Mindshift), Spain (INFODEF and AEICE), and Turkey (GOI).

The framework is intended to bridge the gap in the implementation of the SDGs in SMEs, by strengthening VET professionals and consultants' competences to support SMEs staff leading that process. It describes, in a comprehensive way, the competences that VET professionals and consultants must have to effectively support SMEs staff, through training and consulting, to leverage the implementation of the SDGs in their business settings. The framework also defines the type of competences, distinguishing between generic and specific ones, which allow learners' different backgrounds and proficiency levels to be better addressed and recognised. Generic competences refer to the basics of sustainability in business contexts; while specific competences cover concrete aspects, methods, and techniques related to the integration of sustainability goals in SMEs.

The European Framework of Competencies provides the means for VET professionals and consultants to reflect on their current training and consulting practices, foreseeing improvement opportunities and co-ordinating efforts to provide SMEs staff with the most effective support to leverage sustainability-oriented action within their businesses.

By describing the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that VET professionals and consultants must have or develop to effectively support SMEs integrating sustainability, the framework establishes a common understanding about essential requirements and desirable proficiency levels for those working in the field. This helps them self-assessing their competences to provide these services within defined and commonly accepted quality standards. It also enables them to shape their practices and continuing professional development paths accordingly.

The common foundation provided by the framework to clearly describing goals, content, and methods, will increase the transparency and transferability of courses, syllabuses, and qualifications, thereby promoting Europe-wide cooperation to increase the implementation of the SDGs in SMEs. This will thoroughly support key-policy objectives and programmes targeting the implementation of sustainability goals in small and medium businesses at the five countries that are directly involved in the project, and all other European countries that might benefit from it.

The comprehensive nature of the framework enables a complete, multi-dimensional, and multi-stakeholders' approach to SDGs implementation in business settings, supported by VET training and Consulting services.

Figure 1 presents the six units of competence that are covered by the framework. They evolve from the basics of the SDGs and green skills to the core processes and actions concerning planning, implementing, monitoring, and outreaching foreseen business integration of the SDGs. The specifics of sustainability-oriented business development in SMEs are transversally covered by the framework, through specific competences defined for each of the unit of competence. The framework describes, for the six units of competence, the knowledge, skills, and attitudes VET professionals and consultants must have or develop to effectively support SMEs staff integrating sustainable goals within their businesses, distinguishing between generic and specific competences, which enable the recognition of different levels of proficiency and specialisation.



Figure 1. European Framework of Competencies to implement the SDGs in SMEs



Chapter 2: Background

This framework has been developed upon a solid research and analysis of current implementation of the SDGs in SMEs in the five European countries participating in the project – Ireland, Italy, Portugal, Turkey, and Spain. National experts' groups have been set in all involved countries and invited to participate in the research process to enable a comprehensive overview of ongoing processes, applied frameworks, and available training and consulting provision to support SMEs. Besides the identification of those current trends and practices, concrete needs and recommendations about key content and methods to be covered, sustainability priorities to be addressed, and recommended EQF level have also been collected to ensure the adequacy and relevance of the European Framework of Competencies across participating countries and Europe-wide. Detailed research results are available in Appendix A.

The European Framework of Competencies emerges as an innovative and unexampled framework to guide VET professionals and consultants' training and consulting work to boost the implementation of sustainable development goals in SMEs. Research has confirmed that the integration of SDGs in SMEs is still at a very initial stage in most of the referred countries, being crucial to raise awareness about sustainability goals and how they can leverage business-related opportunities and benefits. The framework has been developed to respond to these concrete needs, also recognising and integrating good case scenarios and best practices that are already available and mapped by local experts. A quick glance upon the situation in each country highlights that:

- In Ireland, there is a lack of an established framework for taking business advantage of the SDGs, although some (especially bigger and public) organisations have integrated this topic into their mission statement or strategy. The measures taken on a national level are well structured and well intentioned, but no National Action Plan for the upcoming years has been issued yet. SDGs are presented to SMEs as a subtopic of their CSR obligations, what might be a risk (only seen as something to pursue for marketing reasons), or an opportunity (opening new perspectives, and envisioning new business possibilities).
- In Italy, experts mention that an integrated and efficient implementation of the SDGs requires well-structured and strong partnerships, relying on Local and Regional Governments (LRGs) and local stakeholders as focal players for the development of the 2030 Agenda. LRGs play the double key role of developing local agents and worldwide partners, becoming crucial that after setting up specific policies, they encourage citizens and entrepreneurial systems to participate in the identification, planning, monitoring and evaluation of such policies.
- In Portugal, the integration of SDGs in SMEs seems to be almost at an initial stage, although there are already some good case scenarios and best practices, involving financial incentives

to foster sustainability projects, consulting-training to support SMEs' staff in redesigning SDG-oriented business strategies, and local and regional initiatives to encourage and sustain those projects. The Global Compact Network Portugal, the SDG platform for municipalities and a platform that present SMEs alongside the SDGs play an important role in supporting their implementation in small and medium enterprises.

- In Spain, there is still a small number of SMEs that are aware of the SDGs and implementing an action plan to adhere to the Global Compact, although the percentage of SMEs concerned about sustainability and recognising its importance to strengthen business resilience has grown over the last two years. The National Government, Regional and Local Governments, the Spanish UN Global Compact Network, and some private and public institutions (including clusters, Foundations, Chambers of Commerce or even NGOs) are the main actors and institutions supporting the implementation of the SDG in SMEs. Experts advise for the introduction of the SDGs at university levels, promotion of collaborative partnerships between university students and companies, and broadcast of business and social opportunities related to the implementation of the sustainable development goals, targeting companies and the whole civil society.
- In Turkey, although integration of the SDGs in SMEs is still at a very initial stage, the government, the private sector, and the civil society cooperate and held several initiatives to foster the accomplishment of the SDGs, in line with the 2030 Agenda and the national priorities. Most of those initiatives address SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure), SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions), and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals).

Although the framework focuses more on the common processes that will enable local agents to expand on any relevant SDGs for the target groups they will be working with, rather than in a detailed approach to concrete SDG, a set of 11 SDGs identified as priority or most relevant for SMEs are tackled. The list includes:

- SDG3. Good health and well-being
Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages
- SDG4. Quality education
Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all
- SDG5. Gender equality
Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls
- SDG7. Affordable and clean energy
Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all
- SDG8. Decent work and economic growth



Promote sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all

- SDG9. Industry, innovation, and infrastructure
Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation
- SDG10. Reduced inequalities
Reduce inequality within and among countries
- SDG11. Sustainable cities and communities
Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable
- SDG12. Responsible consumption and production
Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns
- SDG13. Climate action
Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts
- SDG15. Life on land
Protect, restore, and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss

Nevertheless, it is important to stress that research has shown that differentiation based on perceived relevance of SDGs seems to be more country- or sector-specific, rather than being related to the dimension and structure of the enterprises (*i.e.*, large enterprises or SMEs). This is something that VET professionals and consultants should take into account when working locally to support sustainability-oriented business development within SMEs, and the framework also addresses through specific content and methodological approaches.

The European Framework of Competencies intends to become a unifying approach for the development and implementation of training and consulting services aiming at supporting SMEs staff to implement the SDGs. Research evidenced the need for that common framework to guide VET professionals and consultants' continuing development and practices in this context. At this moment, several frameworks and national strategy plans are guiding the implementation of SDGs in partners' countries, although they commonly rely on the SDG Global Compass, as well as on the Green Skills and the Corporate Social Responsibilities related frameworks. Some consulting-training services specifically targeting SMEs are already available at national level, but experts mentioned the offer is scarce and must be improved both in terms of content and methodologies, aligned with the abovementioned frameworks. Country-specific information indicates that:

- In Ireland, the topic of SDGs has been essentially driven through the Corporate Social Responsibility and this should be specifically addressed by training and consulting services

to be provided to SMEs. Experts' recommendations specially target the important of carefully designing content and strategies to meet the concrete needs and interests of SMEs, based upon a clear value proposition for them; use available documents and platforms, providing a structured framework that creates real value and opens up new opportunities for SMEs; clarify if there are incentives that may be implemented on national or European levels for these types of measures; stay alert to further actions that may be developed and issued; clarify the connection and/or distinction from CSR.

- In Italy, the development of a strategic framework that officially recognises and highlights the central role of SMEs in accomplishing the 2030 Agenda is recommended by experts. This framework should focus on raising SDGs awareness among SMEs staff and increasing their accountability in the process, comprising mechanisms to monitor performance and impact, and effective solutions and incentives to seize the opportunities arising from a sustainable development model. Consulting-training processes should then be structured upon this framework, approved at regional and local level to build the necessary entrepreneurial culture needed to achieve the identified sustainability objectives.
- In Portugal, most of the consulting-training work done to support SDGs integration in SMEs is based upon the SDG Compass. Experts believe it is a very practical framework to guide the process and should inspire the development of this European Framework of Competencies, helping to map the fundamental competences required to facilitate the implementation of each proposed step. GRI standards and the 3Ps Triple Bottom Line framework are also recognised and used at national level, and they can both highlight some critical competences to be considered, regarding accountability and green skills.
- In Spain, most of the training programmes are focused on training managers or companies' staff, and no train the trainer opportunities were found. Available training courses usually follow the Action Plan for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, the Guide for SMEs to the Sustainable Development Goals, and The SDG Global Compass, but the development of a framework of competences was highly recommended by experts as a way to facilitate the integration of the SDGs in SMEs, and ensure the process spreads faster reaching more SMEs, while fulfilling relevant consulting-training standards on the target topic.
- In Turkey, experts recommend that training and consulting services prompt the recognition and familiarity of SDGs by SMEs; provide guidance, detailed instructions, and information about international standards on how to integrate sustainability into business, highlighting essential competences to handle the process; provide more information about the policies fostering the implementation of the SDGs in SMEs; and help identifying country-specific sustainable development needs of SMEs, as well as strategies to accomplish them, increasing companies' resilience and sustainability in the long-term.



The European Framework of Competencies is inspired by all these frameworks and proposals, and it is structured around the six thematic areas that were commonly validated by national experts as crucial to support effective implementation of sustainability goals in business, and concretely in SMEs. These six areas include:

- Essentials of the SDGs & business opportunities
What are the SDGs and why do they matter for business?
- Green skills in SMEs
What are green skills and why are they important for SMEs and SDGs implementation?
- Sustainability priorities definition
How to assess business needs and opportunities within the framework of the SDGs?
- Strategy and action plan design
How to transform sustainability priorities into concrete strategies and actions in a business setup?
- PDCA cycle
How does the plan-do-check-act cycle model support the strategic plan implementation and monitoring?
- Outreach achievements
How to report and communicate implemented initiatives and measured impact?

These thematic areas were then redefined as units of competence to structure the framework. For each unit of competence, learning outcomes were defined in line with EQF level 5, which was the minimum requirement set by national experts to ensure the framework's relevance and adequacy to the target group in partners countries and Europe-wide. Leading-edge methodologies, including the Bloom's Revised Taxonomy, were applied for the definition of learning objectives, to guarantee the framework is aligned with the forefront practices and recommendations in the field.

Chapter 3: The six units of competence

The European Framework of Competencies to implement the SDGs in SMEs provides a reference of six units of competence required and applied to support sustainability-oriented business development in small and medium-sized enterprises, through VET and consulting provision. These six units of competence cover all knowledge, processes and methodologies identified as essential for professionals to effectively provide support to SMEs towards increasing sustainability within their



Unit 1: Introduction to the SDGs in business

To offer a comprehensive understanding of the SDGs and to expand on their relevance for business, setting the necessary background for the development of the upcoming units.



Unit 2: Understanding the role of green skills in SMEs

To support VET professionals and consultants in recognising green skills and new business models related to them, forecasting their relevance for the implementation of the SDGs in SMEs.



Unit 3: Defining sustainability priorities

To support VET professionals and consultants identifying business needs and opportunities within the framework of the SDGs.



Unit 4: Designing sustainability strategies and action plans

To support VET professionals and consultants in transforming sustainability priorities into concrete strategies and actions within a business setting.



Unit 5: Applying the PDCA cycle

To support VET professionals and consultants in applying a plan-do-check-act cycle model to support the implementation and monitoring of the strategic sustainability action plan.



Unit 6: Outreaching sustainability achievements

To support VET professionals and consultants in reporting and disseminating sustainability implemented initiatives and related measured impact.

businesses.

These units of competence have been translated into related learning outcomes, defined in accordance with the EQF level 5, and in terms of knowledge, skills, and attitudes, to ensure they can be understood and applied across Europe. A matrix of consistency was used to identify and select factual, practical and attitudinal criteria corresponding to each unit of competence.

Criteria	Unit 1	Unit 2	Unit 3	Unit 4	Unit 5	Unit 6
Core unit-related concepts	x	x	x	x	x	x
Concrete application examples	x	x	x	x	x	x
Specific considerations for SME contexts	x	x	x	x	x	x
Concrete training and consulting methodologies, strategies and/or tools	x	x	x	x	x	x
Orientation towards intentional action	x	x	x	x	x	x

Figure 2. Matrix of consistency for developing the European Framework of Competencies

The European Framework of Competencies organise and develop competences following a three-layer structure of increased granularity and specialisation:

Layer 1 6 units	Six units of competences are defined, derived from a whole life-cycle project approach, from the basics of sustainability in business settings to concrete processes and methodologies for planning, implementing, monitoring, and outreaching achievements.
Layer 2 54 competences	54 competences in total provide the European standard references of VET professionals and consultants to support SMEs staff implementing the SDGs within their business settings. Each dimension is described as knowledge, skill, or attitude, following European guidelines and the Reviewed Bloom's Taxonomy.

Layer 3
2
types

Two types of competence are recognised – generic and specific – differentiating between the basics of sustainability in business contexts, and the concrete aspects, methods, and techniques for integrating sustainability goals in SMEs. This points out to two levels of proficiency and specialisation regarding the integration of the SDGs in business, being the higher specialised standard highly recommended for those providing consulting services to SMEs on the targeted topic.

Chapter 4: Learning outcomes

Considering the six units of competence and the three-layer approach structuring the European Framework of Competencies to implement the SDGs in SMEs, a training curriculum was designed, considering the ECVET formula that is most commonly adopted Europe-wide, which is 25 hours corresponding to 1 ECVET point.

All the learning outcomes (LOs) are described in terms of the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that VET professionals and SMEs staff should develop to support the implementation of SDGs in SMEs through VET, considering the EQF level 5 descriptors, presented in the table below.

Knowledge	Skills	Attitudes
The cognitive learning domain that comprises comprehensive, specialised, factual, and theoretical knowledge within a field of work or study and an awareness of the boundaries of that knowledge, i.e., what they should know .	The practical learning domain that comprises a comprehensive range of cognitive and practical skills required to develop creative solutions to abstract problems, i.e., what they should learn to do .	The affective learning domain that is related to the exercise of management and supervision in contexts of work or study activities where there is unpredictable change , as well as to the review and development of self and others' performance , i.e., their predispositions and what they tend to do .

The formulation of learning outcomes for the European Framework of Competencies additionally considered the following generic guidelines:

- describe specific learning outcomes for each targeted unit, **avoiding overlapping** with the other ones
- use **concise statements**, and clear and unambiguous language
- focus on **one unique objective** instead of presenting different purposes
- write in the **future tense** and start with an **action verb** that most precisely describes the expected outcome
- keep unit specific to **avoid overlapping**
- describe unit-related **knowledge, skills, and attitudes**
- set proper outcomes **for the targeted level**
- ensure they are **observable and measurable**, clearly allowing learners to know what is expected from them
- make the transition clear for both training and consulting scenarios
- make sure they **enable and encourage** the application of **assessment methodologies**

The final training curriculum is presented in the following pages, where each unit of competence is further described in terms of its generic aim and a related set of nine learning outcomes, defined as knowledge (K), skills (S), and attitudes (A). Following the three-layer structure guiding the framework, these learning outcomes are also categorised as corresponding to either generic or specific competences, with a total of six generic and three specific competences targeted to each unit.



Unit 1: Introduction to the SDGs in business

Aim

This unit aims to offer a comprehensive understanding of the SDGs, as well as to expand on their relevance for business, setting the necessary background for the development of the upcoming units.

Developed by INFODEF, Spain

Learning outcomes			Type of competences
<i>at the end of this unit the participants will be able to</i>			
K	K1.1	Describe the seventeen SDGs and related indicators	generic
	K1.2	Recognise business opportunities associated with the implementation of the SDGs	generic
	K1.3	Recall the role of SMEs in accomplishing the SDGs	specific
S	S1.1	Illustrate key business themes related to each SDG	generic
	S1.2	Discuss business benefits coming from the implementation of the SDGs	generic
	S1.3	Debate on crucial steps for SMEs to maximise their contribution to the SDGs	specific
A	A1.1	Collaborate for the promotion of the SDGs in the business sector	generic
	A1.2	Advise on best practices concerning the implementation of the SDGs to generate benefits for business	generic
	A1.3	Guide the implementation of the SDGs in SMEs	specific



Unit 2: Understanding the role of green skills in SMEs

Aim

This unit aims to support VET professionals and consultants in recognising green skills and new business models related to them, forecasting their relevance for the implementation of the SDGs in SMEs.

Developed by Mindshift, Portugal

Learning outcomes <i>at the end of this unit participants will be able to</i>			Type of competences
K	K2.1	Define the concept of green skills	generic
	K2.2	Identify clusters of green skills and new business models related to them	generic
	K2.3	Recall the role of green skills and related new business models for sustainability in SMEs	specific
S	S2.1	Explain the relation between green skills and the SDGs	generic
	S2.2	Analyse current situation regarding green skills in SMEs	generic
	S2.3	Debate on how to address sustainability in SMEs through green skills and new business models related to them	specific
A	A2.1	Advise for green skills development	generic
	A2.2	Make recommendations on best practices in fostering sustainability through green skills and related new business models	generic
	A2.3	Support SMEs staff developing green skills towards organisations' sustainability	specific



Unit 3: Defining sustainability priorities

Aim

This unit aims to support VET professionals and consultants identifying business needs and opportunities within the framework of the SDGs.

Developed by AEICE, Spain

Learning outcomes <i>at the end of this unit the participants will be able to</i>			Type of competences
K	K3.1	Identify relevant sustainability goals for business development	generic
	K3.2	Describe strategies to support the definition of sustainability aims in business settings	generic
	K3.3	List triggers and constraints for sustainability-oriented business development in SMEs	specific
S	S3.1	Relate business performance indicators to sustainability-oriented development	generic
	S3.2	Design business-aligned sustainability goals	generic
	S3.3	Illustrate best practices on SMEs strategic business development upon a sustainability framework	specific
A	A3.1	Advise for the strategic definition of sustainability priorities to leverage business development	generic
	A3.2	Make recommendations on best strategies and tools to support strategic definition of sustainability priorities within the business sector	generic
	A3.3	Guide SMEs in the definition of business plans that prompt sustainable development	specific



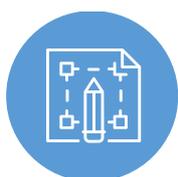
Unit 4: Designing sustainability strategies and action plans

Aim

This unit aims to support VET professionals and consultants in transforming sustainability priorities into concrete strategies and actions within a business setting.

Developed by FRI, Italy

Learning outcomes			Type of competences
<i>at the end of this unit the participants will be able to</i>			
K	K4.1	Identify relevant strategies for the implementation of sustainability priorities in specific business sectors	generic
	K4.2	Describe essential dimensions of an action plan definition for sustainability-oriented business development	generic
	K4.3	Recall the role of strategic planning for sustainability-oriented business development in SMEs	specific
S	S4.1	Conceive strategic action plans for sustainability	generic
	S4.2	Redesign business models to adjust to new strategic sustainability development guidelines/trajectories	generic
	S4.3	Evaluate skill gaps in SMEs staff to be covered by strategic action plans towards sustainability	specific
A	A4.1	Make recommendations on best practices to foster new sustainability-oriented strategies and business models	generic
	A4.2	Carry out sustainability development tasks within the business sector	generic
	A4.3	Verify and monitor the implementation of sustainability action plans in SMEs	specific



Unit 5: Applying the PDCA cycle

Aim

This unit aims to support VET professionals and consultants in applying a plan-do-check-act cycle model to support the implementation and monitoring of the strategic sustainability action plan.

Developed by INQS, Ireland

Learning outcomes			Type of competences
<i>at the end of this unit the participants will be able to</i>			
K	K5.1	Identify the benefits of a quality assurance model in action planning and execution	generic
	K5.2	Describe the PDCA cycle model	generic
	K5.3	Recall the PDCA cycle model to support the implementation and monitoring of strategic sustainability action plans in SMEs	specific
S	S5.1	Recognise the need for a structured approach in quality assurance	generic
	S5.2	Assess the overall need and benefit of applying the PDCA cycle model	generic
	S5.3	Design the PDCA cycle model in order to implement and monitor strategic sustainability action plans in SMEs	specific
A	A5.1	Create a quality assurance strategy for action planning and execution	generic
	A5.2	Be responsible for the application of the PDCA cycle model	generic
	A5.3	Carry out the tasks to plan and implement the PDCA model to support the implementation and monitoring of the strategic action plan in SMEs	specific



Unit 6: Outreaching sustainability achievements

Aim

This unit aims to support VET professionals and consultants in reporting and disseminating sustainability implemented initiatives and related measured impact.

Developed by GOI, Turkey

Learning outcomes		Type of competences
<i>at the end of this unit the participants will be able to</i>		
K	K6.1 Identify the role of social media channels/networks and dissemination platforms in the rapid dissemination and amplification of sustainability achievements	generic
	K6.2 Recall the importance of reporting sustainability achievements	generic
	K6.3 Recognise the relevance of the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) Standards to report sustainability impacts in SMEs	specific
S	S6.1 Select appropriate social media channels and dissemination platforms to ensure a far-reaching impact	generic
	S6.2 Disseminate organisational SDG-related data and achievement indicators	generic
	S6.3 Use selected standards to report information on the impacts of SMEs initiatives targeting specific users or purposes	specific
A	A6.1 Monitor organisational dissemination activities by making use of social media channels/networks and dissemination platforms	generic
	A6.2 Collaborate with a broader stakeholders' network for far-reaching and impactful dissemination activities concerning sustainability achievements	generic
	A6.3 Advise SMEs to use GRI Standards for corporate reporting	specific

Chapter 5: Implementation roadmap



The common European Framework of Competencies to implement the SDGs in SMEs can be used for many purposes. It provides a reference of competences towards the implementation of the SDGs in SMEs through training and consulting. It sets the competency profile of VET professionals and consultants intending to provide those services and raises awareness among SMEs on the crucial competences they need to develop to advance with more effective and relevant sustainability-oriented business approaches. In this sense many different target groups will benefit from this framework:

- **VET providers** find a trustworthy European reference to boost the continuous development of their professionals, as well as their strategic market position as a reference point to support SMEs staff integrating the SDGs in business, through innovative and effective workplace training approaches.
- **Consulting services** find a reliable European reference to grow their business portfolio and positioning, as well as the opportunity to reskill and/or upskill their consulting teams, thus better supporting SMEs staff in the implementation of the SDGs in business, through meaningful consulting strategies that help designing effective tailor-made sustainability agendas fitting each organisation's ADN.
- **SMEs staff** can use the framework to screen their current situation concerning business orientation towards sustainability goals, and internal competences to move forward with that agenda. This will support internal decision-makers and strategic elements in-charge of sustainability-oriented development to set up strategic action plans, targeting training, consulting, and business-alignment actions, to boost the process.
- **Qualification and certification bodies** can apply the European Framework of Competencies for developing training curricula, promoting programmes, and accrediting competences that have been acquired through training or experience-based recognition and validation processes. It increases transparency in the EU landscape, innovation on training and consulting approaches to increase sustainability-related impacts, more flexible learning pathways, better marketing to learners and companies, as well as better understanding inside targeted organisations. By expanding on innovative training methodologies for workplace training, the framework will guide these stakeholders to develop high-quality advanced practices, though reinforcing a lead position within the sector.
- **Policy-makers** get a trustworthy reference, a European benchmark and starting point for developing occupational standards, as well as new skills alliances and strategies on local and international networks to support the implementation of high-level designed policy objectives and programmes.
- **Stakeholders** can benefit from combining the use of the European framework with other available frameworks (e.g., SDG Compass, GRI Standards) to further develop profile



description, curricula, and methods, strategies, and tools to support concrete implementation of the SDGs within SMEs settings, avoiding starting from the scratch.

This overall perspective about the potential beneficiaries of this framework and anticipated positive impacts highlights the far-reaching potential of the framework and the diverse possibilities to consider when forecasting its implementation roadmap. The following section of frequently asked questions (FAQs) and answers prompts a clear vision and communication of those possibilities.

FAQ1: Which are the target groups of the European Framework of Competences to implement the SDGs in SMEs?

The framework was specifically designed to target VET professionals and consultants, intending to strengthen their competency profile so they become able to provide more relevant and effective training and consulting services within the scope of sustainability-oriented business development. SMEs staff are indirect beneficiaries of this framework, as they are expected to also develop the targeted competences, by getting involved in the training programmes and consulting processes they will be provided with.

FAQ2: Can the framework be used to measure and assess competences?

Yes, this is one of the possible applications of the framework. Based on this framework, an assessment app to evaluate competences on the implementation of the SDGs in SMEs has been also developed by SME Green Skills HUB project and can be used as a self-assessment tool for personal development purposes or to design training paths that better address concrete trainees' needs. It is available at www.smegreenskillshub.eu.

FAQ3: Is the framework suitable only for SMEs?

The framework has been developed to concretely target small and medium-sized enterprises. Although it can also be applied to large companies, the framework encompasses a set of specific competences that intend to address concrete needs of SMEs and their staff. And this is part of the added value of this framework, as it aims at bridging the gap left by other available frameworks in what concerns the specifics of integrating sustainability goals within SMEs businesses.

FAQ4: Is this framework redundant with others available?

No, as mentioned before there are a set of valuable and well-recognised frameworks guiding business implementation of the SDGs, but they mostly target large enterprises. This European Framework of Competencies intends to support the concrete implementation in SMEs, coming up with specific competences, processes, methods, and techniques to enable it. It brings together essential dimensions of those frameworks, but details and specialises for the concrete approach to SMEs.



FAQ5: *Does the framework enable personalised training pathways, based on previously developed competences?*

Yes, by defining generic and specific competences, the framework is considering and addressing different levels of proficiency and specialisation. The assessment tool developed upon it, also helps to identify clusters of developed competences and skill gaps. Both enable individuals to focus their training and professional development efforts on their personal needs, recognising the whole set of competences required to effectively provide training and consulting services to support sustainability-oriented business development in SMEs.

Chapter 6: Training paths

To reach this full potential, training paths design should straight follow the training curriculum proposed in the scope of this framework, and its core concepts and principles as well. The design of flexible training paths is critical to ensure their relevance and effectiveness, in terms of creating the essential conditions for professional development and high-level performance in sustainability-related topics within business settings. This flexibility is intended not only to target and enable different levels of proficiency and specialisation, but also to address the specific needs of both VET providers and Consulting services.

General contents that should be covered, related to each unit of competence include:



Unit 1: Introduction to the SDGs in business

- SDGs, SDGs indicators, and 2030 Agenda
- SDGs and business iterative opportunities – business themes per SDG, business benefits from the SDGs, SDGs accomplishment through business
- Highlights, best practices, and examples of SDGs implementation in SMEs



Unit 2: Understanding the role of green skills in SMEs

- Green skills, SDGs, and new business models
- Green skills in business – general positioning and specific SMEs situation
- Highlights, best practices, and examples for green skills development and use for sustainability improvement in business settings, and concretely in SMEs



Unit 3: Defining sustainability priorities

- Sustainability goals and business goals – iterative dynamics, strategic definition, and performance monitoring
- Strategies and tools for defining sustainability-oriented business goals
- Best practices and examples for SMEs



Unit 4: Designing sustainability strategies and action plans

- Sustainability-oriented strategic business planning and development
- Strategies and tools for designing business plans targeting sustainability
- Best practices and examples for SMEs



Unit 5: Applying the PDCA cycle

- Quality assurance in sustainability-oriented business planning and development – models and benefits
- The PDCA cycle model
- Highlights, best practices, and examples of application in SMEs



Unit 6: Outreaching sustainability achievements

- Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) and sustainability achievements report
- Means, strategies, and networks for impact dissemination
- Highlights, best practices, and examples for SMEs

Specific target-oriented content should be covered by:

VET providers

- Innovative training approaches and pedagogies for workplace learning in SMEs, exploring next-generation training solutions and gamification
- Use self-assessment tools to keep track of competences and professional development needs related to each unit of competence, to enable personalised and tailored training approaches

Consulting services

- Innovative consulting tools and strategies to support SDGs implementation in SMEs and promoting staff autonomy to lead the process
- Use self-assessment tools to keep track of competences and consulting needs related to each unit of competence, to adjust the process in a way that better fits enterprises and teams' needs

Final remarks

The European Framework of Competencies developed under the Erasmus+ project SME Green Skills HUB emerges as a unifying approach to support the implementation of SDGs in SMEs, through VET training and consulting. The specific context of SMEs is concretely addressed by this framework, as an innovative value proposition to help bridging that existent gap.

The potential of the framework to support VET training and consulting targeting sustainability in business settings, not only in the partners' countries but also Europe-wide, has been thoroughly explored. Nevertheless, following tips are drafted to help the main target groups of the project mainstreaming the European Framework of Competencies:

VET

- Self-assess own competences to provide sustainability-oriented business training, mapping relevant personal strengths and skill gaps to be addressed through continuing professional development
- Assess current competences of SMEs staff, to identify training needs and design training curricula that effectively address them
- Map core content to be covered and effective workplace training strategies to foster the development of targeted knowledge, skills, and attitudes

CONSULTING

- Assess current SMEs' status regarding the integration of sustainability goals within their business plans and processes, identifying goals, strengths, and improvement opportunities
- Design tailor-made consulting services to address those specific needs, maximising their impact on increased and more intentional sustainability-oriented business development
- Select and implement the most relevant strategies and tools to guide and facilitate all stages of sustainability implementation in business settings

The training content, the virtual campus and the mobile assessment app developed in the scope of this project, based upon this framework, facilitate its adoption and dissemination, following European and national policy, priorities, and guidelines.

Besides the far-reaching potential of the framework for dissemination and implementation as it is structured at this moment, the prevalence of SMEs in the European context and their important role in fostering the accomplishment of the SDGs stresses the need to continuously invest in further developing and improving methods, strategies, and tools, anchored on it.

Appendix A

Analysis of the theoretical frameworks related to the implementation of SDGs in SMEs through VET

SPAIN

In Spain three main frameworks guide SDGs implementation in SMEs through VET.

- "Action Plan for the implementation of the AGENDA 2030: Towards a Spanish Strategy for Sustainable Development"¹

This Action Plan is an action-oriented programmatic document. A transition Plan, between the urgent start of the implementation of the Agenda, and the formulation of a long-term Spanish Strategy for Sustainable Development.

The Plan is also a document that collects the actions carried out by all the actors, and also commits immediate actions by the General State Administration, a reinforced and choral governance structure, at the highest level of government, and a commitment to create a strategy ambitious project for sustainable development, with the participation and consensus of all the actors and levels of government in Spain.

The Plan assigns responsibilities for each of the objectives and goals in the various Ministries, which thus become focal points. The policies and regulations aimed at progress in each SDG are extensively described, establishing their baseline and the indicators that will mark their evolution. The Plan identifies priority areas of action in which to develop "lever" policies: prevention and fight against poverty and social exclusion, circular economy and social economy; equal opportunities, scientific and technical research, open government and Spanish Cooperation; the Spanish Urban Agenda; and the Law of Climate Change and Energy Transition. Among the horizontal measures² are defined, with concrete and measurable commitments, ambitious policies and reforms necessary to sustain the path towards 2030: the qualification of public officials, the education system, citizen awareness and culture, multi-actor alliances, public budgets, public procurement, the analysis of the impact of all public policies on the SDGs, as well as the link with the National Reform Program in the context of the European Union.

¹ Action Plan for the implementation of the AGENDA 2030: Towards a Spanish Strategy for Sustainable Development.
<http://www.exteriores.gob.es/Portal/es/SalaDePrensa/Multimedia/Publicaciones/Documents/PLAN%20DE%20ACCION%20PARA%20LA%20IMPLEMENTACION%20DE%20LA%20AGENDA%202030.pdf>

² Guide for SMEs to the Sustainable Development Goals.
<https://www.pactomundial.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Gu%C3%ADa-para-pymes-ante-los-ODS-digital.pdf>



- "Guide for SMEs to the Sustainable Development Goals"³

The Spanish UN Global Compact Network, the General Council of Economists of Spain (CGE) and the Spanish Confederation of Small and Medium Enterprises have published the Guide for SMEs to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) because only 22% of Spanish SMEs are aware of the 2030 Agenda.

The objective of the manual is to make the 2030 Agenda known in a practical and schematic way among small and medium-sized SMEs, set the steps for their contribution to sustainable development and show how many of them are already doing it through their actions.

The content of the manual is designed for SMEs to visualize the benefits based on the principles of sustainability. It includes tips for achieving sustainability, examples of good practices, suggestions for action, regulatory aspects and a self-assessment test so that companies can know their level of sustainability.

- "The SDG Compass: The guide for business action on the SDGs"⁴

The objective of the SDG Compass is to guide companies on how they can align their strategies as well as measure and manage their contribution to the SDGs.

The guide presents five steps that assist companies in maximizing their contribution to the SDGs: 1 Understanding the SDGs; 2 Defining priorities; 3 Setting goals; 4 Integrating; 5 Reporting and communicating.

Companies can apply the five steps to set or align their course, depending on where they are on the journey of ensuring that sustainability is an outcome of core business strategy. The five steps of the SDG Compass rest on the recognition of the responsibility of all companies to comply with all relevant legislation, respect international minimum standards and address as a priority all negative human rights impacts.

The SDG Compass is developed with a focus on large multinational enterprises. SMEs and other organizations are also encouraged to use it as a source of inspiration and adapt, as necessary. It is also designed for use at entity level, but may be applied at product, site, divisional or regional level as required.

The following competences are targeted by these frameworks:

- know the documents of reference for the application of the SDGs to SMEs, in particular the SDG Compass

³ Guide for SMEs to the Sustainable Development Goals.

<https://www.pactomundial.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Gu%C3%ADa-para-pymes-ante-los-ODS-digital.pdf>

⁴ The SDG Compass: The guide for business action on the SDGs.

<https://www.unglobalcompact.org/library/3101>



- understand what the SDGs are, how they can be applied to a SME and how they can be supervised and measured
- improve the governance and the transparency of the companies, increasing its reputation and image
- put in value the current contribution of the companies to the SDGs
- improve the current contribution to the SDGs, which imply an improvement in performance, improvement of impacts in their environment and savings in the company
- launch Corporate Social Responsibility actions
- involve employees in a common project: contribute to local and global development
- discover possible business opportunities

The appropriate EQF/NQF level for this type of training is no lower than 6, and no higher than 7.

There is no compulsory or even standard ECVET formula applied in Spain, but a usual reference is

25 hours	1 ECVET point
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PORTUGAL

The main framework identified to support the implementation of the SDGs in business in Portugal is the SGD Global Compass⁵ (Figure 1), developed by the WBCSD (World Business Council for Sustainable Development), UN Global Compact and GRI (Global Reporting Initiative). It is used to support consulting, mentoring and training for business strategy design regarding the SDGs implementation, as well as for the measurement of those specific goals' accomplishment.

In Portugal, the available training courses aimed at promoting the implementation of the SDGs in large-, medium-, and small-sized businesses mainly target the five steps proposed by this framework, considered essential to assist companies in maximising their contributions to the SDGs.

⁵ GRI, the UN Global Compact & the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD), 2015. *The SDG Compass – The guide for business action on the SDGs*. UN and GRI published report.

Other consulting-training interventions to promote SDGs integration in Portuguese business also rely on the 3Ps Triple Bottom Line⁶ framework (Figure 2), used as a tool for business strategy design and accountability



over the three pillars of sustainability – People, Planet and Profit.

Figure 1. The SDG Global Compass

Figure 2. 3Ps Triple Bottom Line

The SDG Global Compass targets:

- knowledge about the 2030 Agenda and the 17 SDGs
- awareness of the relevance of the SDGs for business
- awareness of the relevance of business to accomplish the SDGs
- capacity to define business priorities that contribute to the SDGs by mapping current and potential impact areas, selecting indicators, and collecting data
- capacity to set sustainable goals, by defining the scope of the goals, selecting the KPIs, and announcing the commitment to the SDGs
- capacity to integrate those sustainable goals within business, concerning activities, professional functions and responsibilities, and engaging in partnerships
- capacity to effectively report and communicate on SDGs performance

The 3Ps Triple Bottom Line comprises:

⁶ Elkington, J. (1999). *Cannibals with forks: the triple bottom line of 21st century business*. Oxford: Capstone.



- knowledge and awareness about the three pillars of sustainability – people, planet, profit
- capacity to redesign business strategy targeting sustainable social, environmental, and financial aims
- capacity to manage and measure social, environmental, and financial impacts of business

Green skills are not explicitly mentioned at any of the referred frameworks, although the 3Ps' one clearly matches the essentials of green skills – “skills for sustainability (...) the technical skills, knowledge, values and attitudes needed in the workforce to develop and support sustainable social, economic, and environmental outcomes in business, industry, and the community” (Australian Green Skills Agreement, 2009).

The appropriate EQF/NQF level for this type of training is level 5.

The standard ECVET formula applied in Portugal is

25 hours	1 ECVET point
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ITALY

In 2015, the 2030 Agenda of United Nations for Sustainable Development was presented and adopted by Head of States/Governments. Since then, Italy is adapting and transforming the strategic objectives of 2030 Agenda to fit in the national economic, social and environmental programming. As all the other countries from European Union, Italy needs to follow also the indications coming from the communitarian level while setting its own strategic objectives.

Consequently, the Italian National Strategy on Sustainable Development (SNSvS) was approved by the Italian entity CIPE in 2017 and set itself within a renewed global framework to strengthen the path towards global sustainable development. Such Strategy represents a concrete step to transpose at national level principles and objectives from the 2030 Agenda and takes on the 4 key principles: integration, universality, transformation, inclusion.

The SNSvS is structured under 5 areas, corresponding to the “5Ps” from the Agenda 2030: People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace, and Partnership. A sixth area is added to these pillars; the sustainability vectors, which have to be considered as an essential driver for the achievement of national strategic goals. Within such areas the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are declined.⁷

⁷ Strategia Nazionale per lo Sviluppo Sostenibile, 10/2017 - Ministero dell'Ambiente e della tutela del Territorio e del Mare



Figure 3 and 4 - www.minambiente.it/pagina/la-snsvs

The SNSvS were first landing in Public Bodies, such as Government, Regions, Local Authorities Public Administrations and so on. The next step, after their transposition, was the setting of policies/laws/programmes in order to involve public and private stakeholders in the process of adoption of SNSvS. The first measures deployed in Italy involved mainly the environment and its preservation (pollution, recycling, etc.), as it's a matter that involves a wide audience, citizens included. Two examples of national tenders related to waste management can be found here:

- <https://www.minambiente.it/bandi/bando-cofinanziamento-progetti-di-ricerca-raee>
- <https://www.minambiente.it/bandi/bando-il-cofinanziamento-di-progetti-di-ricerca>

Being this the premise, it's important also to specify the general national structure on the matter of business companies, as the backbone of Italy is mostly made by SMEs. Even if this information is well known, the SNSvS doesn't define a specific role for SMEs in the reach of 2030 Agenda objectives. In addition to this observation, it's easier to find big companies more committed to the Agenda 2030 goals than SMEs, thanks to their social and more often public commitment. For example, this can happen through the setting of year-over-year KPIs (e.g., to meet the world's growing energy needs while reducing the greenhouse gas emissions or developing sustainable technology solutions) that represent and reflect corporate purposes and core values as well as a baseline for their business strategies. Using open and transparent annual reporting the big companies show the progresses on their key sustainability measures and their alignment with the SDGs.

Among the SNSvS' five pillars, the targets aligned with SGSH project were identified:

PEOPLE

Guarantee the conditions for the development of human potential

- reduce unemployment for the weakest segments of the population
- reduce the school drop-out rate and enhance the education system

PLANET

Ensure the sustainable management of natural resources

- minimise emissions and reduce air pollutants concentration

PROSPERITY

Fund and promote sustainable research and innovation:

- increase the investments in research and development
- implement the digital agenda and improve the spread of smart networks
- innovate processes and products and promote technological transfer

Ensure full employment and high-quality training:

- ensure accessible, high quality and permanent training
- increase sustainable and high-quality employment

Ensure sustainable production and consumption patterns:

- dematerialize the economy, improving the efficient use of resources and the circular economy
- promote environmental taxation
- promote social and environmental responsibility in companies and institutions
- reduce waste production and promote secondary raw material market

Decarbonize the economy:

- increase energy efficiency and renewable energy production, avoiding or reducing impacts on natural and cultural heritage and landscapes
- reduce greenhouse gas emissions in non-ETS sectors.

PARTNERSHIP

Education:

- promote training and improve professional skills of teachers, school staff and development workers
- define training paths offering new professional skills, addressed to students from partner countries
- provide research tools in order to produce innovation for development and to deliver assessment methods and models in line with international good practices

Environment, climate change and energy for development:

- contribute to increase resilience and manage new environmental risks in most vulnerable regions
- promote technology transfers - also involving profit actors - in areas such as energy, transport, industry and urban management



- promote energy for development: appropriate and sustainable technologies optimized for local contexts particularly in rural areas; new models for income generating energy activities; support to the development of enabling policies and regulatory mechanisms that lead to energy governance modernization based on local needs; development of technical and managerial skills of locals, through multi-level training

The link among SMEs, VET, green skills and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) it's clearly mentioned in the sixth complementary area identified by SNSvS' document, the sustainability vectors, where it's possible to find a clear reference to: turning knowledge into competences; promoting education on sustainable development; promoting and applying solutions for sustainable development.

The appropriate EQF/NQF level for this type of training is level 5.

The standard ECVET formula applied in Italy is

27 hours	1 ECVET point
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TURKEY

In Turkey, the SDG Compass^{8,9} is widely accounted guide used for the implementation of the SDGs in business which developed by the WBCSD (World Business Council for Sustainable Development), UN Global Compact and GRI (Global Reporting Initiative).

This guide is suggested by Global Compact Turkey, local network of UN Global Compact, and Business for Goals, a platform established by TURKONFED, TUSIAD and UNDP in 2019. The goal of the SDG Compass is to guide SMEs on how they can align their strategies as well as measure and manage their contribution to the SDGs. The SDG Compass rests on the five steps (Understanding the SDGs, Defining Priorities, Setting Goals, Integrating, and Reporting & Communicating) which assist businesses to ensure that sustainability is the core of their business strategy. Due to being an internationally recognized framework, it also encourages companies to respect international minimum standards and comply with them.

As a national plan taken into account for the implementation of the SDGs, even if not limited to SMEs, is the Eleventh Development Plan (2019-2023)¹⁰ prepared by the Presidency of Strategy and Budget that is also responsible for the implementation of SDGs across in city design, production, society and governance. Designed as the first five-year part of a fifteen-year perspective, the Development Plan envisages an overall change and breakthrough in all fields, and a resolute and uninterrupted implementation in the long-term perspective. The Development plan lays down development vision of our country with a long-term perspective and will serve as a basic roadmap in meeting the fundamental values and expectations of our nation prepared through an inclusive approach involving ministries, public institutions, representatives from private sector, NGOs and academia. It also aims at transforming the economic structure, to maintain stability and sustainability in the long-term. In addition, the plan focuses on increasing efficiency and competitiveness in all fields and has five fundamental pillars: namely, stable and strong economy, competitive production and productivity, qualified human and strong society, liveable cities and sustainable environment, and rule of law, democratization and good governance.

⁸ Business4goals.org. 2021. *SDG Compass*
www.business4goals.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/019104_SDG_Compass_Guide_2015.pdf

⁹ Business4goals.org. 2021. *Sürdürülebilir Kalkınma Amaçları Pusulası*
www.business4goals.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Surdurulebilir-Kalkinma-Amaclari-Pusulasi.pdf

¹⁰ Sbb.gov.tr. 2021. *Elevent Development Plan*
https://www.sbb.gov.tr/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Eleventh_Development_Plan-2019-2023.pdf



Under the pillar of “stable and strong economy” the Plan lays down a basic framework and principles governing the monetary, fiscal, revenue and foreign trade policies as well as macroeconomic targets to reinforce these policies.

The pillar of “competitive production and productivity” covers policies to achieve competitiveness and productivity increase in the economy and to support the structural transformation in production as well as the improvement in welfare.

Under the pillar of “qualified human and strong society”, the Plan sets out policies to strengthen human capital, explicitly implement the inclusive growth approach and scale up welfare across all sections of the society.

Under the pillar “Liveable Cities and Sustainable Environment”, the Plan includes goals and policies aimed at protecting the environment, improving the quality of living in urban and rural areas and reducing regional development disparities in line with the goal of enhanced economic and social benefit.

The pillar of “rule of law, democratization and good governance” covers goals and policies aimed at reinforcing the application of the principles of rule of law and democratization across all institutions and organizations making up the state, strengthening inclusiveness, transparency and accountability at all levels in public administration.

Although it is not called as a training framework, it is an important policy paper as it offers a set of guidelines to prepare strategies in line with Turkey’s priorities. In scope of SDGs, The Development Plan encourages and urges the relevant stakeholders to reflect SDGs in sectoral and thematic policy documents and establish national sustainable development goals monitoring and follow up mechanism in all sectors.

The SDG Compass targets the following competences:

- knowledge and familiarization about 17 SDGs
- awareness about how SDGs relates to the business on a general level
- analyse the challenges, risks, and opportunities that SDGs bring to the business
- map the value chain of the company
- define the priorities the businesses based on an assessment of their negative and positive and current and potential impact on sustainable development
- setting specific, measurable and time-bound company goals and key performance indicators (KIPs) directly addressing the impact or the outcome of its activities aligning with SDGs
- create a shared understanding how sustainability creates value for the company
- capacity to integrate sustainability goals into performance reviews
- knowledge about the GRI G4 Sustainability Reporting Guidelines and capacity to apply the reporting standards



The SDG Compass doesn't address the green skills specifically.

However, The Eleventh Development Plan prepared by Government of Turkey mostly focuses on the implementation of SDGs related to environmental priorities in regarding manufacturing industries, more liveable cities, healthy citizens, and sustainable environment even if not directly addressing to SMEs in Turkey. The Development plan does not provide any competences regarding SDGs implementation, but serves as a strong recommendation paper to reflect SDGs in all sectors and establish effective and cooperative follow-up and review mechanisms for SDG implementation in line with the mainly national priorities. To this aim, The Development Plan suggests policies and measures to be taken for the realization of this goals in a 5-year span.

The appropriate EQF/NQF level for this type of training is level 5. According to Turkish Qualification Framework (TQF), Diploma in associate degree, Certificate of professional competence and Certificate of vocational qualification certificate Level 5 are provided. With all these documents, the individuals can carry out the tasks and this type of trainings.

The standard ECVET formula applied in Turkey is

30 hours	1 ECVET point
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IRELAND

In Ireland, there are no formally established frameworks or programmes used for training design and facilitation regarding the implementation of the SDGs in SMEs. Nevertheless, there are very few informal training courses which address the topic provide general knowledge of SDGs and how to apply them. Apparently, a significant number of larger companies have already taken on the subject and integrated it to their strategic goals.

The most published one is the "SDG Advocate Training"¹¹. This programme relies on a training model that is based on experiential learning and support:

- the participants broaden their awareness and understanding of the SDGs
- they implement a project in their community

¹¹<https://www.developmentperspectives.ie/EventPdfs/SDG%20Advocate%20Training%202021.pdf>



- they share and showcase their actions, learnings and outcomes
- they receive support and mentoring throughout the programme

Despite the fact that we did also not identify an established framework that would cover the implementation of SDGs in SMEs, we did however come across and screen several resources that will be of use for the further development of the Green Skills HUB project.

The most useful in these terms is the SDG Compass. It is a very comprehensive guide for business actions on the SDGs even containing a dedicated document to this cause¹². (<https://sdgcompass.org>)

Furthermore, we also annex some of the other resources identified which may be of relevance in the footnotes¹³. Examples of courses are listed in part two.

The programmes identified convey the following things:

- general and specific knowledge about the SDGs
- opportunities for different sectors; some of them also specifically point out economic and business aspects
- action planning and execution
- partnering for success

The competences do not solely address green skills improvement. The green skills aspects are pointed out specifically with the SDGs that relate to this topic.

The EQF and the NQF are not fully harmonized at this stage. Whilst the EQF operates with 8 levels the NQF identifies 10 of those. Since our target group are trainers and consultants, they need to have a sound understanding of the topic and build up enough knowledge so they can also convey the information to their target groups. On the other hand, we think that the level of information does not need to be on the level of a masters or doctoral degree. We therefore think that an adequate level for SDGs is level 5 to 6 in the EQF and 6 to 8 on the NQF.

¹² https://sdgcompass.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/019104_SDG_Compass_Guide_2015.pdf

¹³ <https://sdgacademy.org>; <https://www.sdgwatcheurope.org>; <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/resourcelibrary>;
<https://sdgtoolkit.org>; https://sdgs.un.org/sites/default/files/2020-07/MSMEs_and_SDGs.pdf;
http://www2.paconsulting.com/rs/526-HZE-833/images/Framework_for_Breakthrough_Impact_on_the_SDGs_through_Innovation_FINAL_GUIDE_07_11.pdf;
<https://www.pwc.com/gx/en/sustainability/publications/PwC-sdg-guide.pdf>



The ECVET formula in Ireland is not that directly proportional because ECVET is not fully recognized or integrated into the Irish qualification system. As identified in notes by Dermot O'Brien in respect to the ECVET Formal Systems Conference Report (Léargas Forum 2014), within national VET systems ECVET is facilitated through national common award systems. In Ireland, this is done through the Common Award System. The QQI Common Award System (CAS) and its credits-based Credit Accumulation and Transfer System (CATS) offers 120 CATS credits for a major award - this is compatible with the ECVET system of 60 ECVET points for a full academic year of 1200 hours of learning effort. Between national VET systems, ECVET is facilitated by using a common yardstick/single currency-ECVET credits and between VET and HE, ECVET is facilitated through compatibility, comparability and complementarity with the ECTS. It is notable, however, when considering ECVET in Ireland with regard to national VET systems, O'Brien notes that *"ECVET credit does not necessarily imply credit points and when it does, they do not have a single unit of measure in different countries and do not have a value outside the qualification. Learning outcomes do not all have the same weight within a qualification."*

Based on this a somewhat applicable ration may be as follows:

20 hours	1 ECVET point
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Analysis of professional and institutional trends and positions on implementing

SPAIN

The Spanish Global Compact Network, together with the Secretary of State for the 2030 Agenda, launched a public consultation to the Spanish business sector open for 32 days, from August 26th to September 27th, 2020. The objective of this consultation was to know the degree of implementation of the 2030 Agenda in the Spanish business fabric and collect inputs for the future Sustainable Development Strategy. The conclusions of the consultation are based on the responses of more than 1,900 Spanish companies that have participated in the process.

- 81% of companies are aware of the 2030 Agenda, improving the previous figure by 10 points, and 82% say that the implementation of the SDGs helps them to be more resilient.
- Only 5% of public companies and 20% of private companies are unaware of the framework of the 2030 Agenda.
- 82% of the companies consulted affirm that the implementation of the SDGs can help their company to be more resilient and better cope with future crises such as COVID-19.
- Regarding the implementation of measures in SDGs, there are different speeds depending on the nature of the company. Thus, while 89% of public companies and 66% of private ones carry out some implementation measure, only 61% of the SMEs consulted and 40% of the self-employed carry out measures specific implementation related to the SDGs.

- The most common measures include having a sustainability policy and environmental policies, documents that 47% and 50% of the companies consulted have, respectively. However, there are important areas for improvement in terms of implementation, that is, moving from commitment to action: only 27% train their employees in areas of sustainability and only 28% measure their CO2 emissions.
- If we analyse the data by company size, large companies have implemented more measures in the areas of sustainability compared to SMEs and the self-employed. It is particularly noteworthy that 63% of large companies measure their carbon footprint compared to 18% of SMEs and 5% of the self-employed.
- The areas of the 2030 Agenda most worked are gender equality (SDG 5), followed by health and well-being (SDG 3), the fight against climate change (SDG 13) and decent employment (SDG 8).
- There is an interesting initiative launched by one of the partners in this project, the Efficient Habitat Cluster, AEICE, called NETODS. This initiative has developed a methodology for the implementation of the SDGs in companies and has created a service to help its partners formalize their adherence to the Global Compact.

The following table presents the available training and consulting services in Spain to support and monitor SDGs integration in SMEs:

Designation	Main goal	Responsible entity
Training workshop: How to integrate the sustainable development goals (SDG) in the company	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Knowing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and background. - Contextualize the SDGs within global trends. - Assess the importance of integrating the SDGs into the company's strategy. - Provide participants with the necessary methodology to integrate the SDGs into the company's activity. - Analysis of practical cases of integration of the SDGs in the business. 	Chamber of Commerce of Valladolid
Free personalized advice to SMEs on SDG	Advice on the weaknesses and strengths of companies in various aspects oriented to sustainability and offer practical recommendations (to develop an action plan) that will allow them:	COPADE Foundation (Comercio Para el Desarrollo / Commerce for Development)



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improve the governance (their way of managing) and the TRANSPARENCY of the company, increasing its reputation and image. - Put in value their current CONTRIBUTION TO THE SDGs and that they probably do not know. - Improve their current contribution to the SDGs, which will require an improvement in performance, improvement of impacts in their environment and SAVINGS IN THE COMPANY. - Launch CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY actions without the need to have a specific department for it. - Involve employees in a common project: contribute to LOCAL AND GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT. - IMPROVE THE external IMAGE of the company, positioning itself as a responsible company towards their clients, administration and other stakeholders. - Be a pioneering SME in sustainability. Discover possible business OPPORTUNITIES. 	
<p>Training course: Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) in business strategy</p>	<p>Goals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Put into practice in their organizations the introduction of the 17 objectives with their respective targets on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) - Know the main concepts and ideas of relevance today of the SDGs, as well as the context in which these objectives are found. 	<p>Asociación Española para la Calidad (Spanish Association for Quality)</p>

	<p>Addressed to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All people interested in acquiring knowledge about the SDGs and their application in organizations. - Professionals and researchers. - Directors and managers of management systems. - Directors and managers of social responsibility. - Directors and managers of environmental management systems. 	
NETODS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ It is an accompaniment service for SMEs associated with the following steps: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Introduction to the SDGs. - Analysis of company characteristics and definition of affected SDGs. - Determination of the exclusive Action Plan for each company. - Management of the application for membership. - Support for the annual review. 	EFFICIENT HABITAT CLUSTER (AEICE)

The entities that support and monitor SDGs implementation in SMEs in Spain are:

- The Spanish UN Global Compact Network.
- The Government of Spain, and all the respective Regional and Local governments, through the "Action Plan for the implementation of the AGENDA 2030: Towards a Spanish Strategy for Sustainable Development"



PORTUGAL

According to recent data about the Portuguese economic landscape (Pordata¹⁴), SMEs represented 99.9% of the overall existing enterprises in Portugal, in 2018. Although this number is quite expressive, information about the integration of SDGs in SMEs is still very diffuse and punctual.

Nevertheless, it is possible to identify some relevant projects and initiatives on SDGs integration specifically targeting or involving SMEs:

- financial incentives to foster sustainable projects with positive social benefits and aligned with the SDGs¹⁵;
- consulting-training programmes promoted by diverse entities to support SMEs' staff in redesigning business strategy to integrate and accomplish SDGs (*referred at the following section*).
- local and regional initiatives to encourage and sustain the design, implementation and accountability of processes targeting SDGs integration in SMEs¹⁶;
- concrete SMEs projects targeting different SDGs, according to their core activity¹⁷.

All this data highlights the relevance of the topic at national level, as well as the great opportunity for the development of accurate tools and processes that support and foster it among the huge number of SMEs existing in Portugal.

The following table presents the available training and consulting services in Portugal to support and monitor SDGs integration in SMEs:

Designation	Main goal	Responsible entity
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¹⁴<https://www.pordata.pt/en/Portugal/Small+and+medium+sized+enterprises+as+a+percentage+of+total+enterprises+total+and+by+size-2859>

¹⁵<https://www.fis.gov.pt/en/2019/04/02/pme-investimentos-appointed-managing-body-of-the-social-innovation-fund>

¹⁶<https://www.odslocal.pt>

¹⁷https://smesustainablepractices.com/pt_PT/companies/ttView/18

Training – “Global Management Challenge”	Preparing SMEs staff for the SDG Global Challenge competition	IAPMEI www.iapmei.pt
Project – “Sustainable Act”	Promote the adoption of business policies by SMEs, according to the 3P framework – People, Planet, Profit – and the implementation of management practices related to the SDGs	PBS – Porto Business School www.pbs.up.pt
Training and consulting – “Formações ODS”	Raising awareness about the 2030 Agenda and its relevance for business, focusing on priorities definition, corporate strategy alignment, monitoring and measuring, report and communication	BCSD Portugal - Conselho Empresarial para o Desenvolvimento Sustentável www.bcsdportugal.org
Training – ODS (Objetivos de Desenvolvimento Sustentável)	Raising awareness about the SDGs and how to integrate them in the corporate strategy and communication	PwC www.pwc.pt

In Portugal, SDGs implementation in SMEs is supported and monitored by different national and local organisations, committed to business innovation, business ethics, and corporate social responsibility. Although the response seems to be a non-coordinated one, the diverse entities mainly base their activity in the SDG Global Compass, the Global Reporting Initiative and the 3Ps Triple Bottom Line frameworks. Some key entities are:

- Aliança ODS Portugal¹⁸ – the Global Compact Network Portugal, sustained by the SDG 17
- ODS Local¹⁹ – a SDG platform for municipalities
- PME Sustentável²⁰ – a platform that present SMEs alongside the SDGs they are committed to

ITALY

¹⁸ <https://globalcompact.pt/alianca-ods/gov>

¹⁹ <https://www.odslocal.pt/>

²⁰ https://smesustainablepractices.com/pt_PT/

As mentioned above, SMEs are not directly involved in SNSvS, but it's crucial to think how to evaluate their impact on the SDGs and on the implementation of SNSvS. Due to their well-known numerosity and dynamicity, SMEs could be the perfect lever to convey sustainability values through the territories, as they represent about 92% of Italian companies²¹ and are spread all over Italy. Based on these considerations surely SMEs will have more and more a crucial role to produce and share responsible sustainable good practices, becoming fundamental to reach 2030 Agenda objectives. This aspect will be fundamental for the development of a new entrepreneurial culture linked to the SDGs tasks.

At national and regional level, it's possible to highlight several initiatives, all of them linked to SDGs and involving also SMEs:

- financial incentives to foster sustainable projects (public or private) with positive social benefits and aligned with the SDGs²²
- local and regional initiatives for dissemination and increased awareness of territories towards 2030 Agenda objectives (e.g., Tuscany regional forum for the Sustainable Development)²³
- consulting-training programmes promoted by different entities to support PA and SMEs' staff in redesigning business strategy to integrate and accomplish SDGs

The following table presents the available training and consulting services in Italy to support and monitor SDGs integration in SMEs:

Designation	Main goal	Responsible entity
E-learning course "L'Agenda 2030 e gli Obiettivi di sviluppo sostenibile"	20 training modules for raising people awareness about the Agenda 2030.	Alleanza Italiana per lo Sviluppo Sostenibile ASviS https://asvis.it/
Course on SDGs and on sustainable development	The course is designed for managers and professionals. It aims to deepen into sustainable development goals, and how to bring them inside the SMEs' strategic frameworks.	Spin Lab – Laboratorio di Impresa Srl https://spinlab.academy/
Course on SDGs: sustainability assessment	Introduction to sustainable development goals, to European and international	Politecnico di Torino https://didattica.polito.it/

²¹ <https://www.infodata.ilsole24ore.com/>

²² <https://www.mise.gov.it/index.php/it/incentivi>; <https://www.sviluppo.toscana.it/>; <https://www.minambiente.it/bandi/bando-cofinanziamento-progetti-di-ricerca-raee>; <https://www.minambiente.it/bandi/bando-il-cofinanziamento-di-progetti-di-ricerca>

²³ <https://www.regione.toscana.it/-/forum-della-sostenibilit%C3%A0>

methods and global challenges	policies for their implementation, to indicators and sustainability assessment methods for monitoring SDGs progress and comparing solutions for the achievement thereof. The course, oriented to policies and solutions development, will give an overview of the SDGs including approaches on how to frame the problems and their interlinkages, the selection of models, indicators, and data enabling the evaluation of benefits and drawbacks.	
GiovaniSi	GiovaniSi is the project promoted by the Tuscany Region to help young people become independent. Funded with national, regional and community resources, the project is divided into six main areas: Internships, Housing, Civil Service, Entrepreneurship, Employment, Education and Training. It's a clear example of how investing in youth means investing in development. This by fostering income, economic growth and decent jobs creation at local level (Goal 1; 2; 8; 9; 10; 12), while improving public institutions capacities in delivering public services such as housing and education (Goal 4; 6; 11; 16).	Tuscany Region https://giovansisi.it/
E-Learning course on sustainable certifications and 2030 Agenda from UN – SDGs	The course is composed by 15 training modules which aim to provide SMEs the tips for integrating sustainability goals into corporate strategies.	Focus Lab https://focus-lab.it
Master in Sustainability manager	The Master aims to the development of sustainability management skills in the PA workers, in order to create specific professional figures who can be a reference point within the Administrations for the coordination of management activities consistent with the more general sustainability goals of the SNSvS.	Scuola Nazionale dell'Amministrazione https://www.sna.gov.it

Together with 2030 Agenda, United Nations placed as fundamental need the setting and putting in place of indicators useful to measure sustainable development and monitoring its objectives.

The Italian Institute for Statistics (ISTAT) is in charge at national level to coordinate the production of such indicators and consequently follow the monitoring process, furthermore such indicators are constantly



updated (once a year) in order to guarantee coherent reporting activities that can measure the achievement levels of sustainable goals, actions undertaken, and results gained by SNSvS implementation.

Such activities can benefit from the huge work that ISTAT has developed and implemented since 2016, measuring the “equal and sustainable wealth” (BES), using a multidimensional approach to integrate the most common business activity indicator, GDP (PIL), with fundamental wealth scales. This work helps to measure quality of life and evaluate the effects of public policies on specific fundamental dimensions²⁴.

TURKEY

As SMEs have a larger share of economic activity in most of the OECD countries, including Turkey, they are seen as the key drivers of innovation and achievement of SDGs. According to the data released in December 2020 by TUIK (Turkish Statistical Institute)²⁵, SMEs constituted 99.8% of the total number of enterprises in 2019. It is known that the Government of Turkey is dedicated to incorporating SDGs into its national plans and policies, and information about the implementation of SDGs is accessible to some extent.

Here are some examples for projects and initiatives regarding implementation of SDGs in SMEs:

Business For Goals²⁶ was established by TURKONFED, TUSIAD and UNDP in 2019, the Business For Goals Platform serves as a platform open to all large-, medium- and small-sized enterprises willing to integrate the Sustainable Development Goals into their corporate policies and strategies, all public agencies keen on public-private partnership, local governments, academia, international organizations and non-governmental sector. It carries activities webinars, discussions, and meetings so as to build a bridge between the business community and Sustainable Development Goals and strengthen the role of businesses in sustainable development, as well as enable enterprises both to meet current needs and prepare for the future economy.

TURKONFED (Turkish Enterprise and Business Confederation) was established in 2004 as a nation-wide confederation, representing 6 federations and 69 associations. Today, 30 federations and 270 associations fall under TÜRKONFED, through which over 40,000 companies are represented. TÜRKONFED is a non-governmental business organization, aiming to contribute to the development of regional, sectoral and national economic policies, as well as an associate member of The European Association of Craft, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (UEAPME) since 11th of February 2014. Regional development, vocational education and employment, competitiveness and innovation are TÜRKONFED’s main areas of activity, together with focus on

²⁴ Rapporto SDGs 2020 - Informazioni statistiche per l'Agenda 2030 in Italia, 2020 - ISTAT

²⁵ <https://data.tuik.gov.tr/Bulten/Index?p=Small-and-Medium-Sized-Enterprises-Statistics-2019-37548>

²⁶ <https://www.business4goals.org/en/>



enhancing competitiveness of SMEs. In the framework of SME Green Skills HUB project, TÜRKONFED carries out Sustainable Growth Program²⁷ in cooperation with HSBC. This program addresses to only start-ups working towards the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). The program aims to support building a strong ecosystem consisting of start-ups, entrepreneurs, mentors and investors in Turkey, to create new commercial opportunities on a sectoral basis, and to support start-up companies to increase the speed and impact of their products and services to market.

In addition to Sustainable Growth Program, TÜRKONFED in collaboration with SPARK has kicked off a project called "Resilient SMEs, Strong Tomorrows" as of January 2021. As an initial idea, the project plans to matchmake 50 SMEs in response to unprecedented circumstances and complex emergencies emerging, such as the pandemic and the economic shrinkage, as well as to boost the impact of social cohesion through the creation of jobs for increased economic inclusion and livelihood development and to facilitate access to the labour market. In line with this initial plan, the project also envisages 6 online training in 6 different modules, 6 webinars, 12 coaching meetings, and 12 matchmaking meetings during the lifecycle of project.

Another project carried by and in cooperation with TÜRKONFED, UNDP AND Visa Turkey is "I Can Manage My Business"^{28,29} launched in 2019 project aims to improve SMEs' management skills, knowledge, attitudes and confidence to maximise the potential of their business for the benefit of their enterprises and that of the wider economy in line with UNDP's Strategic Plan 2018-2021 promoting the actual implementation of SDGs through a expanding the scope, quality and outcome of collaboration with private sector. Complying with this the project has been planned to last 3 years through a phased programme with the aim of involving 3000 high impact SMEs in 18 cities in Turkey. Within the project, an innovation-based training package is defined. In the first year of the I Can Manage My Business project, nearly 1,000 SMEs in Adana, Antalya, Hatay, Balıkesir, Mardin and Istanbul under 10 different headings, from digitalization to accounting, from international trade to the institutionalization of family companies, took lessons from Boğaziçi University Innovation and Competition Focused Development Studies Implementation and the Research Centre lecturers and industry experts. In its second year, the project aims to reach and strengthen SMEs through online trainings that include new conditions developing with the health agenda. The training content has been updated to help SMEs transfer their existing businesses to digital quickly. It can be said that this project supports the implementation of more than one SDG in SMEs.

²⁷ <https://www.turkonfed.org/en/detail/2384/start-ups-contributing-to-the-future-of-the-society-supported-by-the-sustainable-growth-program>

²⁸ <https://www.tr.undp.org/content/turkey/en/home/projects/i-can-manage-my-business.html>

²⁹ <https://www.turkonfed.org/en/detail/2381/i-can-manage-my-business-trainings-given-to-550-sme-representatives-during-the-pandemic>



KOSGEB (Small and Medium Enterprises Development Organization) was established in 1990. Till 2009, KOSGEB provided services and supports only for the production industry SMEs. However, due to the increase in the added value production and employment creation potentials of the sectors other than the production sector in our country and due to the requests received from SMEs in the sectors other than the production sector, the necessity to enlarge the target population of KOSGEB so as to cover all SMEs. KOSGEB has implemented "Model Factory Project"³⁰ also known as Applied SME Capability Building Centre in cooperation of Ministry of Industry and Technology and UNDP since 2015. Although this project has started as a feasibility study by Ministry of Industry and UNDP, it has transformed into a project thanks to supports from public and private sector. This project aims to train SMEs on a wide variety of issues ranging from lean manufacturing to energy efficiency. Through this project SDG 8 Decent Work and Economic Growth and SDG 12 Responsible Consumption and Production is being achieved. In addition, KOSGEB also highlights the SME and Green Growth in its strategy and action plans, which is relevant to one of the areas this project focuses.

UNDP's Istanbul International Centre for Private Sector in Development (IICPSD)³¹ established in 2011 in partnership with Government of Turkey supports the private sector and foundations in 4 thematic areas. In this scope, Private Sector Engagement through South-South Cooperation for the Sustainable Development Goals is the relevant thematic area in which the companies are supported to tailor their business models to respond to sustainable development so that contributes to the achievement of the SDGs.

The UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN)³² was set up in 2012 to promote integrated approaches to implement the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, through education, research, policy analysis, and global cooperation. Turkey network of SDSN, led by the outstanding universities and big enterprises, also promotes networking and collaboration with the stakeholders for the implementation of SDGS in Turkey. To boost its implementations, SDSN Turkey network has also a SDG Academy³³ to provide free educational resources from the world's leading experts on sustainable development. These free resources are mostly addressing green growth and optimization of environmental conditions.

The data reveals that Government of Turkey and the existing initiatives signals strong support to facilitate the implementation of SDGs through multi-stakeholder partnerships by promoting public-private dialogue and collaborates with UNDP to design a Sustainable Development Goal implementation plan in Turkey. Here, we can come to the conclusion that the implementation of SDGs is very relevant and hot topic in Turkey' development agenda and we can see more training provisions and implementation of SDGs especially on

³⁰ <https://www.tr.undp.org/content/turkey/en/home/projects/applied-sme-capability-building-center--model-factory-.html>

³¹ <https://www.iicpsd.undp.org/content/istanbul/en/home.html>

³² <http://unsdsn.boun.edu.tr/>

³³ <https://sdgacademy.org/courses/>



environment related ones in SMEs considering Turkey's commitment to 2030 Agenda and Green Deal. After Covid-19, health is also likely to be included and highlighted in more initiatives and projects.

The following table presents the available training and consulting services in Turkey to support and monitor SDGs integration in SMEs:

Designation	Main goal	Responsible entity
Training and Consulting	Enhance competitiveness of SMEs through vocational education and activities addressing SDGs for enterprises	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TÜRKKONFED (Turkish Enterprise and Business Confederation) https://turkonfed.org/en/page/about-us
Training and Finance support	Support SME enterprises to be innovative, develop and move abroad	KOSGEB https://en.kosgeb.gov.tr/site/tr/genel/detay/347/about-kosgeb
Joint action platform	Promote SDGs and forge new partnerships through joint learning	Business For Goals https://www.business4goals.org/en/who-we-are/

For the implementation of 2030 Agenda, the SDGs has been linked to National Development Plans and sectoral strategies that is under the responsibility of The Strategy and Budget Office under the Presidency and Ministry of Development. Regarding monitoring, responsibilities have been assigned to ministries relevant to specific SDGs.

As also highlighted in part 1, in order to ensure the follow up and coordination of SDG implementation at national level 11th Development Plan strongly encourages establishment of the National Sustainable Development Coordination Board in a flexible structure for the participation of representative local administrations, academia, private sector and NGOs in addition to related public institutions and national sustainable development goals monitoring and evaluation system.

In addition, the following initiatives and entities support the SDGs implementation in SMEs in Turkey:

- Global Compact Turkey³⁴ – The Global Compact Network for Turkey
- UNDP Istanbul International Centre for Private Sector in Development (IICPSD)
- KOSGEB – supports the sustainable development of SMEs through financial and capability building supports
- TURKKONFED
- Business for Goals

³⁴ <https://www.globalcompactturkiye.org/global-compact-turkiye/>



- SDSN Turkey Network

IRELAND

In general Ireland has defined and taken several institutional measures to promote the implementation of the SDGs. We would like to highlight these first of all because they also influence the implementation of SDGs in SMEs although their focus is much larger.

- SDG Champions – This is a programme that was established by the government to raise public awareness of the topic through partnerships and promotion. This programme shows practical ways in which organisations and individuals can contribute to achieving the SDGs. These examples serve as best practices.^{35,36}
- The National SDG Stakeholder Forum – is a multi-stakeholder forum that got together five times between the end of 2018 and 2019 in order to discuss and innovate ideas and solutions for achieving the SDGs in Ireland. The majority of the participants of these forums are from NGOs and the public sector however also representatives of SMEs were present.³⁷
- The UN High Level Political Forum is responsible for the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda at a global level. They meet annually and feature inputs from national governments, intergovernmental bodies, relevant UN agencies, civil society and other stakeholders.³⁸

The most complete information regarding the state of the implementation of the SDGs the "Voluntary National Review" (VNR)³⁹. The last one was issued 2018. There were annual reports regarding "Ireland's Sustainable Progress Index" for 2018, 2019 and 2020⁴⁰ which even indicate in their conclusions which measures should be taken on a local and national level. The next VNR is due 2022.

The national action plan for implementation⁴¹ for the period between 2018 and 2020 includes measures as the creation of things like SDG Champion and the SDG Forum as mentioned above. In this plan 19 high level

³⁵ <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/40f61-sdg-champions-20192020/#>

³⁶ <https://irelandsdg.geohive.ie/app/0649f3af1e1d48d7abfc4b060ce5c1cf>

³⁷ <https://www.gov.ie/en/collection/c1cb6e-national-sustainable-development-goals-stakeholder-forum/>

³⁸ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf>

³⁹ https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/19382Ireland_Voluntary_National_Review_2018.pdf

⁴⁰ <https://www.socialjustice.ie/content/publications/sustainable-progress-index-2020>

⁴¹ <https://assets.gov.ie/19344/32f9bdd2aae2464caae37760edd1da04.pdf>

actions were defined. There are several action plans to be found that include measures for the years to come that are inspired or even explicitly contain SDGs.

The SDG Champion programme is the most relevant example for the scope of this project.

The following table presents the available training and consulting services in Ireland to support and monitor SDGs integration in SMEs:

Designation	Main goal	Responsible entity
UN Sustainable Development Goals Seminar Series	Raise awareness of the SDGs – each topic addressed individually in a brief seminar every 2 weeks	University College Dublin Research Seminar Series https://sdgseminars.ucd.ie
CSR Consultations for SME	Although the title is focussed on CSR the content is very closely linked to SDG. The target is to consult SMEs to develop and implement a CSR strategy in alignment with the SDGs.	Chambers Ireland https://www.chambers.ie/policy/sustainable-development-goals/csr-consultations-for-smes/

We also discovered some MOOCs that could be helpful for the development of content which are however not based in Ireland but which we would like to complete anyway:

- "Driving businesses towards the SDGs"
<https://www.coursera.org/learn/sdgbusiness?action=enroll#instructors>
- "Organising for the SDGs"
<https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/organising-for-sustainable-development-goals>

The Government of Ireland has created a data hub as a collaboration platform for reporting on the progress towards the goals and sharing information regarding the topic. On this site more information about the goals, events, data, guidelines as well as stories and applications can be found.⁴²

There are also the three institutionalized measures as mentioned above: SDG Champions, National SDG Forum and the HLPF.

⁴² <https://irelandsgd.geohive.ie>

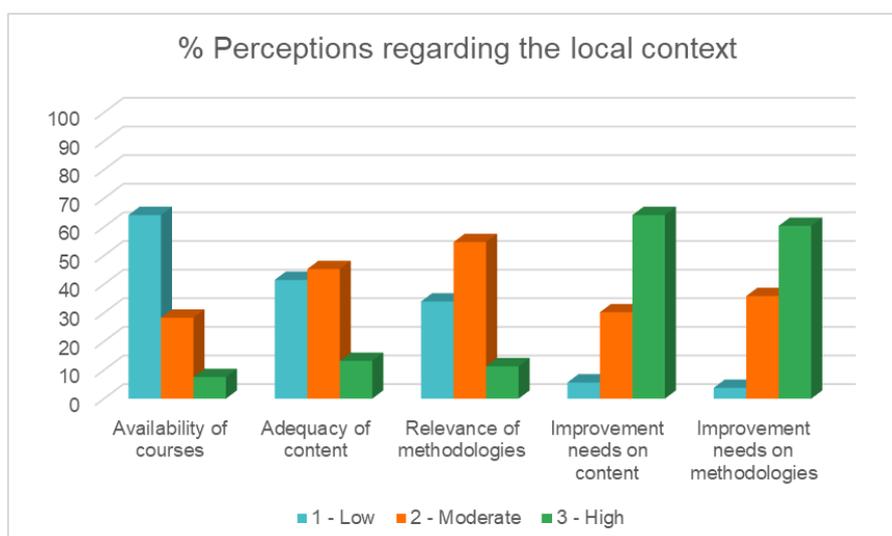
Another entity that could be mentioned in this context is the Coalition 2030 which is an alliance of 75 civil society organisation that wants to assure Ireland’s commitment to the topic. The entities involved do have a rather broad focus.⁴³

All these are not however specifically focussed on SDG implementation in SMEs. The entity that is most closely associated with this topic is the Irish Chamber of Commerce.

Analysis of local context and needs in vocational education and training, targeting the implementation of SDGs in SMEs

To complement this data, a group of 53 national experts from the five partners’ countries has been asked to answer a set of questions about the current and the expected context on implementing SDGs in SMEs, focusing on:

Available VET training to support SDGs implementation in SMEs



Most of the participants highlighted the scarcity of training courses on this topic, as well as the need to improve both content and methodologies of the training courses that are and will be made available.

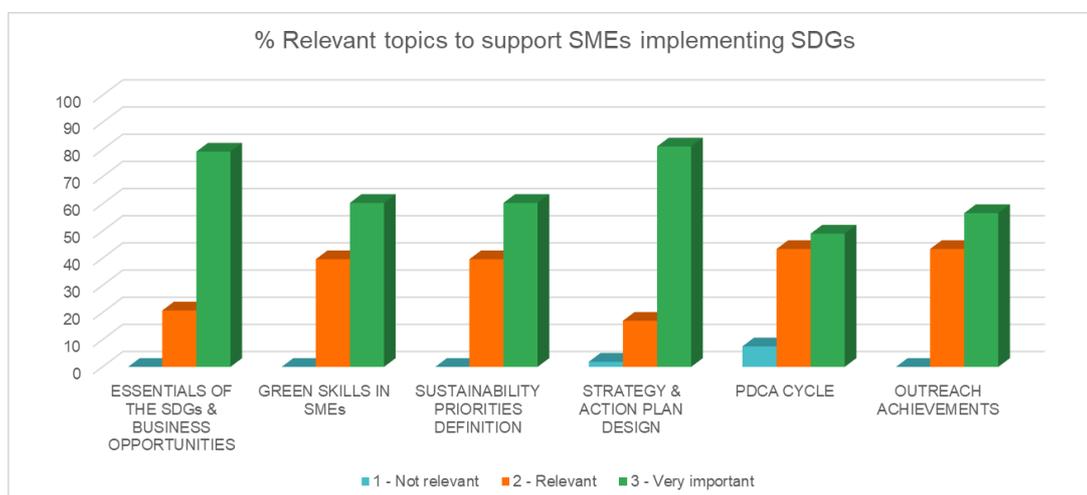
Additional comments on this topic refer to:

⁴³ <https://www.ireland2030.org/about-us>

- the difficulty to engage SMEs manager with the SDGs, raising their awareness about all the priorities covered on the SDGs framework and the role they can play in the process, in a very concrete and strategic way, focusing on the business opportunities and benefit it might raise
- the relevance of strengthening a corporate culture that is hugely connected to the SDGs, and implementing strategies to monitor the impact, as a way to commit the teams with the achievement of those priorities
- the importance of calling for the support of corporate collaborative networks/business sector associations to promote and enlarge the training program scope
- the importance of setting up sector-specific training courses, that help participants to clearly recognise strategic opportunities to implement within their businesses, based on the examples shared by experts working on the field
- the relevance of having a digital platform to provide online training and share constantly updateable material
- the importance of setting up a follow-up strategy to measure training effectiveness and continuously sustain the commitment with the SDGs priorities

Relevant topics to support SMEs implementing the SDGs

National experts who have been asked to share their perceptions about the relevant topics that VET training courses should cover to support SMEs in the implementation of the SDGs validated an approach that is sustained by the SDG Global Compass, the Corporate Social Responsibility and the Green Skills frameworks. In line with the previous inputs, they highlighted the importance of working on the essentials of the SDGs and how they connect with business opportunities and benefits, also supporting SMEs staff on designing SDGs-oriented business strategies and action plans. Green skills and sustainability priorities are also considered important topics to be covered as well as how to monitor and communicate strategic implementations and achievements, through outreach activities.



Additional comments on this topic refer to:

- the possibility of further exploring new business models, the life cycle approach in product development, and system thinking/open innovation towards SDG goals
- the relevance of covering critical project management skills
- the importance of sharing use cases, best practices, and success stories of SMEs that are already implementing the SDGs, sharing return indicators for companies

SDGs relevance for implementation by SMEs

Regarding the relevance of the different SDGs for the SMEs, there has been great consensus among the national experts who have been contacted. The SDG 7 (affordable and clean energy) is the only one that has no mention as "not relevant", followed by the SDGs 3 (good health and well-being), 11 (sustainable cities and communities), and 12 (responsive consumption and production) with only one "not relevant" reference each. The SDGs 1 (no poverty), 2 (zero hunger), and 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions) are the ones that gather more "not relevant" references from the inquired group.

