



Press Release

All international eyes on the Sustainability Code

Berlin (Germany), 5 July 2016 – As things stand today, the Sustainability Code enables undertakings and organizations to fulfill the EU's forthcoming non-financial reporting obligation. Given how easy and efficient it makes sustainability reporting, it is also meeting with growing interest outside of Europe.

The Sustainability Code provides a framework for reporting on non-financial performance that can be applied worldwide by organizations and undertakings regardless of their size or legal structure. In light of this, the Code is currently meeting with growing international interest. The Code was, for example, the primary focus of a workshop held in Brussels in February 2016 at the invitation of the German Council for Sustainable Development (RNE) and involving the Greek QualityNet Foundation and French cooperation partners. During the event, around 70 high-ranking business, political and civil society representatives from across Europe discussed a variety of ways of disclosing non-financial information as well as the initial experiences gained among EU member states while implementing the CSR reporting obligation.

Inaugural partner: Greece

The first European country to seize the opportunity to develop their own national access on the basis of the Code was Greece: the Greek non-profit organization QualityNet Foundation presented the "Greek Sustainability Code" at the beginning of April. RNE will be inviting four other EU partners to adopt the Code database and its input tools free of charge.

Interest outside of Europe

Non-European countries have also expressed their interest in the Sustainability Code: mid-June saw the publication of the Code in Hebrew. At an event in Bangkok, the Academy for International Cooperation will be testing how the standard might be used in Asia. Japan has also expressed interest in applying the Code's format as a blueprint for sustainability reporting. Of particular appeal to the international audience is the fact that countries are at liberty to adapt the Code to their needs.

National information campaign

In March 2016, the Federal Ministry of Justice and Consumer Protection (BMJV), which is responsible for its implementation, published a minister's bill on transposing the requirements of the EU Directive into national law. In order to keep the relevant stakeholders up to date, RNE launched an information campaign on the reporting obligation due to come into force as of the reporting year 2017 and also on the Code.

As part of the campaign, around 4,000 business, political and trade association representatives received an email from the Code Team, informing them of the content, background and effects of the CSR reporting obligation. They were also notified that, by issuing a full declaration of conformity with the Code, they would already be meeting the requirements of the EU Directive. In the event that further provisions should be formulated in the course of transposing the Directive into national law, RNE will adapt the Code accordingly.

Events promote dialogue – with newcomers and experts

An event held in Berlin late May was specifically designed for those new to sustainability reporting. A total of 75 representatives from undertakings and associations took RNE up on its offer. This was preceded by a meeting of 150 leading German and European business, civil society, academic and political experts in Frankfurt am Main in mid-April. During the multi-stakeholder forum, the participants discussed how the Code could be advanced to enable it to drive sustainable development. The experts confirmed that the Code was already a highly effective and attractive instrument – for both SMEs and international undertakings alike.

Added to this, Code training partners significantly stepped up their activities in the first six months of 2016. On average, ten events have been organized by Code training partners every month since the beginning of the year.

Cooperation with chambers of industry and commerce and trade associations

The Code has also extended its working partnership with chambers of industry and commerce as well as some trade associations. An industry guide developed by the German Association of Local Public Utilities (VKU) is available as of right now to assist waste management and city cleaning businesses in applying the Code and compiling a declaration of conformity.

Pro-active campaign bearing fruit

In Germany, the Sustainability Code is continuing its upward trend: whilst 66 undertakings were registered with the database of declarations of conformity with the Sustainability Code at the beginning of 2015, this figure had risen to 135 undertakings and organizations by mid-2016, with 272 declarations of conformity currently on hand. This rise in the Code's acceptance is also due to the revamping of the Code database, which has rendered it far more user-friendly.

RNE has also been affirmed in its work by the publication of a study: the results of a broad-based survey among Code users confirm that the Code is especially helpful for SMEs – not least of all when it comes to establishing an internal sustainable management system. All of the numbers attest to the suitability of the Code as an easy-to-use means of beginning the sustainability reporting process and also to its relevance for undertakings that have been compiling reports for some time.

The Sustainability Code promotes corporate and social responsibility. Using 20 criteria, it measures the sustainability performance of national and international organizations and companies regardless of their size and legal structure. The EU Commission and German legislator have praised the Code as a suitable standard for fulfilling the reporting obligation. Its area of focus and uncomplicated handling also make the Code an ideal tool for small and medium-sized enterprises.

<http://www.sustainabilitycode.org>

The German Council for Sustainable Development (RNE) was first called into being by the German government in April 2001. The Council consists of 15 public figures. Its tasks comprise developing contributions to implement the National Sustainability Strategy, specifying concrete areas for action and projects, as well as making sustainability an important public issue. Federal Chancellor, Dr. Angela Merkel, is continuing the National Sustainability Strategy and appointed RNE for a further three years on 1 July 2013.

<http://www.nachhaltigkeitsrat.de/en>

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