



Press Release

All systems go for CSR reporting obligation: RNE takes annual stock of the Sustainability Code

Berlin (Germany), 9 January 2016 – The Sustainability Code has undergone its most successful year to date since being launched in 2011. In the run-up to the introduction of the EU's non-financial reporting directive, the number of organisations and companies using the reporting standard developed by the German Council for Sustainable Development (RNE) has risen continuously. Interest in the Code is also growing abroad, with several different language versions already in place.

Rapid rise in declarations of conformity with the Code

The CSR reporting obligation itself and its transposition into national law are imminent. In light of this, the Sustainability Code is experiencing record numbers: the publicly accessible [Code database](#) currently holds 352 declarations of conformity from 175 companies and organisations. In 2016 alone, 58 new users posted reports using the Sustainability Code, which equates to an increase of almost 30 percent. In addition to this, 48 companies have updated their previous year's declarations. The growing interest in the Code can also be seen in the number of people visiting the Code website: following 62,949 and 154,504 hits in 2014 and 2015 respectively, this number has risen between January and December 2016 to over 240,000.

Successful information campaign

This level of success is in no small part due to the work efforts of the Sustainability Code Office and the training partner network in 2016: through numerous informative mail shots as well as events and workshops, representatives of the business and political communities as well as trade associations have been provided with information on the implications of the CSR reporting obligation and the application and benefits of the Code. Core message: the Code is an easy-to-use and effective tool on the one hand to meet the requirements of the reporting directive, on the other hand for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

User-friendly database

The Sustainability Code Office has also taken technical steps to prepare for the rising number of users. The revised Code database is now far more user-friendly. The changes include a considerably easier means of compiling declarations of conformity and the possibility to compare abridged reports with individual criteria. Tables can be incorporated and reports from previous years can be imported and revised to cater to new developments. The next improvement is already being piloted: the database now offers a universal interface to enable the import of content from other databases and reporting tools and thus reduce the amount of time expended for reporting. In future, the interface will furthermore ensure that the reports can be exported to databases, rating agencies and competitors.

Effective partnerships

The Code Team has extended its working partnerships with chambers of industry and commerce as well as trade associations in 2016. The development of industry guides in particular is playing a vital role: an industry guide created with the German Association of Local Utilities (VKU) explaining the Code to waste management and city cleaning businesses and assisting them with its application is just one such new development. Other guides are in the pipeline for banks, universities and the hotel industry.

Companies directly impacted by the reporting directive that operate in the financial industry, along with their associations, have also shown an increased interest in Code training courses.

Expansion of training partner network

The [training concept](#) launched in 2015 has proven its worth. The network has grown from 58 to 102 [training partners](#) in 2016. It currently offers Code-related events in 14 German federal states, the Netherlands, Austria and Switzerland, and provides tailored advice to companies on how to compile a declaration of conformity. Not only has there been a significant rise in the number of trainers but also in the activities undertaken by the training partners: on average, ten events have been organized by Code training partners every month since the beginning of the year 2016.

Internationalization on the increase

The Sustainability Code can also be used outside Germany for CSR reporting purposes and in other EU countries in particular in order to meet the requirements of the reporting directive. Accordingly, it is meeting with ever-greater interest on the international stage. The Code is currently available in English, French, Spanish, Greek, Russian and Hebrew. Interested countries can adapt the standard to meet their specific national needs.

At present, RNE offers its EU partners four separate means of accessing the Sustainability Code and related database. Greece became the first European country to seize the opportunity to develop its Greek Sustainability Code over a two-year period of dialogue.

Bright outlook for 2017

When the EU reporting directive comes into effect in 2017, the Sustainability Code Office will continue to provide information on how easily and effectively the reporting directive can be fulfilled using the Code. Plans are also in place to significantly step up the sharing of experiences, which is already possible through the tried-and-tested Code mentors, for example. More users signify more experiences – the Code wants to make use of these to further advance the green economy.

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 Sustainability 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 German 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 German Sustainability Strategy and appointed RNE for a further three years on 1 November 2016.

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

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