



## Press Release

### **The Sustainability Code goes international: RNE offers four free-of-charge ways to use and adapt the database**

**Berlin 31. March 2016** – This year, the German Council for Sustainable Development (RNE) is offering international partners to create up to four accesses to use the Sustainability Code and its related database. Partners are invited to independently adapt the Code to their country-specific reporting requirements. RNE's offer is free of charge for potential partners. This has been made technically possible following an overhaul of the database, which has also resulted in significantly enhanced user-friendliness for both, companies and stakeholders. Greece is about to become the first European user. The Greek non-profit organization QualityNet Foundation (QNF) is using its data access for the Greek Sustainability Code.

#### **The Sustainability Code goes international**

The Sustainability Code can already be used by international undertakings and organizations as a standard for fulfilling the EU's new reporting obligation on nonfinancial disclosure. The relaunch of the database marks the first step towards establishing an EU-wide system: RNE is offering instinctive interested parties the possibility to adapt the Sustainability Code to their own national needs and will cover the costs of setting up four additional editing accesses which will be administered under the responsibility of the partner.

#### **The Greek Sustainability Code: first adaptation in another EU member state**

The Greek non-profit organization QualityNet Foundation (QNF) will shortly become the first European partner to present a nationally adapted version. Following the inception of the working partnership between RNE and QNF in the autumn of 2013, the German version of the Sustainability Code was initially translated into Greek. This means that the Code is now available in five languages. QNF will be presenting the Greek Sustainability Code in Athens on 7 April 2016. It has been developed on the basis of the Sustainability Code and modified accordingly to suit the specific needs of Greece. In future, QNF will review the declarations of conformity and then publish them in the Greek Sustainability Code database.

#### **Focus on user-friendliness**

On the basis of twenty criteria and selected non-financial performance indicators, undertakings reporting on their sustainability performance by means of the Code compile a declaration of conformity that is publicly accessible in the database. This database has now been fully revamped, making it simpler to use, easier to handle and far more efficient.

But the relaunched version is not just focused on a clear layout and intuitive navigation. Users now also have an array of editing options at their fingertips. Undertakings can create and edit their own profiles and compile contact details as well as new reporting years. Several editors can now also be assigned to one company profile, making it easier for undertakings to involve their external editors.

Moreover, the process of compiling the declaration of conformity has been significantly simplified. Until now, the German Sustainability Code team runs a manual check to ensure that all the details had been supplied. With this process now having been partially automated, the declaration of conformity is only submitted to the Office of the RNE for review after every input field has been completed. Since the latest version will also offer various means of exporting data into other file formats, the declaration of conformity can be used as the basis for a sustainability report or other communications media. A comprehensive user manual will be provided in July 2016.

### **With the Sustainability Code, you can fulfil your reporting obligation**

The German Federal Ministry of Justice and Consumer Protection (BMJV) has now submitted a minister's bill for the transposition of the EU Directive into German law (only German): As of the fiscal year 2017, capital-market-oriented companies and enterprises with over 500 employees and a balance sheet total of over 20 million euros or sales proceeds in excess of 40 million euros as well as companies and cooperatives (with limited liability) are dutifully bound to furnish data on environmental, social, employee-related, and anti-corruption matters as well as on the issue of respect for human rights. The Code provides a framework for reporting on environmental, social and governance aspects. It can be used by companies of any shape and legal structure and fully meets the requirements of the EU Directive in question.

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**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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