



BALANCE

*green and stable*

# Synthesis Report Resume

Co-funded by the  
Erasmus+ Programme  
of the European Union





BALANCE  
*green and stable*

# SYNTHESIS REPORT ON THE NEEDS OF SMEs

IO2 – A4  
Resume

Author: Politeknika Ikastegia Txorierri S.Coop.

Grant agreement	2020-1-KA204-079048
Programme	Erasmus+
Key action	Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices
Action	Strategic Partnerships for adult education
Project acronym	BALANCE
Project title	BALANCE - Green & Stable - Bringing Sustainability and Environmental Action Together for Better Future
Project starting date	01/11/2020
Project duration	24 months
Project end date	31/10/2022

## IO2/A4 Synthesis Report – Resume

BALANCE is an Erasmus+ project that steps on the key priority of environmental sustainability, as set on the Green Action Plan for SMEs, and aims to guide the SME decision makers towards transforming their operations into greener ones, enhancing their environmental awareness while securing their financial sustainability.

In this context, the project partnership carried out an extensive desk research, as part of the first set of actions foreseen by the project proposal. Project partners from Bulgaria, Spain, Ireland, Greece, Cyprus, and Belgium researched the national context for SME's development, available support, and the current green initiatives. They then identified and collected successful implementations of green practices in different companies in their countries.

As uncovered throughout the Report "Green policies and financial sustainability - Analysed Best Practises", appraisal or examination is not only necessary, but possible. The first output of the BALANCE project shows real examples in the partnering countries and provides financial analysis over the current best practices in the business sector. These examples, which are companies that have already implemented greener policies and sustainable policies in the partnering countries, can be used as important trend-setter and can provide input into resolving actual implementation problems. The Report seeks to increase the awareness about the Green Deal, environmental protection and business, steps towards reducing SME's footprint, and more importantly, it gives answers to change-management aspects that SME's decision makers will be capable of adopting.

Some results shown in the Report include:

- Validation of the notion that there is a gap between the big companies and the SMEs as a result the dramatic difference in their resource availability. On the other hand, SMEs are facing harsher regulations regarding their footprint.
- Improvement in the awareness of Environmental Policies and the topics around financial sustainability. It can be utilized as valuable tool to promote green operations to SMEs.
- An increase in the awareness about Green Deal, environmental protection and SMEs footprint while proving business can maintain their financial stability and even thrive due to these changes in business management, thus, answering questions such as what is the cost of an environmentally-friendly business.
- Internal and external factors or challenges related to the operations and management of SMEs. However, they respond mainly by internal adjustments to green practices, because they can be influenced by them.
- Focus on improving their entrepreneurship operation by optimizing their resources by striving to attain an efficient and effective production processes. In addition, however, they consider Company Social Responsibility a sound investment in influencing society.
- Validation that the notion that small and constant efforts do have big impact, since they cultivate a company culture and reputation towards environmental sustainability.

The second output is a holistic training program for the implementation of financially sustainable green policies in SMEs. This training program, “Green and stable SMEs – comprising of the training ECVET based curriculum and materials, presentations, framework”, aims to provide all needed information to SME's decision makers as a direct target group on how to transform their operations without causing financial stress to the enterprises. The training materials developed by partners will provide valuable information tailored for both decision makers and consultants. The curriculum seeks to encourage the transformation into greener practices within small businesses without having to sacrifice their financial stability.

In order to reach this goal, the consortium carried out a needs analysis, which was divided in two parts. Firstly, partners shared an online survey with different SMEs within their countries, the questions covering different issues such as: their needs as businesses, awareness on green policies and level of readiness for change management.

Answers obtained in every country seem to be broadly in harmony with one another, repeatedly finding two main hindrances throughout the survey when it comes to implementing green measures. These are: first, a concern about the investment cost that green measures imply, and the amortization of such investment. Secondly, the lack of generalized knowledge on green measures –be it knowledge on how to carry out green practices, knowledge related to employees’ skills, or knowledge on public funding and policies– in the company. Hence, an urgent need emerges for qualified employees on these topics.

The second part of the needs analysis consisted of a focus group dynamic where each partner invited five stakeholders to provide their input, advice, and suggestions over the Training Curriculum draft.

Bearing in mind how comprehensive the curriculum is and the time-frame limitations, a big difficulty for partners has been to compress everything into a short training. Nonetheless, the final version of the draft will include broadly expressed concerns about how exactly will the Green Deal and green practices in general affect their businesses, their little to no expertise in the field, and the current lack of environmental policies in place in their SMEs.

Finally, we concluded to develop two slightly different Training Curriculums: decision makers on one side and consultants on the other (as the depth of the training will be more profound for consultants whose knowledge on green practices is already significant).

It has been clearly proven that green measures go hand in hand with financial benefits for those SMEs willing to make a first inversion. Therefore, SMEs need to be provided with examples and training on how to transform into greener operations without suffering economically. Hence, the next steps for the BALANCE project include: on the one hand, the completion of IO2, i.e., finalizing the training curriculum, development of the training materials, translation to national languages of the same, and the conduct of pilot workshops with SME consultants and decision makers. On the other, the development of IO3, an e-learning platform to compliment the training program responsive for desktop version, mobile and tablet for the promotion of green measures. This third output will also suppose a powerful tool by itself, allowing the user direct access to information and trainings regardless of the user’s distance from the workshops, or lack of time.