



Output 4 Guide for VET

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

The starting point of the desk research is based on the informal dialogues with SMEs. The method of the analysis is a form of secondary research, namely desk research. The aim is to extend and to ensure the correct contextualisation for the development of the self-scan and learning materials.

The COVID-19 crisis accelerated the need for modernisation and digital transformation of training systems in Europe. CIRCULAR SME SCAN (CSS) connects this with a circular economy which is a strategic approach to a more green economy in support of European economic recovery.

Circular, sustainable, environment-climate friendly operation of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) results in their competitive advantage over their rivals. However the over 25 million European SMEs encounter challenges in grasping these opportunities, as they do not have the knowledge, matching financial, non-financial resources that large companies have to make the due changes. As these enterprises constitute the main body of the business ecosystem in participating countries, a strategic alliance between them and circular economy experts has to be forged. This, especially in the COVID pandemic, generates awareness on and illustrates that outstanding quality, inclusive, digital vocational education tools on circular skills and competences are beneficial for this group.

The main goal of CSS, in support of innovative practices in digital era, aimed at creating a self-scan and learning platform that develops SME circular economy skills-competences by focusing on four main areas of entire SME circularity value chain (supply-acquisition, operation-production, retail, waste stream analysis).

The main results and outputs of the project are:

1. A self-scan, which is an online tool for SME owners and managers to assess their current level of circularity and redirects to multiple tools, strategies and connections to apply a more circular approach in their current business models.
2. A platform which includes:
 - a) Local connections: Becoming more circular is not something one can do on their own. It requires collaborations, synergy and co-work. The platform includes access to several valuable connections in the relevant field of work or region, to support SMEs and guide them in their circular pathways.
 - b) To get a clear picture of how other SME owners and managers like you are upfronting the challenge of becoming more circular, Circular SMA Scan includes inspirational stories and clear examples, small and large, of other businesses.

These are complemented with Stakeholders supporting Guides, which will help you in making the turnaround for the SMEs you support and support them in their efforts to become more circular. This guide is one of these.





Chapter 2 – the CSS guides

The CSS guides target different groups, representing the different stakeholders with the common denominator that all are interested and open towards the innovative methods in the service of circular SME operations.

The present guide is part of this effort and a wider set of guides developed for each of the SAGA stakeholders.

CIRCULAR SME SCAN learner's guide, supports the learners and explains in detail how to use the self-scan and learning materials and platform independently but is also inspires and motivates the representatives of the target groups to use the scan and engage in the learning platform.

CIRCULAR SME SCAN guide for VET: focuses on trainers and training organisations by sharing with them the project approach and the way on how to integrate the topics of SME circularity into the training courses they offer in the area of SME development and skills-competency training.

Supporting SMEs to become more circular: aimed at all those organisations and bodies that can support the SMEs in becoming more circular and how they can take stock of the CSS results to do so. Despite the difference between several of the identified stakeholders in the underlying reasons, all have reasons for wanting SMEs to become more circular. This is the guide that will help them in this effort.

CIRCULAR SME SCAN policy brief: set of guidelines for policy makers assisting them in addressing the uptake of good/best practices in circular SME scanning. The brief also elaborates on how to provide training and education in this SME circularity.

Chapter 3 – Target Group

This guide is aimed at VET teachers and continuing education trainers for people who want to learn more about circularity and circular transition in the business world.

The guide aims to make the resources developed by the Circular SMEs Scan (CSS) project consortium available to trainers and trainers. These resources have been adapted to serve as training materials to support the sessions given by these teachers or trainers.

This guide aims to provide insight on how to make the best use of each of the resources and results as well as ideas on how to include them in your training or teaching session. , The CSS Self Scan together with the theoretical content, can serve as a basis for quality training and education on circularity and circular transition for companies (being it start-ups or established companies.), as well as active and future professionals.





Chapter 4 – What is CSS

The Circular SMEs Scan (CSS) project has developed a range of materials, relevant for VET teachers and trainers, supporting circular entrepreneurship and circular transition for active professionals as well as those that will enter the labour market in the coming years.

Specifically, The Circular SMEs Scan (CSS) provides VET teachers with a Circular SMEs Scan, best practices and examples, interviews and access to courses, networks, websites, books, articles, videos, and podcasts. All these materials have been selected to ensure the best possible quality for the circular transition of companies as well as for VET teaching and training on circularity.

The CSS Self Scan is at the core, through a set of questions on different aspects related to the operation of the business, and assesses the current level of circularity. The questions focus on the size and sector but also on the different processes (acquisition, production, waste management & circularity of goods/services) within the business. Although has been designed mainly with businesses that are active in the manufacturing; agro-food; packaging; retail/commerce and hospitality sectors in mind, the CSS Self Scan can be used by any person or company regardless of their sector.

Within the framework of VET, the CSS Self Scan can be used to evaluate the knowledge of circularity that learners and students have and to highlight good and bad practices in terms of circularity in companies.

Once the CSS Self Scan has been filled in, it gives the level of circularity calculated on the basis of a percentage that will indicate how well or badly the analysed business is doing in terms of circularity. Based on these results, we will be redirected to the learning resources, in line the needs the CSS Self Scan has detected. The following resources are offered in English, as well as in Hungarian, Dutch and Spanish:

- **Examples/best practices:** These are real cases that have been selected to illustrate the possibilities of circularity in business and in particular in SMEs. They are intended to serve as inspirational examples and complementary training material.
- **Courses:** We have compiled circularity training courses on the topic of circularity. you can guide your learners or students to these if they want to learn more. Keep in mind that you can always take advantage of these courses to prepare for the classes.
- **Networks:** defines existing networks which are active in the field of circularity and which can support you, they also have their own publications and reports in the majority of the cases. They are good sources for additional information and knowledge which you can use with your learners.
- **Websites:** contains relevant links related to the topic of circularity in SMEs, the sites offer different contents and a wide range of information on the topic. You can use it to work with your students or learners, or lead them explore by themselves.
- **Books/articles:** Contains references to further reading on the topic of circularity for business, in particular SMEs. Here you can find books, articles and very relevant guides to investigate and learn everything about this topic.





- **Videos/podcasts:** As it's not all about reading, we have collected a lot of multimedia content to make your teaching or training on circularity more enjoyable.
- **Interviews:** includes relevant testimonials on circularity in which different aspects of this topic are explained in more detail.

The website is very well organised and everything is accessible and easy to find. If you don't find what you are looking for, you can use our filter search system to choose how to display the contents.

Chapter 5 – CSS for VET

This guide explains and exemplifies the potential of The Circular SMEs Scan (CSS) results for our in your classes or sessions. Now that you understand all the materials of the project and how to navigate through them, it becomes easier to take advantage of them in the such a way as to get the most out of them.

Here are some tips and ideas for introducing these results and materials in your sessions. Obviously, the last word is up to you, but we hope they will help you.

In general, for both regular VET as well as continuous VET, the CSS Self Scan is recommended to be used both as the opening and closing element of the training and teaching on circularity, as it is the baseline one that establishes the unit of measurement of the circularity.

It is the outcomes of the CSS Self Scan that guide the learner or student to the learning content and resources. Once the CSS Self Scan has been filled in, the approach for regular VET and continuous VET can be slightly different, due to the different type of learners.

5.1. Circular SMEs Scan (CSS) approach for continuous VET education

For continuous VET the approach is based upon the assumption that the learners have prior experience or knowledge and are already active professionals working in different types of companies and interested in circularity, or those active in fields related to business support, innovation and/or circularity and sustainability.

Most probably your learners are active professionals, or have been working for a company and are making a turnaround in their careers. The CSS Self Scan can be used to ask the learners to reflect on the level of the circularity of their company (or one they worked for). You can ask them to do this as self-work (outside or during the session). Then you can ask them to share the outcomes. Using their actual or former companies as baseline for the exercise makes the activity more realistic and closer to the learner.

Once they have shared the outcomes the next phase would be to ask them to think about the improvements they could implement and the actions they could take, of course bearing in mind the limitation of resources and time (as in the reality of the business). Due to the characteristics and prior experience of the learners, you can ask them to prepare the next





session and propose concrete actions, in which they have to use the examples, best practices and other relevant resources from the CSS learning resources as reference and input.

The idea is that the rest of the learners provide feedback and input to the cases present. If the group is quite big you can consider making groups and have the group select the specific company they want to analyse. Of course, you could also provide a case but as said, it is recommended to use the current or former companies of the professionals participating in your session.

Another option is that the learner submits their improvement plan as part of an assignment and possible a way to assess the knowledge level.

5.2. Circular SMEs Scan (CSS) for formal education and training

As can be seen from the previous points, Circular SMEs Scan is a very complete and versatile tool and that is why it is perfect for teaching circularity in the classroom.

In Circular SMEs Scan (CSS) we understand that students have different levels of knowledge of business processes and circularity and therefore sessions should be tailored to this prior knowledge.

If your students have no background in business and circularity, it is recommended that start by explaining these basics in order to get the most out of CSS Self Scan and the training materials.

When carrying out activities using the Circular SMEs Scan (CSS) results and platform, the activity can also be carried out in various ways depending on the size of the group or the general knowledge of the learners and learners. We give you three ideas to carry out these activities in your sessions:

1. The first modality would consist of a more group activity in which the teacher or trainer selects an existing and real company to work on. Together the students will try to gather the necessary information to carry out the CSS Self Scan as realistically as possible.

Once the results of the CSS Self Scan have been obtained and the company's weaknesses in terms of circularity have been identified, the students should form groups to develop and propose ideas to improve the company's situation based on the contents provided in the learning resources included on the platform.

2. In the second one, students should imagine a company or choose an existing one that they want to work on. Once they are completely clear about how the company works in all its processes, they will have to carry out the CSS Self Scan independently, bearing in mind that they are responding based on the information of the company they have chosen.

Once the CSS Self Scan has been carried out, the students are asked to think about potential improvements, using the content as provided on the platform. Here as a teacher, you can talk on a more leading role and focus with the students on





improvements per process or for a specific item (e.g., water). You can give an introduction to the process and topic from a more theoretical point of view and then have the students work with the platform.

This activity makes sense to be carried out individually by each of the students and learners, although they can then engage in a discussion about the reality prior to the measures and the proposed measures in order to encourage critical thinking.

3. The third way of working with the CSS results with your students is to make it an assignment for their traineeships or work-based learning activity. If the company agrees the student can use the CSS Self Scan to evaluate the level of circularity and propose improvements using the learning resources provided on the platform.

Finally, in all the modalities, students can run the CSS Self Scan again to see if there are improvements in circularity in each of the areas that previously, and continue to propose further improvements.

Chapter 6 – Concluding Remarks

As you have seen the results from the Circular SMEs Scan (CSS), although not designed specifically for VET education and training courses, these are versatile enough to provide useful tools and contents for any VET teacher or trainer, and the use of the materials is easily adapted to different educational and training contexts and levels. We already have given some ideas on how to use them, but there are some more things which are good to bear in mind:

- You need to make sure that you have sufficient knowledge and understanding of the topic and the results offered by the project, so as to take maximum advantage of them, and be able to guide, teach or train your students or learners appropriately. The CSS platform has links to courses in your language and which can be helpful for you in acquiring the knowledge level you need to be able to teach or train on the topic of circularity.
- When teaching circularity using The Circular SMEs Scan (CSS) it is not only necessary to deliver these materials to the students or learners, but it also requires the trainer or teacher to facilitate the sessions and guide them in the best possible way.
- Engage companies, ask them to present their company and have the students work on a real case, and propose improvements to the company. The idea that a staff member explains which improvements are possible and which not, explaining why. This adds on to the learning process, and visualises the applicability of the skills and knowledge acquired. This enhances the motivation of your students and learners.
- Connect with experts on circularity and have them participate in your session, maybe by small presentations, this allows to drill deeper into specific subtopics or items you feel are relevant for the students or learners and make the learning process much more engaging.

