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1. INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 incident made it more urgent for Europe's training systems to be modernized and transformed digitally. This is linked to a circular economy, which is a strategic approach to an eco-friendlier economy in support of the European economic recovery, according to CIRCULAR SME SCAN (CSS). Small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) have a competitive advantage over their competitors because of their circular, sustainable, and climate-friendly operations. Even so, over 25 million SMEs in Europe struggle to take advantage of these prospects because they lack the knowledge and complementary financial and non-financial resources that major corporations have to make the necessary changes. Due to the fact that these businesses make up the majority of the commercial ecosystem in the participating nations, a strategic partnership between them and circular economy experts is required.

CSS aims to create a self-scan and learning platform that develops SMEs circular economy skills and competencies by focusing on four main areas of entire SME circularity value chain (supply-acquisition, operation-production, retail and waste stream analysis).

The main results and outputs of the project are:

1. An online tool called the self-scan which allows SME owners and managers to evaluate the degree of circularity in their present business models. The tool then directs users to a variety of other tools, methods and connections.
2. A platform which includes:
 - a. Local connection: It is not possible to become more circular on one's own. Collaborations, synergy and teamwork are necessary. The platform gives us access to a number of beneficial connections in the concerned industry or area, supporting and directing SMEs along their circular pathways.
 - b. The Circular SME Scan combines motivational stories and concrete examples of other companies, both big and small to give a clear





picture of how people in your position as SME owners and managers are approaching the problem of becoming more circular.

This document will serve as a guide that focuses on trainers and training organisations to educate them about the project as well as the integration of topics into their own training courses.





2. Methodology

Validation methodology includes the methods, which will be used to evaluate the content of the CIRCULAR SME SCAN programme and learning process. It guarantees that testing is carried out consistently throughout all project countries, that potential improvements are found, noted and addressed in order to enhance the programme and produce their final versions that are appropriate for the target group.

The recommendations for improvement are all included in the validation report.

The CIRCULAR SME SCAN programme undergoes a double innovation loop for validation:

- . Loop: Internal assessment of the learning environment's functioning and content by partners (their employees and/or collaborator; 2 people/ partner country)
- . Loop: With a larger sample of participants (20 SMEs/ partner country). 15 being from the direct target group and 5 stakeholders. A total of 60 participants from 3 partners.

Chapter 2.1 – First loop: Internal evaluation by partners

The framework is validated of the first innovation loop during which all completed units and learning materials are examined by the experts of the partner organisations (their staff and/or collaborators) focused on the review of the content.

The evaluation of the units will be divided among the project partners as follows:

Intellectual Outputs	Unit	Author	Evaluator
1	A1: Identifying best practices and methodologies	BDF,STRIA, EOLAS	ALL





	A2: Focus Group and Survey	ALL	ALL
2	A1: Defining the indicators	STRIA	ALL
	A2: Developing the self scan	AVACA	BDF, STRIA, EOLAS
	A3: Internal Validation	AVACA	BDF, STRIA, EOLAS
3	A1: Developing the learning content	ALL	ALL
	A2: Best practices and case studies	ALL	ALL
	A3: Developing the platform	ALL	ALL
	A4: Pilot Validation	BDF	ALL
4	A1: CSS learner's guide	AVACA. EOLAS	STRIA, BDF
	A2: CSS guide for VET	BDF	AVACA, STRIA, EOLAS
	A3: Supporting SMEs to become more circular	EOLAS	BDF, STRIA, AVACA
	A4: CSS policy brief	STRIA	BDF, EOLAS, AVACA

Chapter 2.2. – Second Loop: Pilot Testing

Pilot testing will be done with a wider sample of participants who go through the programme (20 SMEs/ partner country).

Around 60 participants from the potential target group and other potential beneficiaries will participate in the testing and validation activities and will be able to make full use of





the developed programme in the duration of the project. The participants of pilot sessions will be asked to evaluate their skills and the impact of CIRCULAR SME SCAN programme. The results of the evaluation will be presented in the validation report.

During the pilot testing, we ask the learners to fulfil a questionnaire seen in Annex 1. The questionnaire results will be collected with the help of Google forms, to get the unified view. Questionnaire will be translated to project partner's languages.

CSS final release – After the end of the pilots, the partners will filter all suggested improvement and decide upon the updates to be incorporated in the final release of the platform. This release will be made available at the end of the project and it will constitute the final product of the project.

3. Pilot testing in Spain

The participants in the pilot testing in Spain were recruited through two channels. Throughout the project lifetime several representatives of the target groups expressed their interest in the results, these were contacted directly (via email, phone or direct personal invitation) and were informed about the fact that the CSS Self-Scan and platform were ready and that they could use it. We informed them about the fact that we needed their support for the validation.

The second set of participants in the validation came from the Multiplier Event which was held on the 28th of April. During the event the results were presented and the participants were invited to use the CSS Self-Scan and platform and give their feedback.

The pilot validation activity started on the 28th of April with the Multiplier Event presenting the CSS Self-Scan and platform in Spanish to the potential participants, the invites for the participation in the event were sent 2 weeks prior to the event, and included an invitation to the event as well as an invitation to participate in the validation only. The validation





phase finalised mid-June to allow participants sufficient time to test the results and provide their feedback.

Participants in the piloting represented the whole range of the target groups from the project:

- **Managers, owners and staff from (micro-)SMEs;**
- **Potential entrepreneurs;**
- **VET teachers and students in fields related to business.**

Additionally, through a post on EOLAS social media an invitation to participate was sent out.

EOLAS is 🥰 feeling fantastic.
Published by Eolas Paula Matias · June 5 at 9:30 AM · 🌐

👏👏👏 Do you have a company or work in a [#smallbusiness](#) that aims to be more sustainable and [#environmentallyfriendly](#)?

Then the [Circular SME Scan - CSS](#) project is for you! 🥰 We invite you to take a look their website at www.circularsmescan.eu to take the self-scan we propose and learn about circularity solutions that add value to your activity.

👇 Don't miss out!

[#ec...](#) [See more](#)

[@CircularSMEScan](#) 
www.circularsmescan.eu
www@ec.europa.eu


Circular SME Scan

What is Circular SME Scan about?

CIRCULAR SME SCAN (CSS) connects digitalisation with a circular economy. Circular, sustainable and environment climate friendly operation of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) results in a competitive advantage and simultaneously contributes to a better environment.

The project started in April 2021 and will run for two years and three months to produce the deliverables which are needed to equip SMEs with circular related materials. The mission of CSS is to upskill SMEs and equip them with useful information & practical materials to apply circularity in their business strategy and contribute to a green economy.

We are inviting you!

So what is exactly circular economy and where do you stand in it as a company?

To find out, go to our website www.circularsmescan.eu and take the self-assessment yourself. Find out how circular your company is based on four processes: manufacturing, assembly, retail and extraction.

Through the website, you will be able to find a compilation of materials on circular economy and how to be more circular. These two tools will be able to help you start the change to make your company more circular.







As the questionnaire was anonymous, it is not possible to identify how many participants came from each of the groups and how many belonged to each group. In total 22 people filled out the survey.

The results from the questionnaire are included below, all of them are from Spain.

1. Por favor, indica tu país de origen

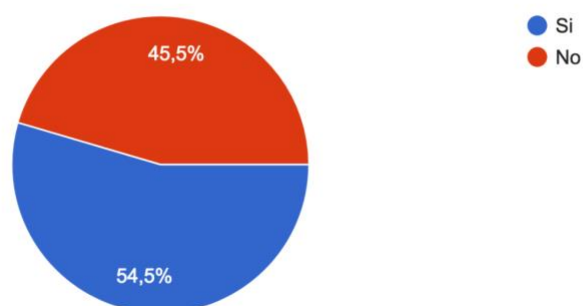
22 respuestas



The responses indicated that 54,5 % of the participants reviewed not only the CSS Self Scan but also all materials included in the platform. This is higher than expected, estimations were that participants would access only those materials considered relevant after filling in the Self-Scan but it seemed interest was raised and they explored all the content.

2. ¿Has tenido la oportunidad de recorrer el programa completo?

22 respuestas



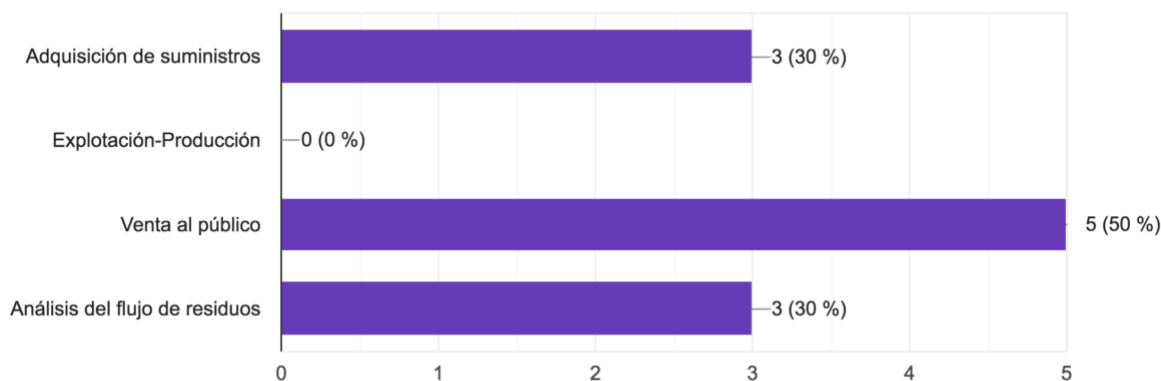
The rest, 45,5% chose the most relevant topic for themselves, such a retail, supplies and the waste stream analysis, which processes were chosen together by 11 times.





2.a. Si la respuesta es no, ¿qué tema(s) has elegido?

10 respuestas



For the 3. question, participants had to write down the first three words that come to mind about the learning programme and they gave the following answers:

1. intuitive, useful, practical
2. useful, practical and concrete
3. comprehensive, easy to use, interesting
4. interesting and useful
5. simple and complete
6. interesting, comprehensive and helpful
7. attractive and beneficial
8. interesting, useful, novel
9. interesting, useful and innovative
10. self-learning and circularity
11. Practical, concrete and useful
12. practical and interesting
13. Specific, tailored, concrete
14. It is easy, complete and can be adapted to each case.
15. interesting but not for my sector
16. useful and innovative
17. useful and comprehensive
18. Innovative, sustainable, green
19. Responsibility, environmental, operational
20. Circularity, innovation and profit
21. sustainability, green economy, recycling
22. sustainability, green economy, recycling

The most common key words are

- **Useful (8 times)**
- **Interesting (7 times)**



- **Innovative, innovation & novel (5 times)**
- **Practical (4 times)**

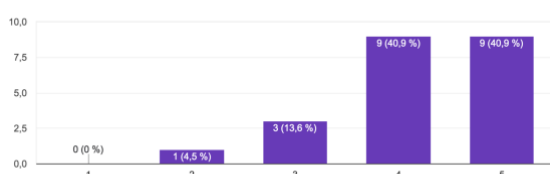
People had to scale their agreement with the following statements in the 4. question:

- a) The goals of the learning programme were achieved
- b) The learning programme met my expectations.
- c) The practical usefulness of the information obtained during the learning programme is very good.
- d) The information and methods learned during the learning programme were novel.
- e) The acquired information and acquired methods can be well utilized during adapting circular activities and/or increasing circularity in SMEs.

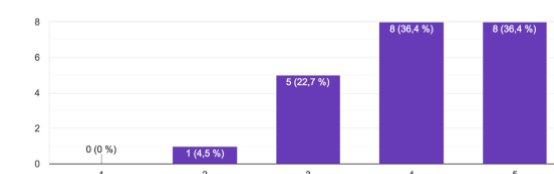
For all the questions asked, almost all respondents answered that they agreed or strongly agreed except for the following:

- a) 3 no opinion 1 who disagreed.
- b) 5 no opinion 1 disagreed
- c) 2 no opinion 1 disagreed
- d) 9 no opinion 1 disagreeing
- e) 2 no opinion 1 person disagreed 1 person strongly disagreed

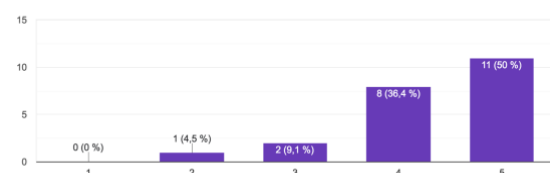
4.a. Se cumplieron los objetivos del programa de aprendizaje
22 respuestas



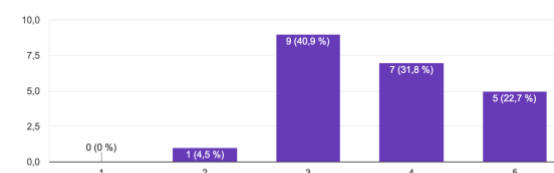
4.b. El programa de aprendizaje cumplió mis expectativas
22 respuestas



4.c. La utilidad práctica de la información obtenida durante el programa de aprendizaje es muy buena
22 respuestas

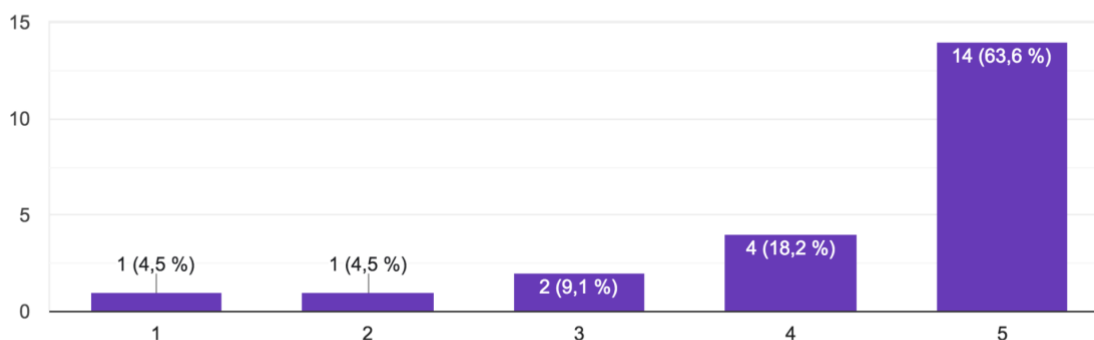


4.d. La información y los métodos aprendidos durante el programa de aprendizaje fueron novedosos.
22 respuestas



4.e. La información y los métodos adquiridos pueden ser utilizados durante la creación y/o desarrollo de la actividad de una empresa social colaborativa.

22 respuestas



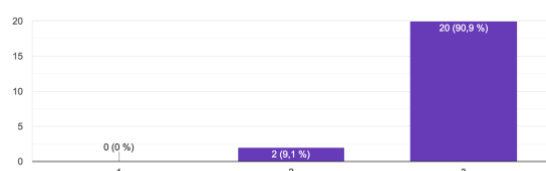
Respondents had the opportunity to make comments and suggestions about the content, structure of the programme in the 5. question, which was not obligatory to fill out. 3 answers were received with the following text:

- Expected the outcome of the self-diagnosis to be some kind of comparative report with other companies in the sector.
- Maybe it's fine for other types of business, but for a shop I don't know.
- Businesses need to be made aware of their ecological responsibility.

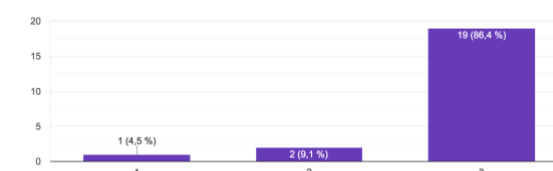
Most fillers agreed that the learning materials were comprehensive, user-friendly and useful in question 6.

However, 2 respondents neither agree nor disagree with any of the statements mentioned above and in the case of the usefulness of learning materials 1 respondent disagrees.

6.a. Amplios/completos
22 respuestas



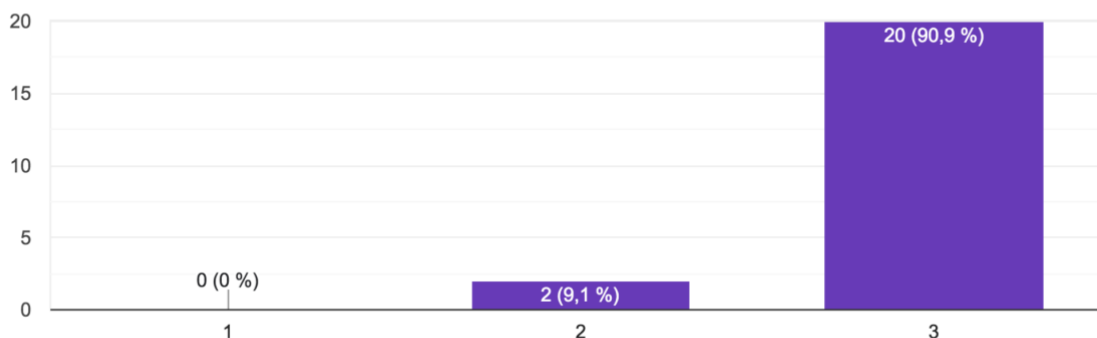
6.b. Útiles
22 respuestas





6.c. Fácil de usar

22 respuestas



The most useful types of materials were different almost in every answer in question 7. such as:

1. Case studies
2. examples/best practices
3. articles
4. Videos
5. examples
6. Articles and examples
7. Examples
8. Videos/podcasts
9. Articles and examples
10. articles and best practices
11. Self-diagnosis is a very useful tool to identify what is really useful.
12. articles and examples
13. Inspirational stories are what I find best
14. Guides
15. Articles
16. Examples
17. All
18. I found it all useful, although the cases of good practice are very enriching.
19. Practical examples from other companies
20. Best practices and videos
21. all material is useful
22. examples and articles

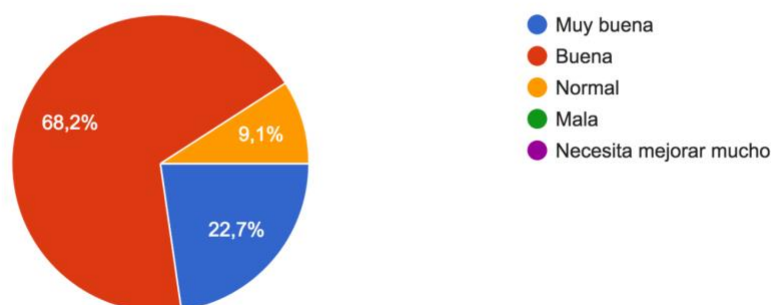
To highlight the most striking results - Good practices and examples were mentioned 10 times, until videos and podcasts 3 times.



The quality of the materials got 22,7 % very good and 68,2% good evaluation from the respondents.

8. ¿Cómo consideras la calidad de los materiales? (Incluida la plataforma)

22 respuestas



The following answers were given as justification for the quality (Question 8.a):

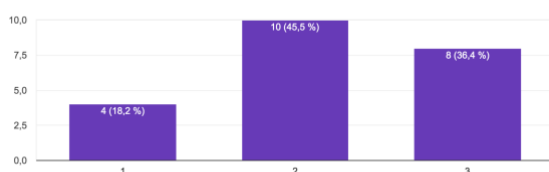
1. The quality of the content is noticeable, although it is aimed at more industrial businesses.
2. It is based on real cases.
3. You can see that there are professionals behind it, who offer the contents in a very enjoyable way for any audience.
4. There are many flaws in the platform. The self-diagnosis does not add much. It is better to browse through the materials and select the ones you are interested in.
5. There is a wide variety of very interesting materials.

As the question was not obligatory to answer, only 6 responses were gathered from the 22 participants.

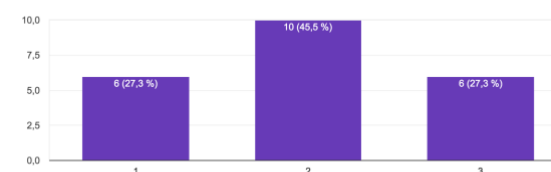
In the next part (9), the self-scan was examined from different point of view: comprehensive, useful, user-friendly.

We can observe some discrepancy on the responses showing that the Selfscan can be improved.

9.a. Amplio/completo
22 respuestas

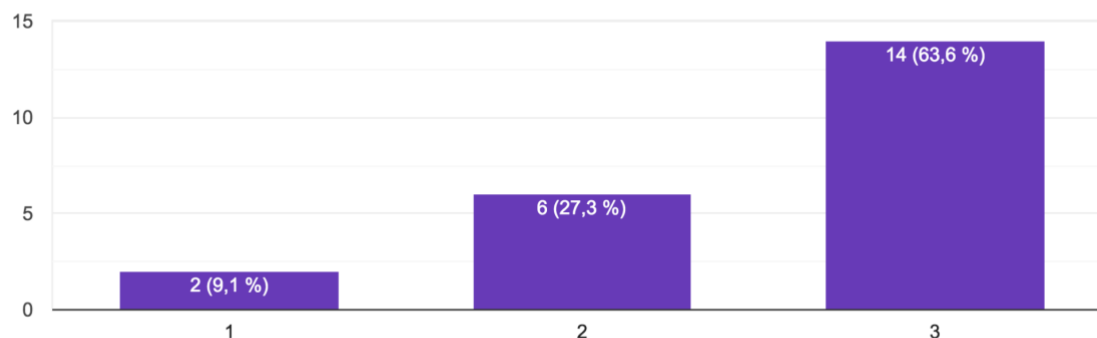


9.b. Útil
22 respuestas



9.c Fácil de usar

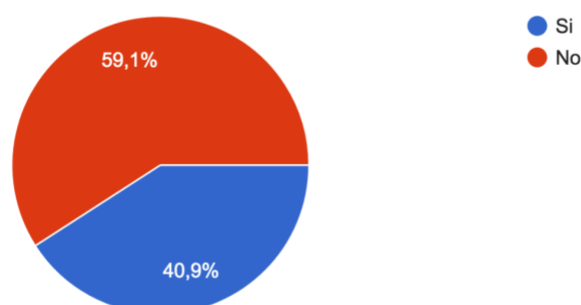
22 respuestas



The 10. question had two parts. First the participants had to answer whether the self-scan was helpful to analyse the circularity level of their business or not.

10. ¿Te ha resultado útil el auto escaneo para analizar el nivel de circularidad de tu negocio?

22 respuestas



Then they had to explain for either answer, but again the explanation was not obligatory. The following answers were still submitted:

Respondents who say it was useful say the following:

1. I have not obtained hardly any information after doing so
2. I have realised that there are many things I can do, simply by taking what interests me from what others are doing.
3. I found all the content I saw very interesting.
4. Because you can easily make a diagnosis of what is most relevant for your company.
5. Although it's good, it's what I found least satisfying about the platform.
6. It has helped me to see where I need to improve.

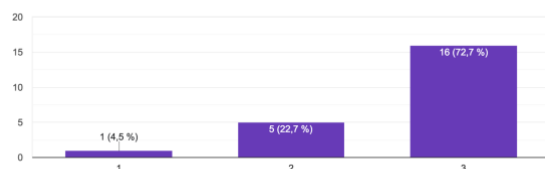
Respondents who say it was not useful say the following:



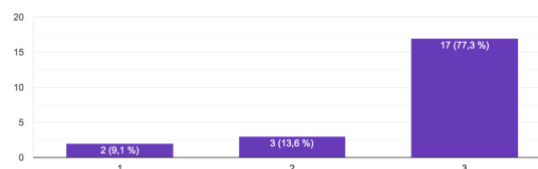
1. I had a failure and could not complete it.
2. I have not been able to do so
3. As I said, you have no report or comparative picture of how your situation is compared to other companies in the sector.
4. It has not worked
5. it is missing that a report should be obtained.
6. This is what I liked the least, I didn't find the result very useful.
7. is what I found least useful
8. I am in retail and although there are a few things that I can use, most of them are more dedicated to the industrial sector.
9. Instead of auto-scanning you can search for the information yourself. It doesn't offer much.
10. It has not provided me with any different information than that obtained by filtering the materials without doing the previous auto-scan.
11. It has not provided me with any different information than that obtained by filtering the materials without doing the previous auto-scan.
12. It hasn't given me much.

The 11. question included the same statements for the platform as it was before for the self-scan. Luckily, the answers are very positive about the platform, mostly saying it is comprehensive, useful, user-friendly.

11.a. Amplia/completa
22 respuestas

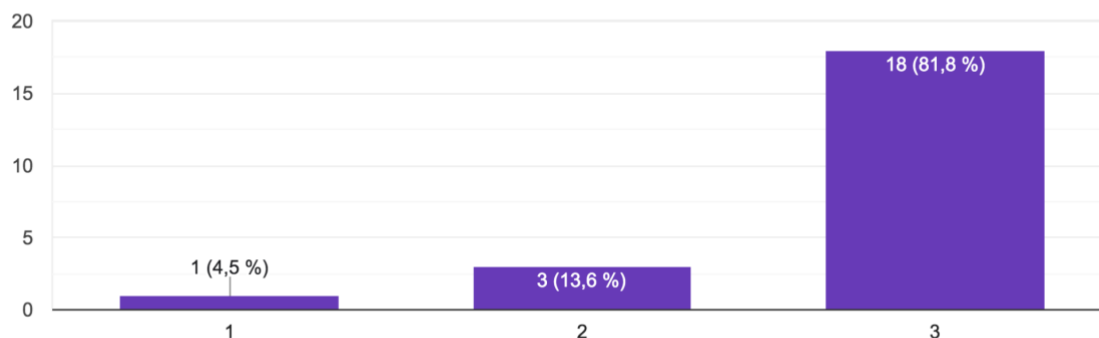


11.b. Útil
22 respuestas



11.c. Fácil de usar

22 respuestas

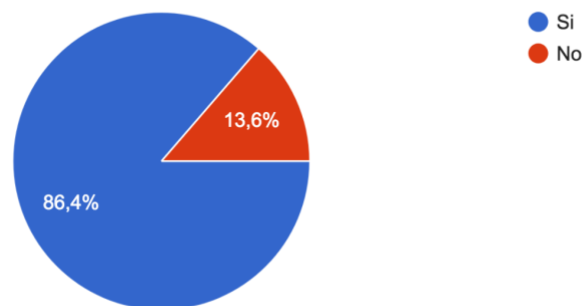




The last question of the survey was about the recommendation of the self-scan tool and learning platform to the responders' business environment. The replies gave an almost clear yes answer. This is a good initiative and it can hold the key for a sustainable circular future.

12. ¿Recomendarías esta herramienta a otras personas y/o a tu entorno empresarial?

22 respuestas





4. ANNEXES

Annex 1. Questionnaire for Pilot testing –

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1jB6qwl_PlaDe6AFxC0Ecn2b1GodXgkCgMyGnRsoX7o/prefill

Encuesta de validación de CIRCULAR SME SCAN (CSS)

Muchas gracias por revisar el programa de aprendizaje online desarrollado por el proyecto CIRCULAR SME SCAN. Rellena este breve cuestionario para ayudarnos a evaluar y mejorar el programa y la plataforma de aprendizaje online.

1. Por favor, indica tu país de origen *

- Países Bajos
- Hungría
- España
- Grecia
- Otra...

2. ¿Has tenido la oportunidad de recorrer el programa completo? *

- Si
- No





2.a. Si la respuesta es no, ¿qué tema(s) has elegido?

- Adquisición de suministros
- Explotación-Producción
- Venta al público
- Análisis del flujo de residuos

3. Describe en tres palabras nuestro programa de aprendizaje *

Texto de respuesta corta
.....

4. Indica en una escala del 1 al 5 cómo de acuerdo estás con las siguientes afirmaciones

Descripción (opcional)

4.a. Se cumplieron los objetivos del programa de aprendizaje *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Totalmente en desacuerdo	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Totalmente de acuerdo



4.b. El programa de aprendizaje cumplió mis expectativas *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Totalmente en desacuerdo	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Totalmente de acuerdo

4.c. La utilidad práctica de la información obtenida durante el programa de aprendizaje es muy buena *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Totalmente en desacuerdo	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Totalmente de acuerdo

4.d. La información y los métodos aprendidos durante el programa de aprendizaje fueron novedosos. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Totalmente en desacuerdo	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Totalmente de acuerdo





4.e. La información y los métodos adquiridos pueden ser utilizados durante la creación y/o desarrollo de la actividad de una empresa social colaborativa. *

Totalmente en desacuerdo 1 2 3 4 5 Totalmente de acuerdo

5. Si tienes algún otro comentario o sugerencia sobre el contenido o la organización del programa, indícalo aquí

Texto de respuesta larga

.....

6. Puntúa en una escala del 1 al 3 si consideras que los materiales son:

Descripción (opcional)

6.a. Amplios/completos *

En desacuerdo 1 2 3 De acuerdo



6.b. Útiles *

	1	2	3	
En desacuerdo	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	De acuerdo

6.c. Fácil de usar *

	1	2	3	
En desacuerdo	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	De acuerdo

7. ¿Qué material o herramienta has encontrado más útil? *

Texto de respuesta corta

.....





8. ¿Cómo consideras la calidad de los materiales? (Incluida la plataforma) *

- Muy buena
- Buena
- Normal
- Mala
- Necesita mejorar mucho

8.a. Explica tu respuesta

Texto de respuesta larga

9. Puntúa en una escala del 1 al 3 si consideras que el auto escaneo es:

Descripción (opcional)

9.a. Amplio/completo *

- | | | | | |
|---------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | |
| En desacuerdo | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | De acuerdo |





9.b. Útil *

	1	2	3	
En desacuerdo	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	De acuerdo

9.c Fácil de usar *

	1	2	3	
En desacuerdo	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	De acuerdo

10. ¿Te ha resultado útil el auto escaneo para analizar el nivel de circularidad de tu negocio? *

- Sí
- No





10.a. Si la respuesta es si, ¿cómo?

Texto de respuesta larga

10.b. Si la respuesta es no, ¿porqué?

Texto de respuesta larga

11. Puntúa del 1 al 3 si consideras que la plataforma es:

Descripción (opcional)

11.a. Amplia/completa *

	1	2	3	
En desacuerdo	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	De acuerdo



11.b. Útil *

En desacuerdo 1 2 3 De acuerdo

11.c. Fácil de usar *

En desacuerdo 1 2 3 De acuerdo

12. ¿Recomendarías esta herramienta a otras personas y/o a tu entorno empresarial? *

- Sí
- No

