

Responsible Supply Chain Management

The construction sector is characterized by a multitude of actors that contribute to the production process. Here, the complex supply chain composition of individual construction companies as well as the importance of sub-contracting reflects the significance of responsible supply chain management in the sector in order to ensure compliance with social, environmental but also qualitative standards along the production process, thereby increasing competitiveness.

Measures that allow for increased transparency and control in the supply chain include:

- Responsible selection of suppliers via a set of specific CSR criteria and correspondent implementation mechanisms;
- Monitoring and evaluation systems for suppliers;
- Awareness-raising and proactive supplier engagement on the promotion of socially responsible behavior;
- Limitation to the number of sub-contractors.

Equal Opportunities

Equal opportunities deals with the valorization of people, regardless of gender, origin, ethnicity, age and others. In this respect, the societal trends such as demographic change, an increasing number of women in higher education or immigrant inflows pose challenges to companies to adapt their recruitment and employee management systems to new conditions. Because of those demographic changes, women will represent an added value for the competitiveness of a company. Many researches show that companies that developed diversity policies revealed that their workplace diversity has contributed to innovation and creativity in the company and is key to business performance and development.

Hence, potential solutions and approaches include:

- Integration of equal opportunity policies into the company's organizational principles and internal governance;
- Tools for work – family life balance via supporting structures and facilitations (flexible working hours, reintegration after maternity paternity leave via trainings, financial contributions).



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BRC PROJECT BUILDING RESPONSIBLE COMPETITIVENESS

Guidelines to Enhance CSR in the Construction Sector

Project leader



Project partners



To get the full text of the Guidelines please visit the "European projects" section of the website:
www.improntaetica.org/?lang=en



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Introduction

Socially responsible and sustainable principles have for a long time been limited to isolated initiatives of single market participants. In recent years however, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has made its way into the mainstream of business and an increasing number of companies are nowadays engaging in the further expansion of CSR into their core business activities.

The project “BRC - Building Responsible Competitiveness”, co-financed by the European Commission, sets out to foster Corporate Social Responsibility within the construction sector.

A multistakeholder approach has been adopted. It aimed to involve different companies operating in the field (both general contractors and SMEs that are part of the supply chain) and relevant stakeholders (such as business associations, trade unions, universities). The project covered a period of 18 months and involved ten partners coming from five European countries: Italy, Spain, Austria, Hungary and Portugal.

The toolkit developed by the project which includes Guidelines for companies, aims to verify and demonstrate how the adoption of socially responsible behavior (not on a one-off case basis but according to a strategic approach) enhances the competitiveness of business in the construction sector and the territory it belongs to.

The CSR areas that have been analyzed are:

- Health and safety
- Eco-compatibility
- Responsible supply chain management
- Equal opportunities



Health and safety

Due to the specific context factors and workflows that apply to the construction sector (intense use of workforce, risk of accidents, et al.), health and safety issues play a vital role in the operational performance of companies.

The implementation of sustainable health and safety conditions has a positive impact on efficiency and employee well-being, in turn, increasing productivity.

Furthermore, the reduction of injuries and their associated costs (penalties, social insurance, absenteeism, fall-out) directly influence operational performance.

Specific solutions to tackle the challenges of health and safety can be:

- Training programmes for workers to increase awareness and knowledge on health and safety issues, also tailored to migrant workers speaking different languages;
- Control systems to ensure the application of safety standards, internally and in the supply chain;
- Use of cutting-edge and safer equipments;
- Improve employees health by physical activities and warm-up exercises;
- Increased transparency and control along the supply chain;
- Develop partnerships with external consultants and local experts to assess and intensify necessary actions in the field of health and safety;
- Use of healthy building materials.

Eco-compatibility

The term eco-compatibility touches upon various issues; from the reduction of CO2 emissions or the re-use of waste materials to noise pollution, urban and landscape impact as much as the aesthetic and practical harmonization of buildings with their surrounding contexts.

According to the European Commission, buildings are responsible for the use of more than 40% of the total energy consumption of the European Union, therewith positioning the construction sector as an important strategic tool for the achievement of environmental policies.

Especially in light of national government targets for the reduction of CO2 emissions and the rising public demand for environmental sustainability (i.e. energy-efficiency), the issue of eco-compatibility implies significant challenges and opportunities for construction companies.

The possible ways to address these issues include the following:

- Eco-compatible conception of buildings (green buildings);
- Sustainable management of construction processes and materials life-cycles to optimize resource-efficiency, waste management, transport etc.;
- Implementation of environmental and sustainability management system standards into the supply chain;
- Stakeholder engagement with regards to the adoption of sustainable practices during the working process;
- Research and Development investments.

