

General information

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Title of the initiative: Fostering Smarter Implementation of EU Sustainability Legislation through Transdisciplinary Education

Summary of the initiative

This initiative seeks to translate the outcomes of a recently completed pilot project on the integrated implementation of EU sustainability legislation into a transdisciplinary course that brings together EUR students and practitioners – including business, supervisors and policymakers – to develop the knowledge, skills and tools needed for smarter implementation of EU sustainability legislation. In doing so, it aims to contribute to awareness raising and capacity building on the topic among business actors and those financing or advising them, supervisors, policymakers and other relevant stakeholders – and thus to realization of the legislation's objectives.

Description of the initiative

Across Europe, companies are facing a rapidly growing body of EU legislation on corporate responsibility and sustainability. Topics range from non-financial reporting (CSRD) and human rights and environmental due diligence (CSDDD) to deforestation (EUDR), forced labour (FLR), packaging waste (PPWR) and carbon border adjustments (CBAM). Each law has its own scope, structure and rules, and responsibility for monitoring compliance is entrusted to different supervisory authorities. Furthermore, whereas all of these laws relate to negative impacts by in-scope companies and their value chain partners alike, they cover different parts of the value chain.

The result is a patchwork of rules and requirements for both EU-based companies and their non-EU-based buyers, suppliers and other value chain partners. When companies implement all these obligations separately, this results in unnecessary paperwork, additional costs, perceived regulatory burden, and a tick-the-box approach to regulatory compliance. In turn, this diverts attention away from the very objective of these laws: protecting human rights, the climate and the environment against the adverse impacts of economic activities.

As part of the pilot project '[Integrated Implementation of EU Sustainability Legislation](#)', commissioned by the Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs, an interdisciplinary team of EUR academic experts developed – in close cooperation with societal project partners and based on input by businesses, business associations, supervisors and policymakers – an integrated approach to EU sustainability legislation. The outcomes of the pilot project, concluded in May 2026 (publication forthcoming), demonstrate that companies can implement the obligations arising directly or indirectly from multiple EU sustainability laws in a coherent and more efficient manner, and show how they can do so in practice. The pilot also demonstrates that an integrated approach does not come about automatically. It requires government-wide coordination, an integrated approach from supervisory authorities and – crucially – awareness raising and knowledge and capacity building among business actors and those financing or advising them, supervisors, policymakers and other relevant stakeholders.

This initiative addresses that gap directly. By translating the project's research insights, analytical frameworks and practical tools into a transdisciplinary course, it equips EUR students — future lawyers, economists, business professionals and policymakers — with the knowledge, skills and tools to support companies and other actors in navigating EU sustainability legislation more effectively. Practitioners from business, supervisory authorities and policy will be actively involved as co-creators of the course, ensuring that it reflects real-world challenges and contributes to building the awareness and capacity needed across sectors and disciplines to make the integrated approach work in practice, as well as to the realization of the legislation's objectives.

Contribution to sustainability

The outcomes of the pilot project reduce unnecessary regulatory burden by helping companies implement EU sustainability legislation more coherently, strengthening its substantive objectives: protecting human rights, the climate and the environment from adverse corporate impacts across global

value chains. Through its integrated approach, the project supports more effective corporate due diligence in relation to adverse impacts such as deforestation, forced labour and CO₂-emissions and in relation to activities in global value chains ranging from the sourcing of raw materials to the use and disposal of end products. Working closely with the EUR researchers involved, EUR's societal project partners – FoodFIRST, RBConnect and Future Up – have translated the legal and academic insights developed into practical tools, training programmes, e-learning and multi-stakeholder dialogue sessions, enabling businesses and supervisors to align compliance processes with real-world sustainability outcomes.

Translating these tools and programmes and the underlying frameworks and insights into a course for EUR students, as the initiative seeks to do, will contribute to a generation of young professionals with the understanding and skills necessary to implement abstract objectives relating to corporate responsibility and sustainability into concrete policies and corporate practice.

Innovation and collaboration (approach & process)

The outcomes of the pilot project are highly innovative because they move beyond a law-by-law compliance mindset towards an integrated implementation methodology that connects diverse EU rules on responsible and sustainable business conduct, building on existing international frameworks and shared logics like the OECD's 6 step model for due diligence. EUR's interdisciplinary team of academic experts has coordinated legal, economic and business expertise and has worked closely together with its societal project partners to identify practical issues, test and refine insights and co-design and pilot practical outputs on the basis of continuous input by subject matter experts from different Ministries, supervisory authorities, implementing bodies, trade associations, unions, ngo's and corporate practitioners, embodying an Erasmian way of working that is impact-driven, co-creative and societally engaged. Outputs include an analysis of (in)coherence between a wide range of relevant laws, a description and explanation of how these can be approached in an integrated manner and on what basis, policy recommendations, multistakeholder dialogue sessions, training for business associations and an e-learning for business practitioners.

Practitioners from business, supervisory authorities and policy will be actively involved as co-creators of the course, ensuring that the translation of the pilot project's outcomes reflects real-world challenges and contributes to building the awareness and capacity needed across sectors and disciplines to make the integrated approach work in practice, as well as to the realization of the legislation's objectives.

Impact and future potential (results & change)

Early results from the project's dialogue sessions and pilots show increased understanding of the regulatory landscape, improved capacity within companies to implement requirements, and reduced resistance within and between organisations, indicating that the integrated approach can indeed both lower administrative burden and enhance substantive sustainability performance. The initiative will broaden the societal impact of the outputs generated by the pilot project by using them to provide the next generation of lawyers, economists and business professionals with the knowledge, skills and tools to support companies and other actors in navigating EU sustainability legislation more effectively. This will in turn contribute to the legislation's substantive objectives: protecting human rights, the climate and the environment from adverse corporate impacts across global value chains.

Use of the prize money

The prize money of €5,000 will be used to cover the costs of curriculum development and instructional design (€2,500), development and adaptation of course materials based on the project's outputs (€1,500), and organisation of a co-creation session bringing together students, practitioners and academic staff to jointly design the course (€1,000). All activities will be completed within the academic year.

Endorsement

Prof. Dr. Harriët Schelhaas,
Dean of Erasmus School of Law

