From Knowing to Knowing How: When Sustainability Becomes a Competence

Since the 1970s, the use of environmental policy instruments has increased significantly, primarily through the application of taxes and fees, followed by subsidies and environmentally beneficial payments. Today, the OECD's PINE database[1] includes historical information on over 4600 relevant policy instruments for environmental protection and natural resource management deployed in around 150 countries. The increase in regulations, strategies, and environmental messages has created a broad knowledge base, driving the revolution in clean technologies through the Green Deal Industrial Plan. This strengthens the competitiveness of European industry with the goal of achieving net-zero emissions and accelerating the transition to climate neutrality[2].

The Green Deal Industrial Plan provides a conducive environment for increasing the EU's manufacturing capacity for net-zero technologies and products needed to meet Europe's ambitious climate goals. However, these climate objectives, combined with the increase in environmental regulations, can pose challenges for entrepreneurs in certain industrial sectors where implementation is more difficult, such as the footwear and textile sectors. These sectors face complex supply chains involving multiple countries, each with different regulations and implementation capacities[3, 4]. In this context, the main challenge is no longer access to sustainability-related information, but translating that knowledge into concrete, coherent, and genuinely sustainable actions within the business strategy.

These regulations lay the foundation for industrial sustainability, but sustainability is a practical competence that must be developed over time through lifelong learning[5], supported by regulatory frameworks, and linked to related competences such as quality, safety, and risk management[6].

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[1] OECD. (n.d.). *Policy Instruments for the Environment (PINE) database*. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.
https://www.oecd.org/en/data/datasets/policy-instruments-for-the-environment-pine-database.html

[2] European Commission. (n.d.). *Green Deal Industrial Plan*.
https://commission.europa.eu/topics/competitiveness/green-deal-industrial-plan_es

[3] Sustainability Directory. (2025, January 30). *What are the key challenges in implementing sustainable textile policies?*
https://fashion.sustainability-directory.com/question/what-are-the-key-challenges-in-implementing-sustainable-textile-policies/

[4] Shibly, M. A. H., & Ul Hoque, M. M. (2025). *Sustainability challenges of the textile industry*. In C.-L. Hui (Ed.), *Textile industry and the environment: Challenges, recent development and future*. IntechOpen. https://doi.org/10.5772/intechopen.1009414

[5] UNESCO. (n.d.). *Education for sustainable development (SDG 4.7)*.
https://www.unesco.org/en/sustainable-development/education

[6] ASQ (American Society for Quality). (n.d.). *What is ISO 26000 – Guidance on Social Responsibility?* https://asq.org/quality-resources/iso-26000

Many errors in environmental communication, often labelled as *greenwashing*, are not due to bad faith but rather to a lack of tools to evaluate information, prioritise actions, and accurately communicate decisions related to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)[7]. The European Commission is taking measures to address *greenwashing* and protect consumers and the environment, as up to 53% of environmental claims are reported to be vague, misleading, or unfounded. Additionally, there are numerous sustainability labels with varying levels of transparency[8].

The ability to effectively transfer knowledge is essential for scaling sustainability and making it a tangible practice within organisations. In this regard, Directive (EU) 2024/825[9], designed to empower consumers against *greenwashing*, reflects the EU's progress toward a more stringent and verifiable regulatory framework. This scenario not only requires practical competences to justify and communicate environmental decisions but also demands progressive preparation: training, internal review, and continuous improvement are key to reducing legal and reputational risks, thereby strengthening organisational resilience. To achieve this change, tools that facilitate the practical application of these principles are essential.

In this context, the *anti-greenwashing* training course from the Erasmus+ VETting Green[10] project offers a unique opportunity to acquire the necessary competences. Designed for professionals and organisations seeking to align their practices with European standards, this course provides the knowledge and tools to identify, evaluate, and communicate environmental claims transparently and verifiably, thus avoiding *greenwashing* and promoting authentic and effective sustainability. Are you ready to take the next step?

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[7] United Nations. (2020, December 10). *Sustainable Development Goals and targets*. https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/es/sustainable-development-goals/
[8] European Commission. (2026, January 19). *Green claims*. https://environment.ec.europa.eu/topics/circular-economy-topics/green-claims_en
[9] European Parliament and Council of the European Union. (2024, February 28). *Directive (EU) 2024/825*. Official Journal of the European Union.
[10] Vetting Green. (n.d.). *Vetting Course*. https://vettinggreen.eu/es/course/curso-vetting-2/?lang=es