



Empowering employees to help mitigate Climate Change: A business–employees alliance promoting behavioural change towards achieving Green Deal goals

Recommendations to businesses/employers to mitigate the negative impacts of Green Deal policies

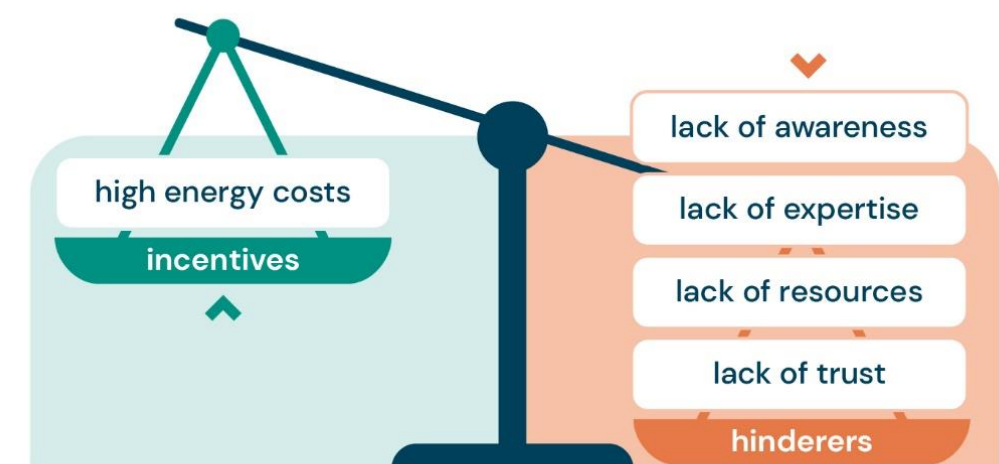
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Recognising the important role that companies can play towards fighting Climate Change and based on the preliminary findings of the ACCTING project, we provide a framework for companies to promote inclusiveness and Green Deal policies within their own workforce. The recommendations span aspects including knowledge creation, incentives, and encouragement of collective initiatives. They are addressed to companies of all sizes, as well as organisations that collectively represent companies at the local or sectoral level. The goal is to empower employees to become agents of change within the company and their communities, recognising and addressing issues that link Climate Change with pre-existing, amplified or newly created vulnerabilities and inequalities.

Findings from ACCTING

Many entrepreneurs have suffered from the crises of recent years, but the explosion of energy costs in late 2021 was more effective in inducing behavioural change. During ACCTING's first research phase, we found that several measures and technologies have been adopted by entrepreneurs or are being considered by them, such as installing solar panels, renovating their places of business, utilising heat pumps or sun boilers, and changing the software system to reduce energy consumption. In contrast, other identified initiatives have met resistance from entrepreneurs due to higher costs. These include intensifying the use of eco-sustainable products, improving water distribution infrastructure, avoiding the use of chemical materials, producing and retailing sustainable products, and promoting sustainable mobility. Furthermore, our research found that:

- There is a lack of a strong, widely accepted environmental culture among corporations, SMEs and the other involved actors, such as a lack of widespread awareness of the relevance of EEMs, and low prioritisation of environmental incentives.
- SMEs are, generally, not well equipped for the effective practice of environmental measures, due to a lack of expertise.
- There is a low level of trust between energy auditors and businesses, which are reluctant to undertake EEMs and EAs because of the possible economic and operational burden.
- Regulations favouring environmental practices are very complex, because measures are often difficult to access, and the different types of public actors involved need to be coordinated.



findings that reflect the issue

Recommendations

General recommendations

- **Develop a comprehensive Climate Change education program for all employees** aimed at
 - a) educating them on the threat of CC and the on the danger of increasing vulnerabilities due to the effects of Climate Change,
 - b) engaging in a creative dialogue on how we can collectively devise responses to CC and
 - c) encouraging behavioural change at the individual and collective level.
 Depending on the local and corporate circumstances this education program can focus on a mix of the following areas:
 - Health and inclusiveness, including healthy food that minimises environmental impact.
 - Green mobility
 - Energy conservation at the office/ production floor and in the home
 - Natural disaster response
 - Biodiversity
 - Inclusion



- **Encourage and incentivise innovation and engagement by rewarding ideas** that conserve energy, facilitate recycling, actively replace unhealthy food, promote the use of green transportation means and, in general, help the company to achieve ambitious environmental and social goals. Do so in line with a well-thought ESG strategy that is ideally co-created with the active participation of the employees and local communities. Ensure that the ESG strategy puts a special emphasis on identifying vulnerabilities (existing and potential ones) and includes means to address them within the working environment. Ideally, ESG should be discussed in the company at all levels and include input from civil society and local communities. As part of ESG, an “Inclusivity Action Plan” may be developed.



- **Implement GD measures within the working environment, i.e.**
 - Serving local and organic food and avoiding plastic in the internal cafeteria/canteen.
 - Creating carpooling plans, coordinated and facilitated by the company's HR.
 - Promoting cycling and the use of public transportation (incentive schemes; cooperation with local authorities in co-defining multimodal transportation that encourages green mobility. I.e., train to bicycle).
 - Encouraging energy saving during heating and cooling periods.
 - Encouraging and facilitating employee participation in energy communities
 - Recycling at every level of activity within the company.

- **Target work-life balance measures**, considering the new challenges that CC creates. Include work-life balance provision to a detailed Corporate Diversity and Inclusion strategy and action plan (part of ESG) that reflects GD and SDGs (especially SDGs 3 {Good health and Wellbeing}, 5 {Gender Equality} and 10 {Reduced Inequalities}).

- **Initiate a cooperation scheme with SMEs** in your locality to collectively provide training and education to employees regarding CC and the GD, enabling them to become agents of change within the SMEs and their community.

Recommendations towards business associations and other business representing entities (i.e., chambers, clusters etc.)

- **Promote best practices with your members**, allowing for exchange of knowledge and experiences. This can be facilitated by:
 - Including special sections in annual conferences and other gatherings devoted to behavioural change for fighting CC.
 - Developing sector-specific guidelines targeting inclusivity measures, work-life balance promotion, and circular economy practices.
 - Organising Local Sustainability Events: Organise or sponsor local events focused on sustainability, such as fairs, workshops, or community clean-up days, to raise awareness and engage the local community.
 - Promoting Local and Sustainable Products: Support the local economy and sustainable practices by promoting local and sustainable products among members.
 - Organising regular training opportunities for the employees and executives of members.
 - Creating rewards celebrating innovation and best practices within members, that target inclusion and green practices.



- Actively **anticipate regulations and advocate for combatting inequalities** in the fight against CC at the local, regional and national level.
- **Engage in social dialogue** with trade unions, civil society organisations, and local communities aiming at creating “alliances for change” and regulatory transformations, driven by employees and facilitated/ incentivised by employers.



- **Promote research and innovation activities** that tackle CC within the working environment within members in cooperation with academia and civil society. Promote related research and innovation agendas to local/ national Research Funding Organisations and with local planning initiatives like the Smart Specialization Strategy.¹
- **Assist in Sustainable Funding Opportunities:** Help their members identify and apply for grants or loans aimed at promoting sustainable business practices.

¹ <https://s3platform.jrc.ec.europa.eu/what-we-do>

Better Stories

In ACCTING, we look for inspiring bottom-up initiatives as Better Stories, a concept borrowed from Dina Georgis² to refer promising practices that can instil ideas for how to advance individual and collective behavioural change as envisioned by the Green Deal.



GREECE

A Greek hotel received an Eco-label accreditation³ thanks to an EU programme. The hotel increased energy efficiency through better thermal isolation, thus significantly decreasing energy consumption, and adopted other relevant measures.



ITALY

An Italian entrepreneur is the owner of a woman-led micro-enterprise which faced serious economic hardships (because of COVID-19 and subsequent crises). Nevertheless, she implemented several ongoing changes to mitigate the enterprise's environmental impact, like recycling of metal and other materials and handling of non-hazardous waste.



NORWAY

Norwegian company⁴ is searching for environmental and ethical sustainability in the fashion field. This is done by focusing on the recuperation of waste materials from other industrial chains, avoiding the use of chemical materials, checking working conditions along the production chain, and recovering traditions from the past, despite the enormous costs of such innovations.



BELGIUM

A network of small companies in the social economy of Flanders⁵ carries out energy scans and energy-conserving measures like insulation of walls/roofs, preferably in the homes of socially and financially vulnerable people. Because the companies are part of the social economy, they employ people who typically encounter problems or don't receive many opportunities in the labour market. I.e., 'low-skilled' workers, people with a disability, etc. Once someone is hired, they are trained/educated to carry out the above-mentioned jobs. Socially and financially vulnerable people often, if not always, do not have the resources required for a thorough assessment of their homes in terms of energy usage and insulation. The free energy scan and free insulation guidance offered by the network address this problem. Given the recent inflationary pressures on energy prices, their services have become more relevant and urgent for vulnerable people.

² Georgis, D. (2013). *The better story: Queer affects from the Middle East*. Suny Press.

³ <https://www.villadespinasuites.com/el/>

⁴ <https://morck.myshopify.com/?fbclid=IwAR2b7IOPjARjkazb3T7d8hy9lchUgcUHLhqAZNKX9W2qyHZQg5Fnz-3Q8Bo>

⁵ <https://www.saamo.be/west-vlaanderen/westhoek/model/papillon/>

Green Deal policy areas

These recommendations are linked to the following Green Deal policy areas:

- [Mobilising industry for a green and circular economy](#)
- [Supplying clean, affordable and secure energy](#)
- [Sustainable and smart mobility strategy](#)
- [Farm to fork strategy](#)

About ACCTING

ACCTING is an EU-funded project aiming to understand the impact of Green Deal policies on vulnerable groups, prevent inequalities, and produce knowledge and innovations to advance behavioural change at individual and collective levels.

Running until May 2025 and based on two research cycles, ACCTING mobilises research experimentation and innovation to promote an inclusive and socially just European Green Deal, focusing on the inequalities produced by its policies.

Find out more about the project and discover more factsheets at <https://accting.eu>

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