



ONLINE

ENTERPRISES

# ESG AS A DRIVER FOR SME GROWTH

FROM RISK MITIGATION TO VALUE CREATION

9 – 27 JUNE 2025

 30 HOURS

*Information Note*



International  
Labour  
Organization



International Training Centre

*This course empowers organizations that work with SMEs to support them by unpacking the concept of ESG (environment, social, and governance) as it relates to SMEs while providing tools, instruments and insights to drive sustainable growth and competitive advantage.*

## BACKGROUND

Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) considerations are steadily influencing how businesses operate and interact with society. Although the concept of “ESG” is often associated with large corporations, many ESG-related frameworks and concepts are becoming increasingly important for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) striving for sustainability and resilience.

Recent legislative developments emphasize environmental sustainability and human rights, while large enterprises and multinational companies continue to demand adherence to social and environmental governance standards. These expectations are communicated through codes of conduct, supplier requirements, and tender regulations, addressing issues such as working conditions, responsible business practices, environmental management—including energy use, water consumption, and waste management—and integrity concerns related to fraud and corruption.

SMEs are expected to adapt to these evolving demands, as they are significantly reshaping both local economies and global supply chains. Understanding these ESG-related expectations is crucial in this context. ESG represents the key elements that define and operationalize a sustainable and responsible enterprise, but it should not be seen as a rigid framework or a specific standard.

Integrating ESG-related policies and business practices presents both challenges and opportunities for SMEs. Limited resources, lack of expertise, inconsistent regulations and diverging or cloudy expectations can hinder their ability to adopt sustainable practices. On the other hand, embracing ESG as an additional business management layer can improve competitiveness, productivity, and access to finance.

In this evolving landscape, intermediary organizations with a mandate for enterprise development both from the public and the private sector, including financial institutions can play a key role. They guide SMEs in meeting ESG expectations by advising on risk management, reporting, and the integration of sustainability considerations into their strategies, policies, and operations, ultimately enhancing business growth and resilience.

Participants will gain an overview of essential topics, discussions, programs, initiatives, and tools that shape business practices of SMEs in terms of ESG. This course aims to equip them with the tools and knowledge needed to support SMEs in embracing ESG, ensuring their long-term success in a rapidly changing global market.

# OBJECTIVES

By the end of this course, participants will:

1. Strengthen their ability to support SME sustainability and ESG practices.
2. Gain a comprehensive understanding of ESG-related frameworks, standards, and approaches and their relevance to SMEs. Examples include ISO 14001:2015 (environmental management), the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, the ILO Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy (MNE Declaration), the UN Global Compact, and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), among others.
3. Be equipped to support SMEs navigate ESG expectations and requirements.
4. Develop skills to provide effective advisory and training services to SMEs on ESG related issues.

# TARGET GROUP

This course is designed for organizations and individuals supporting SMEs, such as:

- SME support agencies.
- Business development service providers.
- Employer and Business Membership Organizations.
- Financial service providers.
- Import and export promotion agencies.
- Other agencies or development partners dedicated to enhancing SME productivity and competitiveness.

# CONTENT

The training programme will cover the following topics:

- Introduction to ESG principles in sustainable business
- The business case and challenges of integrating ESG for SMEs
- How to support SMEs in their ESG journey
- Environmental management and green business strategies
- Social responsibility and community engagement
- Corporate governance and ethical practices
- Developing and implementing effective ESG strategies
- Managing sustainability across the value chain
- ESG reporting, communication, and compliance standards
- Leveraging ESG for market access and financial opportunities

## PROGRAMME STRUCTURE & METHODOLOGY

This online course will be delivered over 15 days (3 weeks) through a blend of live webinars and self-paced study materials, which participants can access and complete at their convenience. The program includes:

- Live webinars:
  - Expert-led presentations, Q&A sessions, and interactive group discussions
  - Key topics covered through case studies, real-life examples, and ready-to-use tools.
- Self-guided learning modules:
  - Structured, interactive content for participants to complete at their own pace
  - Accessible through ITC-ILO's eCampus platform

During the sessions, participants will also have the possibility to further develop their skills by applying the acquired knowledge in group learning exercises.

The course will close with a final assignment that will enable participants to showcase their newly acquired knowledge and put it into action.

The total time investment for the completion of the course will be **30 hours**.

## CERTIFICATION

Participants who successfully complete the course will receive a **certificate of participation**. Certification will be provided through secure digital credentials to ensure validity and prevent fraud.

## PRACTICAL INFORMATION

The course will be delivered in English and it will be held fully online. Asynchronous learning modules will be released weekly through our e-campus, allowing participants to complete them at their own pace throughout the course.

After successfully completing all required activities, participants obtain an official ITCILO Certificate of Participation in Digital Credentials Format.

The tuition fee for this course is **1.250 Euros**.

## HOW TO APPLY?

If you wish to participate in this course, please fill in the online application form available here:

<https://oarf2.itcilo.org/DST/A9718554/en>

Applications must be received no later than **30 May 2025**.

If the participation is sponsored by an institution, the application should be accompanied by a letter from the sponsoring organization.

## MORE INFORMATION

For more information, please contact us at: [enterprise@itcilo.org](mailto:enterprise@itcilo.org).

## **WITHDRAWAL, CANCELLATION POLICY, AND REFUNDS FOR OPEN COURSES**

If an enrolled participant wishes or must withdraw from a course, they may choose to apply to a different course or be substituted by another candidate. The participant must notify the Centre, in writing, of their decision at least 14 days prior to the start date of the course. Cancellation of participation in regular courses will result in the following penalties:

- 14 days or more prior to the start date of the course: No penalty, 100% refund of amount paid less applicable bank charges
- 8 to 13 days prior to the start date of the course: Penalty of 50% of course price, refund of residual amount paid (if any) less applicable bank charges
- 7 days or less prior to the start date of the course: Penalty of 100% of course price.

## **INFO**

### **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT**

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**COURSE CODE: A9718554**