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D2.2.1.
Final report of transnational Pilot – Part1



Deliverable overview

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AI - Artificial Intelligence

CDR - Corporate Digital Responsibility

CE - Central Europe

COEUS - Corporate digital responsibility skills in central European Smart specialization

ESG - Environmental, Social, and Governance

SME – Small and medium Enterprises

A. Executive summary

The document D2.2.1 – Final Report of Transnational Pilot (Part 1) summarises the implementation of the first CDR (Corporate Digital Responsibility) pilot training under WP2 of the COEUS project. Its main goal was to train selected trainers, validate the CDR training concept, and collect feedback on materials and methodology. The training was conducted in five partner countries (Poland, Czech Republic, Italy, Austria, and Slovenia) under the coordination of DIH Slovenia. Due to delays in the trainer selection process, the training period was shortened from three months to one, requiring flexible adaptation by all partners.

B. Introduction

COEUS – Corporate Digital Responsibility Skills in Central European Smart Specialisation – is a transnational project co-funded by the Interreg Central Europe Programme. The project promotes responsible, inclusive, and sustainable digitalisation in Central Europe by strengthening Corporate Digital Responsibility (CDR) skills among SMEs.

Deliverable D2.2.1 – Final Report of Transnational Pilot Part 1 summarises the results of Activity A2.2: Testing of CDR Training to Trainers, implemented within Work Package 2 (WP2). The aim of this activity was to train selected trainers, test how the CDR training concept performs in practice, validate its structure and implementation, and collect feedback on the overall quality of both the training materials and the concept itself for further improvement. The activity was implemented through a combination of on-site and online sessions, using a hybrid, transnational approach that enabled joint participation of trainers from all partner countries and facilitated the exchange of experience and feedback.

Implementation was affected by delays in the preceding activity (A2.1 – Selection of Trainers), which took longer than planned. As a result, the training schedule had to be revised several times and condensed from the initially foreseen three months to one month. Despite these constraints, all partners successfully completed the pilot, ensuring delivery of the full CDR training programme in a hybrid national and transnational format.

C. Execution of the Transnational Pilot – Part 1

The transnational pilot under Activity A2.2 – Testing of CDR Training to Trainers was implemented in May 2025. The process was coordinated by Digital Innovation Hub Slovenia (DIHS), while University North (UNIN) acted as the training provider, responsible for the content delivery and moderation of sessions.
The training was conducted in a hybrid format, combining national and transnational sessions, and following a harmonised schedule across all partner countries.

Training Timeline Overview

Date	Parnter	Session
5-9 May 2025	Lubelskie (PL)	Full training week (Introduction – Modules 1-3 – Final Class)
22-23 May 2025	CMTO-SFG(IT/AT)	Introduction and Module 1
26-27 May 2025	ICUK-DIHS(CZ/SI)	Introduction and Module 1
28-30 May 2025	CMTO, SFG, DIHS, ICUK	Modules 2-3 and Final Class

Each training cycle followed a unified structure:

- Day 1 – Introduction: Presentation of the CDR concept, training objectives, and entry survey.
- Day 2 – Module 1: Basic Principles of Corporate Digital Responsibility.
- Day 3 – Module 2: Privacy, Security, and Ethical Use of Data.
- Day 4 – Module 3: Digital Sustainability, Inclusion, and Accessibility.
- Day 5 – Final Class: Discussion, evaluation, and completion of the final test.

All sessions were led by Prof. Katerina Fotova Čiković, PhD, Prof. Tomislav Horvat, PhD, Prof. Josip Hrgović, PhD, and Martina Mak, mag. oec. from the University North.

Implementation across Partner Countries

Although all partners followed the same CDR training framework and used the same materials and modules prepared by University North (UNIN), the actual implementation differed slightly among countries.

Each partner adapted the delivery to its national context, trainer availability, and logistical possibilities, while ensuring consistency with the agreed content and structure.
Because the selection of trainers (A2.1) took significantly longer than planned, the overall training period was reduced from three months to just one month. To make the most of the shortened timeframe, partners decided to distribute the training across countries, with each partner organising its own local sessions (either on-site or hybrid), and later joining joint transnational online modules coordinated by UNIN.

This flexible approach allowed all partners to complete the programme within the available time, ensured the involvement of trainers from all participating regions, and enabled meaningful exchange of experiences, feedback, and good practices across the consortium.
The following sections describe how the training was implemented in each country, highlighting the main characteristics, specific challenges, and lessons learned.

Poland

The Department of Economy of the Lubelskie Voivodeship organised its pilot training from 5 to 9 May 2025 at the Marshal's Office in Lublin, supported by online connections with UNIN lecturers.

Implementation and Activities

- **5 May**: Introductory on-site meeting presenting the COEUS project and CDR concept. Trainers completed the entry survey and shared their professional experience in digitalisation, training, and CDR-related fields. An introduction to CDR was delivered by UniNorth online.
- **6-8 May:** Independent work with training materials, complemented by interactive Q&A sessions with UNIN experts – online.
- **9 May:** The final on-site meeting focused on practical SME case studies and discussions about implementing CDR principles in daily operations. In addition to the local session, an online closing lecture was delivered by UniNorth.

Challenges and Feedback

- Trainers noted that the handbook and modules contained too much theory and too few practical examples.
- Some topics were too general and did not explore practical details.
- The language used in the CDR materials was sometimes abstract and overly idealistic, which made it difficult to connect with SMEs' operational needs.
- Trainers emphasised the need for an individualised approach to SMEs, based on their size, financial capability, and digital maturity.
- They recommended focusing on:
    - Translating theory into concrete business actions.

- Including case studies from real companies and tools that can be easily applied.

Despite these remarks, trainers confirmed that the training gave them a solid theoretical foundation and they were confident in linking it with their practical experience to guide SMEs effectively.

Czech Republic

The introductory meeting was held at the ICUK premises in Ústí nad Labem, where trainers were introduced to the structure and goals of the COEUS project. Before the start of the training, a preparatory session was organised to present the CDR framework, outline the expected trainer roles, and clarify the next steps.
The on-site sessions included live discussions and were enriched by the participation of several SME representatives, who were invited to selected meetings to observe and provide practical input. The online component, coordinated by University North (UNIN), allowed trainers from other regions to take part in lectures and interactive Q&A sessions.
All training materials — including the handbook, presentations, and supplementary resources — were translated into Czech, while the video lectures remained in English. These materials were shared through a dedicated Google Drive folder to ensure continuous and easy access.

Challenges and Feedback

- The pilot was affected by time constraints due to the shortened schedule; several sessions had to be rescheduled or condensed.
- Technical difficulties occasionally disrupted online sessions.
- The final test, originally designed to have 40 questions, contained 60, which trainers found too long and repetitive.

Despite these issues, trainers reported high satisfaction with the structure and clarity of materials, describing them as relevant and appropriate for upcoming SME collaboration. ICUK's trainers appreciated the dual structure (on-site + online) and highlighted the need for more local examples and continued mentoring opportunities during SME implementation.

Italy

The pilot began with a Launch Seminar on 22 May 2025 at CMTO headquarters in Turin, bringing together CMTO representatives, FPI experts, UNIN lecturers, and selected trainers. The opening session introduced the COEUS project, the CDR framework, and key SME challenges such as regulatory uncertainty and limited strategic capacity. Trainers then engaged in discussions on digital sustainability, ethics, and the connection between CSR and CDR. Between 23 and 29 May, UNIN delivered three main modules covering CDR principles, ethical data use, and digital inclusion. The programme concluded on 30 May with a Final Class, where trainers reviewed materials, shared experiences, and discussed the practical application of CDR concepts in SMEs.

Challenges and Feedback

- While the overall training programme was well-received, several logistical and communication issues were noted. The late announcement of class times caused inconvenience and forced trainers to reschedule other commitments on short notice.
- The live sessions and Q&A segments were praised for their clarity, focus, and engagement, offering valuable opportunities for direct interaction with lecturers. However, some trainers found the recorded lectures less engaging due to the use of a synthetic (artificial) voice, which made the content harder to follow.The handbook was regarded as a well-structured and practical resource, especially its appendices, which were useful for organising future SME work. Nonetheless, participants recommended including more diverse learning materials—such as short videos, detailed articles, and relevant regulatory documents—to better address different learning preferences.

- Module 2 (Privacy, Ethical Use, and Data Security) was considered the most complete and practical, especially due to interactive online elements.Modules 1 and 3 (Basic Principles of CDR and Digital Sustainability, Inclusion, and Accessibility) were perceived as less developed, lacking depth and detailed explanations. Trainers suggested expanding them with clearer examples and hands-on activities.

Austria

The Austrian pilot, coordinated by the Styrian Business Promotion Agency (SFG), was conducted in parallel with the Italian sessions to ensure alignment with the transnational training methodology while also addressing specific national needs. SFG selected a small group of experienced trainers and SME consultants with expertise in innovation, digitalisation, and ESG management. Due to the shortened overall timeframe, the Austrian training began in late May 2025, overlapping with the joint online sessions led by University North (UNIN). Trainers participated together with their Italian counterparts in the introductory session and Module 1, followed by Modules 2 and 3 and the Final Class between 28 and 30 May 2025. Although all partners followed a common framework, SFG adapted its communication and internal coordination processes to better suit the availability and language preferences of Austrian trainers.

Challenges and Feedback

- The pilot was affected by time constraints due to the shortened schedule; several sessions had to be rescheduled or condensed.
- Trainers pointed out a lack of didactic clarity, fragmented structure, and limited practical relevance. The example of *Deutsche Telekom* was considered unsuitable for SMEs and not representative of the Austrian context.
- Two Austrian trainers decided to withdraw from the programme after the first sessions. Although they recognised the importance and relevance of the Corporate Digital Responsibility topic, they felt that the training format and its initial execution did not meet their expectations in terms of structure and practical applicability.

Slovenia

As the Work Package 2 coordinator, DIH Slovenia (DIHS) ensured consistent coordination of all partners' pilots while also conducting its own national training. The Slovenian pilot took place between 26 and 30 May 2025 in a hybrid format — the introductory and final sessions were held in person, while the other modules were followed online alongside other partners. All training materials were translated into Slovenian, and the video lectures were equipped with subtitles, ensuring full accessibility and understanding for all participants.

Challenges and Feedback

The training in Slovenia was successfully implemented despite several organisational challenges, particularly those related to the shortened timeline and the late confirmation of training dates.

Trainers also provided constructive feedback for improving future editions of the programme:

- **Case studies** should include examples from **EU countries** with comparable regulatory frameworks.
- It would be beneficial to invite **entrepreneurs and institutional representatives** as **guest speakers** to share real-world experiences.
- Materials should feature **less theory and more advanced, practical content**, suitable for experienced trainers.
- The **survey tools** should include **open-ended questions** to capture more qualitative insights.
- The **final test** was viewed as **too simple** and not fully aligned with real CDR challenges.
- **Modules 1 and 2** were perceived as **too similar** and could be merged or streamlined.

D. Lessons Learned and Improvement Measures for Future Cycles

Area	Identified Challenge	Planned Action / Improvement Measure
Timing and Organisation	Delays in the selection of trainers (A2.1) significantly shortened the training period from three months to one, causing scheduling pressure and late date confirmations across all partners.	Launch trainer selection earlier and establish a fixed implementation calendar at least two months before the pilot. Assign a national coordinator in each partner country to oversee planning.
Training Content and Relevance	Materials were perceived as too theoretical, with limited SME relevance and abstract terminology.	Revise handbook and modules to include SME-oriented and sector-specific case studies, tools, and interactive exercises.
Repetition and Depth	Overlap between Modules 1 and 2; insufficiently advanced content for experienced trainers (noted by DIHS and CMTO).	Streamline content, merge overlapping topics, and introduce “advanced tracks” for experienced trainers.
Didactic and Visual Quality	Trainers highlighted lack of didactic clarity, fragmented structure, and outdated visuals in slides and handbook (especially SFG and CMTO).	Redesign materials for didactic flow, modern visuals, and improved readability; validate updates through test sessions.
Technical Delivery	Use of synthetic voice in recorded lectures reduced engagement and learning quality.	Replace synthetic narration with human voice; include more interactive Q&A and discussion-based segments.
Localisation and Practical Relevance	Limited local examples and absence of guest speakers	Include national case studies, SMEs,
Evaluation Tools	Pre/post surveys were too generic and failed to capture qualitative insights or open-ended feedback.	Redesign evaluation forms with reflective and open-ended questions; collect both quantitative and qualitative data.
Language and Accessibility	In some pilots, materials were not available in local languages or lacked subtitles	Ensure timely translation and subtitling of all materials; use shared multilingual templates.
Engagement and Motivation	Trainers requested more interactive formats, real-world examples, and practical exercises to stay engaged.	Introduce live discussions, SME case simulations, and digital collaboration tools (polls, workshops, role-plays).

E. Conclusion

The implementation of Activity A2.2 – Testing of CDR Training to Trainers successfully achieved its primary goal of validating the Corporate Digital Responsibility (CDR) training concept and preparing trainers for the next project phase. Despite the organisational and timing challenges caused by delays in the trainer selection process, all partners completed their pilots in accordance with the agreed methodology and within the shortened timeframe.

The pilot demonstrated the relevance and scalability of the CDR training model and provided valuable insights into how the programme can be further improved. Feedback collected from trainers across all partner countries highlighted both the strengths of the concept — such as cross-country cooperation, structured learning modules, and hybrid implementation — and the areas requiring refinement, including content depth, localisation, and practical applicability for SMEs.
Input and feedback from the first pilot testing will be incorporated into the second phase of the pilot test for the CDR training aimed at SMEs. Trainers will be informed of any suggestions for improvement to enhance the effectiveness of the training for SMEs. They will personalise the CDR training by drawing on experiences from the COEUS training, the trainers' prior knowledge, and the specific characteristics of the SMEs participating in the upcoming pilot training.

Lessons learned from this activity will directly inform the update of the CDR Handbook and related training materials (A1.2). Key recommendations include improving planning and coordination, introducing more interactive and practical components, enhancing visual and didactic quality, and ensuring consistency and accessibility across all languages and delivery formats.

Overall, this deliverable represents a significant milestone in building the foundation for responsible digital transformation in Central Europe. By strengthening the competencies of trainers, the project has taken a crucial step toward enabling SMEs to adopt ethical, sustainable, and human-centric digital practices — the core mission of the COEUS project.