



KNOWLEDGE INTO ACTION FORUM

ENGAGEMENT WORKSHOP FORM

TITLE: SUSTAINABILITY QUICK-CHECK IN START-UPS AND MICRO-ENTERPRISES

1. Central Theme

The central theme of the project “Sustainability Quick-Check in Start-Ups and Micro-Enterprises” is to conceptually propose and empirically test an IT-supported assessment and reporting tool for sustainability in start-up and micro-sized enterprises, closing the research and practice gap on appropriate sustainability management, measurement and reporting tools for these companies. Based on previous research on sustainability management tools in SMEs as well as sustainability software applications, the project proposes the contents, layout and practical application of a web-based tool - referred to as the "Sustainability Quick-Check".

2. Going Beyond the State of the Art

For enterprises of all sizes, sustainability is becoming increasingly important. Accordingly, a noticeable increase in academic literature is apparent in two research fields: on one side sustainability for small and medium-sized enterprises (sustainability SMEs) and on the other side sustainable entrepreneurship. While the contributions of both these fields are growing, it appears a sizeable theoretical and research gap has arisen, namely sustainability management practices for start-up companies and micro-enterprises with a conventional business background. Nonetheless, mounting evidence places an emphasis for the inclusion of start-ups and micro-enterprises in the sustainability discourse, as they constitute more than 80% of the registered enterprises in the European Union. Therefore, this research proposal suggests go beyond the current state of art, and begin a completely new strand of academic literature in the very smallest of enterprises.

3. Objectives

The goals of this project will be covered in three complementary steps. First, an analysis of the academic literature reveals the existing sustainability management tools in current practice and research, mostly applied in SMEs at this point. These tools will be grouped in two separate categorical sets: (1) application area – including assessment, management and reporting; and (2) addressed sustainability aspect – including economic, environmental, social and integrated. In a second step, the Sustainability Quick-Check will be developed and tested for application and empirically analyzed using various methods. One particular method is action research, where the researcher becomes actively involved in testing the Quick-Check with multiple start-ups and micro-sized enterprises in the regions surrounding the partner universities (outside of the Leuphana University in Lüneburg, Germany, these partner universities are still to be determined). For example, the project lead will also conduct empirical research in the northern German region. The final step will oversee the dissemination of the Quick-Check to many start-ups and in the various countries through partner universities. This will be conducted via practitioner-based workshops hosted at the Leuphana University and partner universities as well as a free downloadable version on a created website.



4. Anticipated value and impact

The lessons learnt and best practices can be collected and passed on to many start-ups and micro-enterprises. All the while, the researchers are taking notes, transcribing interviews and coding the results to find patterns. This approach to researcher provides mutual benefits for all parties involved, as start-ups benefit from the accompaniment of the researcher (in this case a PhD student) while establishing the quick-check in the firm, and the researcher benefits from intensive, up-close experience and data from the participating enterprises. Start-ups and micro-enterprises that are interested will be asked to be interviewed and take surveys before, during and after the implementation. The results will provide useful insights for academic and practitioner-focused journals.

5. Funding Scheme

The preferred source of funding will be both on the EU level with multiple partners both in the university and practical arenas. The lead applicant is currently looking for partner universities outside of the country of origin, which ABIS could be an excellent platform to find such partner universities with similar research interests. The lead applicant will contribute the majority of the required text, including several work packages, but is open to the offered suggestions from future acquired research partners.

6. General Theme (Choose at least one)

Education

Research

Training



KEYWORDS

<input type="checkbox"/> Social entrepreneurship	<input type="checkbox"/> Sustainable Development
<input type="checkbox"/> Human Right	<input type="checkbox"/> Training, Research
<input type="checkbox"/> Health	<input type="checkbox"/> Corporate Strategy
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sustainability	<input type="checkbox"/> Development
<input type="checkbox"/> Innovation	<input type="checkbox"/> Environmental Sustainability
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Technology	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SMEs
<input type="checkbox"/> Life Style, Sociology	<input type="checkbox"/> Strategy
<input type="checkbox"/> Management	<input type="checkbox"/> Competitiveness
<input type="checkbox"/> Entrepreneurship	<input type="checkbox"/> Consumer Behavior
<input type="checkbox"/> Leadership	<input type="checkbox"/> Corporate Responsibility
<input type="checkbox"/> Cross-sector and Society Collaboration	<input type="checkbox"/> Developing Countries
<input type="checkbox"/> Corporate Social Responsibility	<input type="checkbox"/> Finance
<input type="checkbox"/> Ethics, Human Resources	<input type="checkbox"/> Circular Economy,
<input type="checkbox"/> Business Model	<input type="checkbox"/> Smart Cities,
<input type="checkbox"/> Social Responsibility	<input type="checkbox"/> Water,
	<input type="checkbox"/> Big Data

7. Administrative information:

Information of Person Submitting the Project idea

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