

The DESIGN-MTS project:

Free online training modules for machine tool companies on the fundamentals of Corporate Social Responsibility

The project **DESIGN-MTS – Defining Social responsibility Interventions for a Grounded Networking in Machine Tools Sector** was launched in July 2013 and has brought together partners from industry, academia and the research world to develop a multi-stakeholder platform in the field of corporate social responsibility (CSR) and sustainability. The project has enabled partners to enhance communication on relevant practices in the sector, to encourage the exchange of best practices and to promote stakeholder dialogue along the value chain.

Over the past one year, the project consortium has identified areas of relevance in CSR for the machine tool industry namely, employability, demographic changes, workplace challenges and environmental sustainability. The project has mapped challenges and opportunities in each area, it has assessed the level of awareness and best practices in the sector and has disseminated findings through a series of events as well as the project website. A major objective of the project is to better inform SMEs as regards the fundamental concepts of CSR, international standards and to help them better prepare to respond to growing requirements of customers. Therefore, **online training modules** have recently been launched on the project website and offer free-of-charge courses to companies and trade associations (<http://designmts.eu/training-modules/>).

As societal and regulatory pressure have increased on large customers, such as in transport vehicles industries, they have adopted “codes of conduct” and corporate strategies for CSR. In these strategies, customers outline also their expectations from players in their supply chain in key CSR areas, such as environmental sustainability, labour practices, workplace safety and fair operating practices. Small-sized suppliers of production machines and tools lack sufficient resources and knowledge to understand and assess customer requirements which are often based on international standards such as ISO 26000.

Filip Geerts, CECIMO Director General, states: *“Compliance with customers’ CSR-related requirements has become a matter of competitiveness for machine tool suppliers. It increasingly affects suppliers’ ability to keep their customers and to win new contracts”*. The online training modules are designed to educate SMEs and help them develop their internal capacity to be able to comply with these standards. SMEs will be introduced to fundamental concepts of CSR and implementation methodologies, but also to real-life examples from industry. The DESIGN-MTS project offers thereby a useful tool which contributes helping meet the Europe 2020 strategy’s objective of smart and sustainable growth.

