

ANNEX 2

BULGARIA

WHAT CONCEPTS RELATED TO INNER TRANSFORMATION FOR SUSTAINABILITY ARE USED BY COMPANIES, AND PARTICULARLY SMES?

1. What is the current level of awareness, knowledge and interest in inner transformation for sustainability in SMEs in your country, and what are the concepts/definitions/theories/words/terms that are used in this context?
2. Are there existing definitions or interpretations of inner transformation specific to companies, and particularly SMEs? If yes, how are they different from other contexts?
3. Are there government initiatives, NGOs or academic institutions that are addressing inner transformation? If yes, what concepts/definitions/theories/words/terms do they use in this context?
4. Which COMPETENCIES are being addressed in relation to the existing concepts in your national context?
5. Are there documented examples in your country, of SMEs incorporating inner transformation in their training?
6. Are companies using philosophy as a concept in relation to sustainability (or in other contexts)?

In the Bulgarian context, the term "inner transformation for sustainability" is not yet widely used. But its underlying principles can be connected to existing policies and initiatives that emphasize "behavioral change, sustainability and corporate responsibility". The challenge remains in bridging external sustainability efforts with internal, psychological and emotional shifts within SMEs.

Bulgaria has been actively implementing EU sustainability policies, such as the European Green Deal and the National Recovery and Resilience Plan, which encourage SMEs to adopt sustainable business models. These frameworks emphasize corporate responsibility, social innovation and green practices, which indirectly contribute to inner transformation by requiring businesses to rethink their values, leadership approaches and decision-making processes (European Commission, 2023, Bulgaria's National Resilience and Recovery Plan – Green Transition.).

Additionally, Bulgaria's Innovation Strategy for Smart Specialisation promotes sustainability through research, innovation and digital transformation (Digital Cluster Bulgaria. (n.d.). Innovation Strategy for Smart Specialisation of the Republic of Bulgaria.).

While these initiatives mainly focus on external transformation, they push organizations toward internal reflection on sustainability practices.

In Bulgaria, many SMEs are adopting sustainability practices, but their focus is often practical and compliance-driven rather than a deep, values-based inner transformation. In general, companies implement sustainable actions—such as reducing waste, improving energy efficiency or complying with EU regulations—but they do not fully integrate sustainability as a core belief system that reshapes their organizational culture and decision-making processes.

Promoting awareness and understanding of the interconnectedness of internal and external dimensions is still a very new topic for the Bulgarian companies. The connection of inner transformations and sustainability within the company is also something that Bulgarian companies are not prioritizing, simply because they do not know the topic in details (Ministry of Economy, 2019).

The focus of the Bulgarian companies has predominantly been on external factors, such as technological innovation and digital transformation, to drive sustainable growth. For instance, the Innovation Strategy for Smart Specialisation of the Republic of Bulgaria emphasizes sustainable development through research, innovation and territorial capacities, aiming to enhance the competitiveness and climate neutrality of regions (Digital Cluster Bulgaria. (n.d.). Innovation Strategy for Smart Specialisation of the Republic of Bulgaria).

In the Bulgarian context, inner transformation for SMEs is still an emerging concept, largely tied to sustainable business practices and corporate responsibility. While there is no formal, widely adopted definition specific to SMEs, the idea aligns with efforts toward ethical leadership, social impact, and environmental responsibility. However, due to resource constraints and Bulgaria's post-socialist business landscape, most SMEs approach transformation pragmatically, focusing on compliance with EU regulations and practical sustainability measures rather than deep cultural shifts. This interpretation aligns with global concepts of inner transformation, but in Bulgaria, it is more pragmatic and tied to local regulations (such as EU sustainability frameworks) and the current market conditions (which are increasingly pushing businesses to meet environmental standards).

In Bulgaria, several government initiatives, NGOs and academic institutions are addressing aspects of inner transformation within the broader context of sustainability, business ethics and social responsibility. While there is no specific focus solely on "inner transformation" in the formal sense, the concept is indirectly addressed through programs and initiatives. These focus on promoting ethical leadership, corporate social responsibility and personal development:

- Academic Institutions: Sofia University and The University of National and World Economy (the two most renowned universities in Bulgaria) offer programs on sustainability, corporate responsibility and social innovation, integrating theories of ethical leadership, sustainable business development and social impact. The programs often focus on the psychological and social dimensions of business transformation. While not explicitly labeled as "inner transformation" the concepts of personal responsibility, values-driven business, and ethical decision-making underpin these academic approaches.
- NGOs and Civil Society Initiatives: Bulgarian Centre for Not-for-Profit Law focuses on promoting social enterprises and businesses that adopt ethical practices and sustainability as core principles. The organization works to create an ecosystem that encourages businesses to focus on both economic and social well-being, which aligns with the principles of inner transformation. The Green Balkans Foundation, environmental NGO that promotes sustainable development through community-based actions and environmental awareness, encouraging businesses to integrate personal values and eco-consciousness into their practices.
- Government Initiatives: National Recovery and Resilience Plan focuses on sustainability and green transition, some aspects emphasize organizational culture change to promote corporate responsibility and leadership transformation within businesses. This plan aligns with EU frameworks that advocate for sustainable, inclusive growth, but it often emphasizes external (environmental) changes rather than deep internal transformations. The National Innovation Strategy for Smart Specialisation encourages innovation and sustainable practices among Bulgarian businesses, with an increasing emphasis on social responsibility and ethical business practices, which indirectly touch on the idea of organizational transformation.

Several sources provide valuable insights into the competencies related to inner transformation and sustainability in SMEs, particularly in Bulgaria. A study in the Bulgarian Journal of Business and Economics explores how SMEs in Bulgaria adopt sustainability, addressing competencies like strategic thinking, ethical decision-making, and resilience (Bulgarian Journal of Business and Economics, 2023). Furthermore, the Social Enterprise Journal discusses the growing impact of social enterprises in Bulgaria, highlighting competencies related to social innovation, entrepreneurial thinking, and sustainable

business models (Social Enterprise Journal, 2022). Additionally, the Journal of Sustainable Business and Management examines the role of emotional intelligence and ethical leadership in fostering sustainability, offering a framework applicable to Bulgarian SMEs (Journal of Sustainable Business and Management, 2022). These resources reflect the development of essential competencies that enable SMEs to drive ethical decision-making, personal growth and organizational transformation toward more sustainable practices.

There are few organizations in Bulgaria that have incorporated elements of personal growth and sustainability into the training programs that they offer. However, the approach is often more practical and linked to employee well-being and corporate social responsibility rather than a formalized, deep philosophical shift. Here are the examples:

- Green Balkans Foundation: Though an NGO, this organization works with SMEs to integrate sustainability and social responsibility. They offer training on eco-consciousness and ethical decision-making, helping businesses adopt a sustainable mindset and reflect on their impact.
- Bulgarian Social Enterprise Network (B Corps): The network promotes B Corps in Bulgaria, helping businesses with ethical leadership and personal development. Their training encourages a values-driven culture that aligns with sustainability and community engagement.
- Sofia University MBA in Sustainability - though aimed at broader audiences, include leadership transformation and personal growth with a focus on sustainable business practices, providing future leaders with the skills to drive change within SMEs.

Even though, the concept of inner transformation within SMEs is indeed still emerging, there are some companies in Bulgaria that are actively incorporating these principles into their internal training and development programs. Many social enterprises are leading the way by embedding elements of personal growth, emotional intelligence, and mindful leadership into their training processes. These companies often aim to cultivate ethical leadership and create a values-driven culture focused on sustainability. For example, organizations connected with the Bulgarian Social Enterprise Network (BSEN) often integrate inner transformation concepts such as self-awareness, collaborative leadership, and personal responsibility into their internal practices (BSEN, 2021). As for B Corps, which are businesses certified for their commitment to social and environmental performance, some Bulgarian companies pursuing B Corp certification have adopted inner transformation elements such as empathy, ethical leadership, and emotional intelligence in their internal development programs.

In Bulgaria, the use of philosophy as a formal concept within companies, especially in relation to sustainability, is not widespread but is beginning to gain attention in certain circles. While philosophical frameworks and concepts might not be directly applied in mainstream business training, there are some emerging trends where philosophy is being incorporated, either explicitly or through indirect influences such as ethical leadership, corporate social responsibility (CSR), and holistic business practices. For example, the Bulgarian Social Enterprise Network (BSEN) promotes holistic and mindful leadership in social enterprises, encouraging a values-driven approach to business (BSEN, 2021). Additionally, academic programs, like those at Sofia University, integrate business ethics and sustainability, drawing on philosophical theories such as virtue ethics to prepare future leaders (Sofia University, 2021). The European Commission's report on CSR highlights that Bulgarian SMEs are increasingly applying ethical decision-making frameworks, including utilitarianism and deontological ethics, to address their long-term environmental and social impacts (European Commission, 2020). These trends reflect the growing influence of philosophy in shaping more responsible, sustainable, and ethically driven business practices in Bulgaria.

WHAT PRACTICES (METHODS, ACTIVITIES OR INTERVENTIONS) EXIST TO SUPPORT INNER TRANSFORMATION FOR SUSTAINABILITY WITHIN COMPANIES, AND PARTICULARLY SMES?

1. Are certain inner transformation practices/methods/activities/interventions recognized as important for sustainability for SMEs in your country? If yes, which ones?
2. What are the most commonly used practices/methods/activities/interventions for developing competencies related to inner transformation in SMEs in your country?
3. What specific practices/methods/activities/interventions for inner transformation are currently being used by SMEs and other companies in your country?
4. Do they differ in SMEs and Multinational Corporations? If so, how?
5. What is the nature of these practices/methods/activities/interventions?
6. Are they philosophical in nature, focused on reflection, or rooted in other disciplines like psychology or leadership development?
7. Are there any activities aimed to institutionalize inner transformation for sustainability in companies' strategic priorities, aims or visions, their project management approaches, working structures, regulations, cooperation with other organizations, etc.?
8. What COMPETENCIES are targeted in relation to the existing practices/methods/activities/interventions in your national context?
9. Are there documented examples in your country, of SMEs incorporating inner transformation practices/methods/activities/interventions?



The specific academic literature on inner transformation practices for sustainability in Bulgarian SMEs is limited, but some existing reports and events indicate a developing recognition of their importance in fostering sustainable business practices.

A study by Slavova (Slavova, I. (2015). Socially Responsible Business in Bulgaria – Value, Behavior, Personal Position. Trakia Journal of Sciences, Vol. 13, Supplement 1, Series Social Sciences.) emphasizes that socially responsible business practices in Bulgaria involve changing corporate values, modeling behavior and transforming personal positions in alignment with individual and personal interests. This process integrates corporate social responsibility into organizational culture, highlighting the importance of inner transformation for sustainable business practices.

Additionally, the 17th INSME Annual Meeting held in Sofia, Bulgaria, in December 2021, focused on "SMEs as Drivers of a Sustainable Recovery." The event underscored the role of SMEs in enhancing post-COVID-19 recovery and productivity through innovation and internationalization. While not explicitly detailing inner transformation practices, the agenda suggests a growing awareness of integrating sustainable practices within SMEs, which encompass inner transformation methodologies.

In Bulgaria, SMEs are increasingly recognizing the value of inner transformation practices to enhance sustainability, resilience, and competitiveness. Key approaches include workplace innovation (WPI), continuous learning, and targeted skills development programs. Workplace innovation fosters employee engagement, creativity, and collaboration, enabling organizations to build adaptability and resilience (Supporting Workplace Innovation amongst SMEs in Bulgaria, 2022). Additionally, the National Strategy for Small and Medium Enterprises 2021-2027 emphasizes fostering a culture of continuous learning and digital transformation, supporting SMEs in integrating innovation into their operations (National Strategy for Small and Medium Enterprises 2021-2027, 2021). The Human Resources Development Programme (2021-2027) provides resources for skills development and personal growth, facilitating inner transformation within organizations (Human Resources Development Programme 2021-2027, 2021).

In Bulgaria, SMEs are adopting several practices to support inner transformation and sustainability. These include workplace innovation (WPI), which fosters creativity and collaboration and agile management, which promotes adaptability and continuous improvement. Ethical leadership and personal development training is also common, particularly in social enterprises and B Corps, emphasizing self-awareness and responsible decision-making. Additionally, mindfulness practices and leadership development programs are being implemented to enhance emotional intelligence and

resilience, contributing to a sustainable organizational culture. These methods align with broader strategies to cultivate inner transformation and sustainable practices in Bulgarian SMEs (Supporting Workplace Innovation amongst SMEs in Bulgaria (2022). Workplace Innovation Europe.).

The inner transformation practices in Bulgarian SMEs and multinational corporations (MNCs) differ significantly due to differences in resources, organizational scale, and strategic priorities. MNCs in Bulgaria typically implement more structured and globally aligned practices, such as leadership development programs and mindfulness initiatives integrated into their corporate sustainability strategies, often adhering to international standards like the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These organizations can afford large-scale interventions and incorporate transformation into their strategic vision, fostering cross-cultural leadership and long-term sustainability. In contrast, Bulgarian SMEs generally adopt more localized and resource-constrained practices, focusing on immediate outcomes like ethical leadership, emotional intelligence and team collaboration. These practices are often informal, tailored to the specific needs of smaller teams and less integrated into the company's overall strategic planning. (Supporting Workplace Innovation amongst SMEs in Bulgaria, 2022; National Strategy for Small and Medium Enterprises 2021-2027, 2021).

The inner transformation practices in Bulgarian SMEs are typically practical and adaptable, focusing on emotional intelligence, mindful leadership and ethical decision-making. These interventions are often informal and localized, such as leadership workshops, team-building exercises and stress management programs. The emphasis is on developing self-awareness, communication and empathy to foster a sustainable organizational culture. (Supporting Workplace Innovation amongst SMEs in Bulgaria, 2022; National Strategy for Small and Medium Enterprises 2021-2027, 2021).

The inner transformation practices in Bulgarian SMEs are primarily based on psychology and leadership development, focusing on self-awareness, emotional intelligence, and ethical decision-making. While some practices encourage reflection, they are mainly practical, aimed at improving leadership and fostering sustainable business practices (Supporting Workplace Innovation amongst SMEs in Bulgaria, 2022; National Strategy for Small and Medium Enterprises 2021-2027, 2021).

In Bulgaria, some SMEs, particularly in the social enterprise sector, are beginning to integrate ethical leadership and social responsibility into their strategic priorities and operations. These practices are influencing organizational structures and project management approaches to promote sustainability. However, these efforts are still

developing and not yet fully institutionalized (Supporting Workplace Innovation amongst SMEs in Bulgaria, 2022; National Strategy for Small and Medium Enterprises 2021-2027, 2021).

In Bulgaria, the existing practices for inner transformation in SMEs target competencies such as emotional intelligence, ethical decision-making, self-awareness, leadership development, and collaborative skills. These competencies are aimed at fostering responsible leadership, improving communication, and building a sustainable organizational culture. Additionally, mindful leadership and resilience are emphasized to help employees adapt to change and contribute to long-term sustainability. These competencies are developed through workshops, leadership programs, and other practical interventions focused on personal growth and organizational transformation (Supporting Workplace Innovation amongst SMEs in Bulgaria, 2022; National Strategy for Small and Medium Enterprises 2021-2027, 2021).

Primarily, international companies operating in Bulgaria implement inner transformation practices for their staff, but this is driven by their global sustainability strategies rather than the local Bulgarian context. Among Bulgarian companies, there are only a few examples, such as Sofarma and Telerik Academy, which focus on employee development and inner transformation. However, these companies operate either in the digital technologies sector or in highly profitable industries, where investments in such initiatives are more feasible. This suggests that inner transformation practices are not yet widely adopted across Bulgarian SMEs, especially in sectors with lower profit margins.

WHAT EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS EXIST TO SUPPORT INNER TRANSFORMATION FOR SUSTAINABILITY IN COMPANIES, AND PARTICULARLY SMES?

1. Are there existing training programs specifically focused on inner transformation in your country?
2. What types of organizations (e.g., private companies, NGOs, government agencies, academic institutions) offer such training programs?
3. How do they link inner transformation with sustainability? Or are these topics rather addressed separately?
4. Are these programs tailored for SMEs, or are they part of broader training initiatives?
5. What are the key topics and COMPETENCIES¹ covered in these training programs? What COMPETENCIES are targeted in relation to the existing educational programs in your national context?

¹ The term *competencies* encompasses the terms *skills* and *capacities*

6. Do they for instance focus on certain values, ethics or certain capacities, such as mindfulness, self-awareness or systems thinking?
7. What training methods are effective in developing these competencies in SMEs in your country? Are there successful case studies or examples of effective training?
8. Which formats (e.g., workshops, mentoring, online courses) are most suitable for local SMEs?
9. How do SMEs prefer to engage with inner transformation or sustainability trainings (e.g., self-paced learning, peer-to-peer sessions, and interactive workshops)?

There are no dedicated training programs in Bulgaria specifically focused on inner transformation for SMEs. Instead, training programs primarily target broader themes such as sustainability, leadership and business development, with inner transformation being an implicit or secondary component. For example, there are leadership and personal development trainings offered by organizations such as Telerik Academy and SoftUni, which incorporate elements of emotional intelligence and ethical leadership but they are not framed explicitly within the context of inner transformation for sustainability. So while inner transformation concepts are present, they are integrated within larger frameworks rather than addressed as standalone topics.

In Bulgaria, training programs that incorporate elements of inner transformation, though not explicitly labeled as such, are offered by a mix of private companies, NGOs, academic institutions, and government-backed initiatives:

- Private companies like Telerik Academy and SoftUni provide leadership and emotional intelligence training, while firms like Deloitte Bulgaria offer executive coaching linked to corporate sustainability.
- NGOs such as Bulgarian Social Enterprise Network and Bulgarian Center for Not-for-Profit Law support social enterprises with training in values-based leadership and sustainable business practices.
- Academic institutions like Sofia University and University of National and World Economy integrate ethics, CSR and responsible leadership into their programs.
- Government initiatives, led by the Ministry of Economy and Bulgarian Small and Medium Enterprises Promotion Agency offer CSR and sustainability training with occasional leadership development elements.

In Bulgaria, inner transformation and sustainability are typically addressed separately in training programs. Sustainability-focused programs concentrate on CSR, ethical business practices and environmental issues. On the other hand, leadership and personal

development programs focus on emotional intelligence, ethical decision-making and mindfulness, which contribute to inner transformation but are not directly linked to sustainability. While some programs do integrate ethical leadership and values-driven decision-making, these topics are still largely treated independently, and there is no comprehensive approach connecting inner transformation with sustainability in Bulgaria's SME training programs.

As mentioned above the training programs related to inner transformation and sustainability in Bulgaria are part of broader initiatives rather than being specifically tailored for SMEs. While organizations like BSMEPA, BSEN, and BCNL offer training that can benefit SMEs, their programs often target a wide range of businesses, including larger enterprises and social enterprises. Similarly, private companies and academic institutions provide training that is not exclusively designed for SMEs but can be adapted for them, especially in leadership and personal development areas. In general, while SMEs may participate, the programs are not highly specialized to their unique needs.

Training programs in Bulgaria related to inner transformation and sustainability cover competencies such as self-awareness, emotional intelligence, ethical leadership, systems thinking, strategic vision, problem-solving, and sustainable business practices. These programs, offered by various institutions, aim to develop mindful leadership, resilience, values-driven decision-making, and social responsibility. While some trainings focus on personal growth and leadership, others emphasize corporate sustainability and stakeholder engagement. However, inner transformation and sustainability are typically addressed separately, with no fully integrated approach specifically designed for SMEs.

In Bulgaria, the most effective training methods for developing inner transformation and sustainability competencies in SMEs proven to be interactive workshops, mentorship programs, experiential learning, and online courses. These format are proven to be the most effective, based on previously implemented similar training programs in related topics. Programs such as "Ready for ESG Challenges" (Cleantech Bulgaria, 2023), mentorship initiatives by BSMEPA, and leadership development courses by BCNL and Telerik Academy demonstrate that these formats are already successfully applied in sustainability, leadership, and business ethics training.

Research on SME training preferences (OECD, 2021) highlights that hands-on, experience-based learning is most effective for smaller businesses, as it allows for direct application of new skills. Reports from BSMEPA and BCNL indicate that networking events and collaborative learning environments are preferred, as SMEs benefit from shared experiences and real-life case studies. Additionally, flexible online courses have gained

traction, particularly for sustainability-related topics, due to their accessibility and cost-effectiveness (Cleantech Bulgaria, 2023).

WHAT PARTICULAR GAPS AND NEEDS EXIST IN RELATION TO THE PREVIOUS QUESTIONS?

1. What challenges do SMEs in your country face in taking or implementing inner transformation or sustainability-focused training programs (e.g., budget, time, lack of expertise)?
2. Are there cultural attitudes or norms that may inhibit the adoption of inner transformation practices in SMEs in your country?
3. Are there gaps in the current training programs in your country in terms of addressing inner transformation?
4. What are the most significant gaps in the adoption of inner transformation practices by SMEs in your country?
5. Are there particular competencies that SMEs would particularly need to develop?
6. Are there particular competencies or skills missing in current inner transformation approaches?
7. What challenges do SMEs report in finding or accessing relevant training programs?
8. What challenges do SMEs report in institutionalizing inner transformation for sustainability in their organizations?

Bulgarian SMEs face challenges in adopting inner transformation and sustainability training due to budget constraints, lack of time, and limited expertise. Many SMEs prioritize immediate business needs over long-term goals, making it difficult to invest in training programs (OECD, 2021). Additionally, the lack of specialized knowledge in sustainability and inner transformation further hinders implementation.

Culturally, there is skepticism towards abstract concepts like mindfulness and inner transformation, as they are often not seen as directly beneficial for business outcomes (World Bank, 2022). The hierarchical management structures in many SMEs also limit the adoption of such practices, as they require changes in leadership mindset (European Commission, 2023). To overcome these gaps, cost-effective, accessible programs that clearly link personal transformation to tangible business results are needed.

The gaps in current training programs in Bulgaria are that the most focus is put on general sustainability without addressing inner transformation practices like mindfulness or emotional intelligence. Additionally, training is often not tailored to SMEs, which have unique needs and limited resources (OECD, 2021; Cleantech Bulgaria, 2023).

The key gaps in SMEs' adoption of inner transformation include limited awareness, lack of expertise, and cultural resistance. Many SMEs don't see the link between personal development and business success, and there is skepticism towards abstract concepts like mindfulness (World Bank, 2022; European Commission, 2023). Addressing these gaps requires awareness-building and tailored, accessible programs.

The concept of inner transformation for sustainability is relatively new and not widely explored within the Bulgarian SME sector, and that is why it is difficult to identify concrete competencies that are needed. The topic itself is still in its infancy in Bulgaria, so there is no well-defined understanding or comprehensive data on what competencies might be lacking in this area. Essentially, the absence of widespread engagement with this topic means that it is challenging to pinpoint specific gaps or needs related to inner transformation practices for sustainability within Bulgarian SMEs.

Bulgarian SMEs face several challenges when it comes to accessing and implementing training on inner transformation for sustainability. First, there are few programs specifically focused on this topic, with most training addressing broader sustainability issues. Many SMEs struggle with limited budgets and time, making it hard for them to prioritize or access such training. Additionally, there is cultural resistance to practices like inner transformation, as they are often seen as less practical or relevant to immediate business needs. SMEs also lack the awareness of how inner transformation can benefit sustainability, and they don't have the structures in place to integrate these practices into their organizations.

Since the research specifically focused on SMEs' interest in inner transformation training is very limited, it is challenging to definitively define their challenges in finding such programs. However, based on general insights and related research on SMEs' sustainability efforts, we can make some general propositions about potential challenges they might face, such as budget constraints, lack of time, and cultural resistance to practices like inner transformation.

There is limited specific data on challenges Bulgarian SMEs face in institutionalizing inner transformation for sustainability. However, based on general trends, challenges include a lack of awareness about the long-term benefits of such practices and limited resources to implement them. SMEs may prioritize short-term profits over deeper transformational efforts, and organizational structures may not support these changes. Additionally, resistance to change and traditional business mindsets can hinder the integration of inner transformation practices into company culture.

GERMANY

WHAT CONCEPTS RELATED TO INNER TRANSFORMATION FOR SUSTAINABILITY ARE USED BY COMPANIES, AND PARTICULARLY SMEs?

1. What is the current level of awareness, knowledge and interest in inner transformation for sustainability in SMEs in your country, and what are the concepts/definitions/theories/words/terms that are used in this context?
2. Are there existing definitions or interpretations of inner transformation specific to companies, and particularly SMEs? If yes, how are they different from other contexts?
3. Are there government initiatives, NGOs or academic institutions that are addressing inner transformation? If yes, what concepts/definitions/theories/words/terms do they use in this context?
4. Which COMPETENCIES are being addressed in relation to the existing concepts in your national context?
5. Are there documented examples in your country, of SMEs incorporating inner transformation in their training?
6. Are companies using philosophy as a concept in relation to sustainability (or in other contexts)?



1. **New Work:** New Work in Germany represents a paradigm shift in how work is structured, moving beyond traditional hierarchies toward autonomy, purpose, and human-centric practices. Rooted in philosopher Frithjof Bergmann's vision of meaningful labor, the concept has evolved to integrate sustainability and inner transformation. Startups and agile SMEs are at the forefront, viewing flexible work models not just as logistical adjustments but as opportunities to align business practices with ecological and social values. For example, Berlin-based search engine Ecosia ties its New Work ethos to its mission of reforestation, encouraging employees to reflect on how their roles contribute to planetary health. Inner work—such as self-reflection, emotional intelligence training, and purpose workshops—is seen as critical for fostering adaptability and resilience in fast-changing environments. Consultancies like Sinnwerkstatt and the Dive amplify this by helping SMEs redesign workflows to prioritize psychological safety and collective purpose (especially in Berlin). The discourse around New Work has become a gateway for sustainability conversations, particularly in startups, where "purpose over profit" is a constant. By linking personal growth to systemic change, New Work reframes sustainability as both an individual and organizational journey.

Examples

Sinnwerkstatt (consultancy): helps SMEs redesign workflows with mindfulness and psychological safety.

Betterplace (donation platform): blends New Work with inner development, offering workshops on "Purpose Alignment" and "Resilient Collaboration."

2. **Conscious Leadership (Bewusste Führung):** Conscious Leadership in Germany emphasizes leaders' responsibility to model sustainability through self-awareness, ethical clarity, and trust-building. It challenges traditional command-and-control styles by prioritizing mindfulness, vulnerability, and values-driven decision-making. For instance, Weleda, a natural cosmetics company, trains its leaders in self-reflection practices to ensure business decisions align with its commitment to biodiversity and fair trade. Similarly, organic spice producer Sonnentor hosts mindfulness retreats where leaders explore how their personal values intersect with regenerative agriculture.

Examples:

Weleda (natural cosmetics) trains leaders in self-reflection to balance profit with planetary health.

Sonnentor (organic spices) uses mindfulness retreats to align leadership with regenerative agriculture.

3. Organisationsentwicklung (Organizational Development): Organizational Development has evolved to emphasize cultural transformation alongside structural change, recognizing that sustainability requires shifts in collective mindsets. Current Organizational Development practices integrate concepts like collective intelligence and psychological safety, aiming to create cultures where collaboration and creativity flourish. Workshops, dialogue circles, and co-creation processes are used to dismantle siloed thinking, encouraging employees to view their roles through a lens of shared purpose.

Examples:

VAUDE (outdoor gear) redesigned its culture around "collaborative leadership" and ecological ethics.

Deutsche Gesellschaft für Gruppendynamik und Organisationsdynamik (DGGO) promotes "inner-outer" alignment tools like Theory U

4. Regeneration / Reinvention / Reimagination: Inspired by principles like the circular economy and biomimicry, these concepts urge businesses to move beyond sustainability's "do less harm" ethos toward actively restoring ecosystems and communities. Regeneration involves designing systems that replenish resources, such as closed-loop production or regenerative agriculture, while reinvention calls for rethinking business models to align with planetary boundaries. Reimagination, meanwhile, invites a paradigm shift in how organizations perceive their role—from exploiting nature to collaborating with it. Inner shifts like humility, creativity, and systems thinking are critical here, enabling leaders to embrace uncertainty and innovate within ecological limits.

Examples

GLS Bank (ethical banking) uses "Zukunftswerkstätten" (future workshops) to reimagine finance as a force for good.

Reinventing Society: consultancy that connects inner work with creating ideas for the future.

5. Mindfulness for Social Change: Mindfulness practices, such as meditation and deep listening, are increasingly leveraged to address sustainability challenges by fostering empathy and resilience. These techniques help individuals and teams manage the emotional toll of climate anxiety or social injustice, creating space for reflective, compassionate action. In organizational settings, mindfulness enhances collaboration by reducing reactive behaviors and improving communication, enabling more inclusive decision-making. For instance, companies use mindful dialogues to integrate diverse perspectives on sustainability initiatives, ensuring that marginalized voices are heard.

Examples:

Teikei Coffee (fair-trade) hosts mindfulness sessions to connect employees with coffee farmers' realities.

Brot für die Welt (NGO) trains staff in "compassionate systems thinking."

Achtsamkeit in Unternehmen (various offers) for to use mindfulness as a future skill.

6.Inner Sustainability: Inner Sustainability posits that mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being are prerequisites for organizational resilience and ecological stewardship. German SMEs are increasingly recognizing that burned-out employees cannot drive meaningful change. Green energy provider LichtBlick, for instance, offers "mental detox" programs to help staff manage climate anxiety while advancing decarbonization goals. Footwear brand Wildling Shoes embeds "inner balance" into its corporate values, offering flexible schedules and nature retreats to align employee well-being with its minimalist, eco-friendly ethos. Inner Sustainability also encourages individuals to align their personal values with professional roles, creating coherence that fuels motivation and ethical action.

Examples:

Wildling Shoes (sustainable footwear) embeds "inner balance" into its corporate values.

Siemens runs "Inner Sustainability Labs" to align employee well-being with net-zero targets.

WHAT PRACTICES (METHODS, ACTIVITIES OR INTERVENTIONS) EXIST TO SUPPORT INNER TRANSFORMATION FOR SUSTAINABILITY WITHIN COMPANIES, AND PARTICULARLY SMES?

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9. Are there documented examples in your country, of SMEs incorporating inner transformation practices/methods/activities/interventions?

Art of Hosting: The Art of Hosting is a participatory leadership methodology rooted in fostering collective intelligence and inclusive decision-making. It employs dialogue-driven practices such as World Café (structured conversations in small groups), Open Space Technology (self-organized meetings around shared topics), and Circle Practice (equitable speaking rounds) to create spaces where employees, stakeholders, and leaders can collaboratively address complex challenges. By emphasizing trust and shared ownership, SMEs can align their operations with ethical and ecological goals. For example, networks like UnternehmensGrün (a green business association) use Art of Hosting techniques to facilitate workshops where SMEs brainstorm eco-innovation strategies, such as redesigning supply chains for circularity or integrating renewable energy solutions.

Systems-Thinking and Complexity Training: Systems-Thinking and Complexity Training equips individuals with the ability to analyze interdependencies within ecological, social, and economic systems. For SMEs, this training is critical to transitioning from linear "take-make-waste" models to circular economies or to identify leverage points for sustainability, and anticipate unintended consequences of decisions.

Transformation Coaching: focuses on guiding leaders and teams to align mindsets, organizational culture, and business models with sustainability. In Germany, where many SMEs are family-run, coaches help bridge generational gaps and overcome resistance to change. For instance, an SME transitioning to a Gemeinwohl-Ökonomie (Common Good Economy) model—which balances profit with social and environmental impact—might work with coaches to redefine its purpose, engage employees in value-driven governance, and communicate transparently with stakeholders.

Resilience Training: Resilience Training builds adaptive capacities to withstand disruptions like climate shocks, supply chain crises, or regulatory changes. For German SMEs, resilience is closely tied to the Energiewende (energy transition) and compliance with stringent EU sustainability standards.

Business Ethics: involves institutionalizing moral principles into governance and operations. For SMEs, this might entail adopting frameworks like the Triple Bottom Line or obtaining B Corp certification, which formalizes accountability. Ethical training programs can resolve dilemmas by juxtaposing profit motives with stakeholder welfare, fostering critical reflection. The inner transformation lies in transcending compliance-driven ethics to embrace intrinsic responsibility, where sustainability becomes a non-negotiable value.

Theory U and Presencing (MIT): Developed by Otto Scharmer at MIT, Theory U is a framework that guides organizations through a process of "letting go" of entrenched mental models and "letting come" of new insights. It uses methods like stakeholder interviews, deep listening, and "presencing" retreats (where individuals reflect quietly on collective goals), enabling SMEs to sense emerging trends and co-create sustainable

solutions. For instance, a family-owned manufacturing firm might use Theory U processes to reimagine its supply chain beyond compliance, aligning production with circular economy principles.

Mindfulness and Compassion Training: Integrating mindfulness-based techniques—ranging from short daily meditations to formal Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) courses—helps employees cultivate self-awareness, stress resilience, and empathy. Bigger companies such as Google, Ernst and Young, McKinsey incorporated mindfulness practices into staff routines.

Nonviolent Communication: NVC encourages empathetic verbal and nonverbal communication, focusing on needs rather than judgments. Companies adopting NVC can reduce conflict, build trust, and foster collaborative problem-solving around sustainability challenges. For instance, a small German firm transitioning to renewable energy might use NVC-trained facilitators to navigate employee concerns, ensuring that differing perspectives are heard and integrated into the final implementation plan. The community around NVC practitioners and trainers is spread within Germany (many in Berlin).

WHAT EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS EXIST TO SUPPORT INNER TRANSFORMATION FOR SUSTAINABILITY IN COMPANIES, AND PARTICULARLY SMES?

1. Are there existing training programs specifically focused on inner transformation in your country?
2. What types of organizations (e.g., private companies, NGOs, government agencies, academic institutions) offer such training programs?
3. How do they link inner transformation with sustainability? Or are these topics rather addressed separately?
4. Are these programs tailored for SMEs, or are they part of broader training initiatives?
5. What are the key topics and COMPETENCIES² covered in these training programs? What COMPETENCIES are targeted in relation to the existing educational programs in your national context?
6. Do they for instance focus on certain values, ethics or certain capacities, such as mindfulness, self-awareness or systems thinking?
7. What training methods are effective in developing these competencies in SMEs in your country? Are there successful case studies or examples of effective training?
8. Which formats (e.g., workshops, mentoring, online courses) are most suitable for local SMEs?

² The term *competencies* encompasses the terms *skills* and *capacities*



9. How do SMEs prefer to engage with inner transformation or sustainability trainings (e.g., self-paced learning, peer-to-peer sessions, and interactive workshops)

While the concept of inner transformation for sustainability is quite well known in activist circles, it is still in its early stages in companies and in academia – except for a bubble of start-ups, mostly located in and around Berlin. Some formal and non-formal educational institutions are beginning to incorporate elements of inner transformation into their training programs.

1. Tomorrow University (Global University, situated in Germany): Apart from offering know-how in business and technology, they also integrate personal development and reflection of student's WHY into their program to prepare them to integrate that aspect into their future job as well. <https://www.tomorrow.university>
2. University for Societal Design (Hochschule für Gesellschaftsgestaltung): integrate aspects of the inner (e.g. through reflections) in their study programs around economy and sustainability. <https://hfgg.de/studium/studium-allgemein/>
3. Institute for Transformational Leadership: they offer learning and experience space for those who want to learn transformation competences or who are active in agile systems. Leaders, coaches and anyone interested in deep change processes gain the necessary knowledge to deal with complex transformation dynamics. <https://www.transformational-leadership.de/en/training/>
4. Akademie for Transformations Design: they focus on training that addresses three layers – macro, meso and micro – within the micro, they talk about inner development and change. They refer Transformation design as the art of shaping transitions from our unsustainable present to a desirable and regenerative future. Transformation designers think, feel, and work within complex systems. They identify the universal within the specific, connect the large with the small, and avoid the right within the wrong. They skillfully integrate the three levels of the individual, organizations, and society, and understand their systemic interactions. At the Academy for Transformation Design, they primarily learn the methodological know-how for systemically evolutionary transformation support for organizations and teams. <https://www.transformationsdesign.de>
5. Living Organisation Master (at the Coaching Center Berlin): The program certifies participants as a Consultant & Coach for sustainable organizational development. They dive into a transformative journey that reshapes their understanding of team and organizational growth and redefines the human-work-organization-society dynamic. Crafted by leaders in transformation, the curriculum blends scientific and system-theoretical concepts with practical, real-world project insights. Graduates become change agents, equipped to challenge the status quo and actively shape the future of New Organizations, where organizations prioritize serving people. <https://coachingcenterberlin.de/coaching-methoden-angebote-ausbildung/agile-journey-2/>
6. Inner Green Deal gGmbH: offers trainings, for example Mindfulness-Based Sustainable Transformation Programme. They address the human dimension of sustainability and offer a range of short and longer programmes and empower

people to bring their sustainability goals to life (for leaders and teams, community facilitators, to individuals) <https://innergreendeal.com>

7. The Dive Academy: Participants will acquire essential skills to drive organizational change from within. Their trainings and workshops are designed for those looking to develop in the areas of agile collaboration, change management, sustainability, or regenerative economy. They merge these trainings with inner capacities: <https://www.thedive.com/en/academy>
8. Collective Leadership Institute: builds capacities for transformation literacy, empowers people at the individual level by building the competence for collective leadership, stakeholder collaboration, dialogic- and process facilitation, as well as transformation stewardship expertise. Additionally, CLI builds competence at the systemic level by strengthening the collective capacity of collaborating actors to implement dialogic change and to shift towards more co-creation. CLI offers its certification programme through open courses, on-site courses, tailor made solutions, online learning, and the Young Leaders for Sustainability programme. <http://www.collectiveleadership.de>
9. University Kassel: Philosophy - Sustainability - Criticism (Bachelor): The Bachelor's degree course in Philosophy - Sustainability - Critique at the University of Kassel provides students with a deep understanding of philosophical principles and their application to current sustainability issues. They learn to critically reflect on complex topics, understand issues in a differentiated way and communicate them in a scientifically sound manner. <https://www.uni-kassel.de/uni/en/study/philosophy-sustainability-critique-bachel> or

WHAT PARTICULAR GAPS AND NEEDS EXIST IN RELATION TO THE PREVIOUS QUESTIONS?

1. What challenges do SMEs in your country face in taking or implementing inner transformation or sustainability-focused training programs (e.g., budget, time, lack of expertise)?
2. Are there cultural attitudes or norms that may inhibit the adoption of inner transformation practices in SMEs in your country?
3. Are there gaps in the current training programs in your country in terms of addressing inner transformation?
4. What are the most significant gaps in the adoption of inner transformation practices by SMEs in your country?
5. Are there particular competencies that SMEs would particularly need to develop?
6. Are there particular competencies or skills missing in current inner transformation approaches?
7. What challenges do SMEs report in finding or accessing relevant training programs?
8. What challenges do SMEs report in institutionalizing inner transformation for sustainability in their organizations?



1. Lack of Ethical Grounding in Long-Term Responsibility

- Gap: Existing approaches (e.g., New Work, Regeneration) rather emphasize present actions and psychological resilience but often neglect explicit ethical frameworks. For example, while SMEs adopt circular economy practices, decisions are often driven by compliance, cost savings, or market trends rather than a moral imperative rooted in ideas, such as for example, Hans Jonas's "Imperative of Responsibility"—which argues that humanity's power to alter ecosystems demands a duty to preserve life for future generations. Without ethical grounding, sustainability efforts risk becoming transactional (e.g., offsetting carbon to meet targets) rather than transformational (e.g., redefining success as intergenerational equity). This gap leaves SMEs vulnerable to "ethics washing," where symbolic gestures (e.g., green branding) mask deeper contradictions (e.g., exploitative supply chains).
- Need: Integrate long-term ethical deliberation into decision-making processes, moving beyond short-term cost-benefit analyses. For example, SMEs could adopt precautionary principles when designing circular economies or decarbonization strategies.

2. Superficial Reflexivity on Power and Epistemology

- Gap: Organizational Development and Conscious Leadership practices foster self-awareness but rather don't interrogate deeper power structures, cultural norms, or epistemologies shaping sustainability agendas. For instance, a company may adopt "regenerative agriculture" without questioning how colonial land-use histories or corporate monopolies influence its supply chain. Similarly, New Work's focus on autonomy often ignores how neoliberal individualism perpetuates inequality. Philosophical action through requires understanding the social and historical contexts that shape values. Without critical reflexivity, SMEs risk reinforcing dominant paradigms (e.g., growth-at-all-costs) even while pursuing "sustainability."
- Need: Develop tools for critical reflection on systemic inequities and dominant paradigms (e.g., decolonizing sustainability frameworks, questioning growth-centric assumptions). Programs could pair mindfulness with critiques of extractive capitalism.

3. Absence of Phronesis (Practical Wisdom)

- Gap: Systems-thinking training and resilience programs focus rather on technical adaptability but lack Aristotle's phronesis—context-sensitive moral discernment essential for navigating trade-offs (e.g., balancing profit with ecological restoration). For example, an SME may adopt renewable energy to meet EU standards but fail to weigh trade-offs between local job losses and global emissions reductions. In complex systems, rigid rules (e.g., ESG checklists) often clash with ethical nuance. Phronesis bridges this gap by fostering discernment in ambiguous scenarios (e.g., prioritizing stakeholder well-being over short-term profits).
- Need: Cultivate phronesis through case-based ethical dilemmas, emphasizing stakeholder dialogue and intergenerational justice.

4. Overlooking Uncertainty as a Generative Space



- Gap: While practices like Art of Hosting encourage dialogue, they often seek consensus rather than ideas, such as embraced by Haraway's "staying with the trouble". For example, SMEs may default to "proven" sustainability strategies (e.g., recycling programs) rather than experimenting with radical alternatives (e.g., degrowth models). The metacrisis defies linear solutions though and clinging to certainty stifles the creativity needed for transformative change.
- Need: Design iterative, open-ended processes (e.g., "future workshops" that tolerate ambiguity) and integrate communicative action to legitimize decisions amid complexity.

5. Fragmented Transdisciplinarity

- Gap: Educational programs (e.g., Transformation Design, Inner Green Deal) blend inner work with sustainability but seldom bridge how ones philosophy contributes and / or hinders sustainability. For instance, mindfulness training may reduce stress without linking to ethics (e.g., Why should we care about sustainability?), while systems-thinking courses omit epistemological critiques (e.g., Whose knowledge counts in climate models?). Complexity requires weaving scientific, ethical, and cultural knowledge. Without this integration, efforts remain siloed and reductionist.
- Need: Develop curricula that explicitly link psychological practices (e.g. mindfulness) to philosophical inquiry (ethics, epistemology) and ecological knowledge, fostering transdisciplinary literacy.

6. SME Accessibility to Philosophical Frameworks

- Gap: SMEs often lack resources to engage deeply with philosophical concepts, leading to tokenistic adoption of terms like "regeneration" without systemic ethical grounding. For example, a family-owned organic farm may adopt regenerative practices but view Jonas's "responsibility" as abstract academic jargon rather than a practical governance tool. Philosophy remains siloed in academia, while SMEs—key drivers of sustainability transitions—miss out on frameworks that could anchor their efforts in deeper purpose.
- Need: Create accessible, practice-oriented guides and workshops translating philosophical principles (e.g., Jonas's responsibility, phronesis) into SME-friendly tools (e.g., ethical decision-making checklists, reflective governance models).

7. Challenges in Scaling Tailored Interventions for SMEs

- Gap: Many inner transformation practices are designed for larger corporations, making them resource-intensive and difficult for SMEs to adopt.
- Need: Design modular, low-cost frameworks (e.g., "Transformation Toolkits") that allow SMEs to implement practices incrementally. For example, bite-sized mindfulness modules or DIY ethical governance templates that scale with business growth.

8. Underdeveloped Intergenerational and Cultural Dialogue



- Gap: Family-owned SMEs often face generational clashes in values and sustainability approaches, yet existing tools don't bridge these divides through inner transformation.
- Need: Facilitate intergenerational visioning workshops that blend legacy values with innovative sustainability practices. Example: "Legacy Circles" where elders and younger leaders co-design purpose-driven succession plans.

9. Superficial Engagement with Ethical Dilemmas in Practice

- Gap: Many programs teach abstract ethical principles (e.g., "do no harm") but lack tools for navigating real-world trade-offs, such as balancing profit with ecological restoration or addressing conflicting stakeholder interests. For example, an SME may learn about circular economy principles but struggle to reconcile the ethical implications of sourcing recycled materials from regions with exploitative labor practices.
- Need: Integrate applied ethics labs into programs, using case studies and role-playing scenarios to practice ethical discernment. Example: Workshops where SMEs simulate dilemmas like prioritizing local biodiversity over short-term job creation, guided by frameworks like Levinas's "ethics of care" or Rawls's "veil of ignorance."

10. Neglect of Non-Western and Indigenous Philosophies

- Gap: Programs often center Eurocentric philosophies while marginalizing non-Western wisdom, such as Ubuntu ("I am because we are") or Buen Vivir ("living well in harmony with nature"). This limits SMEs' ability to design culturally inclusive sustainability strategies.
- Need: Integrate indigenous knowledge and philosophers in curricula that blend Western sustainability frameworks with relational ontologies. Example: Training SMEs in Andean "Ayni" (reciprocity) principles to reframe supply chains as mutualistic networks.

11. Epistemic Injustice in Knowledge Production

- Gap: Programs rarely question whose knowledge shapes sustainability agendas (e.g., privileging corporate ESG metrics over grassroots ecological wisdom). This reinforces power imbalances, as marginalized voices are excluded from defining "sustainability."
- Need: Teach epistemic humility through participatory methods like "knowledge dialogues," where SMEs engage farmers, indigenous communities, or workers in co-creating sustainability criteria. Example: A food SME collaborating with smallholders to redefine "regenerative agriculture" beyond corporate greenwashing.

12. Overlooking Existential Dimensions of Sustainability

- Gap: Programs avoid existential questions about mortality, meaning, and human-nature interdependence, which are central to motivating deep transformation. For instance, few explore how confronting ecological grief or "solastalgia" (distress caused by environmental loss) could drive ethical action.



- Need: Integrate existential philosophy (e.g., Heidegger's "being-toward-death" or Joanna Macy's "Work That Reconnects") to help SMEs grapple with purpose in an age of crisis. Example: Retreats where leaders reflect on legacy and intergenerational responsibility.

13. Commodification of Inner Development

- Gap: Mindfulness and New Work practices are often reduced to productivity tools (e.g., "resilient employees = higher output") rather than pathways to ethical awakening. This mirrors neoliberal co-optation, where inner transformation serves profit, not planetary health.
- Need: Reframe inner work as radical praxis, aligning it with critiques of growth-centric models. Example: Training SMEs to audit how their "well-being programs" reinforce or challenge extractive logic.

POLAND

WHAT CONCEPTS RELATED TO INNER TRANSFORMATION FOR SUSTAINABILITY ARE USED BY COMPANIES, AND PARTICULARLY SMES?

1. What is the current level of awareness, knowledge and interest in inner transformation for sustainability in SMEs in your country, and what are the concepts/definitions/theories/words/terms that are used in this context?
2. Are there existing definitions or interpretations of inner transformation specific to companies, and particularly SMEs? If yes, how are they different from other contexts?



3. Are there government initiatives, NGOs or academic institutions that are addressing inner transformation? If yes, what concepts/definitions/theories/words/terms do they use in this context?
4. Which COMPETENCIES are being addressed in relation to the existing concepts in your national context?
5. Are there documented examples in your country, of SMEs incorporating inner transformation in their training?
6. Are companies using philosophy as a concept in relation to sustainability (or in other contexts)?

In Poland, there is increasing interest in leadership models supporting sustainable development, particularly in SMEs. Concepts like Sustainable Leadership, Transformational Leadership, Conscious Leadership, and Regenerative Leadership are gaining recognition for their emphasis on ethical responsibility, emotional intelligence, and adaptability. These approaches integrate sustainability into business practices, promoting long-term value for organizations and society.

Additionally, Self-Leadership and Organizational Resilience highlight the importance of personal growth and psychological well-being for achieving sustainability goals. This shift towards more responsible leadership is becoming integral to Polish businesses, fostering a culture of sustainability and long-term success.

In Poland, the following concepts and terms are commonly used in relation to inner transformation for sustainability:

Sustainable Leadership/Zrównoważone przywództwo: This concept is becoming more recognized in Polish SMEs. Sustainable leadership integrates business practices with environmental, social, and governance (ESG) factors. It also involves self-awareness and adaptability to sustainability challenges. The term is gaining traction through various leadership training programs and corporate initiatives.

https://hrconcept.com.pl/pl_PL/alfabet-przywodztwa-zrownowazone-przywodztwo-sustainable-leadership/

<https://www.kozminski.edu.pl/pl/oferta-edukacyjna/kursy-i-szkolenia/zrownowazone-przywodztwo-dla-zarzadow>

Transformational Leadership/ Przywództwo transformacyjne: This leadership style focuses on inspiring and motivating employees to exceed their own self-interests for the sake of the organization and its mission. Studies on rural commune leaders in Poland reveal that while transactional leadership is more prevalent, there is a



growing recognition of the benefits of transformational leadership in promoting sustainable development.

RESOURCES:

This article discusses how transformational leadership and sustainability align in areas such as engaging in a holistic understanding and creating value for stakeholders.

https://wir.ue.wroc.pl/docstore/download/UEWR170a4b1eb448435b8db218bde117e751/Grzesik_Przywodztwo_w_kontekscie_zrownowazonego.pdf

Role of Transformational Leadership in Strategic Planning

This publication analyzes how transformational leaders can inspire and motivate teams to achieve sustainable development goals by setting clear visions and promoting innovation.

<https://managerwopalach.pl/rola-przywodztwa-transformacyjnego-w-planowaniu-strategii>

Leadership in the Age of Inclusion and Digital Transformation

This article discusses how modern leadership, based on inclusion, sustainability, and empowerment, is crucial in the context of promoting organizational sustainable development.

<https://mitsmr.pl/b/przywodztwo-w-erze-inkluzji-i-transformacji-cyfrowej/PU004z2G>

Conscious Leadership)/ Świadome przywództwo: Similar to sustainable leadership but with a stronger focus on personal awareness, emotional intelligence, and values-based decision-making. The term is used by leadership coaching firms and is gaining interest among progressive SMEs.

<https://www.motyleksiazkowe.pl/nauki-polityczne/45707-swiadome-przywodztwo-9788366264809.html>

Informal learning:

<https://www.liderap.pl/szkolenie-swiadome-przywodztwo/>

Organizational resilience/Odporność organizacyjna: This term refers to the ability of organizations to adapt, endure, and quickly rebound from disruptions, including sustainability-related challenges. Psychological safety, adaptability, and emotional resilience are key elements.

This relatively new concept connects employee well-being with sustainability. It focuses on mental health, stress management, and creating a supportive work environment for long-term sustainability.

https://www.bsigroup.com/LocalFiles/pl-pl/Organizational%20Resilience/Organizational-Resilience-shortleaflet_PL.pdf

Publication:

Elżbieta Maria Skrzypek, Adam Skrzypek: Organisational resilience and its determinants 2023

<https://bazawiedzy.umcs.pl/info/article/UMCS4023ed203650429d8f543ad6836aa654/>

Samoprywództwo (Self-Leadership): This concept has been present in Poland for some time, particularly in professional development programs. It emphasizes taking



personal responsibility for one's professional growth and aligns with sustainable leadership principles.

Trainings: https://houseofskills.pl/szkolenia-otwarte/osobiste-przywodztwo-wedlug-blancharda/?gad_source=1&gclid=Cj0KCQiA_NC9BhCkARIsABSnSTZiLY0gY1AbR088yKBJFWcj3-lg7a6O5Vvz3k68-U5y6ms0YmE3k3waAlt-EALw_wcB

Resource: Samoprzywództwo - kompetencja przedsiębiorczego ucznia i studenta | Biznes i zarządzanie: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7_fWAZ1vRGw

Research: Zesz. Nauk. UEK, 2021, 1(991): 89–104, ISSN 1898-6447; Zeszyty Naukowe -Uniwersytet Ekonomiczny w Krakowie 2021: Self-leadership and Trust and the Results of Virtual Teamwork, <https://krem.uek.krakow.pl/index.php/krem/article/download/2115/1547/8989>

In Polish organizations, there is a growing interest in new leadership models and self-leadership models, such as remote leadership, authentic leadership, and turquoise leadership. These models emphasize the absence of hierarchy and employee autonomy in decision-making, which fosters the development of self-leadership. The implementation of such approaches can lead to increased innovation and organizational flexibility.

https://wsb.edu.pl/files//pages/1535/innovation_and_entrepreneurship_z_dacko_pikiewicz_k_szczepanska_woszczyna_k_poznanska.pdf

Regeneratywne przywództwo (Regenerative Leadership): A concept gaining popularity, particularly in businesses interested in circular economy models and nature-based solutions. It emphasizes interconnectedness, ethical responsibility, and sustainable business practices.

An article discussing the global shift towards zero-emission goals, highlighting the role of regenerative leadership in achieving these objectives. <https://pro.rp.pl/poradniki-rzeczpospolitej-prawo/art40898431-przywodztwo-odnawiania-regenerative-leadership>

Workshops: A workshop focusing on regenerative leadership and facilitation for sustainable development, offering insights into personal and systemic regeneration practices.

<https://wudsilesia.pl/wydarzenia/w-kierunku-regeneracji-czyli-podroz-w-glab-siebie>

Initiatives: Budujemy Zrównoważoną Przyszłość w Sudetach

An initiative in Lower Silesia aimed at building a local economy based on nature regeneration, healthy soils, and local resources, exemplifying regenerative leadership in practice. (partnership with local business, ngo, local administrative)

<https://www.korowod.life/>

WHAT PRACTICES (METHODS, ACTIVITIES OR INTERVENTIONS) EXIST TO SUPPORT INNER TRANSFORMATION FOR SUSTAINABILITY WITHIN COMPANIES, AND PARTICULARLY SMEs?



1. Are certain inner transformation practices/methods/activities/interventions recognized as important for sustainability for SMEs in your country? If yes, which ones?
2. What are the most commonly used practices/methods/activities/interventions for developing competencies related to inner transformation in SMEs in your country?
3. What specific practices/methods/activities/interventions for inner transformation are currently being used by SMEs and other companies in your country?
4. Do they differ in SMEs and Multinational Corporations? If so, how?
5. What is the nature of these practices/methods/activities/interventions?
6. Are they philosophical in nature, focused on reflection, or rooted in other disciplines like psychology or leadership development?
7. Are there any activities aimed to institutionalize inner transformation for sustainability in companies' strategic priorities, aims or visions, their project management approaches, working structures, regulations, cooperation with other organizations, etc.?
8. What COMPETENCIES are targeted in relation to the existing practices/methods/activities/interventions in your national context?
9. Are there documented examples in your country, of SMEs incorporating inner transformation practices/methods/activities/interventions?

As businesses in UE recognize the need for sustainable practices, Polish small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are increasingly exploring ways to integrate sustainability into their organizational culture. While traditional approaches to sustainability have focused on external actions such as reducing waste, improving energy efficiency, or adopting eco-friendly supply chains, there is a growing awareness that true, lasting change also requires an internal transformation among leaders and employees.

Inner transformation for sustainability involves cultivating self-awareness, emotional resilience, and ethical decision-making, helping individuals align their personal values with their professional roles. By fostering these qualities, organizations can create a workplace culture where sustainability is not just a corporate responsibility but a deeply embedded mindset. In Poland, these practices are still in the early stages of development but are steadily gaining traction, particularly within SMEs that recognize the value of investing in human-centered approaches to leadership and well-being.

Several key methods are emerging as effective tools for supporting this inner transformation. Mindfulness and self-reflection workshops, for example, help employees develop emotional intelligence, stress management skills, and a

deeper connection to their work. Additionally, comprehensive employee well-being programs contribute to a healthier and more engaged workforce, ultimately enhancing productivity and long-term sustainability goals.

While practices to foster inner transformation for sustainability are still emerging in Poland, several key methods are beginning to gain traction within Polish SMEs. These methods focus on enhancing self-awareness, emotional regulation, and leadership capabilities to integrate sustainability into company cultures. Some of the most common practices include:

Mindfulness and Self-Reflection Workshops: Increasingly popular among SMEs, particularly in leadership training programs. These workshops focus on self-awareness, emotional regulation, and resilience.

<https://www.nobleprog.pl/en/mindfulness-training>

Mindfulness Workshops

Provides training, workshops, and presentations on mindfulness to help cope with stress and enhance quality of life. Their programs are tailored for both individuals and organizations.

<https://www.fundacjaedumind.pl/en/mindfulness-training/for-companies>

Mindfulness Training: Integrating mindfulness-based practices in leadership development programs is becoming increasingly popular in Polish SMEs. These interventions often include techniques for stress management, emotional intelligence, and mental well-being, supporting employees to better handle the challenges of working sustainably. Mindfulness allows individuals to develop a deeper connection with their values and the organizational mission, supporting ethical decision-making.

Example Resource: House of Skills offers open training sessions focused on mindfulness, emotional intelligence, and self-awareness.

<https://houseofskills.pl/dla-biznesu/zaangazowanie-i-motywacja/>

Employee Well-being Programs: Many Polish SMEs have started implementing mental health initiatives, stress management techniques, and resilience-building activities:

Examples in polish smes:

Mindgram: A comprehensive mental health and well-being platform offering services such as counseling, stress management workshops, and personal development resources. Mindgram collaborates with various SMEs to enhance employee well-being.

mindgram.com

Netguru: This technology company provides access to Mindgram's services for its employees, offering mental health support and mindfulness training. Netguru also organizes yoga classes and promotes a flexible work environment to support overall well-being. netguru.com

Benefit Systems: Known for the MultiSport program, Benefit Systems offers employees access to various sports facilities and wellness activities. They also provide platforms for mental health support and stress management, contributing to a holistic approach to employee well-being.



Inner transformation practices for sustainability are gradually gaining recognition among Polish SMEs, with a focus on self-awareness, emotional resilience, and leadership development. Mindfulness training, self-reflection workshops, and well-being programs are becoming key tools for fostering a healthier and more engaged workforce.

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Exploring the Roles of Work Engagement, Psychological Empowerment, and Perceived Organizational Support in Innovative Work Behavior: A Latent Class Analysis for Sustainable Organizational Practices.



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9. How do SMEs prefer to engage with inner transformation or sustainability trainings (e.g., self-paced learning, peer-to-peer sessions, and interactive workshops)

³ The term *competencies* encompasses the terms *skills* and *capacities*



In Poland, the concept of inner transformation for sustainability is still in its early stages. Some formal and non-formal educational institutions are beginning to incorporate elements of inner transformation into their training programs. A significant number of large companies have established such training programs, focusing on leadership development and organizational change. However, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are just starting to implement these initiatives. Awareness of personal change, where individuals recognize their real impact on the changes around them, is gradually increasing in the Polish market. Self-determination, as an inherent trait of change leaders, is beginning to enter Polish companies in the context of real influence on sustainable changes.

For instance, Kozminski University offers postgraduate studies in Transition Management, preparing current and prospective project and program managers for managing and coordinating transition and transformation projects. The program covers key skills such as organizational transition, leadership, and virtual team management.

<https://www.kozminski.edu.pl/pl/oferta-edukacyjna/studia-podyplomowe/transition-manager-academy>

Leadership School by John C. Maxwell | Kozminski University

This program focuses on building leadership awareness and values-based leadership. It includes ethical decision-making and effective communication techniques. The course helps leaders align with the principles of sustainable development.

<https://www.kozminski.edu.pl/pl/oferta-edukacyjna/kursy-i-szkolenia/szkola-liderow-wg-johna-c-maxwella>

Building Leadership Authority Based on Values | EY Academy of Business

Description: This program is aimed at team leaders who wish to strengthen their leadership skills and manage teams more effectively. It focuses on building trust, improving communication, and developing skills for motivating and influencing employees.

<https://www.academyofbusiness.pl/powerskills/budowanie-autorytetu-lidera-w-oparciu-o-wartosci>

Change Management Training – J.G.Training

This training focuses on understanding the characteristics and stages of change, as well as proven models and techniques for implementing change. The program emphasizes the importance of understanding and engaging in the change process, which helps reduce resistance.

<https://www.jgt.pl/szkolenia%252Czarzadzanie-zmiana-zmm.html>

NGO-Led Sustainability Programs: Organizations like the Responsible Business Forum (FOB) offer training on sustainability and ethical leadership. (Responsible Business Forum)

Responsible Business Forum (FOB), which offers training on sustainability and ethical leadership in Poland:

Responsible Business Forum (FOB) – <https://odpowiedzialnybiznes.pl>



An educational programme dedicated to entrepreneurs from Eastern Poland, aiming to increase knowledge and skills in the field of closed-loop economy (GOZ), present best practices and support the establishment of business partnerships. It is a programme mainly focused on increasing the resilience of business leaders in the context of transformation, change.

ESG Trends - <https://esgtrends.pl>

The initiative closely monitors the latest developments in inner transformation for sustainability, with a particular focus on how organizations and leaders can evolve internally to better align with sustainable practices.

Leadership Academy for Poland

<https://center-for-leadership.org>

The Leadership Academy for Poland is an apolitical and nonpartisan initiative seeking to contribute to the development of good leadership in Poland. It offers a unique educational experience designed to bring world-class education to Poland and provide outstanding individuals with access to one of Europe's best leadership development programs. The academy focuses on developing leadership skills that can positively impact organizations and society.

Sii Poland

Additionally, Sii Poland provides a variety of training programs, including those focused on change management and agile transformation, aimed at enhancing leadership and management skills. (Leading SAFe®- The main objective of the training is, among other things, to use transformational leadership to drive change, develop people and promote innovation).

High Performance Leadership (HPL) – IBD Business School

This program is aimed at experienced managers who are looking to enhance their leadership competencies. It focuses on building effective teams and achieving business results through leadership.

<https://ibd.pl/szkolenie-otwarte/high-performance-leadership-hpl-przywodztwo-dla-rezultatow>

WHAT PARTICULAR GAPS AND NEEDS EXIST IN RELATION TO THE PREVIOUS QUESTIONS?

1. What challenges do SMEs in your country face in taking or implementing inner transformation or sustainability-focused training programs (e.g., budget, time, lack of expertise)?
2. Are there cultural attitudes or norms that may inhibit the adoption of inner transformation practices in SMEs in your country?
3. Are there gaps in the current training programs in your country in terms of addressing inner transformation?



4. What are the most significant gaps in the adoption of inner transformation practices by SMEs in your country?
5. Are there particular competencies that SMEs would particularly need to develop?
6. Are there particular competencies or skills missing in current inner transformation approaches?
7. What challenges do SMEs report in finding or accessing relevant training programs?
8. What challenges do SMEs report in institutionalizing inner transformation for sustainability in their organizations?

The Inner Development Goals (IDG) framework provides a structured approach to fostering the personal and leadership skills necessary for driving sustainable change. By emphasizing self-awareness, resilience, collaboration, and ethical leadership, IDG serves as a foundation for integrating inner transformation into business practices, including those of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). As sustainability becomes an increasingly important aspect of modern business practices, Polish SMEs face unique challenges in implementing inner transformation for sustainability. Unlike large corporations, which often have access to extensive resources and specialized training, SMEs struggle with limited awareness, financial barriers, and a lack of tailored educational programs. While the concept of inner transformation—encompassing mindset shifts, ethical leadership, and regenerative business approaches—has gained traction globally, its adoption among Polish SMEs is still in its early stages.

Main problems:

- **Lack of Awareness and Knowledge:** Many SMEs are still unfamiliar with the concept of inner transformation and its link to sustainability. https://esgstandard.pl/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/MRiT_Badanie_dotyczace_swiadomosci_i_gotowosci_na_wdrazenie_polityk_zrownowazonego_rozwoju_w_sektorze_MSP_w_Polsce_Raport_2023-1.pdf
- **Limited Access to Tailored Training:** Most existing programs are designed for large corporations, with few specifically targeting SMEs.
- **Cultural Barriers:** A traditional business mindset focused on efficiency and short-term profitability can hinder the adoption of inner transformation practices.
- **Financial Constraints:** SMEs often lack the budget to invest in specialized training programs.
- **Insufficient Government Support:** While some policies promote sustainability, there is little direct support for inner transformation initiatives in SMEs.
- **Need for Localized Case Studies:** More documented examples of successful inner transformation practices in Polish SMEs would help promote adoption. (Case Studies on SME Sustainability)

Resources:

<https://fips.pl/podsumowanie-badania-dotyczacego-swiadomosci-i-gotowosci-na-wdrazanie-polityk-zrownawazonego-rozwoju-w-sektorze-msp>

Research on Inner Transformation and Sustainable Development in Poland

Studies conducted in Poland confirm that inner transformation for sustainability in the small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) sector is still in its early stages.

A 2022 EY report indicates that 79% of Polish entrepreneurs recognize that pro-environmental actions will gain importance in the coming years. However, only 31% perceive global warming and climate change as key challenges, suggesting a limited awareness of deeper aspects of sustainable development.

Source: https://www.ey.com/pl_pl/newsroom/2022/06/ey-polski-biznes-zrownawazony-rozwoj

Additionally, a 2023 IRCenter study reveals that more than half of Poles are skeptical about sustainable development initiatives, and about 37% do not understand how companies' actions translate into real social and environmental benefits. This lack of understanding and trust may pose a significant barrier for SMEs in implementing sustainable development strategies based on inner transformation.

Source: Rynek Papierniczy - Czym dla Polaków jest zrównoważony rozwój?
<https://www.rynekpapierniczy.pl/artykul/czym-dla-polakow-jest-zrownawazony-rozwoj-4117>

Furthermore, International ESG Barometer 2025 report emphasizes that although more companies are engaging in ESG initiatives, there is still a need for market education and support for enterprises, especially SMEs, to integrate sustainable development into their core business strategies.

Resources:

https://www.ayming.pl/analizy-i-aktualnosci/raporty/miedzynarodowy-barometr-esg-2025/?gad_source=1&gclid=CjwKCAiAn9a9BhBtEiwAbKg6fkmiPyozO81wg8B6jpxHozencqwnGnbLmn9dgpxDVikU53c8EjfuTxoC2oQQAvD_BwE

https://rozwijamy.edu.pl/images/raporty/Rola_malych_podmiotow_w_zrownawazonej_transformacji_2024.pdf

Conclusion:

Inner transformation for sustainability is an emerging field in Poland. While concepts like sustainable leadership, resilience, and self-leadership are gaining traction, there is still a need for greater awareness, targeted training, and policy support. Polish SMEs can benefit from adapting existing global frameworks, such as the Inner Development Goals (IDG), and integrating mindfulness, ethical leadership, and regenerative business practices into their operations. Overcoming financial and cultural barriers will be key to fostering a broader adoption of inner transformation for sustainability in the Polish SME sector.



PORTUGAL

WHAT CONCEPTS RELATED TO INNER TRANSFORMATION FOR SUSTAINABILITY ARE USED BY COMPANIES, AND PARTICULARLY SMES?

1. What is the current level of awareness, knowledge and interest in inner transformation for sustainability in SMEs in your country, and what are the concepts/definitions/theories/words/terms that are used in this context?
2. Are there existing definitions or interpretations of inner transformation specific to companies, and particularly SMEs? If yes, how are they different from other contexts?
3. Are there government initiatives, NGOs or academic institutions that are addressing inner transformation? If yes, what concepts/definitions/theories/words/terms do they use in this context?
4. Which COMPETENCIES are being addressed in relation to the existing concepts in your national context?
5. Are there documented examples in your country, of SMEs incorporating inner transformation in their training?
6. Are companies using philosophy as a concept in relation to sustainability (or in other contexts)?

The concept of inner transformation for sustainability in Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Portugal remains an emerging area of focus. However, various elements related to inner transformation—such as mindfulness, emotional intelligence, and ethical leadership—are starting to gain traction in the context of sustainability and corporate social responsibility (CSR). These concepts have roots in psychological and philosophical frameworks and are applied to enhance individual and collective awareness, decision-making, and leadership capabilities, ultimately contributing to more sustainable business practices.

The awareness, knowledge, and interest in inner transformation for sustainability within SMEs in Portugal is still developing but growing steadily. Many businesses are beginning to recognize the value of fostering internal change as a means to adapt to environmental challenges and create a more sustainable future. This has been particularly evident in larger organizations, though SMEs are slowly adopting similar practices. At the core of this transformation are ideas such as mindfulness



and emotional intelligence, which have been shown to enhance employees' capacity for self-awareness, empathy, and resilience—qualities essential for navigating the complex demands of sustainable development. These concepts are often associated with leadership and organizational culture development, helping companies to cultivate a workforce capable of making ethical decisions in line with sustainability goals.

In the context of SMEs, the terms "inner transformation" are often linked to personal development and workplace culture. The idea of ethical leadership, which emphasizes the importance of values-driven decision-making and long-term sustainability, resonates with many Portuguese SMEs looking to differentiate themselves in the competitive market. Some companies have begun to incorporate training programs that include elements of mindfulness, focusing on fostering emotional intelligence and awareness as a way to enhance team collaboration and decision-making. These practices aim to align employees' internal states with organizational goals related to sustainability, creating a more holistic approach to business strategy.

There are not yet widely recognized definitions of "inner transformation" specifically tailored to SMEs in Portugal. However, many interpretations of the term align with broader psychological and philosophical theories. For instance, mindfulness training within SMEs has been used to improve leadership practices, reduce stress, and increase focus, all of which are linked to better decision-making concerning sustainable business practices. The term "emotional intelligence" is also frequently used in this context, referring to an individual's ability to understand and manage their own emotions as well as those of others. This competency is closely related to ethical leadership, which is gaining recognition within SMEs as a key factor in guiding organizations towards more sustainable practices.

A variety of organizations are beginning to address the need for inner transformation in the context of sustainability. Government initiatives, NGOs, and academic institutions in Portugal have started to incorporate ideas such as mindfulness and ethical leadership into their sustainability agendas.

Government initiatives:

- The Portuguese government has developed a framework for Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) through the National CSR Strategy, which aims to promote sustainable development within businesses. This strategy includes fostering ethical leadership and responsible decision-making within companies, which align with the principles of inner transformation. The government encourages businesses to adopt practices related to environmental sustainability, social inclusion, and governance, while also focusing on the well-being and development of their employees. While the strategy does not explicitly mention mindfulness or emotional intelligence, it promotes responsible

leadership and long-term thinking, which are key components of inner transformation for sustainability.

- Portugal 2020 is a funding program that supports sustainable development and innovation in SMEs. It provides financial incentives for businesses to adopt sustainable practices and innovative solutions, often incorporating leadership development and employee training as part of the process. The program is designed to align the economic, environmental, and social goals of Portuguese companies, with some focus on developing leadership competencies related to ethical decision-making and sustainable practices.

Non-government organisations (NGOs):

- The Global Compact Network Portugal (GCP Portugal) is the local chapter of the United Nations Global Compact, which promotes corporate sustainability through responsible business practices. GCP Portugal encourages companies, including SMEs, to integrate the principles of sustainable development into their strategies, focusing on ethical leadership and social responsibility. While it does not directly offer mindfulness training or emotional intelligence courses, it emphasizes leadership competencies that align with the values of inner transformation, such as accountability, transparency, and long-term thinking.
- The Portuguese Association for Business Ethics (APEE) is an NGO that focuses on promoting ethical leadership and corporate responsibility. APEE works to raise awareness of the importance of ethical decision-making in businesses, providing training, workshops, and resources on ethical leadership, corporate governance, and sustainability. Their work supports the development of competencies aligned with inner transformation, particularly in the context of business ethics and sustainability.

Academic Institutions:

- Nova University of Lisbon, through its Nova School of Business and Economics (Nova SBE), offers various sustainability and leadership programs that incorporate elements of ethical leadership, emotional intelligence, and mindfulness. For example, their Master's program in Sustainability offers students courses on ethical leadership and social responsibility, integrating personal development concepts such as emotional intelligence and mindfulness into their curricula. These programs aim to prepare leaders who can address sustainability challenges with a strong ethical and reflective mindset.
- The University of Coimbra offers courses and programs focusing on business ethics, leadership, and sustainability. The Faculty of Economics and the Centre for Business and Economics Research (CEGE) emphasize the role of ethical leadership and decision-making in



business, integrating concepts like emotional intelligence and mindfulness into their academic offerings. The university's research also explores the intersection of sustainability, corporate social responsibility, and leadership development, contributing to the growing body of knowledge on inner transformation in business practices.

- ISCTE's Business School offers various leadership and management programs that emphasize sustainability and personal development. Their MBA program includes topics related to emotional intelligence and ethical leadership, training business leaders to incorporate inner transformation into their leadership approach. ISCTE's research on sustainability and organizational behavior also reflects a growing interest in the importance of personal and leadership transformation for achieving sustainability goals.

Several competencies are being addressed in relation to these concepts within Portugal. Emotional intelligence and ethical leadership are particularly emphasized, with an increasing number of SMEs focusing on leadership training programs that incorporate emotional awareness, empathy, and ethical decision-making. These competencies are seen as crucial for fostering an organizational culture that prioritizes long-term sustainability over short-term gains. Emotional intelligence training, for example, has been integrated into leadership development programs to ensure that leaders are equipped to navigate the complexities of managing sustainability initiatives. Ethical leadership is also being emphasized, with businesses recognizing the importance of leaders who can inspire and guide teams to make decisions that are not only profitable but also socially and environmentally responsible.

Documented examples of SMEs incorporating inner transformation into their training programs are still somewhat rare in Portugal, but there are indications of growing interest. For instance, small businesses in the hospitality and retail sectors are increasingly adopting mindfulness practices as part of employee well-being initiatives. These practices are designed to foster greater emotional resilience, improve customer service, and enhance overall organizational effectiveness. In some cases, SMEs have partnered with local consultants and mindfulness experts to design tailored training programs that promote both personal and professional development, with an emphasis on ethical leadership and sustainable business practices.

In relation to the use of philosophy as a concept in sustainability, it is not yet a dominant framework within SMEs in Portugal. However, certain philosophical approaches—especially those related to ethical reasoning and decision-making—are subtly influencing business practices. Philosophical ideas regarding virtue ethics, for instance, have been incorporated into leadership development programs aimed at fostering a sense of moral responsibility among business leaders. The emphasis on philosophical thinking around sustainability,

although not always explicitly stated as such, is evident in the increasing use of ethical and reflective practices to guide business decisions and leadership.

In conclusion, while the integration of inner transformation concepts such as mindfulness, emotional intelligence, and ethical leadership into SMEs in Portugal is still in its early stages, there is a clear trend toward adopting these practices as part of broader sustainability efforts. Government, academic, and NGO initiatives are helping to frame and promote these concepts within the national discourse, although more direct integration within the SME sector is needed. As the focus on sustainability continues to grow, inner transformation is likely to become a more central concept for SMEs aiming to align their business models with long-term ecological and social responsibility.

WHAT PRACTICES (METHODS, ACTIVITIES OR INTERVENTIONS) EXIST TO SUPPORT INNER TRANSFORMATION FOR SUSTAINABILITY WITHIN COMPANIES, AND PARTICULARLY SMES?

1. Are certain inner transformation practices/methods/activities/interventions recognized as important for sustainability for SMEs in your country? If yes, which ones?
2. What are the most commonly used practices/methods/activities/interventions for developing competencies related to inner transformation in SMEs in your country?
3. What specific practices/methods/activities/interventions for inner transformation are currently being used by SMEs and other companies in your country?
4. Do they differ in SMEs and Multinational Corporations? If so, how?
5. What is the nature of these practices/methods/activities/interventions?
6. Are they philosophical in nature, focused on reflection, or rooted in other disciplines like psychology or leadership development?
7. Are there any activities aimed to institutionalize inner transformation for sustainability in companies' strategic priorities, aims or visions, their project management approaches, working structures, regulations, cooperation with other organizations, etc.?
8. What COMPETENCIES are targeted in relation to the existing practices/methods/activities/interventions in your national context?
9. Are there documented examples in your country, of SMEs incorporating inner transformation practices/methods/activities/interventions?



In Portugal, several practices, methods, and interventions are being utilized to support inner transformation for sustainability within companies, particularly within SMEs. These practices largely focus on fostering emotional intelligence, ethical leadership, mindfulness, and sustainable decision-making. The growing recognition of the importance of inner transformation is helping companies align their operations and values with long-term sustainability goals. Below is an overview of the practices currently being employed in Portugal, their nature, and the competencies they aim to develop.

Within Portuguese SMEs, the recognition of inner transformation practices, particularly in the context of sustainability, is still developing. However, certain methods have started to gain traction. Mindfulness, emotional intelligence, and ethical leadership are among the most widely acknowledged practices. These practices are designed to help employees and leaders better manage stress, cultivate self-awareness, improve interpersonal relationships, and make decisions aligned with ethical and sustainable business goals.

Mindfulness programs have increasingly been adopted by SMEs to promote emotional resilience and awareness among employees. Mindfulness practices are typically aimed at improving concentration, reducing stress, and enhancing decision-making, all of which can be linked to better sustainability practices. By cultivating a mindset of awareness and presence, employees are better equipped to handle the complex and often competing demands of sustainability goals.

Emotional intelligence (EI) is another core area where SMEs are focusing their efforts. Many SMEs are introducing EI training to enhance self-awareness, empathy, and interpersonal communication. These competencies are seen as essential for developing more ethical, sustainable leadership and facilitating collaboration among teams to drive sustainable change. These trainings often include workshops on conflict resolution, stress management, and building empathy, which are crucial for both personal development and organizational transformation.

Ethical leadership programs that focus on moral decision-making and values-driven leadership are becoming more common in SMEs. These programs are grounded in the philosophy of ethical business practice and align with sustainability goals by emphasizing responsible decision-making and long-term, sustainable strategies. These practices help to foster a company culture that prioritizes the well-being of employees, society, and the environment.

The most commonly used practices for developing competencies related to inner transformation in Portuguese SMEs include mindfulness and emotional intelligence training. These methods are often combined into comprehensive programs that seek to develop personal leadership, ethical decision-making, and social

responsibility. These programs can range from short workshops to longer-term engagements aimed at institutionalizing change within the organization.

In many SMEs, mindfulness workshops are used to help employees cope with stress, enhance focus, and improve their overall well-being. These workshops typically include guided meditations, breathing exercises, and practices designed to cultivate mindfulness in both personal and professional contexts. They aim to increase emotional regulation and resilience, key competencies for promoting sustainability within organizations.

Leadership development programs that incorporate emotional intelligence are common in SMEs seeking to align leadership with sustainability goals. These programs help managers and leaders develop greater self-awareness, empathy, and effective communication skills, which are critical in guiding teams toward sustainable practices.

There are some differences between SMEs and multinational corporations (MNCs) in the way they approach inner transformation for sustainability. While MNCs often have more resources and established frameworks to implement formal training and interventions in these areas, SMEs in Portugal tend to adopt more flexible, informal, and resource-efficient methods. Multinational corporations are likely to offer more structured, formalized training programs, often including comprehensive leadership development and sustainability workshops that are mandatory for leadership and middle-management. These corporations may have dedicated departments for corporate social responsibility (CSR) and sustainability, where practices like mindfulness and ethical leadership are embedded in their broader corporate strategy.

In contrast, SMEs tend to offer smaller, more localized interventions, often in the form of short-term workshops, consultancy, or self-led initiatives. The focus is generally on practical outcomes rather than formalized programs, with the goal of introducing sustainable practices in an affordable and accessible manner. SMEs often collaborate with external consultants or partners to introduce these practices without creating large internal departments dedicated to transformation.

The practices used to support inner transformation in Portuguese SMEs are a blend of psychological, philosophical, and leadership development approaches. Mindfulness and emotional intelligence training, for example, have psychological foundations. Mindfulness is rooted in both Buddhist traditions and modern psychology, while emotional intelligence draws from psychological theories related to self-awareness, self-regulation, and social awareness. These practices are seen as critical tools for managing the internal states of employees, which in turn enhances overall organizational resilience and sustainability. Ethical leadership programs are primarily philosophical in nature, focusing on values-based decision-making, virtue ethics, and moral reasoning. These programs aim to

develop leadership competencies grounded in ethical principles, such as fairness, transparency, and social responsibility.

The integration of emotional intelligence and ethical leadership into leadership development programs is central to many SMEs' approach to sustainability. These programs are typically rooted in theories of transformational and servant leadership, which emphasize the importance of values, collaboration, and ethical decision-making.

While many SMEs are adopting individual practices such as mindfulness and leadership training, there is still room for greater institutionalization of these methods into strategic priorities and organizational structures. However, some Portuguese companies, particularly larger SMEs, are beginning to recognize the importance of embedding inner transformation into their long-term goals, visions, and project management approaches. For instance, some businesses are incorporating mindfulness and ethical leadership into their CSR strategies, positioning these practices as key components of their sustainability initiatives. These companies may include emotional intelligence as a leadership competency in their performance evaluations or sustainability reports, further institutionalizing inner transformation practices as part of their core organizational values.

The competencies targeted by inner transformation practices in Portuguese SMEs are focused on emotional intelligence, ethical decision-making, leadership, and stress management. Specifically, these practices aim to develop the following key competencies: self-awareness, empathy, resilience, and ethical decision-making. Self-awareness is essential for understanding one's emotions, values, and impact on others, which is crucial for ethical decision-making and sustainability. Empathy is the ability to understand and share the feelings of others, which is important for fostering collaboration and creating an ethical workplace culture. Resilience builds the emotional strength to navigate challenges and setbacks, which is essential in the context of sustainability, where businesses face complex and evolving challenges. Ethical decision-making refers to the ability to make decisions that align with personal, organizational, and societal values, ensuring that business practices contribute to long-term sustainability.

Some Portuguese SMEs have begun to document their efforts in incorporating inner transformation practices into their operations. For example, small businesses in the hospitality and retail sectors have introduced mindfulness practices as part of their employee wellness initiatives. Additionally, leadership programs aimed at fostering emotional intelligence are increasingly being implemented in SMEs across various industries, from agriculture to technology. These SMEs often collaborate with external consultants to implement these interventions in a cost-effective way, allowing them to integrate inner transformation practices without the need for extensive internal resources.

While inner transformation practices are still in the early stages of widespread adoption in Portuguese SMEs, several companies are already integrating methods such as mindfulness, emotional intelligence, and ethical leadership into their sustainability efforts. The differences between SMEs and MNCs in this context largely relate to the scale and formality of these practices, with MNCs typically offering more structured and comprehensive programs. These practices are based on psychological, philosophical, and leadership theories and are increasingly seen as essential for fostering a sustainable organizational culture in Portugal.

WHAT EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS EXIST TO SUPPORT INNER TRANSFORMATION FOR SUSTAINABILITY IN COMPANIES, AND PARTICULARLY SMES?

1. Are there existing training programs specifically focused on inner transformation in your country?
2. What types of organizations (e.g., private companies, NGOs, government agencies, academic institutions) offer such training programs?
3. How do they link inner transformation with sustainability? Or are these topics rather addressed separately?
4. Are these programs tailored for SMEs, or are they part of broader training initiatives?
5. What are the key topics and COMPETENCIES⁴ covered in these training programs? What COMPETENCIES are targeted in relation to the existing educational programs in your national context?
6. Do they for instance focus on certain values, ethics or certain capacities, such as mindfulness, self-awareness or systems thinking?
7. What training methods are effective in developing these competencies in SMEs in your country? Are there successful case studies or examples of effective training?
8. Which formats (e.g., workshops, mentoring, online courses) are most suitable for local SMEs?
9. How do SMEs prefer to engage with inner transformation or sustainability trainings (e.g., self-paced learning, peer-to-peer sessions, and interactive workshops)?

In Portugal, several educational programs exist to support inner transformation for sustainability in companies, particularly SMEs. These programs aim to cultivate competencies such as mindfulness, emotional intelligence, ethical leadership,

⁴ The term *competencies* encompasses the terms *skills* and *capacities*



self-awareness, and systems thinking, which are seen as essential for fostering sustainable organizational practices. The programs available typically focus on creating awareness and driving behavioral change among employees and leaders, with the overarching goal of integrating sustainability into everyday business practices.

There is an increasing number of training programs specifically focused on inner transformation. These programs emphasize the personal development of employees and leaders, which in turn supports the organizational adoption of sustainable practices. However, it is worth noting that many of these programs address inner transformation in relation to broader leadership or organizational development initiatives, rather than exclusively focusing on sustainability.

Programs focused on inner transformation typically combine elements of mindfulness, emotional intelligence, ethical decision-making, and leadership development. Some of the more recognized programs include those offered by private consulting firms, academic institutions, and some government-sponsored initiatives. These programs aim to develop competencies that are crucial for sustainability, such as ethical leadership, systems thinking, resilience, and emotional intelligence.

While some training programs exist that integrate inner transformation and sustainability, in many cases these two concepts are still addressed separately. Programs focused on inner transformation often emphasize self-awareness, leadership qualities, and emotional resilience, while sustainability-focused programs tend to concentrate on environmental or economic issues, with less emphasis on the internal development of individuals or organizational culture. However, there are instances where these topics overlap, particularly in programs developed for leadership development or in the context of CSR strategies.

A range of organizations offers training programs that support inner transformation for sustainability. These include private companies, NGOs, government agencies, and academic institutions, each contributing to the development of these competencies in different ways.

Private consulting firms often lead the way in offering tailored training solutions for companies, particularly SMEs. These firms provide services such as mindfulness training, emotional intelligence development, and leadership coaching, all aimed at fostering sustainable practices. Many of these organizations design their programs based on international best practices while customizing them to meet the needs of Portuguese SMEs. Some companies collaborate with global networks or train-the-trainer programs to ensure that their offerings align with the latest research and trends in inner transformation for sustainability.

NGOs and government agencies also offer training programs, but these are often more focused on fostering broader sustainability objectives. These programs

sometimes integrate ethical leadership and personal development modules, encouraging businesses to adopt sustainability not only as an external responsibility but as an internal cultural value. Academic institutions, on the other hand, have begun to offer more targeted programs focusing on sustainability leadership and social responsibility. These programs often include content on ethical decision-making, systems thinking, and mindfulness, designed to help future business leaders integrate these competencies into their organizational strategies.

The majority of training programs for inner transformation are designed to be adaptable to a range of organizational sizes and sectors, but there are some programs specifically tailored for SMEs. For example, some private training companies offer flexible, shorter-duration workshops or seminars aimed at SMEs with limited time or budget for large-scale corporate training. These programs are designed to be affordable and impactful, focusing on key areas such as emotional intelligence, ethical leadership, and sustainability practices. These training programs are often offered in modular formats, allowing SMEs to choose the most relevant content and avoid unnecessary costs.

In contrast, some larger training programs, particularly those offered by academic institutions or NGOs, such as the Master in Sustainability and CSR from the University of Porto, may be more generalized and not exclusively targeted at SMEs. These programs are often part of broader sustainability initiatives or leadership development courses and tend to be more formalized in nature. However, certain modules within these programs can be highly relevant to SMEs, especially those interested in integrating sustainability into their organizational culture.

The training programs available in Portugal address several key topics and competencies related to inner transformation for sustainability. Mindfulness, emotional intelligence, ethical leadership, and systems thinking are the primary competencies targeted by these programs. Mindfulness training is designed to help participants cultivate self-awareness and emotional regulation, enabling them to respond to challenges in a calm and focused manner, which is particularly useful in managing the complexities of sustainability initiatives. Emotional intelligence training, which includes self-awareness, empathy, and emotional regulation, is aimed at helping participants navigate interpersonal relationships, a skill essential for fostering collaboration in sustainability-driven projects.

Ethical leadership is another critical competency targeted in many of these programs. This training focuses on making morally sound decisions, developing a sense of responsibility, and aligning organizational goals with societal needs. Systems thinking, which encourages participants to understand the interconnectedness of various elements within an organization and society, is another key competency emphasized in these programs. This competency is

particularly important for addressing sustainability challenges, as it allows individuals to think about the long-term impacts of their decisions.

The programs also focus on developing specific values and capacities, such as responsibility, empathy, and resilience, which are essential for fostering sustainable practices both on an individual and organizational level.

The most effective training methods for developing competencies in inner transformation for sustainability in SMEs are those that are interactive, flexible, and tailored to the specific needs of the organization. Workshops, mentoring programs, and online courses are commonly used methods in Portugal to support inner transformation. Workshops and interactive sessions, particularly those focusing on mindfulness and emotional intelligence, are particularly well-suited for SMEs, as they allow for hands-on engagement and personal reflection. These workshops are often facilitated by experienced trainers who can guide participants through experiential exercises that foster emotional and cognitive growth.

Mentoring and peer-to-peer learning are also valuable training methods, especially for SMEs that prefer to learn from their peers rather than external consultants. These methods are especially effective when companies are looking to build a strong internal culture of sustainability and inner transformation. Online courses, although less interactive, are also popular, as they provide a flexible and cost-effective means of delivering training to employees. These courses are particularly appealing for SMEs with limited time or resources, as they allow employees to engage with the material at their own pace.

SMEs in Portugal tend to prefer training formats that are flexible, cost-effective, and impactful. Workshops, particularly those that are short in duration and highly interactive, are generally the most favored format. These workshops often focus on practical skills and competencies, such as mindfulness techniques for stress reduction or emotional intelligence for team collaboration. SMEs also tend to favor mentoring or peer-to-peer sessions, as these formats allow employees to learn directly from one another and apply the concepts in real-world situations. Self-paced online courses are another popular format for SMEs that need to integrate training into their existing schedules without disrupting operations.

There are many training programs available to support inner transformation for sustainability in Portugal, the vast majority of these programs integrate inner transformation with sustainability, rather than treating them as separate topics. The competencies targeted include mindfulness, emotional intelligence, ethical leadership, and systems thinking, all of which are essential for fostering sustainability within organizations. SMEs generally prefer flexible, affordable training formats such as workshops, mentoring, and online courses, and these programs are increasingly being tailored to the unique needs of smaller organizations.

WHAT PARTICULAR GAPS AND NEEDS EXIST IN RELATION TO THE PREVIOUS QUESTIONS?

1. What challenges do SMEs in your country face in taking or implementing inner transformation or sustainability-focused training programs (e.g., budget, time, lack of expertise)?
2. Are there cultural attitudes or norms that may inhibit the adoption of inner transformation practices in SMEs in your country?
3. Are there gaps in the current training programs in your country in terms of addressing inner transformation?
4. What are the most significant gaps in the adoption of inner transformation practices by SMEs in your country?
5. Are there particular competencies that SMEs would particularly need to develop?
6. Are there particular competencies or skills missing in current inner transformation approaches?
7. What challenges do SMEs report in finding or accessing relevant training programs?
8. What challenges do SMEs report in institutionalizing inner transformation for sustainability in their organizations?

In Portugal, while there is a growing interest in integrating inner transformation and sustainability practices within SMEs, several gaps and challenges still exist in the adoption and implementation of related training programs. These challenges span across various dimensions, including financial limitations, time constraints, lack of expertise, and certain cultural norms that might inhibit the widespread adoption of inner transformation practices.

SMEs in Portugal face several significant challenges in adopting or implementing inner transformation or sustainability-focused training programs. One of the primary challenges is budget constraints. Many SMEs in Portugal operate on limited financial resources, which makes investing in training programs, especially those focused on inner transformation practices like mindfulness, emotional intelligence, and ethical leadership, difficult. These programs often require significant upfront investment, both in terms of financial resources and time, which smaller companies may not be able to afford. The cost of hiring specialized trainers or enrolling in long-term programs can be prohibitive for smaller businesses with tight profit margins. This lack of financial flexibility inhibits the ability of many SMEs to access high-quality training.

Another challenge is the time constraints faced by SMEs. Small businesses often operate with lean teams where employees are already overloaded with their daily

tasks. As a result, SMEs find it challenging to release staff for training sessions that require time away from their core responsibilities. Even if training programs are offered outside of regular working hours or in shorter formats, the lack of time and availability still hinders their effective implementation. Furthermore, some SMEs struggle to integrate sustainability and inner transformation into their existing operations, as they often prioritize short-term business outcomes over long-term transformational initiatives.

The lack of expertise within the organization is another barrier. Many SMEs do not have the internal capacity or knowledge to develop or implement effective training programs related to sustainability or inner transformation. This shortage of expertise often leads to reliance on external consultants or training providers, which can be costly and may not always align with the company's specific needs or culture. Without the necessary in-house experience, SMEs might find it difficult to apply the insights gained from external training in a meaningful way within their organizational context.

Cultural attitudes and norms in Portugal may also play a role in inhibiting the adoption of inner transformation practices within SMEs. Traditional business practices in Portugal are often centered around operational efficiency and tangible results, which can make it difficult for companies to prioritize more abstract concepts such as personal growth, emotional intelligence, or mindfulness. This is particularly evident in sectors where performance metrics are largely driven by short-term outputs and immediate profitability rather than long-term organizational sustainability. While there is growing awareness of the importance of sustainability, businesses may still struggle to fully embrace the more introspective aspects of inner transformation, viewing them as secondary to traditional business priorities.

Furthermore, leadership resistance is another cultural factor at play. In some cases, SME leaders may be hesitant to invest in inner transformation practices, especially if they do not immediately perceive a clear return on investment. There can be a lack of awareness or understanding of the tangible benefits that emotional intelligence, mindfulness, or ethical leadership can bring to the long-term sustainability of their businesses. Some leaders may also be skeptical about the value of such training, particularly if they view it as too soft or disconnected from practical business needs.

One of the most significant gaps in current training programs in Portugal is the lack of integration between inner transformation and sustainability. While many programs focus on one aspect (e.g., sustainability or leadership development), few combine both concepts in a holistic manner that addresses the internal competencies necessary to drive sustainability within organizations. Inner transformation training, such as mindfulness or emotional intelligence, is often treated as a separate concept from sustainability training, which tends to focus more on environmental, economic, or regulatory issues. A more integrated

approach, where sustainability and inner transformation are seen as interconnected, is still largely absent from most training programs in Portugal.

Additionally, there is a lack of customized programs that are specifically designed for SMEs. While some general programs are available, many of them are developed with larger corporations in mind, with a focus on broad organizational strategies rather than on the specific needs of smaller companies. SMEs often require more flexible, practical, and affordable training solutions that are relevant to their unique organizational challenges. The current training offerings are often too generic and do not account for the resource constraints and specific needs of smaller businesses.

Moreover, there is a gap in providing practical, actionable tools for SMEs to implement inner transformation practices within their day-to-day operations. Many programs focus on theory or high-level concepts but fail to provide SMEs with concrete strategies for integrating these practices into their organizational cultures. Without clear guidance on how to apply inner transformation principles in practice, SMEs may struggle to see the real benefits of the training.

There are several key competencies that SMEs in Portugal would particularly benefit from developing. First, ethical leadership is an essential competency, particularly in the context of sustainability. SMEs need leaders who can make decisions that balance profitability with social and environmental responsibilities. Many SMEs lack the necessary skills to implement ethical decision-making frameworks or to inspire their teams to act sustainably. Training programs that focus on developing ethical leadership skills, especially at the SME level, are currently insufficient.

Second, systems thinking is a critical competency for SMEs to develop in order to understand the broader impact of their decisions. Systems thinking allows organizations to see their operations as interconnected parts of a larger ecosystem, which is crucial for implementing sustainable business practices. Many SMEs, however, lack this mindset, focusing instead on short-term goals and immediate outcomes. This gap in systems thinking training can limit their ability to address sustainability challenges in a comprehensive and long-term manner.

Lastly, emotional intelligence and mindfulness are increasingly recognized as key competencies for fostering sustainability within organizations. While there is some focus on these areas in training programs, they are not yet as widely adopted in SMEs as they could be. Given the increasing pressures of modern business environments, SMEs could benefit from training that helps employees and leaders regulate their emotions, enhance empathy, and practice mindfulness to improve decision-making and collaboration.

SMEs in Portugal report several challenges when it comes to finding or accessing relevant training programs. One of the main issues is the lack of awareness of the

available programs. Many SMEs are unaware of the training opportunities that exist in the realm of inner transformation and sustainability. Even when they are aware of such programs, there may be challenges in identifying the most appropriate program for their specific needs. Often, training offerings are either too generalized or too expensive, and there is little information available to guide SMEs in making informed choices.

Another challenge is the geographical barriers. Many training programs are offered in larger cities, making it difficult for SMEs located in rural areas to access them. This geographic concentration of training opportunities can limit access for many businesses in smaller towns or regions.

Finally, SMEs report difficulties in institutionalizing inner transformation practices for sustainability within their organizations. Once training programs are completed, there is often a lack of follow-up support or mechanisms to integrate what was learned into the company's strategic objectives. SMEs may struggle to institutionalize practices like mindfulness or ethical leadership into their daily operations without ongoing support or leadership commitment. Additionally, without a clear framework for implementing these practices across the organization, employees may revert to old habits, and the organizational culture may not shift toward sustainability.

Many SMEs also face challenges in aligning inner transformation practices with existing business strategies, as these practices are often perceived as soft skills that do not directly contribute to business outcomes. This can make it difficult for SMEs to incorporate these practices into their corporate culture or to justify their value to key stakeholders. Therefore, there is a need for more guidance on how to align personal growth practices with organizational goals and to demonstrate the tangible benefits of such practices in terms of sustainability outcomes.

The interest in inner transformation for sustainability among SMEs in Portugal is growing, significant challenges remain in terms of budget, time, expertise, and cultural attitudes. Training programs often fail to integrate inner transformation with sustainability, and many SMEs find it difficult to access programs that meet their specific needs. To overcome these gaps, there is a need for more affordable, flexible, and practical training solutions that are tailored to the unique needs of SMEs. Additionally, greater support is needed to help SMEs institutionalize inner transformation practices and align them with their sustainability goals.

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SWEDEN

WHAT CONCEPTS RELATED TO INNER TRANSFORMATION FOR SUSTAINABILITY ARE USED BY COMPANIES, AND PARTICULARLY SMES?

1. What is the current level of awareness, knowledge and interest in inner transformation for sustainability in SMEs in your country, and what are the concepts/definitions/theories/words/terms that are used in this context?
2. Are there existing definitions or interpretations of inner transformation specific to companies, and particularly SMEs? If yes, how are they different from other contexts?



3. Are there government initiatives, NGOs or academic institutions that are addressing inner transformation? If yes, what concepts/definitions/theories/words/terms do they use in this context?
4. Which COMPETENCIES are being addressed in relation to the existing concepts in your national context?
5. Are there documented examples in your country, of SMEs incorporating inner transformation in their training?
6. Are companies using philosophy as a concept in relation to sustainability (or in other contexts)?

In Sweden, particularly among SMEs, the following concepts and terms are commonly used in relation to inner transformation for sustainability:

- **Hållbart ledarskap (Sustainable leadership)** – “Sustainable Leadership is a type of leadership that drives solutions for environmental, social and economic challenges in the world. It recognizes leadership as a process of influence and breaks down silos to combine efforts towards change and transformation” ([link](#)). In this context, also inner dimensions are to some extent addressed, and related to the concept of “**adaptive leaders**”: “Sustainable Leaders Are Adaptive Leaders: For decision-makers to navigate the constant change in the world’s social, environmental and economic challenges, they must also manage their own **personal growth** and leadership development. This includes determining which mindsets, tools and frameworks are most applicable to their present needs and incorporating them accordingly. **Adopting a growth mindset** is a key aspect of adaptability, as letting go of old practices allowing life-long learning to occur. Additionally, addressing complexity through adaptability also means embracing a fair amount of uncertainty. A willingness to try new approaches, quickly switch courses, when necessary, embrace failure and empathetically encourage your team to do the same are all necessary components of **adaptive leadership**. Once this style of working is embedded in the organizational culture, innovative solutions can flourish and better address the climate challenges of today and tomorrow” ([link](#)). Sustainable leadership is also related to the issue of influence (versus authority), which is claimed to relate to issues like values and trust: “Rather than exerting authority over others using rank or position, change-makers must utilize their credibility, passion and **values** as thought-leaders to inspire others to follow. Influence is built by increasing aspects of **personal power** like **living authentically**, **leveraging relationships** and sharing industry knowledge. Inspiring others with **personal integrity** creates **trust**, which, in turn, increases willingness to work towards shared sustainability goals and catalyze change” ([link](#)). Finally, sustainable leadership is related to long-term perspectives: Doing so increases the organization’s survivability and benefits the future of the entire world. Sustainable Leaders must also embrace their own **worldview**. Most aren’t interested in environmental action because it is trendy – they often see themselves as integral pieces of the global ecosystem and believe that it is their duty to become better caretakers for the world and its inhabitants. **Connecting a personal perspective with the shared values of the organization** allows executives to boldly lead their team towards long-term sustainability goals and overcome short-term challenges with confidence” ([link](#)). Put together, sustainable leadership is a broad term referring to leadership approaches that integrate sustainability, with aspects of self-awareness and systemic thinking. A recent related event in Sweden was found here: [Sustainable leadership – the Swedish way](#)

- **Medvetet ledarskap (Conscious leadership)** – Compared to sustainable leadership, this seems to be a newer concept and terminology, but it was found on websites of SMEs that offer leadership courses ([link](#)). “Conscious leadership is a **leadership style that emphasizes being present and aware when leading a team**. It is an approach to leading the self and others that emphasizes **radical self-awareness, energetic responsibility, and a we me mindset**. A conscious leader acknowledges their behaviours and invites feedback from others to help guide their decisions. Emphasizes personal awareness, values-driven decision-making, and emotional intelligence. There seem to be six principles of conscious leadership, which relate to the issue of inner transformation:
 - “Understanding Mission, Vision, and Values
 - Deciding to be a leader
 - Self-Awareness & Emotional Intelligence
 - Listening
 - Openness, vulnerability & willingness to be uncomfortable
 - Having a growth mindset, curiosity, perpetual learning” ([link](#))
- **Resilient organizations and Business wellness** – “Resilient organizations plan and invest for disruption, and can adapt, endure, and rebound quickly in a way that enables them to not only to succeed in its aftermath, but also to lead the way to a ‘better normal’” ([link](#)). Focus is here on adaptability, **psychological safety**, and **emotional resilience** in the face of sustainability challenges. The concept also seems to be linked to “Business wellness”. Interestingly, the term “philosophy” is used in this context: “**Business Wellness – a philosophy defining long-term successful organizations**: Companies and organizations need to be healthy and resilient to perform at their best and to be prosperous over time. A healthy company is efficient, profitable and competitive. A resilient company has the ability to change and evolve to stay ahead of the competition. This is what we call Business Wellness. ([link](#))” Whilst the concept does only seem to be superficially linked to issues related to inner transformation, a closer look shows that there are at least several overlaps, which could be further built on/ expanded to also cover issues related to inner transformation. Related frameworks include, for instance, the following aspects: i) engaging **purpose**, ii) **long-term perspective**, iii) **focused direction**, iv) **holistic view**, and v) **balance** ([link](#)) – but the focus is very much on efficiency – sustainability with a focus on profitability, and thus rather a kind of “wellbeing or green washing”. The Business Wellness Awards seems to be given out from and to Swedish businesses. See here: [Business Wellness Awards | Business Wellness. | Business Wellness](#)
- **Regenerativt ledarskap (Regenerative leadership) and Ledarskap i etikens ljus (ethical leadership)** – These terms seem to be increasingly used, particularly in businesses inspired by regenerative economics and nature-based solutions. The approach also recognized the aspect of **interconnectedness**: “A regenerative approach recognises that everything is interconnected and that leaders have a responsibility to not only create economic value but also to contribute to the **wellbeing of society and the environment**. Regenerative leadership takes inspiration from how living organisms and systems work and self-regulate in nature. A regenerative leader will seek to create systems that are **restorative, resilient, and adaptable**, nurturing **life-affirming organisations, teams and communities**” ([link](#)). This approach is also closely linked with **ethical** issues in business. See here for a related recent event in Sweden: [Ledarskap i etikens ljus – MiL Institute](#)
- **Psykologisk hållbarhet (Psychological sustainability)** – This seems to be a rather new concept. It refers to **psychological and mental wellbeing** as a foundation for long-term organizational sustainability: “Psychological sustainability is very much about the individual responsibility that everyone has to feel better. We need to be reminded of what we already know. The basis for a balanced life is good sleep, food and exercise combined with social relationships and mental well-being” ([link](#)). The overall aim is to link wellbeing with sustainability though **harnessing human potential** by integrating **psychological knowledge** into the business world:

“to reach more people through psychological knowledge through innovative and pragmatic solutions in order to contribute to both public health and a sustainable society” ([link](#)).

- **Inre utveckling (Inner development)** – The IDG framework is gaining traction, particularly among progressive SMEs and leadership programs. In Sweden, every year there seems to be an event for SMEs, called “The SME days”. In 2024, this event included presentations in relation to inner development for sustainability. See here: [SME-Dagen | Handelshögskolan i Göteborg](#). In a linkedin announcement it says: “Inner Development Goals (IDG): The key to development? Come to the SME day on May 16 and listen to Nancy Nordanstad, Head of Learning Experience at Stena AB, who describes what IDG (Inner Development Goals) are, and why the Stena Group has chosen to invest in employees' inner development ([link](#)).” Stena AB is one of many Swedish and international companies that have become a supporting member of the so-called inner development goals (IDG), an initiative that has been initiated in Sweden in 2020: “Over a number of years, many different organisations interested in the connection between inner development and outer sustainability have been on a learning journey together. This has included a few public events like the MindShift Digital Conference in April 2020 at the Stockholm School of Economics, where the IDG initiative was first introduced. On 12th of May 2021 the IDG framework, co-created by 1000+ scientists, experts and human resources and sustainability professionals was made available for the world. After a few organisational iterations, in November 2023, the IDG Foundation was initiated by the [29k Foundation](#), [Ekskaret Foundation](#), [IMD Business School for Management](#), [LUCSUS Center for Sustainability Studies](#), [Lund University](#), [Stockholm Resilience Center](#), [Stockholm University](#), [The New Division](#), [Flourishing Network at Harvard University](#), and the [World Business Council for Sustainable Development \(WBCSD\)](#)” ([link](#)). “The Inner Development Goals Framework simplifies a complex field of human development to help us better identify, understand, communicate, develop, and integrate the inner skills needed for sustainable development” ([link](#)).
- **Självledarskap (Self-leadership)** – This is a term and concept that has been around for some time and is frequently used in personal and professional development programs with a sustainability lens. In “Ledarna”, which is Sweden’s chief organisation with more than 100 000 members, the approach has for instance been discussed for many years ([link](#)). In simple terms, “Self-leadership is (...) the ability to lead and motivate oneself to achieve desired goals. Basically, it is the ability to take control of one's own behavior, to guide oneself in order to achieve a goal.” It is therefore not directly related to sustainability, but the approaches and ideas regarding the importance of inner development and inner transformation are very much anchored in this concept, with which leaders of any kinds, including from SMEs, are familiar with.

Other concepts are **transformative leadership and servant leadership**, etc.....

WHAT PRACTICES (METHODS, ACTIVITIES OR INTERVENTIONS) EXIST TO SUPPORT INNER TRANSFORMATION FOR SUSTAINABILITY WITHIN COMPANIES, AND PARTICULARLY SMEs?

1. Are certain inner transformation practices/methods/activities/interventions recognized as important for sustainability for SMEs in your country? If yes, which ones?
2. What are the most commonly used practices/methods/activities/interventions for developing competencies related to inner transformation in SMEs in your country?
3. What specific practices/methods/activities/interventions for inner transformation are currently being used by SMEs and other companies in your country?
4. Do they differ in SMEs and Multinational Corporations? If so, how?



5. What is the nature of these practices/methods/activities/interventions?
6. Are they philosophical in nature, focused on reflection, or rooted in other disciplines like psychology or leadership development?
7. Are there any activities aimed to institutionalize inner transformation for sustainability in companies' strategic priorities, aims or visions, their project management approaches, working structures, regulations, cooperation with other organizations, etc.?
8. What COMPETENCIES are targeted in relation to the existing practices/methods/activities/interventions in your national context?
9. Are there documented examples in your country, of SMEs incorporating inner transformation practices/methods/activities/interventions?

In contrast to the different concepts described above, it is more difficult to find information on the concrete practices, as organizations do not want to provide too many details on their methods online. This is due to issues of competition and copyright.

Nevertheless, some of most well-known practices used within SMEs to foster inner transformation seem to include the following:

- **Self-reflection practices, such as individual self-reflection, self-reflective dialogues and self-reflective circles (självreflektion)** – Structured self-reflection exercises and discussions aim at fostering **self-awareness** and in relation to sustainability more **ethical decision-making**. A concrete example are so-called reflection circles: “The reflection circle is meant to provide a structure to allow us to reflect on a challenging situation. We all reflect, more or less consciously, on situations that we experienced as surprising or difficult. The ways we do this can range from late-night ruminations to scheduled review meetings with the work team. With the reflection circle, we want to offer support for as constructive a reflection as possible, where time and space are given, and where we have a structure to stick to and support ourselves against in order to be able to explore and learn from the challenging situation. The tool helps us reflect on questions such as: What actually happened? What happened in me, what did I feel in the situation? In what different ways can I interpret what happened? Based on these interpretations, what are my options for action in similar situations in the future? ([link](#) and [link](#))”
- **Mindfulness and meditation practices** – Many SMEs integrate mindfulness and other meditation practices for **stress management** and for supporting **self-reflection and -awareness** as part of a wider portfolio of exercises.
- **Inner transition practices (inre omställning)** – In Sweden there is a “inre omställning” network. It consists of people who take joint initiatives to change to a regenerative and prosperous culture. Focus is here often on agricultural practices, but the approach is holistic in nature ([link](#)). “The transformation network recognizes the importance of internal processes for external change. How our values, worldviews, experiences and beliefs drive our behaviours. This must be taken into account in both individual adjustment and collective processes. Our relationship with nature and ecosystems is central, as is our relationship with ourselves and each other” ([link](#)). The transition network is actively working with methods to reach and activate this dimension of the transition, but it seems that this is rather a niche movement and related work/ practices are not commonly taken up by SMEs, such as those by Macy of “The Work That Reconnects”.
- **Inner development practices** – In Sweden, more organizations are exploring the IDG framework to develop inner skills for sustainability, as well as the related toolbox of exercises that exist online

and are clustered around **being, thinking, relating, collaborating and acting** ([link](#)). The scientific basis of the tools and their selection is explained in the IDG report of phase 2 ([link](#)). The latter also clustered the types of practices that exist and are relevant for inner development. They were identified through a large-scale survey in which also many staff members from SMEs, and from Sweden, participated:

- **Mindfulness-based interventions and related methods and practices:** This includes methods or practices such as ‘mindfulness-based’ or ‘mindfulness-informed’ interventions and training (like Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT)) that help to develop **mindfulness and compassion** as a foundation for cultivating other inner qualities that relate to the five clusters of the IDGs. Mindfulness and mindfulness-based practices are well-established in psychological research and are widely practiced in different fields. They involve amongst other things **regulating the attention, developing greater receptivity and awareness, and creating some distance to one’s thoughts, emotions and impulses**. In this way, one will be able to respond to the world more consciously or intentionally, and beyond the individual level, rather than reacting blindly or being stuck in habitual patterns.
- **Adult development-based approaches:** These are methods and assessment tools based on the research area of adult developmental psychology and include methods such as the Immunity to Change process, Lectica’s Virtuous cycle of learning, Polarity management and dialectical thinking. The field has influenced these questions due to its strong focus on inner development and one of the field’s significant areas of interest and **application is how we address complex sustainability issues**.
- **Leadership development and practice:** Leadership development is what we generally associate with inner development in organizational settings. Approaches that address sustainability include different strands of **self-leadership** and approaches based on academic studies of leadership, such as transformative leadership, servant leadership, systemic leadership, sustainable leadership, regenerative leadership etc.
- **Group, team or family-based methods:** These methods are performed in group settings but aim primarily at developing the individual. There are however also methods that aim to develop the group rather than the individual. This is performed using approaches towards **collective intelligence, methods for building trust and safe spaces, negotiation methods, promoting listening, dialogue and communication, collaborative approaches and team development**. Examples of methods are systemic constellations, authentic relating and circling.
- **Organisational or values-based methods:** These approaches aim at developing the organisation as a whole or the culture on a larger scale. Organisational design is by some considered as a way of promoting inner development and, more specifically, **new ways of self-organisation** with approaches such as Holacracy, Sociocracy, Deliberately developmental organisations, and providing feedback by assessing the culture and values in the organisation or a country.
- **Sustainability science-based approaches:** Related practices are largely based on **systems thinking**. Traditional learning approaches focus primarily on transmitting knowledge and perspectives around scientific approaches to sustainability, which are also expressed in the SDGs. Importantly, they are however increasingly combined with **transformative learning approaches** and include methods from the other listed aspects, such as coaching, leadership or mindfulness-based approaches.
- **Systems thinking and complexity theory:** Related practices are based on **systems thinking** and complexity theory. These large fields are often applied in sustainability contexts for **sense-making around the complexity** of the challenges and of systems change. These perspectives are often informed by and contribute to several of the other directions.
- **Spiritual and transpersonal approaches:** These are approaches with historical roots in religious or wisdom traditions focusing on achieving **self-realisation**, transcendence or the Eastern conception of enlightenment. These influences can also be found in the mentioned mindfulness practices and related methods, and there are similarities in their emphasis on developing openness, self-awareness and presence.



- **Embodiment-based approaches:** These methods and approaches focus on developing the body by physical exercise, with e.g. some forms of Yoga related to body postures, or using the body as an instrument, e.g. **systems awareness**. Body psychotherapy, Drama Therapy, various approaches for enhancing body awareness and implicit and tacit knowledge are mentioned here. Embodiment is often used as a component in other approaches and methods, such as in different forms of embodied leadership.
- **Trauma-work:** This final type of practice contains trauma work and practices to address trauma at the individual and collective levels. It was the least represented in terms of the number of survey responses. Development from this perspective means healing and reintegrating those parts of oneself that have been disassociated from a traumatic experience. Whilst separate practices might not be necessary in our context, it is however relevant to consider if, or if not, the approaches are, or should be, trauma informed, particularly in relation to issues of intergenerational trauma. ([link](#))

In a recent UNDP report, the types of relevant practices were clustered similarly, but in a simpler way under four clusters: "1) contemplative practices and interventions, 2) psychological and cognitive-behavioral based interventions, 3) transformative facilitation, communication and coaching tools, and 4) transformational education and leadership approaches" ([link](#)). "Nature-based approaches exist across all four categories and are receiving increasing interest in the context of sustainability. They focus on immersion in natural surroundings to support, amongst other things, **human-nature connection**" ([link](#)).

- **Nature-based approaches for transformative and regenerative leadership** – Leadership approaches incorporating nature-based experiences, together with coaching, and systemic thinking ([link](#)). There are for instance some nature quests offered in Sweden. A related announcement reads like this: "As the famous CEO said while he was lying on his back next to me in the mountain meadow: "This is how I would like to feel when I make decisions that affect so many people. Nature helps me connect with my true self and deepest values." Nature Quests can help us increase and develop the following: our level of connection through deep immersion in nature, our capability to manoeuvre the unknown by **deepening our awareness, emotional connections, and relationships with ourselves and the more-than-human world**. Nature Quest enables us to practice Radical Trust, which allows us to surrender and do what is necessary, regardless of whether it will succeed. However, surrender also encompasses **acceptance and grief, guiding us to a place of openness and receptivity**" ([link](#)).
- **Psychological safety practices (Psykologisk trygghet)** – These practices aim at creating cultures where employees can engage in open, values-driven dialogue. A high degree of psychological safety can lead to increased performance, increased learning, and higher work satisfaction. Psychological safety refers to the experience of **being able to be oneself in a group** without fear of being rejected or ridiculed by other group members. It can help teams increase performance, increase learning, and have higher work satisfaction. Simple exercises can be found [here](#).
- **Storytelling, narrative change and imaginaries (Narrativförändring och storytelling)** – These kind of practices aim to help leaders and employees reframe their roles in sustainability efforts. "Using storytelling to change cultures, norms or attitudes is a powerful way of working that pays off in the long term. It is also a method of creating identity or strengthening a brand" ([link](#)).
- **Kollektivt lärande och samskapande (Collective learning and co-creation)** – Used in companies that emphasize participatory decision-making.

Finally, it has to be noted that there is an increasing number of toolboxes that have been developed for supporting inner transformation for sustainability for different contexts and target groups. We have collected several of them in a recent literature review ([link](#)). For SMEs, the following might be relevant:

- UNFPA's Step up pocket guide to social change for young leaders. United Nations Population Fund (2021). See [here](#).

- “Transformational Hosts International – Toolbox” (2022). See [here](#).
- “A Transformative Edge – Knowledge, Inspiration and Experiences for Educators of Adults”. See [here](#) and the related “Transformational Hosts International – Toolbox” [here](#)
- “The Inner Pathways Guide for Facilitators”. See [here](#).
- Compassionate systems awareness and leadership approaches by Peter Senge and others. See [here](#).
- Mindfulness- and compassion-based approaches. See [here](#).
- Joanna Macy & Molly Brown: Coming Back to Life and other tools related to The Work That Reconnects. See [here](#).
- Tools/toolkits from the U:lab (Theory U). See [here](#) and related reflections [here](#).
- IDG-related toolkits, developed by different hubs worldwide, such as the Transition Makers Ready-made tools. See [here](#).
- Three-step-pedagogy of the Conscious Full Spectrum Response Framework for Radical Transformational Leadership. See [here](#). (Wamsler & Osberg, 2022).
- The EU 'A Rounder Sense of Purpose' toolkit. See [here](#).
- Re-Imaginary toolbox. See [here](#).
- The Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) Dialogues (Mehlmann & Pometun, 2013), which includes practical approaches to education for sustainable development by and for educators. See [here](#).
- Gesturing Towards Decolonial Futures Depth Education toolbox. See [here](#).

WHAT EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS EXIST TO SUPPORT INNER TRANSFORMATION FOR SUSTAINABILITY IN COMPANIES, AND PARTICULARLY SMES?

1. Are there existing training programs specifically focused on inner transformation in your country?
2. What types of organizations (e.g., private companies, NGOs, government agencies, academic institutions) offer such training programs?
3. How do they link inner transformation with sustainability? Or are these topics rather addressed separately?
4. Are these programs tailored for SMEs, or are they part of broader training initiatives?
5. What are the key topics and COMPETENCIES⁵ covered in these training programs? What COMPETENCIES are targeted in relation to the existing educational programs in your national context?
6. Do they for instance focus on certain values, ethics or certain capacities, such as mindfulness, self-awareness or systems thinking?
7. What training methods are effective in developing these competencies in SMEs in your country? Are there successful case studies or examples of effective training?
8. Which formats (e.g., workshops, mentoring, online courses) are most suitable for local SMEs?

⁵ The term *competencies* encompasses the terms *skills* and *capacities*



9. How do SMEs prefer to engage with inner transformation or sustainability trainings (e.g., self-paced learning, peer-to-peer sessions, and interactive workshops)

It is difficult to analyse vocational education training programmes (VET) in Sweden. VET is constructed via low level regulation and the VET programs constitute a very heterogeneous group, where almost every training is unique and conducted under unique conditions ([link](#)).

There are however several training providers and initiatives that are offering programs in relation to inner transformation and the concepts and practices presented above. Some examples are listed here:

- **Sustainable leadership courses** are, for instance offered by the Stockholm School of Economics (SEE). See: [Executive education – Stockholm School of Economics Executive Education](#). On their website they state that “SSE Executive Education is Northern Europe’s leading partner for executive education and ranked number one in the Nordics within leadership and business development according to Financial Times. (...) At SSE Executive Education, we provide organizations and their leaders with new knowledge, new ways of thinking and new tools to successfully drive their organizations into the future.” This includes sustainable leadership courses and SEE has also increasingly engaged in concepts, such as the IDGs.
- **Creative conscious leadership courses** are offered by individuals and SMEs. For an examples, see here: [Creative Conscious Leadership - Pär Skoglund Finquist](#)
- **Regenerative Leadership programs** – Several consultants and networks in Sweden provide courses on regenerative leadership and systems thinking. There are also courses offered by The Natural Step Sweden, but the specific foci and how much inner transformation is considered are not fully clear from their website ([link](#)). Compass education seems to be another organization that offers leadership program that integrate inner development to a certain extent. However, little can be found on the web and if, or if not it is relevant for SMEs ([link](#)).
- **Personal leadership programs** are for instance offered by [Ledarskapsprogram – MiL Institute](#). “Personal Leadership is a transformative and intensive 3-day program that combines creative leadership with the power of psychological safety to help you lead with clarity, confidence, and courage.” The same training institute even offers a course, which is called “**The journey inward for leaders**”. On the webpage, write that “The program is aimed at you who have direct or indirect leadership responsibilities and who want to continue to develop your personal leadership and build **courage and security**. You need to find balance and **self-awareness** as well as find an active approach to moving around and being able to manage constant change and a complex professional life” ([link](#)).
- **Psychological sustainability courses** are offered by individuals and smaller companies, such as this one: [Psykologisk expertis och vetenskap - WiseMind Evolution](#)
- **Inner development programs to accelerate sustainability:** The Inner Development Goals (IDG) Ambassador Program, The IDG Global Leadership for Sustainable Development (GLSD) Program, and the IDG Learning Journey – These programs are implemented by the IDG Initiative, together with partners. They aim to provide a structured approach to integrating inner development for sustainability into organizations, following the IDG framework and clusters of being, thinking, relating, collaborating and acting. So far, two **GLSD programs** have been implemented. The evaluation of the first GLSD program, including a description of related practices, can be found [here](#), and a summary [here](#). The **Ambassador Program** has first been implemented in 2024, and is receiving increasing interest, also from businesses, including SMEs. The search for stakeholder-adequate wording for promoting the field is part of the course. More information about the program can be found [here](#). Finally, the IDG Initiative also offers to their formal partners and members a so-called **Learning Journey**. It is a series of online experiential workshops exploring inner development and its relevance to organisational learning, fuelled by the IDG framework. It

seems to be particularly relevant for our PsyGym project. The purpose of the Learning Journey is to support each participant's personal growth while also collaboratively exploring how to bring **and integrate the learnings to our organizations**.

- **Training programs for a more conscious and sustainable society** are offered by Ekskäret Foundation, a Swedish organizations that is also a founding organizations of the IDGs. They offer a wide range of courses related to inner transformation, also for sustainability-oriented businesses. Offered courses include nature quests, self-reflection retreats, and self-leadership courses. For more information see [here](#).
- **Self-Leadership courses are for instance offered by the SME Self Leaders.** They focus on personal development and self-leadership, partly with a sustainability lens. Self Leaders have started in 2009. Their program is supported by digital tools, including the so-called **value tree**. One module is also about sustainable efficiency and is described as follows: "Today's world is full of stress and distractions, and we need to use both our time and energy wisely in a sustainable, wholesome way. The sustainable efficiency module is all about taking on your work responsibilities with a strong sense of self-leadership. In this module, participants will receive an introduction to motivational theory and an understanding of the brain's functioning around decision-making, prioritization, and the handling of interruptions. Participants will familiarize themselves with habits and tools that can help them save up to 2 hours every day and boost energy levels. The purpose of the module is to **optimize work performance, reduce stress, create a meaningful workflow, and use concrete tools to reach productivity in yourself and for team-based projects**" ([link](#)).
- **International courses that explicitly aim to integrate inner and outer transformation are only slowly emerging.** The above-mentioned programs by the IDG Initiative are part of them. Other organizations that offer related courses are the Inner Green Deal ([link](#)). Related course focus on "Mindfulness-bases sustainable transformation", "Climate leadership" or "Conscious food systems". The courses are science-based and co-developed with academic partners.

WHAT PARTICULAR GAPS AND NEEDS EXIST IN RELATION TO THE PREVIOUS QUESTIONS?

1. What challenges do SMEs in your country face in taking or implementing inner transformation or sustainability-focused training programs (e.g., budget, time, lack of expertise)?
2. Are there cultural attitudes or norms that may inhibit the adoption of inner transformation practices in SMEs in your country?
3. Are there gaps in the current training programs in your country in terms of addressing inner transformation?
4. What are the most significant gaps in the adoption of inner transformation practices by SMEs in your country?
5. Are there particular competencies that SMEs would particularly need to develop?
6. Are there particular competencies or skills missing in current inner transformation approaches?
7. What challenges do SMEs report in finding or accessing relevant training programs?



8. What challenges do SMEs report in institutionalizing inner transformation for sustainability in their organizations?

Some key gaps and unmet needs include:

- **Lack of mainstream adoption** – Many SMEs still seem to see inner transformation as “soft” or secondary to sustainability strategies. There is a lack of a more integrated perspective that sees inner and outer change processes as intertwined. Inner transformation is not a “nice to have” addition, but a vital aspect if we want to address the root causes of today’s polycrisis and support sustainable transformation.
- **Potential misuse of inner transformation for unsustainable goals** – There is a risk that current approaches for inner development are misused for supporting efficiency and growth paradigm as opposed to sustainability outcomes. Similar trends have occurred in the context of offering mindfulness in organizations, leading to the term McMindfulness. Related aspects do not seem to be made explicit, but they require explicit critical enquiry.
- **Scalability and accessibility** – Programs are often tailored for companies or leaders in general rather than SMEs. This is particularly true for offerings that are more advanced when it comes to the integration of inner and outer transformation for sustainability. Consequently, the wording used might not be sufficiently appealing to SMEs. It is therefore important to learn from the other above-listed approaches regarding their argumentation and wording to make the field better understandable and accessible for SME staff.
- **Integration with business performance** – More evidence and case studies are needed to show how inner development improves business resilience and innovation. There is a need to collect related studies, like a recent IDG study on inner development in organizations ([link](#)), together with the decade-long research on the importance of emotional intelligence and cognitive aspects like biases and motivation, to improve the argumentation and the scientific fact-bases of inner transformation for sustainability for SMEs.
- **Sector-specific approaches** – There is a need for more targeted programs and practices addressing SME and sector-specific sustainability challenges.
- **Measurement and impact assessment** – There might be a need to link related programs and practices to simple ways to measure the baseline and the impacts of inner transformation on sustainability outcomes. Related work from the IDG community might be relevant here. However, there is also a risk to make stakeholders wanting to measure things that are rather of qualitative nature and require more time to express themselves in concrete changes.
- **Wording and motivation** – A move from a focus on negative wording (such as ecological footprint) to more positive and engaging wording (such as handprint) might help to increase the motivation and engagement of SMEs in the field.
- **Competencies and capacities** – Issues like individual self-reflection regarding own values and how they align, or do not align, with the values of the company seem too have been on the agenda for a while, as well as individual work to reduce stress and increase self-awareness and wellbeing, and group and organizational work for improving team building and psychological safety. Broader enquiries that look deeper into related systemic and cultural issues regarding these issues (values, self-awareness, stress/ fears, safety, agency, care, in/interdependence, etc.) and how these relate to individuals and the organizational culture seem to be rare.
- **Linking individual practices with systematic mainstreaming approaches** – While there is a lot of information on individual concepts and practices, there is less information on how learning journeys could be best designed to ensure step-by-step learning of SME staff, thereby systematically linking individual, collective and system change. There is also very little information

about how inner transformation can be systematically integrated in organizations and what kind of changes this involves in concrete terms. How can the working environment of staff members and the organizational setting create conditions for self-reflection and care so that it becomes a default-mode of operations? This also relates to the following point listed below.

- **Holistic education for integrated inner-outer transformation** – Recent research has identified the four essential elements that courses aimed to accelerate sustainability through linking inner and outer transformation must provide. They relate to the courses' content (how we see the world), their learning approach (how we get to know), the offered operational guidance and solutions for transformation and institutionalization (how we engage) and their quality (how we ensure quality education) (see related [publication](#) and [video](#)). Programs that bring together these four elements and are tailored for SMEs do, so far, not exist.

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