

Cooperation and integration of knowledge and practices from within various areas: how can one become an ESG specialist?

ESG covers a number of factors that affect the organisation's operations and their impact on the environment, including environmental (e.g., greenhouse gas emissions, management of natural resources), social (e.g., employee rights, employee safety and health, relations with local communities) and management aspects (e.g., governance structure, transparency, ethics). Effective management of ESG issues, from strategy building and implementation; through operational management and coordination of activities in this area; to performance monitoring and reporting, requires an interdisciplinary approach.

Environmental graduates can provide environmental expertise, engineers can develop technology solutions, lawyers can ensure compliance, and human resources experts can implement social policies in organisations.

ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) requires consideration of different perspectives and stakeholders. The impact of an organisation on the environment, local community and financial markets requires a holistic approach, considering economic, environmental, social and management aspects.

If you want to become an ESG specialist, i.e., an expert dealing with issues of sustainable development, corporate social responsibility, and management, you do not have to abandon your studies and interests, it is worth expanding them to include ESG aspects.

First: theory

At the beginning, it is worth deepening your knowledge in the field of ESG. Literature related to the subject of sustainable development, ESG reporting standards (e.g., Global Reporting Initiative and EU reporting standards) as well as the latest research and trends in this field will be helpful. There are many sources of information, such as reports from international organisations, market reports, and websites that provide up-to-date information on the latest ESG trends and events (e.g., ReportCSR.pl).

It is worth focusing on the most important environmental, social and management aspects that affect business operations. There are many postgraduate studies that can provide relevant knowledge and skills in this area (e.g., 'CSR Manager. Sustainable development and ESG' by Collegium Civitas in cooperation with CSR Info.)

Courses directly related to sustainable development, such as environmental protection, focus on analysing the impact of business activities on the environment and society, and on how to manage these aspects. This often includes the opportunity to obtain useful certificates, e.g., ISO 14001 (standard for environmental management systems).

Studies in environmental economics will provide knowledge of the economic aspects of sustainable development, including ways to measure the social and environmental impact of business activities. In addition, there are many trainings and webinars in the field of non-financial reporting available on the market that can provide more advanced knowledge in this area.

Second: practice

Having theoretical background, you can move on to practice. It is worth checking which companies carry out ESG activities, what their goals are and how they report their results. Analysing sustainability practices and strategies helps understand how ESG activities affect an organisation's financial performance and reputation.

For a potential employer, it will be important to have practical experience in the ESG area. Therefore, paid internships or work shadowing at companies, non-profit organizations, rating agencies, or consulting companies dealing with ESG may be a good idea. You can apply the acquired knowledge in practice and gain valuable skills.

Networking

Build your network: meet other ESG professionals and be part of this growing community. Participation in conferences, industry meetings, and networking events will help to establish contacts and share knowledge. You can also consider a membership in ESG organisations that offer the opportunity to meet other experts and participate in industry projects (e.g., Responsible Business League: a free educational program on CSR/ESG/sustainability for students in Poland).

The ESG world is dynamic, so it's important to stay up to date with the latest trends, regulations, and initiatives. You constantly need to educate yourself and follow international initiatives and regulations in this area. The CSRD directive and the related legal changes that will soon be implemented in Poland, as well as the principles of the United Nations Global Compact for Responsible Investment (UN PRI), the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) and initiatives related to green finance, are important to look into further.

This publication reflects solely the views of the author and the European Union is not responsible for any use of the information contained therein.

The study, as well as its detailed description which is presented on the following pages of this report, was conducted as part of a project co-financed by the European Union entitled 'Future leaders of ESG in the business sector' no. 2022-2-PL01-KA210-VET-000094045. The project is executed by the Foundation for XBW by Ignacy Krasicki, in partnership with the Irish company EDU SMART TRAINING CENTER LIMITED.

All results achieved within this project are made available under an open license. They can be used free of charge and without restrictions.

Copying or processing these materials in whole or in part without the author's permission is prohibited. In the case of using the results, it is necessary to provide the source of funding and its authors.