



# esg<sup>4</sup>PMChange

The ESG Imperative for the Project Management World:  
Alliance for Developing and Empowering Changemakers



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# **Deliverable 2.2**

## **Competency framework for ESG project management professionals**

WP 2 - Market scanning and professional  
profile formulation

WP 2.2

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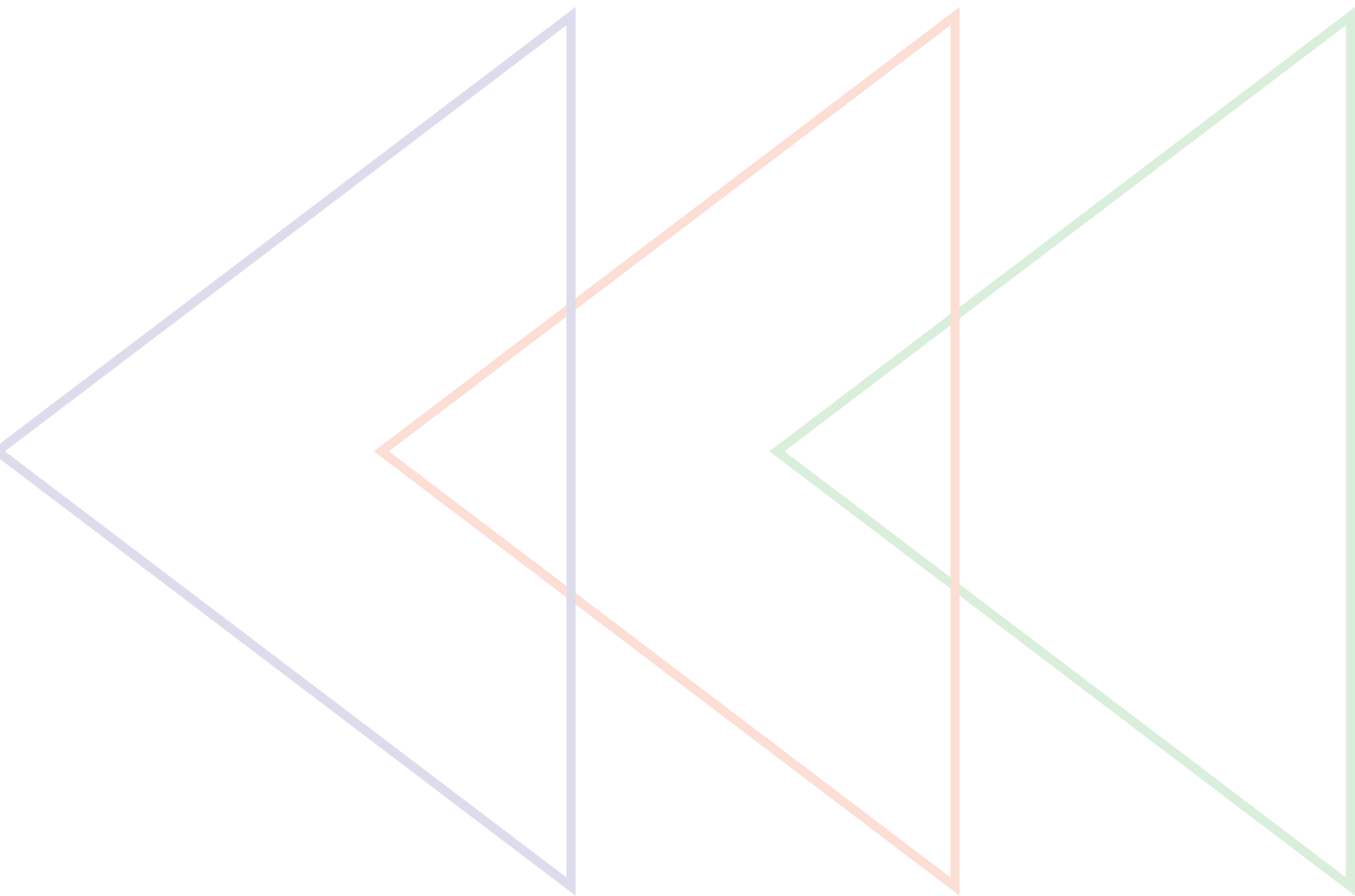
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Acronym	Full Form
AINS	Advise Institute
CSRD	Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive
DEI	Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
EA	European Academy
ENG	ENERGY NET
EQF	European Qualifications Framework
ESG eLAB	ESG EDU-LAB
ESRS	European Sustainability Reporting Standards
FFI	Future Food Institute
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
GRI	Global Reporting Initiative
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OHS	Occupational Health and Safety
PM <sup>2</sup>	PM <sup>2</sup> Alliance
REVAS	REVAS
SFDR	Sustainable Finance Disclosure Regulation
SPARKY	SPARKY
SSA	Syntea
TCFD	Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures
UITM	The University of Information Technology and Management in Rzeszow
UNIBO	The Alma Mater Studiorum Università di Bologna
UNIST	The University of Split
UNS	University of Novi Sad
UTH	The University of Thessaly



<b>DOCUMENT CONTROL INFORMATION</b>	<b>7</b>
DOCUMENT CONTROL INFORMATION	7
DOCUMENT AUTHOR(S) AND REVIEWER(S):	7
DOCUMENT HISTORY:	7
TABLE WITH ACRONYMS	8
<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b>	<b>13</b>
1. INTRODUCTION	15
1.1 Aim of the document	16
1.1.1 Core Objectives of the Framework	17
2. METHODOLOGY	19
2.1 Research Design and Conceptual Grounding	19
2.2 Development Phases	20
2.3 Alignment with European and Global Standards	22
3. STRUCTURE OF THE COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK	23
3.1 Sub-Frameworks	24
3.2 Levels of Competency and EQF Alignment	25
3.3 Competency Composition	26
4. HOW TO USE THE FRAMEWORK	29
4.1 Intended Users	29
4.1.1 Supporting Career Progression Pathways	30
4.1.2 Competency Development and Learning Design	31
4.1.3 Assessment Criteria and Performance Evaluation	31
4.1.4 Strategic Integration into Organizational and Policy Processes	32
4.2 Application Use Cases of the ESG Project Management Competency Framework	33
<b>I. CORE PROJECT MANAGEMENT COMPETENCIES</b>	<b>39</b>
I.1. Project initiation and business case development	41
I.2. Project planning and scheduling	41
I.3. Scope and deliverables management	42
I.4. Budgeting and financial planning	42
I.5. Risk and opportunity management	43
I.6. Stakeholder engagement and communication	43
I.7. Team leadership and collaboration	44
I.8. Quality assurance and control	44
I.9. Monitoring, evaluation and reporting	45
I.10. Procurement and contract management	45
I.11. Project closure and knowledge transfer	46
<b>II. ENVIRONMENTAL COMPETENCIES</b>	<b>47</b>
II.1. Resource efficiency and sustainable use	50
II.2. Green technology integration	50
II.3. Environmental risk and compliance management	51
II.4. Innovation in environmental practices	51
II.5. Pollution prevention and control	52
II.6. Stakeholder engagement on environmental matters	52
II.7. Circular economy and life cycle thinking	53
II.8. Sustainable finance and environmental costing	53
II.9. Climate change mitigation and adaptation	54
II.10. Water and marine resources impact management	54
II.11. Protection of ecosystems and biodiversity	55
II.12. Environmental impact management in the value chain	55
II.13. Scenario analysis and transition planning	56
<b>III. SOCIAL COMPETENCIES</b>	<b>57</b>
III.1. Human rights and labor practices	59
III.2. Competency Area: Occupational health and safety (OHS)	60



III.3. Diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) .....	60
III.4. Community impact and development .....	61
III.5. Human rights due diligence .....	61
III.6. Social risk and impact management .....	62
III.7. Inclusive decision-making and co-creation .....	62
III.8. Stakeholder engagement and dialogue .....	63
III.9. Sustainable procurement (social dimension) .....	63
III.10. Social innovation and cross-sector collaboration .....	64
III.11. Freedom of association and labor rights .....	64
III.12. Training and upskilling for social responsibility .....	65
III.13. Security and safeguarding in project environments .....	65
III.14. Customer and end-user responsibility in projects .....	66
III.15. Protection of user data and privacy .....	66
III.16. Public interest and policy alignment .....	67
III.17. Wellbeing and social value creation in projects .....	67
<b>IV. GOVERNANCE COMPETENCIES .....</b>	<b>69</b>
IV.1. Data protection and privacy management .....	71
IV.2. Anti-corruption and compliance enforcement .....	72
IV.3. Ethical conduct and integrity in project execution .....	72
IV.4. Accountability and transparent decision-making .....	73
IV.5. Legal and regulatory awareness .....	73
IV.6. Corporate governance alignment .....	74
IV.7. Risk management and internal control systems .....	74
IV.8. Stakeholder communication and reporting .....	75
IV.9. ESG reporting and disclosure standards .....	75
IV.10. Training on governance and ESG standards .....	76
IV.11. Governance of ESG risks and opportunities .....	76
IV.12. Whistleblower protection and grievance mechanisms .....	77
<b>V. CROSS-CUTTING &amp; ENABLING COMPETENCIES .....</b>	<b>79</b>
V.1. Systems thinking and interconnectivity .....	81
V.2. Change leadership for ESG transformation .....	81
V.3. Life cycle thinking and long-term value orientation .....	82
V.4. Digital proficiency for ESG monitoring and reporting .....	82
V.5. Evidence-based and data-driven decision making .....	83
V.6. Facilitation and multi-stakeholder engagement .....	83
V.7. Conflict resolution in ESG-sensitive contexts .....	84
V.8. Strategic communication and ESG narrative building .....	84
V.9. Foresight and anticipatory skills .....	85
V.10. Adaptive thinking and agile responsiveness .....	85
V.11. Interdisciplinary collaboration and knowledge integration .....	86
<b>5. WAYS FORWARD .....</b>	<b>87</b>
5.1 Embedding the Framework in Education and Training .....	87
5.2 Advancing Workforce Development and Organizational Capability .....	88
5.3 Informing Policy Alignment and System-Level Strategies .....	88
5.4 Enabling Institutional Innovation and Capacity Building .....	89
5.5 Fostering Ecosystemic Collaboration and Knowledge Exchange .....	89
5.6 Ensuring Inclusivity, Adaptability, and Lifelong Learning .....	90
<b>6. CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>91</b>
<b>APPENDIX A: TERMINOLOGY GLOSSARY .....</b>	<b>93</b>

# LIST OF TABLES

TABLE 1.
Overview of Core Project Management Competencies
40

---

TABLE 2.
Overview of Environmental Competencies
48

---

TABLE 3.
<i>Overview of Social Competencies</i>
58

---

TABLE 4.
Overview of Governance Competencies
70

---

TABLE 6.
Overview of Core Project Management Competencies
80

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



The **Competency Framework for ESG Project Management Professionals** provides a strategic and operational reference for equipping project professionals, educators, institutions, and policymakers with the capabilities needed to lead and support the transition toward environmentally, socially, and ethically responsible project delivery. In the context of climate urgency, social transformation, and evolving governance standards, integrating ESG competencies into project management has become essential to sustainable development and organizational resilience.


Developed under the ESG4PMChange initiative through a rigorous and participatory process, the framework reflects contributions from 14 partner organizations across 7 countries, drawing on leading European and global standards, including the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), GRI Standards, CSRD, SFDR, and OECD principles. The structure is designed for cross-sectoral relevance and adaptability across public, private, and educational sectors.

Organized into five interlinked competency domains—**Core Project Management, Environmental, Social, Governance, and Cross-Cutting & Enabling Competencies**—the framework defines a total of **64 competencies**, each mapped across **five progressive levels (L1–L5)** aligned with **EQF levels 3 to 8**. These levels reflect increasing degrees of expertise, responsibility, and systemic leadership in ESG-integrated project environments.

Key features include:

- A modular, holistic architecture suitable for curriculum development, project talent management, and policymaking;
- Integration of ESG principles with project planning, leadership, compliance, stakeholder engagement, and innovation;
- Alignment with EQF learning outcomes, enabling transparency and comparability across European education and labor markets;



- 
- Practical tools including descriptors, sub-level indicators, sample career pathways, and assessment criteria;
  - Adaptability to diverse institutional settings—corporate, academic, NGO, and public administration.

The framework development process involved:

- A scoping analysis of more than **job advertisements** examines **191 job postings** across **26 countries**, international frameworks, ESG and project management standards;
- Field research involving surveys, focus groups, and validation workshops with ESG and project management professionals;
- Iterative reviews and refinements by cross-disciplinary stakeholders to ensure contextual relevance, coherence, and usability.

This document is designed as a strategic tool for:

- Higher education institutions integrating ESG into project management curricula and qualifications;
- Employers and HR professionals building ESG-sensitive talent development systems and leadership programs;
- Policy actors supporting the alignment of green, social, and governance standards with project delivery mechanisms;
- Training providers and certification bodies developing micro-credentials and recognition schemes for ESG competencies;
- Project professionals and learners navigating ESG-focused career transitions in a rapidly evolving landscape.

As ESG expectations and regulatory environments evolve, this framework should be regarded as a living document—ready to be updated in response to new challenges, innovations, and societal demands. It lays the groundwork for inclusive, responsible, and future-ready project management practice at the heart of sustainable transformation.

# 1. INTRODUCTION



The global movement toward sustainability, ethical governance, and inclusive development has become one of the defining imperatives of our time. Amid accelerating climate change, social inequities, and heightened governance demands, organizations and societies are being called upon to integrate Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) principles into every aspect of their operations. This convergence of ecological urgency, social responsibility, and ethical oversight is reshaping how we plan, implement, and manage projects across all sectors.

At the heart of this transformation lies a shift in the role and expectations of project professionals. No longer confined to scope, schedule, and budget, today's project managers are increasingly expected to serve as agents of ESG transformation—embedding sustainability, equity, and integrity into the very core of project design and delivery. These responsibilities demand more than technical proficiency; they require a new generation of project competencies that are systemic, ethical, interdisciplinary, and future-focused.

This transition is closely aligned with the European Union's strategic vision for sustainable development, responsible digitalization, and social cohesion. Frameworks such as the **European Green Deal**, the **Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD)**, and the **Sustainable Finance Disclosure Regulation (SFDR)** underscore the need for competency-based approaches to workforce development, organizational capacity building, and policy alignment.

Yet, current frameworks for project management education and professional development often remain insufficiently equipped to meet the challenges of ESG integration. Many are fragmented, siloed, or outdated—failing to prepare professionals for the complex ethical, social, and environmental trade-offs that increasingly define project success.



In response, the **ESG Project Management Competency Framework** has been developed under the **ESG4PMChange** initiative as a comprehensive, evidence-based, and forward-looking tool. It provides a structured model to identify, cultivate, and assess the skills, values, and behaviors required for ESG-aligned project practice. It serves as a common reference point for educators, employers, certification bodies, and policymakers—bridging the persistent gap between sustainability intent and implementation reality.

The framework is organized into five interdependent domains: **Core Project Management, Environmental, Social, Governance, and Cross-Cutting & Enabling Competencies**. Each domain addresses a unique set of capabilities, while together they reflect the holistic nature of ESG-informed project leadership. All competencies are mapped across five progressive levels (L1–L5) aligned with **EQF levels 3 to 8**, ensuring relevance for professionals at every stage of their career.

Crucially, the framework recognizes that ESG is not a parallel track to traditional project management—it is a new operating paradigm. Project leaders must be equipped not just to adapt to this new paradigm, but to shape it—strategically, ethically, and collaboratively. By aligning competence development with long-term ESG goals, this framework aims to prepare a new generation of professionals to manage projects that create value not only for organizations, but for society and the planet at large.

## 1.1 Aim of the document

The aim of this document is to present a **comprehensive and integrated Competency Framework for ESG Project Management**, developed to support project professionals, educational institutions, employers, and policy actors in building the capacities required for responsible, inclusive, and sustainable project delivery. The framework serves both as a strategic reference and a practical tool to guide education, training, workforce development, and policy alignment in the rapidly evolving ESG landscape. Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) considerations must not be treated as isolated or ancillary concerns within **project management**. Rather, they represent a **transformative agenda** that redefines the objectives, processes, and success criteria of project work across all sectors. Projects that disregard ESG dimensions risk exacerbating environmental degradation, social inequity, and governance failures. Conversely, projects that integrate ESG effectively can act as powerful levers for sustainable development, stakeholder trust, and long-term resilience.

- **Environmental principles**—such as resource efficiency, climate resilience, circular economy, and ecosystem preservation—must inform project planning, implementation, and closure to ensure minimal harm and regenerative impact.
- **Social priorities**—including equity, diversity, human rights, labor conditions, and community well-being—must be embedded in how projects are designed,



staffed, and evaluated.

- **Governance imperatives**—such as transparency, accountability, anti-corruption, and data protection—must shape project decision-making, stakeholder engagement, and reporting practices.

The intersection of these dimensions requires a **unified competency approach** that equips individuals and organizations to operate with awareness, agility, and integrity in complex and interconnected environments. Without such alignment, ESG strategies may remain rhetorical, and project management practices may fail to deliver meaningful, measurable change.

The **ESG Project Management Competency Framework** directly addresses this need by identifying and organizing the specific knowledge, skills, and values required to lead, manage, and support ESG-sensitive projects across industries and roles. It enables structured career progression, informs curriculum design, supports organizational development, and strengthens policy coherence around sustainable and responsible project delivery.

### 1.1.1 Core Objectives of the Framework

The **ESG Project Management Competency Framework** has been developed with the following core objectives:

- To provide a structured, scalable, and integrative model for identifying and developing ESG-related project competencies across education, employment, and policy domains;
- To organize key competencies within five interconnected domains—Core Project Management, Environmental, Social, Governance, and Cross-Cutting & Enabling Competencies—capturing the full spectrum of capabilities required for sustainable project practice;
- To define five levels of competency progression (L1–L5), aligned with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) levels 3 to 8, enabling recognition of prior learning, targeted upskilling, and lifelong learning pathways;
- To support the design of modular educational programs, vocational training, and professional development curricula that respond to ESG challenges across various sectors and geographies;
- To guide employers in aligning project management roles and talent development strategies with organizational ESG goals, governance obligations, and sustainability priorities;
- To serve as a strategic tool for public authorities and policymakers in the development of national and EU-wide skills strategies, qualification standards, and funding instruments that advance ESG integration.

By articulating a common language and structure for ESG project competencies, the framework contributes to systems-level coherence and coordination—ensuring that competence development is not fragmented or reactive, but anticipatory, harmonized, and transformative.





## 2. METHODOLOGY



The development of the **ESG Project Management Competency Framework** followed a rigorous, multi-phase methodology grounded in scientific principles, evidence-based inquiry, and participatory design. The approach was informed by best practices in competence framework development and aligned with European policy priorities, global ESG reporting standards, and recognized project management models. This section outlines the methodological steps undertaken to ensure the framework's robustness, relevance, and applicability across sectors and geographies.

### 2.1 Research Design and Conceptual Grounding

The conceptual foundation of the framework drew upon contemporary theories of competence-based education, systems thinking, and responsible project management. Key reference models included the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), the GreenComp and DigComp frameworks, as well as established project management standards such as PMI's Talent Triangle, GPM's P5 Standard, and the IPMA Individual Competence Baseline. ESG-specific benchmarks—including CSRD, EU Taxonomy, SFDR, and GRI—served as alignment anchors throughout the development process.

A mixed-methods approach was employed to ensure both breadth and depth of insight, combining extensive desk research, job market analysis, empirical data collection, and stakeholder co-creation.



## 2.2 Development Phases

### PHASE 1

**Phase 1: Scoping and Analytical Mapping (Q4 2024)** An initial mapping exercise was undertaken to establish the scope and key dimensions of ESG in project environments. This phase included:

- Systematic review of over 100 policy documents, scientific articles, and institutional reports on ESG, sustainability skills, and project competence models;
- Analysis of more than 40 project management and sustainability education programs across Europe;
- Comparative review of 10 existing competency and certification frameworks relevant to ESG or project leadership. This phase generated a preliminary set of ESG-relevant capability areas and supported the design of a draft structure of the five-domain model.

### PHASE 2

**Phase 2: Labor Market Needs Analysis (Q4 2024)** To ensure the framework reflected real-world demands, a structured analysis of 191 ESG-related job advertisements across 26 countries was conducted. Positions ranged from junior project officers to senior sustainability advisors. Key findings included:

- High demand for ESG integration skills in project planning, stakeholder engagement, and reporting;
- Growing emphasis on sector-specific ESG knowledge (e.g., construction, energy, finance);
- Widespread gaps in governance-related competencies and transversal project delivery capabilities. These insights directly informed the identification of priority competencies and the formulation of application scenarios.

### PHASE 3

**Phase 3: Survey-Based Validation (Q4 2024 – Q1 2025)** An online survey was deployed to gather input from project professionals, employers, and educators. The survey captured perceptions of current ESG competence gaps, the adequacy of existing qualifications, and preferences for future capacity-building tools. With 986 responses across 15 countries, the findings validated the need for a standardized and modular competency model. Respondents confirmed that existing certifications insufficiently address ESG dimensions, particularly in governance and social inclusion.

**Phase 4: Stakeholder Focus Groups (Q1 2025)** Targeted focus groups were held with representatives of higher education institutions, vocational training providers, public authorities, and industry stakeholders. These sessions gathered qualitative feedback on the preliminary structure and terminology. They reinforced the need for:

- Stronger linkage with international ESG reporting standards (e.g., ESRS, SFDR);
- Modular and flexible structure adaptable across disciplines and professional levels;
- Inclusion of emerging competencies such as digital ethics and regenerative project leadership.

### PHASE 4

### PHASE 5

**Phase 5: Drafting and Internal Expert Review (Q1 2025)** Based on consolidated evidence, the full draft framework was developed. This version included:

- Five domains and 64 competencies;
- Defined progression levels from L1 to L5, mapped to EQF levels 3 to 8;
- Competency descriptors, indicators, examples, and alignment with ESG reporting instruments. Internal peer review was conducted by ESG4PMChange partners, followed by iterative revisions to ensure clarity, usability, and policy relevance.

### PHASE 6

**Phase 6: Finalization and External Validation (Q2 2025)** The finalized framework underwent an external review by international experts in project management, ESG policy, and educational standards. The final version incorporated:

- Adjustments for language clarity and global applicability;
- Mapping to EQF descriptors for recognition across education and employment systems;
- Development of implementation support tools including use cases, credentialing roadmaps, and policy integration guides.



## 2.3 Alignment with European and Global Standards

To ensure the framework's relevance and credibility, the Environmental, Social, and Governance competency blocks include an alignment column that maps each competency to global standards, such as:



Where applicable, each ESG-related competency is mapped to relevant components of these standards, showing how a project manager's skill supports institutional ESG obligations and reporting. This alignment ensures that the competencies are not only theoretically sound but also practically applicable in organizations operating within the EU or aligning with international ESG requirements.

Cross-cutting & Enabling Competencies and Core Project Management Competencies are presented without specific alignment references. These competencies support ESG implementation through project delivery, system thinking, stakeholder engagement, and change management, rather than directly reflecting reporting standards.

By combining methodological rigor, empirical evidence, and stakeholder co-creation, the development of the ESG Project Management Competency Framework reflects a scientifically grounded and policy-relevant response to the challenges of sustainable and responsible project practice in the 21st century.

### 3. STRUCTURE OF THE COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK



The ESG Project Management Competency Framework is designed as a **modular and scalable system**, composed of **five interconnected competency domains**:

1. Core Project Management Competencies
2. Environmental Competencies
3. Social Competencies
4. Governance Competencies
5. Cross-Cutting & Enabling Competencies

These five domains reflect the **essential knowledge, skills, and attitudes** needed to manage projects responsibly and effectively within the evolving landscape of sustainability, social equity, and ethical governance. Together, they offer a holistic view of what it means to be an ESG-aware project professional.



Figure 1. ESG Project Management Competency Framework

### 3.1 Sub-Frameworks

The **ESG Project Management Competency Framework** is organized into five interconnected sub-frameworks, each representing a key dimension of knowledge and capability required for delivering projects in alignment with ESG principles. These sub-frameworks are further divided into **Competency Areas**, which serve as thematic clusters of expertise essential for responsible, sustainable, and effective project management.

- **Core Project Management Competencies** represent foundational skills and knowledge areas necessary for the successful initiation, planning, execution, and closure of projects. These include competencies in project planning, stakeholder coordination, budget and risk management, quality assurance, and results-based monitoring and evaluation. This sub-framework ensures that ESG dimensions are integrated into traditional project management functions.
- **Environmental Competencies** focus on the knowledge and skills required to manage the environmental impact of projects. These include capabilities in resource efficiency, climate risk mitigation, circular economy design, biodiversity preservation, and environmental compliance. Professionals equipped with these competencies are able to drive environmentally sustainable outcomes across project lifecycles and contribute to broader green transformation goals.
- **Social Competencies** emphasize inclusive, equitable, and human-centered approaches to project delivery. This sub-framework addresses areas such as diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI), community engagement, stakeholder communication, human rights, labor standards, and well-being. These competencies prepare professionals to embed social responsibility into project design, implementation, and evaluation.
- **Governance Competencies** relate to the ethical and regulatory dimensions of project management. They include skills in data protection (e.g. GDPR), anti-corruption, transparency, accountability, risk management, and regulatory compliance. These competencies are essential for aligning project execution with good governance practices and legal standards at national, EU, and global levels.
- **Cross-Cutting & Enabling Competencies** encompass transversal skills that support performance across all ESG domains. These include systems thinking, innovation, digital literacy, critical thinking, leadership, change management, and collaboration. They enable professionals to work effectively across disciplines, sectors, and contexts, making them indispensable for holistic ESG project leadership.

Together, these five sub-frameworks provide a comprehensive structure for developing and assessing the full range of **64 competencies** required to lead ESG-integrated projects across diverse organizational and sectoral landscapes.



## 3.2 Levels of Competency and EQF Alignment

The **ESG Project Management Competency Framework** defines five progressive levels of expertise—from **Associate (L1)** to **Principal (L5)**—corresponding to increasing degrees of complexity, autonomy, and strategic responsibility. These levels are **aligned with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)** to ensure compatibility with education, training, and workforce development systems across Europe.

The EQF provides a shared reference structure that helps compare learning outcomes across countries and sectors. Each level is described in terms of **knowledge, skills, and responsibility/autonomy**, enabling recognition of formal, non-formal, and informal learning. Alignment with EQF supports transparency and strengthens the mobility of ESG-skilled professionals.

Below is a detailed description of each competency level and its alignment with EQF:

### L1 – Associate -> EQF Level: 3–4

At this entry level, individuals possess a basic understanding of ESG concepts and terminology. They can apply foundational knowledge in familiar contexts, usually under guidance.

- **Typical profiles:** recent graduates, trainees, junior staff.
- **Responsibilities:** support roles, routine data collection, administrative assistance.
- **Supervision required:** high; operates within structured and supervised environments.
- **Decision-making:** limited; follows established instructions.
- **Learning outcomes (EQF link):** Apply basic knowledge and perform simple tasks under supervision; communicate routine information using appropriate tools.

### L2 – Professional -> EQF Level: 5–6

Professionals at this level demonstrate a solid theoretical understanding and the ability to work independently in defined roles. They contribute to project components and ESG implementation.

- **Typical profiles:** analysts, project officers, specialists.
- **Responsibilities:** deliver project tasks, monitor ESG indicators, generate reports.
- **Supervision required:** minimal; works with autonomy in standard contexts.
- **Decision-making:** informed by organizational procedures; solves moderately complex issues.
- **Learning outcomes (EQF link):** Exercise judgment in defined work contexts; collaborate in teams; solve problems using appropriate methods.

### L3 – Senior Professional / Manager -> EQF Level: 6–7

Individuals demonstrate advanced ESG knowledge, contextual awareness, and lead-



ership ability. They supervise teams and integrate ESG principles into project planning and execution.

- **Typical profiles:** project managers, team leads, ESG coordinators.
- **Responsibilities:** manage project components, lead stakeholder engagement, ensure ESG compliance.
- **Supervision required:** low; expected to lead others.
- **Decision-making:** adapts to complexity and change; proposes and implements new approaches.
- **Learning outcomes (EQF link):** Manage complex activities and decision-making; demonstrate leadership and creative problem-solving.

#### **L4 – Lead Professional / Senior Manager -> EQF Level: 7–8**

This level involves institutional leadership and systemic influence. Professionals align ESG strategies with organizational goals and drive integration across departments or sectors.

- **Typical profiles:** senior managers, directors, sustainability officers.
- **Responsibilities:** develop ESG strategies, manage large portfolios, represent the organization in multi-stakeholder settings.
- **Supervision required:** none; holds senior authority.
- **Decision-making:** anticipates and responds to strategic risks; leads institutional change.
- **Learning outcomes (EQF link):** Lead strategy development and implementation; take accountability for teams and results; integrate knowledge across domains.

#### **L5 – Principal / Executive / Global Thought Leader -> EQF Level: 8**

At the highest level, individuals serve as recognized experts shaping ESG practices at national or global levels. They create new knowledge, influence policy, and define standards.

- **Typical profiles:** chief ESG officers, international advisors, senior consultants.
- **Responsibilities:** global thought leadership, policy shaping, mentorship, and innovation leadership.
- **Supervision required:** none; serves as reference point and mentor for others.
- **Decision-making:** visionary; leads long-term systemic transformation.
- **Learning outcomes (EQF link):** Demonstrate the most advanced and specialized skills; lead research, policy, and strategic innovation; contribute to global ESG impact.

### **3.3 Competency Composition**

The **ESG Project Management Competency Framework** is designed as a structured, multi-layered tool that enables clear understanding, development, and evaluation of ESG-related skills and knowledge across project environments. Each **Competency** is

described across **five progressive levels of mastery (L1–L5)**, aligned with the **EQF**. Each competency is described using the following elements:

- **Sub-Level Competency Indicators:**

Detailed, level-specific indicators that define the knowledge, skills, and attitudes (KSAs) required at each stage. These indicators reflect increasing levels of autonomy, complexity, and strategic impact as one progresses from L1 (Associate) to L5 (Principal).

- **Descriptor:**

A concise description outlining the scope of the competency and the level-specific expectations. It provides a high-level summary of what individuals are expected to know and do at each level.

- **Competency Examples:**

Real-world use cases or scenarios that illustrate how the competency may be applied in practice. These help contextualize abstract concepts, making them relatable and relevant for different sectors and roles.

- **Overall Description of the Competency:**

This section provides a high-level overview of the competency's purpose and scope. It defines what the competency encompasses, why it matters in an ESG project context, and how it contributes to sustainability, governance, and social responsibility outcomes.

- **Career Progression Pathways:**

Real-world job role examples associated with each level, illustrating how the competency manifests in various organizational or sectoral contexts. This supports career mapping, job profiling, and professional development planning.

- **Assessment Criteria:**

Measurable performance indicators that enable the evaluation of individual proficiency and learning outcomes. These criteria support both formative and summative assessment processes and are aligned with EQF descriptors.

This multi-dimensional design ensures that the framework is not only **theoretically robust**, but also **practically actionable**—supporting use in curriculum development, training programs, performance evaluation, and policy formulation. It bridges the gap between **competence definition and real-world application**, ensuring alignment with ESG goals at both individual and institutional levels.





## 4. HOW TO USE THE FRAMEWORK



### 4.1 Intended Users

The **ESG Project Management Competency Framework** is designed to function as both a **practical and strategic tool** for a wide range of users—including project professionals, educators, employers, training providers, and policymakers. It supports the development of targeted learning pathways, ESG-focused upskilling strategies, and systemic alignment between sustainability goals, social impact, governance standards, and project-based delivery.

The framework offers **flexibility, modularity, and scalability**, making it adaptable to diverse organizational settings, sectors, and regional contexts. It can be applied in multiple ways depending on the specific needs, objectives, and institutional maturity of the user.

Its structure—built around **five interrelated domains, 64 competencies**, and **five levels of progression (L1–L5)** aligned with **EQF levels 3 to 8**—enables nuanced application and tailored implementation. These include:

- **For professionals and learners:**  
Use the framework to assess current skill levels, identify development needs, and map out career progression in ESG project roles.
- **For educators and training providers:**  
Apply the framework to design future-proof curricula, short courses, and micro-credentials that integrate ESG values and competencies into project management learning.
- **For employers and HR departments:**  
Leverage the framework for competency mapping, role profiling, training program design, performance evaluation, and succession planning aligned with ESG priorities.
- **For policymakers and regulators:**  
Utilize the framework to inform national and regional qualification frame-



works, funding instruments, ESG skills strategies, and education-to-employment reforms.

- **For certification and assessment bodies:**

Reference the framework in the development of assessment tools, professional certification schemes, and recognition of prior learning (RPL) related to ESG in project contexts.

By providing a common language and structure, the framework helps bridge the gap between **intention and implementation**, ensuring that ESG considerations are embedded not only in project goals but also in the competencies of those who manage them.

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#### 4.1.1 *Supporting Career Progression Pathways*

The **ESG Project Management Competency Framework** defines five progressive levels of competence—from **entry-level (L1 – Associate)** to **expert-level leadership and policy influence (L5 – Principal)**. These levels reflect increasing autonomy, complexity, and strategic responsibility, making the framework a practical tool for supporting career development and professional growth in ESG-oriented project roles.

The framework enables users to:

- **Map individual career trajectories** in ESG project management, from early-stage roles to high-level leadership positions;
- **Design structured learning pathways** for professionals working in technical, coordination, management, and executive functions across all ESG domains;
- **Clarify role expectations and required capabilities** for specific job functions, project assignments, and organizational levels;
- **Support interdisciplinary mobility and transition-readiness**, particularly for professionals moving between sectors such as academia, industry, consulting, and public administration.

Each level builds on the competencies of the previous one, allowing learners and professionals to evolve from **basic ESG awareness and task execution** to **strategic integration, team and program leadership**, and ultimately **system-level influence and policy shaping**.

This structured progression supports lifelong learning, upskilling, and the professionalization of ESG project roles, ensuring that individuals are equipped to navigate and lead within complex, sustainability-driven project environments.

### 4.1.2 Competency Development and Learning Design

The **ESG Project Management Competency Framework** can be used as a foundational tool for designing educational programs, training modules, short courses, and micro-credentials that support ESG-aligned project skills development across sectors and learning environments.

It supports learning design by:

- **Clearly defining learning outcomes** that respond to real-world ESG challenges and organizational transformation needs;
- **Structuring content around progressive sub-level competencies (L1–L5)**, allowing learners to build mastery step-by-step across environmental, social, governance, and project management dimensions;
- **Enabling the development of modular, stackable learning pathways**, which are especially valuable for lifelong learning, adult education, and reskilling initiatives;
- **Facilitating content customization** based on industry, geographical context, learner background, or specific ESG domain focus.

Educational institutions, training providers, and professional development teams can apply the framework to:

- Assess learners' current ESG competence levels;
- Identify skill gaps relevant to specific roles or organizational objectives;
- Design targeted capacity-building programs for individuals, teams, or entire organizations;
- Align curriculum content with **European Qualifications Framework (EQF)** levels and international ESG standards such as **GRI**, **CSRD**, and **SFDR**.

By anchoring learning design in a well-defined, evidence-based structure, the framework ensures that competence development is **relevant, measurable, and aligned** with evolving sustainability and governance priorities in project-based work.

### 4.1.3 Assessment Criteria and Performance Evaluation

Each competency within the **ESG Project Management Competency Framework** is supported by clearly defined **assessment indicators**, enabling the evaluation of knowledge, skill application, and professional growth across all five levels of progression (L1–L5). These criteria provide a foundation for both individual and organizational evaluation practices.

The framework can be used to:

- **Enable self-assessment** of current ESG project management capabilities and support the development of personalized learning and career advancement plans;



- **Establish competency-based performance appraisal systems** that align with organizational ESG goals and project success metrics;
- **Assess the impact and effectiveness of training and upskilling programs**, ensuring alignment with real-world project needs and ESG integration targets;
- **Facilitate external validation of skills** through formal certification schemes, digital credentials, accreditation systems, or recognition of prior learning (RPL).

The approach supports both **formative assessment** (for developmental feedback) and **summative evaluation** (for certification, advancement, or role alignment), and is fully aligned with **European quality assurance principles** in education and training, including EQF and ESG-related policy frameworks.

By embedding consistent assessment criteria into the learning and professional development process, the framework helps ensure that ESG competencies are not only acquired, but **demonstrably applied in practice**, thereby enhancing accountability, transparency, and impact across project environments.

#### 4.1.4 *Strategic Integration into Organizational and Policy Processes*

The **ESG Project Management Competency Framework** serves as a reference model for embedding ESG-related skills and values into broader **institutional strategies, workforce systems, and public policies**. Its structured, multi-level design enables organizations and authorities to operationalize ESG goals through human capital development and project delivery practices.

The framework can be used to:

- **Align HR strategies, workforce planning, and talent development** with long-term ESG and sustainability priorities;
- **Map competencies to specific organizational roles and functions**, enhancing clarity in job design, recruitment, internal mobility, and succession planning;
- **Support ESG, CSR, and sustainability strategies** by integrating environmental, social, and governance competencies into project execution, leadership development, and employee engagement programs;
- **Inform the development of institutional and public policy instruments**, including ESG-aligned qualification standards, funding programs, and skills strategies at national and EU levels.

Its alignment with the **European Qualifications Framework (EQF)** also facilitates:

- **Recognition across national qualification frameworks** and education systems;
- **Harmonization of ESG-related skills development** across borders, enabling international mobility and coherence in capacity-building efforts.

By embedding the framework into core **organizational and policy processes**, stakeholders can ensure that ESG commitments are not only strategic statements, but are translated into **concrete capabilities, accountable roles, and measurable outcomes**—advancing ESG transformation at scale.



## 4.2 Application Use Cases of the ESG Project Management Competency Framework

The ESG Project Management Competency Framework is designed as a strategic and operational tool capable of supporting institutions, organizations, and ecosystems in embedding sustainability, ethics, and governance into project practice. Its modular and EQF-aligned structure enables tailored application across diverse stakeholder settings. Below are five illustrative use cases demonstrating the framework's utility for curriculum reform, human capital development, and institutional transformation.

### Use Case 1

#### Use Case 1: Curriculum Redesign for a Master's Program in Project Management

**Context:** A leading university seeks to redesign its master's-level curriculum in project management to integrate ESG competencies, ensuring alignment with emerging sustainability legislation (e.g., CSRD), labor market demand, and international educational standards.

#### Objective:

To embed ESG-aligned knowledge, skills, and values into the academic curriculum through a structured, progression-based approach.

#### Application of the Framework:

- Competencies from all five domains are mapped to learning outcomes across core and elective modules (e.g., environmental risk mitigation in project design, stakeholder dialogue techniques, transparency in governance structures).
- EQF-aligned progression levels (L1–L5) are used to scaffold learning from foundational awareness to strategic leadership.
- Assessment criteria from the framework are embedded into coursework, capstone projects, and internships.
- Elective micro-credentials are created for specialized topics (e.g., circular economy, ethical procurement, ESG disclosure), fostering stackable learning pathways.

#### Outcome:

A modular, competency-based academic program that produces graduates equipped to assume ESG-sensitive project roles in public, private, and hybrid sectors, while also enhancing the university's appeal to accreditation bodies and global employers.



# Use Case 2

## Use Case 2: HR Competency Matrix in a Public Infrastructure Agency

### Context:

A national public agency managing large-scale infrastructure and digitalization projects aims to align its workforce capabilities with ESG obligations under the European Green Deal and national sustainability commitments.

### Objective:

To implement an agency-wide competency matrix that enables performance alignment, capability mapping, and succession planning grounded in ESG project management.

### Application of the Framework:

- ESG competencies are mapped to all job profiles (e.g., risk managers at L3 in governance risk integration; contract officers at L2 in sustainable procurement).
- A gap analysis is conducted using the framework's assessment indicators, supported by staff self-assessments and supervisor reviews.
- Training programs and career progression routes are aligned with ESG policy priorities and the EQF framework.
- Integration of the matrix into performance appraisal, promotion decisions, and public accountability mechanisms.

### Outcome:

A competency-driven HR system that institutionalizes ESG capabilities, strengthens compliance with public sector governance standards, and fosters a more sustainable and responsive agency culture.

# Use Case 3

## Use Case 3: Upskilling Roadmap for a Mid-Sized Consulting Firm

### Context:

A growing consultancy, traditionally focused on digital transformation and organizational development, seeks to reposition as a premium ESG advisory firm in response to client demand and new regulatory requirements (e.g., SFDR, CSRD).

### Objective:

To assess internal ESG capabilities and deliver a targeted upskilling initiative to strengthen advisory services and competitive positioning.

### Application of the Framework:

- Internal ESG competence audit conducted using the framework's 64 competencies, segmented by functional teams (e.g., strategy, operations, legal).
- Training curricula developed per domain: Environmental (climate scenario planning), Social (human rights due diligence), Governance (CSRD-aligned ESG reporting).
- Internal certification scheme launched using progression levels (L3–L5), linked to client project tiers and billing structures.
- Talent acquisition and onboarding aligned with framework-based job descriptions for ESG transformation roles.

### Outcome:

A differentiated, ESG-savvy consulting workforce capable of delivering high-impact transformation services across industries, enhancing client trust and regulatory relevance.



# Use Case 4

## Use Case 4: Regional VET (Vocational Education and Training) Program for Green Jobs

### Context:

A regional development authority partners with VET institutions to address local labor market shortages in green and sustainable project roles in construction, energy, and circular economy sectors.

### Objective:

To design and deliver a skills development program that prepares vocational learners for ESG-relevant job profiles, in line with regional industrial policy and EU recovery funding.

### Application of the Framework:

- Selected L1–L3 competencies used to structure curricula across green construction, energy efficiency, and materials management.
- Practical, project-based learning modules co-designed with employers to reflect ESG practice in real-world settings.
- Digital micro-credentials issued for core ESG skills (e.g., sustainable procurement, stakeholder engagement), stackable into formal qualifications.
- Coordination with national qualifications frameworks and ESCO/ESCO+ occupational standards to ensure recognition.

### Outcome:

An industry-aligned vocational program that supports just transition, enhances youth employment, and fosters ESG awareness at technician and operational levels.

## Use Case 5

### Use Case 5: Policy Alignment and Skills Strategy in a National ESG Education Reform

#### Context:

A national ministry of education is implementing an ESG curriculum reform aligned with CSRD, EU Taxonomy, and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), focusing on tertiary and lifelong learning.

#### Objective:

To provide a national reference model for embedding ESG competencies into educational qualification frameworks, teacher training, and public investment in skills.

#### Application of the Framework:

- Integration of EQF-aligned ESG competencies into national qualifications descriptors for business, engineering, and public administration.
- Framework used to inform funding calls for universities and training providers developing ESG-aligned modules and programs.
- Policymakers use the framework to assess system readiness and align national ESG priorities with educational outcomes and labor market needs.
- Capacity-building initiatives launched for teachers and trainers, using the governance and cross-cutting competency blocks.

#### Outcome:

A coherent policy ecosystem that bridges education, employment, and ESG transformation—building the foundation for a resilient, values-driven workforce equipped to deliver green, inclusive, and transparent development.





# ))) COMPETENCIES



# I. CORE PROJECT MANAGEMENT COMPETENCIES



**T**he **Core Project Management Competencies** form the foundational layer of the ESG Project Management Competency Framework. They encompass the essential skills, knowledge, and practices required to plan, execute, monitor, and close projects effectively—regardless of the specific ESG domain or sectoral context. Following 11 competencies are the bedrock upon which Environmental, Social, and Governance considerations are operationalized within project environments.

As organizations face increasing complexity, stakeholder scrutiny, and regulatory expectations, project professionals must be equipped with advanced capabilities in managing scope, time, cost, risk, and quality—while simultaneously aligning project outcomes with ESG goals. These competencies ensure that projects are delivered not only on time and within budget, but also in a way that is ethically responsible, socially inclusive, and environmentally sustainable.

The competencies in this section span the full project lifecycle, including areas such as project initiation and planning, stakeholder management, performance monitoring, resource and risk management, and adaptive decision-making. They are designed to apply across industries and geographies, supporting both traditional and agile project environments.

These foundational skills not only enable the implementation of ESG-related initiatives, but also serve as enablers of innovation, efficiency, and resilience in all types of project-based work. Ultimately, they empower professionals to deliver projects that create long-term value for organizations, communities, and the planet.

The following section provides a structured overview of the key competencies within the **Core Project Management Competencies** domain of the **ESG Project Management Competency Framework**. Each competency is described in terms of its relevance for embedding ESG value into the project management process, with no formal mapping to standards since these are operational skills that underpin all ESG domains.



This overview enables a high-level understanding of the scope and intent of the competency area. In subsequent subsections, each sub-competency is elaborated in detail, with descriptors developed across five EQF-aligned proficiency levels (L1–L5). These descriptors are action-oriented and designed to support curriculum design, training development, professional profiling, and assessment within sustainability-focused project environments.

**Table 1. Overview of Core Project Management Competencies**

No.	Competency	Description
1.1	<b>Project initiation and business case development</b>	Ability to initiate projects based on ESG-aligned needs analysis and to develop business cases reflecting environmental, social, and governance value.
1.2	<b>Project planning and scheduling</b>	Ability to define timelines, milestones, and dependencies while integrating ESG activities, outputs, and verification points.
1.3	<b>Scope and deliverables management</b>	Defining and managing project scope to ensure deliverables are ESG-relevant and aligned with sustainability targets.
1.4	<b>Budgeting and financial planning</b>	Planning and controlling financial resources, including ESG-related budget lines such as green procurement or social inclusion costs.
1.5	<b>Risk and opportunity management</b>	Identifying and managing risks and opportunities across E, S, and G dimensions, including regulatory, reputational, and stakeholder risks.
1.6	<b>Stakeholder engagement and communication</b>	Mapping and engaging stakeholders with sensitivity to ESG concerns and ensuring transparent communication throughout the lifecycle.
1.7	<b>Team leadership and collaboration</b>	Leading diverse project teams with inclusivity, shared ESG values, and collaborative culture.
1.8	<b>Quality assurance and control</b>	Applying quality standards that reflect both technical and ESG performance indicators.
1.9	<b>Monitoring, evaluation and reporting</b>	Tracking ESG indicators alongside traditional KPIs and producing transparent, meaningful performance reports.
1.10	<b>Procurement and contract management</b>	Ensuring procurement processes reflect ESG criteria (e.g., ethical sourcing, environmental impact) and managing contracts accordingly.
1.11	<b>Project closure and knowledge transfer</b>	Documenting ESG results and lessons learned, ensuring organizational memory and transfer of sustainable practices.



### I.1. Project initiation and business case development

Sub-Level Competencies	L-1 (Associate)	L-2 (Professional)	L-3 (Senior Professional/ Manager)	L-4 (Lead Professional/ Senior Manager)	L-5 (Principal)
EQF Level	EQF 3-4	EQF 5-6	EQF 6-7	EQF 7-8	EQF 8
Descriptor	Understands basic principles of ESG-aligned project initiation.	Develops ESG-sensitive business cases with guidance.	Leads ESG-aligned project conceptualization and justification.	Oversees institutional ESG business case standards.	Shapes global ESG-aligned project frameworks.
Competency Examples	Assists in developing ESG-sensitive needs assessments.	Writes ESG-driven value justifications in business case.	Presents ESG case to decision makers.	Approves green and inclusive project portfolio.	Advises multilateral bodies on ESG innovation logic.
Description	Ability to initiate projects based on ESG-aligned needs analysis and to develop business cases reflecting environmental, social, and governance value.				

### I.2. Project planning and scheduling

Sub-Level Competencies	L-1 (Associate)	L-2 (Professional)	L-3 (Senior Professional/ Manager)	L-4 (Lead Professional/ Senior Manager)	L-5 (Principal)
EQF Level	EQF 3-4	EQF 5-6	EQF 6-7	EQF 7-8	EQF 8
Descriptor	Follows defined ESG-integrated planning tasks.	Plans ESG-integrated timelines and resources.	Manages ESG-informed planning in complex settings.	Aligns portfolio plans with ESG strategies.	Influences international ESG planning standards.
Competency Examples	Updates schedules to reflect planned ESG activities.	Schedules verification steps for climate goals.	Adapts schedule for resilience and adaptation needs.	Mandates inclusion of climate milestones.	Speaks at global forums on planning ESG transitions.
Description	Ability to define timelines, milestones, and dependencies while integrating ESG activities, outputs, and verification points.				



### I.3. Scope and deliverables management

Sub-Level Competencies	L-1 (Associate)	L-2 (Professional)	L-3 (Senior Professional/ Manager)	L-4 (Lead Professional/Senior Manager)	L-5 (Principal)
EQF Level	EQF 3-4	EQF 5-6	EQF 6-7	EQF 7-8	EQF 8
Descriptor	Supports in identifying scope aligned with sustainability.	Defines deliverables incorporating ESG targets.	Manages ESG-aligned scope in multidisciplinary teams.	Aligns project deliverables to corporate ESG KPIs.	Sets global agenda for ESG deliverables.
Competency Examples	Identifies ESG-relevant tasks within project scope.	Lists deliverables related to SDGs.	Ensures circular economy goals in deliverables.	Aligns delivery milestones with UN SDGs.	Authors ESG integration guides for UN projects.
Description	Defining and managing project scope to ensure deliverables are ESG-relevant and aligned with sustainability targets.				

### I.4. Budgeting and financial planning

Sub-Level Competencies	L-1 (Associate)	L-2 (Professional)	L-3 (Senior Professional/ Manager)	L-4 (Lead Professional/ Senior Manager)	L-5 (Principal)
EQF Level	EQF 3-4	EQF 5-6	EQF 6-7	EQF 7-8	EQF 8
Descriptor	Understands ESG-related financial planning basics.	Plans budget including ESG cost items.	Controls budget to ensure ESG value delivery.	Directs ESG investment prioritization.	Advises on global ESG financial standards.
Competency Examples	Prepares budget inputs for green procurement.	Includes line items for accessibility in budget.	Validates costs for carbon offsets in budget.	Reallocates funds based on ESG risks.	Supports development of green budgeting tools.
Description	Planning and controlling financial resources, including ESG-related budget lines such as green procurement or social inclusion costs.				

### I.5. Risk and opportunity management

Sub-Level Competencies	L-1 (Associate)	L-2 (Professional)	L-3 (Senior Professional/ Manager)	L-4 (Lead Professional/ Senior Manager)	L-5 (Principal)
EQF Level	EQF 3-4	EQF 5-6	EQF 6-7	EQF 7-8	EQF 8
Descriptor	Identifies basic ESG risks with support.	Assesses ESG risks and proposes responses.	Leads risk frameworks covering E, S, G risks.	Establishes ESG risk dashboards.	Shapes transnational ESG risk strategies.
Competency Examples	Flags basic risks in climate-sensitive projects.	Maps ESG-related legal risks.	Implements ESG audit protocols.	Implements ESG early warning systems.	Contributes to ESG risk disclosure standards.
Description	Identifying and managing risks and opportunities across E, S, and G dimensions, including regulatory, reputational, and stakeholder risks.				

### I.6. Stakeholder engagement and communication

Sub-Level Competencies	L-1 (Associate)	L-2 (Professional)	L-3 (Senior Professional/ Manager)	L-4 (Lead Professional/ Senior Manager)	L-5 (Principal)
EQF Level	EQF 3-4	EQF 5-6	EQF 6-7	EQF 7-8	EQF 8
Descriptor	Assists in stakeholder mapping and communication.	Conducts stakeholder analysis and dialogue.	Manages stakeholder expectations across ESG issues.	Directs organization-wide stakeholder engagement.	Advises governments on ESG engagement policy.
Competency Examples	Helps coordinate ESG workshops with stakeholders.	Organizes inclusive consultation sessions.	Leads dialogues with affected communities.	Coordinates multi-stakeholder ESG roundtables.	Consults on global stakeholder justice initiatives.
Description	Mapping and engaging stakeholders with sensitivity to ESG concerns and ensuring transparent communication throughout the lifecycle.				



### I.7. Team leadership and collaboration

Sub-Level Competencies	L-1 (Associate)	L-2 (Professional)	L-3 (Senior Professional/ Manager)	L-4 (Lead Professional/ Senior Manager)	L-5 (Principal)
EQF Level	EQF 3-4	EQF 5-6	EQF 6-7	EQF 7-8	EQF 8
Descriptor	Contributes to inclusive team discussions.	Coordinates diverse and inclusive project teams.	Fosters ESG commitment in team leadership.	Leads ESG change management.	Leads global ESG talent development efforts.
Competency Examples	Participates in diverse team meetings.	Implements diverse hiring practices in teams.	Chairs ESG working groups.	Champions psychological safety in teams.	Leads taskforce on inclusive project leadership.
Description	Leading diverse project teams with inclusivity, shared ESG values, and collaborative culture.				

### I.8. Quality assurance and control

Sub-Level Competencies	L-1 (Associate)	L-2 (Professional)	L-3 (Senior Professional/ Manager)	L-4 (Lead Professional/ Senior Manager)	L-5 (Principal)
EQF Level	EQF 3-4	EQF 5-6	EQF 6-7	EQF 7-8	EQF 8
Descriptor	Follows standard quality control procedures.	Applies ESG criteria in QA reviews.	Develops ESG-aligned quality frameworks.	Aligns QA system with ESG assurance.	Defines global norms for ESG quality.
Competency Examples	Checks ESG indicators in quality checklists.	Reviews technical specs for sustainability.	Defines quality gates with ESG KPIs.	Audits cross-cutting ESG quality reports.	Co-creates international ESG audit systems.
Description	Applying quality standards that reflect both technical and ESG performance indicators.				

### I.9. Monitoring, evaluation and reporting

Sub-Level Competencies	L-1 (Associate)	L-2 (Professional)	L-3 (Senior Professional/ Manager)	L-4 (Lead Professional/ Senior Manager)	L-5 (Principal)
EQF Level	EQF 3-4	EQF 5-6	EQF 6-7	EQF 7-8	EQF 8
Descriptor	Assists in ESG data gathering and monitoring.	Tracks ESG metrics and contributes to evaluations.	Leads M&E frameworks including ESG targets.	Supervises institutional ESG impact assessments.	Shapes international ESG accountability standards.
Competency Examples	Supports baseline data collection for reporting.	Monitors social KPIs during implementation.	Prepares midterm ESG performance reports.	Oversees third-party ESG evaluations.	Drives standards for global ESG dashboards.
Description	Tracking ESG indicators alongside traditional KPIs and producing transparent, meaningful performance reports.				

### I.10. Procurement and contract management

Sub-Level Competencies	L-1 (Associate)	L-2 (Professional)	L-3 (Senior Professional/ Manager)	L-4 (Lead Professional/ Senior Manager)	L-5 (Principal)
EQF Level	EQF 3-4	EQF 5-6	EQF 6-7	EQF 7-8	EQF 8
Descriptor	Supports contract documentation under supervision.	Drafts ESG-compliant procurement strategies.	Manages contracts ensuring ESG obligations.	Leads ESG contractual negotiations.	Leads global ESG procurement coalitions.
Competency Examples	Prepares draft ESG terms for contracts.	Writes supplier code of conduct clauses.	Ensures green certification in procurement.	Negotiates clauses for fair-trade compliance.	Builds cross-border sustainable sourcing networks.
Description	Ensuring procurement processes reflect ESG criteria (e.g., ethical sourcing, environmental impact) and managing contracts accordingly.				



### I.11. Project closure and knowledge transfer

Sub-Level Competencies	L-1 (Associate)	L-2 (Professional)	L-3 (Senior Professional/ Manager)	L-4 (Lead Professional/ Senior Manager)	L-5 (Principal)
EQF Level	EQF 3-4	EQF 5-6	EQF 6-7	EQF 7-8	EQF 8
Descriptor	Documents project activities related to ESG outcomes.	Prepares closure plans that capture ESG results.	Transfers ESG good practices organization-wide.	Institutionalizes ESG results tracking mechanisms.	Advances global learning on ESG legacy design.
Competency Examples	Helps organize sustainability handover sessions.	Summarizes learning from DEI interventions.	Documents outcomes of sustainability pilots.	Sets ESG closure benchmarks across programs.	Publishes global ESG knowledge transfer models.
Description	Documenting ESG results and lessons learned, ensuring organizational memory and transfer of sustainable practices.				

### Career Progression Pathway for Core Project Management Competencies

Level	Position Examples	Focus
Entry-Level (L-1)	Project Assistant, Junior Project Coordinator	Assist in project execution and learn basic planning and scheduling tools.
Mid-Level (L-2)	Project Manager, ESG Planner	Plan and manage projects integrating ESG requirements and quality control.
Senior-Level (L-3)	Senior Project Manager, ESG Portfolio Lead	Lead complex projects, ensure risk management and stakeholder inclusion.
Lead-Level (L-4)	Program Director, Head of Project Delivery	Manage programs or portfolios with ESG-aligned strategies and reporting.
Expert-Level (L-5)	Chief Project Officer, ESG Transformation Architect	Shape global ESG project standards and mentor organizational change.

### Assessment Criteria for Core Project Management Competencies

Level	Assessment Focus	Example Metrics
Entry-Level (L-1)	Support in ESG-sensitive project tasks.	Completion of project admin tasks; familiarity with ESG context.
Mid-Level (L-2)	Management of ESG-inclusive plans and budgets.	Delivery of ESG-relevant plans, risk logs, and stakeholder maps.
Senior-Level (L-3)	Leading ESG-aligned projects.	Achievement of ESG KPIs and stakeholder feedback metrics.
Lead-Level (L-4)	Directing portfolios and ensuring ESG synergy.	Delivery of program-level results; audits on ESG-integrated quality.
Expert-Level (L-5)	Establishing strategic project standards.	ESG policy innovation; international benchmarks or publications.

## II. ENVIRONMENTAL COMPETENCIES



**T**he **Environmental Competencies** within the ESG Project Management Competency Framework focus on equipping professionals with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required to lead projects that advance environmental sustainability. As climate change, biodiversity loss, and resource depletion become central challenges for organizations and societies, project professionals must be prepared to integrate environmental considerations into every phase of the project lifecycle.

This block addresses specific competencies needed to plan and execute projects that align with **environmental sustainability principles**, supporting the delivery of low-impact, resilient, and regenerative outcomes. Each competency is accompanied—where applicable—by **explicit alignment with international standards and regulatory frameworks**, including:

- **EU Taxonomy for Sustainable Activities**, which classifies environmentally sustainable economic activities;
- **GRI 300 Series**, focused on environmental disclosures in sustainability reporting;
- **CSRD and the European Sustainability Reporting Standards (ESRS E1–E5)**, which guide corporate reporting on environmental performance;
- **Sustainable Finance Disclosure Regulation (SFDR)**, which requires financial actors to disclose ESG risks and impacts.

The competencies span a broad spectrum of capabilities—from **pollution prevention, emissions reduction, and resource efficiency** to more advanced skills such as **scenario analysis, environmental risk management, and value chain impact assessment**. Each competency illustrates how project managers contribute to environmental objectives through **strategic decision-making, stakeholder engagement, operational planning, and performance monitoring**.

By building these competencies, professionals are empowered to:



- Implement circular economy and low-carbon principles in project design;
- Integrate environmental metrics into performance frameworks and project evaluation;
- Align project outcomes with regulatory expectations and global climate goals;
- Drive organizational change toward more sustainable operations and supply chains.

Ultimately, the Environmental Competencies prepare project professionals to take proactive roles in mitigating environmental impacts, supporting green transitions, and contributing to a future that prioritizes ecological integrity alongside economic and social value.

The following section provides a structured overview of the key competencies within the **Environmental** domain of the **ESG Project Management Competency Framework**. The initial table presents a consolidated summary of all sub-competencies grouped under this category, each aligned with relevant regulatory and professional standards. This overview enables a high-level understanding of the scope and intent of the competency area. In subsequent subsections, each sub-competency is elaborated in detail, with descriptors developed across five EQF-aligned proficiency levels (L1–L5). These descriptors are action-oriented and designed to support curriculum design, training development, professional profiling, and assessment within sustainability-focused project environments.

Primeri naslova tabela koje se mogu pomenuti u rečenici:

**Table 2. Overview of Environmental Competencies**

No.	Competency	Description	Alignment with EU Taxonomy, CSRD, GRI
2.1	<b>Resource efficiency and sustainable use</b>	Ability to plan and manage projects to optimize energy, water, and material use, minimizing waste and promoting resource efficiency.	EU Taxonomy: Resource Use & Circular Economy; GRI 301-2, 302-1; CSRD: Circularity indicators
2.2	<b>Green technology integration</b>	Capacity to identify, evaluate, and apply green technologies aligned with project goals and environmental impact reduction.	EU Taxonomy: Climate Mitigation, Pollution Prevention; GRI 302-4; CSRD: Innovation reporting
2.3	<b>Environmental risk and compliance management</b>	Ability to assess and mitigate environmental risks while ensuring project compliance with environmental laws and standards.	EU Taxonomy: Adaptation, Pollution Prevention; GRI 307; CSRD: Risk & compliance sections



2.4	<b>Innovation in environmental practices</b>	Initiating or adopting new practices that enhance the environmental performance of projects, especially through innovation.	EU Taxonomy: Circular Economy, Biodiversity; GRI 306; CSRD: Innovation and environmental initiatives
2.5	<b>Pollution prevention and control</b>	Designing project activities to reduce emissions, discharges, and environmental pollutants, ensuring regulatory compliance.	EU Taxonomy: Pollution Prevention; GRI 305, 306; CSRD: Emission reductions
2.6	<b>Stakeholder engagement on environmental matters</b>	Effectively engaging stakeholders such as local communities, NGOs, and environmental regulators to address environmental concerns.	GRI 102-40 to 44, 413-1; CSRD: Stakeholder inclusion; supports EU Taxonomy's 'Do No Significant Harm' principle
2.7	<b>Circular economy and life cycle thinking</b>	Applying circular economy principles and life cycle assessments (LCA) in project planning, implementation, and closure.	EU Taxonomy: Circular Economy; GRI 301-3, 306-2; CSRD: Life cycle impacts
2.8	<b>Sustainable finance and environmental costing</b>	Understanding and integrating environmental costs and benefits into project budgeting and financing decisions.	CSRD: Environmental accounting; EU Taxonomy: Sustainable finance; GRI 201, 203
2.9	<b>Climate change mitigation and adaptation</b>	Implementing strategies that reduce greenhouse gas emissions and strengthen project resilience to climate change.	EU Taxonomy: Climate Mitigation & Adaptation; GRI 305-5; CSRD: Climate targets
2.10	<b>Water and marine resources impact management</b>	Assessing and managing project impacts on freshwater and marine environments, including sustainable water use practices.	EU Taxonomy: Water & Marine Resources; GRI 303; CSRD: Water usage and protection indicators
2.11	<b>Protection of ecosystems and biodiversity</b>	Managing impacts on biodiversity and ecosystems, supporting conservation, restoration, and responsible land use.	EU Taxonomy: Biodiversity & Ecosystems; GRI 304; CSRD: Land use, biodiversity, and conservation impact disclosures
2.12	<b>Environmental impact management in the value chain</b>	Ability to assess, monitor, and influence environmental impacts of suppliers and contractors, ensuring ESG criteria are applied across the project's value chain.	GRI 308; CSRD: ESRS E1–E5; EU Taxonomy: Extended supply chain impact criteria
2.13	<b>Scenario analysis and transition planning</b>	Ability to develop ESG-related transition pathways, assess climate risks through scenario analysis, and adjust project plans accordingly.	CSRD: ESRS E1 (Climate Change); EU Taxonomy: Transition plans and risk assessment; TCFD-aligned disclosure



## II.1. Resource efficiency and sustainable use

Sub-Level Competencies	L-1 (Associate)	L-2 (Professional)	L-3 (Senior Professional/ Manager)	L-4 (Lead Professional/ Senior Manager)	L-5 (Principal)
EQF Level	EQF 3-4	EQF 5-6	EQF 6-7	EQF 7-8	EQF 8
Descriptor	Understands basic concepts of energy, water, and material use.	Applies resource efficiency measures in defined project components.	Leads resource efficiency initiatives across projects.	Integrates efficiency practices into organizational policies.	Shapes global policies and innovations on sustainable resource use.
Competency Examples	Tracks basic material consumption data for project reporting.	Designs project-wide strategy for reducing material waste.	Oversees company-wide implementation of resource optimization tools.	Advises international bodies on circular economy integration.	Tracks basic material consumption data for project reporting.
Description	Ability to plan and manage projects to optimize energy, water, and material use, minimizing waste and promoting resource efficiency.				
Alignment	EU Taxonomy: Resource Use & Circular Economy; GRI 301-2, 302-1; CSRD: Circularity indicators				

## II.2. Green technology integration

Sub-Level Competencies	L-1 (Associate)	L-2 (Professional)	L-3 (Senior Professional/ Manager)	L-4 (Lead Professional/ Senior Manager)	L-5 (Principal)
EQF Level	EQF 3-4	EQF 5-6	EQF 6-7	EQF 7-8	EQF 8
Descriptor	Recognizes green technologies relevant to project tasks.	Implements selected green technologies in standard projects.	Leads technology integration across cross-functional teams.	Strategizes organizational deployment of green technologies.	Influences global innovation and standardization of green tech.
Competency Examples	Assists in gathering technical information on renewable energy devices.	Manages implementation of smart grids in multiple project locations.	Develops investment roadmap for green tech adoption.	Chairs working group on global standards for green technology certification.	Assists in gathering technical information on renewable energy devices.
Description	Capacity to identify, evaluate, and apply green technologies aligned with project goals and environmental impact reduction.				
Alignment	EU Taxonomy: Climate Mitigation, Pollution Prevention; GRI 302-4; CSRD: Innovation reporting				

### II.3. Environmental risk and compliance management

Sub-Level Competencies	L-1 (Associate)	L-2 (Professional)	L-3 (Senior Professional/Manager)	L-4 (Lead Professional/Senior Manager)	L-5 (Principal)
EQF Level	EQF 3-4	EQF 5-6	EQF 6-7	EQF 7-8	EQF 8
Descriptor	Understands key environmental regulations affecting projects.	Conducts basic risk assessments and ensures legal adherence.	Leads environmental audits and risk mitigation strategies.	Directs organization-wide compliance systems.	Shapes national and international policy on environmental compliance.
Competency Examples	Supports preparation of compliance documentation.	Designs project risk management plan for hazardous materials.	Implements ISO 14001 environmental management system.	Advises government on integrating compliance tools into legislation.	Supports preparation of compliance documentation.
Description	Ability to assess and mitigate environmental risks while ensuring project compliance with environmental laws and standards.				
Alignment	EU Taxonomy: Adaptation, Pollution Prevention; GRI 307; CSRD: Risk & compliance sections				

### II.4. Innovation in environmental practices

Sub-Level Competencies	L-1 (Associate)	L-2 (Professional)	L-3 (Senior Professional/Manager)	L-4 (Lead Professional/Senior Manager)	L-5 (Principal)
EQF Level	EQF 3-4	EQF 5-6	EQF 6-7	EQF 7-8	EQF 8
Descriptor	Understands basic concepts of environmental innovation and can identify standard eco-friendly practices.	Implements pollution control protocols and monitors compliance with basic standards.	Leads participatory processes and addresses stakeholder concerns in project planning.	Drives organizational change by embedding innovation in environmental practices across programs.	Shapes international standards and best practices for pollution prevention and environmental health.
Competency Examples	Identifies existing eco-friendly methods used in current projects.	Implements air quality monitoring tools at a project site.	Leads workshops with stakeholders to co-design mitigation strategies.	Designs a green R&D initiative fostering eco-innovation in product development.	Advises international organizations on pollution risk mitigation strategies.
Description	Initiating or adopting new practices that enhance the environmental performance of projects, especially through innovation.				
Alignment	EU Taxonomy: Circular Economy, Biodiversity; GRI 306; CSRD: Innovation and environmental initiatives				



## II.5. Pollution prevention and control

Sub-Level Competencies	L-1 (Associate)	L-2 (Professional)	L-3 (Senior Professional/ Manager)	L-4 (Lead Professional/ Senior Manager)	L-5 (Principal)
EQF Level	EQF 3-4	EQF 5-6	EQF 6-7	EQF 7-8	EQF 8
Descriptor	Recognizes key environmental stakeholders and their concerns in projects.	Applies innovative practices to improve environmental outcomes within defined project scopes.	Leads pollution mitigation initiatives and evaluates effectiveness of control measures.	Develops and institutionalizes stakeholder engagement strategies organization-wide.	Influences global agendas through groundbreaking environmental innovations and collaborations.
Competency Examples	Identifies and lists local environmental advocacy groups relevant to a project.	Introduces new environmentally friendly tools or processes in project delivery.	Coordinates a pollution audit and designs a compliance improvement plan.	Implements organization-wide policy for stakeholder-informed project decisions.	Leads a cross-sector alliance on nature-based solutions for urban planning.
Description	Designing project activities to reduce emissions, discharges, and environmental pollutants, ensuring regulatory compliance.				
Alignment	EU Taxonomy: Pollution Prevention; GRI 305, 306; CSRD: Emission reductions				

## II.6. Stakeholder engagement on environmental matters

Sub-Level Competencies	L-1 (Associate)	L-2 (Professional)	L-3 (Senior Professional/ Manager)	L-4 (Lead Professional/ Senior Manager)	L-5 (Principal)
EQF Level	EQF 3-4	EQF 5-6	EQF 6-7	EQF 7-8	EQF 8
Descriptor	Understands basic pollution sources and control measures relevant to project contexts.	Engages stakeholders through structured consultations and feedback mechanisms.	Leads projects that integrate novel environmental strategies and promotes continuous improvement.	Oversees organizational pollution control systems aligned with strategic objectives.	Establishes global models for inclusive, transparent environmental dialogue and policy influence.
Competency Examples	Supports pollution prevention activities such as waste sorting and recycling.	Conducts regular stakeholder meetings to discuss environmental risks.	Manages a team to pilot innovative recycling solutions in construction projects.	Oversees integration of pollution control into all organizational project planning.	Chairs a global platform on environmental stakeholder partnerships.
Description	Effectively engaging stakeholders such as local communities, NGOs, and environmental regulators to address environmental concerns.				
Alignment	GRI 102-40 to 44, 413-1; CSRD: Stakeholder inclusion; supports EU Taxonomy's 'Do No Significant Harm' principle				

## II.7. Circular economy and life cycle thinking

Sub-Level Competencies	L-1 (Associate)	L-2 (Professional)	L-3 (Senior Professional/ Manager)	L-4 (Lead Professional/ Senior Manager)	L-5 (Principal)
EQF Level	EQF 3-4	EQF 5-6	EQF 6-7	EQF 7-8	EQF 8
Descriptor	Understands basic concepts of circular economy and LCA in project contexts.	Applies circular economy and life cycle thinking in project phases and procurement decisions.	Leads initiatives integrating circular strategies into multi-phase project lifecycles.	Drives organizational shift toward circular business models and value retention strategies.	Influences global standards and innovation ecosystems through life cycle-centric project design.
Competency Examples	Recognizes project design opportunities for reuse or recycling.	Implements LCA software tools in product or process design.	Leads a procurement redesign to reduce life cycle emissions.	Develops circular supply chains across business units.	Advises global forums on project circularity metrics.
Description	Applying circular economy principles and life cycle assessments (LCA) in project planning, implementation, and closure.				
Alignment	EU Taxonomy: Circular Economy; GRI 301-3, 306-2; CSRD: Life cycle impacts				

## II.8. Sustainable finance and environmental costing

Sub-Level Competencies	L-1 (Associate)	L-2 (Professional)	L-3 (Senior Professional/ Manager)	L-4 (Lead Professional/ Senior Manager)	L-5 (Principal)
EQF Level	EQF 3-4	EQF 5-6	EQF 6-7	EQF 7-8	EQF 8
Descriptor	Understands basic principles of environmental costs and green financing instruments.	Applies basic environmental costing in project budgeting and identifies green funding sources.	Leads integration of full-cost environmental accounting in financial planning.	Oversees portfolio-level sustainable investment strategies aligned with ESG metrics.	Shapes financial policies that internalize environmental externalities and prioritize green impact.
Competency Examples	Identifies costs associated with project environmental impacts.	Applies triple bottom line metrics in feasibility studies.	Leads a cost-benefit analysis including ecological outcomes.	Builds a funding strategy using green bonds or taxonomies.	Designs international financing schemes for ecosystem restoration.
Description	Understanding and integrating environmental costs and benefits into project budgeting and financing decisions.				
Alignment	CSRD: Environmental accounting; EU Taxonomy: Sustainable finance; GRI 201, 203				



## II.9. Climate change mitigation and adaptation

Sub-Level Competencies	L-1 (Associate)	L-2 (Professional)	L-3 (Senior Professional/ Manager)	L-4 (Lead Professional/ Senior Manager)	L-5 (Principal)
EQF Level	EQF 3-4	EQF 5-6	EQF 6-7	EQF 7-8	EQF 8
Descriptor	Understands basic climate risks and the role of projects in mitigation and adaptation.	Applies emission-reducing and resilience measures in project implementation.	Leads climate-smart project strategies and evaluates carbon footprints.	Directs climate alignment across program portfolios, including science-based targets.	Influences sectoral climate strategies through innovative adaptation and mitigation models.
Competency Examples	Lists project GHG emissions sources and adaptation needs.	Calculates carbon intensity of project operations and plans offsets.	Leads decarbonization initiatives using renewable energy inputs.	Establishes climate governance systems in large infrastructure projects.	Develops national project funding criteria aligned with Paris Agreement.
Description	Implementing strategies that reduce greenhouse gas emissions and strengthen project resilience to climate change.				
Alignment	EU Taxonomy: Climate Mitigation & Adaptation; GRI 305-5; CSRD: Climate targets				

## II.10. Water and marine resources impact management

Sub-Level Competencies	L-1 (Associate)	L-2 (Professional)	L-3 (Senior Professional/ Manager)	L-4 (Lead Professional/ Senior Manager)	L-5 (Principal)
EQF Level	EQF 3-4	EQF 5-6	EQF 6-7	EQF 7-8	EQF 8
Descriptor	Demonstrates awareness of project impacts on water and marine ecosystems and follows basic guidelines.	Applies water use efficiency practices and supports impact analysis in projects.	Leads water and marine conservation components of projects; ensures regulatory alignment.	Directs strategic programs for water stewardship across organizational portfolios.	Influences international water governance agendas and innovations in marine sustainability.
Competency Examples	Follows water use protocols and assists in basic water quality monitoring.	Applies methods for efficient water use; prepares project documentation for compliance.	Designs water conservation strategies across multiple sites.	Leads regional partnerships for sustainable watershed management.	Advises on UN projects targeting coastal resilience and marine ecosystem preservation.
Description	Assessing and managing project impacts on freshwater and marine environments, including sustainable water use practices.				
Alignment	EU Taxonomy: Water & Marine Resources; GRI 303; CSRD: Water usage and protection indicators				

### II.11. Protection of ecosystems and biodiversity

Sub-Level Competencies	L-1 (Associate)	L-2 (Professional)	L-3 (Senior Professional/ Manager)	L-4 (Lead Professional/ Senior Manager)	L-5 (Principal)
EQF Level	EQF 3-4	EQF 5-6	EQF 6-7	EQF 7-8	EQF 8
Descriptor	Recognizes biodiversity issues and applies basic environmental principles in project settings.	Implements project activities that protect or restore biodiversity in specific contexts.	Manages biodiversity risk assessments and integrates ecosystem conservation in project design.	Shapes institutional biodiversity conservation policies and project frameworks.	Advises on global policy and funding initiatives for ecosystem protection.
Competency Examples	Participates in basic environmental assessments and follows ecological guidelines.	Implements measures to protect flora and fauna in project surroundings.	Oversees biodiversity audits and collaborates with environmental consultants.	Chairs biodiversity steering groups and drives cross-project alignment.	Contributes to EU biodiversity policy consultations and research consortia.
Description	Managing impacts on biodiversity and ecosystems, supporting conservation, restoration, and responsible land use.				
Alignment	EU Taxonomy: Biodiversity & Ecosystems; GRI 304; CSRD: Land use, biodiversity, and conservation impact disclosures				

### II.12. Environmental impact management in the value chain

Sub-Level Competencies	L-1 (Associate)	L-2 (Professional)	L-3 (Senior Professional/ Manager)	L-4 (Lead Professional/ Senior Manager)	L-5 (Principal)
EQF Level	EQF 3-4	EQF 5-6	EQF 6-7	EQF 7-8	EQF 8
Descriptor	Identifies suppliers' environmental impacts and supports basic data gathering.	Monitors supplier compliance with environmental standards within projects.	Leads environmental impact evaluations across suppliers in complex project settings.	Integrates supply chain environmental oversight into organizational ESG governance.	Leads international collaborations on supply chain sustainability innovations.
Competency Examples	Assists in collecting supplier environmental credentials for reporting.	Uses environmental assessment tools for supplier selection.	Implements a supplier improvement program based on ESG risk scores.	Introduces cross-department supply chain ESG audit protocols.	Leads global initiative for harmonized ESG supplier scoring systems.
Description	Ability to assess, monitor, and influence environmental impacts of suppliers and contractors, ensuring ESG criteria are applied across the project's value chain.				
Alignment	GRI 308; CSRD: ESRS E1–E5; EU Taxonomy: Extended supply chain impact criteria				





### II.13. Scenario analysis and transition planning

Sub-Level Competencies	L-1 (Associate)	L-2 (Professional)	L-3 (Senior Professional/ Manager)	L-4 (Lead Professional/ Senior Manager)	L-5 (Principal)
EQF Level	EQF 3-4	EQF 5-6	EQF 6-7	EQF 7-8	EQF 8
Descriptor	Understands the concept of scenarios and assists in collecting data for transition planning.	Applies climate risk analysis tools and supports mitigation/adaptation actions.	Leads scenario-based risk assessment and integrates outcomes into project planning.	Oversees institutional transition plans aligned with national or EU climate goals.	Shapes global frameworks and metrics for transition planning and scenario design.
Competency Examples	Supports preparation of simple risk registers related to climate impacts.	Applies sector-based scenarios to test climate risks and plan adaptations.	Develops climate adaptation action plans based on transition scenarios.	Supervises cross-sector scenario testing aligned with CSRD climate disclosure.	Publishes transition planning methods in leading international ESG journals.
Description	Ability to develop ESG-related transition pathways, assess climate risks through scenario analysis, and adjust project plans accordingly.				
Alignment	CSRD: ESRS E1 (Climate Change); EU Taxonomy: Transition plans and risk assessment; TCFD-aligned disclosure				

### Career Progression Pathway for Environmental Competencies

Level	Position Examples	Focus
Entry-Level (L-1)	Environmental Assistant, Junior Sustainability Analyst	Learn basics of environmental impact management, resource efficiency, and stakeholder engagement.
Mid-Level (L-2)	Environmental Specialist, Green Technology Coordinator	Apply environmental competencies in project settings and assist in regulatory compliance.
Senior-Level (L-3)	Environmental Project Manager, Compliance Officer	Lead projects and teams, ensuring environmental integration and compliance.
Lead-Level (L-4)	Director of Sustainability, Environmental Strategy Lead	Oversee environmental strategies across organizations or sectors.
Expert-Level (L-5)	Chief Sustainability Officer, Environmental Policy Advisor	Influence national/global environmental strategies, policies, and innovations.

### Assessment Criteria for Environmental Competencies

Level	Assessment Focus	Example Metrics
Entry-Level (L-1)	Understanding of environmental principles and basic applications.	Completion of environmental training; participation in sustainability audits.
Mid-Level (L-2)	Application of competencies in operational settings.	Implementation of resource efficiency plans; green technology integration.
Senior-Level (L-3)	Leadership in environmental project delivery.	Management of environmental impact assessments; coordination of compliance teams.
Lead-Level (L-4)	Oversight of organization-wide sustainability strategies.	Development of environmental policies; leadership in external reporting (GRI, CSRD).
Expert-Level (L-5)	Strategic leadership and global influence.	Contribution to national/international ESG standards; publication of thought leadership.



### III. SOCIAL COMPETENCIES



**T**he **Social Competencies** domain of the ESG Project Management Framework encompasses the capabilities required to deliver projects that are not only effective but also equitable, inclusive, and ethically responsible. In a world where social expectations are evolving and stakeholders demand greater transparency, fairness, and participation, project professionals must be equipped to integrate social dimensions into every phase of the project lifecycle.

This set of competencies is designed to help project managers uphold **human rights**, promote **decent working conditions**, foster **diversity and inclusion**, and maximize **positive social impact** through intentional design and community engagement. It empowers professionals to identify and mitigate social risks, facilitate inclusive dialogue, and ensure that projects contribute meaningfully to social value creation.

Each competency is mapped—where applicable—to globally recognized frameworks and regulations, including:

- The **GRI 400 Series** on social sustainability disclosures;
- The **Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD) ESRS S1–S4** on social topics;
- The **EU Social Taxonomy**, which provides criteria for evaluating the social sustainability of economic activities.

The Social Competencies address real-world needs in areas such as **labor practices**, **occupational health and safety**, **community impact**, **human rights due diligence**, **social procurement**, and **inclusive decision-making**.

The framework recognizes that socially responsible project delivery is essential to sustainable development and organizational integrity. These competencies are designed not only to reduce harm but to create shared value for all stakeholders—ensuring that social responsibility is embedded in both project intent and practice.

The following section provides a structured overview of the key competencies within the **Social** domain of the **ESG Project Management Competency Framework**. The initial table presents a consolidated summary of all sub-competencies grouped under this category, each aligned with relevant regulatory and professional standards. This overview enables a high-level understanding of the scope and intent of the competency area. In subsequent subsections, each sub-competency is elaborated in detail, with descriptors developed across five EQF-aligned proficiency levels (L1–L5). These descriptors are action-oriented and designed to support curriculum design, training development, professional profiling, and assessment within sustainability-focused project environments.

*Table 3. Overview of Social Competencies*

No.	Competency	Description	Alignment with GRI, CSRD, Social Taxonomy
3.1	<b>Human rights and labor practices</b>	Ensuring fair labor conditions and upholding human rights in all project-related activities and partnerships.	GRI 401, 408, 409; CSRD S1, S2; Social Taxonomy: Human Rights, Decent Work
3.2	<b>Occupational health and safety (OHS)</b>	Establishing safe and healthy working environments and promoting a culture of occupational wellbeing.	GRI 403; CSRD S1; Social Taxonomy: Working Conditions, Wellbeing
3.3	<b>Diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI)</b>	Creating inclusive environments that value diversity, ensure equal opportunities, and prevent discrimination.	GRI 405, 406; CSRD S1; Social Taxonomy: Equal Opportunities
3.4	<b>Community impact and development</b>	Assessing and enhancing the social impact of projects on local communities through development-oriented approaches.	GRI 413; CSRD S3; Social Taxonomy: Inclusive Communities
3.5	<b>Human rights due diligence</b>	Conducting systematic due diligence to identify, prevent, and mitigate human rights risks in projects and supply chains.	GRI 412; CSRD S1, S2; Social Taxonomy: Human Rights
3.6	<b>Social risk and impact management</b>	Managing social risks and maximizing opportunities to achieve positive societal outcomes in project implementation.	GRI 413, 414; CSRD S3; Social Taxonomy: Wellbeing, Risk Management
3.7	<b>Inclusive decision-making and co-creation</b>	Involving diverse stakeholders in participatory decision-making processes that reflect social inclusion.	GRI 413; CSRD S3; Social Taxonomy: Inclusive Participation
3.8	<b>Stakeholder engagement and dialogue</b>	Facilitating transparent and respectful dialogue with all social stakeholders affected by the project.	GRI 102-43, 413; CSRD S3; Social Taxonomy: Community Dialogue
3.9	<b>Sustainable procurement (social dimension)</b>	Applying social sustainability criteria in procurement processes and evaluating supplier practices.	GRI 414; CSRD S2; Social Taxonomy: Supply Chain Fairness

3.10	<b>Social innovation and cross-sector collaboration</b>	Fostering innovation and collaborative models to address social challenges and promote inclusivity.	GRI 413; CSRD S3; Social Taxonomy: Social Innovation
3.11	<b>Freedom of association and labor rights</b>	Respecting and promoting the right to organize, collective bargaining, and constructive labor relations.	GRI 402, 407; CSRD S1; Social Taxonomy: Decent Work, Dialogue
3.12	<b>Training and upskilling for social responsibility</b>	Providing ongoing education and capacity building on social responsibility and ESG practices for project teams.	GRI 404; CSRD S1; Social Taxonomy: Equal Opportunities
3.13	<b>Security and safeguarding in project environments</b>	Implementing procedures to ensure personal and organizational safety, especially in sensitive project contexts.	GRI 410; CSRD S1; Social Taxonomy: Working Conditions
3.14	<b>Customer and end-user responsibility in projects</b>	Understanding and protecting the interests, safety, and rights of end-users and consumers affected by the project.	GRI 416; CSRD S4; Social Taxonomy: Consumer Protection
3.15	<b>Protection of user data and privacy</b>	Ensuring ethical handling of user data and personal information in digital and service-based project components.	GRI 418; CSRD S4; Social Taxonomy: Digital Rights
3.16	<b>Public interest and policy alignment</b>	Aligning project objectives and practices with public policy goals and legal social compliance frameworks.	GRI 419, 415; CSRD S1–S4; Social Taxonomy: Public Policy
3.17	<b>Wellbeing and social value creation in projects</b>	Designing projects that improve quality of life, provide equitable access, and generate measurable social value.	GRI 401, 413; CSRD S3; Social Taxonomy: Wellbeing and Living Standards

### III.1. Human rights and labor practices

Sub-Level Competencies	L-1 (Associate)	L-2 (Professional)	L-3 (Senior Professional/ Manager)	L-4 (Lead Professional/ Senior Manager)	L-5 (Principal)
EQF Level	EQF 3-4	EQF 5-6	EQF 6-7	EQF 7-8	EQF 8
Descriptor	Understands the fundamental social principles and their relevance in projects.	Applies social principles in project settings and collaborates with stakeholders.	Leads initiatives addressing social dimensions in project and organizational contexts.	Oversees strategic alignment of social policies within organizations or sectors.	Shapes global strategies, standards, and innovations for social responsibility.
Competency Examples	Recognizes basic labor rights and project relevance.	Ensures fair working conditions in project teams.	Leads fair labor policy implementation across projects.	Monitors compliance with labor rights in project portfolios.	Shapes organizational strategies around human rights.



<b>Description</b>	Ensuring fair labor conditions and upholding human rights in all project-related activities and partnerships.
<b>Alignment</b>	GRI 401, 408, 409; CSRD S1, S2; Social Taxonomy: Human Rights, Decent Work

### III.2. Competency Area: Occupational health and safety (OHS)

Sub-Level Competencies	L-1 (Associate)	L-2 (Professional)	L-3 (Senior Professional/ Manager)	L-4 (Lead Professional/ Senior Manager)	L-5 (Principal)
EQF Level	EQF 3-4	EQF 5-6	EQF 6-7	EQF 7-8	EQF 8
<b>Descriptor</b>	Understands the fundamental social principles and their relevance in projects.	Applies social principles in project settings and collaborates with stakeholders.	Leads initiatives addressing social dimensions in project and organizational contexts.	Oversees strategic alignment of social policies within organizations or sectors.	Shapes global strategies, standards, and innovations for social responsibility.
<b>Competency Examples</b>	Understands safety protocols for project environments.	Applies OHS guidelines in routine tasks.	Leads OHS audits and improvements on project sites.	Integrates OHS across portfolios and strategies.	Influences OHS standards at national/international level.
<b>Description</b>	Establishing safe and healthy working environments and promoting a culture of occupational wellbeing.				
<b>Alignment</b>	GRI 403; CSRD S1; Social Taxonomy: Working Conditions, Wellbeing				

### III.3. Diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI)

Sub-Level Competencies	L-1 (Associate)	L-2 (Professional)	L-3 (Senior Professional/ Manager)	L-4 (Lead Professional/ Senior Manager)	L-5 (Principal)
EQF Level	EQF 3-4	EQF 5-6	EQF 6-7	EQF 7-8	EQF 8
<b>Descriptor</b>	Understands the fundamental social principles and their relevance in projects.	Applies social principles in project settings and collaborates with stakeholders.	Leads initiatives addressing social dimensions in project and organizational contexts.	Oversees strategic alignment of social policies within organizations or sectors.	Shapes global strategies, standards, and innovations for social responsibility.
<b>Competency Examples</b>	Identifies key DEI principles in the workplace.	Promotes inclusive practices in project planning.	Leads DEI initiatives within teams or departments.	Aligns DEI efforts with organizational policy.	Establishes industry-leading DEI frameworks.
<b>Description</b>	Creating inclusive environments that value diversity, ensure equal opportunities, and prevent discrimination.				
<b>Alignment</b>	GRI 405, 406; CSRD S1; Social Taxonomy: Equal Opportunities				

### III.4. Community impact and development

Sub-Level Competencies	L-1 (Associate)	L-2 (Professional)	L-3 (Senior Professional/ Manager)	L-4 (Lead Professional/ Senior Manager)	L-5 (Principal)
EQF Level	EQF 3-4	EQF 5-6	EQF 6-7	EQF 7-8	EQF 8
Descriptor	Understands the fundamental social principles and their relevance in projects.	Applies social principles in project settings and collaborates with stakeholders.	Leads initiatives addressing social dimensions in project and organizational contexts.	Oversees strategic alignment of social policies within organizations or sectors.	Shapes global strategies, standards, and innovations for social responsibility.
Competency Examples	Supports community-related project activities.	Implements community consultation practices.	Leads community development strategies in projects.	Oversees social impact programs in large-scale projects.	Advises on policy for community-driven innovation.
Description	Assessing and enhancing the social impact of projects on local communities through development-oriented approaches.				
Alignment	GRI 413; CSRD S3; Social Taxonomy: Inclusive Communities				

### III.5. Human rights due diligence

Sub-Level Competencies	L-1 (Associate)	L-2 (Professional)	L-3 (Senior Professional/ Manager)	L-4 (Lead Professional/ Senior Manager)	L-5 (Principal)
EQF Level	EQF 3-4	EQF 5-6	EQF 6-7	EQF 7-8	EQF 8
Descriptor	Understands the fundamental social principles and their relevance in projects.	Applies social principles in project settings and collaborates with stakeholders.	Leads initiatives addressing social dimensions in project and organizational contexts.	Oversees strategic alignment of social policies within organizations or sectors.	Shapes global strategies, standards, and innovations for social responsibility.
Competency Examples	Supports initial human rights screening by gathering basic project and supplier information under supervision.	Conducts due diligence assessments using standard tools and checklists to identify potential human rights risks in specific project phases.	Leads human rights impact assessments for projects and manages the implementation of risk mitigation measures in collaboration with suppliers and local stakeholders.	Develops and oversees organizational human rights due diligence strategies, ensuring alignment with CSRD and GRI frameworks across project portfolios.	Shapes global due diligence standards and policies, advises governments or international organizations on ESG-related human rights compliance and innovation.
Description	Conducting systematic due diligence to identify, prevent, and mitigate human rights risks in projects and supply chains.				
Alignment	GRI 412; CSRD S1, S2; Social Taxonomy: Human Rights				



### III.6. Social risk and impact management

Sub-Level Competencies	L-1 (Associate)	L-2 (Professional)	L-3 (Senior Professional/ Manager)	L-4 (Lead Professional/ Senior Manager)	L-5 (Principal)
EQF Level	EQF 3-4	EQF 5-6	EQF 6-7	EQF 7-8	EQF 8
Descriptor	Understands the fundamental social principles and their relevance in projects.	Applies social principles in project settings and collaborates with stakeholders.	Leads initiatives addressing social dimensions in project and organizational contexts.	Oversees strategic alignment of social policies within organizations or sectors.	Shapes global strategies, standards, and innovations for social responsibility.
Competency Examples	Identifies potential social risks in project settings.	Applies social impact assessment tools in projects.	Leads mitigation planning for social risks.	Manages social risk frameworks across portfolios.	Designs innovative social impact assessment models.
Description	Managing social risks and maximizing opportunities to achieve positive societal outcomes in project implementation.				
Alignment	GRI 413, 414; CSRD S3; Social Taxonomy: Wellbeing, Risk Management				

### III.7. Inclusive decision-making and co-creation

Sub-Level Competencies	L-1 (Associate)	L-2 (Professional)	L-3 (Senior Professional/ Manager)	L-4 (Lead Professional/ Senior Manager)	L-5 (Principal)
EQF Level	EQF 3-4	EQF 5-6	EQF 6-7	EQF 7-8	EQF 8
Descriptor	Understands the fundamental social principles and their relevance in projects.	Applies social principles in project settings and collaborates with stakeholders.	Leads initiatives addressing social dimensions in project and organizational contexts.	Oversees strategic alignment of social policies within organizations or sectors.	Shapes global strategies, standards, and innovations for social responsibility.
Competency Examples	Participates in inclusive stakeholder workshops.	Organizes co-creation sessions for project planning.	Leads participatory design initiatives in projects.	Oversees inclusive governance structures.	Advances policy on inclusive decision-making.
Description	Involving diverse stakeholders in participatory decision-making processes that reflect social inclusion.				
Alignment	GRI 413; CSRD S3; Social Taxonomy: Inclusive Participation				

### III.8. Stakeholder engagement and dialogue

Sub-Level Competencies	L-1 (Associate)	L-2 (Professional)	L-3 (Senior Professional/ Manager)	L-4 (Lead Professional/ Senior Manager)	L-5 (Principal)
EQF Level	EQF 3-4	EQF 5-6	EQF 6-7	EQF 7-8	EQF 8
Descriptor	Understands the fundamental social principles and their relevance in projects.	Applies social principles in project settings and collaborates with stakeholders.	Leads initiatives addressing social dimensions in project and organizational contexts.	Oversees strategic alignment of social policies within organizations or sectors.	Shapes global strategies, standards, and innovations for social responsibility.
Competency Examples	Supports mapping of social stakeholders.	Facilitates community meetings and consultations.	Leads stakeholder dialogue on project issues.	Manages engagement strategy for major projects.	Sets standards for global stakeholder dialogue.
Description	Facilitating transparent and respectful dialogue with all social stakeholders affected by the project.				
Alignment	GRI 102-43, 413; CSRD S3; Social Taxonomy: Community Dialogue				

### III.9. Sustainable procurement (social dimension)

Sub-Level Competencies	L-1 (Associate)	L-2 (Professional)	L-3 (Senior Professional/ Manager)	L-4 (Lead Professional/ Senior Manager)	L-5 (Principal)
EQF Level	EQF 3-4	EQF 5-6	EQF 6-7	EQF 7-8	EQF 8
Descriptor	Understands the fundamental social principles and their relevance in projects.	Applies social principles in project settings and collaborates with stakeholders.	Leads initiatives addressing social dimensions in project and organizational contexts.	Oversees strategic alignment of social policies within organizations or sectors.	Shapes global strategies, standards, and innovations for social responsibility.
Competency Examples	Learns about ethical sourcing criteria.	Implements social criteria in supplier selection.	Leads supplier audits on social compliance.	Strategizes socially responsible procurement.	Shapes regulations on fair procurement practices.
Description	Applying social sustainability criteria in procurement processes and evaluating supplier practices.				
Alignment	GRI 414; CSRD S2; Social Taxonomy: Supply Chain Fairness				





### III.10. Social innovation and cross-sector collaboration

Sub-Level Competencies	L-1 (Associate)	L-2 (Professional)	L-3 (Senior Professional/ Manager)	L-4 (Lead Professional/ Senior Manager)	L-5 (Principal)
EQF Level	EQF 3-4	EQF 5-6	EQF 6-7	EQF 7-8	EQF 8
Descriptor	Understands the fundamental social principles and their relevance in projects.	Applies social principles in project settings and collaborates with stakeholders.	Leads initiatives addressing social dimensions in project and organizational contexts.	Oversees strategic alignment of social policies within organizations or sectors.	Shapes global strategies, standards, and innovations for social responsibility.
Competency Examples	Explores basic social innovation concepts.	Supports joint projects with social impact goals.	Leads partnerships for social innovation pilots.	Manages cross-sector innovation platforms.	Champions global models of social collaboration.
Description	Fostering innovation and collaborative models to address social challenges and promote inclusivity.				
Alignment	GRI 413; CSRD S3; Social Taxonomy: Social Innovation				

### III.11. Freedom of association and labor rights

Sub-Level Competencies	L-1 (Associate)	L-2 (Professional)	L-3 (Senior Professional/ Manager)	L-4 (Lead Professional/ Senior Manager)	L-5 (Principal)
EQF Level	EQF 3-4	EQF 5-6	EQF 6-7	EQF 7-8	EQF 8
Descriptor	Understands the fundamental social principles and their relevance in projects.	Applies social principles in project settings and collaborates with stakeholders.	Leads initiatives addressing social dimensions in project and organizational contexts.	Oversees strategic alignment of social policies within organizations or sectors.	Shapes global strategies, standards, and innovations for social responsibility.
Competency Examples	Recognizes the importance of union participation.	Ensures project practices respect labor rights.	Leads labor relations and negotiation activities.	Develops labor policies for complex organizations.	Advises international bodies on labor standards.
Description	Respecting and promoting the right to organize, collective bargaining, and constructive labor relations.				
Alignment	GRI 402, 407; CSRD S1; Social Taxonomy: Decent Work, Dialogue				



### III.12. Training and upskilling for social responsibility

Sub-Level Competencies	L-1 (Associate)	L-2 (Professional)	L-3 (Senior Professional/ Manager)	L-4 (Lead Professional/ Senior Manager)	L-5 (Principal)
EQF Level	EQF 3-4	EQF 5-6	EQF 6-7	EQF 7-8	EQF 8
Descriptor	Understands the fundamental social principles and their relevance in projects.	Applies social principles in project settings and collaborates with stakeholders.	Leads initiatives addressing social dimensions in project and organizational contexts.	Oversees strategic alignment of social policies within organizations or sectors.	Shapes global strategies, standards, and innovations for social responsibility.
Competency Examples	Participates in ESG and social training programs.	Delivers training on social responsibility basics.	Leads internal upskilling for ESG teams.	Develops organization-wide learning strategies.	Designs national-level training frameworks.
Description	Providing ongoing education and capacity building on social responsibility and ESG practices for project teams.				
Alignment	GRI 404; CSRD S1; Social Taxonomy: Equal Opportunities				

### III.13. Security and safeguarding in project environments

Sub-Level Competencies	L-1 (Associate)	L-2 (Professional)	L-3 (Senior Professional/ Manager)	L-4 (Lead Professional/ Senior Manager)	L-5 (Principal)
EQF Level	EQF 3-4	EQF 5-6	EQF 6-7	EQF 7-8	EQF 8
Descriptor	Understands the fundamental social principles and their relevance in projects.	Applies social principles in project settings and collaborates with stakeholders.	Leads initiatives addressing social dimensions in project and organizational contexts.	Oversees strategic alignment of social policies within organizations or sectors.	Shapes global strategies, standards, and innovations for social responsibility.
Competency Examples	Learns basic safeguarding principles.	Implements security procedures on site.	Leads safeguarding risk assessments.	Oversees organizational safety systems.	Shapes safeguarding policy across regions.
Description	Implementing procedures to ensure personal and organizational safety, especially in sensitive project contexts.				
Alignment	GRI 410; CSRD S1; Social Taxonomy: Working Conditions				



### III.14. Customer and end-user responsibility in projects

Sub-Level Competencies	L-1 (Associate)	L-2 (Professional)	L-3 (Senior Professional/ Manager)	L-4 (Lead Professional/ Senior Manager)	L-5 (Principal)
EQF Level	EQF 3-4	EQF 5-6	EQF 6-7	EQF 7-8	EQF 8
Descriptor	Understands the fundamental social principles and their relevance in projects.	Applies social principles in project settings and collaborates with stakeholders.	Leads initiatives addressing social dimensions in project and organizational contexts.	Oversees strategic alignment of social policies within organizations or sectors.	Shapes global strategies, standards, and innovations for social responsibility.
Competency Examples	Understands basic customer safety needs.	Applies end-user feedback in service design.	Leads user-centered project strategies.	Ensures end-user interests across programs.	Influences consumer protection policy.
Description	Understanding and protecting the interests, safety, and rights of end-users and consumers affected by the project.				
Alignment	GRI 416; CSRD S4; Social Taxonomy: Consumer Protection				

### III.15. Protection of user data and privacy

Sub-Level Competencies	L-1 (Associate)	L-2 (Professional)	L-3 (Senior Professional/ Manager)	L-4 (Lead Professional/ Senior Manager)	L-5 (Principal)
EQF Level	EQF 3-4	EQF 5-6	EQF 6-7	EQF 7-8	EQF 8
Descriptor	Understands the fundamental social principles and their relevance in projects.	Applies social principles in project settings and collaborates with stakeholders.	Leads initiatives addressing social dimensions in project and organizational contexts.	Oversees strategic alignment of social policies within organizations or sectors.	Shapes global strategies, standards, and innovations for social responsibility.
Competency Examples	Learns about digital data ethics.	Implements basic data protection protocols.	Leads GDPR-compliant project initiatives.	Oversees data governance for programs.	Innovates privacy frameworks in digital ESG.
Description	Ensuring ethical handling of user data and personal information in digital and service-based project components.				
Alignment	GRI 418; CSRD S4; Social Taxonomy: Digital Rights				

### III.16. Public interest and policy alignment

Sub-Level Competencies	L-1 (Associate)	L-2 (Professional)	L-3 (Senior Professional/ Manager)	L-4 (Lead Professional/ Senior Manager)	L-5 (Principal)
EQF Level	EQF 3-4	EQF 5-6	EQF 6-7	EQF 7-8	EQF 8
Descriptor	Understands the fundamental social principles and their relevance in projects.	Applies social principles in project settings and collaborates with stakeholders.	Leads initiatives addressing social dimensions in project and organizational contexts.	Oversees strategic alignment of social policies within organizations or sectors.	Shapes global strategies, standards, and innovations for social responsibility.
Competency Examples	Understands the role of public policy in projects.	Supports project alignment with local regulations.	Leads advocacy or alignment efforts for public good.	Manages public-interest portfolios.	Advises on ESG-related policy development.
Description	Aligning project objectives and practices with public policy goals and legal social compliance frameworks.				
Alignment	GRI 419, 415; CSRD S1–S4; Social Taxonomy: Public Policy				

### III.17. Wellbeing and social value creation in projects

Sub-Level Competencies	L-1 (Associate)	L-2 (Professional)	L-3 (Senior Professional/ Manager)	L-4 (Lead Professional/ Senior Manager)	L-5 (Principal)
EQF Level	EQF 3-4	EQF 5-6	EQF 6-7	EQF 7-8	EQF 8
Descriptor	Understands the fundamental social principles and their relevance in projects.	Applies social principles in project settings and collaborates with stakeholders.	Leads initiatives addressing social dimensions in project and organizational contexts.	Oversees strategic alignment of social policies within organizations or sectors.	Shapes global strategies, standards, and innovations for social responsibility.
Competency Examples	Identifies wellbeing indicators in projects.	Implements social value tools in planning.	Leads wellbeing strategies in multi-stakeholder settings.	Measures social return on investment (SROI).	Develops models for maximizing social value.
Description	Designing projects that improve quality of life, provide equitable access, and generate measurable social value.				
Alignment	GRI 401, 413; CSRD S3; Social Taxonomy: Wellbeing and Living Standards				



### Career Progression Pathway for Social Competencies

Level	Position Examples	Focus
Entry-Level (L-1)	Community Engagement Officer, HR Assistant	Understand basic principles of human rights, diversity, and community impact.
Mid-Level (L-2)	Social Sustainability Specialist, Diversity & Inclusion Officer	Apply and monitor social standards in projects and ensure stakeholder inclusion.
Senior-Level (L-3)	Social Compliance Manager, Community Development Lead	Lead social impact assessments and community dialogue initiatives.
Lead-Level (L-4)	Head of Social Impact, Director of ESG Social Affairs	Oversee social responsibility programs and align them with corporate strategies.
Expert-Level (L-5)	Chief Social Responsibility Officer, Social Innovation Strategist	Influence public policy, foster global social innovation, and lead cross-sector coalitions.

### Assessment Criteria for Social Competencies

Level	Assessment Focus	Example Metrics
Entry-Level (L-1)	Understanding social responsibility principles.	Completion of social impact training; basic stakeholder mapping.
Mid-Level (L-2)	Applying DEI, OHS, and social compliance practices.	Implementation of social standards in procurement; inclusive engagement activities.
Senior-Level (L-3)	Managing social aspects of projects.	Delivery of social impact assessments; management of community relations.
Lead-Level (L-4)	Directing organizational social strategies.	Leadership in stakeholder partnerships; strategic oversight of social policies.
Expert-Level (L-5)	Advancing global social responsibility.	Influence in public policy; recognition in social innovation and equity.

## IV. GOVERNANCE COMPETENCIES



**T**he **Governance Competencies** within the ESG Project Management Framework address the ethical, legal, and procedural dimensions of responsible project execution. In an increasingly complex and regulated global environment, project professionals must ensure that their work is guided by integrity, transparency, and compliance with evolving governance expectations.

This competency domain equips individuals with the knowledge and capabilities necessary to establish and uphold high standards of project governance—supporting organizational accountability, anti-corruption efforts, stakeholder trust, and ESG-aligned reporting. These competencies are essential not only for legal and ethical compliance but also for reinforcing the legitimacy, resilience, and long-term success of projects.

Each competency is aligned with key international frameworks and standards, including:

- **GRI Governance-Related Standards** (e.g., 102, 205, 307, 418);
- The **Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD)** – particularly ESRS G1;
- **OECD Principles of Corporate Governance**;
- The **Sustainable Finance Disclosure Regulation (SFDR)**;
- Other instruments such as **ISO 37001 (anti-bribery)**, **ISO 31000 (risk management)**, and **GDPR (data protection)**.

This section covers a broad spectrum of governance topics—from **data protection**, **anti-corruption**, and **ethical conduct**, to **accountability**, **stakeholder communication**, and **ESG reporting**. It also includes emerging issues such as **whistleblower protection**, **ESG risk integration**, and **governance training**—ensuring that project professionals are prepared to meet both current and future governance challenges.

Incorporating these governance dimensions ensures that projects are not only delivered efficiently, but also in a way that is **transparent**, **just**, and **aligned with**



**democratic and legal norms.** These competencies are central to earning trust, managing risk, and ensuring that ESG project management meets the highest standards of professional practice.

The following section provides a structured overview of the key competencies within the **Governance** domain of the **ESG Project Management Competency Framework**. The initial table presents a consolidated summary of all sub-competencies grouped under this category, each aligned with relevant regulatory and professional standards. This overview enables a high-level understanding of the scope and intent of the competency area. In subsequent subsections, each sub-competency is elaborated in detail, with descriptors developed across five EQF-aligned proficiency levels (L1–L5). These descriptors are action-oriented and designed to support curriculum design, training development, professional profiling, and assessment within sustainability-focused project environments.

Primeri naslova tabela koje se mogu pomenuti u rečenici:

**Table 4. Overview of Governance Competencies**

No.	Competency	Description	Alignment with GRI, CSRD, Governance Standards
4.1	<b>Data protection and privacy management</b>	Ensuring project data is managed in line with legal privacy standards, safeguarding personal and sensitive information.	GRI 418; GDPR; CSRD: G1-7
4.2	<b>Anti-corruption and compliance enforcement</b>	Applying measures to prevent corruption, enforce compliance policies, and ensure ethical decision-making throughout the project.	GRI 205; ISO 37001; CSRD: G1-6
4.3	<b>Ethical conduct and integrity in project execution</b>	Upholding ethical standards, transparency, and fairness in all project-related actions and relationships.	GRI 102-16, 102-17; OECD Principles; CSRD: G1
4.4	<b>Accountability and transparent decision-making</b>	Establishing clear lines of responsibility and transparent decision-making processes within project governance.	GRI 102-18, 102-19; CSRD: G1-1 to G1-2
4.5	<b>Legal and regulatory awareness</b>	Understanding and applying applicable laws, policies, and regulations affecting project implementation and ESG compliance.	GRI 307, 419; CSRD: General disclosures
4.6	<b>Corporate governance alignment</b>	Aligning project governance with broader organizational structures, ESG mandates, and strategic priorities.	GRI 102-18; OECD Governance Principles; CSRD: G1-1

4.7	<b>Risk management and internal control systems</b>	Implementing systems to identify, assess, and manage risks, including ESG-specific controls and internal audits.	GRI 102-30; ISO 31000; CSRD: Risk section
4.8	<b>Stakeholder communication and reporting</b>	Ensuring open, timely, and meaningful communication with stakeholders on project performance and governance practices.	GRI 102-43 to 102-44; CSRD: Stakeholder engagement disclosures
4.9	<b>ESG reporting and disclosure standards</b>	Preparing accurate, complete, and standardized ESG reports aligned with global disclosure frameworks.	GRI 102-45 to 56; CSRD: Mandatory ESG disclosures
4.10	<b>Training on governance and ESG standards</b>	Building capacity in governance, ethics, and compliance through training and continuous learning for project teams.	GRI 404; CSRD: G1-5; OECD Guidelines on training
4.11	<b>Governance of ESG risks and opportunities</b>	Integrating ESG-related risks and opportunities into project governance, including scenario planning and escalation protocols.	GRI 102-30; CSRD: G1-3, G1-4; OECD risk integration
4.12	<b>Whistleblower protection and grievance mechanisms</b>	Creating secure and fair channels for reporting misconduct and ensuring protection for whistleblowers and ethical grievance procedures.	GRI 102-17; CSRD: Whistleblower protection; OECD Principles

#### IV.1. Data protection and privacy management

Sub-Level Competencies	L-1 (Associate)	L-2 (Professional)	L-3 (Senior Professional/ Manager)	L-4 (Lead Professional/ Senior Manager)	L-5 (Principal)
EQF Level	EQF 3-4	EQF 5-6	EQF 6-7	EQF 7-8	EQF 8
Descriptor	Understands the importance of protecting personal data and basic privacy principles.	Implements standard procedures to ensure compliance with data protection laws.	Leads privacy risk assessments and data protection plans for projects.	Establishes strategic privacy protocols and aligns them with governance systems.	Influences international privacy and data governance standards.
Competency Examples	Recognizes basic data privacy principles in handling user information.	Applies data handling procedures per GDPR requirements.	Leads audits of data protection practices in multi-stakeholder projects.	Develops enterprise-wide data governance policies and training.	Advises governments or boards on global data privacy protocols.
Description	Ensuring project data is managed in line with legal privacy standards, safeguarding personal and sensitive information.				
Alignment	GRI 418; GDPR; CSRD: G1-7				



## IV.2. Anti-corruption and compliance enforcement

Sub-Level Competencies	L-1 (Associate)	L-2 (Professional)	L-3 (Senior Professional/ Manager)	L-4 (Lead Professional/Senior Manager)	L-5 (Principal)
EQF Level	EQF 3-4	EQF 5-6	EQF 6-7	EQF 7-8	EQF 8
Descriptor	Identifies unethical behavior and is aware of basic anti-corruption rules.	Applies company policies to ensure compliance and prevent unethical conduct.	Manages internal controls and leads compliance reviews within the team.	Develops organizational anti-corruption frameworks and training programs.	Leads global anti-corruption initiatives and compliance innovation.
Competency Examples	Identifies potential conflicts of interest and reports unethical behavior.	Implements compliance protocols in procurement processes.	Coordinates anti-corruption workshops for project partners.	Oversees risk-based compliance monitoring strategies across departments.	Shapes international policy on anti-corruption in project governance.
Description	Applying measures to prevent corruption, enforce compliance policies, and ensure ethical decision-making throughout the project.				
Alignment	GRI 205; ISO 37001; CSRD: G1-6				

## IV.3. Ethical conduct and integrity in project execution

Sub-Level Competencies	L-1 (Associate)	L-2 (Professional)	L-3 (Senior Professional/ Manager)	L-4 (Lead Professional/ Senior Manager)	L-5 (Principal)
EQF Level	EQF 3-4	EQF 5-6	EQF 6-7	EQF 7-8	EQF 8
Descriptor	Demonstrates basic understanding of ethical responsibilities in project work.	Applies ethical principles in decision-making and handles dilemmas transparently.	Oversees project conduct ensuring alignment with ethical standards and codes.	Shapes internal ethics policies and oversees governance in project operations.	Shapes international standards for ethical project execution and governance.
Competency Examples	Follows the organization's code of conduct in project activities.	Ensures ethical behavior within their project team.	Advises teams on ethical dilemmas and manages ethical approval processes.	Designs ethics frameworks and chairs ethics committees.	Contributes to global ethical governance standards in ESG.
Description	Upholding ethical standards, transparency, and fairness in all project-related actions and relationships.				
Alignment	GRI 102-16, 102-17; OECD Principles; CSRD: G1				



#### IV.4. Accountability and transparent decision-making

Sub-Level Competencies	L-1 (Associate)	L-2 (Professional)	L-3 (Senior Professional/ Manager)	L-4 (Lead Professional/ Senior Manager)	L-5 (Principal)
EQF Level	EQF 3-4	EQF 5-6	EQF 6-7	EQF 7-8	EQF 8
Descriptor	Recognizes the need for transparency and clear responsibilities in project tasks.	Uses procedures to support accountability and participates in transparent processes.	Leads audits and reporting processes that ensure decision-making transparency.	Implements accountability frameworks and leads transparent decision structures.	Advises governments or institutions on transparency and governance reform.
Competency Examples	Acknowledges roles and responsibilities in project documentation.	Contributes to transparent project review and decision logs.	Leads governance reports including accountability assessments.	Implements decision-making frameworks across business units.	Chairs transparency commissions or advisory boards.
Description	Establishing clear lines of responsibility and transparent decision-making processes within project governance.				
Alignment	GRI 102-18, 102-19; CSRD: G1-1 to G1-2				

#### IV.5. Legal and regulatory awareness

Sub-Level Competencies	L-1 (Associate)	L-2 (Professional)	L-3 (Senior Professional/ Manager)	L-4 (Lead Professional/ Senior Manager)	L-5 (Principal)
EQF Level	EQF 3-4	EQF 5-6	EQF 6-7	EQF 7-8	EQF 8
Descriptor	Familiar with key legal and regulatory frameworks relevant to project activities.	Ensures project activities are compliant with legal and regulatory requirements.	Provides guidance on legal matters and leads compliance in project contexts.	Directs legal risk assessments and integrates regulations into organizational policy.	Champions global legal standards and builds regulatory alignment frameworks.
Competency Examples	Refers to project guidelines to ensure legal compliance.	Conducts regulatory research and informs project leads.	Oversees adherence to legal standards in high-impact project activities.	Builds legal compliance workflows into organizational systems.	Negotiates legal alignment strategies across multi-national initiatives.
Description	Understanding and applying applicable laws, policies, and regulations affecting project implementation and ESG compliance.				
Alignment	GRI 307, 419; CSRD: General disclosures				



## IV.6. Corporate governance alignment

Sub-Level Competencies	L-1 (Associate)	L-2 (Professional)	L-3 (Senior Professional/ Manager)	L-4 (Lead Professional/ Senior Manager)	L-5 (Principal)
EQF Level	EQF 3-4	EQF 5-6	EQF 6-7	EQF 7-8	EQF 8
Descriptor	Recognizes how project governance aligns with broader organizational policies.	Implements procedures that align project activities with corporate governance.	Leads project-level governance alignment and ensures adherence to standards.	Aligns department governance with corporate and ESG strategies.	Shapes global frameworks linking project and corporate governance.
Competency Examples	Acknowledges links between project decisions and corporate policies.	Ensures project documentation reflects governance policies.	Coordinates governance alignment between project and legal teams.	Establishes a governance task force to align strategy and execution.	Develops cross-border governance alignment programs.
Description	Aligning project governance with broader organizational structures, ESG mandates, and strategic priorities.				
Alignment	GRI 102-18; OECD Governance Principles; CSRD: G1-1				

## IV.7. Risk management and internal control systems

Sub-Level Competencies	L-1 (Associate)	L-2 (Professional)	L-3 (Senior Professional/ Manager)	L-4 (Lead Professional/ Senior Manager)	L-5 (Principal)
EQF Level	EQF 3-4	EQF 5-6	EQF 6-7	EQF 7-8	EQF 8
Descriptor	Understands the concept of risk and the need for internal control systems.	Applies risk management checklists and uses internal control tools.	Develops risk mitigation plans and oversees internal control procedures.	Oversees organization-wide risk control frameworks and auditing systems.	Advises global bodies on integrated ESG risk governance systems.
Competency Examples	Identifies basic risks and reports them to supervisors.	Uses checklists to perform risk reviews during project phases.	Manages internal audits for project-related risks.	Leads quarterly enterprise risk reviews and reports to the board.	Shapes regulatory frameworks for integrated risk governance.
Description	Implementing systems to identify, assess, and manage risks, including ESG-specific controls and internal audits.				
Alignment	GRI 102-30; ISO 31000; CSRD: Risk section				

### IV.8. Stakeholder communication and reporting

Sub-Level Competencies	L-1 (Associate)	L-2 (Professional)	L-3 (Senior Professional/ Manager)	L-4 (Lead Professional/ Senior Manager)	L-5 (Principal)
EQF Level	EQF 3-4	EQF 5-6	EQF 6-7	EQF 7-8	EQF 8
Descriptor	Understands the importance of regular and transparent communication with stakeholders.	Assists in preparing stakeholder communication materials for project updates.	Leads stakeholder engagement and feedback analysis activities.	Implements organization-wide stakeholder engagement and communication plans.	Leads global stakeholder engagement platforms and reporting alliances.
Competency Examples	Supports the preparation of updates for project stakeholders.	Contributes to Q&A documents and stakeholder briefing notes.	Leads consultation meetings and stakeholder dialogue events.	Oversees external stakeholder consultations for ESG alignment.	Represents organizations in international ESG dialogue platforms.
Description	Ensuring open, timely, and meaningful communication with stakeholders on project performance and governance practices.				
Alignment	GRI 102-43 to 102-44; CSRD: Stakeholder engagement disclosures				

### IV.9. ESG reporting and disclosure standards

Sub-Level Competencies	L-1 (Associate)	L-2 (Professional)	L-3 (Senior Professional/ Manager)	L-4 (Lead Professional/Senior Manager)	L-5 (Principal)
EQF Level	EQF 3-4	EQF 5-6	EQF 6-7	EQF 7-8	EQF 8
Descriptor	Is aware of ESG reporting requirements and global disclosure frameworks.	Collects ESG data for use in team-level reporting.	Manages the ESG data validation and report drafting process.	Establishes formal ESG reporting structures aligned with international standards.	Innovates ESG reporting methodologies and influences global standards.
Competency Examples	Assists with data collection for sustainability reports.	Drafts basic reports using standardized ESG templates.	Coordinates cross-team input for ESG compliance reports.	Standardizes ESG metrics across business units for global reporting.	Publishes global ESG benchmark reports and guidance.
Description	Preparing accurate, complete, and standardized ESG reports aligned with global disclosure frameworks.				
Alignment	GRI 102-45 to 56; CSRD: Mandatory ESG disclosures				



#### IV.10. Training on governance and ESG standards

Sub-Level Competencies	L-1 (Associate)	L-2 (Professional)	L-3 (Senior Professional/ Manager)	L-4 (Lead Professional/Senior Manager)	L-5 (Principal)
EQF Level	EQF 3-4	EQF 5-6	EQF 6-7	EQF 7-8	EQF 8
Descriptor	Recognizes the value of learning about governance and ESG practices.	Participates in training on ethics, governance, and ESG integration.	Delivers internal training on governance and ESG standards.	Develops training strategies for continuous learning in governance and ESG.	Establishes ESG governance capacity-building models across regions.
Competency Examples	Attends ESG-related orientation sessions.	Conducts brief training sessions on ESG basics.	Trains departments on updated governance standards.	Leads cross-functional ESG training programs at scale.	Establishes international learning networks on ESG capacity.
Description	Building capacity in governance, ethics, and compliance through training and continuous learning for project teams.				
Alignment	GRI 404; CSRD: G1-5; OECD Guidelines on training				

#### IV.11. Governance of ESG risks and opportunities

Sub-Level Competencies	L-1 (Associate)	L-2 (Professional)	L-3 (Senior Professional/ Manager)	L-4 (Lead Professional/Senior Manager)	L-5 (Principal)
EQF Level	EQF 3-4	EQF 5-6	EQF 6-7	EQF 7-8	EQF 8
Descriptor	Understands the concept of ESG risks and their relevance to project planning.	Uses risk identification tools to assess ESG risks and opportunities.	Leads ESG risk scenario analysis for major projects.	Integrates ESG risk governance into institutional policies and escalation systems.	Champions proactive ESG governance models across industries.
Competency Examples	Flags potential ESG issues in team meetings.	Supports ESG risk workshops for new projects.	Develops project-wide ESG risk dashboards.	Advises on policy changes to embed ESG risk into corporate planning.	Advises governments on ESG opportunity integration frameworks.
Description	Integrating ESG-related risks and opportunities into project governance, including scenario planning and escalation protocols.				
Alignment	GRI 102-30; CSRD: G1-3, G1-4; OECD risk integration				

#### IV.12. Whistleblower protection and grievance mechanisms

Sub-Level Competencies	L-1 (Associate)	L-2 (Professional)	L-3 (Senior Professional/ Manager)	L-4 (Lead Professional/ Senior Manager)	L-5 (Principal)
EQF Level	EQF 3-4	EQF 5-6	EQF 6-7	EQF 7-8	EQF 8
Descriptor	Knows basic rights for raising concerns and the existence of grievance mechanisms.	Supports awareness sessions on whistleblower rights and grievance protocols.	Manages confidential reporting systems and ensures fair grievance handling.	Designs enterprise-wide whistleblower protection and grievance frameworks.	Advises international institutions on whistleblower policy and ethics reform.
Competency Examples	Distributes leaflets on grievance channels during onboarding.	Implements digital tools for anonymous reporting.	Manages a secure grievance case tracking system.	Ensures global whistleblower protocols comply with best practice.	Advises multinational alliances on grievance mechanism reform.
Description	Creating secure and fair channels for reporting misconduct and ensuring protection for whistleblowers and ethical grievance procedures.				
Alignment	GRI 102-17; CSRD: Whistleblower protection; OECD Principles				



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### Career Progression Pathway for Governance Competencies

Level	Position Examples	Focus
Entry-Level (L-1)	Governance Assistant, Compliance Intern	Learn fundamentals of ethical conduct, compliance, and governance policies.
Mid-Level (L-2)	Compliance Officer, Risk Analyst	Apply and monitor governance standards and ensure regulatory compliance.
Senior-Level (L-3)	Governance Manager, Legal Advisor	Lead compliance initiatives and manage stakeholder reporting.
Lead-Level (L-4)	Director of Corporate Governance, Head of Compliance	Oversee governance strategies across the organization.
Expert-Level (L-5)	Chief Compliance Officer, Global Governance Strategist	Shape global standards and policies, lead ESG governance strategy.

### Assessment Criteria for Governance Competencies

Level	Assessment Focus	Example Metrics
Entry-Level (L-1)	Understanding basic governance responsibilities.	Completion of compliance training; adherence to privacy rules.
Mid-Level (L-2)	Enforcing governance standards and practices.	Implementation of internal controls; handling of policy breaches.
Senior-Level (L-3)	Managing governance-related processes.	Oversight of governance audits; facilitation of stakeholder transparency.
Lead-Level (L-4)	Strategizing and directing governance systems.	Organizational policy creation; reporting under CSRD/GRI.
Expert-Level (L-5)	Innovating and shaping global governance.	International recognition; leadership in setting governance standards.

## V. CROSS-CUTTING & ENABLING COMPETENCIES



**T**he **Cross-Cutting & Enabling Competencies** represent the transversal capabilities essential for embedding ESG principles into the full spectrum of project management activities. While not directly mapped to specific standards or reporting frameworks, these competencies are critical enablers of ESG transformation—supporting the integration of environmental, social, and governance dimensions into both project practice and strategic vision.

These competencies reflect the adaptive, systems-oriented, and collaborative mindset required to manage complexity, lead change, and generate long-term value. They provide the foundation for project managers to operate not only as task executors, but as transformation agents who can align technical processes with ethical responsibility, societal needs, and ecological constraints.

Unlike technical or domain-specific ESG skills, Cross-Cutting & Enabling Competencies support a deeper form of leadership—one that embraces uncertainty, fosters innovation, and bridges diverse perspectives and knowledge systems. They empower professionals to work across silos, navigate competing stakeholder interests, and ensure that ESG is not treated as an afterthought or compliance exercise, but as a **core pillar of project success**.

The following section provides a structured overview of the key competencies within the **Cross-Cutting** domain of the **ESG Project Management Competency Framework**. The initial table presents a consolidated summary of all sub-competencies grouped under this category, each aligned with relevant regulatory and professional standards. This overview enables a high-level understanding of the scope and intent of the competency area. In subsequent subsections, each sub-competency is elaborated in detail, with descriptors developed across five EQF-aligned proficiency levels (L1–L5). These descriptors are action-oriented and designed to support curriculum design, training development, professional profiling, and assessment within sustainability-focused project environments.



Table 6. Overview of Core Project Management Competencies

No.	Competency	Description
5.1	<b>Systems thinking and interconnectivity</b>	Ability to understand and manage complex interconnections between environmental, social, and governance elements within and across project systems.
5.2	<b>Change leadership for ESG transformation</b>	Capacity to guide teams and organizations through behavioral and strategic change processes that embed ESG principles into project operations.
5.3	<b>Life cycle thinking and long-term value orientation</b>	Integration of life cycle thinking and long-term sustainability considerations into project design, implementation, and evaluation.
5.4	<b>Digital proficiency for ESG monitoring and reporting</b>	Proficiency in using digital platforms and tools to collect, analyze, and report ESG data in a transparent and accessible manner.
5.5	<b>Evidence-based and data-driven decision making</b>	Using qualitative and quantitative data to inform ESG-related decisions, trade-offs, and performance evaluations.
5.6	<b>Facilitation and multi-stakeholder engagement</b>	Ability to lead inclusive processes that bring together diverse stakeholders for shared problem-solving and decision-making.
5.7	<b>Conflict resolution in ESG-sensitive contexts</b>	Skill in resolving tensions or conflicts among stakeholders, especially those rooted in ESG value trade-offs or socio-environmental impacts.
5.8	<b>Strategic communication and ESG narrative building</b>	Crafting and delivering clear, compelling ESG narratives tailored to different stakeholder groups and communication channels.
5.9	<b>Foresight and anticipatory skills</b>	Anticipating emerging ESG trends, risks, and innovations and integrating them into project planning and risk mitigation strategies.
5.10	<b>Adaptive thinking and agile responsiveness</b>	Responding dynamically to changing ESG conditions or stakeholder feedback, using agile principles for iterative project adaptation.
5.11	<b>Interdisciplinary collaboration and knowledge integration</b>	Collaborating across sectors and disciplines, leveraging diverse knowledge systems to address sustainability challenges in a holistic manner.



### V.1. Systems thinking and interconnectivity

Sub-Level Competencies	L-1 (Associate)	L-2 (Professional)	L-3 (Senior Professional/ Manager)	L-4 (Lead Professional/ Senior Manager)	L-5 (Principal)
EQF Level	EQF 3-4	EQF 5-6	EQF 6-7	EQF 7-8	EQF 8
Descriptor	Understands basic ESG concepts and recognizes how project activities affect inter-connected ESG systems.	Applies systems mapping to ESG problems and integrates insights into routine project planning.	Designs and leads ESG systems analysis for complex project environments.	Oversees organization-wide ESG systems integration and manages inter-dependency risks.	Shapes international discourse on ESG systems integration and complexity science.
Competency Examples	Identifies basic relationships between project activities and ESG factors.	Applies systems mapping tools to visualize ESG inter-dependencies.	Leads team sessions to explore ESG feedback loops in complex projects.	Integrates system dynamics modeling into ESG strategy.	Advises on ESG transformation through inter-connectivity frameworks.
Description	Ability to understand and manage complex interconnections between environmental, social, and governance elements within and across project systems.				

### V.2. Change leadership for ESG transformation

Sub-Level Competencies	L-1 (Associate)	L-2 (Professional)	L-3 (Senior Professional/ Manager)	L-4 (Lead Professional/ Senior Manager)	L-5 (Principal)
EQF Level	EQF 3-4	EQF 5-6	EQF 6-7	EQF 7-8	EQF 8
Descriptor	Displays openness to change and willingness to adopt ESG-related improvements in personal tasks.	Motivates peers and contributes to ESG adoption through supportive actions and communication.	Implements and manages structured ESG change initiatives across project teams.	Leads ESG transformation initiatives at department or cross-functional level.	Champions global strategies and frameworks for institutional ESG change.
Competency Examples	Demonstrates willingness to support ESG improvements in own work.	Encourages ESG practice adoption via workshops and communication.	Leads ESG change management plans aligning team and sustainability goals.	Drives ESG transformation across departments or units.	Shapes international frameworks for ESG change leadership.
Description	Capacity to guide teams and organizations through behavioral and strategic change processes that embed ESG principles into project operations.				



### V.3. Life cycle thinking and long-term value orientation

Sub-Level Competencies	L-1 (Associate)	L-2 (Professional)	L-3 (Senior Professional/ Manager)	L-4 (Lead Professional/ Senior Manager)	L-5 (Principal)
EQF Level	EQF 3-4	EQF 5-6	EQF 6-7	EQF 7-8	EQF 8
Descriptor	Understands the concept of life cycle thinking and its relevance to sustainability.	Uses life cycle tools to assess environmental or social impacts across project stages.	Integrates life cycle principles into planning and execution of major project phases.	Develops organization-wide policies reflecting life cycle thinking and long-term sustainability goals.	Advises on global ESG investment strategies using life cycle and systems thinking.
Competency Examples	Recognizes environmental or social impacts across product/service stages.	Uses life cycle checklists to inform resource choices.	Leads design based on cradle-to-cradle principles.	Develops long-term sustainability KPIs with life cycle metrics.	Establishes ESG strategies based on life cycle and equity.
Description	Integration of life cycle thinking and long-term sustainability considerations into project design, implementation, and evaluation.				

### V.4. Digital proficiency for ESG monitoring and reporting

Sub-Level Competencies	L-1 (Associate)	L-2 (Professional)	L-3 (Senior Professional/ Manager)	L-4 (Lead Professional/ Senior Manager)	L-5 (Principal)
EQF Level	EQF 3-4	EQF 5-6	EQF 6-7	EQF 7-8	EQF 8
Descriptor	Is familiar with basic digital tools used for ESG data collection and entry.	Operates ESG software for monitoring and reporting within defined parameters.	Leads the implementation of digital ESG monitoring systems within a team or unit.	Aligns digital ESG reporting architecture with corporate governance and strategy.	Creates new ESG digital standards and drives innovation in sustainability tech platforms.
Competency Examples	Uses basic digital forms or dashboards to input ESG-related data.	Applies ESG-specific software for project monitoring.	Leads team in setting up ESG tracking and reporting systems.	Oversees ESG analytics platform integration with governance.	Innovates ESG tech solutions and sets global standards.
Description	Proficiency in using digital platforms and tools to collect, analyze, and report ESG data in a transparent and accessible manner.				

### V.5. Evidence-based and data-driven decision making

Sub-Level Competencies	L-1 (Associate)	L-2 (Professional)	L-3 (Senior Professional/ Manager)	L-4 (Lead Professional/Senior Manager)	L-5 (Principal)
EQF Level	EQF 3-4	EQF 5-6	EQF 6-7	EQF 7-8	EQF 8
Descriptor	Can identify simple ESG data types and understands how they inform basic decisions.	Applies ESG metrics and data in evaluating different project options.	Designs ESG data processes and leads performance evaluations across functions.	Ensures executive decisions are informed by comprehensive ESG data and analytics.	Leads the development of global benchmarks for ESG decision support and accountability.
Competency Examples	Reviews simple ESG data sets to support decisions.	Applies ESG indicators to evaluate project solutions.	Leads ESG data collection and decision support systems.	Ensures strategic decisions use real-time ESG data.	Shapes ESG data practices and global evaluation norms.
Description	Using qualitative and quantitative data to inform ESG-related decisions, trade-offs, and performance evaluations.				

### V.6. Facilitation and multi-stakeholder engagement

Sub-Level Competencies	L-1 (Associate)	L-2 (Professional)	L-3 (Senior Professional/ Manager)	L-4 (Lead Professional/Senior Manager)	L-5 (Principal)
EQF Level	EQF 3-4	EQF 5-6	EQF 6-7	EQF 7-8	EQF 8
Descriptor	Recognizes the importance of stakeholder input and listens actively during engagement sessions.	Facilitates stakeholder sessions and uses inclusive methods for gathering feedback.	Leads co-creation processes involving diverse stakeholder groups with conflicting interests.	Institutionalizes stakeholder engagement frameworks aligned with ESG governance.	Shapes global standards for multi-stakeholder ESG collaboration and consensus-building.
Competency Examples	Participates in facilitated ESG-related meetings recognizing diverse perspectives.	Organizes stakeholder facilitation sessions in projects.	Leads workshops to co-create ESG project goals.	Develops ESG-aligned stakeholder engagement strategies.	Advises on inclusive facilitation and participatory governance.
Description	Ability to lead inclusive processes that bring together diverse stakeholders for shared problem-solving and decision-making.				



### V.7. Conflict resolution in ESG-sensitive contexts

Sub-Level Competencies	L-1 (Associate)	L-2 (Professional)	L-3 (Senior Professional/ Manager)	L-4 (Lead Professional/Senior Manager)	L-5 (Principal)
EQF Level	EQF 3-4	EQF 5-6	EQF 6-7	EQF 7-8	EQF 8
Descriptor	Can recognize the early signs of conflict arising from ESG issues and knows when to escalate.	Uses structured approaches to manage ESG-related disagreements among stakeholders.	Resolves ESG conflicts using mediation and structured negotiation methods.	Develops high-level protocols for conflict-sensitive ESG engagement.	Mediates high-level ESG disputes across institutions and nations with conflicting values.
Competency Examples	Identifies potential ESG-related conflicts in projects.	Applies basic conflict resolution in stakeholder discussions.	Mediates community-corporate ESG conflicts.	Designs ESG engagement protocols in high-risk contexts.	Leads global ESG conflict resolution and negotiation.
Description	Skill in resolving tensions or conflicts among stakeholders, especially those rooted in ESG value trade-offs or socio-environmental impacts.				

### V.8. Strategic communication and ESG narrative building

Sub-Level Competencies	L-1 (Associate)	L-2 (Professional)	L-3 (Senior Professional/ Manager)	L-4 (Lead Professional/Senior Manager)	L-5 (Principal)
EQF Level	EQF 3-4	EQF 5-6	EQF 6-7	EQF 7-8	EQF 8
Descriptor	Communicates basic ESG ideas clearly to peers or within a team setting.	Creates engaging materials to explain ESG relevance to broader audiences.	Leads strategic communication campaigns to promote ESG internally and externally.	Oversees strategic communication that positions the organization as a leader in ESG.	Drives global ESG communication initiatives and positions organizations in global sustainability narratives.
Competency Examples	Shares ESG updates via internal communications.	Creates ESG briefs or infographics for stakeholders.	Leads ESG communication campaigns across stakeholders.	Oversees ESG communication strategies organization-wide.	Shapes public ESG narratives through global platforms.
Description	Crafting and delivering clear, compelling ESG narratives tailored to different stakeholder groups and communication channels.				

### V.9. Foresight and anticipatory skills

Sub-Level Competencies	L-1 (Associate)	L-2 (Professional)	L-3 (Senior Professional/ Manager)	L-4 (Lead Professional/Senior Manager)	L-5 (Principal)
EQF Level	EQF 3-4	EQF 5-6	EQF 6-7	EQF 7-8	EQF 8
Descriptor	Demonstrates curiosity about emerging ESG trends and their potential impacts.	Participates in foresight exercises such as trend mapping or horizon scanning.	Integrates ESG foresight into long-term planning and decision-making processes.	Guides institutional foresight programs related to ESG futures and scenario analysis.	Leads global ESG foresight initiatives and sets anticipatory governance agendas.
Competency Examples	Follows ESG developments in news and industry trends.	Contributes to ESG risk horizon scanning.	Develops ESG scenarios for project planning.	Integrates foresight into ESG governance systems.	Leads foresight programs for ESG innovation agendas.
Description	Anticipating emerging ESG trends, risks, and innovations and integrating them into project planning and risk mitigation strategies.				

### V.10. Adaptive thinking and agile responsiveness

Sub-Level Competencies	L-1 (Associate)	L-2 (Professional)	L-3 (Senior Professional/ Manager)	L-4 (Lead Professional/Senior Manager)	L-5 (Principal)
EQF Level	EQF 3-4	EQF 5-6	EQF 6-7	EQF 7-8	EQF 8
Descriptor	Adjusts work plans when ESG priorities shift, under guidance.	Suggests adaptive measures in response to ESG feedback or changing contexts.	Oversees agile responses to ESG-related challenges, balancing flexibility and standards.	Implements agile structures that enable rapid, systemic ESG alignment across operations.	Establishes adaptive ESG ecosystems that continuously learn and evolve with emerging realities.
Competency Examples	Accepts changes to ESG goals and adapts work accordingly.	Suggests adaptive actions to shifting ESG priorities.	Leads project pivots maintaining ESG alignment.	Embeds agile ESG governance into organizational routines.	Champions agile ESG frameworks across sectors.
Description	Responding dynamically to changing ESG conditions or stakeholder feedback, using agile principles for iterative project adaptation.				



### V.11. Interdisciplinary collaboration and knowledge integration

Sub-Level Competencies	L-1 (Associate)	L-2 (Professional)	L-3 (Senior Professional/Manager)	L-4 (Lead Professional/Senior Manager)	L-5 (Principal)
EQF Level	EQF 3-4	EQF 5-6	EQF 6-7	EQF 7-8	EQF 8
Descriptor	Collaborates respectfully across disciplines and values different viewpoints.	Synthesizes insights from various disciplines to enrich ESG project design.	Manages interdisciplinary teams and ensures coherent integration of diverse ESG inputs.	Designs platforms for cross-sector knowledge exchange and trans-disciplinary collaboration.	Creates international alliances that advance knowledge co-production for systemic ESG change.
Competency Examples	Participates in cross-functional ESG working groups.	Bridges insights from different disciplines in planning.	Leads collaborative ESG initiatives with multiple partners.	Designs interdisciplinary ESG innovation programs.	Leads global ESG knowledge alliances and systems thinking.
Description	Collaborating across sectors and disciplines, leveraging diverse knowledge systems to address sustainability challenges in a holistic manner.				

### Career Progression Pathway for Cross-cutting & Enabling Competencies

Level	Position Examples	Focus
Entry-Level (L-1)	ESG Assistant, Sustainability Intern	Support projects using basic ESG tools and assist in data collection and reporting.
Mid-Level (L-2)	ESG Analyst, Digital ESG Officer	Apply data-driven methods and stakeholder engagement in ESG implementation.
Senior-Level (L-3)	Project Manager ESG Integration, Systems Thinking Facilitator	Lead ESG-oriented project phases using foresight and collaboration tools.
Lead-Level (L-4)	Director of ESG Transformation, Agile Sustainability Lead	Oversee strategic ESG embedding across organizational processes.
Expert-Level (L-5)	Chief ESG Strategist, Global ESG Integration Lead	Shape global ESG foresight practices, frameworks, and innovation policies.

### Assessment Criteria for Cross-cutting & Enabling Competencies

Level	Assessment Focus	Example Metrics
Entry-Level (L-1)	Basic understanding of ESG-enabling competencies.	Participation in stakeholder meetings; use of basic reporting tools.
Mid-Level (L-2)	Effective use of ESG digital and communication tools.	Facilitation of inclusive workshops; reporting ESG indicators.
Senior-Level (L-3)	Leading enabling practices in complex settings.	Project outcomes showing integration of ESG foresight and agility.
Lead-Level (L-4)	Strategizing cross-cutting ESG practices.	Oversight of lifecycle projects; development of adaptive ESG protocols.
Expert-Level (L-5)	Setting trends in ESG integration and systems thinking.	Global publications or standards; recognized leadership in ESG transformation.

## 5. WAYS FORWARD



**T**he ESG Project Management Competency Framework is conceived not as a static document, but as a living instrument for transformative action—one that must be continuously adapted, operationalized, and refined through iterative engagement with real-world challenges. To unlock its full systemic potential, the framework must become embedded across education systems, organizational practice, public policy, and innovation ecosystems. Its long-term impact hinges on sustained adoption by diverse actors, integration into institutional processes, and co-ownership by stakeholder communities.

### 5.1 Embedding the Framework in Education and Training

The framework provides a foundational architecture for reforming educational provision in line with ESG priorities. General, vocational, higher, and adult education institutions can leverage the framework to:



- Redesign existing curricula and qualifications to integrate ESG-aligned project management competencies across disciplines;
- Develop flexible, stackable, and modular learning programs—including short courses, micro-credentials, and specializations—that align with EQF levels;
- Reinforce applied, interdisciplinary pedagogies, such as challenge-based learning and project simulations, that mirror real-life ESG scenarios;
- Strengthen teacher training and professional development for educators delivering ESG-relevant content, ensuring instructional consistency across sectors;



- Embed robust assessment mechanisms that mirror the framework's level descriptors, supporting transparency and comparability of learning outcomes.

When fully integrated, the framework serves as a lever for transforming education systems into engines of sustainability, equity, and governance innovation.

## 5.2 Advancing Workforce Development and Organizational Capability

The framework offers a strategic lens for aligning human capital development with ESG demands across industries and institutions. Employers, human resources professionals, and leadership teams can:



- Map employee competencies against present and emerging ESG needs, identifying skill gaps and upskilling opportunities;
- Co-design internal training programs that build ESG capacity across hierarchical levels and functional areas;
- Integrate ESG competencies into job profiling, performance management, recruitment, and promotion criteria;
- Promote recognition of informal and non-formal learning, enabling dynamic career pathways through validation of practical ESG experience;
- Support organizational resilience by cultivating ESG champions and nurturing leadership roles oriented toward systemic transformation.

In doing so, organizations can move from ESG compliance to ESG excellence—embedding responsibility, agility, and purpose in their workforce strategies.

## 5.3 Informing Policy Alignment and System-Level Strategies

The framework offers a harmonized, EQF-aligned model that can be used by governments and multilateral institutions to:



- Inform national and regional ESG skills strategies, as well as sector-specific transformation roadmaps;
- Update national qualifications frameworks (NQFs) and educational standards to reflect the interdisciplinary demands of ESG project work;
- Guide the allocation of funding and incentives toward ESG capacity-building programs and institutional reform efforts;



- Embed ESG competencies into policy instruments such as sustainable finance regulations, innovation funds, and climate resilience programs;
- Facilitate mutual recognition of ESG-related qualifications across borders, contributing to a more integrated and mobile European labor market.

Its alignment with global ESG disclosure standards (e.g., CSRD, SFDR, GRI) further positions the framework as a strategic enabler of policy coherence and regulatory readiness.

## 5.4 Enabling Institutional Innovation and Capacity Building

Universities, training providers, research institutions, and professional associations can mobilize the framework to:



- Drive continuous improvement of academic programs through outcome-based curriculum redesign;
- Foster cross-sectoral partnerships and public-private collaborations to co-create ESG learning ecosystems;
- Launch interdisciplinary centers of excellence focused on ESG in project management, bridging theory and practice through research, training, and policy dialogue;
- Establish institutional quality assurance systems and accreditation mechanisms anchored in ESG competency standards;
- Develop digital infrastructure and learning platforms that facilitate access to ESG-related content, mentorship, and experiential learning.

By institutionalizing the framework, organizations not only enhance their own strategic positioning—they become drivers of structural change.

## 5.5 Fostering Ecosystemic Collaboration and Knowledge Exchange

The framework can act as a catalyst for cross-sector and cross-border collaboration, fostering a collective learning architecture. Opportunities include:

- Establishing regional innovation hubs and living labs focused on ESG project practices;
- Creating communities of practice and professional networks that share tools, methodologies, and lessons learned;
- Promoting open-access repositories of teaching ma-





- terials, case studies, and implementation toolkits;
- Facilitating policy experimentation and pilot programs to test the framework's application in diverse governance, cultural, and economic contexts;
  - Encouraging joint certification schemes and benchmarking initiatives to foster convergence in ESG competence standards.

Such collaborative dynamics ensure the framework remains agile, future-proof, and grounded in the lived realities of practice.

## 5.6 Ensuring Inclusivity, Adaptability, and Lifelong Learning

At its core, the framework must uphold principles of equity, access, and adaptability. To that end, future application should prioritize:



- Customizing implementation strategies to the needs of marginalized groups, underserved regions, and under-represented professions;
- Integrating gender-responsive, diversity-sensitive, and territorially balanced approaches to ESG competence development;
- Enabling individuals to accumulate learning over time through modular design, stackable credentials, and open recognition of prior experience;
- Supporting learners at all life stages—from school to retirement—by embedding the framework into lifelong learning policies and digital credentials ecosystems.

An inclusive and adaptive approach ensures that the green and digital transitions do not exacerbate inequality—but become opportunities for empowerment and social cohesion.

## 6. CONCLUSION

The **ESG Project Management Competency Framework** offers a holistic, future-oriented, and evidence-based response to the urgent call for embedding sustainability, social value, and ethical governance into project practice. At a time when projects are the vehicles for implementing societal transformation, the capabilities of those who lead and manage them must evolve accordingly.

Structured across five domains—**Core Project Management, Environmental, Social, Governance, and Cross-Cutting & Enabling Competencies**—the framework articulates 64 distinct competencies mapped across five progression levels (L1–L5) aligned with EQF levels 3 to 8. This architecture enables modularity, flexibility, and application across educational, organizational, and policy systems.

The framework's value lies in its actionable design:

- Educators can translate ESG priorities into measurable learning outcomes and teaching strategies;
- Employers can align talent strategies with sustainability and governance objectives;
- Policymakers can integrate competencies into national qualifications, green transition policies, and labor market reforms;
- Professionals and learners can navigate career progression, lifelong learning, and cross-sector mobility with confidence.

By grounding ESG transformation in concrete skills, behaviors, and knowledge, the framework closes the gap between intention and implementation. It provides a common language for advancing collective accountability, resilience, and inclusive innovation through projects.

Most importantly, the framework reframes competence not as a static attribute, but as a dynamic capability—one that must evolve with changing contexts, challenges, and societal aspirations. It empowers individuals and institutions to become not only compliant with ESG imperatives but to lead ethically, systemically, and sustainably.

In a world facing converging crises and accelerating transitions, project professionals must be prepared not only to manage change—but to embody it. This framework serves as a strategic enabler for that mission.





# APPENDIX

# APPENDIX A

## APPENDIX A: TERMINOLOGY GLOSSARY

# TERMINOLOGY GLOSSARY

Term	Definition
Accountability	The obligation of individuals and organizations to report, explain, and be answerable for resulting consequences of their actions, particularly in the context of ESG project performance, stakeholder trust, and transparent decision-making.
Adaptive Thinking	The cognitive capability to adjust strategies and behaviors in response to dynamic conditions, uncertainty, or stakeholder feedback, often used in ESG-sensitive or complex project contexts.
Agile Responsiveness	A flexible and iterative project management approach that emphasizes adaptability to change, continuous feedback loops, and stakeholder responsiveness, particularly relevant in ESG-integrated projects.
Assessment Criteria	Explicit and measurable indicators used to evaluate competencies across levels of mastery (L1–L5), aligned with EQF, and applied for formative and summative performance assessment in ESG project management.
Circular Economy	An economic model focused on designing out waste, keeping products and materials in use, and regenerating natural systems. In project contexts, it involves integrating life cycle thinking and sustainable resource management.
Climate Resilience	The capacity of a project, system, or community to anticipate, absorb, adapt to, and recover from climate-related shocks while maintaining core functions and structures.
Competency	A combination of knowledge, skills, and attitudes (KSAs) that enables individuals to perform tasks effectively in professional contexts. In this framework, competencies are ESG-aligned and defined across five progression levels.
Competency Framework	A structured, multi-level model that organizes and defines essential competencies required to perform specific roles or functions, in this case for ESG project management.



Conflict Resolution	The ability to address and mediate tensions or disputes among stakeholders, particularly where ESG-related values, risks, or expectations diverge.
Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD)	An EU directive requiring large companies to disclose information on how they operate and manage social and environmental challenges, supported by European Sustainability Reporting Standards (ESRS).
Cross-Cutting & Enabling Competencies	Transversal capabilities, such as systems thinking, change leadership, digital skills, and communication, that support ESG integration across all domains of project management.
Data-Driven Decision Making	An approach to decision-making that relies on empirical evidence and analytics, used to inform ESG project planning, evaluation, and trade-offs.
Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)	Principles and practices that promote fair treatment, equal access, and representation of different identities and perspectives in project teams and beneficiary groups.
Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG)	A set of non-financial performance criteria used to assess the ethical impact and sustainability of organizational and project activities, forming the foundation for responsible and resilient project management.
Environmental Competencies	Skills and knowledge related to minimizing environmental harm and advancing ecological sustainability through projects, including climate action, circular economy, pollution control, and biodiversity protection.
EQF (European Qualifications Framework)	A reference framework that links qualifications across EU countries based on learning outcomes, used in this framework to align competency levels (L1–L5) with formal educational standards.
Ethical Governance	The application of moral principles in the design and execution of projects, emphasizing integrity, transparency, accountability, and stakeholder respect.
Foresight	The ability to anticipate future ESG trends, risks, and opportunities and incorporate them into strategic planning and project design.
Governance Competencies	Skills required to manage projects in accordance with ethical, legal, and procedural norms, including risk management, anti-corruption, ESG reporting, and data protection.

GRI (Global Reporting Initiative)	An independent international organization providing sustainability reporting standards that guide how organizations disclose ESG performance and impacts.
Green Technology	Technological innovations that reduce environmental harm, improve resource efficiency, or enable sustainable practices within project lifecycles.
Human Rights Due Diligence	A proactive process of identifying, preventing, mitigating, and accounting for human rights risks across project activities and supply chains.
Inclusive Development	A development paradigm that ensures equitable access to project benefits and participation in decision-making processes, particularly for marginalized or vulnerable groups.
Interdisciplinary Collaboration	Cooperative engagement across multiple disciplines or sectors, promoting holistic problem-solving and knowledge integration in ESG-sensitive projects.
Lifelong Learning	A continuous, voluntary process of acquiring new competencies throughout one's professional life, emphasized in the progression from L1 to L5 within this framework.
Micro-Credentials	Modular certifications of learning that validate specific ESG competencies, aligned with curriculum and workforce needs in agile training environments.
Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting (MER)	The systematic collection and analysis of performance data throughout the project lifecycle to assess alignment with ESG objectives and inform transparent reporting.
Occupational Health and Safety (OHS)	A set of practices and systems aimed at ensuring safe, healthy, and dignified working conditions for all project stakeholders.
Project Management	The application of knowledge, tools, and techniques to plan, execute, and control projects effectively. In this framework, it includes ESG-aligned practices across all lifecycle phases.
Project Lifecycle	The structured phases of a project from initiation to closure, each requiring specific ESG considerations and competency applications.



Resilience	The capacity of systems, teams, and individuals to adapt and recover from disruptions, critical in projects addressing climate, social, and governance uncertainties.
Risk and Opportunity Management	The systematic process of identifying, evaluating, and responding to ESG-related threats and benefits throughout project delivery.
Scenario Analysis	A planning method that assesses possible future developments (e.g., climate change) to inform risk mitigation and adaptation strategies in projects.
Social Competencies	Capabilities that promote equity, inclusion, human rights, and social impact in project contexts, ensuring responsible stakeholder engagement and fair outcomes.
Stakeholder Engagement	The process of identifying, consulting, and involving individuals or groups affected by or influencing a project, especially concerning ESG-sensitive issues.
Strategic Communication	The deliberate design and dissemination of messages that advance ESG goals, build stakeholder trust, and support organizational positioning.
Sustainability	A guiding principle that promotes long-term ecological balance, social equity, and economic viability, embedded in project objectives and practices.
Sustainable Finance Disclosure Regulation (SFDR)	An EU regulation that mandates ESG-related disclosures from financial market participants, informing sustainable investment and project funding decisions.
Sustainable Procurement	Procurement practices that incorporate ESG criteria into supplier selection and contracting, emphasizing social equity and environmental impact.
Systems Thinking	A holistic analytical approach that considers the interconnectedness and interdependencies within and beyond the project system, essential for ESG integration.
Transparency	A governance principle requiring openness in processes, decision-making, and performance reporting, vital for building stakeholder trust and compliance with ESG norms.



Value Chain Impact	The cumulative environmental, social, and governance effects that result from activities across the project's full lifecycle and supply chain.
Wellbeing	A multidimensional concept encompassing physical, mental, and social health, considered in projects that aim to deliver positive social value and inclusive outcomes.
Whistleblower Protection	Mechanisms that allow individuals to report misconduct safely and confidentially, with protection against retaliation, aligned with ethical governance standards.





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