



Utrecht  
University



MSc in Global Challenges for Sustainability

Cohort 5

2024-2026

# EMPOWERING SMES THROUGH DIGITAL EPR COMPLIANCE FOR THE TRANSITION TOWARD SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS PRACTICES

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## GRAND FINALE PRESENTATION

Presented By:

Gaia Casazza

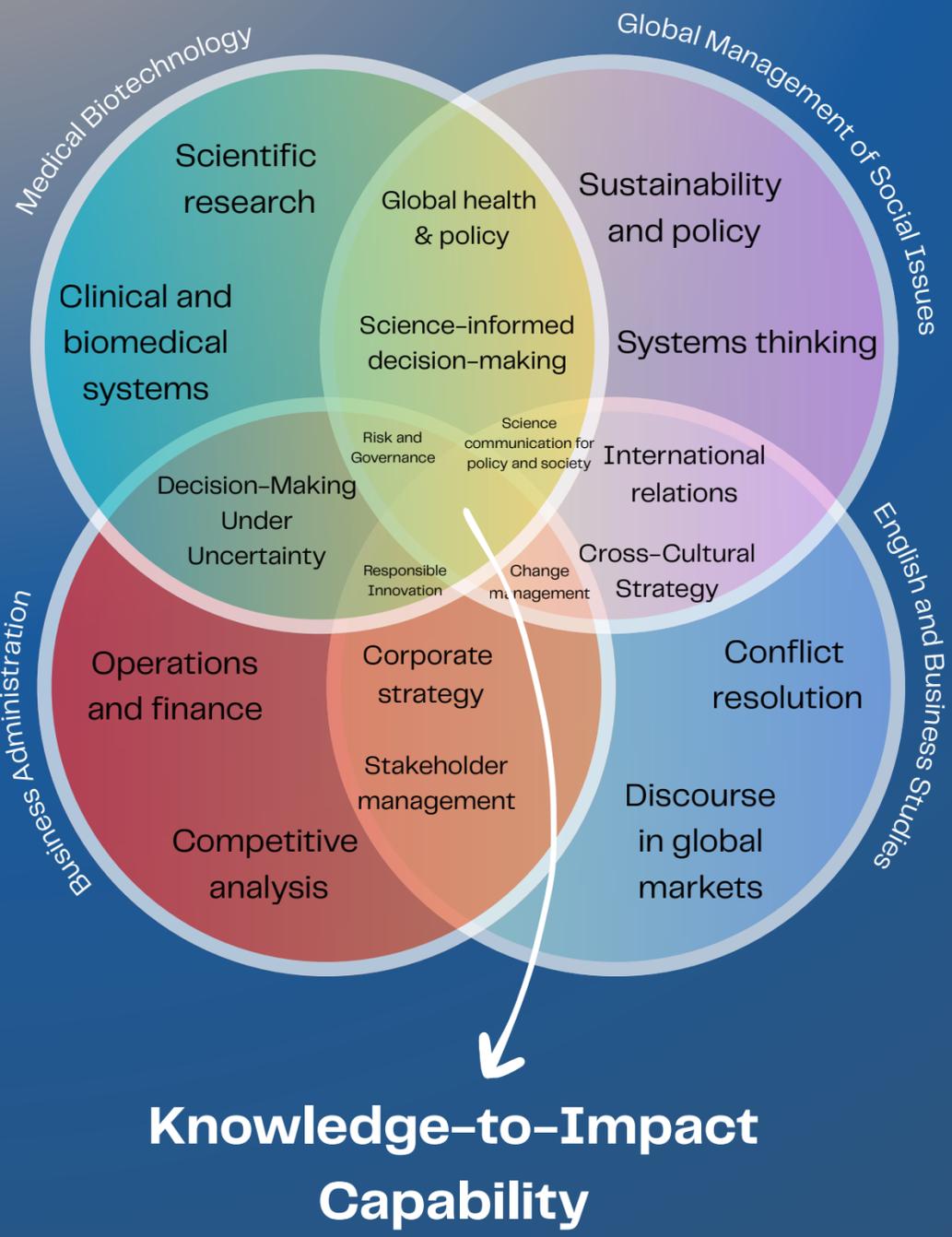
Lisa Moukala

Mats Wortelmann

Margherita Zanazzi



# MEET THE TEAM



Margherita Zanazzi  
Medical Biotechnology



Gaia Casazza  
Global Management for Social Issues



Mats Wortelmann  
Business Administration



Lisa Moukala  
English and Business Studies

# 01- CASE SCENARIO

# MEET YOUR COMPANY

YOU ARE A YOUNG, NEW SME



- **Primary Mission:** Create affordable, stylish, and durable accessories for everyday smartphone use.
- **Sustainability:** The team is open to sustainability but hasn't prioritized it yet. Their primary focus is on cost efficiency, scalability, and meeting market demand.
- **Target Market:** Broad consumer market, primarily cost-conscious, design-driven customers.

# 02-CASE SCENARIO

# THE CHALLENGE

## THE CROSSROADS OF SUSTAINABILITY

### Environmental Compliance – The SME Perspective:

#### INTERNAL



Lack of expertise



Limited resources



Staffing constraints

#### EXTERNAL



Mandatory reporting of packaging volumes placed on the market



Producers are responsible for the collection, sorting, and recycling of packaging waste



Compliance with recycling and recovery targets

# 03- CASE SCENARIO

## THE CHALLENGE

SUSTAINABILITY OR  
PROFITABILITY?

**If you were part of this SME team, would you still invest in sustainability if it risked your company's short-term survival?**

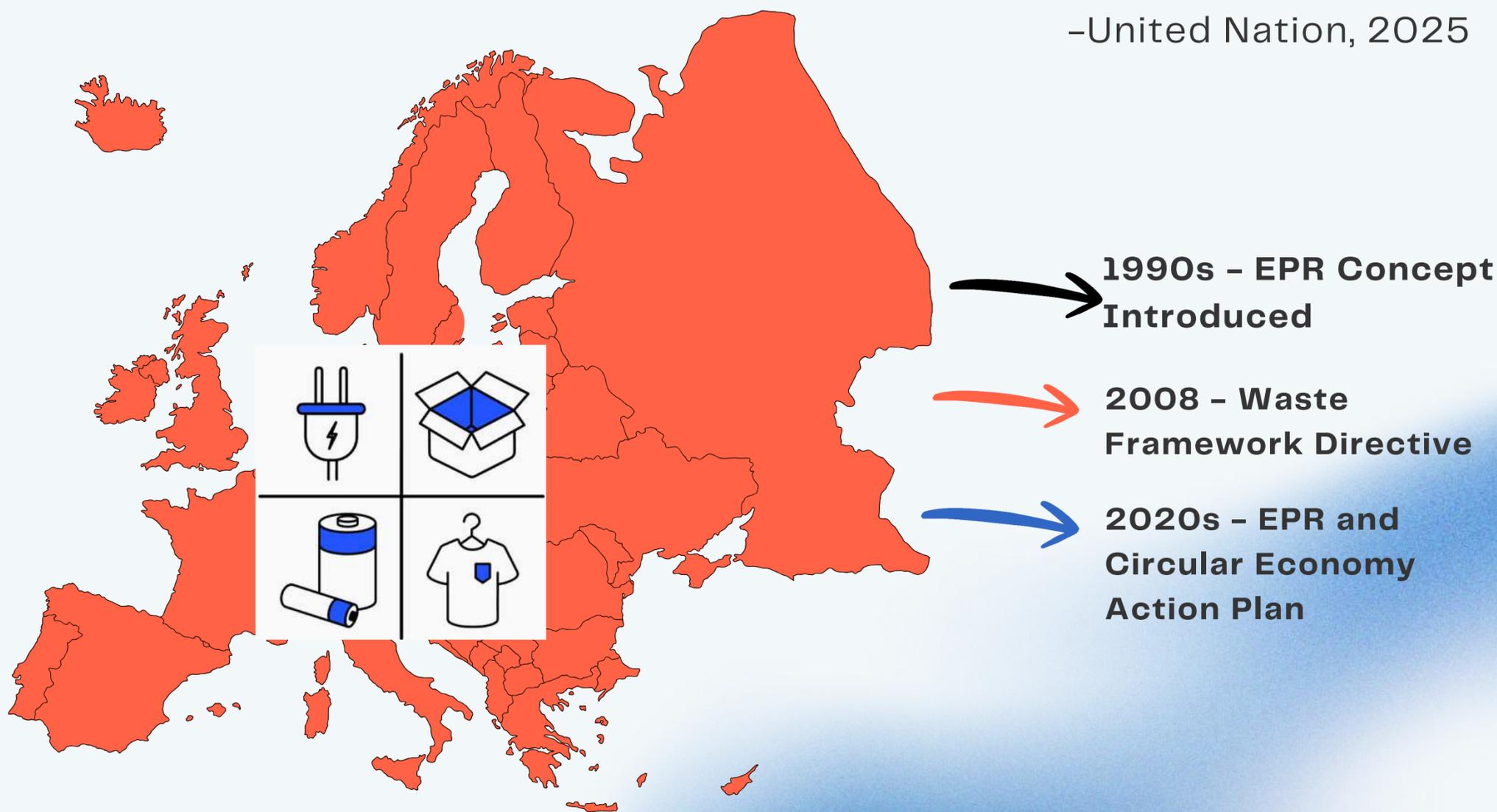
- Who is **responsible for sustainability** when there is no sustainability manager, no compliance team, and no spare time?
- What **risks** are you accepting with your choice?
- Is it fair to expect SMEs to move at the **same speed as large corporations**?

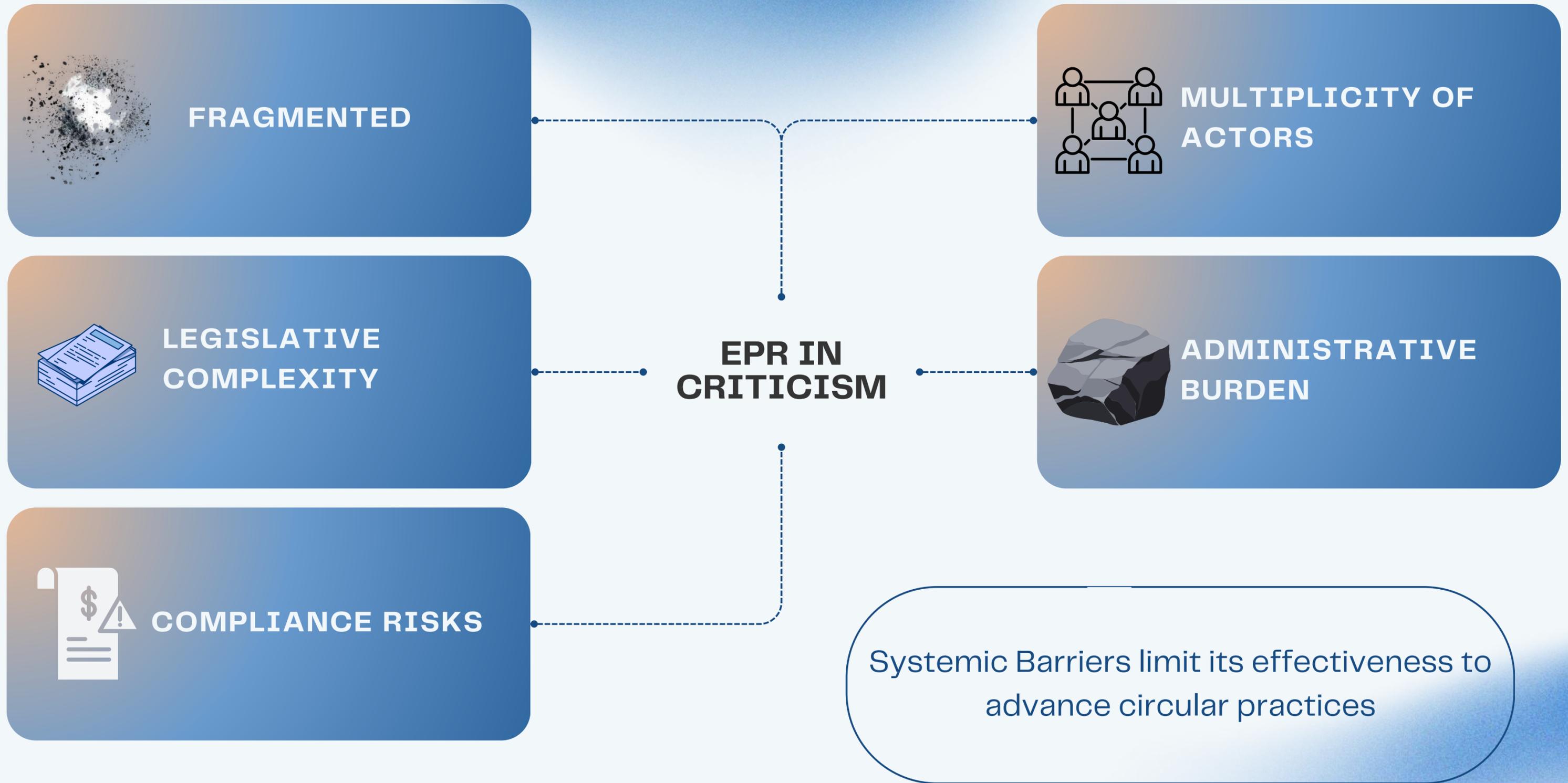
**SUSTAINABILITY  
POLICIES AIM  
HIGH, BUT FOR  
SMES, THE REALITY  
IS MORE COMPLEX**

# EXTENDED PRODUCER RESPONSIBILITY

“EXTENDED PRODUCER RESPONSIBILITY (EPR) IS A POLICY APPROACH THAT MAKES PRODUCERS RESPONSIBLE FOR THEIR PRODUCTS ALONG THE ENTIRE LIFECYCLE, INCLUDING AT THE POST-CONSUMER STAGE”

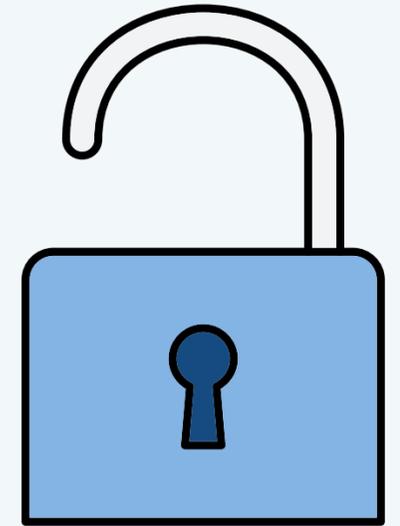
-United Nation, 2025





# BUT IT DOESN'T HAVE TO BE LIKE THIS

THE TRANSFORMATIVE POTENTIAL OF SUSTAINABILITY POLICIES CAN BE UNLOCKED THROUGH THE RIGHT TOOLS.



A **digital compliance platform** replaces fragmented compliance work with one shared, structured system.



Capstone Project Stakeholder

# ForSURE

For Sustainable Responsibility

ForSURE  
For Sustainable Responsibility

Overview

Catalog

Orders

Report

History

Analyse



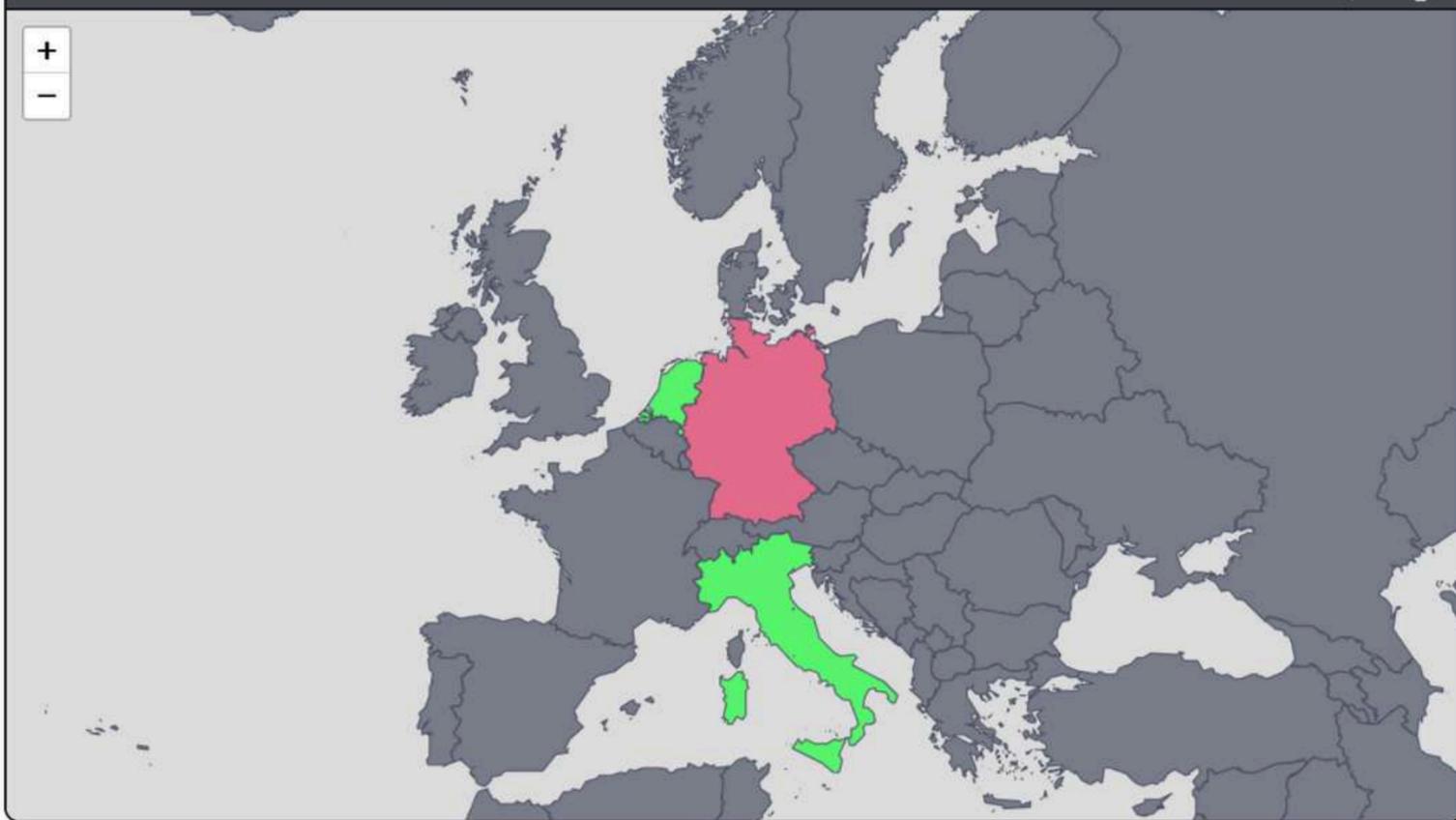
## Deadlines

DE		Batteries	28.10.2025
DE		WEEE	28.10.2025
DE		Batteries	28.11.2025
DE		WEEE	28.11.2025
DE		Batteries	28.12.2025

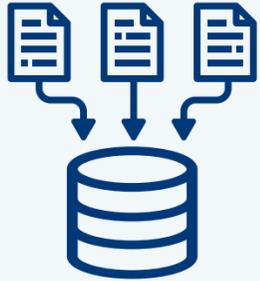
## Information

Status	Country	Report Type	PRO
	DE		ERP Recycling
	DE		GRS
	DE		EAR

## EPR Map



# AUTOMATED EPR REPORTING SOFTWARE FEATURES



Automated Data  
Collection



Deadline  
Management



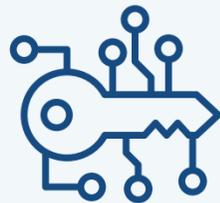
Customized  
Compliance



Automated EPR  
Reporting



API  
Integration



Enhanced Access  
Management



Data Visualization  
and Analysis



Audit  
Trail

# COMPLIANCE TODAY, TRANSFORMATION TOMORROW ?

**“How can digital compliance platforms support SMEs in achieving sustainable outcomes by transforming regulatory reporting from a compliance task into a driver of measurable sustainability performance and stakeholder collaboration?”**

Overarching research question -  
Capstone Challenge 2025/2026



**Behavioral Science perspective (Zanazzi)**

**Economic-organizational perspective (Wortelmann)**

**Socio-organizational perspective (Casazza)**

**Ethical and legitimacy perspective (Moukala)**

# METHODOLOGY



## Literature Review

Semi-structured, concept-driven literature review focused on key sustainability and EPR related concepts and their interrelations



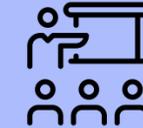
## Semi-structured Interviews

17 semi-structured Interviews : Academics, SMEs, EPR experts, Software Providers and Buyers and ForSURE



## Surveys

18 Surveys collected among e-bike owners in the Netherlands



## Participatory Action Research Workshop

60min activity with 4 participants



## Comparison Analysis

Comparison Analysis of Digital Compliance Software Features

# RESULTS

## ■ BEHAVIORAL SCIENCE

SMEs engage more effectively when EPR information is framed in an **economic competence enhancing and practical way**

## ■ STRATEGIC ECONOMIC

Digital Compliance Platforms as key tools for **operational efficiency** of compliance and **strategic capability**, based on internal data and external alignment capacity

## ■ SOCIO-ORGANIZATIONAL

**Fragmentation and lack of shared interpretive spaces** within EPR systems.

## ■ ETHICAL AND LEGITIMACY

**Growing legitimacy pressures** require SMEs to demonstrate **credible sustainability performance**, digital compliance platforms can support this by providing reliable EPR data

# PRODUCTS

## BROCHURE

It functions as both:

- an **educational entry point** for SMEs unfamiliar with EPR, and
- a **conversation starter** that structures **initial client interactions** around shared understanding rather than technical reporting alone.



Facilitates **introduction to DCPs** and specifically targets SMEs

## OFFLINE ROUNDTABLE (TEMPLATE)

It aims to:

- create a trusted, in-person space for open and **honest discussion on complex EPR issues**
- brings together **diverse stakeholders** to share **practical, experience-based insights**, and
- support **shared understanding** without forcing consensus



Allows for **knowledge-sharing** and **collaboration**





## WHY OUR RESEARCH IS MEANINGFUL

### Social Sustainability

Simplified DCP compliance enables transparent sustainability communication, reducing greenwashing risks and strengthening local trust

### Environmental Sustainability

By reducing EPR reporting time and costs, DCPs free resources for understanding impacts and taking sustainability action

### Economic Sustainability

DCPs reduce time and administrative effort and help SMEs build useful data capabilities, supporting long-term competitiveness and efficiency

## WHY OUR PRODUCTS ARE MEANINGFUL

### Policy

EPR implementation runs smoother, crucially enabling success of policies and the extension of scope of new regulations and therefore contribute to advancing European circular goals

### Economic

More proactive SME engagement with opportunities of EPR obligation strengthens long-term competitiveness of ForSure as well as of European Businesses

### Social

SMEs become part of the discussion about transition towards more circular practices and reduce their risk of exclusion from markets

### Environmental

More responsible waste mindset and decreased impact of business practices

# WISHES FOR THE FUTURE

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

IMPLEMENTATION & CIRCULAR PRACTICES

## **From Compliance to Capability**

Sustainability policies should not stop at obligation, but support SMEs learning and sustainable transition.

## **From Fragmentation to Shared Understanding**

Digital tools should become spaces for transparency and collaboration, beyond mere reporting activity.

## **From Burden to Opportunity**

When compliance is simplified and meaningful, SMEs should redirect time and resources toward **real circular practices.**

# THANK YOU

ANY QUESTIONS?



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