Public Consultation on the CSDDD Guidelines
Factual summary report

Disclaimer: *This document should be regarded solely as a summary of the contributions made by stakeholders to the public consultation on the CSDDD guidelines. It cannot in any circumstances be regarded as the official position of the Commission or its services. Responses to the consultation activities cannot be considered as a representative sample of the views of the EU population.*

I. Introduction and objectives

The consultation gathered input for Commission guidelines on the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD), through 56 questions in 22 areas and supporting documents.

II. Overview of the respondents

There were 508 responses from 51 countries: 360 from EU Member States (70.9%) and 148 from non-EU countries (29.1%). The largest numbers came from Belgium (86), Germany (73), the Netherlands (44), the United States (41), the United Kingdom (37), France (27), Italy (26) and Spain (21). Belgian entries included European and international organisations.

Stakeholder group	Responses
Business associations and individual businesses	243
Non-governmental organisations	130
Other respondents	55
Individuals, academia and international organisations	37
Trade unions and workers	33
Public authorities	10

Of 117 businesses, 90 were large and 27 SMEs.

III. Summary of the results

Percentages cover closed questions, with denominators stated. Open-text findings record reported views without quantifying support.

Policies and risk management (Q1). Responses addressed integration into existing systems, flexibility, coherence with EU rules, board and senior management oversight and worker involvement.

Human rights and environmental impacts (Q2–Q3). Respondents requested examples and clarity on covered rights, addressing for example labour rights, living wages and income, rights to land, non-discrimination, impacts on indigenous peoples, water, climate and other pollution. They cited the importance of contextual indicators and of combined information sources.

Identification and information sources (Q4–Q9). Under Q9 about useful due diligence source or methods, stakeholder engagement was selected by 242 respondents (47.6%); media, NGO or independent reports by 200 (39.4%); complaints by 192 (37.8%); site visits by 151 (29.7%); and industry or multi-stakeholder initiatives by 150 (29.5%) out of 508 responses. Multiple answers were allowed.

Open-text replies described combining supplier data, audits, interviews, complaints, reports, traceability tools, workers voice tools and stakeholder engagement for scoping, in-depth assessments and identifying indirect partners. Possible obstacles under certain circumstances included data restrictions, access to information, restricted civic space and retaliation. In terms of possible wider use of public administration data, respondents pointed to public inspection, court, customs and environmental data held by the public sector.

Risk factors and digital tools (Q10–Q14). Responses referred to international databases, risk indices and government data, discussing the need to combine risk factors. Restricted civic space should be considered as a risk factor. As regards digital tools, the need for interoperability, avoiding duplication, importance of data quality and human control over digital solutions were stressed. The danger of relying on digital tools leading to the exclusion of workers voice and engagement with stakeholders was emphasised. Digital tools should also integrate the voice of affected people. Listed uses for digital tools included value chain mapping, risk screening, risk identification and (satellite) monitoring.

Prioritisation (Q15–Q16). Responses discussed severity, likelihood, the need to prioritise harm that is irremediable, the importance of considering cumulative harm and urgency of action. The need for the prioritisation process to include stakeholder involvement and regular review was raised.

Responsible disengagement (Q17). Awareness of cases where relationships were maintained with a view to avoid even greater harm was reported by 222 respondents (43.7%) out of 508 respondents; 88 out of 508 respondents reported no awareness (17.3%), 198 gave no substantive answer. Comments addressed last-resort disengagement and possible negative consequences for workers (e.g. job loss, wage loss

or reduction, push into informality) and communities (e.g. loss of tax revenue, impairment of essential services).

Purchasing practices, living income and investment (Q18–Q20). Respondents discussed the importance of fair pricing, including living wage and living income, reasonable lead times, incentives for long-term supplier relationships and that the model contract clauses should address this issue. On living income for self-employed workers and smallholders, they reported data gaps and comparability issues, citing benchmarks and the importance of collective bargaining. On investments by in-scope companies, training/capacity building for business partners and upgrade of infrastructure were referred to most.

SME support and remediation (Q21–Q24). Suggested support included training, common templates, reusing data, shared assessment tools, assistance and realistic timelines. Some SME respondents asked for excluding liability transfer through contracts. Remedy topics included the importance of corrective action plans, financial compensation, participation by affected persons in remediation and collaboration by multiple actors in the case of joint causation.

Conflict affected and high-risk areas (Q25–Q27). In Q25 regarding operational challenges in conflict affected and high-risk areas, “Other” was selected by 124 respondents (40.9%, 124/303), limited access to information by 78 (25.7%, 78/303), and stakeholder safety risks by 49 (16.2%, 49/303). For identifying high-risk areas beyond active conflict zones (Q26), 156 selected “Other” (50.2%, 156/311), 69 the need for contextual risk indicators (22.2%, 69/311), and 46 the use of global indices (14.8%, 46/311). Comments covered the need for proper definitions, identification methods and the importance of safety risks.

Information sharing and group arrangements (Q28–Q30). Possible barriers depending on context included trade secrets, confidentiality, competition law, data protection and limitations on data transfers. Respondents discussed collective initiatives, data sharing and other cooperation arrangements. Varying corporate law requirements were referred to as a potential challenge for group due diligence.

Model contractual clauses (Q31–Q35). Respondents requested voluntary risk-based clauses covering shared responsibility between in-scope companies and business partners, cascading, responsible purchasing practices, organising stakeholder engagement at local level while maintaining the responsibility of the in-scope company, the organisation of grievance mechanisms across value chains (namely, where complaints can be filed), monitoring and remedy arrangements and termination safeguards. Other issues raised included jurisdiction clauses, applicable law and liability transfer.

Industry and multi stakeholder initiatives (Q36–Q38). In Q36, the functions of such initiatives that respondents most selected were collaborative leverage (51.0%, 259/508), risk identification (50.8%, 258/508), and stakeholder engagement (46.3%, 235/508). Multiple answers were allowed. Comments addressed the need for worker participation, training, and shared assessments, while stressing the importance of in-scope companies' own responsibilities.

In Q38 about governance challenges of such initiatives, selected challenges included lack of tangible impact (34.3%, 174/508), processes insufficiently adapted to local realities or SME needs (33.9%, 172/508), and inadequate stakeholder engagement (32.7%, 166/508). Other topics were fragmentation, lack of interoperability and the need for independence.

The Commission's facilitation role in accompanying measures (Q39). Among 338 respondents, 177 selected "Other roles" for the Commission (52.4%), 100 convening best-practice and peer learning (29.6%), and 61 designing new initiatives (18.0%).

Third party verification (Q40–Q42). Responses addressed the need for independence, avoiding conflicts of interest, the role of accreditation, requirements for competence, local and sector knowledge, worker involvement and transparency of results (disclosure).

Stakeholder engagement and stakeholder information (Q43–Q49). Respondents discussed stakeholder engagement through unions, global framework agreements, civil society, trusted local organisations, multistakeholder initiatives and worker-voice tools. Discussed topics included information access, power imbalances, confidentiality and protection against retaliation. Responses identified indigenous peoples, informal workers, women and migrants among vulnerable groups requiring tailored outreach and support.

Supervisory authorities (Q50–Q56). Responses addressed the need for consistent enforcement in cross-border chains, authority expertise, sufficient resources, independence and coordination. Evidence discussed included corporate records and external verification. The importance of recognising good-faith efforts and the need for substantive assessment beyond formal compliance was raised.

Penalty topics included how to operationalise penalty factors such as prioritisation, the extent of remedial action, financial gains or losses avoided and gravity, nature and duration of the infringement. Requests covered a common EU methodology for penalties, guidance on mitigating and aggravating factors and case examples.

IV. Supporting documents

396 supporting documents were submitted from 28 countries, including reports, guidelines, corporate policies, contract clauses, codes of conduct and position papers, with overlapping categories.

Documents addressed topics such as the need for alignment with the international framework (UN and OECD), coherence with other EU law, proportionate requirements, SME protections, purchasing practices, living wages, worker's voice, collective bargaining, safety and protection against retaliation, and remedies. Environmental topics included climate, biodiversity, water, deforestation and pollution.

Other topics included gender issues, disability, children's rights, indigenous peoples, forced labour and trafficking. Requests covered sector examples and taking into account experience under German and French due diligence laws.

V. Methodological information

The analysis included 69 responses in 15 languages other than English. The analysis used descriptive statistics and thematic review with expert-reviewed AI assistance.

Non-substantive answers and attachment referrals were excluded from question-level counts. Coordinated submissions were retained. Supporting materials were screened for relevance and duplication.