

Responsible Sourcing across Industries (RSaI) Platform

Common solutions to common challenges

I. Societal Challenge

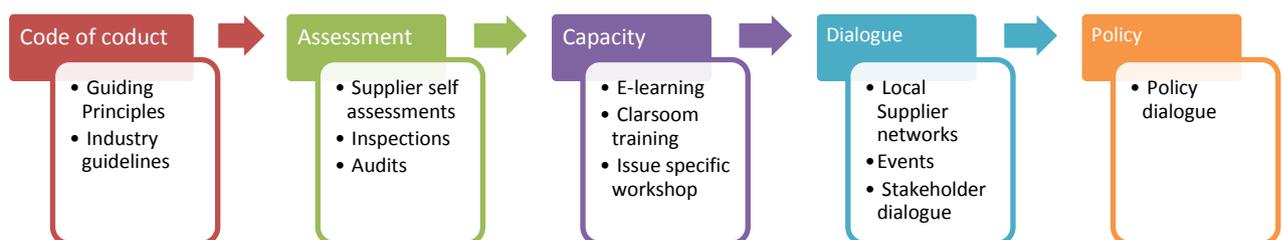
Value chains are becoming increasingly complex, difficult to manage and interconnected, presenting businesses with ethical, social and environmental challenges that go beyond their operations. In an effort to address these and unlock the value of enhanced long term supplier collaboration, businesses have created sectorial or multi-stakeholder sustainability initiatives. A lot of work has been done to reach a satisfactory level of compliance, but much more needs to be done to reach real impact and to move towards sustainable value chains.

II. Background

In June 2015, CSR Europe organised two events that focused on how to embed sustainability across value chains. The first event was a closed meeting that brought together sector initiatives to exchange knowledge on **the impact of sectorial approaches to responsible sourcing**. The second event was a multi-stakeholder conference, open to companies, EU representatives, NGOs, academia etc. to discuss about the shift from **compliance to innovation**. Nine months later, the first meeting of the Responsible Sourcing across Industries Platform took place in Brussels, **bringing together eleven participants representing nine different sectors**, to discuss common challenges and explore the potential for collaboration, as well as conclude on the necessity of greater EU policy support for cross-sectorial collaboration. These events have highlighted a number of **commonalities between sectors**.

III. Commonalities Between Sectors

1. Processes and tools: similar processes and tools are used by all industries



2. The limitations of audits: audits and assessments are essential tools for businesses to assess risk in value chain. Audits, however, can detect a problem but cannot solve it. So far, businesses put a lot of effort in building efficient audit schemes, but less on building capacities. This leads to a **weakening of the audit process itself**, while social, ethical and environmental **issues in value chains** persist or worsen.

3. The necessity of building capacity: it is equally important to not only have a code of conduct, an assessment or an audit but also to invest in building both internal (buyer) and external (supplier) capability. At internal level, companies should focus on embedding sustainability in daily procurement activities and on developing the required skills among buyers. At external level, companies should work with their suppliers to build the capacity of supplier to meet sustainability standards and requirements.

4. Value chain sustainability key issues: industries face the same issues along the value chain: business integrity, human rights and environmental protection. Issues such as forced labour, conflict minerals, pollution, corruption etc. are not specific to a sector, but are more national or regional in nature.

5. The importance of good policy: often policies that facilitate or enhance the efforts of sustainability initiatives can be instrumental to their success. It is imperative to understand how policies facilitate or limit the possibility for sustainability and collaboration in value chains, and work towards creating a positive policy environment.

IV. Platform Objective

Responsible Sourcing across Industries (RSaI) is a Platform that, based on the above observations, brings together sector initiatives and their members, offering them a space to share experiences, challenges, best practices and identify synergies to tackle common issues in value chains. Specifically, through the RSaI Platform, sector initiatives can:

- Share experiences on managing value chain sustainability and learn from peers
- Explore practical alignment and collaboration on standards, tools, and specific topics and issues
- Discuss and propose policies that promote and facilitate sustainable value chains

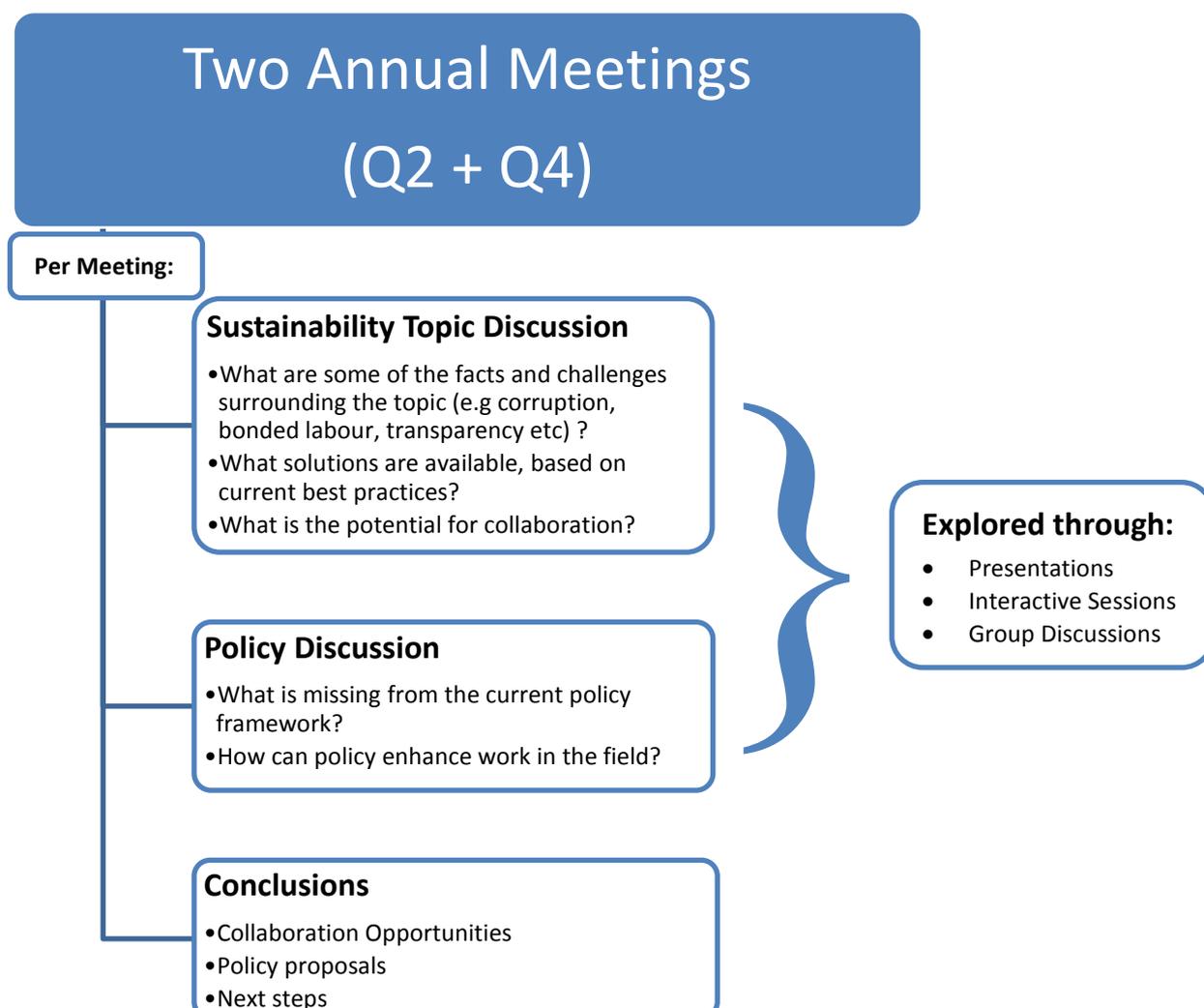
V. Platform Structure

The RSaI Platform welcomes any sector initiatives willing to meet, discuss, share and jointly explore the challenges and opportunities facing their value chains, with the aim of discovering how collaboration can help strengthen the impact of their work. For certain activities of the Platform, such as webinars, the participation of the members of the participating initiatives is also welcome. All Platform meetings and activities are organised and facilitated by CSR Europe.

VI. Platform Activities

1. Meetings

Each year, the Platform will meet twice to address the sustainability topics (e.g corruption, bonded labour, transparency, deforestation etc.) of highest interest and importance for its members. The meetings will focus on finding potential solutions to these issues and on discussing and proposing policies that CSR Europe should further promote at European level. Meetings will take a roundtable format, with key presentations on challenges and potential solutions. The below graph outlines the structure and content of these meetings further:



2. Webinars

Drawing from the lessons learned, conclusions, and policy suggestions of the meetings, the Platform will organise webinars scheduled to complement each of the biannual meetings. The webinars will be facilitated by CSR Europe and will be open to members of all initiatives involved in the Platform.

3. Policy Discussions

CSR Europe will leverage the policy proposals to further pursue, together with other key actors, the sustainability agenda of global value chains at European level. Our position as a leading partner of the European Institutions in defining the European CSR agenda, and our years of experience in negotiation, and our pro-active collaboration with EU leaders and stakeholders makes us a strong catalyst for positive policy change in this area.

4. Seminars, Workshops, and Conferences

Based on the outcomes of the meetings and policy discussions, as well as the popularity of webinars, CSR Europe will also organise *ad hoc* seminars, workshops and conference, which will further explore, at a more practical level, the sustainability topics addressed.