

Understanding Digital Reputation in SMEs

A Transnational Perspective from the RepUtAction Analysis Report

The growing importance of corporate reputation in contemporary business environments has led to increased attention on how micro-enterprises and start-ups manage their public image and stakeholder relationships. In this context, the RepUtAction initiative focuses on strengthening the capacity of small businesses to strategically manage their reputation, recognising its direct impact on market positioning, trust-building, and long-term sustainability.

A transnational analysis (<https://reputation-project.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/RepUtAction-Transnational-Analysis-Report-EN.pdf>)

conducted within the framework of the project provides valuable insights into how corporate reputation is perceived and addressed across different European contexts. Drawing on data collected from Italy, Greece, and Portugal, the study explores key challenges, skill gaps, and expectations among small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), start-ups, and business support organisations. This comparative perspective allows for a better understanding of both shared trends and country-specific characteristics in reputation management practices.

The findings highlight that, despite the acknowledged importance of corporate reputation, many SMEs still face significant limitations in terms of skills, awareness, and strategic planning. In particular, gaps are observed in areas such as digital communication, stakeholder engagement, and the ability to systematically monitor and manage online presence. These challenges underline the need for more structured and targeted educational interventions, especially within vocational education and training (VET) systems. The analysis also emphasises the importance of adopting a comprehensive and strategic approach to reputation management. Factors such as product and service quality, innovation capacity, effective digital communication, and corporate social responsibility emerge as key determinants shaping how businesses are perceived by their stakeholders. In an increasingly competitive and globalised market, these elements are closely interconnected and contribute significantly to the overall credibility and resilience of SMEs. Methodologically, the study is based on a structured data collection process that examined awareness levels, existing practices, and perceived challenges related to corporate reputation. This approach enabled the identification of both common patterns and contextual differences across the participating countries. Such a transnational perspective is particularly valuable, as it supports the development of more adaptable and relevant training approaches that can respond to diverse economic and educational environments.

Overall, the analysis provides a solid foundation for understanding the current state of corporate reputation management among SMEs and highlights the urgent need to integrate relevant competences into training and support mechanisms. By addressing identified skill gaps and promoting a more strategic mindset, educational initiatives can play a crucial role in enhancing the competitiveness and sustainability of small businesses in the digital era.