

## What is responsible innovation?

Innovating without having a negative impact on the planet is a major challenge we have to face, and one that the concept of responsible innovation aims to meet. But what does it mean?

### Definition

Innovation refers to the introduction onto the market of a product or process that is **new or considerably improved on those that preceded it**. Thus, by its very nature, innovation is disruptive, and can upset established norms and **open up new avenues to progress**.

However, unlike "classic" innovation, responsible (or sustainable) innovation takes a **more holistic approach, seeking to address ecological and societal challenges in an integrated way**. Beyond simply proposing innovative products or processes, it **also considers the impact of these innovations on the planet, society and future generations**.

Guide GCI

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## How does responsible innovation meet the challenges of sustainable development?

Sustainable development (SD) aims to **meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs**. It is based on three essential pillars: economic, ecological and social. Responsible innovation thus plays a key role in enabling **development that is economically efficient, socially equitable and ecologically sustainable**.

This type of innovation focuses on **creating solutions that integrate sustainability criteria**, minimize negative consequences, promote social inclusion and contribute to solving global problems such as climate change, planetary degradation, social inequalities and respect for human rights.

By integrating these ethical dimensions right from the design stage and throughout the life cycle of products, technologies or processes, **sustainable**

sustainable practices, for example, or through projects designed to improve working conditions for employees.

Sustainable innovation thus offers a **proactive approach to meeting the challenges of sustainable development**, initiating a transition to more ethical processes, and guaranteeing the long-term viability of companies that adopt this approach. You can call on a GCI [carbon balance expert](#)(a company created by [TK'BLUE](#)) to support you in this process.

## Improve your CSR strategy by adopting a responsible innovation policy

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) criteria focus primarily on **sustainable development, diversity and well-being in the workplace**. It therefore makes sense to **reconcile CSR and sustainable innovation**, as they share **common objectives**. But how can the two be effectively combined to achieve optimum results?

Here are some key actions you can take to get there:

- ✓ **Assess your impact:** the first key step is to evaluate the areas in which your company has the greatest impact, in order to identify the opportunities for improvement available to make your practices more sustainable.
- ✓ **Set targets:** once you've completed the previous step, it's time to set ambitious, achievable goals that will encourage you to maintain consistency in the actions you take.
- ✓ **Incorporate sustainability criteria into your corporate culture:** to achieve your goals, it's essential to integrate sustainability criteria into every one of your practices. Every project and every policy must be designed to meet these criteria. Raising your employees' awareness of these issues, through training for example, is an integral part of this step.
- ✓ **Collaborate with stakeholders:** whether your customers, suppliers or business partners, it's essential to involve them too in your transition to more ethical practices. Indeed, a collaborative approach will enable you to better understand and anticipate the expectations of each stakeholder, while engaging them in turn in this transition.
- ✓ **Track your progress:** the final step is to track your progress so that you can compare your evolution over the years and identify actions to improve so that your company achieves the highest possible level of performance and responsibility.

These steps apply to both **your CSR strategy and your sustainable innovation policies**. They enable you to take stock of **your company's practices** and create a positive synergy between these two approaches, leading to optimal results in terms of sustainable development. This not only

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## How can you apply responsible innovation to your corporate policy?

While the concept of sustainable innovation may still seem vague, here are a few ideas to help you apply this concept within your company and **begin your transition**.

### Innovation through the circular economy

The **circular economy** is about **producing goods and services in a sustainable** way, by limiting the consumption and wastage of resources and the production of waste. The aim is to move from a throwaway society based on a linear economy (extract, manufacture, consume, throw away) to a circular economic model.

You can apply this model to your company by taking the following actions:

- 👉 **Sustainable sourcing:** which takes into account the ecological and social consequences of the resources used, in particular those associated with their extraction and exploitation.
- 👉 **Eco-design:** taking into account the ecological impact of a product or technology throughout its entire life cycle, and integrating it right from the design stage.
- 👉 **Extending the useful life of products:** by repairing, selling or buying second-hand, donating, reusing and reusing.
- 👉 **Improving waste prevention, management and recycling,** including reinjecting and reusing waste materials in the economic cycle.

These steps enable you to innovate while significantly reducing your impact on the planet. The circular economy is therefore **a key model to apply if you want to remain competitive in the marketplace while adopting an ethical approach**.

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## Innovation through LCA

Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) is an essential tool that **perfectly complements the circular economy approach**. It enables us to **assess the ecological impact of technologies, equipment and products at every stage of their life cycle, from design to end-of-life**. By integrating LCA into your approach, you can innovate ethically by incorporating eco-design principles into the manufacture of technologies and products, making them more responsive to the challenges of sustainable development.

What's more, LCA will enable you to make informed decisions in terms of **materials selection, manufacturing processes, resource use and waste management**, promoting the reduction of environmental impacts over the entire product life cycle. Thanks to this approach, you can optimize the sustainability of your products and contribute to the transition towards a circular, planet-friendly economy.

## The challenges and opportunities created by responsible innovation

Sustainable innovation is a process rich in opportunities, but not without its challenges. Let's take a closer look here:

### Challenges

#### Application complexity

Applying responsibility criteria to the innovation process can be complex. **Many aspects need to be taken into account, such as ecological, social, ethical and economic repercussions, while seeking a balance between these different elements**. It's a process that requires in-depth research, specific management and time to be carried out properly.

#### Financial resources

## ● Opportunities

### Greater attractiveness

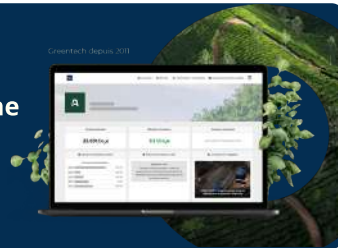
Adopting a sustainable innovation policy enables us to **meet the expectations of consumers and investors**, who are increasingly looking for companies committed to greener practices.

### Resilience to future changes

Responsible innovation also offers greater resilience in the face of current and future changes, such as climate disruption, dwindling fossil fuel resources, and environmental regulations. By adopting a sustainable innovation approach, **companies and industry are well positioned to face the challenges** of the future.

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## How can we encourage companies to take part in responsible innovation?

Sustainable innovation is a **key and growing issue**. It is therefore essential that more and more players and organizations participate, so that as many people as possible can benefit from these technological solutions, and begin their **transition to more sustainable practices**.

### Tech for Good

In 2020, in response to current societal and ecological challenges, the French government launched the **Tech for Good** initiative to **"define development models that put technology and digital technology at the service of humanity"**. Stakeholders are invited to work in 5 key areas:

- 📁 The future of work ;
- 🤝 Social and economic inclusion;
- 🌿 Environmental protection.

For example, the section devoted to the **ecological** crisis "promotes the reduction of companies' environmental footprint in line with the Paris climate agreement, as well as technological solutions to achieve this".

In the future, this type of initiative will become increasingly common, and will play an essential role in promoting sustainable innovations and **Green Tech**, the benefits of which can be felt on a large scale, in France and elsewhere. **The transition to technologies incorporating sustainability principles is therefore fundamental.**

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