

Call for Papers
Journal for Social Economy and Common Welfare (Z'GuG)

Special issue 1/2026
“ESG reporting and management in public and social economy enterprises”

With the adoption of the European Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD) (European Parliament and European Council 2022), the number of private-law limited companies that must report on their sustainability issues has expanded considerably. This also affects public and social economy enterprises providing services of general interest, be they limited liability companies providing network-based infrastructure services or social and health services. Prior to the European Commission's Omnibus I proposal in February 2025 (European Commission 2025), the CSRD stipulated that all large corporations that meet two of the three size criteria are required to report from the 2025 financial year at the latest: at least 250 employees, a balance sheet total of more than EUR 25 million and revenues of more than EUR 50 million. In February 2025, the European Commission issued the Omnibus I proposal (European Commission 2025). It includes, among others aspects, the proposal of increasing the employee threshold to 1,000 employees, reducing the scope of reporting, changes in auditing requirements and postponing the reporting to the financial year 2027 for the 2025 first implementers.

A central element of the CSRD is the principle of double materiality. This serves to identify key company-specific topics for the environmental, social and governance (ESG)-reporting in a structured stakeholder engagement process. In the context of double materiality, it is necessary not only to assess the environmental and social impacts of a corporation's activities on its financial success (outside-in perspective), but also the impacts of its business activities on the environment and society (inside-out perspective). The double materiality also requires from reporting companies to identify risks and opportunities in connection with sustainable development and to adapt their internal management systems accordingly.

With the European Sustainability Reporting Standards (ESRS) (EFRAG 2024a and 2024b; KMPG 2024), the number of sustainability reporting-relevant narrative and quantitative data points has increased tremendously. Additionally, sustainability reporting was reorganized along the ESG-dimensions. So far, the discussion on ESG-reporting has been dominated by critical voices, which criticize the high time and financial expenditure in view of the many data points. ESG-reporting may also be an opportunity to make the specific contributions of companies providing services of general interest more visible to a broader circle of key stakeholder groups. By doing that the risk of being accused of greenwashing could also be reduced. ESG-reporting is a further instrument of public accountability for providers of services of general interest (Greiling 2021; Greiling/Bauer 2023).

In the limited liability companies a systematic linking of ESG-issues with the corporate strategy and the development of corresponding internal control instruments as part of ESG-management is necessary. In addition to being anchored in the corporate culture,

strategic and operational planning, cybernetic controls in form budgeting and key performance indicators, ESG-management also requires the establishment of appropriate governance and organizational structures as part of the administrative controls (Malmi/Brown 2008; Lueg/Radlach 2026). So far, linking the ESG-performance to incentives is underdeveloped in public and social economy enterprises. Another pillar of ESG-management is the development of an appropriate risk management for ESG-matters.

Against this background, the editors of this Z'GuG thematic focus invite you to submit your (empirical) contribution, that is thematically dedicated to one of the listed topics:

- Status and perspectives of ESG-reporting (with and without a sector focus)
- ESG-reporting as a necessary evil or as an opportunity for the green transformation
- Status and perspectives of ESG-management (with and without a sector focus)
- Approaches to implementing an ESG-risk management
- Methodological challenges of the double materiality analysis.

Publication modalities and schedule

Notes on formatting and submission	<u>Z'GuG - Journal Nomos Verlag</u>
Language	Papers in German and English will be accepted.
Deadline for submission	July 28, 2025
1st review round	Until September 15, 2025
Resubmissions and 2nd review round	By October 25 at the latest, re-evaluation and resubmission by December 10, 2025
Final decision	December 10, 2025
Publication	First Quarter 2026

If you have any questions, please also contact: weigner@wiso.uni-koeln.de

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