



CASE

EKONEWS

“**Building Green B2B Media: Helping Businesses Meet Sustainability Goals**”

STUDY

IN SHORT

EkoneWS identified a major gap among Czech medium-sized companies preparing for ESG reporting under the EU's Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD). To address this, it developed a B2B subscription-based platform featuring expert analysis, legislative updates, best practices, and access to ESG specialists — enabling companies to better understand and meet sustainability requirements.

ABOUT THE NEWS OUTLET

Founded in 2020 by journalists Martina Patočková and Veronika Němcová, EkoneWS is a Czech independent media outlet focused on sustainability and business innovation. Its mission is to promote environmentally responsible business practices while supporting transparent journalism. By bridging corporate interests with ecological awareness, EkoneWS provides practical tools, stories, and analysis for sustainability seeking organizations.



PROJECT OBJECTIVES

EkoneWS aimed to create a self-sustaining, subscription-based B2B platform offering high-value ESG insights to help businesses comply with new EU sustainability regulations while diversifying its own revenue streams.



IMPLEMENTED SOLUTIONS

Applying design thinking, EkoneWS conducted user research with ESG managers, tested pricing models, and refined its paywall content. It built a platform combining expert analysis, FAQs, and consulting access — designed around users' evolving sustainability needs.

WHY THIS PROJECT?

As a young, independent newsroom without major investors, Ekonews needed a stable income source beyond advertising. The new EU sustainability legislation created a timely opportunity to offer specialized, subscription-based ESG content to Czech businesses seeking clarity on compliance. This approach served dual goals — helping companies navigate regulation while ensuring Ekonews' long-term financial sustainability. By aligning its editorial mission with market demand, Ekonews positioned itself as both a trusted knowledge hub and a viable business model for independent, impact-driven journalism.

HOW DID APPLYING DESIGN THINKING PRINCIPLES HELP?

Design thinking guided Ekonews through an evidence-based development process. The team began by interviewing 50 ESG and sustainability professionals, uncovering their most urgent needs — clear legal summaries, best practices, and expert commentary. Prototypes of the platform were shaped around this feedback. Iteration and testing allowed rapid refinement of features and pricing. Continuous user engagement through surveys and meetings helped the outlet evolve the platform in real time. This methodology turned abstract business needs into actionable editorial strategies rooted in empathy and data.

DID EKONEWS' APPROACH CHANGE ENGAGEMENT WITH ITS AUDIENCE IN ANY WAY?

Yes. Launching a subscription-based ESG platform allowed Ekonews to form deeper relationships with its professional readers. Instead of passive consumption, the new model fostered dialogue between journalists and sustainability experts. Corporate users began reaching out with questions and feedback, influencing future content. This two-way communication strengthened Ekonews' authority in ESG reporting and built trust among businesses facing complex regulatory challenges. Early feedback suggests that users appreciate having a reliable, Czech-language resource for sustainability information, solidifying Ekonews' role as a bridge between media and enterprise.

WHAT CHALLENGES DID EKONEWS ENCOUNTER AND HOW DID IT ADDRESS THEM?

Ekonews faced major uncertainty when the EU temporarily relaxed CSRD rules, reducing its potential client base. The outlet quickly pivoted — narrowing focus to affected firms and highlighting exclusive ESG insights. Another challenge was pricing perception: some clients hesitated to pay for journalism. Ekonews countered this through transparent communication, emphasizing that a daily subscription costs roughly one euro — a small price for expert guidance. These adaptations proved essential for maintaining credibility and relevance amid shifting legislation and market expectations.

HOW WAS EKONEWS' PROJECT RECEIVED BY ITS AUDIENCE?

The subscription model has been well-received, overall. Most readers recognize the value of supporting independent journalism. Some corporate users did question the price, prompting EkoneWS to proactively communicate the value proposition, explaining that access to expert ESG content costs about one euro per day.

WHAT INSIGHTS OR LESSONS DID EKONEWS GAIN FROM THIS PROJECT?

Flexibility and continuous user engagement were key. EkoneWS learned to adapt content strategy based on regulatory changes and audience input. Surveys and direct communication revealed that transparency in pricing and purpose encourages loyalty. Another major takeaway was the value of tailoring B2B journalism — balancing expert depth with accessible language. The project also reinforced that sustainable monetization isn't only about paywalls but about creating meaningful, data-backed services that fulfill tangible needs in the marketplace.

WHAT DOES EKONEWS PLAN ON DOING NEXT?

EkoneWS plans to further enhance its B2B ESG platform by adding more case studies, expert Q&As, and a series of industry-specific webinars. It will also launch EcoHelpdesk — a consumer-focused sustainability platform aimed at younger audiences — to expand reach and brand awareness. The outlet intends to strengthen data analysis to refine pricing models and test cross-promotional opportunities between business and consumer segments. By combining journalistic integrity with entrepreneurial innovation, EkoneWS is setting a new example for sustainable media in the Czech Republic.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD EKONEWS GIVE TO OTHER JOURNALISTS OR ORGANISATIONS CONSIDERING A SIMILAR PATH?

Start with research. Understand what the audience wants, what they are willing to pay for, and continuously test your assumptions through feedback loops. For paid offerings, tiered pricing and added-value features, such as branded content or podcast appearances for companies, can be useful. EkoneWS also recommends maintaining open access to paid content within subscribed organizations, which can boost overall readership early in the model's life cycle.
