



# SDG Barometer Belgium 2018

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**Baseline insights on the engagement  
of organizations with the Sustainable  
Development Goals**

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# In memoriam: Kofi Annan





## Kofi Annan

1938-2018

Former Secretary-General  
of the United Nations

**"We clearly have an ambitious agenda ahead of us, but I am confident that we can turn aspiration into action and build a more prosperous and sustainable world. We are not asking corporations to do something different from their normal business; we are asking them to do their normal business differently."**

# Foreword by the Belgian Minister of Sustainable Development





## Foreword by the Belgian Minister of Sustainable Development

Dear reader,

In your hands is the first edition of the Belgian SDG barometer. An analysis of the results of an extensive survey of companies and organisations this summer has provided us for the first time with a clear view of the way in which Belgium is working towards the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals.

The SDGs, which are part of the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, were endorsed by all 193 member states in September 2015. Belgium has undertaken to achieve the 17 goals and 169 sub-goals by 2030.

And that is a major challenge. Agenda 2030 reflects the need for change. The goals must bring about the transformation to a more sustainable world and society. A world in which our planet, people, prosperity and peace for all are central.

To achieve this sustainable world, close cooperation is necessary between governments, businesses, trade unions, NGOs and all other stakeholders in society, including citizens. This implies that everyone will need to adapt in order to work in partnership, without losing sight of their individual identity.

The results of this first SDG barometer show that we are on the right track. Three years after the launch of the sustainable development goals, they are now widely known. They act as a compass, guiding the evolution of our society.

I am therefore delighted to present you the results of the SDG barometer. They show a positive image, but also highlight the fact that the road ahead is long and challenging.

I would like to congratulate everyone who contributed to the SDG barometer, as well as all the organisations which are taking action to achieve the SDGs. I am convinced that, together, we will accomplish the transformation to a sustainable world.

Marie-Christine Marghem  
Minister for Sustainable Development

# A word from the deans





**Steven de Haes**

Dean, Antwerp Management School



**Koen Vandembemt**

Dean, Faculty of Business and Economics, University of Antwerp



**Per Agrell**

Dean, Louvain School of Management, UCLouvain

It is with great pleasure and pride that we can present you the first edition of the SDG Barometer in Belgium. This milestone marks the ambitions and the development of sustainability in our country that we have witnessed to grow strongly over the past years. We are particularly pleased to see that the SDG Barometer shows that organizations of all sorts and sizes are actively engaging in sustainability by adopting the SDGs. It shows that organizations recognize the need to integrate performance in the ecological and social domain with economic performance and that they seem to be confident that this combination offers them a way to remain successful in the future. In that sense, we hope that the SDGs offer an additional, powerful way of connecting businesses to their constituents and wider society ever stronger. That, we think, is a hopeful message.

A previous joint effort of our institutions in collaboration with other partners was the development and execution of the CR Barometer, the research project that has paved the way for the SDG Barometer. This time, the research has been gratefully supported by the Federal Institute for Sustainable Development (FIDO) and ING Belgium.

Taking stock in our own institutions, we can say that we are in the process of translating SDGs into our organizational processes and, perhaps more importantly, making the SDGs part of the curriculum of our programs. It is fair to say that we still have quite a way to go, just like many others. However, it is also fair to say that we have already taken many serious steps towards becoming effective SDG ambassadors. We feel that, on this journey, we could become even more effective when we share our experiences, our knowledge, and our networks. We hope that the SDG Barometer is instrumental

in this. As far as we are concerned, a well-known African proverb surely applies here: *If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.*

Having said that, challenges remain, as this report also shows. We want to emphasize that it is important to recognize the need to go both fast and far – and we are convinced that we can do that better when we team up with others, including schools, companies, governments and, of course, our students, professors, and staff.

We hope this report challenges and invites you to continue your journey and also go both fast and far.

# Key takeaways from the SDG Barometer

## SDG awareness is on the rise ...



Not only are the majority of Belgian organizations aware of UN's Sustainable Development Goals, many have already acted on them – often through partnerships.

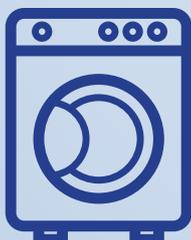
## helping to combat global challenges ...

The key motivation to engage in the SDG are associated with the global challenges the SDGs present and the limited availability of natural resources.

## led by boardroom managers.

If the organization has not engaged in an SDG partnership, the coordination of SDG initiatives tends to be at mid-management level. If it has, the coordinator is more likely to be operating at boardroom level.

## Threats to SDG are rainbow-washing and the resistance



The SDGs are mostly communicated on websites and in annual reports. They have not yet been fully integrated into sustainability reports. The organizations that report on the SDGs on a regular basis are not necessarily those with

the highest levels of engagement, whereas those that have a high level of SDG engagement do not always communicate about it.

## and opening doors to new opportunities.

Other driving factors for Belgian organizations to adopt the SDGs include reputation, market opportunities and a license to operate.

## Belgian organizations establish sustainable strategies ...

The SDGs are mostly used as an additional building block for existing sustainability strategies. Only in a few cases has it been replaced by the SDG strategy.

## and engaging in temporary partnerships ...

As for SDG partnerships, Belgian organizations engage in intrasectoral as well as intersectoral collaborations. They are more often medium-term and project-based than long-term strategic in nature.

## adopting a selection of goals ...

The lion's share of Belgian organizations prioritizes a selection of SDGs rather than embracing the entire set of goals. SDG 8 (Decent work and economic growth) and SDG 3 (Good health and well-being) are the main areas of focus. SDG 2 (Zero hunger) and SDG 14 (Life below water) are often overlooked.

## of internal stakeholders



The main barrier for adopting the SDGs are internal stakeholders rather than (the lack of) financial resources or the SDG framework not bringing organizational benefits.

# The Sustainable Development Goals and the SDG Barometer



## A short introduction to the Sustainable Development Goals – and why they matter for all

### SDGs in a global context

Like many people in both the developed and developing world, Belgian citizens and organizations are confronted with an array of sustainability challenges that are essentially global in nature, even though these challenges manifest themselves nationally and even regionally or locally as well. These challenges include the increase of greenhouse gasses, financial insecurity, the acceleration of biodiversity loss, and rising inequality. Overall, the main challenge of the 21st century will be to live well in an inclusive society, while maintaining a healthy environment and prosperous economy within our planet's boundaries. In order to tackle the most pressing global challenges, the 17 SDGs of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development were adopted by 193 world leaders in September 2015. This new framework has a broader scope than the previous Millennium Development Goals as it brings together ecological, economic and social aspects of sustainable development and defines its reach as the entire world rather than just the less developed countries. The ambitions of the SDGs are described according to five core themes, namely *People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace, and Partnership*. The SDGs have an integrated and global perspective to respond to today's global challenges and they involve all stakeholders, including

companies, governments, and non-governmental organizations.

While Agenda 2030 is a shared, essentially human-focused agenda that requires a collective responsibility and response, it may also provide several benefits for all kinds of organizations and citizens worldwide. In fact, adopting the SDGs holds the promise of increasing the value of companies' activities and products, may provide innovation opportunities for organizations and their stakeholders, and improves relations

*"The Sustainable Development Goals were forged from the most inclusive policy dialogue we have ever organized. Now is the time to mobilize the global business community as never before. Realizing the Sustainable Development Goals will improve the environment for doing business and building markets".*

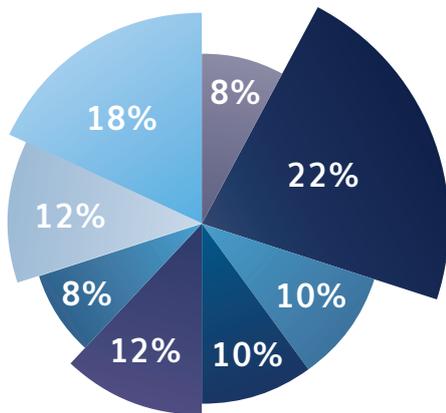
*Former UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon*

between organizations and broader society. Since sustainability is increasingly valued by markets and increasingly in line with the economic interests of organizations, embracing the 2030 Agenda can create efficiency gains, drive innovation, minimize costs, and enhance reputations. Beyond this, engagement with the SDGs can help myriad organizations to be an inspiration to others and create awareness among employees, investors, and customers alike.

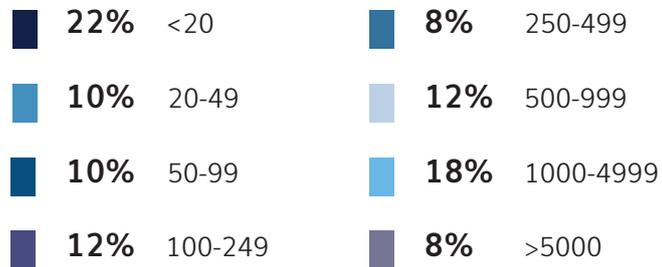
It is expected that governments will further increase their focus on sustainable development in the near future and that they will encourage companies to adopt sustainable practices and integrate these into the reporting cycle (see for instance SDG target 12.6). Organizations could therefore anticipate governmental policies and regulations to ensure resilient, future-proof business models by adopting the SDGs. A lot of organizations – and their constituents – already do so.

### The SDGs in Belgium

Belgium is among the 193 countries that have ratified the SDGs and has been active in promoting these global goals. In 2017, Belgium presented its first evaluation report on the SDGs to the United Nations. This review serves as a benchmark that will aid the further implementation of the SDGs in and by Belgium and that will allow to better identify gaps and consequently commit resources where the SDGs have



Distribution by number of employees



the greatest impact. Still, Belgium faces some major challenges to fulfil several SDGs, including those relating to Responsible consumption and production (SDG 12), Climate action (SDG 13), and Life on land (SDG 15) (Sachs et al., 2016; UN High Level Political Forum, 2017). Several SDG initiatives, coordinated by different actors, are taking place in Belgium to increase SDG awareness and adoption. More information on SDG initiatives in Belgium can be found at [www.sdgs.be/nl/initiatives](http://www.sdgs.be/nl/initiatives).

Against this background, the SDG Barometer should be seen as a new initiative that may not only add to the Belgian efforts on achieving the SDGs, but that also may prompt new or corrected actions in the context of the SDGs through newly generated insights.

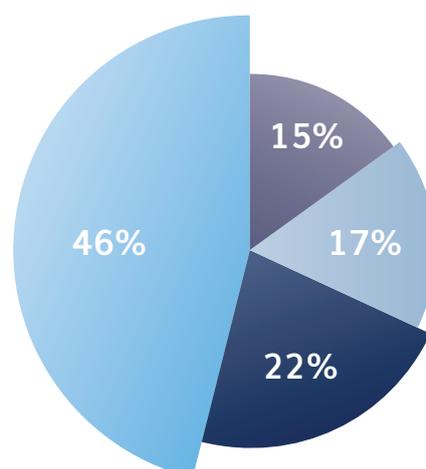
### About the SDG Barometer

The SDG Barometer can be viewed as a follow-up study to the Belgian Corporate Responsibility (CR) Barometer studies held in 2011 and 2015. As such, these studies serve as a reference point

for comparison over time for understanding the roles, responsibilities, and actions of Belgian companies in the field of sustainability. The 2015 CR Barometer pointed out that companies had made substantial progress over the years following the 2011 study. Companies appeared to develop a good understanding of the fact that sustainability poses questions about the responsibilities of companies in society, inviting them to contribute to a better world for everyone, and providing business opportunities at the same time.

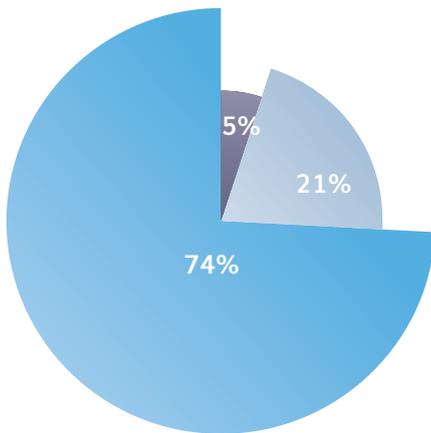
The current SDG Barometer extends this multi-year research endeavor but will concentrate on the SDGs as potential game

changers for viewing and practicing CR in Belgium. While it has become widely known that more and more organizations are supporting the SDGs and are developing their sustainability policy and reporting activities based on the global Agenda 2030, up until today there is no clear overview of the adoption and the implementation of the SDGs by Belgian organizations. In partnership with Louvain School of Management and the University of Antwerp, Antwerp Management School has taken the initiative to develop the SDG Barometer, to investigate the adoption of the SDGs in Belgium. The project is supported by the Federal Institute of Sustainable



Distribution by annual turnover





### Distribution by organization type

- 21% Government
- 74% Business
- 5% Non-governmental organisation

Development and ING Belgium and further developed in partnership with The Shift, Cifal Flanders, VBO/FEB, UWE, VOKA, Essencia, Agoria, Febelfin and Fevia. The overall goal of this SDG Barometer is to obtain insights in to the SDG landscape in Belgium for various types of organizations, including companies, governments and non-governmental organizations. Since this research project is the first national survey on the adoption and implementation of the SDGs, these results may serve as a baseline for further investigations, both within Belgium and abroad.

### Objectives

The SDG Barometer has two main objectives. First, it aims to analyze the current state of affairs regarding the type of engagement, the implementation (progress made so far, challenges), and the communication on the SDGs of Belgian organizations through a quantitative survey methodology. The second objective is to get a better understanding of the application of the SDGs in practice through analyzing the choices organiza-

tions made and investigating the problems they encounter when working with the SDGs. As part of this latter objective, several interviews were held to further inform the survey findings and to develop several brief case descriptions that provide qualitative insights into different aspects of the SDGs in practice. In addition, this report integrates two smaller research projects, namely an analysis of reporting on the SDGs by listed Belgian companies (BEL 20) and an analysis of the SDG engagement of members of a large sustainability-oriented business network (The Shift). These projects were conducted because of the availability of solid data sets.

The SDG Barometer may stimulate and facilitate the adoption of SDGs by companies, contribute to developing new governmental action programs, and provide insights for non-governmental organizations, business networks, and knowledge institutions to spur the effective implementation of the SDGs. The SDG Barometer also gives a signal towards different types of organizations that the progress on the SDGs is

monitored and that SDG adoption is being supported by the Belgian government. As such, this first SDG Barometer should be seen as an invitation for organizations to keep working on the SDGs and explore new practices and approaches.

### Presentation of the results

The results in this report are presented in an aggregate form and hence include the findings for all organizations, including companies, governments, and non-governmental organizations that participated in this survey. Although the presented results provide a snapshot of the 'state of play' when it comes to the engagement of organizations with the SDGs, readers should be aware that the results cannot be perceived as statistically representative. In fact, with the chosen research approach, there is the bias of self-selection: respondents may have participated in the SDG Barometer exactly because it is about the SDGs and because their organizations have a certain SDG engagement. Still, the results point in a certain direction that may capture the actual state of play.

Where possible and relevant, the findings are differentiated for organizational characteristics, but only in (the few) cases where there is a significant difference. In addition, the findings for the Belgian context have been compared to and illustrated with recent international studies on the SDGs and previous research projects such as the Belgian CR



Barometer (2011, 2015) to provide the reader with a broader and richer view and interpretation of the results and add meaningful context to the results of the SDG Barometer. Overall, the findings of the SDG Barometer tend to align with other recent studies, adding to the reliability of the findings.

### Response demographics

A total of 641 organizations across many sectors responded to the SDG Barometer questionnaire. The SDG Barometer questionnaire consisted of several different routes, including an 'exit route' at the beginning of the questionnaire based on organizations' attention for sustainability. This led to roughly one-third of

all respondents taking the 'exit route', meaning the starting point of the SDG Barometer was 409 respondents. Of these 409 respondents, 13% were not aware of the SDGs. The remainder of the respondents consequently went into the actual SDG Barometer. Within the actual SDG Barometer, the additional routings led to different partitions of respondents, meaning the different constituting questions of the SDG Barometer were answered by a varying number of respondents. For reasons of clarity of presentation and overall interpretation, the response numbers for each separate question are not displayed in this report. However, when interpreting the results of the SDG Barometer it should be taken into account that the responses to the various questions reflect subsets

of the entire set of respondents and that the results are not claimed to be statistically representative. Still, it is believed that the results of the SDG Barometer as presented in this report reflect the actual patterns found within organizations.

### Other response characteristics:

- **82%** of the responding organizations have existed for more than 10 years
- **30%** of the responding organizations are family businesses
- **72%** of the responding organizations are located in Flanders, 17% in the Brussels Capital Region, and 11% in Wallonia
- Most of the responding organizations are located in Antwerp (25%), Brussels (17%), West-Flanders (15%) and East-Flanders (14%)
- **18%** of the responding organizations are listed companies



# Survey Results



# 1 SDG adoption and engagement

## 1.1 SDG awareness and action

With virtually all responding organizations (96%) dedicating some or a lot of attention to sustainability (Exhibit 1), 87% are aware of the SDGs (Exhibit 2). Notably 63% of the surveyed organizations are not only aware of the SDGs but also act on the goals either through implementing them in their organization or through partnerships. These findings seem to indicate a higher level of commitment to the SDGs in Belgium than compared to global Exhibits. For instance, international research by Globescan (2016) showed that 66% of organizations still had to adopt the SDGs (Globescan, 2016). On the other hand, 24% of the organizations are aware of the SDGs

but have no knowledge about or action plans for the goals. A mere 13% are not at all aware of the SDGs (Exhibit 2). Despite the noted unawareness or lack of knowledge, there is a strong willingness among respondents (90%) to adopt the SDGs in the future. It should be noted that awareness of the SDGs varies with organization type: the non-governmental sector is more aware of the SDGs compared to the governmental sector and the private sector. Also, the size of organizations matters: family businesses and smaller organizations are generally less aware of the SDGs.

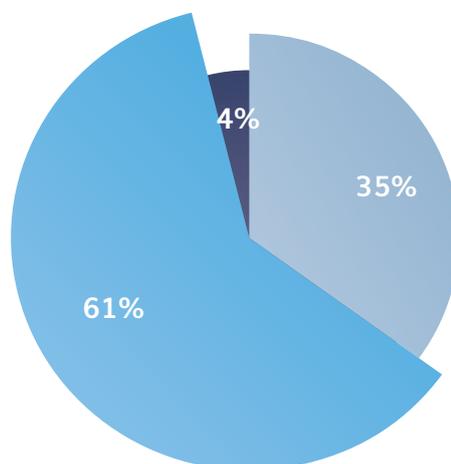
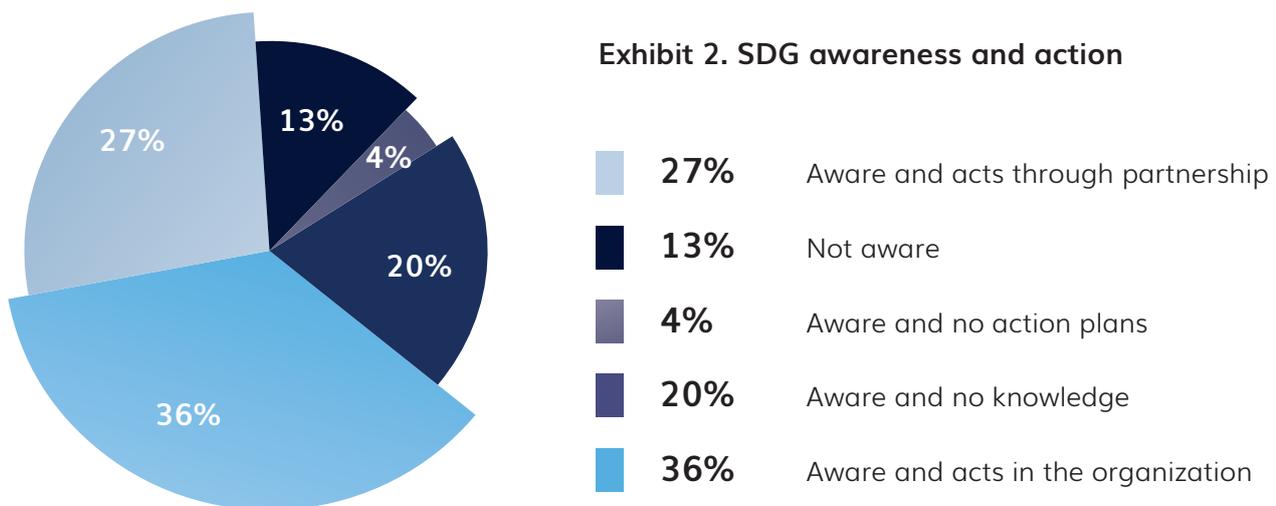


Exhibit 1. Attention for sustainability in general

- **61%** A lot of attention
- **35%** A little
- **4%** No attention



The attention for sustainability and willingness to adopt the SDGs are yet to be fully translated into action on the SDGs. Looking at the type of action that organizations are undertaking on the SDGs, it appears that they mainly set specific objectives on the SDGs (55%), engage in partnerships (40%), design SDG-oriented strategies or programs (36%) and measure their impacts on the SDGs (32%). It should be

noted that this study does not reveal the quality of the action taken by the organization.

Most of the responding organizations (85%) believe that all relevant sustainability topics are reflected in the SDGs. Other themes that were suggested are already included in the goals, either directly or indirectly, such as sustainable tourism, freedom of speech, consumer rights, con-

sumer trust, career management, family planning, civic participation and animal welfare. Also, part of the respondents indicated the need to develop clear and measurable objectives for the SDGs. These results suggest that work is needed to improve awareness and knowledge about the SDGs, since they definitely include specific targets to attain.

## VOKA

VOKA, the Flanders' Chamber of Commerce and Industry, has developed the VOKA Charter for Sustainable Entrepreneurship. This voluntary sustainability scheme offers companies the opportunity to develop a tailored action plan based on the SDGs that is result-oriented and continuously optimized. Every company participating in the

Charter process and signing the Charter commits itself to proactively integrating sustainable entrepreneurship in its policies, setting objectives and undertaking actions that fit within the SDG framework, reporting on the results to an evaluation commission consisting of independent experts, communicating externally about its actions, and working in conformity and beyond with the social and environmental reg-

ulations. In VOKA's experience, it is crucial to have commitment at CEO level to make companies' engagement to the Charter a success. While a barrier may be that companies focus particularly on the low-hanging fruit when implementing sustainability, the Charter encourages companies to go beyond focusing on single SDGs and adopt a broader set of goals.

## 1.2 Motivations for engaging with the SDGs

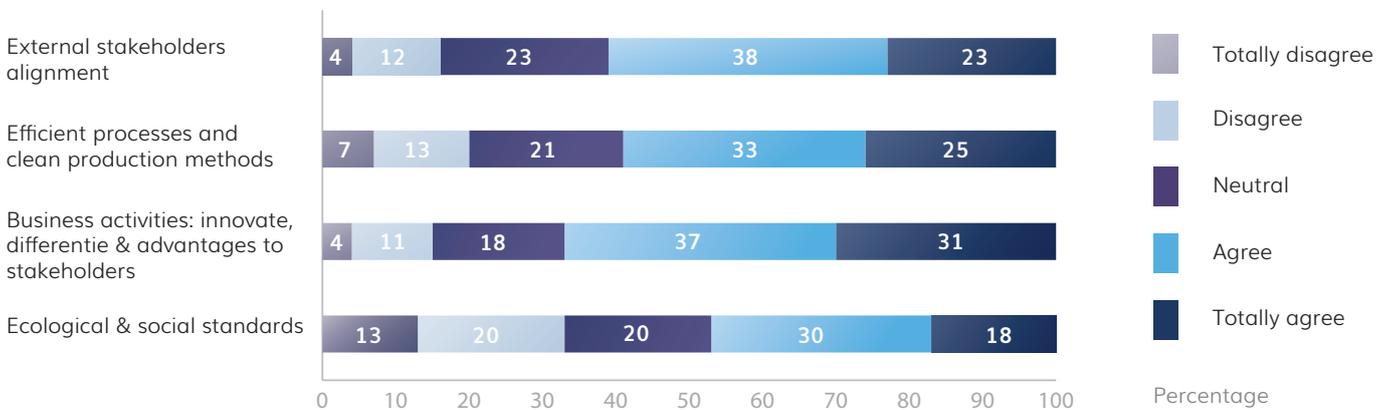
Exhibit 3 shows that organizations that have attention for sustainability indicate that they mainly do so to innovate and differentiate their organization in order to provide unique advantages to stakeholders and enhance their competitive advantage (68%). This result is similar to that of the 2015 CR Barometer, which found that companies identified 'innovation of products and services' as an important motivator for introducing CR management practices. Complying with sustainability standards appears to be the least impor-

tant reason to have attention for sustainability (48%).

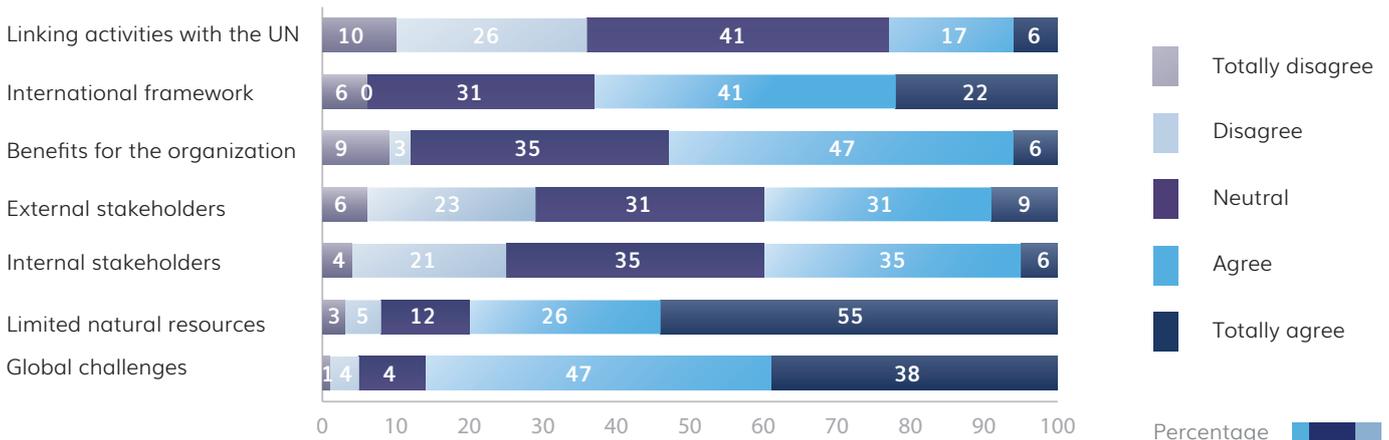
Interestingly, looking at the reasons why organizations adopt the SDGs, a different picture emerges (Exhibit 4). The fact that the SDGs may provide benefits for the organization is not a top 3 reason for organizations to take up the SDGs, although 53% of respondents agree that the SDGs do so. The findings indicate that far more important reasons for organizations to adopt the SDGs are the fact that the SDGs represent important

global challenges (85%) and the fact that organizations have a sense of the finiteness of natural resource availability (81%). Also, the SDGs being an international framework appears important for organizations (63%). Stakeholder pressure or linking their activities to the United Nations are relatively unimportant reasons for organizations to adopt the SDGs. These findings are coherent with international analyses showing that the urgency of sustainability issues is frequently mentioned as a reason for adopting the SDGs (e.g., Globescan, 2016).

**Exhibit 3. Motivations for having attention for sustainability**



**Exhibit 4. Reasons for adopting the SDGs**



### 1.3 SDG driving forces

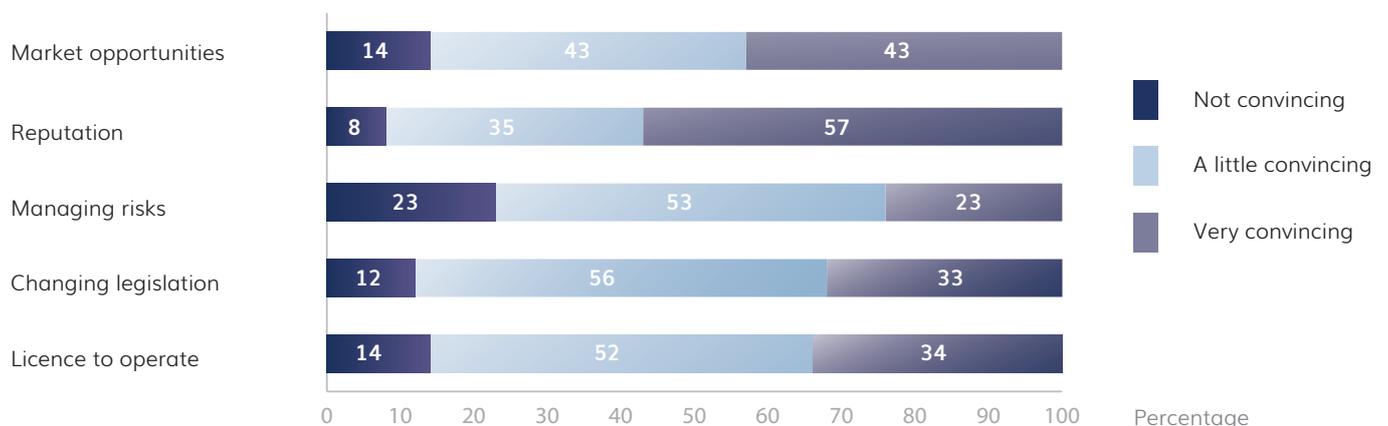
While motivations for adopting the SDGs may originate internally, driving forces are rather found externally. Looking at these driving factors, organizations mention reputation (57%) and market opportunities (43%) as the most convincing driving forces (Exhibit 5). Reputational factors were mentioned by the 2011 and 2015 CR Barometer as important driving forces for sustainability. It should be noted that organizational reputation is something different from marketing and is crucial for longer-term success. For instance, in the current organizational context intangible assets constitute the lion's share of the market value of large

corporations and organizational reputations are linked to many important aspects, including the ability to attract and retain employees, increase consumer and supplier loyalty, and organizations' overall license to operate (GRI, UNGC & WBCSD, 2015). Indeed, securing this license to operate is also mentioned as an important driving factor by respondents (34%).

The results indicate that organizations mainly see the 2030 Agenda as a broad window of opportunities – as a way to achieve a good fit with their environments, align with the expectations of society, and be in sync

with broader economic and societal developments rather than viewing the SDGs as a way to manage organizational risks. It is clear that in sectors such as food and agriculture, urban development, energy and materials, and health and well-being, organizations - notably but not exclusively companies - can contribute to spur sustainability through their core activities, including goods, services, and business models, and improve overall prosperity (SDG Fund, 2015; WBCSD & DNV GL, 2018).

Exhibit 5. SDG driving forces

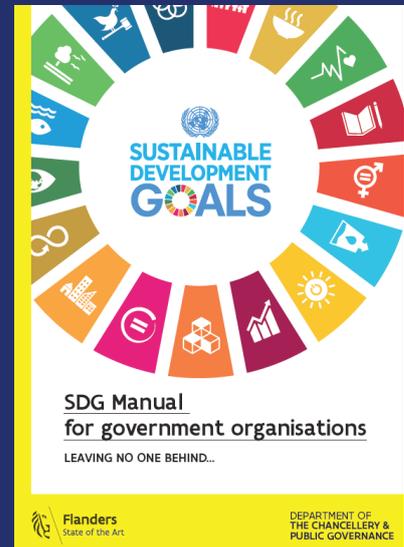


## Governments and the SDGs

Building a competitive advantage and differentiation is less applicable for governmental institutions, at least from a market perspective. At the same time, adopting the SDGs relates to market opportunities for governments, too, as these organizations represent a big purchasing power in several markets. In addition, from the perspective of attracting and retaining employees, competitive advantage and differentiation are in fact also relevant for governmental organizations (and for other non-business organizations as well). It should be noted that the 2030 Agenda fully aligns with many governments' strategies and policy agendas. Governments on different policy levels (local, regional, national, and supranational) have chosen to adopt the SDGs and interpret them in the way they see fit from the applicable policy level. Hence, many of the findings of the SDG Barometer are directly applicable to governmental organizations.

Recently, the 'SDG Manual for government organizations' was developed by Sustenuto, explaining how governments, including local authorities, can integrate the SDGs into the strategy and activities of their organizations. This manual reads: "The SDGs are universal objectives, which means that all governments must integrate them into their policy. (...) Vision 2050, the long-term strategy for Flanders, endorses the achievement of the SDGs at global level, and considers this to be a necessary condition for achieving the vision for Flanders by 2050." The manual includes a case study of the VDAB, the public employment service of Flanders.

From the perspective of municipalities, the Association of Flemish Cities and Municipalities (VVSG) has published the booklet 'SDGs in your municipality' assembling 50 practical awareness-raising examples of initiatives that Flemish cities are taking to implement the SDGs. As a common theme, initiatives have a low-threshold and often fun approach to introduce people to the goals. In 2017, the VVSG has started an SDG pilot project, bringing together a group of 20 large and small local authorities, exploring how to anchor the SDGs structurally and across departments for the entire policy planning process. The VVSG's ultimate goal is to have as many local authorities as possible include the SDGs into their new policy plans after the municipal elections in October 2018. In 2019, all municipalities will create a new six-year municipal policy plan.



## 2 SDG alignment with organizational strategy

There are obvious links between organizations' existing sustainability strategy and the way they approach the SDGs. The findings of the SDG Barometer show that organizations mainly adopt the SDGs through building on their sustainability strategy (48%). A similar percentage of organizations state that the SDGs have many similarities with their existing sustainability strategy (43%). Only 4% of the responding organizations appear to have replaced their sustainability strategy with the SDGs (Exhibit 6). These results signal that organizations tend to embed SDGs into their existing sustainability strategies. This embedding of the SDGs – either within an organization's sustainability strategy or its overall strategy – is generally viewed as important for the SDGs to be truly effective.

Looking at the organizations that indicated that they are aware of the SDGs but lack knowledge and have not yet taken actions, 33% state that they prefer to integrate the SDGs in their overall strategy. A comparable percentage gives preference to the option of integrating the SDGs in their sustainability policy (32%). However, 35% indicate that they would only integrate those SDGs into their policies that require

### BEFIMMO

The construction industry has an important role to play as it is responsible for 40% of the total energy consumption and 36% of the EU's CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. So it is no surprise that CSR has become a priority at Befimmo. In 2013, a Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) materiality analysis was conducted within the organization, leading to a four-pillar sustainability strategy that was followed up until 2017. In 2018, Befimmo strategically adopted the SDGs to ameliorate its CSR policy and integrate sustainability in the organization's overall strategy.

An analysis based on the SDGs made clear which of Befimmo's

activities and challenges could have a positive or negative impact on the goals. From the set of 17 SDGs, 15 are now emphasized through the organization's policies and six strategic axes were identified: integrating buildings as ecosystems in the city, redesigning office spaces, being an example for its partners and sharing research and innovations, contributing to alternative and environmentally friendly mobility, communicating with stakeholders through dialogue, and using natural resources according to eco-design and circular economy principles throughout the lifecycle of buildings.

limited efforts (Exhibit 7). This includes quick wins such as recycling waste, adopting recyclable paper, and using rechargeable batteries, or adopting the objectives of only a few SDGs that are already in line with the organization's existing activities (e.g., implementing a gender equality policy) or their core business.

A Dutch study by Sustainalize and Tilburg University (2018)

states that the SDGs have not yet been fully integrated in the company strategy, although companies are highly aware of the SDGs. It should be noted that the SDGs are not used to describe the status quo, but that they facilitate strategic choices and innovations that will contribute to the realization of the 2030 Agenda.

## SPADEL

Sustainability at Spadel is strongly oriented towards responsibility for the impacts of its own activities and products. Years ago, the company already developed an overarching framework for the implementation of sustainability. Spadel considers the SDGs present a wider set of societal challenges that can offer perspective on how companies may contribute to sustainability deeper in their supply chains.

Hence, the SDGs have a supporting function but are expected to become a leading framework during the next couple of years. The SDGs will not, however, replace the

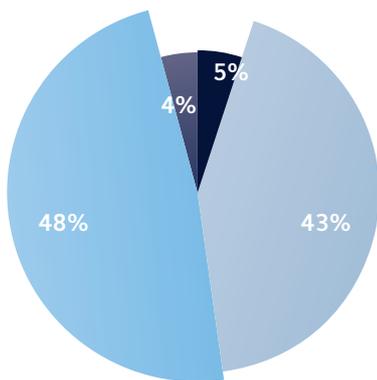
existing frameworks, but will serve as an assessment or review framework for companies' own interpretations of and approaches to sustainability. When used in that way, the SDGs can help better interpret companies' roles in society.

For now, Spadel has chosen to focus on those SDGs that are associated with its direct impacts – that is the initial strategic layer. A subsequent strategic layer is making the connection with the objectives that are formulated for each SDG.

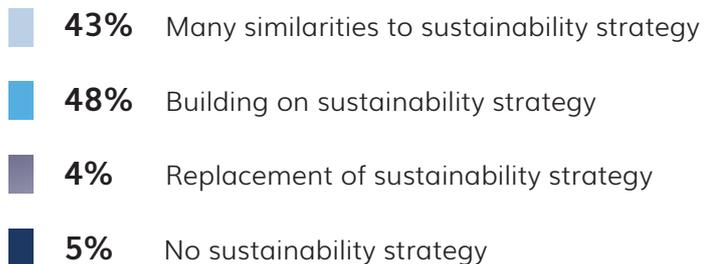
While the SDGs propagate an inclusive approach, meaning that there is no hierarchy between the goals, the practice of Spadel shows it is important to contextualize the SDGs. This

contextualization, for instance, takes place from the perspective of the sector the company operates in and regions in which it is active.

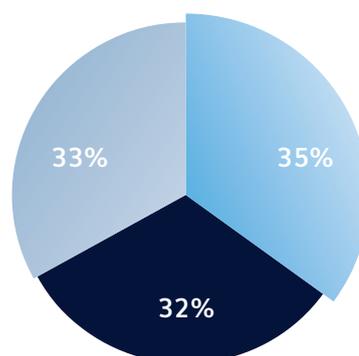
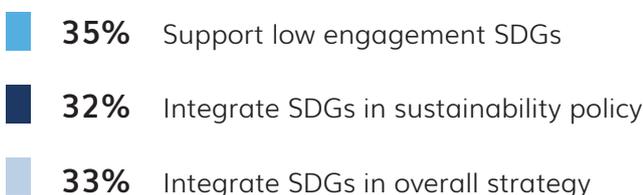
In the future, the company expects the SDGs to become an additional layer for its sustainability strategy, also to investigate its indirect impacts. That is seen as perhaps the most important role of the SDGs: to identify indirect impacts as well as exposing the cross-linkages between the sustainability issues that the goals represent. That will lead to a greater sustainability maturity and quality of impact measurement.



**Exhibit 6. Relationship between SDGs and organizations' sustainability strategy**



**Exhibit 7. Integration by organizations that have not yet adopted the SDGs**



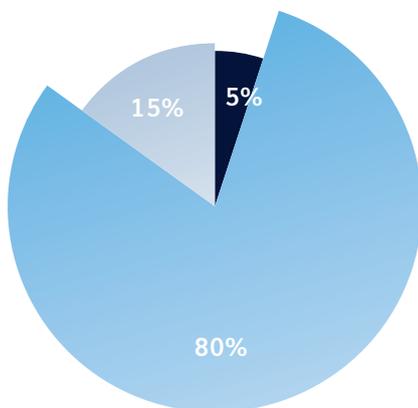
## 3 SDG prioritization and impact

The findings of the SDG Barometer clearly show that most organizations (80%) that adopt the SDGs tend to prioritize a few SDGs rather than focusing on the entire set of goals. Only 15% of the responding organizations consider the 17 SDGs equally important; 5% of them give priority to one SDG (Exhibit 8). This is in line with international results (PWC, 2015) showing

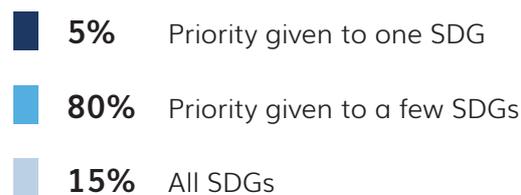
that the majority of companies narrow down their choice to a subset of SDGs that they deem most relevant to their operations. While this behavior may be perfectly understandable from a practical point of view, the UN has clearly stated that the SDGs are indivisible and that cherry-picking the SDGs is not the approach organizations should take when contributing to real-

izing the 2030 Agenda. It should be noted that prioritization varies with the age of the organization: organizations that have existed for less than two years prioritize the SDGs less when compared to organizations that have existed for more than two years.

**Exhibit 8. Prioritization of the SDGs**



**Exhibit 8. Prioritization of the SDGs**



The question, then, is: 'Which SDGs do organizations focus on?' There is a difference in focus between organizations that are at different stages of 'SDG maturity', based on their perceived impacts. Although, on average, all responding organizations perceive themselves as having the highest impact on SDG 8 (Decent work and economic growth) and SDG 3 (Good health and

well-being), organizations that are either not aware of the SDGs or are aware but lack knowledge or have not (yet) taken action consider SDG 1 (No poverty), SDG 5 (Gender equality) and SDG 7 (Affordable and clean energy) as significantly more important compared to organizations that have adopted the SDGs. Organizations that have adopted the SDGs, on the contrary,

consider SDG 3 (Good health and well-being), SDG 8 (Decent work and economic growth), SDG 12 (Responsible consumption and production) and SDG 13 (Climate action) as the most important focus points. These latter organizations also attributed an overall higher priority to SDG 17 (Partnerships) compared to the former (Exhibit 9).

The analysis of the impact organizations have on the SDGs shows that organizations who have not adopted the SDGs mainly prioritize on socially oriented goals (e.g., No poverty, gender equality), whereas organizations that have already

adopted the SDGs tend to prioritize the SDGs that reflect market opportunities and innovations more (economic growth, industry, energy & materials, consumption & production and health & well-being).

### Exhibit 9. SDG prioritization according to different 'SDG maturity'

	<b>Organizations that are either not aware or are aware but lack action/knowledge</b>	<b>Organizations that are aware and have adopted the SDGs</b>
1	SDG 3 (Good health and well-being)	SDG 8 (Decent work and economic growth)
2	SDG 8 (Decent work and economic growth)	SDG 3 (Good health and well-being)
3	SDG 5 (Gender equality)	SDG 17 (Partnerships)
4	SDG 9 (Industry, innovation and infrastructure)	SDG 9 (Industry, innovation and infrastructure)
5	SDG 7 (Affordable and clean energy)	SDG 13 (Climate action)
6	SDG 12 (Responsible consumption and production)	SDG 12 (Responsible consumption and production)
7	SDG 11 (Sustainable cities and communities)	SDG 7 (Affordable and clean energy)
8	SDG 13 (Climate action)	SDG 11 (Sustainable cities and communities)
9	SDG 17 (Partnerships for the goals)	SDG 5 (Gender equality)
10	SDG 1 (No poverty)	SDG 4 (Quality education)
11	SDG 4 (Quality education)	SDG 6 (Clean water and sanitation)
12	SDG 10 (Reduced inequalities)	SDG 15 (Life on land)
13	SDG 6 (Clean water and sanitation)	SDG 10 (Reduced inequalities)
14	SDG 15 (Life on land)	SDG 1 (No poverty)
15	SDG 14 (Life below water)	SDG 16 (Peace, justice and strong institutions)
16	SDG 2 (Zero hunger)	SDG 14 (Life below water)
17	SDG 16 (Peace, justice and strong institutions)	SDG 2 (Zero hunger)

There also appears to be consensus about which SDGs organizations think they have the least impact on: SDG 2 (Zero hunger), SDG 14 (Life below water) and SDG 16 (Peace, justice and strong institutions). This result is again in line with international findings, where a similar set of SDGs were ranked low. Research by Globescan (2016) shows that progress has been particularly slow in the areas of Reduced inequalities (SDG 10), Life below water (SDG 14), Life on land (SDG 15) and No poverty (SDG 1). The findings suggest that these SDGs are deemed less relevant to many organiza-

tions and their core activities and are more difficult to translate into concrete objectives. Other SDGs, such as SDG 16 (Peace, justice and strong institutions) and SDG 2 (Zero hunger), are perhaps perceived as being primarily aligned with the roles and responsibilities of governments or a small number of specific companies (e.g., UN, 2017).

## PORT OF ANTWERP

When the Port of Antwerp started with its SDG engagement in 2015, it prioritized those SDGs that seemed directly relevant to their operations and sustainability commitment. Among those selected were SDG 8 (Decent work and economic growth), SDG 13 (Climate action) and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the goals).

However, after consultations with external stakeholders

and through input by an internal task force on mobility, it became clear that, as an important organization for the economy of the Antwerp region, the Port also had substantial impact on themes such as poverty, air quality and local communities. Recognizing the indivisibility and interdependence of the SDGs the Port decided to embrace all SDGs, make them the common thread that runs through its Vision 2030-2050, and translated them to the local context.

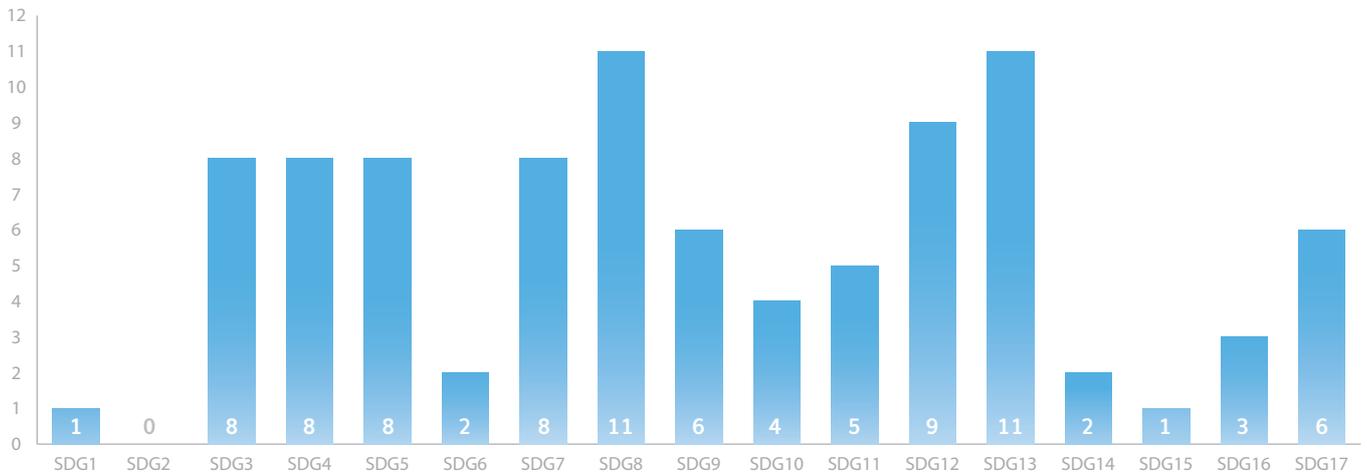
The Port is ambitious when it comes to creating support for the SDGs among its employees. Within a two-year timeframe, all of its 1,500 employees should know what the SDGs are, why the organization has adopted the SDGs and how employees can contribute to the SDGs both from their own professional domain and from their personal interest.

# SDG priorities of the BEL 20 and members of The Shift

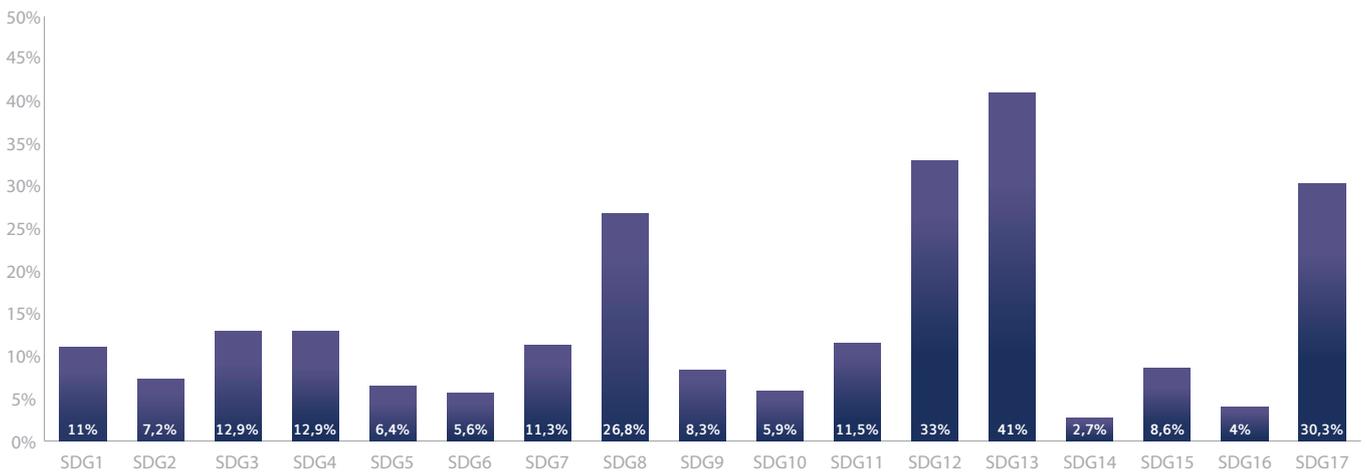
As part of the SDG Barometer, additional analyses were conducted of SDG prioritization by companies listed on the BEL 20 index and companies that are members of the sustainability-oriented business network The Shift. Based on their sustainability reports, BEL 20 companies most often prioritized SDG 8 (Decent work and economic growth) and SDG 13 (Climate action), followed by SDG 12 (Responsible consumption and production) (Exhibit 10). An explanation for this may be that these SDGs are closely linked with perceptions of what constitutes corporate social responsibility. The least popular SDG for BEL 20 companies was SDG 2 (Zero hunger). The results for The Shift members reflect a similar

pattern: SDG 13, SDG 12 and SDG 8 are all in the top 5 of the SDGs that the 385 members of this organization tend to focus on. It should be noted that SDG 17 (Partnerships for the goals) are deemed more important when compared to the preferred SDGs of the BEL 20 companies (Exhibit 11). This may be caused by the relatively high maturity levels and the level of commitment to sustainability by members of this network. SDG 12 (Responsible consumption and production) and SDG 13 (Climate action) are given a somewhat higher priority by The Shift members and the BEL 20 companies compared to the respondents of the SDG Barometer.

**Exhibit 10. Prioritization of SDGs by BEL 20 companies**



**Exhibit 11. Prioritization of SDGs by members of The Shift**

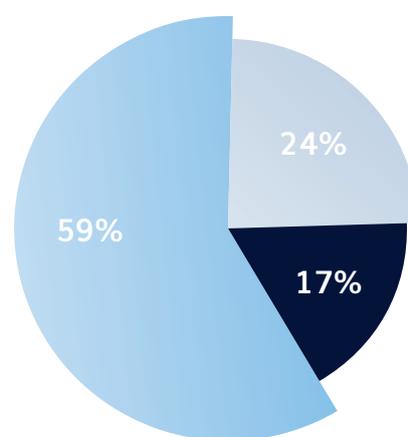


## 4 Partnerships on SDGs

There is wide consensus that the success of the 2030 Agenda will be highly dependent on the efforts and partnerships between all stakeholders involved and affected. From bilateral partnerships to multi-stakeholder cooperation, these initiatives are seen to be better able to deal with the complexities and interconnectivity of the SDGs and offer, among other benefits, efficiency gains, mutual opportunities for learning, better access to financial means, and a pooling of human resources.

In line with recent research (Globescan, 2016; Beisheim & Ellersiek, 2017; UNGC & Accenture, 2018) surveyed organizations that have adopted the SDGs indicate that they give a high priority to SDG 17 (Partnerships). Of these organizations, 27% appear to act on the SDGs through partnerships in different ways and with different scopes. Most of these organizations have partnerships with members of their own sector as well as partnerships with organizations from other sectors (59%). Respectively 24% and 17% seem to prefer intrasectoral and intersectoral partnerships (Exhibit 12). When it comes to the type of partners, collaborative endeavors with non-governmental organizations seem to be slightly preferred over partnerships with governmental organizations and sector organizations. When organizations

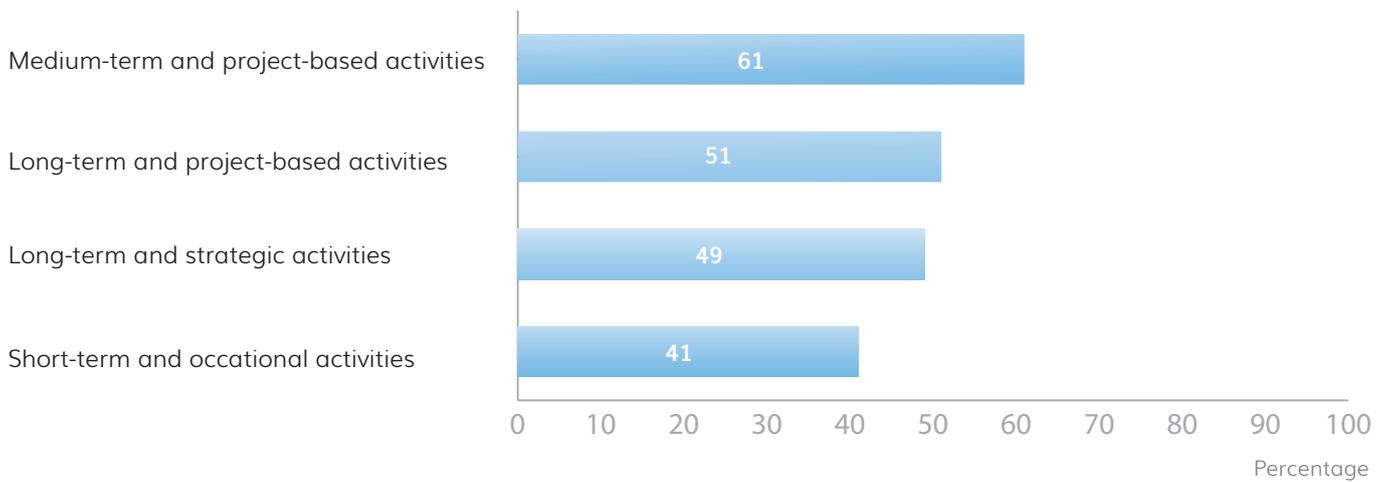
engage in such partnerships, they prefer mid-term partnerships with a clear project as their focus over long-term strategic partnerships and short-term partnerships in which occasional activities are undertaken (Exhibit 13). Interestingly, organizations consider educational institutions to be the least preferred partner for realizing SDG objectives. Higher education, however, has a big role to play in spurring the adoption of the SDGs by developing knowledge and generating new insights through research and through educating future leaders for companies, governments and non-governmental organizations alike.



**Exhibit 12. Partnership types**

- **24%** Intrasectoral (same sector)
- **17%** Intersectoral (cross-sector)
- **59%** Inter- & intrasectoral

### Exhibit 13. Partnership scope



## JOKER

No less than 10% of the world economy and about one in 10 jobs worldwide depend on the tourism sector. Consequently, the awareness of the impacts of the sector is high and sustainable tourism has become mainstream in the sector especially over the past decades. For Joker, the SDGs present a new framework that encapsulates a lot of the sustainability-related actions that have already been taken by the organization. The SDG framework however strengthens this commitment to sustainable tourism and even enables its acceleration. Since the framework is universal, it makes it easier for Joker to work with and speak the same language with its stakeholders.

Being one of the SDG Voices of 2018, Joker invites its travellers to share their favourite 'SDG-spot' while travelling. Rather than being geographical locations, these spots can be anything, such as activities, moments, experiences, or initiatives of locals. Through the online #mySDGspot contest, the organization aims to enable travellers to share their spots with others, hence raising awareness about sustainable tourism. In addition, Joker aims to be an inspiration for the entire tourism sector in order to challenge and inspire it to take action on the SDGs.

Joker organizes a sector-wide event in 2018 in partnership with Travel 360° to work together on sustainability challenges with the SDGs as their main guidance. The

organization considers the SDGs as a valuable framework since they overrule individual organizations and challenge them to come to a common agenda that foregoes competition.

Through Joker's projects fund the organization supports different good causes worldwide, also by partnering with local communities. Currently, Joker has partnerships with several small social enterprises in developing countries that mainly focus on community-based tourism, which they support for a period of three years.

## 5 Internal coordination of the SDG initiative

A striking 83% of the organizations that have adopted the SDGs have appointed someone to work on the organization's SDG initiative on a regular basis. Not surprisingly, larger organizations appear to be more likely to have such a person appointed. Recent research has shown that it is particularly the sustainability function within organizations that is most engaged in the SDG agenda (WBCSD, 2018). The SDG Barometer shows an interesting result on this issue: within organizations that have not engaged in an SDG partnership, the person assigned to coordinate activities related to the SDG initiative is most likely someone from the middle management layer. Within organizations that have entered into an SDG part-

nership, this person is more likely to be operating at boardroom level. Also, people working on the SDG initiative within organizations that have entered into an SDG partnership are more likely to directly report to the board of directors (72%) than within organizations that have no such partnership (51%). These results hence suggest that engaging in an SDG partnership could be a facilitator to align the boardroom and management department with the SDG agenda, probably also because the reputation of the organization – which was identified as a main driving force for supporting the SDGs – is at stake. This insight is particularly important since research by the World Business Council for Sustainable Development

suggests that it is important to engage boardroom executives and strategy departments in the SDG initiative, as there is often a gap between the departments that have operational responsibility for the SDGs (i.e., the CSR and sustainability department) and the corporate functions that are critical in helping advance the SDG agenda within the organization (i.e., CEO, strategy department, communications department). Another interpretation of this research result from the SDG Barometer is that exactly because this person reports to the boardroom, the SDGs are taken more seriously and such organizations are more inclined to engage in partnerships.

### CITY OF ROESELARE

The City of Roeselare is one of the pilot communities in the SDG project of the Association of Flemish Cities and Municipalities (VVSG). Given the global and multidisciplinary character of the SDG framework, multidisciplinary collaboration on projects is crucial, as it requires a different way of working together. The SDG project is led by the Strategic cell. This cell stimulates horizontal collaboration within the organization and crossing several themes, which could benefit the implementation of the SDGs.

In the experience of the city of Roeselare, multidisciplinary col-

laboration often brings new project ideas to the table and makes it easier to link policy areas that are normally separated through departments, such as poverty and climate. Such collaboration results in having more impact, while working more efficiently from a financial point of view. While the proverbial walls are coming down between themes and responsibilities, the challenge remains to implement this multidisciplinary agenda and make actions visible. In addition, it is necessary to translate the multidisciplinary approach to higher policy levels as well, as policy coherence on themes is often lacking.

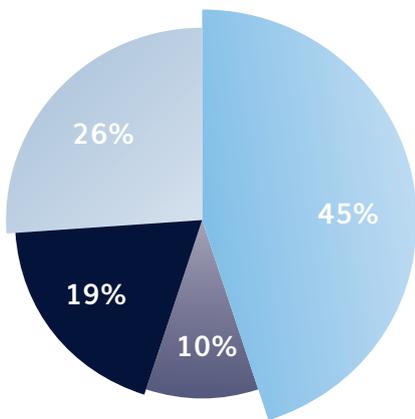
While the comprehensive, integral nature of the SDGs may be a pitfall, existing projects can be linked to the framework, which enables project priorities to become clearer. As such, the SDG framework is not a new policy per se, but it shows what the organization already undertakes, and the SDG framework can create coherence across policies. Through internal communication efforts towards policy officers that emphasize this notion, the city strives for every policy officer within the organization to have an 'SDG reflex' in the future.

# 6 Communication on the SDGs

Most organizations appear to communicate on sustainability, both internally (87%) and externally (82%). Of the responding organizations that have adopted the SDGs 63% communicated about the goals, either internally or externally. The extent of communication about the SDGs does not seem to depend on the type of SDG engagement organizations have: the interviews

that were held as part of the SDG Barometer indicate that organizations with a strong SDG engagement do not always communicate about it. When it comes to the channels organizations use to communicate sustainability externally, the website (45%), the annual report (26%) and the dedicated sustainability report (19%) appear to be the main outlets (Exhibit 14). Additional channels

mentioned by the respondents were newsletters, social media and events. While just 14 organizations (5%) that have adopted the SDGs indicate that they have a dedicated SDG report, it can be expected that organizations will integrate their communications on the SDGs in their sustainability communication.



**Exhibit 14. External communication channels for sustainability**

- 45% Website
- 10% Packaging
- 19% Sustainability
- 26% Annual report

Global research shows that currently only 18% of the companies mention the SDGs in their reporting, either in annual or sustainability reports. Also, there are differences in the way organizations report on the SDGs: less than 25% report on how their organizations are contributing to the SDGs at the level of objectives, while only 10% disclose specific SDG-related targets. In several ways, this reflects how or-

ganizations face broader integration challenges when it comes to the SDGs (WBCSD, 2018). Other recent research revealed that the SDGs are relatively complex and elaborate, causing most organizations to face difficulties when reporting on these goals (GRI & UNGC, 2018), a result that is corroborated by the interviews that were held for the SDG Barometer. Currently, there is no uniform methodology available which

enables companies to specifically measure or report on progress and impact of the SDGs. A collective initiative by the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI), the UN Global Compact (UNGC) and the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD) has been started in recent years to classify business metrics according to the SDG indicators and the monitoring framework.

The analysis of the reporting activity by BEL 20 companies allows to draw several preliminary conclusions and make some inferences. First, a vast majority of the BEL 20 companies (80%) have published a sustainability report for the year 2016, most of them (60%) based on the GRI guidelines for sustainability reporting. Second, the BEL 20 companies that published a sustainability report are more likely to mention the SDGs: only 19% of the companies that published

a sustainability report did not mention the SDGs in their report. However, companies that included information on their SDG engagement in their sustainability reports tended to not report in much detail on their performance on the SDGs. Companies that did not publish a sustainability report did not mention the SDGs at all, neither in their annual (financial) report nor on their websites. These results suggest that SDG reporting may over time become integrated with general sustain-

ability reporting and that structured and detailed reporting on the SDGs may only take off after an appropriate SDG reporting framework and methodology has become available.

## HET FACILITAIR BEDRIJF (HFB)

HFB, the facility management organization of the Flemish government, wants to be a frontrunner by developing and offering sustainability-driven IT, real estate and facility services. The organization's goal is to become an SDG leader. To this end, it has developed an SDG roadmap that encourages and enables the organization to critically reflect on its current sustainability strategy programs, projects, and internal processes, to become an ambassador for the SDGs within

the Flemish government and to participate in learning networks to improve its performance and impacts.

Within this initiative, for which the board of directors has been an important driver, HFB organizes internal workshops and thematic sessions at all levels to gain internal support and translate the SDGs into more concrete priorities, objectives and actions. This will form the basis of a sustainability report based on the SDG framework. In addition, HFB has integrated the SDGs into its education and development pro-

gram and its internal and external communication of the organization. This way, the importance of the SDGs and acting on them are also clearly communicated to employees.

Eventually, this way of acting on the SDGs is meant to contribute to overall sustainability goals, which include reducing total costs, minimizing negative environmental impacts and creating positive impacts, both for the own organization and for others.

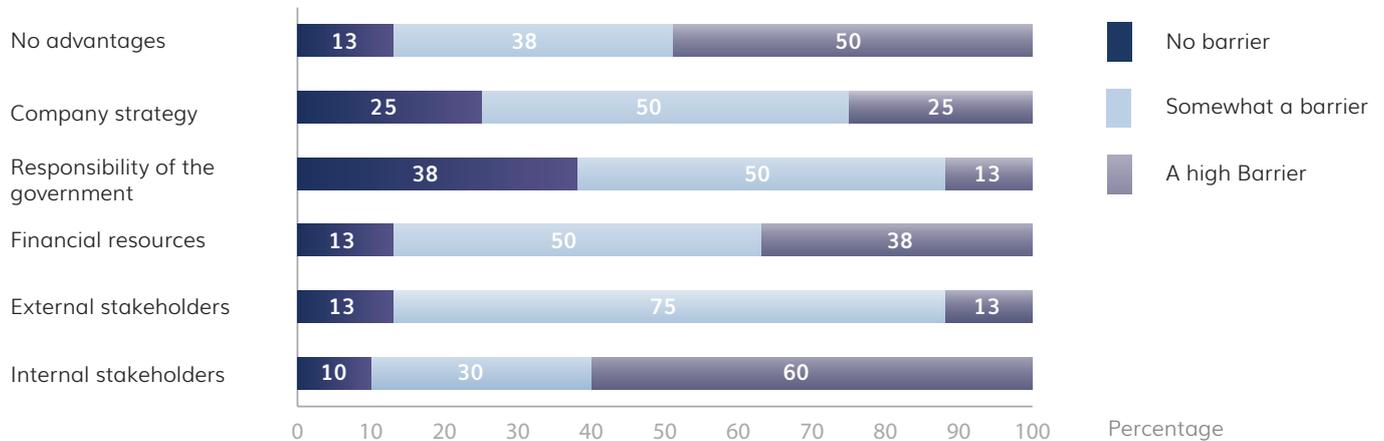
# 7 Barriers for engaging with the SDGs

The results of the SDG Barometer show that organizations perceive internal stakeholders (e.g., employees, directors, investors) and external stakeholders (e.g. suppliers, clients, competitors) to be the most important barriers for sustainability in general. Looking specifically at barriers for adopting and implementing the SDGs, organizations identify

internal stakeholders not having attention for the SDGs as the main barrier, before other barriers, such as the (lack of) availability of financial resources and the perception that the SDG framework does not bring benefits to the organization. External stakeholders that may not be interested in the SDG are seen as somewhat of a barrier rather

than a high barrier. Interestingly, organizations do not perceive the SDGs as the sole responsibility of government and it does not inhibit them from taking action (Exhibit 15).

**Exhibit 15. Barriers for adopting the SDGs**

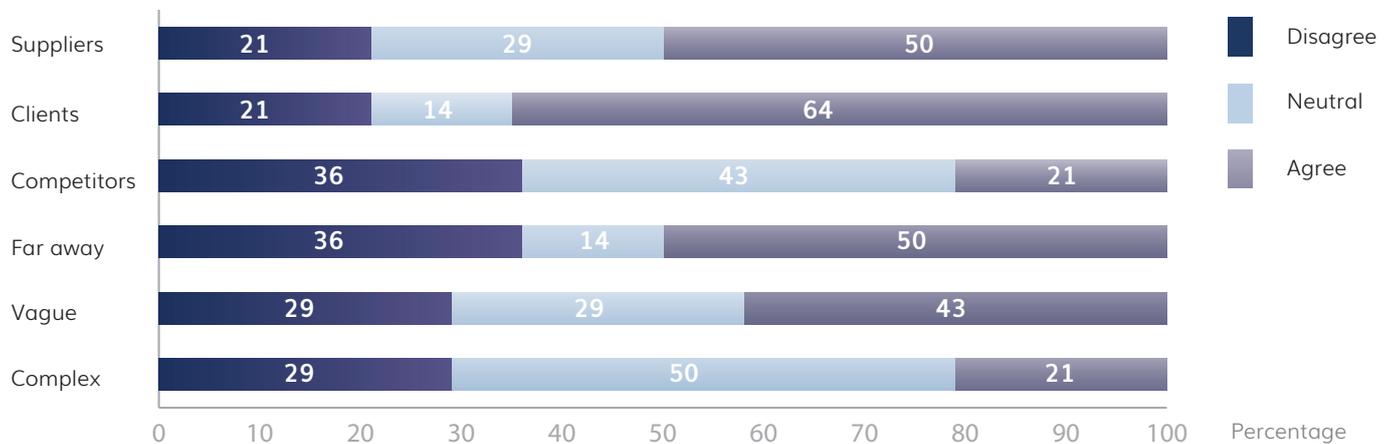


Organizations that are currently not adopting the SDGs particularly mention clients and suppliers as barriers for not being engaged in the SDGs. This seems to suggest that these organizations feel they need the market

and market-related stakeholders to express the relevance of the SDGs. Other important reasons for not adopting the SDGs indicated by these organizations are that they perceive the SDGs as being too far away from daily

organizational life and the SDGs representing sustainability issues that are too vague (Exhibit 16).

Exhibit 16. Reasons for not adopting the SDGs



## RIKOLTO

It is part of the mission of non-governmental organization Rikolto (former Vredeseilanden) to work on the SDGs and contribute to the 2030 Agenda, in particular on eradicating poverty in rural areas while at the same time ensuring stable supply chains to feed the world. An important part of their strategy is to work together with partners from different sectors, including companies, research institutes, citizens, ... Rikolto engages in several multi-stakeholder partnerships, a good example is the partnership on the project Food For The Future, in which 5 partners are engaged: Colruyt Group, KULeuven, University College UCLouvain and the Province of Flemish Brabant. Among the

goals of these partnerships is to find ways to feed nine billion people in the world in a sustainable way, one of the main global challenges addressed by the SDGs.

The experience of the organization shows that it is relatively easy to find consensus with partners on visions of the future when it comes to the SDGs. It becomes much harder when visions must be translated into concrete projects as, for instance, the interests of different parties may conflict in intersectoral partnerships. To overcome such barriers, contexts must be created that invite and enable partners to trust each other. This implies, among other things, that partners should agree on what is and what is not externally communicated, and for

all partners to agree on a clear starting point for the project and to adopt a learning mindset that allows for making mistakes and for being open to change.

Food for the Future is unique in its approach and was one of the four winners of the sustainable partnership awards 2017. This co-creative project combines the expertise of five partners with different backgrounds who will look for the 'what' and 'how' together. Thus, the project can be the start of a much larger movement of partnerships.



# Conclusion

**In conclusion, the results of the SDG Barometer tell a developing story about the SDGs in Belgium. They clearly show that the SDGs have already acquired a certain position and profile within many Belgian organizations. There is awareness about the SDGs, the goals are in the process of being adopted by organizations, and organizations are taking concrete actions on the SDGs. In fact, action on the SDGs in Belgium seems to be higher than average international figures. At the same time, the SDG Barometer shows that work remains to be done when it comes to awareness and knowledge about the SDGs.**

One of the striking findings of the SDG Barometer is that the reasons given by organizations for having adopted the SDGs are not directly related to the business case of the SDGs. Organizations that have not yet adopted the SDGs seem to focus on the business benefits of the SDGs – and it seems that these are not always clear to organizations. In fact, these organizations report market-related factors as barriers for adopting the SDGs. Organizations that have already adopted the SDGs seem to value the SDGs more from the perspective of longer-term legitimacy and the fact that the SDGs represent important global challenges, perceiving the 2030 Agenda as a way to align with expectations of society, and be in sync with broader economic and societal developments.

However, Belgian organizations that have adopted the SDGs appear to prefer focusing on just a few SDGs rather than the entire set of goals. SDGs such as Reduced inequalities (SDG 10), Life below water (SDG 14), Life on land (SDG 15) and Zero hunger (SDG 2) are among the least prioritized, suggesting that these SDGs are considered as less relevant to organizations operating in the Belgian context and are perhaps more difficult to translate into concrete objectives. This does not suggest cherry-picking behavior by organizations per se but may reflect mere practical considerations. Also, it may indicate that organizations see the SDGs as goals that are isolated from each other rather than interdependent. Regarding this latter point, the SDG Barometer then suggests that more work is needed to address SDGs that reflect systemic challenges (e.g. ecosystem degradation, biodiversity loss) and link the activities of organizations in Belgium (and other countries, for that matter) to organizations, coun-

tries, and people abroad. This is generally thought of as being crucial to tackle other global challenges and helping to ensure that organizations do not only support the SDGs that are close to them or require the least efforts.

It is from this perspective, too, that partnerships for the SDGs should be seen as essential vehicles to realizing the 2030 Agenda. The SDG Barometer shows that organizations are not hesitant to engage in partnerships (both intrasectoral and intersectoral) to work on the SDGs. Such partnerships could serve as a facilitator and accelerator for the SDGs by strongly engaging the boardrooms of organizations into the SDG agenda. A consequence of this may be that organizations may perceive internal and external stakeholders less as barriers for adopting the SDGs, but rather as enablers for realizing the goals since stakeholder support and engagement is key to realizing the 2030 Agenda.

The results of the SDG Barometer reflect the patterns of organizational behavior in the context of sustainability and the SDGs as identified by other national and international research. The overall picture that results from both the SDG Barometer and international research on the SDGs is that of a development in its infancy. If anything, therefore, the story of the SDGs in Belgium – as well as in other countries – will be a developing story. The results of this first edition of the SDG Barometer may inspire more effective action and function as a baseline for future editions that will investigate the state of the SDGs in Belgium.

# Recommendations

**The findings of the SDG Barometer have prompted the formulation of several recommendations, particularly relating to policy and research.**

## **Increase awareness and knowledge on all SDGs**

There is a need for increasing both awareness of and knowledge about the SDGs within organizations. This need pertains to the overall SDG framework and the 2030 Agenda in general, but also on specific SDGs. In fact, the attention should be focused on those SDGs that are least prioritized by organizations and their relationship to the other SDGs and the overall notion of sustainable development.

## **Investigate the business materiality of the SDGs**

As an extension of the previous recommendation, research could focus on the business materiality of the SDGs. The findings of the SDG Barometer suggest that some SDGs are purposely ignored by organizations, even though they may be material to them. It is important to investigate to what extent each SDG is considered to be material to organizations. This should be done to see if and how all SDGs can become more relevant for organizations against the background of the current ways in which organizations conduct materiality assessments as an integral part of developing their sustainability strategies.

## **Spur SDG learning processes through best practices**

Identifying, analyzing and reporting on best practices within business, government, and non-governmental organizations can spur learning processes about the adoption and implementation of the SDGs. It is suggested to further map national and international best practices in the context of the SDGs and distill and disseminate practical lessons learned, for in-

stance through a case-based learning approach, e-learning and learning (cross-sector) networks. This is especially important since the implementation of and actions on the SDGs are still in their infancy.

## **Identify the nature and quality of SDG initiatives**

While organizations are taking action on the SDGs, the exact nature and quality of their actions as well as the impacts of their actions are unclear. Investigating this will shed light on the type of initiatives organizations are taking and the extent to which these actions are successful in contributing to realizing the 2030 Agenda. This will enable governments and sector organizations, among others, to identify important avenues to pursue when encouraging the uptake and implementation of the SDGs.

## **Make partnerships a priority**

Since partnerships seem to be an important vehicle to stimulate and strengthen SDG engagements, organizations should be stimulated to explore and enter new SDG partnerships. With this recommendation comes the suggestion of better informing organizations about the advantages and risks of partnerships and of enabling organizations to learn more about partnerships, especially cross-sectoral ones. Also, matchmaking facilities could be offered for organizations to select the right partner(s) and develop the right kind of partnerships from the perspective of their ambitions and goals.

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# List of interviewed organizations



Aquafin

Arbeid en Milieu

Befimmo

Belvas

Greenyard

Het Facilitair Bedrijf

Joker

Lidl

Port of Antwerp

Rikolto (Vredeseilanden)

City of Roeselare

City of Kortrijk

Solvay

Spadel

Service Public de Wallonie

Toerisme Vlaanderen

Vlaams Netwerk van Ondernemingen

WWF

# Contributors



## Lars Moratis

is Professor of Sustainable Business at Antwerp Management School and Breda University of Applied Sciences. Lars holds a PhD in management science and has worked in the field of sustainable business in both academia and business practice. His research interests include corporate strategy and the Sustainable Development Goals, sustainable business models, the credibility of corporate sustainability claims, sustainability standards, and responsible management education. He has authored and edited several books, book chapters, academic articles, practitioner-oriented papers, and opinion pieces on these topics.



## Soraya Candido

works as a researcher at the Sustainable Transformation Lab at Antwerp Management School. The expertise center focuses on shifting business from incremental to transformative action, in response to global social and environmental challenges. Sustainable Transformation, as we see it, is about a journey of fundamental change toward a high-synergy society, integrated economy and flourishing ecosystem, guided by the principles of economic continuity, technological networking, social equity, ecological restoration and personal wholeness.



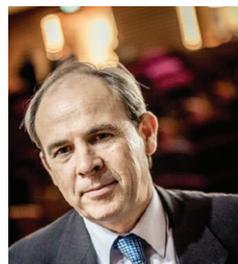
## Valérie Swaen

has a PhD in Economics and Management Sciences from UCLouvain and is a Professor of Marketing and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) at the Louvain School of Management (LSM, UCLouvain, Belgium) and at IESEG School of Management (France). She studied corporate social responsibility from different fields of management, even if her main research interest concerns stakeholders' reactions to CSR communication. She is leading the Louvain CSR network (at the LSM) that gathers and supports researchers and practitioners who seek to put responsible leadership and sustainable production and consumption at the heart of their research and strategy. She holds (or held) different corporate chairs in CSR, in particular the multi-company Philippe de Woot chair in Corporate Sustainable Management.



## Luc Van Liedekerke

holds the BNP Paribas Fortis chair in Ethics and Finance at the University of Antwerp. He was director of the Center for Economics and Ethics at the KULeuven and for many years president of the European Business Ethics Network, the largest academic network in business ethics. He publishes extensively on business ethics, CSR and financial ethics and is chief editor for the Springer Handbooks in Business Ethics series. He is board member of several academic and non-academic organizations in Belgium and abroad who are active in the field of SRI and sustainable business.



*Nils Wuytens, during his time at AMS, conducted research on the SDG Barometer and analyzed the BEL 20 and The Shift members.*

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