

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 instance 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.



Key takeaways from the SDG Barometer

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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 full report is available at www.antwerpmanagementschool.be/sdgbarometer

This study was developed by Antwerp Management School and Antwerp University under the umbrella of the Antwerp Partnership for Sustainability together with Louvain School of Management.



It was supported by the Federal Institute for Sustainable Development and ING Belgium.



We worked in partnership with The Shift, Cifal Flanders, VBO/FEB, UWE, VOKA, Agoria, Essenscia, Febelfin and Fevia in order to realize the study.

Contactperson: Eva Geluk - Manager Sustainable Transformation Lab
Antwerp Management School - eva.geluk@ams.ac.be

October 2018