

Activity report 2021-2022

“The core mission of the Sustainable Development Initiative is to equip future business and economics graduates with the knowledge and skills to contribute actively to the sustainability transformation of our society. Doing so is not limited to changing how and what we teach. We see ourselves as a catalyst for change at the School level and beyond.”

- Estelle Cantillon, Academic director of the Sustainable Development Initiative

Partners & People: an ever-growing team!

UCB and ETEX have joined the Sustainable Development Initiative! UCB is a global biopharma company headquartered in Brussels and ETEX is a large building and construction solutions company based in Zaventem. Like for our historical partner, Solvay, their financial support will contribute to funding the extra teaching support (pathway coordinators, teaching assistants, instructors) for the sustainable development pathways and the coordination of the Initiative. The SDI is very enthusiastic about these new partnerships and looking forward to building bridges and developing fruitful synergies between the academia and the companies.

Regarding our team, several people joined or strengthen their collaboration with the SDI during the 2021-2022 period including A. Géal (economist at the Bureau Fédéral du Plan), and C. de Meulenaere (project and knowledge manager at the Fondation Roi Baudoin) . This year was also the opportunity for us to open the door of the governance board to students. Thus, we welcomed several master students (A. Galvanin, L. VanLierde, G. Denis) that successively participate in the governance of the SDI. Regarding the involvement of teachers, all of them renewed their participation in the Initiative, and one new teacher joined the SDI this year (see section “The SDI in numbers”). Finally, L. Bouty has been appointed as coordinator of the Circular Economy pathway. These recruits demonstrate the growing interests that members of our faculty but also students show for the Sustainable Development Initiative.

Pathways: development and improved framework

In 2021-2022, we focused on strengthening and professionalizing existing pathways. For each of them, we designed a 2-pager document describing the motivation and objectives of the pathway, its program and structure (courses and teachers), and its relationship to the learning compass of the SBSEM. Also, each pathway coordinator was requested to submit a report by the end of the academic year summarizing their progress and development. This reporting was followed by a debrief session to give them feedback and direction for the year to come. In 2020-2021, we launched the pilot course “Introduction to sustainable development” in BA1 Economics. This year, we developed the new Governance pathway for the Economics Bachelor, that build up on this first introductory course, making it our 7th pathway.

Regarding the development of the pathways, the “Work & People” pathway has been renamed “Socially Sustainable Organisations” to emphasize how organisations (and thus firms) can provide a safe and nurturing environment for their members, workers and other stakeholders (e.g. suppliers). The pathway will move one step further in terms of coordination

this year by having the workshops moderated by P. Ribue in DROIS3002 integrate elements from each three courses in BA3, namely labor law (taught by V. Gutmer and F. Lambinet), social psychology (P. Celik) and human resource management (M. Pfeiffer).

Sustainability 101: first accredited training by the Carbon Literacy Project in Belgium

This year, the SDI reached another milestone by developing the Company Specific Programme “Sustainability 101” in collaboration with the Solvay Lifelong Learning. This crash-course on sustainability (24 hours) was developed for Bain & Co and was run three times just in 2022 (twice for the Brussels office and once for the Madrid office)! Alongside the lectures provided by E. Cantillon, J. Jadin, & B. Collignon, the participants also had the chance to listen to and to exchange with two experts on sustainability from our new partners UCB (V. Touilly, Global Head of Sustainability) and ETEX (Joerg Ertle, Head of Corporate Social Responsibility). In addition, the participants of the Sustainability 101 training have been certified Carbon Literate by the Carbon Literacy Project (CLP), a UK-based internationally recognized education charity. We are proud to say that we are the first university in Belgium to have a programme accredited by the CLP.

SBSEM-UCB symposium on “Business & Society”

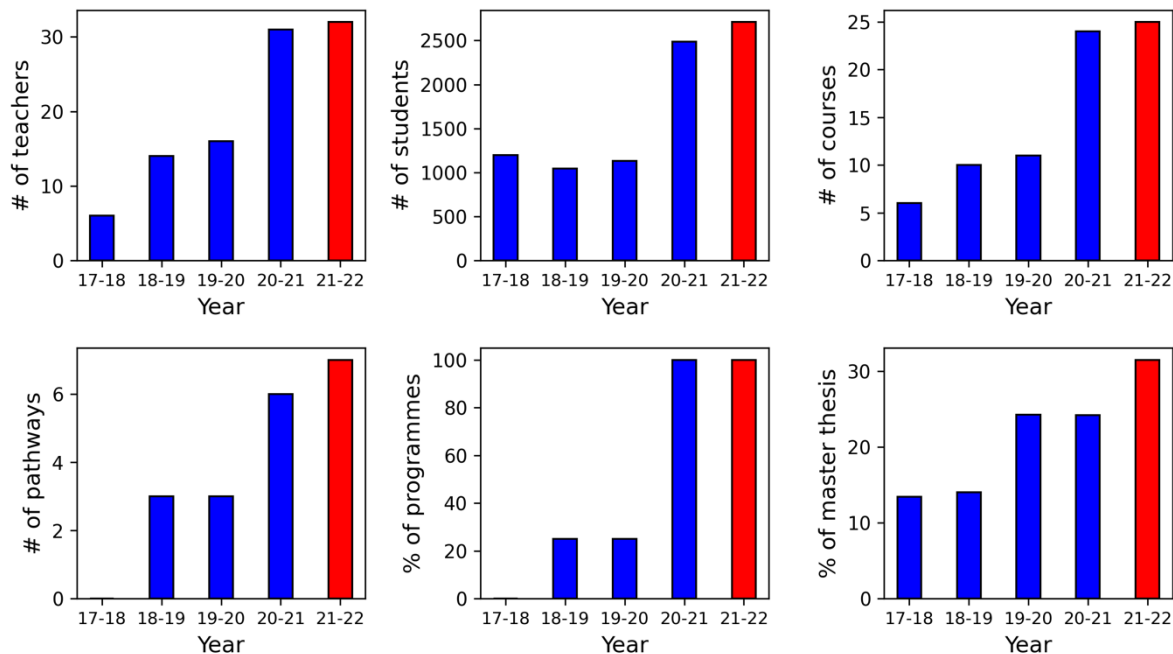
The SDI is very excited to announce that UCB and the SBSEM co-organized a symposium on “Business & Society. It took place on June 27th and brought together about 100 corporate leaders, policymakers, representatives of civil society, young professionals, and academics to discuss the roles and responsibilities of business in the ecosystem that “makes society”. It combined a roundtable with thought leaders from different disciplines (Profs I. Ferreras, M. Krahe, C. Mayer, B. Segrestin) and interactive sessions among participants. A keynote addressed by EU Commissioner Didier Reynders opened the symposium. This symposium brought together voices from all stakeholders to engage on how to foster cross- sector collaborations and cooperation to address the grand challenges facing our societies. The SDI is already looking forward for the second edition of this symposium in 2023!

The launch of the Ernest Learning Lab

Our Dean inaugurated the Ernest Learning Lab with Cathy Macharis’ lecture on the VUB experience of integrating sustainability on campus. The Ernest Learning Lab is a new faculty initiative seeking to encourage all of us – students, staff, faculty, researchers – to experiment, learn and innovate as an organization. It is part of the strategic overhaul of the School and in particular the vision of the Solvay Brussels School as a learning and experimentation ground. We can already announce that the programme of the ELL will include: (1) an interactive workshop “Too late for sustainability?”, (2) a sustainability bootcamp for our student, (3) a training to become a supervisor of the educational game “Fresque du climat”, (4) a workshop “how to integrate sustainability in my teaching?”, and a workshop “what’s my carbon footprint and how to reduce it?”.

The SDI in numbers

Even if this year was devoted to consolidation, we can see that all our KPIs showed progress. The primary target audience is students, whom we reach through teachers and the changes we make to our programs. The attached chart below illustrates how these audiences are directly impacted. From their feedback, students appreciate being exposed to the challenges of sustainable development, and their demand for it is a key motivation for our teachers.



Next steps

Our challenges for the year to come are:

- Evaluating the progress of the students: our goal is to develop a KPI that to evaluate the progress of knowledge and skills in sustainable development of the student. We will collaborate with the teachers to connect their evaluation marks to the four dimensions of the SBSEM learning compass. This will give us a quantified score for each dimension that we can track all along the programs.
- The continuous training of teachers: ensuring the high quality of our courses also requires continuously keeping our teachers up-to-date. In this regard, the Ernest Learning Lab that we launched this year will provide a perfect framework as we already planned several workshops aiming at raising awareness about sustainability but also on how to include sustainable development in teaching.
- Coordinating our fast-growing initiative: In September Dr B. Collignon will join the initiative as Deputy Director to work alongside E. Cantillon. He has been involved since 2020 in the Initiative as a teacher, but will now co-coordinate the SDI to ensure that our management doesn't become a bottleneck for our expansion.