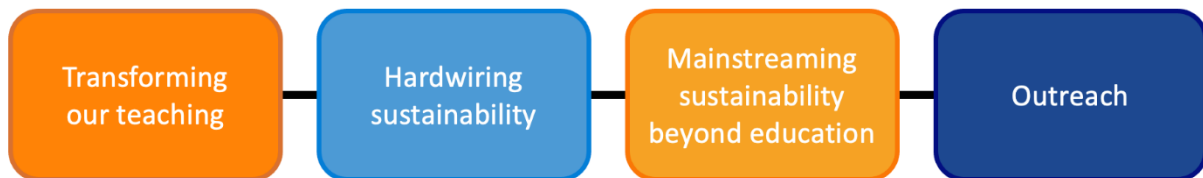


# Sustainable Development Initiative - Activity report 2023-2024

*“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.”*

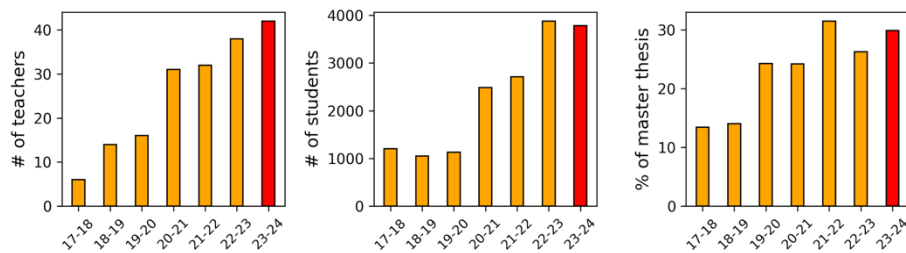
- Estelle Cantillon, Academic director of the Sustainable Development Initiative

## Four areas of activities for the Sustainable Development Initiative (SDI):



### Transforming our teaching

**Upskilling and coordinating our teachers:** In 2023-24, we continued to onboard new teachers through dedicated sessions, and support faculty members with workshops on integrating sustainability into teaching, sponsoring teachers taking a certified sustainability training, and organizing annual consultations and feedback sessions with program coordinators. In addition to our support to existing thematic pathways, we launched a new thematic pathway in the Bachelor of Economics: The “Governance pathway” brings together professors in economics, history, geography, and sustainability, and seeks to expose students to the role and design of public governance mechanisms to support sustainability goals.



**Impact:** Last year, 42 professors took part in one of the seven thematic sustainable development pathways, coordinating their teaching to offer an integrated training in sustainability for their students. The programs in which

they were active reached out to 3,780 students. Sustainability is a hot topic for our students. Almost 30% of the students that successfully defended their master thesis in 2023-2024 chose a sustainability-related topic for their thesis.

**Executive Education expansion:** In 2023-24, we expanded our sustainability training offerings for professionals, tightening our collaboration with Solvay Lifelong Learning. Building on the success of prior initiatives, we launched the second edition of the “Sustainability Fundamentals” short program and participated in the **Executive Master in Sustainability Transformation**. Additionally, we delivered two bespoke sustainability programs tailored to the executive boards of two major corporations, enabling leaders to address sustainability challenges strategically within their organizations.

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## Hardwiring sustainability

To guarantee long term impacts, we hardwire sustainability in the processes and teaching practices of the School. This started with adapting our course offering and integrating sustainability as part of the intended learning outcomes of all programs in 2020. This year, we have again further moved forward in terms of course offering and quality assurance.

**Quality assurance:** in 2022-23, we piloted a method to assess sustainability knowledge and skills in our programs by identifying sustainability-focused questions in our exams to connect their score with the four dimensions of our Sustainability Learning Compass. Based on this experience, we worked on a new methodology that will assess sustainability knowledge and skills acquisition, not at the course level, but at the cohort level. We are currently working with the university's Center for Educational Support (CAP) to implement it for the bachelor in Business Engineering in June 2025.



**New Course Development:** Our course offering continues to evolve as the demands on skills evolve. The academic year 2023-24 saw the creation of two new sustainability-related courses: ECON-S467 "Law and Economics of the Environment" in the Master in Economic Governance and Public Policy and GEST-S4007 "Impact investing" in the Master in Business Engineering.

**Sustainability Bootcamp:** For its third edition in September 2024, the Sustainability Bootcamp was extended to the entry class of two additional masters: Business Economics, and Economic Governance and Public policy in Europe. With 18 speakers and workshop facilitators, these two days were a fast-track introduction to the science and ethics of sustainable development and how it impacts business and business practices. The bootcamp was also an opportunity for newcomers to meet their fellow students and get familiar with their new learning environment.



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## Mainstreaming sustainability beyond education



**The Ernest Learning Lab** continued its mission to foster learning, experimentation, and innovation among students, faculty, researchers, and staff at the Solvay Brussels School of Economics and Management. Open to all, the 2023-24 program featured four events related to key sustainability aspects: "**Teaching and Assessing in the Age of ChatGPT**," "**Student-Driven Campus Changes**," a workshop on "**Harassment and Power Dynamics**," and a session on "**Systems Thinking**." These activities provided valuable opportunities for collaborative learning and diverse perspectives from all School members.

**Carbon footprint:** This year, a group of four students started an ambitious project: quantifying the carbon footprint of the Solvay Brussels School. To this end, the students leveraged several databases from the university and tried to compute the share of emissions that could be attributed to the School. They identified the largest sources of emissions (purchases, students and employees commuting, energy consumption in buildings, travels, waste management, and printing services). The results were presented during the yearly faculty retreat.





The **Student Engagement Recognition** initiative acknowledges students who dedicate time to impactful extracurricular activities. Eligible activities include humanitarian work, sustainability projects, social and cultural initiatives, work in student associations, social entrepreneurship, and emergency services, to which the students dedicate at least 50 hours per year. For the first year of the Initiative, 18 students were recognized as engaged students, who see themselves as actors for a better world.

## Outreach

**Business & Society Symposium:** Organized with our SDI corporate partner UCB, the symposium serves as a regular forum to foster multi-stakeholder collaboration to address the grand challenges facing our societies and contributes to SBSEM’s ambition to support – through research, education and knowledge dissemination - the sustainability transformation of our societies. This past year’s symposium focused on the leadership mindsets and practices that have the potential to unlock progress for sustainable solutions. Participants heard about the Cambridge Leadership for Sustainability framework and explored, through real case studies presented by the protagonists of these cases, four collaborative mechanisms to support change. The post-event report is available at: <https://businessandsocietysymposium.ulb.be/2024-edition/>



**Our Sustainability Learning Compass at PRME:** in March 2024, we participated in the annual meeting of our PRME (Principles for Responsible Management Education) chapter to present our Sustainability Learning Compass. This tool, developed to guide curriculum transformation, outlines essential sustainability knowledge and skills across four dimensions: knowledge, systems thinking, integration, and action. It has become instrumental in aligning our faculty’s courses and programs with sustainability goals, helping faculty integrate sustainability into diverse disciplines and engage students as change agents. This conference provided a valuable opportunity to exchange with other international experts on strategies to embed sustainability into education systems effectively.



## How do we do it?

The money the Initiative raises outside contributes to the salaries of the deputy director of the Initiative, pathway coordinators and extra teaching assistants (for a total of 1,1 FTE in 2023-24), new curricular and extra-curricular activities for students and research subsidies to faculty working with corporate partners. The yearly budget of the Initiative revolves around 123,000 EUR. This past academic year, the SDI benefited from the continued support of corporate partners ETEX and UCB, from the Fonds Ernest Solvay, and a budget from the SBS-EM faculty. These sponsorships were completed by revenues raised from in-company trainings carried out by SDI academic director Estelle Cantillon and deputy director Bertrand Collignon.

