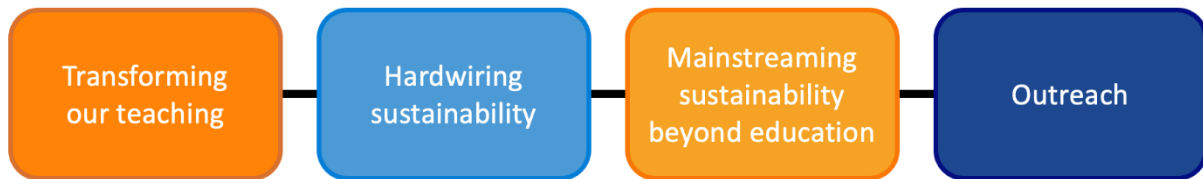


Sustainable Development Initiative - Activity report 2024-2025

"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."

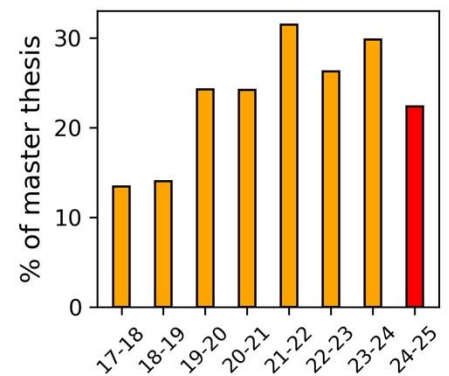
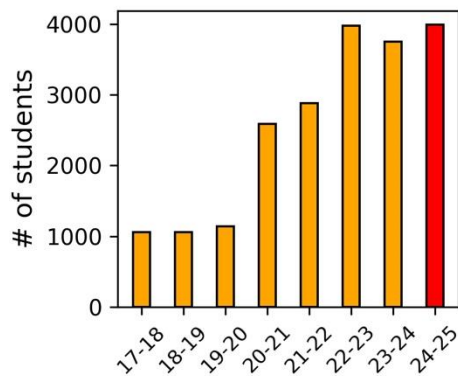
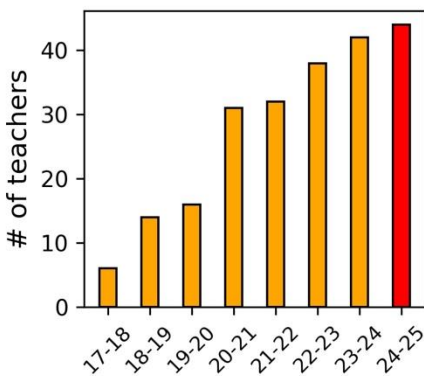
- Estelle Cantillon and Bertrand Collignon, co-directors of the Sustainable Development Initiative

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



Transforming our teaching

Upskilling and coordinating our professors: In 2024-25, we continued to onboard new professors and support their efforts to integrate sustainability in their courses by sponsoring teaching assistants to supervise sustainability-focused seminars, group projects, and workshops. We organized consultations and feedback sessions with program directors and professors to identify current strengths and areas for improvement regarding the inclusion of sustainability content. We financed the development of the sustainability compass evaluation to help professors track students' progress in sustainability literacy.



Impact: Last year, 44 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 3,989 students. Master's theses are a tracker of students' interests. This past year, only 22.4% of the students who successfully defended their master's theses in 2024-2025 chose a sustainability-related topic, a decrease compared to the previous year. On the other hand, our students were rewarded with two HERA master's thesis awards from the Foundation for Future Generations, one in sustainable finance and the other in sustainable economy. One of our students was a finalist for the Philippe de Woot award that recognizes an original contribution to understanding and thinking about CSR.

Hardwiring sustainability

To ensure long-term impact, we hardwire sustainability in our programs and teaching practices. This began with adapting our course offerings and integrating sustainability into the intended learning outcomes of all programs in 2020. This past academic year, we have further expanded our course offerings in sustainability and launched a new tool to evaluate students' sustainability literacy and measure our impact.



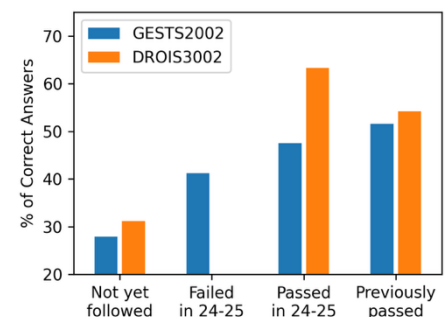
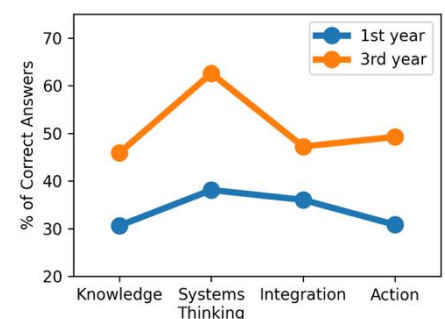
New Course Development: We took advantage of the launch of bachelor's programs in English to create a new sustainability-related mandatory course for these programs: ENVI-S-171 “**Systems theory: from science to a sustainable society**”. The course focuses on the key competence “Systems thinking” and provides students with a comprehensive understanding of systems theory and its relevance to a sustainable society. It will be integrated into the French bachelor's curriculum starting in 2025-26.

In the spring of 2025, the SDI piloted a new online training “Sustainability: From Science, Ethics and Economics to Business Action” for [QTEM](#), a network of over 20 business schools worldwide. The course, co-developed by E. Cantillon, B. Collignon, O. Gillerot, and J. Jadin, was offered to participating master's students and included a hands-on capstone project in which students built a decarbonization plan for a company using real data. The second edition is scheduled to launch in spring 2026.

Executive Education expansion: In 2024-25, we expanded our sustainability training offerings for professionals, tightening our collaboration with Solvay Lifelong Learning. We launched the third edition of the “**Sustainability Fundamentals**” short program and developed a new sustainability module for the **Executive Master in Management**. Additionally, we delivered tailored training sessions to Febelfin, PostLux and Nagelmackers, contributing to their internal upskilling efforts and supporting their internal adoption of their sustainability commitments.

Quality assurance: Since 2020, SBS-EM has embedded sustainability into its intended learning outcomes, guided by the four dimensions *Knowledge, Systems Thinking, Integration, and Action* of our Sustainability Learning Compass. This year, we reached a major milestone with the introduction of a new learning assurance tool to assess the impact of our efforts. In June 2025, more than 500 Business Engineering students completed a pilot online test measuring their sustainability literacy, answering 30 multiple-choice questions drawn from a database of over 100 questions developed by professors across ten courses.

The test shows that students' literacy increases by 15 to 25 percentage points across all dimensions of sustainability literacy between the first and third year of the bachelor's program (see top right graph). The test also informs professors about individual courses' added value to sustainability literacy, and knowledge and skill retention. The graph on the right shows students' performance in answering questions related to the DROIS3002 and GESTS2002 courses, according to whether they have not taken the course yet, they took it this year but failed, they passed the course this year, or passed it in a previous year. In the example shown, there is some decay in sustainability knowledge and skills for the DROIS3002 course, which covers law and psychological concepts in-depth, compared to GESTS2002, which is designed to provide foundations in sustainability for further learning. This initiative marks a significant step towards monitoring progress and reinforcing the integration of sustainability in the DNA of our teachings. It will be extended to our other programs in 2025-26 thanks to a *Fonds d'Encouragement à l'Enseignement* funding from ULB.



Mainstreaming sustainability beyond education

Our campus is not only a place where students learn. By walking the talk, we have the opportunity to experiment with and apply the solutions we discuss in class. Aligning our actions with our teaching also ensures internal alignment and increases our impact.



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 2024-25 program featured four events related to key sustainability aspects: a “**2-tons**” workshop focused on CO₂ emissions reduction, two sessions focused on artificial intelligence “**Generative AI – Winning the game of biases in the business world**” and “**Teaching in the age of A**”, and a session dedicated the use of serious games in teaching.

Carbon footprint: In partnership with ULB’s Environmental & Mobility Service (SEM), two groups of SBSEM students contributed to advancing the University’s quantification of its carbon footprint. The first group designed a customised emission allocation framework based on the GHG Protocol and adapted it to ULB’s constraints and specificities. The second group evaluated the carbon emissions associated with the ULB’s investment portfolios.



The Student Engagement Recognition initiative acknowledges students who see themselves as agents of change for a better world and dedicate their 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. This year, 31 graduating students who finished their bachelor or master program received the Student Engagement Recognition.

Outreach

Business & Society Symposium: The Business and Society Symposium is a SBSEM-UCB joint initiative to foster cross-stakeholder collaborations to tackle societal challenges through capacity building, knowledge sharing, and networking. This past year’s symposium focused on a key stumbling block that many organisations face in their journey towards greater sustainability: making decisions when purpose, profits, and societal alignment conflict. Participants relived through case studies the difficult decisions that Syensqo, Triodos, and UCB had to make and experimented with the decision frameworks these organisations put in place. The post-event report is available at: <https://businessandsocietysymposium.ulb.be/2025-edition/>



**BUSINESS & SOCIETY
SYMPOSIUM**



Cross-university collaborations: Building on the expertise in systems thinking he developed at the Solvay Brussels School, SDI co-director Bertrand Collignon co-taught the opening module of the new European Master’s degree in Transdisciplinary Studies of Climate, Environment, and Energy. The program was launched in September 2025 by the 17-university strong [CIVIS Alliance](#). Bertrand, alongside colleagues from the University of Tübingen and the Stockholm Resilience Centre, introduced students to systemic approaches for understanding the interconnected challenges of climate, environment, and energy.

How do we do it?

The SDI receives a small yearly budget and 0.25 full-time equivalent staff support from the SBSEM faculty and raises funds from external sources for the remainder. This year, the Initiative benefited from the continued support of corporate partners ETEX and UCB and partnered with QTEM, which co-sponsored the development and delivery of the new online sustainability training for QTEM master's students. Additionally, we raised funds through the delivery of tailored in-company sustainability training. The total revenue raised amounted to 120,500 €.

These funds helped cover the salaries of co-director Bertrand Collignon, and those of a project manager in charge of the compass evaluation, pathway coordinators, and additional teaching assistants (representing 1.45 full-time equivalents in 2024–25). The SDI also funded new curricular and extracurricular activities for students and research subsidies for faculty members. Total expenses this year amounted to 160,000 €, following a deliberate decision to capitalize on past savings and invest in the development of the evaluation tool for our sustainability learning compass. For the coming academic year, we have secured ULB funding to further deploy the tool.

