

THE ROLE OF COMPANIES IN SHAPING A SOCIAL GREEN DEAL 2024-2029

Sustainability
Leadership Salon



With the support of Solvay | A Global Leader in Materials, Solutions, and Chemicals



THE EVENT

On 27th April 2023, [CSR Europe](#) and [GlobeScan](#), with the support of Solvay, ran their first Sustainability Leadership Salon in a two-part series: a journey with CSR Europe Leadership Hubs' member companies coming together with peers, civil society leaders, and policymakers to advance the Just Transition and create a Social Green Deal 2024–2029 for Europe.

This summary document lays out the outcome of this event, the key topics discussed, and the opportunities for business and policy leadership moving forward.

WHAT WAS DISCUSSED DURING THE SALON EVENT



1.

HOW TO ADVANCE THE JUST TRANSITION

2.

SOCIAL ISSUES ON THE PUBLIC AGENDA

3.

EXPECTATIONS AROUND THE SOCIAL GREEN DEAL

- As the 2024 EU elections are approaching, it is imperative to advance the Just Transition in Europe for the future of the EU Green Deal 2024–2029 and more broadly, to create the necessary foundations of the EU's social contract moving forward.
- Social issues are high on the public's agenda as well as on businesses' material issues list. Businesses are not currently seen as being ready to address these issues brought about by the Just Transition imperative. However, they are also not expected to address these issues alone and are instead expected to work in partnership with others, starting with governments and regulators.
- There are expectations and opportunities for both business and policy leadership in shaping a Social Green Deal. While businesses are expected to bring social issues back into the picture and speak up, be proactive, and aim to drive positive change along their value chains, EU policymakers are urged to adopt a more holistic approach to regulations and to focus on capacity building and innovation moving forward.

CONTEXT: WHY A "SOCIAL" GREEN DEAL NOW

COVID-19. Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Energy and the cost-of-living crisis. Inflation. Impacts of climate change. Upskilling imperative for a green and digital economy. Challenges to the social dimension of the EU's sustainability agenda abound and make the Just Transition an imperative for the future of the Green Deal. Why does this matter now?



SOCIAL ISSUES ARE HIGH ON THE PUBLIC'S AGENDA

GlobeScan's Radar global public opinion research shows that conflict, climate change, and extreme poverty now dominate European concerns. Concerns about poverty and climate change have been on the rise in recent years, suggesting that one issue cannot be addressed without addressing the other.

PERCEIVED SERIOUSNESS OF GLOBAL PROBLEMS

% of "Very Serious," Average of 7 EU Countries, 2022



76% - WAR/CONFLICT



66% - CLIMATE CHANGE/ GLOBAL WARMING



65% - DEPLETION OF NATURAL RESOURCES



64% - EXTREME POVERTY



63% - WATER POLLUTION

Source: *GlobeScan Radar Trends Report* (survey of 29,293 people in the general public in June – July 2022)

Q. For each of the following possible global problems, please indicate if you see it as a very serious, somewhat serious, not very serious, or not at all serious problem.

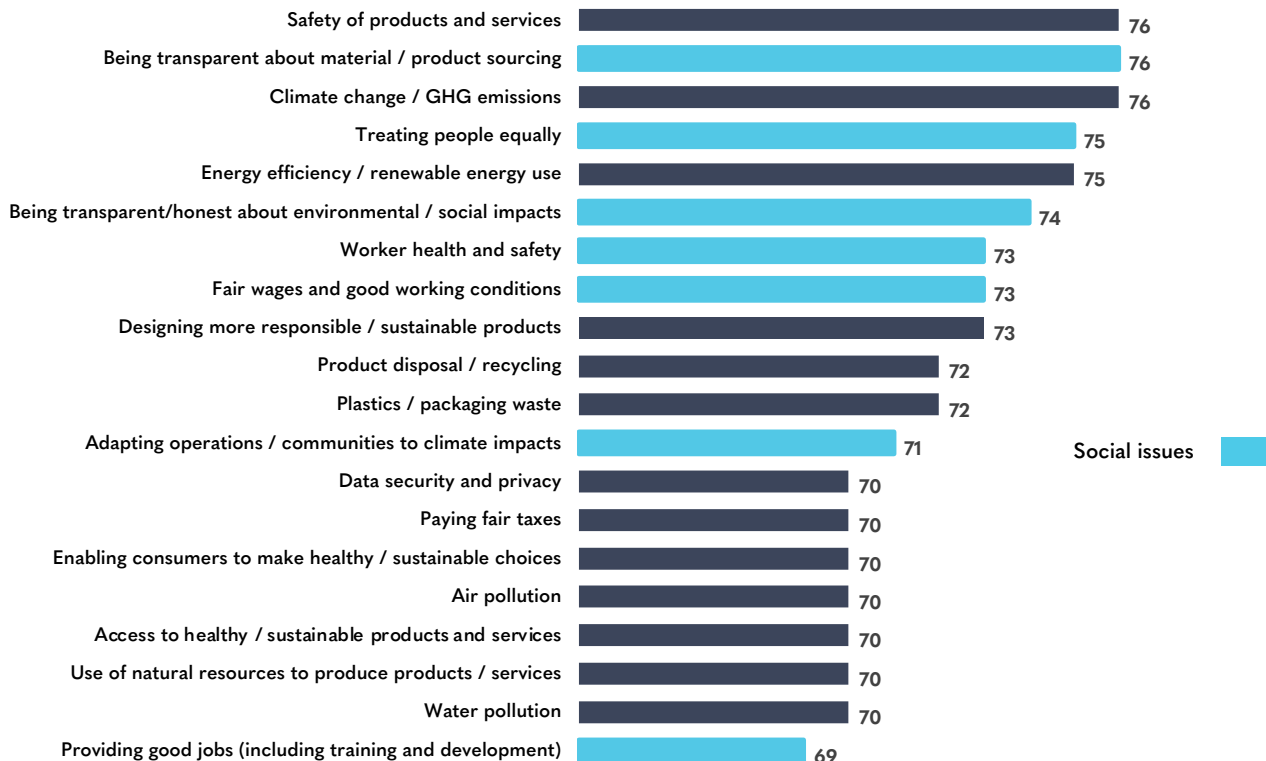
BUSINESSES ARE EXPECTED TO ADDRESS SOCIAL ISSUES BUT ARE NOT READY

According to the same GlobeScan research, social issues rank highly in the list of material issues and impacts that consumers expect businesses to address in Europe, alongside product safety and climate. In short, the “S” of ESG is highly material to businesses.



IMPORTANCE FOR COMPANIES TO ADDRESS ISSUE-RELATED IMPACTS

Top 20% of “Highest” and “High Importance,” Average of 7 EU Countries, 2022



Source: *GlobeScan Radar Trends Report* (survey of 29,293 people in the general public in June – July 2022)

Q. Please indicate how important it is for [company mentioned] to address its impact on these issues.



EUROPE DOES NOT APPEAR ON-TRACK FOR A JUST TRANSITION

[Additional research run for CSR Europe by Moody's ESG Solutions](#) shows that key European sectors – from Automobile to Tourism and Travel – appear insufficiently prepared to manage the social and societal impacts of the Just Transition, especially when it comes to addressing reorganisations in a fair and equitable manner.

Average scores across just transition-relevant indicators across European sectors

Sector	Reorganisations	Career Management	Labour Relations	Social & Economic Development	Non-Discrimination	Fundamental Human Rights	Energy Use	Sector Average
Automobiles	28	42	45	35	56	47	46	42
Building Materials	22	34	31	42	41	43	48	37
Electric & Gas Utilities	38	49	57	52	60	55	41	50
Energy	27	43	41	51	53	49	36	42
Food	14	32	32	37	46	45	46	36
Forest Products & Paper	37	47	60	57	62	50	56	52
Heavy Construction	26	38	43	46	56	54	51	44
Industrial Goods & Services	16	33	30	29	47	41	36	33
Oil Equipment & Services	19	36	27	38	47	50	37	36
Transport & Logistics	27	41	42	39	54	49	53	43
Travel & Tourism	24	38	41	32	48	50	42	39

Source: ESG Assessment data from Moody's ESG Solutions as of July 2022. The data findings presented in the [Sustainable Industry Barometer 2022](#) are not related to any credit rating or analysis performed by Moody's Corporation's rating agent subsidiary, MOODY'S INVESTORS SERVICE, INC.

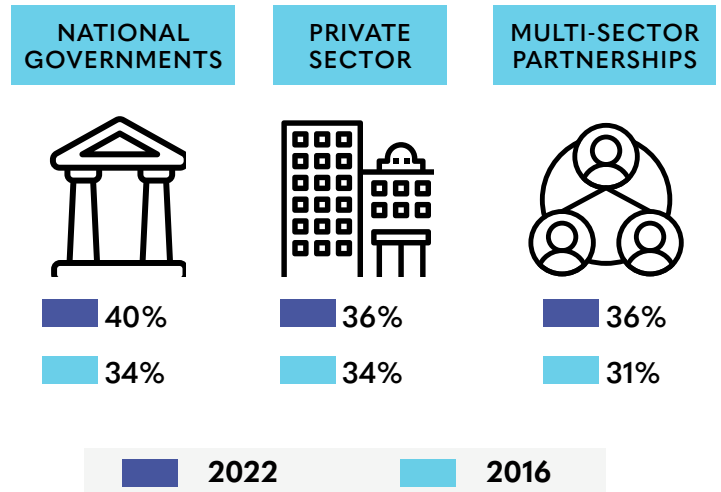
BUSINESSES ARE NOT EXPECTED TO ADDRESS THESE ISSUES ALONE

As we move toward a more sustainable future, the need for collective efforts and an alliance for action between policymakers and business leaders is growing. In particular, sustainability experts surveyed each year by [GlobeScan](#) and its partner [SustainAbility](#) expect national governments, the private sector, and multi-sectoral partnerships to lead the sustainable development agenda over the next 20 years.



INSTITUTIONS EXPECTED TO LEAD THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

% of Experts, 2016–2022



Source: *GlobeScan/SustainAbility by ERM 2022 Leaders Survey*

Q. *In your opinion, who should lead the sustainable development agenda over the next 20 years?*

AT A TIME OF SOCIAL DISTRESS AND UNCERTAINTY, THE FUTURE OF THE EUROPEAN GREEN DEAL IS AT STAKE

As the 2024 European elections are getting closer, with a new Commission and a new Parliament in the balance, the very social and economic concerns of consumers, citizens, and voters need to be understood and addressed. For the transition to a carbon-neutral economy to be successful, it is imperative to bring society along and leave no one behind. Government, business, and civil society leaders now have a great responsibility and an opportunity to do just that.

EXPECTATIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR BUSINESS LEADERSHIP

In this context, voices from a wide range of stakeholders shared during the salon event point to the role of businesses as they strive to advance the Just Transition agenda.

Bring social issues back into the picture and consider their inter-connectedness with other issues

Businesses need to invest in social datasets, KPIs, and facts that are comparable across sectors and are trustworthy (e.g., carbon emissions metrics for climate change). Currently, the risks identified for the ten years ahead are mostly environmental and climate-related, creating an inherent bias in decision-making. Furthermore, it is essential to consider social and environmental issues together as they are interdependent (e.g., climate justice).



Dare to speak up and be proactive

Businesses are expected to move beyond the compliance “trap” and proactively ask for the right policies. Instead of asking to slow down the “regulatory train,” businesses are encouraged to speak up, be ambitious, and take the lead in asking for Just Transition-focused policies, or at the very minimum, to put social initiatives in place.



Seize the opportunity to effect change along the value chain through collaboration

Despite the difficulties and challenges, the Just Transition is seen as an opportunity for companies to achieve systemic change on the ground in the weaker parts of the supply chain.



EXPECTATIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR POLICY LEADERSHIP

The quest for a more holistic approach

In recent months, the EU has seen a great number of sustainability-focused regulations being adopted. Moving forward, there are calls from stakeholders for these regulations to be inter-connected and for their application to be considered in a more coherent manner.

Beyond compliance, now is the time for capacity building

As businesses are expected to drive progress and engage their entire value chain, stakeholders also call on organisations to go beyond compliance and, instead, accelerate capacity-building efforts within businesses. EU policymakers are invited to consider this need through smart “enabling” policies and capacity-building platforms.

Where does innovation fit?

Regulations are expected to be built for the future and for policymakers to be open to technology and invest in research and development moving forward. Innovation is expected to be the focus of policy-makers with one key imperative in mind: how do we enable business transformation at pace and scale?

How should companies convey their message to policymakers most effectively?

As businesses look to engage policymakers around the need to go beyond compliance and instead invest in capacity building at the EU level, it is critical that corporate public affairs teams and sustainability teams get together and align on coherent messages and policy asks. Such internal alignment is seen as a major pre-requisite to engage policymakers most effectively on the Just Transition.

WHAT'S NEXT

Building on the lessons learned from this initial salon event, the three CSR Europe Leadership Hubs are developing policy proposals for a Social Green Deal 2024–2029. Some of these proposals have already been further tested at the CSR Europe Conference and General Assembly on June 20, 2023. These proposals will then be further elaborated and discussed at a [second Sustainability Leadership Salon](#) on November 14, 2023, in Brussels.

While the final policy paper for a Social Green Deal will be presented to the new European Commission, European Parliament, and EU governments in Q1 2024, stakeholders recommend sharing some initial reflections and recommendations earlier with the administration of the European Commission which is already preparing future directions and policies for the next commission term 2024–2029.

If you want to be kept informed about the next steps, please contact:

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ABOUT GLOBESCAN



GlobeScan is a global insights and advisory consultancy working at the intersection of sustainability, behavior change and trust. GlobeScan partners with leading businesses, NGOs, and governmental organisations to deliver insights that guide decision-making and build strategies that contribute to a sustainable and equitable future. Established in 1987, GlobeScan has offices in Cape Town, Hong Kong, Hyderabad, London, Paris, San Francisco, São Paulo, Singapore, and Toronto.

[Find out more here.](#)

ABOUT CSR EUROPE



CSR Europe is the leading European business network for Corporate Sustainability and Responsibility. With its corporate members, National Partner Organisations (NPOs), and Associated Partners, CSR Europe unites, inspires, and supports over 10,000 enterprises at local, European, and global levels. CSR Europe supports businesses and industry sectors in their transformation and collaboration toward practical solutions and sustainable growth.

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