16th ABIS Annual Colloquium 15-16 November 2017

Leadership for a Sustainable Future:
Business-Academic Collaboration on the UN SDGs for Long-Term Success

Event Report
REPRESENTED ORGANISATIONS

HOSTS

Count Etienne Davignon
Belgian Minister of State & Honorary Chairman, ABIS

Alfons Sauquet
Chairman of the Board of Directors, ABIS

Rudi Plettinx
Chief Executive Officer, ABIS

Joris-Johann Lenssen
Managing Director, ABIS
INTRODUCTION

Since their adoption in 2015, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide a vision for the world and a positive agenda to ensure future prosperity by addressing the world’s most pressing challenges. From a business perspective, they not only offer the chance to develop innovative solutions, but also create real value for all stakeholders. Implementing the SDGs will open up new business opportunities, build competitive advantage, strengthen supply chain resilience, help talent recruitment and retention, build investor and stakeholder trust and generate sustainable value for consumers and society.

With a great majority of businesses already adopting and engaging with the SDGs, there is the potential to unlock US$12tn in business savings and revenues by 2030 (Business and Sustainable Development Commission, 2017). On 15-16 November, over 150 representatives from over 60 different institutions joined us to discuss and explore on identifying the right tools to do so, whether that directly relates to business strategy and innovation, leadership practices and talent management as well as measuring impact towards the SDGs.

The ABIS network strongly believes that companies can tap into the academic knowledge and capabilities and - together with universities as their strategic partners - develop leadership and new business strategies to ensure long-term value creation.

Among the others, the event featured dialogues and interactive sessions on:
- Integrating the SDGs into corporate strategies
- The benefits for businesses of partnering up with academia
- Leadership skills, mindsets and capabilities to achieve the SDGs
- Building capacities for sustainable business innovation
- Harnessing science and technology collaboration to implement the SDGs
- Leveraging new approaches to business education to develop the necessary skills and competencies
- Measuring progress and impact on the SDGs

SPONSOR

KEY FACTS

150+ Participants
60+ Represented Institutions
30+ Represented Countries
300+ Social Media Interactions
PRE-CONFERENCE WORKSHOPS

RESEARCH WORKSHOP ON THE SDGs

Prior to the official start of the conference, a pre-conference research workshop explored various manifestations and usages of SDGs across organisations, sectors, and national borders. SDGs can be addressed from a number of different perspectives, ranging from the negotiations leading up to the formulation of the global themes to the individual sensemaking and sensegiving processes at the local level. In particular, the contributions intentionally addressed various levels (micro, meso, macro) and/or perspectives (governance making, taking and breaking), as academic research is often biased towards one-level/one-perspective analyses of organisational phenomena. These contributions will be considered for our Special Issue with Corporate Governance: The international journal of business in society.

New Approaches - Governing the SDGs?

Governance & the SDGs in Higher Education
Christopher J. Moon - Middlesex University

Is a better world relevant for Business? Examining the business materiality of the Sustainable Development Goals
Wayne Visser - Antwerp Management School

Contribution of Confucius teaching to UN Sustainable Development Goals
Weili Teng - Nottingham Trent University

International CSR, who rules, who cares?
Marijke van Hooijdonk - Erasmus University Rotterdam

A new collaborative governance model framework for enhancing global energy production with multi-stakeholder partnerships through SDG 17
M.J. Ni. Ilknur Tekin - Bocconi University, Department of Management and Technology

Producing cola responsibly: Insights from the Premium Collective
Katharina Husemann - Royal Holloway University of London

The Case for SDGs - Implementing the SDGs

Incorporating the SDGs into corporate social performance of leading Russian companies: current trends and future priorities
Yury E. Blagov - St. Petersburg University Graduate School of Management

Anastasia Petrova-Savchenko - St. Petersburg University Graduate School of Management

The Creation of a Group Sustainability Policy and the definition of a Sustainability plan in line with the agenda 2030: the case of A2A
Manuela Baudana - A2A

The London 2012 Olympics as a driver for sustainable innovation
Endrit Kromidha - Royal Holloway University of London

Corporate sustainability and inclusive development: highlights from international business and management research
Arno Kourula - University of Amsterdam

Innovative solution for governance in Higher education: Progressive reward management system model for universities
Lydia W. K. Emuron - University of Kigali

Knowledge Into Action - From Academia to Business

How are companies approaching implementing SDGs?
Matthew Gitsham - Ashridge Executive Education, Hult International Business School

How do executives' values influence corporate responsibility adoption?
Candice Chow - Henley Business School

Links and trade-offs between the SDGs: Scholarly reflections based on an interview with climate scientist Carlos Nobre
Camilla Quental - Audencia Business School

The Ethical dimension of cyber space information technology: A perspective focusing on security, sustainability and human rights aspect
Wayne Rodgers - University of Hull

www.abis-global.org
2050 SCENARIO EXPLORATION WORKSHOP

In addition to the research workshop, the morning featured an interactive scenario exploration workshop on achieving sustainable lifestyles. The session drew on resources developed through our EU-InnovateE project, which received funding by the European Commission.

During the session, participants had the chance to experience first hand, the scenario exploration tool which provides a platform that engages participants in future-oriented systemic thinking. It enabled participants take action to reach their long-term objectives in contrasting scenario-related contexts while interacting with other stakeholders. By creating a realistic journey towards the future, the tool generates a safe space to simulate possible responses connected to any issue of interest to the participants. This engagement platform helps people imagine what the scenarios of interest could mean for themselves and can be used in corporate, academic and other environments as a tool for strategic development and foresight thinking.

If you are an ABIS member and are interested in receiving a free copy of the game, please contact:
marco.matrisciano@abis-global.org

Presenters:
- Laurent Bontoux - Policy Analyst, JRC – Joint Research Centre, European Commission
- Anne-Katrin Bock - Policy Analyst Joint Research Centre Unit I.2 Foresight, Behavioural Insights & Design for Policy
- Rosina Watson - Researcher, Cranfield School of Management
- Simon Lee - Principal Strategist, Forum for the Future

PRE-CONFERENCE WORKSHOPS
The UN SDGs provide a vision for humanity and a powerful agenda for sustainable development efforts. They explicitly call on the private sector to contribute the delivery of the SDGs with their innovation potential and scale. From a business perspective, the SDGs offer the chance to develop innovative solutions that create real value for all stakeholders.

As a leading health technology company focused on improving people’s lives through meaningful innovation, Philips is at the forefront of delivering its commitments to the SDGs. In his opening speech, Robert Metzke highlighted why the SDGs are key not only to the sustainable development of the world, but also for businesses and presented Philips’ approach to integrating the SDGs into their strategy. He further outlined how Philips is contributing to the SDG agenda and what it means to integrate the SDGs into business strategy and operations.

**Key messages:**

- The purpose of business must be redefined around creating shared value
- Meaningful innovation is necessary from all companies to ensure a healthier and more sustainable world
- Philips is particularly assessing its impact against SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being), 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) and 13 (Climate Action)
- Over US $1tn could be generated by 2025 through Circular Economy approaches

“Interesting to see early signals of how companies are responding to the SDGs in practice”
This session on Partnering with Academia connected business and academic representatives to discuss what the SDGs mean for companies and how they might spur effective collaboration with between the two by providing a common language for both.

In the panel discussion, the individual company representatives showcased their perspective on the SDGs as well as what has already been done from their side to achieve the goals. They further stressed the necessity to understand how the SDGs impact the day to day operation of the corporation and how academia can partner with and provide valuable support to businesses on this journey in terms of leadership and knowledge development, co-creation of solutions and impact measurement tools.

Key messages:
• It is important for companies to do well by doing good
• From a corporate perspective, measuring impact against all SDGs is a hard challenge and requires to focus just on a few goals
• Business schools should be open to understanding corporate dilemmas and may be able to provide long-term solutions to businesses they engage with
• Companies are increasingly relying on interdisciplinary approaches to tackle SDG-related issues

“Through partnering, the SDGs can be a game-changer”
The closing keynote aimed to highlight that for companies to truly contribute to the SDGs, they must move beyond current forms of engagement, abandon a narrow focus on the SDGs as an opportunity to increase corporate profits and embrace their wider responsibilities to the societies in which they operate.

Ruth Mhlanga highlighted that before any considerations to ‘do good,’ businesses should ensure that their current activities do not have a negative impact on sustainable development outcomes and do not hinder the ability of others (governments, other businesses, civil society organizations) to achieve the SDGs.

Meaningful engagement by companies requires going beyond cherry-picking SDGs based on win-win opportunities, and instead integrating sustainable development concerns into their core operations. This requires them to look at how their impact is shaped by business functions such as sourcing, employment, tax planning and corporate strategy and to adopt a holistic approach to engagement with the SDGs. This deeper level of engagement requires businesses to raise their level of ambition, identify key areas of tension between commercial practices and the SDGs, and work to find ways to realign them.

Key messages:

• There is a need for more transformative ways of thinking about the future role of business in sustainable development
• When addressing the SDGs, companies should prioritise an understanding of impact; align core business strategies with the SDGs; work towards systemic change with government and peers as well as financing the goals
• New business models need to align business agendas with societal aims
• Companies should improve the quality of disclosure and reporting aligned with the SDGs
• Business schools should break with old models of thinking and educating

“Fabulous to hear Oxfam’s perspective so articulately presented”
The grand challenges that the UN SDGs address are so interconnected that they cannot be left to the efforts of single institutions, disciplines or sectors. Meeting these challenges calls for a global, concerted response that mobilises public bodies, private sector organizations, academic institutions and other stakeholders.

The opening panel of the second day was a harbinger for how different constituencies can pool their efforts to generate powerful ideas, strengthen research and innovation capacities to increase impact.

This Panel highlighted that research & innovation on the SDGs can only happen through meaningful and well-functioning partnerships. These knowledge alliances must be trans-sectoral and trans-disciplinary with an aim for impact. A network like ABIS is therefore of major importance and a SDG 17 enabler between its heterogeneous constituencies.

Key messages:

- European and National authorities will invest in sustainable economic and social models that sustain economic growth – 3% of EU GDP in R&I by 2020
- The EU is in the process of translating the SDGs into Funding Schemes
- Transdisciplinary, cross-sectorial collaboration is key to enable innovation
- Only an open collaboration between business, academia and public authorities can lead to win-win results and a further implementation of the SDGs
While the first panel of the day focused on research and science, this panel stressed how business school education is an integral part of generating the innovation and capacities necessary to achieve the SDGs. The panellists outlined how partnerships between universities and businesses can help students develop the right skills to be more agile and aware of socio-ecological issues.

The speakers highlighted the importance for our next generation of leaders to have an expansive and inspiring view of the role of the firm in society, and their own role as business leaders and citizens. To achieve this, new curricula will be needed that integrate the SDGs throughout their courses. Next to the changes regarding the aspects of university education, speakers echoed the need for students to gain corporate experiences early on to be able to understand the practical implications of their knowledge around sustainable development efforts and ultimately take on a leading role in driving progress.

Key messages:

• Business schools should promote innovative business approaches, critical thinking and change management skills
• Addressing sustainability in management education requires pursuing more active engagement with CEOs, institutional organisational transformation and different pedagogy
• Successful cascading of EU platforms for collaboration to Member States and institutions, however further improvement is needed regarding HEI openness to external stakeholders, inclusion and relevant student experiences
• Business and academia need to come together to put in place solutions such as dual learning schemes, dialogues at CEO-Dean levels, knowledge sharing, sustainability cases and executive learning, engagement HR communities and changes in recruitment practices
The concluding panel of the conference provided corporate and academic perspectives on measurement tools to ensure progress and accountability in implementing the 2030 agenda. The speakers addressed the ways how they are currently dealing with materiality impact measurement and SDGs.

Key messages:

- **AIM’s SDG strategy focuses on multidimensional rather than unidimensional objectives on ways of measuring**
- **Data Science is domain and sector-agnostic and can support decision-making**
- **Improvement of business reporting on the SDGs as new collaborative initiatives are set up (GRI & UN Global Compact)**
- **For BASF the SDGs provide orientation as a strategic frame in target setting and in reporting and are being integrated into decision making and sustainability assessment**
- **Solvay has developed a Sustainable Portfolio Management methodology to measure and monetise environmental impacts that influences strategic investments**

"An excellent panel. To measure impact and progress, use Project Management processes"
INTERACTIVE SESSIONS

CAPACITY BUILDING THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS

1.1 THE FUTURE BOARD – STEWARDSHIP FOR SUSTAINABLE SUCCESS
Anthony Carey - Partner Board Practice, Mazars
Olivier Boutellis-Taft - CEO, Accountancy Europe
Moderator: Raji Jagadeesan - Executive Director, Business for Development Institute, London Business School

1.2 SHAPING LEADERSHIP FOR AN INCREASINGLY COMPLEX WORLD
Patrick Hull - Global Learning Director, Unilever
Paul Begley - Programmes Director, University of Cambridge Institute for Sustainability Leadership
Moderator: Joris-Johann Lenissen - Managing Director, ABIS

1.3 SDG IMPACT THROUGH INVESTMENT – THE ROLE OF INVESTORS
Valeria Piani - Associate Director, ESG Engagement, UN Principles of Responsible Investment
Ophélie Mortier - Head of Responsible Investment, Degroof Petercam
Harry Hummels - Professor of Ethics, Organisations and Society, Maastricht University
Moderator: Ulrika Hasselgren - Managing Director and Global Head of Responsible Investment Strategy & ESG Integration, Institutional Shareholder Services

ADVANCING SDG RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

2.1 OPEN DATA AND OPEN SCIENCE FOR THE SDGs
Geoffrey Boulton - President, CODATA
Erik Wetter - Assistant Professor, Stockholm School of Economics & Co-Founder, Flowminder

2.2 BUSINESS MODEL INNOVATION FOR THE SDGs
Amanda Reid - Senior Network Manager, Waste to Resource Innovation Network, Manchester Metropolitan University
Pasquale Mazzuca - Managing Director, TalentWorks Group

2.3 INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH APPROACHES FOR THE SDGs
Sally Randles - Professor, Manchester Metropolitan University
Sherif Hassane - Director Global Health Academic Partnerships, GSK

DRIVING CHANGE IN BUSINESS EDUCATION TOWARDS THE SDGs

3.1 EMBRACING THE MILLENNIAL CHALLENGE
Abdelrahman Ayman - Global President, AIESEC
Levan Pangani - President, Oikos International
Maximilian Doyle - Founder, One for Ireland

3.2 DIGITAL INNOVATION & CHALLENGE-BASED EDUCATION
Christian Acosta-Flamma - CEO, Telanto
Thomas Oiburg - Professor, Fresenius Business School & Board Member, ABIS
Peter Baur - Policy Officer, DG Education and Culture, European Commission

3.3 REDEFINING CURRICULA FOR THE UN SDG ERA
Claire Preisser - Associate Director, Aspen Institute Business and Society Program
Ismail Erturk - Director for Social Responsibility and Engagement, Alliance Manchester Business School
Michel Bande - Senior Executive VP, Solvay
In each of the interactive sessions, participants were tasked to outline key challenges and solutions for mobilizing business-academic collaboration for the SDGs. This resulted in the identification of a non-exhaustive list of cross-cutting, interlinked dimensions that will have a significant impact in accelerating progress towards the SDGs and therefore represent pathways for action for our ABIS members until 2030.
Primary and secondary education
Skills and competences

Education, Talent & Leadership Development

Skills and competences

Innovative Pedagogies

• Developing ability to influence
• Developing ability to learn from failure
• Developing ability to dare to disagree
• Developing ability to take responsibility

Unique learning activities

• Problem-based approaches
• Teaching as guiding (support and interactive exchange)
• Adapting to millennial expectations and attention span

Leadership Development

• Informal learning
• Learning by doing
• Experiential learning
• Service-learning
• Pro bono work

• Mentorship and reverse mentorship
• Optimizing decision-making processes and teamwork
• Bring executives into nature & bring nature into the organisation
• Promote continuous education on SDGs
• Developing leadership at all levels, not only executive level

Academic evidence for SDGs business case

• Making the case for long term/SDG investment
• Understanding how performance targets drive sustainable progress
• Understanding "true cost" and "true value"
• Developing relevant impact assessments

Assessing SDG performance

• Integrate SDGs into governance and managers’ goals
• Measuring non-financial drivers around leadership
• Assessing university programs with respect to the SDGs
• Focusing on what can create real impact
• Developing clear and shared definitions and indicators

Create incentives and accountability

Partnerships & Collaboration

Enabling collaboration

• Fostering collaborative innovation
• Enhancing active engagement of governance
• Raising awareness of funding opportunities and open spaces for research
• Setting up environments to bring expertise together and co-create solutions

Knowledge Sharing

• Engaging in the global conversation
• Promoting spaces for dialogue
• Sharing best practices

Cooperating with policy makers and public authorities

• Shaping relevant policies
• Developing relevant infrastructure
This year’s ABIS Colloquium featured for the first time our ABIS Sustainability Award which honours initiatives and projects aiming to contribute to the UN Sustainable Development Goals. The contest aims to boost innovation in sustainability projects and to strengthen business-academic collaboration.

The ABIS Sustainability Award 2017 was won by Strathmore Business School for their project “Sustainability Strategy Agenda - End poverty, protect the planet, and ensure prosperity for all”. Strathmore Business School sees it as its responsibility to support the government and business community to realise the Sustainable Development Goals through research, innovation, and co-creation by creating a convergence between the academia, financial institutions, private sector, policy makers, media and researchers.

The ABIS award jury was chaired by Count Etienne Davignon - Belgian Minister of State & Honorary Advisory Board Chairman of ABIS, which jointly with Colloquium participants selected the winning project.
Introduction
Strathmore University has embedded the following SDG Goals in its Commitments:
- Realisation of Quality Education
- Affordable of Clean Energy
- Climate Change Action and Partnerships for Goals
SDG addressed 10, targets 169, Indicators 310

Objectives
- Demonstrating the role of academia in matters related to the Data Revolution for Sustainable Development
- Enhance the use of technology and data to improve the life of the bottom of the pyramid in line with SDG
- Influence Government to implement policies in sustainable development and Leave No One Behind.

Sustainability strategy Agenda- End poverty, protect the planet, and ensure prosperity for all

Greening 8000 minds on Affordable and Clean Energy

Initiative
Set up a 600KW solar system that generates electricity for the University and supplies excess electricity to the government’s national grid.

Impact
- 51% reduction in the university’s electricity bill;
- First university in East and Central Africa to rely on solar energy 100%
- Trained over 500 experts & students on the installation, design and maintenance of solar systems throughout Africa.
- Empowering and fostering innovation among the young generation on clean energy through training

Sustainable Agricultural through Agri-business training

Initiative
Under the AgriBusiness Department, Strathmore is contributing to SDG 2,4,13, 12 & 17 by:
- Capacity building of farmers in business, leadership & management
- Training investors on SDGs

Impact
- 250 investors have set-up profitable commercial producing for the local markets;
- Over 100 investors are managing successful agro-processing firms;
- 10 investors set up export firms that are exporting to international markets in Europe, USA and Asia
- Enhancing the capacity of investors in knowledge, skills, technology and financial services

Innovator and Accelerator for SMEs in Clean & Renewable Energy

Initiative
- Access to finance
- Business support
- Government Advisory
- Access to information
- Technical support

Impact
- Incubated over 200 SMEs in clean technology businesses
- Disbursed over USD 2.5M to SMEs
- Creation of more than 1440 direct and indirect jobs
- 120 enterprises commercialized
- 1,440 jobs created
- Over 250,000 people using clean energy
- Access to clean water among the bottom of the pyramid.
ABIS PARTNERS

INSEAD
MBA School
The Business School for the World

ABIS MEMBERS

CONTACT
ABIS - The Academy of Business in Society
Av Moliere 128
1050 Ixelles
Brussels
Belgium
Rudi Plettinx
Chief Executive Officer
rudi.plettinx@abis-global.org

Telephone: +32 (0)2 539 37 02
Twitter: @abisglobal

www.abis-global.org