

Collaboration for Impact

Why we believe in sector partnerships

Collaboration is vital to pursue the systemic changes needed in society and within business to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. We believe, and there is a growing body of evidence, that sector and multi-stakeholder partnerships have the potential to raise the integration of sustainability on the agenda, which will lead to new business opportunities and enhanced competitiveness.

To find out more about the levels of maturity and integration of sustainability within sector associations, we worked with PwC to survey and interview 16 European sector organisations from 11 different industry sectors.

The key findings of this research will be presented at our Brussels SDG Summit. The full report can be downloaded from [CSR Europe's website here](#).

The findings from this study are a call to action to drive market transformation at sectoral levels. After our Summit, we will extend the dialogue to:

- sector and industry leaders on practical ways to take action around SDGs; and
- EU institutions to explore how they can support industry leadership to accelerate the uptake of SDGs by the sectors.

We are very grateful to the sector associations for participating in the survey, to PwC for performing the research and to TBM for printing the study on sustainable Limex paper.

STEFAN CRETS
Executive Director
CSR Europe





Key findings

The SDGs won't be achieved without business collaboration and cooperation, and sector organisations have an important role to play in helping their members understand the importance of the goals and to encourage them to take action. Our research set out to establish how sector associations are working with their members on this journey. Here's a snapshot of how they are doing so far.

1. SUSTAINABILITY IS EMBEDDED ACROSS SECTOR ASSOCIATIONS, BUT MATURITY LEVELS VARY AND THERE SEEMS A HESITATION TO HELP MEMBERS

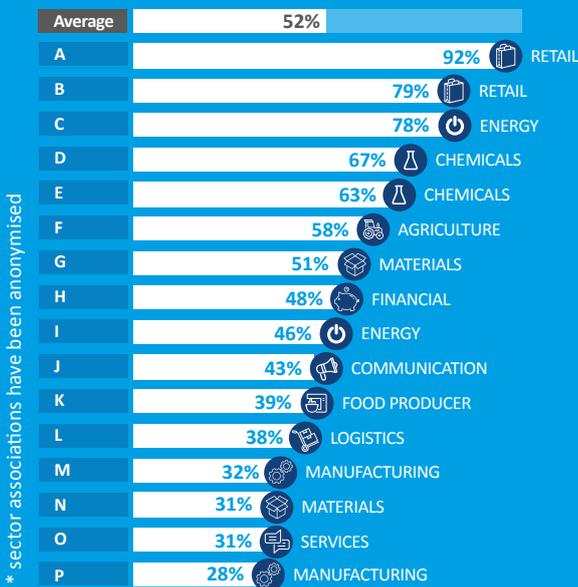
The survey evaluated the level of sustainability commitment and action of each sector association based on four levels of maturity:

1. strategic translation into the organisation;
2. activity level on sustainability and/or the SDGs;
3. involvement in policy work on sustainability and/or the SDGs;
4. focus on impact oriented action

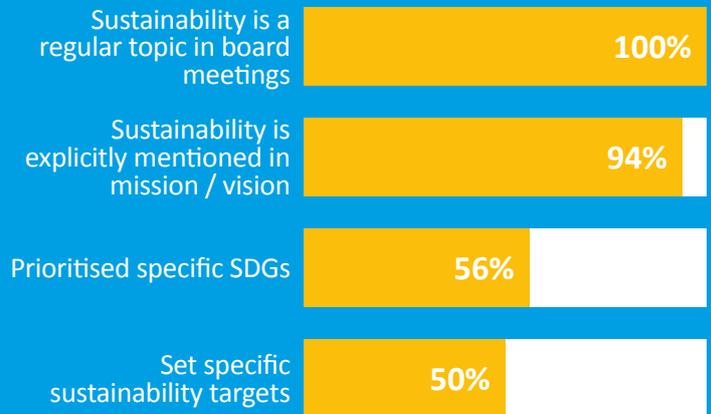
Overall maturity levels varied widely amongst the industry associations and reached an average of only 52%.

Despite enthusiasm to tackle the goals, the responses suggest hesitation in taking action. Sustainability is regularly discussed at Board meetings, and 94% said sustainability was specifically mentioned in mission statements and vision documents. However, just 56% prioritised specific SDGs and only 50% set specific sustainability targets.

Overall maturity assessment of European sector associations*



Percentage of associations taking specific steps to integrate sustainability into their organisations



2. SECTORS SEE A WIDE RANGE OF RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES ASSOCIATED WITH THE 17 SDGS

Climate Action (SDG 13), Industry and Innovation (SDG 9) and Affordable and Clean Energy (SDG 7) are seen as most important both for risks and opportunities.

In terms of priorities, No Poverty (SDG 1) is the top priority of associations (even though it is deemed a fairly low risk) followed by Responsible Consumption and Production (SDG 12) – a broad goal that addresses many individual sustainability issues such as waste, sourcing and supply chains.

SDGs were identified as presenting risks and opportunities to sector associations





3. THERE IS A REAL GAP BETWEEN BOARD VISION AND ACTIVITY LEVELS, PARTICULARLY THOSE FOCUSED ON IMPACT

The maturity gap between good intentions and meaningful action increases when we consider how strategic integration translates into member activities. On average, 72% of associations embed sustainability on a strategic level and 52% translate that commitment into policy work.

Just 35% however put those policies into practice in the form of impact projects. This current gap threatens the economic success of companies and the achievement of the SDGs if it is not addressed quickly.

Maturity analysis of sector organisations

72%

Embedded sustainability on a strategic level

52%

Engaged in policy work

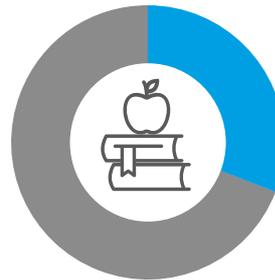
47%

Organised SDG/ sustainability activities

35%

Implemented impact projects

4. FOUR KEY AREAS SECTOR ORGANISATIONS CAN IMPROVE UPON IN ORDER TO CLOSE THE GAP AND INCREASE SDG ENGAGEMENT



IMPROVE EDUCATION

31%

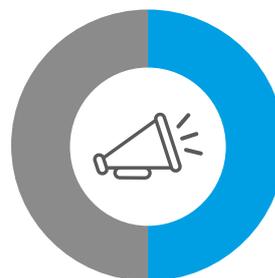
of associations currently have a specific learning or training offer on sustainability and/or the SDGs



INCREASE COLLABORATION

33%

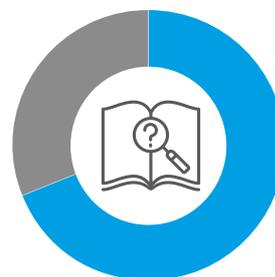
had engaged in multisector impact oriented projects explicitly linked to one or more of the SDGs



COMMUNICATE

50%

of the associations are not communicating regularly on the SDGs - mentioning them in less than 10% of communications



SHARE KNOWLEDGE

69%

organised activities in the past year to exchange on best practice and develop learning on how to approach the SDGs



RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE IMPACT THROUGH COLLABORATION

DEVELOP ROBUST SECTORIAL SDG ROADMAPS

Stakeholders across all sectors should support efforts to develop robust sectorial SDG roadmaps to guide their sector's shift to sustainable development in line with the Global Goals and galvanise sector transformations to address sustainability risks and opportunities



TOP CEOs TO SET VISION AND RALLY OTHERS

Sector associations should encourage CEO's from leading companies to rally others by setting out a vision and clear goals, and should support members with training and learning opportunities



INITIATE CROSS SECTOR COLLABORATION

Cross sector collaboration and recognition of the interlinkages between the goals are fundamental to reinforcing action



ENCOURAGE POLICY TO DRIVE SECTOR ACTIVITY

There is an important role for policymakers to encourage and enable sector activity, through guidance and policy initiatives.



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