

EMBA-2527-109-Sustainable Business & ESG

Name of lecturer(s) & Email	Phase, Status, Timing	ECTS*, CH & SDL**
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Description of the course

Learn to integrate Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) principles into business strategy, creating sustainable solutions that address societal challenges.

Course units

1. Introduction to sustainability
2. Foundations of ESG: A holistic approach
3. Introduction to Double Materiality
4. Sustainability regulatory framework
5. Sustainable business models

Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs)

By the end of the course, you will be able to...

1. Analyze the environmental, social, and governance (ESG) impacts of business operations and strategies.
2. Design sustainable business models that integrate ESG principles into core operations.
3. Evaluate the long-term financial and societal benefits of sustainability initiatives.
4. Develop actionable plans to improve an organization's ESG performance and reporting.
5. Demonstrate a commitment to global citizenship by leading sustainability-focused projects.

Notice: The information available in the course outline is subject to change. Please keep yourself informed at all times by regularly checking Canvas.

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Contribution to Programme Learning Objectives (PLOs)***

PLO 1.1. Design and communicate a compelling strategic vision that motivates and aligns cross-functional teams to achieve organisational goals.	Not Covered
PLO 1.2. Demonstrate collaborative leadership skills, effectively resolving conflicts, negotiating, and engaging diverse teams to reach optimal outcomes.	Not Covered
PLO 1.3. Communicate the strategy to make it understandable to anybody in the organisation and to the stakeholders.	Not Covered
PLO 2.1. Apply critical thinking and data-driven decision-making to detect, assess megatrends and technological disruptions (diagnose).	Introduction
PLO 2.2. Develop a set of clear and motivated decisions about the key element of the corporate strategy in response to market shifts: purpose, vision, missions, business model, portfolio, scopes, values & culture, digitalisation, innovation, organic and non-organic growth strategy.	Introduction
PLO 2.3. Plan the implementation of the corporate strategy and digital transformation enabling teams to adapt smoothly to evolving business environments and technological advancements.	Not Covered
PLO 3.1. Assess the long-term implications of business decisions on ESG factors and create strategies that balance profitability with social and environmental responsibility.	Mastery
PLO 3.2. Lead cross-cultural teams effectively and incorporate global perspectives into business strategies, demonstrating empathy and adaptability to diverse stakeholder needs to foster an authentic corporate citizenship.	Not Covered
PLO 3.3. Use the entrepreneurial toolbox and mindset to shape innovative scalable solutions responding to new societal challenges.	Not Covered

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Contribution to the Environmental, social and governance (ESG)

Course Contribution to ESG: Yes

Contact Hours are dedicated to ESG: 26

Contact Hours containing climate solutions for how organisations can reach net zero: 8

Description of contribution:

The "Sustainable Business & ESG" course is designed to empower executives with the critical knowledge, tools, and mindset required to embed ESG principles into their business strategies. Through a combination of foundational knowledge, real-life case studies, hands-on exercises, and exposure to cutting-edge industry practices, the course enables participants to transform ESG compliance into long-term value creation.

Environmental (E):

The course develops a deep understanding of environmental challenges and equips participants with the practical tools to address them. Key components include an introduction to carbon footprinting using the Greenhouse Gas Protocol (Scopes 1, 2, and 3), an overview of the Science-Based Targets initiative (SBTi), and exercises that simulate real-life emissions measurement and reduction planning. Participants also explore the Circular Economy and its application through collaborative workshops and discussions with sustainability leaders from companies like Procter & Gamble. This enables them to rethink resource flows and develop regenerative business models.

Social (S):

Participants analyze how businesses can design socially inclusive strategies, with a focus on sustainable business models that embed social impact across operations and value chains. Real-life case studies and discussions address topics such as fair labor practices, diversity, stakeholder engagement, and social innovation. Participants also conduct a double materiality analysis identifying key social issues in their chosen companies, enabling them to articulate and prioritize strategies that benefit both the business and society.

Governance (G):

The course emphasizes the critical role of governance in steering sustainability performance. Through a dedicated session on sustainable governance, participants examine case studies of corporate failures and successes to identify best practices in leadership, transparency, and ethical decision-making. Discussions also highlight evolving regulatory frameworks (e.g., CSRD, SFDR), helping participants anticipate and navigate compliance demands while aligning them with strategic objectives.

Integration & Value Creation:

One of the course's core innovations is the focus on double materiality as a strategic compass, not just a compliance tool. Participants use this lens to design value-creating strategies across ESG pillars. Group work culminates in final presentations where participants articulate ESG-driven transformations for real companies—highlighting how sustainability initiatives create both societal and business value.

Conclusion:

The course moves beyond awareness and compliance to empower participants to become active change agents. It develops ESG fluency, strategic thinking, and leadership capabilities, allowing them to embed sustainability into their organization's core purpose, operations, and culture. This approach contributes directly to the EMBA's mission to foster responsible global leaders capable of driving long-term impact."

 This course contributes to the [Sustainable Development Initiative](#) at the Solvay Brussels School of Economics & Management

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Assessment methodology / Learners Use of Time and Load (PART 1)

Evaluation scale

0-20

Pre-Assessed Task: Introduction to Sustainability

- **Value of pre-assessed task:** 10%
- **Type of assessment:** Individual
- **Deadline:** due 03/05/2026
- **Guidelines:** Please take part in the online MOOC (<https://www.coursera.org/learn/sustainability>) to understand the foundations of Sustainability.
- **Feedback Provision:** The purpose of this MOOC is to bring all participants to the same baseline level of understanding regarding sustainability. This ensures that, during the in-person sessions, everyone speaks the same language and shares a common foundation of knowledge. It will allow us to optimize the learning experience through case discussions and other interactive methods. Completion of the course will be assessed based on the certificate of completion.

Key-Assessed Task: From Compliance to Strategy - Turning Double Materiality into ESG Value Creation

- **Value of pre-assessed task:** 90%
- **Type of assessment:** In-group
- **Deadline:** due 24/05/2026
- **Guidelines:**

The final group project, titled "From Compliance to Strategy: Turning Double Materiality into ESG Value Creation", invites participants to apply course learnings to a real-world company case provided by the instructors.

Objective:

Transform the concept of double materiality—core to the CSRD—from a mere compliance exercise into a strategic tool for long-term value creation.

Structure of the project:

1. Company assignment

Each group will be assigned a company currently facing sustainability challenges. The companies will be pre-selected by the course team to ensure diverse ESG profiles and real strategic stakes.

2. Double Materiality Analysis

Groups will conduct a double materiality assessment, identifying key material topics across the three ESG pillars:

- Environmental (E)
- Social (S)
- Governance (G)

3. Strategic ESG Response

For one selected material issue in each ESG pillar, the group will:

- Explain why it is material (based on stakeholder and financial relevance)
- Propose a credible, actionable strategy that mitigates risk and creates value—both for the company and its ecosystem

4. Presentation

The results will be presented in class during a final session. Each group will deliver a 10-minute presentation, followed by 5 minutes of Q&A.

Evaluation Criteria (out of 20 points):

- Relevance and quality of materiality analysis (6 pts)
- Creativity and strategic alignment of ESG strategies (6 pts)
- Demonstrated understanding of ESG as value driver (4 pts)
- Clarity and impact of the oral presentation (4 pts)

Expected Output:

- One PowerPoint deck
- Presentation in class to be confirmed

This project is meant to consolidate participants' ability to analyze sustainability challenges critically and to translate ESG insights into strategic business actions.

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Assessment methodology / Learners Use of Time and Load (PART 2)

- **Feedback Provision:** Feedback will be provided in two complementary ways:

Live Q&A Session:

After each group presentation, a brief Q&A session will be held to allow for immediate interaction, challenge, and clarification. This will serve as a first opportunity to give verbal feedback and engage in constructive discussion.

Evaluation Grid with Written Feedback:

Each group will receive a detailed evaluation grid after the presentations. This grid will include both quantitative scoring and qualitative comments on two main aspects:

- Content and strategic relevance of the analysis
- Presentation skills and clarity of communication
- This will ensure that each group understands their strengths and areas for improvement.

Learning Materials

Readings

Books / Articles

- Readings will be made available in the Canvas Classroom.

Cases (available in Canvas)

- Unilever's New Global Strategy: Competing through Sustainability. This case will be used to anchor our discussion on how sustainability can become a core lever of competitive strategy.
- Bpost – Designing a Sustainability Strategy (original case developed for the course). This case will be co-created with a senior internal stakeholder from Bpost and will be presented in an interactive classroom setting. It will be primarily based on a guest lecture delivered by the Bpost representative, followed by structured group discussions.
- Procter & Gamble – Making Decarbonization a Business Driver (original case developed for the courses. Similarly, this case will be developed jointly with a representative from P&G and used in class after their live presentation, allowing participants to work through key challenges and strategic trade-offs.

Only the Unilever case will require advance reading. The Bpost and P&G cases will be presented in class and will not require any preparatory work from the participants.. All materials will be shared via Canvas in due time.

Other Learning Materials

Introduction to Sustainable Development by the University of Illinois. Available at <https://www.coursera.org/learn/sustainability>

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