

Fourth UCB-SBSEM Business & Society Symposium

Time to make complex choices:

How to balance purpose, profit and societal value

Brussels, 27 May 2025 pm

Concept note

Why ?

Open a newspaper today and you will see headlines about ongoing environmental and social crises – clear signs of our economies’ unsustainability. But you will also find criticisms about the design and speed of current sustainability efforts, and even debates on whether it is the role of business to tackle these crises.

We are at a turning point. The tensions today reflect the challenges of reinventing how we operate as societies. Business leaders and governments are struggling to activate and deploy the needed changes on the ground—not because of technology, not because of unwillingness, but because of the difficulty of integrating the systemic nature of the challenges into decision-making and action.

The Business and Society Symposium

The Business and Society symposium is a joint initiative of the Solvay Brussels School of Economics and Management (SBS) and UCB, a leading European pharmaceutical company, to foster **cross-stakeholder collaborations** to tackle societal challenges. An invitation-only event, the symposium brings together leading voices from business, civil society, academia, policy, and the youth to discuss practical cases and experiment with new collaborative approaches to making progress.

Time to make complex choices

Our fourth symposium will focus on frameworks and processes that organizations use to integrate the complexity of the choices they face and build buy-in for their decisions.

The symposium will consist of a panel introducing different perspectives on the challenges of balancing purpose, profit and societal value in complex choices, and interactive workshops during which participants will experience and apply the decision-making framework used by

featured organizations. The frameworks will be applied to a real decision these organizations faced, introduced by one of the protagonists of this decision.

What will attendees gain?

Participants will:

- Learn to identify ethical dilemmas and increase their literacy about what makes a decision complex and the importance of asking the right questions
- Experience decision-making and decision-making frameworks that seek to integrate the systemic nature of the challenges organizations face in real-life situations
- Learn about the role of organizational culture and cross-stakeholder dialogue in hampering or fostering engagement and support for courageous decisions
- Network with peers and crowdsource experiences, tools and solutions from a diverse set of practitioners and leaders.