

Fourth UCB-SBSEM Business & Society Symposium

Summary of previous editions

2022-2023-2024

The Business & Society Symposium is an annual event hosted in Brussels as a joint initiative of UCB and the Solvay Brussels School of Economics and Management. The event has the ambition to foster continuous learning and collaboration between all stakeholders- business, academia, policy, civil service and youth, to examine our collective roles in transforming our economies and societies. Over the last three years, we have raised the ambition and collaborative capacity of our community of diverse stakeholders in a variety of ways

Over the last three years, we have deepened relationships across an increasingly diverse set of stakeholders through our networking moments, dedicated website and communications – with many returning each year. Since the first Symposium, we have moved from static panels to dynamic interactive workshops rooted in real-life case studies; event summaries to analysis reports with actionable insights.

While we step-up our ambition in 2025, our aim remains constant: to foster cross-stakeholder collaborations to tackle societal challenges, through capacity building, knowledge sharing and networking. Rooted in the belief that sustained change requires *real practice*, the Symposium provides a space for actively developing skills in a safe environment in which challenging conversations and tensions are not just allowed but encouraged.

This is no longer just an ambition; we have made progress.

The first year focused on **why** all stakeholders need to collaborate to address social and environmental issues –

*At its inception in 2022, we started to understand stakeholders' willingness to collaborate across different groups and build awareness about the opportunities for businesses to align their **purpose** with social and environmental needs.*

The second year focused on **what** can be done to create multistakeholder solutions -

*Having laid the foundation for more ambitious work, we moved beyond discussion to equip participants with critical tools for **multistakeholder collaboration** and co-created actionable solutions for advancing social and sustainability objectives.*

The third year delved into **how** to put purpose into action -

Building on the successful use of case studies the previous year, in 2024 we enabled participants to move beyond hypotheticals to uncover a rich variety of insights and concrete solutions to bring back to their work.

At the 2024 Symposium balancing competing priorities - such as between profit, people and planet - was identified as a major challenge for leaders as they workshopped solutions to case studies and in relation to their own work.

Now, we are ready to delve deeper into **solutions to real challenges and tensions** that have arisen at all the Symposiums to date.

We are approaching the fourth Symposium having developed a strong foundation of awareness, tools and solutions – as well as trust amongst our community.