
GUIDING CHANGE FOR GROWTH

Sustainable business growth in times of
a new political reality in the Netherlands



*The beat of a butterfly's wings can
set off a storm a world away*

OmnicomPRGroup

Whitepaper by: Marjolein Rigter, Eli Schim van der Loeff & Flip Dötsch
May 2024

CONTENT

INTRODUCTION - THE DYNAMICS OF BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY	
• Dutch perspective	PG. 03
• Panel of leading sustainability thinkers	PG. 05
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	PG. 06
A DETAILED VIEW ON THE IMPACT OF:	
• Government	PG. 09
• Science	PG. 15
• Business and the financial sector	PG. 20
GUIDING CHANGE FOR GROWTH	
• Reputation management	PG. 27
• Public affairs	PG. 34
CURIOUS HOW WE CAN GUIDE YOUR CHANGE FOR GROWTH?	PG. 40
Appendix	
I: METHODOLOGY	PG. 41
II: REFERENCES	PG. 42

INTRODUCTION

THE DYNAMICS OF BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY

'The only constant in life is change': this quote from the Greek philosopher Heraclitus is commonly used to describe the state of society at large in which to run a business. And he was right. We see a world in a state of transformation in which businesses are looking for solid ground. As a global communication consultancy, at Omnicom PR Group (OPRG) we are determined to guide change for growth. And there will be change: earlier this year, our colleagues defined four key global topics that will dominate 2024:

- 1)** Climate disclosure requirements will become a reality and companies must be prepared
- 2)** Climate action is needed from businesses and governments
- 3)** The impact of upcoming elections that are scheduled in 70 countries
- And last but not least **4)** AI: companies will try to increasingly leverage AI, and regulation will try to keep up.

Of these four topics the third one is expected to have a serious impact on the other three. Because this year close to three billion people will be heading to the ballot box in about 70 countries. Populism is gaining momentum across continents that is based on a growing number of citizens who feel ignored, underrepresented and powerless. Populistic politics promise to give a voice to the unheard. With a potential change in political priorities, the question of what will happen to sustainability efforts arises. Some fear that centre-right governments will drop sustainability from their list of priorities.

Dutch perspective

This global political trend also hit the Netherlands. On 22nd November, almost 10.5 million Dutch voted, and the outcome was an unexpected win for the Party for Freedom (PVV). The big win for the PVV, but also for NSC and BBB can partly be attributed to voters sharing their discontent with 'old' politics. The PVV is outspoken about climate: in their election manifesto they wrote to shred all climate plans once they hold office.

THE DYNAMICS OF BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY

What's at stake for sustainable business growth in the Netherlands?

All these have an impact on businesses. Not only on multinationals, but also on small and medium enterprises. Especially those who have placed sustainability at the core of their business and have or are planning investments in sustainable operations. Given the new political reality, there are certainly risks, but there are also opportunities to grow and rethink business models. That's where we can help. At OPRG we are driven to guide you through this rapidly changing world. We assess change, map stakeholders and their roles, and determine how we can turn change or risks into business opportunities. Using a compelling communications strategy, we help you to deliver on a better world and create trust, resulting in the growth of your business.

In this whitepaper we bring together different perspectives. We collect and share insights that help navigate risks and opportunities for businesses in the Netherlands. These insights help you understand what's at stake and, if needed, optimise your business strategy, reputation management and public affairs activities. All with the same aim: to build a sustainable economy.

Stakeholder landscape

We recognise six key, interdependent stakeholders who play a role in driving a sustainable economy: businesses, science, government, financial institutions, media, and NGOs. In this paper however, we will focus on four stakeholder groups specifically: government, science, business and the financial sector.

Panel of leading sustainability thinkers

Aligned with the aforementioned stakeholders, we carefully identified leading sustainability thinkers who would bring a unique perspective on the current affairs and related risks and opportunities for businesses in the Netherlands.

THIS IS OUR PANEL, IN ALPHABETIC ORDER.



Maarten van Dam
Partner at PYMWYMIC



Silvio Erkens
Member of the house
of representatives
Dutch VVD politician
Spokesperson for
sustainability



Tjeerd de Groot
Former member
of the house
of representatives
Dutch D66 politician
Spokesperson for
sustainability
and agriculture



Suzanne Kröger
Member of the house
of representatives
Dutch GroenLinks/
PvdA politician
Spokesperson for
sustainability



Harmen Krul
Member of the house
of representatives
Dutch CDA politician
Spokesperson for
sustainability



Derk Loorbach
Professor of Socio-
Economic Transitions
Erasmus University



Andre Nijhof
Professor of Sustainable
Business and Stewardship
Nyenrode University



Solange Rouschop
Chief Sustainability Officer
ABN AMRO



Lucas Simons
NewForesight founder
'*Changing the Game*'
author



Pier Vellinga
Professor of Climate
Change and Societal
Implications
VU University of
Amsterdam

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

When we connect the climate-related trends with geopolitical developments, we see populism gaining momentum across continents. And with that comes the risk that sustainability will fall further down the government's list of priorities. The Netherlands follows this political trend. In the context of a new political reality, this white paper therefore provides the answer to the question:

'What's at stake for sustainable business growth in the Netherlands in a new political reality?'

Under this question other questions live:

- Will sustainability demand change from stakeholders?
- Are sustainable investments still feasible or profitable in the future?
- Where can new partners and opportunities be found when a new Dutch government might take a different course of action regarding sustainability?

All of these questions are, in the current political landscape, relevant.

This whitepaper shows that the sustainable transition will continue despite the fact that we are approaching a different political and social terrain. Our advice is to keep moving and act on new opportunities, as there are plenty of them right now. We must welcome new leaders with fresh and sustainable ideas if they manage to truly connect with the new reality of our country.

Yes, there are certainly risks but this paper shows there is enough reason to be optimistic about the sustainable opportunities of this new reality.

And yes, lack of trust is a major issue for the Dutch government, and this is also detrimental to climate policy. And the continuous change in policy and tax regimes have a negative impact on how attractive the Netherlands is as a business partner. Anticipated coalition members promise to reduce the burden of taxes on ordinary civilians and it seems likely that a new coalition will seek ways to shift the burden on to those who pollute the most. This could pose a risk to non-Dutch multinationals that in the eyes of civilians seem to bring little added value to the Netherlands.

The trend of **questioning the credibility of science** and the discussions around fact or opinion also make it harder to find common ground on what exactly is sustainable. Know that the World Economic Forum has indicated misinformation or disinformation as the number one in their latest risk report. The **lack of a shared story or vision** makes it more difficult to get actors moving and/or moving in the same direction.

It is however clear that the financial sector sees various assets on the balance sheet that will be negatively impacted by climate change and that will result in a (heavy) **loss of value**. This is a risk that needs to be managed proactively. Yet business should not approach sustainability exclusively from a perspective of risk. Doing the bare minimum for reasons of compliance and to tick the right boxes is simply not enough. The answer is not to continue the old but to create something new. New approaches are needed to create better outcomes. Or better said, will create better outcomes.

We see clear opportunities for sustainable business initiatives that bring economic advantages to businesses and consumers, especially those in **support of local and regional initiatives**. 'Netherlands first' could be a new guideline and if moral motivation might be lacking, **money still talks the loudest**. Bring in fresh, pragmatic ideas that bridge sustainable business growth and the interests of regular Dutch citizens well. Science could be a helpful partner for business because business can help scientists come out of their own silo and make **business development and research go hand in hand**. We see numerous successful examples of that.

Seeking **new partnerships** will be essential for companies going forwards. In times where government support is expected to be lacking, there are new allies to be found. Step in the world, take a look in your value chain and see where like-minded companies are. And do not forget NGOs, authorities and citizens. Even if government support does lack, make yourself useful to the **new political generation** that has plenty of ambition to change and a need for the right information to do so properly. With a **shared vision**, businesses and their partners can make more of an impact in terms of sustainability.

For this to work, it is crucial that companies take a **vulnerable** stance and that they are ready to **embrace external input**. This input is essential for a company to learn and discover where positive impact can be made and negative impact can be mitigated.

Dare to go outside and you may find unexpected new allies. For companies in doubt, now is the time to start communicating your sustainability journey. **Bonus points in terms of reputation** are available for those who take the initiative. **Do not wait for criticism** to hit and force you into a more negative narrative of defence. Share your way ahead. Making it a joint journey is even better, but regardless, be clear about it and take the lead. And never forget to make a positive, concrete promise for sustainability to distinguish yourself from all of the others focusing on mitigation.

True leaders listen with care, before they make clear decisions on the joint way forward.

The time to act is now. It's time to guide change for growth.

GUIDING CHANGE FOR GROWTH

A DETAILED VIEW ON THE IMPACT
OF THE GOVERNMENT



A DETAILED VIEW ON THE IMPACT OF THE GOVERNMENT

In this chapter, we reflect in more detail on the way that the Dutch government is currently shaping up, and the way that it's expected to shape up in the future. We focus on the risks and opportunities this brings for businesses in the Netherlands.

View on current affairs

Lack of trust instrumental to 2023 elections

The lack of trust in the government was one of the main topics of the 2023 national elections. The panel believes the distrust and disconnect with citizens is a direct result of a lack of clarity, consistency and transparency. The PVV 'used this trend' and pledged in their manifesto for change: "Not an all-powerful government that crushes people, but a government that is there for its citizens, not just those who belong to the left-liberal elite".

Lucas Simons recognises the deterioration of trust in the government: "Dutch politics is aligned with international political trends. There is a lack of trust. It's the people versus the elite. Polarisation and fragmentation are fed by social media and everyone has his or her own truth." Simons continues, "one big lesson that needs to be learned is that the old doesn't work anymore: the role of government as facilitator and initiator needs to change".

Professor Derk Loorbach takes a broader view on the trust issue: "The current economy is structurally unjust and unsustainable. There is a social dissatisfaction with social elites and all kinds of interests that have shaped this and maintain it. There is no vision for the future. Without a vision, how can a new, different sustainable economy emerge?"

The panel believes that a new government should close the gap in society and build trust by being clear, consistent and transparent. To rebuild trust in the government, NSC and BBB focus on predictability. Short-term politics will be replaced by looking to the horizon, and yo-yo policies that changes overnight must be avoided. People must be able to trust that a ruling will still exist a year from now.

Polluter pays principle

Another current trend is the majority that seems to form to introduce a 'polluter pays' principle, in which everyone pays in proportion to their consumption or impact. Silvio Erkens: "By putting a price on pollution, companies will have a predictable incentive to invest in the sustainable alternative. Companies like it



Lucas Simons

"Dutch politics is aligned with international political trends. There is a lack of trust. It's the people versus the elite. Polarisation and fragmentation are fed by social media and everyone has his or her own truth."



Silvio Erkens

"By putting a price on pollution, companies will have a predictable incentive to invest in the sustainable alternative. Companies like it because they know what they must comply with, the government does not steer them in the route they have to choose."

A DETAILED VIEW ON THE IMPACT OF THE GOVERNMENT

because they know what they must comply with, the government does not steer them in the route they have to choose”.

In line with this, Erkens does not believe in so-called bullying taxes for civilians and small SMEs, such as a use tax on plastics. He feels more in favour of taxing the biggest polluters for their emissions in line with ETS: “We should make the big moves on the big polluters, that will provide the biggest bang for buck and is also the most equitable. We cannot say to a small SME that it must become more sustainable whilst TATA Steel, under whose smoke the SME lives, gets an extra ten years to become more sustainable”.

The PVV, BBB and NSC also want to spare citizens and small businesses from disproportionate climate measures, albeit in different ways. While the PVV would prefer to see all climate measures scrapped, it is likely that, due to all sorts of restraining forces such as agreed climate policy and coalition parties that want to achieve climate goals at all costs, they will focus on reducing the burden on citizens.

BBB is realistic about the switch that needs to be made, but wary of its proportionality: “those in that write red digits cannot act green” is used for this purpose. The NSC agrees with the VVD in believing that climate goals must be achieved, but maintains that climate policy must be feasible and affordable.

After the dutchman voted in a majority for parties that vow to reduce the burden of taxes on the ordinary civilian, it seems likely that a new coalition will seek ways to shift the burden to those that pollute the most. In keeping with the sentiment of the PVV, this could pose a risk for those non-Dutch multinationals that seem to bring little in terms of added value for the Netherlands. Simultaneously, this risk is somewhat mitigated by the position of the VVD and NSC, who are vying to let the big polluters be part of the transition for fear that they would otherwise move their business elsewhere and continue emitting.

Risks for businesses

The lack of trust in the government is detrimental to climate policy. Suzanne Kröger expresses her firm belief that tackling the climate crisis cannot be done without societal support. The latest election results show us that Dutch citizens do not currently include combatting climate change as one of the most important topics.

Unpredictability halts investments

According to our panel of politicians, the Dutch government is not up to par when it comes to being a dependable partner. Tjeerd de Groot, who gained

“Those in that write red digits cannot act green.”

A DETAILED VIEW ON THE IMPACT OF THE GOVERNMENT

national notoriety with his clear ambition to half the Dutch livestock population, feels that broken promises are one of the main reasons that companies and citizens no longer trust the government. "Too often politicians present things too positively, leaving people disappointed. The result repeatedly differs from the promise made." He remembers an empty promise that some of his colleagues made during a big farmers protest in the Hague: "On that day, coalition MPs promised the farmers that livestock numbers would stay the same. Ironically, the same politicians negotiated at the ministry about the reduction of livestock later that week."

Tjeerd de Groot urges politicians to be honest to society, even if messages will not go down well. He tried to communicate clearly, consistently and transparently when it came to telling farmers why the rules must change: "In my view, trust in politics starts the moment you look a farmer in the eye and say: you haven't done anything wrong, but we are going to do things differently and this is my proposal". Suzanne Kröger feels the same way – the new government needs to provide the public with clarity and clear motivation for its choices.

"Rob Jetten (Minister for Climate) called the CEO of TATA steel to inform him that using coal would be forbidden from 2030. The CEO did not get angry with him but thanked him for the clarity. Politicians have an obligation to be clear to companies. Then they know what the playing field looks like and can adjust their decisions accordingly, which will put things into motion." Tjeerd de Groot.

The influential Dutch Association for Businesses (VNO-NCW) voiced its concerns on the risks of an unpredictable government. In their letter to the informateur Plasterk they write: "Investment in the climate has been under pressure for some time and new concerns have recently been added. Entrepreneurs face uncertainty about the direction in which they can successfully invest, due to the problems on the grid and uncertainty over policy. In order to make investments, companies and entrepreneurs need to know where they stand. They are not helped by retroactive measures, continuously changing (tax) rates, ever-changing rules or by going back on decisions that have been made before. Companies have based their investments on these decisions".

Harmen Krul agrees. "There are several examples in which the government does not create the conditions for a safe environment to invest. Rules are set, for instance for building wind turbines at sea, and when these rules are met the government decides to add another set of criteria. This faltering government policy causes a drop in sustainable investments".

"It is important that you don't turn all climate policy on its head, change all the rules and choose a different direction. Because then you'll spend another two or three years working out all those plans, nothing will happen in practice, no company will invest. If you want to achieve goals you cannot pull the plug on



Suzanne Kröger

"The new government needs to provide the public with clarity and clear motivation for its choices."

"Entrepreneurs face uncertainty about the direction in which they can successfully invest."

A DETAILED VIEW ON THE IMPACT OF THE GOVERNMENT

everything and start all over again. Climate policy requires a long-term vision," is the warning for a new government from Silvio Erkens.

Opportunities for business

This is not the first setback for the climate cause

Where there are risks, there are also opportunities.

The panel feels that the election results can slow down sustainability efforts, but will not be able to stop them fully. Pier Vellinga refers to the setbacks that sustainability has already overcome: "Sustainability has been around for fifty years. In the seventies, the club of Rome kickstarted the debate, then in the nineties the climate topic was added and people seemed to lose interest. However, since 2000 it has once again risen in importance with the Paris Agreement".

Sustainable is cheaper

Vellinga expects that the trend of plenty of democracies voting for right-wing governments will not seriously harm the cause: "Technologies have made sustainability attractive. Wind turbines first ran on subsidies, but now make a lot of money. Solar panels are following an exponential growth curve too, just like renewables and batteries. So, if only for purely commercial reasons, fossil fuels will be history in 20 to 30 years".

Next to that, Vellinga argues that sustainability also gains more traction because citizens demand a healthy living environment. "If you want to live healthily, you're going to ingest fewer toxins, and you will not accept Chemelot polluting the rivers or farmers putting too much manure on their land".

Silvio Erkens agrees with Vellinga when it comes to the financial benefits of sustainability. By his reasoning, sustainability provides cost savings and other benefits now and in the future that the PVV would welcome: "Insulating houses reduces people's energy bills, building nuclear power plants ensures independence from certain regimes, and companies also want to move away from natural gas because they see the high costs of it and they are also tied to European policies."

Local focus

Reflecting on the current sentiment in Dutch politics, André Nijhof is net-positive on the potential impact on the economy. He believes that sustainability will remain important, but will be part of an economic transition that is more focused on smaller and more local economies. Nijhof sees possibilities for sustainability to remain a topic under a new cabinet: "Obviously, the usual sustainability



André Nijhof

"Technologies have made sustainability attractive."

"Obviously, the usual sustainability themes will not be as prominent as they used to be."

A DETAILED VIEW ON THE IMPACT OF THE GOVERNMENT

themes will not be as prominent as they used to be. We'll see more of things like 'the Netherlands first', and shifting supportive regulations from businesses towards citizens, migration and the impact on local communities will become more prominent".

"I expect a forward progression on a few themes. For example, more impulse on local and regional economies. Not by definition to stimulate a circular economy, but because they provide a positive perspective for action for the Dutch. A chance for people who want to start a locally or regionally driven economy. That's a positive impulse of politics in transition. Give the benefits to the people, for example with energy. There are highs and lows on the energy net. Be flexible with the tariffs and promote the use of energy in the 'low periods'. Allow citizens to benefit and participate in the transformation by giving them a perspective and economic incentive", Nijhof comments.

GUIDING CHANGE FOR GROWTH

A DETAILED VIEW ON THE IMPACT
OF SCIENCE



A DETAILED VIEW ON THE IMPACT OF SCIENCE

The science sector plays an important role in providing new intelligence, but also in developing solutions to problems on the short and long term. We recognise both social and technical science.

View on current affairs

Science is greatly valued for its agenda-setting force, its solutions and innovations. The panel is unanimous on the importance of science. The role of science as a neutral bringer of facts and knowledge is highly valued. With the scale of the climate problem growing, science has also become increasingly vocal in recent years.

Pier Vellinga, who was actively involved in setting up the [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change \(IPCC\)](#) as Vice Chairman in 1989, comments: “Technical science has a role in addressing, pushing and providing insights. For example, the IPCC has addressed the climate story for more than 25 years, before climate was integrated in the Paris agreement. Science has played a critical role in the mega trend.”

Silvio Erkens is very happy with the role that science plays: “Climate science is pushing us to keep taking steps and these make sure that the climate does not sink down the agenda, which is incredibly important. Science is also at the wheel of coming up with new solutions and innovations that we don’t yet have.”

Suzanne Kröger agrees with the praise, but at the same time is saddened that science must play this ‘agenda setting’ role: “We live in a very remarkable time. Today, when it comes to sustainability, scientists are more radical than politicians and most activists. All scientific reports stress that action must be taken now. That shows how incredibly urgent the issue is.”

Risks for businesses

The credibility of science is doubted by some

The influence that science has on the climate debate is questioned by some. Several political parties have voiced their criticism of the dogmatic use of science. As a result, science is sometimes disqualified and its impartiality questioned. This has led to less trust in the neutrality and acceptance of science. According to our panel, this is a dangerous development, especially regarding climate change, as everyone has an interest in the correct facts.



Silvio Erkens

“Climate science is pushing us to keep taking steps.”

A DETAILED VIEW ON THE IMPACT OF SCIENCE

Andre Nijhof contributes the distrust in science to populism and polarisation, a statement with which Harmen Krul agrees: "Science is no longer seen as a strong foundation for policymaking. This is due to blending alternative truths and that is not a good development. Take science seriously!"

According to our panel, questioning the credibility of science means that transformations and changes by businesses, which are backed up by science, have the potential to be questioned and trust is at risk.

Lack of transdisciplinarity

The world of science is very introverted and only focused on its own area of expertise, according to Derk Loorbach. "Natural science is mainly busy describing how bad things are. Social science in general is only studying the present and not the future. No policy maker or business is interested in these insights. The culture within the world of science finds taking a transdisciplinary approach difficult."

One risk resulting from the current way of doing science is that businesses, which are inherently focused on the future and creating innovations, cannot receive the right input from science to create impactful innovations. This is related to the current way that the government and science are driving change from separate and individual transition domains. This can be observed in the energy transition and food transition: not having a holistic approach involving the whole value chain slows down the progress and potential positive impact of these transitions. Driving change from silos also slows down transdisciplinary innovations by businesses.

Opportunities for businesses

The panel believes opportunities for businesses will arise from diverse partnerships and early integration of science and technology in business strategy development.

Transdisciplinarity

The lack of transdisciplinarity does not only form a threat but also an opportunity for businesses. A big opportunity lies in actively reaching out to scientific institutions and setting up diverse collaborations between science and business. Reaching out often starts a chain of reactions. "Knowledge institutions will continue to come up with new data, intelligence and innovations. They will continue to deliver technological solutions. Companies then start looking at whether they can adopt these and use them commercially. If so, customers and also more scientists catch on." Says Andre Nijhof.



Andre Nijhof

"Take science seriously!"



Derk Loorbach

"The culture within the world of science finds taking a transdisciplinary approach difficult."

A DETAILED VIEW ON THE IMPACT OF SCIENCE

Maarten van Dam's view is that the "lack of confidence in science is at best a niggle. Science is good at guiding change. In the end people only act when there is scientific evidence, people no longer trust their gut. Science doesn't have a pioneering role, but more a facilitating one. They should give backing to parties that are at the forefront."

Van Dam mentions the Public Private Partnership ReGeNL as an example of how science and businesses can successfully combine forces. "Together with Dutch farmers, ReGeNL is developing a future-proof agricultural sector in which agriculture goes hand in hand with soil improvement, restoration of soil life and nature. It also offers a good earnings model for farmers.

A total of 54 parties have joined ReGeNL. The initiative wants to use science to underpin progressive practices and enhance economic foresights."

Adopting a transdisciplinary approach creates lasting and successful transformations, according to Derk Loorbach. "In all sectors you see entrepreneurships and pioneering initiatives. This is where people know how to find each other easily. Social initiatives are led by people who are researching something. A good example is the KIN (Climate Initiative Netherlands), which aims to push a trans-disciplinary approach to science forwards for climate-related matters.

In the KIN, scientists work side by side with societal parties. Together, they work towards a climate-neutral and resilient world. The KIN removes restrictive conditions and counterproductive incentives in the scientific system, enabling collaboration across disciplinary boundaries and beyond academia. The approach is collaboration rather than competition. KIN facilitates dialogue and collaboration between researchers, policymakers, businesses, and societal organisations through programs, networks, and events. Similarly, KIN collaborates with local partners to accelerate system transitions in several vulnerable countries.

Loorbach feels that it is up to scientists to take part in initiatives like these: "Our role as scientists is to connect with initiatives in society, often designed or initiated as a business model. And to try to focus on the foundational details, how this connects with other initiatives and what we can learn and apply to enable supportive policy frameworks. Another role of science is to translate insights into technological innovations that help in the adaptation or mitigation of climate change".

Pieter Pauw, climate researcher at TU/e (Eindhoven), also encourages scientists to cooperate with businesses to find solutions. Technological innovation plays an 'essential role' in addressing the climate issue.



Maarten van Dam

"Science doesn't have a pioneering role, but more a facilitating one."



Derk Loorbach

"Our role as scientists is to connect with initiatives in society."

A DETAILED VIEW ON THE IMPACT OF SCIENCE

Scientists must not only support companies with technological scientific research, but also guide them on other key topics in driving transformations such as behavioural change”.

The latter point is crucial: technological science is very important in reaching climate goals but it will not be enough. “We cannot merely innovate out of the climate crisis. Just take air travel as an example. There are quieter and cleaner aeroplanes, but the sector is such a fast grower that the positive impact on climate is lost. To make a real impact we will have to fly less”.

Pauw adds that behavioural scientists can help businesses understand how to make this transition successfully.

GUIDING CHANGE FOR GROWTH

A DETAILED VIEW ON THE IMPACT
OF BUSINESS AND THE FINANCIAL SECTOR



A DETAILED VIEW ON THE IMPACT OF BUSINESS AND THE FINANCIAL SECTOR

As the last stakeholder group to be discussed in this white paper, we aim to answer the question: what is it that businesses, including the financial sector, are currently doing that will either benefit them or pose some additional risks to companies?

View on current affairs

On average, the politicians we interviewed rate Dutch business as satisfactory with respect to their sustainability efforts, and distinguish between small entrepreneurs and multinationals. All sympathise with the small business owner who is unreasonably penalised by sustainability policies while the larger polluters, on the other hand, seem to be undercharged for the impact they have on the climate.

Silvio Erkens, who gives Dutch businesses a six out of ten, would like to see more initiatives coming directly from companies. Although he admits that the government is making mistakes; the business community also has a role to play in taking up the gauntlet and not pointing fingers too easily at the government.

In general, our panel of leading sustainability thinkers blame the lack of progress on the unsafe investment climate described previously. This climate was created by politicians constantly changing the rules of the game. Tjeerd de Groot said that companies must first and foremost survive and make a profit before they can think about their positive contribution to society, and that politicians share the responsibility of ensuring that companies get round to making a positive contribution at all.

New disclosure rules such as the EU Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD) are top of the agenda regarding governance. This is relevant to thousands of companies and will significantly change the approach to communications for many organisations. For many companies subject to the CSRD, 2024 started with the clock ticking for comprehensive disclosures that go well beyond climate and will need to be included in their 2025 reports. The EU text requires distinctly granular reporting on the impact of ESG factors on the business, as well as the business's impact on the environment and society, referred to as "double materiality".

Compliance is a massive undertaking and will demand new models of internal communications, changes to culture and collaboration, just to navigate the process, along with skilled communication professionals who must plan now for this impending era of unparalleled transparency.



Silvio Erkens

"The business community has a role to play in taking up the gauntlet and not pointing fingers too easily at the government."

A DETAILED VIEW ON THE IMPACT OF BUSINESS AND THE FINANCIAL SECTOR

Risks for business

The panel sees various risks for companies who do not transition towards a sustainable business and remain focused on driving growth at the cost of society and the environment.

Legal intervention

There is increasing pressure on businesses to make their ecological impact transparent and to incorporate the negative impact in the price. "You see it now with the case of Milieu Defensie against ING. There is more and more legal intervention", said Loorbach.

Loss of value – financial risks

"Climate change and unsustainable practices is a risk for the financial sector. Irrelevant of what the government prioritises, the European Central Bank's responsibility is to secure a stable financial system, and climate change brings financial risks. "Our balance sheet contains various assets that can be negatively impacted, resulting in a loss of value. This is a risk the bank needs to proactively manage", says Solange Roeschop of ABN AMRO.

Companies are increasingly forced to be more open and integrate sustainability in their core strategy and operations. Loorbach continues; "For a company like ING, it will be more about pulling out of certain sectors and investing differently. For Shell, it's a very different situation because those people and assets are still stuck in extraction, they can't just get out of that. They also have shareholders who want to have continuous revenue/dividends".

Do or die

A shared view of the panel is that it is 'do or die', for multinationals as well as for smaller enterprises. Whether organisations want to or not, they have to be in transition and adapt to a changing world. Otherwise, society will experience negative social and environmental effects. As a result, citizens will use their wallets to vote against unsustainable businesses.

Lucas Simons: "At the moment, a lot of companies handle ESG from a risk management point of view. However, this doesn't get them anywhere. The Pavlovian reaction is to focus on efficiency (continuing existing actions even more efficiently), a sort of 'last man standing problem', with a focus on doing the minimum for reasons of compliance, being able to tick the right boxes and compiling the relevant reports. The answer is not to continue the old but to create something new. Energy and innovation must go into where the world is going."

In Loorbach's view, companies find it difficult to ask themselves existential questions and to start the strategic conversation about what makes the company



Solange Rouschop

"Climate change and unsustainable practices is a risk for the financial sector."



Lucas Simons

"The answer is not to continue the old but to create something new."

A DETAILED VIEW ON THE IMPACT OF BUSINESS AND THE FINANCIAL SECTOR

unsustainable in the long-term. Questions such as: are we stuck in economic structures? Is our supply chain future proof? And if so, is that also in terms of our commodities and our impact on society? "This means business starts to reflect from a point of view of unsustainability and critical self-reflection without judgment. Only then will the creative process start.

Opportunities for business

Sustainability as a strategic business model

All of the panel members believe in sustainability as a business model. By focusing on sustainability in the Netherlands, we can turn that expertise into an export product, whilst simultaneously making the Netherlands more sustainable.

Harmen Krul feels that Dutch businesses must become leaders in sustainability. 'We must move towards a green economy, which becomes a driver of business activity. Such an economy generates a lot of knowledge, which can also immediately become a new export product of the Netherlands'.

This is a vision with which Silvio Erkens agrees. He sees an opportunity for the Netherlands and its businesses to excel in sustainability by making it into a business case. Though all parties interviewed agree on the business potential of sustainability, they differ in their views on how this should be achieved.



Harmen Krul

"We must move towards a green economy, which becomes a driver of business activity."

A DETAILED VIEW ON THE IMPACT OF BUSINESS AND THE FINANCIAL SECTOR

Looking through the lens of society

Loorbach feels it's all about 'adapting to survive'. Businesses must make sure that they still exist in ten to twenty years. This entails far more than only optimising the current business model and seeking out efficiencies. He continues to state that it is a strategic process in which you try to get out of your own furrow of optimising what already exists, instead working with others to transform the system. It's about looking through a societal lens at what is needed. Loorbach mentions DSM, Vopak, Eon, and RWE as examples of this approach.

The name **DSM** is an abbreviation of Dutch State Mines, however one would not suspect this when seeing their current offering. After closing the last mine, DSM diversified its portfolio, expanding into biotechnology and sustainable agriculture and became one of the leading players in food and healthcare.

Royal Vopak started as a tank storage company for fossil fuels. Vopak is now investing heavily worldwide into repurposing their existing conventional oil storage capacity into biofuels storage.

From once generating conventional energy, **Eon** is now Europe's largest distribution network operator, thereby driving the green transformation of the energy sector. The company makes a vital contribution to the green electrification of living, mobility and work.

RWE, Germany's biggest energy supplier, decided 10 years ago to radically depart from its traditional business model based on coal and gas and switched to sustainable sources like wind and solar power. The company also explores the use of batteries and hydrogen.

Use a system approach

The relevant question is how to make such a transition plan. André Nijhof prefers a system approach. Businesses should ask the question: How can we change the rules of the game so that sustainability is the logical result? Furthermore, he highlights the influence businesses have on society and urges them to take action: "It's not only the government who makes the rules. Businesses also influence the rules with their purchasing power, with or without sustainability criteria. Additional stakeholders who have influence are for example pension funds, financial institutions, NGOs, knowledge institutes and media".

According to Nijhof, businesses need to strategically scan and proactively search for relevant alliances, such as with customers or financial institutions. Other than waiting for the government, there are other ways to find solutions and find extra impulses to drive transformations.

A DETAILED VIEW ON THE IMPACT OF BUSINESS AND THE FINANCIAL SECTOR

System change in the garment industry

Following the tragic collapse of the Rana Plaza in Bangladesh in 2013, the whole sector was forced to transform and make fire safety a priority. Alliances were formed and political leadership was shown, for example by Liliane Ploumen, the then responsible Minister of Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation. She personally stepped-up and brought together multiple European politicians to push for a compensation initiative to provide relief for the victims. The transformation has reached the institutionalisation phase and is now the new normal for the garment industry.

Silvio Erkens agrees and sees concrete examples of companies already taking a proactive stance: “As a company, you are not completely at the mercy of the government to take steps. The congested power grid is a problem, and if companies don’t get a connection they can’t electrify, but in some places in the Netherlands people are also looking for solutions themselves. At a business park in Veghel they are working together against grid congestion – they are buying batteries, generating power and sharing that with each other. So, I would also urge companies to get started themselves and not always let the government be the bottleneck.

There are multiple new proactive initiatives and local partnerships with the focus on driving a circular economy. One example started in 2015. The former tropical swimming pool ‘Tropicana’ in Rotterdam transformed into a circular economy hub for the city and the region. Today, BlueCity is a model city for the circular and blue economy and home to 55 entrepreneurs. It is a meeting place for pioneers and enterprising minds, where they develop a framework for action, whether to grow their impact, live a zero-waste life, or develop a future-proof material. BlueCity’s mission is to accelerate the transition from the linear to the circular economy through entrepreneurship. More specifically, our dot on the horizon is the blue economy.

NGOs as a business friend

Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) are a prominent stakeholder in the societal and political debate, and have gained more influence in recent years. Often, to achieve their ambitions, they pose deliberate reputational risks to businesses by publicly calling out malpractices. On the other hand, they can also be an important ally in driving relevant transformations. Loorbach recognises that companies may suddenly find themselves working with activists to increase external pressure to get certain things done that are a bit stuck internally.

A DETAILED VIEW ON THE IMPACT OF BUSINESS AND THE FINANCIAL SECTOR

Collectivism vs individualism

Lucas Simons urges for citizens to be included in the mix. The rules of the game need to be redesigned. Citizens must be included in the design of the business model and have an interest. A good example is the new local energy cooperatives of neighbourhoods in which citizens jointly generate sustainable energy for their own environment. The common interest is clear and citizens work together based on a shared vision and with mutual trust.

Transparency and integration of sustainability as a driver of change

A growing number of sustainability policies and legislation also brings opportunities for businesses. Transparency is currently being pushed on multiple levels; on a corporate level by CSRD, on a product and service level by new anti-Greenwashing legislation, and through consumer preference for companies who proactively drive sustainable development.

Starting in spring 2025, we will see the first CSRD data that companies will deliver. From then we will know exactly how and how much companies are contributing to sustainability. We can from then use this data, for instance for investment proposals. According to Andre Nijhof, this transparency will put the spotlight on every business and reward those that excel.

Solange Rouschop also underlines the role and impact potential of transparency. "We're in an economic transformation in which sustainability is integrated. The more transparent the economy becomes, the harder it is to ignore the business' responsibility. In the current political landscape, it's likely that climate becomes less of a priority. However, this doesn't mean that climate change takes a break. We need to remain committed to mitigate our impact; simply because of the transparency requirements of our economic model, and because we can't support negative impact on society as this leads to increased costs for society that puts our model at risk."



Lucas Simons

"Citizens must be included in the design of the business model and have an interest."



Solange Rouschop

"The more transparent the economy becomes, the harder it is to ignore the business' responsibility."

What do these uncertain times with all kinds of risks and opportunities mean for your reputation management and public affairs strategy? To help you guide change for growth we are keen to share our recommendations on how to optimise your reputation management and public affairs.

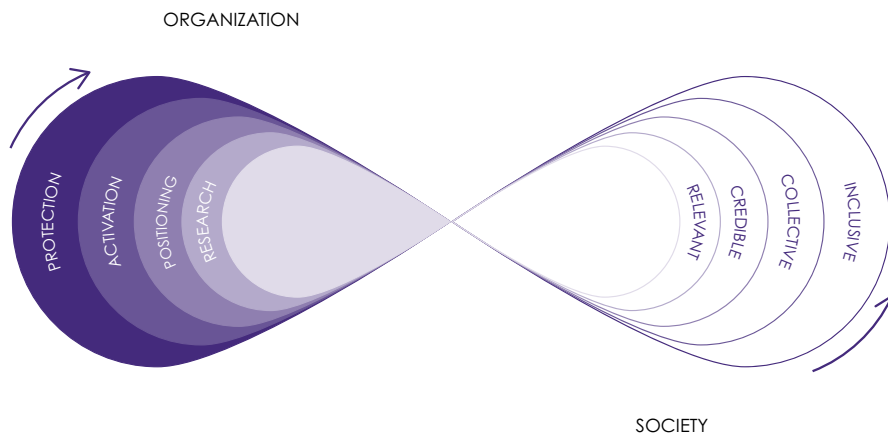
The evolution of reputation management: vulnerability as an asset

This white paper shows that sustainability gains are no longer only achieved by doing the same things better, but increasingly come from doing other things and doing things differently. This certainly also applies to reputation management.

It is time to shift to a different, more equal way of communicating with stakeholders. Actively involving stakeholders in the organisation's integrated sustainability strategy and checking in with the operational performance is necessary to remain relevant in the future and to add power to the required transformational change. In this way, reputation management is not just about sending the right messages, but is also a method to obtain valuable input from the outside world that allows the organisation to remain relevant and innovative and prevents complacency.

Inclusive stakeholder management

In order to achieve this, our [reputation model](#) fits inclusive stakeholder management. This model identifies which stakeholder groups are relevant to the organisation (which significantly differs from target groups for marketing communications) and assesses the quality of those relationships. The model views reputation management as a continuous process of both elements of the dialogue: listening and talking. The model shows which phases of the stakeholder management process are already going well, and how phases that are underdeveloped can be further improved, with the goal of creating a resilient reputation that supports the business in the long term.



The reputation model starts with stakeholder research to determine what different stakeholder groups actually find relevant when it comes to hearing from the organisation.

Once that information has been gathered, in the next phase, positioning choices are made based on what would be the most credible for the organisation. The activation phase then follows, which ensures engagement and a level of commonality with stakeholder groups, resulting in supportive behaviour from stakeholders. Finally in the protection phase, all sorts of monitoring, scanning and analysis ensure that the organisation keeps an open view of the outside world and the reputation management process remains inclusive in such a way that the company encounters surprises as little as possible by changing sentiments or regulations that could cause a crisis.

Our white paper takeaways to ensure sustainable relevance for companies

This inclusive reputation management process is a good basis to help navigate social, climatic and political changes. However, strengthening reputation management and making companies sustainably relevant takes more these days, as our white paper shows. Here our key takeaways.

1. Create a shared vision for the future

An African proverb tells us, “if you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together”. It is clear that true sustainability can only be achieved through collective efforts. This applies not only to the implementation of plans, but for drafting a vision that describes what a sustainable future should look like in the first place. There are many different visions on a sustainable future and the crux of the matter here is that everyone has their own. Every (local) government, every business and every NGO formulates their own future dream scenario of what the world should look like.

But what if all these different organisations join forces and came up with a shared dream? Why not take the lead in this and reach out to the relevant external stakeholders, such as local residents, chain partners, local governments, clients or critics. Investigate and discover where wishes meet needs and what joint picture can be created for a sustainable future. A vision that is based on the input of stakeholders and shared by a broad group of external actors will enhance the support base of the business plans, create an opportunity to exert influence and, ultimately, generate more impact for a better world.

Dare to rise above yourself and seek partnerships. Partnering adds to impact and credibility. You do not shine alone if you partner, but the light is more intense and durable.

2. Come up with a positive and inspiring messaging on sustainability

Having a shared vision is great; a next step is to derive positive messaging from that vision. While we focus on reducing emissions, limiting travelling and saving energy, we ask ourselves: what is it that we actually do aim for? Where is the yes, in a sea of no? Where are the opportunities for growth and development? Because that is where the inspiration, the energy to take action comes from. Call it an 'inviting perspective'.

A term like "nature positive" is already a step in the right direction, but can we go even further and be more specific? Would it be possible to create a more concrete picture of a world in which everyone wants to contribute? There are opportunities for companies here. It is not only about reporting progress on sustainability goals, but also about using positive storytelling to bring the narrative to life and inspire even more positive actions.

Make a difference with a promise in your sustainable messaging, be concrete about the steps on your forwards journey. It sets the bar for your organisation, which adds clarity for all and gives your company credibility and even likeability.

3. Be open and start today

Change is inevitable and companies face a choice: either show leadership in creating a sustainable future or play the waiting game and risk being criticised by activists. Companies struggle with timing when it comes to communicating their sustainability efforts. Shouting ambitions and results from the rooftops too early can result in being accused of greenwashing, while being too late means that you are no longer relevant.

The white paper suggests that the flight forwards is in most cases the most sensible thing to do now. There are so many actors and developments supporting and forcing the sustainable road ahead: the final destination is clear. Government regulations could vary over time and that may pose risks to investments. On the other hand, it's better to get started and be open about the long road ahead of the company, than to wait until everyone has already overtaken you and you are no longer relevant. Reputation bonus points are available for those who take the initiative. Maybe even invite others to join, see under point one 'creating a shared vision for the future'.

Reputation bonus points are available for those who take the initiative' is a truth many times proven. Don't wait until criticism hits, and forces you into a more negative narrative of defence. Share your way ahead, even better make it a joint journey, but in any case start, be clear about it and lead.

4. Find new allies

Collaboration with authorities, policymakers, suppliers and clients was always essential because companies cannot operate in isolation. But in a new political era where sustainability ambitions may be limited, companies may need to find new allies, including when it comes to communication.

More than ever, it is time to bring the outside world in, to connect with social initiatives and to develop innovative solutions together with stakeholders. Think about opportunities to create with chain partners, NGOs and banks. Where can you as a company collaborate with activists, what kind of pilots can you develop in your own chain? Can a (temporary) coalition help to accelerate things in your industry?

There is always an overlap at some point with your sector's NGOs and activists. Do not only focus on what divides you, but bridge from the interests you have in common. Baby steps that start with an internal, open-minded brainstorm.

Key ingredient to success: embracing vulnerability

The factor for success in all of the above is having the courage and the ability to embrace your vulnerability as an organisation. Winning stakeholder trust is no longer enough to secure your reputation in the future. Companies must be vulnerable and embrace external input. This input is essential for a company to learn and discover where positive impact can be made and negative impact can be mitigated. Active involvement of stakeholders, asking them for feedback and actually responding to these insights are essential steps to remaining sustainably relevant as an organisation. For that, OPRG uses different methodologies such as the reputation game, where we work with actual stakeholders of the company and get them to engage with employees who influence its reputation; from call centre employees to the executive board. Numerous studies show that consumers expect companies to play an active role in the pursuit of a better future. It is up to companies to take on these challenges and play a leading role in shaping a world that is fair, sustainable and resilient. Only by working together can we achieve the changes needed to have a positive impact on people and the planet.

GUIDING CHANGE FOR GROWTH

PUBLIC AFFAIRS



'Public affairs is the strategic process of responding to political decision-making and to changes in society and public opinion that affect the functioning of one's own organisation.'

This definition, formulated by the Dutch professional association for public affairs (BVPA), highlights a few key components of public affairs that are very relevant now. With a new government on the horizon, likely consisting of parties that gave a voice to a growing number of Dutch citizens who hope to be better heard by a more right-wing cabinet, a new course and policy can be expected. Pragmatism, clarity and a focus on national affairs are some of the high expectations.

As this new future cabinet will break the trend seen with previous cabinets, businesses are wondering in what way this new cabinet and its policy will impact their organisation. Will investments that were made and partly covered by green subsidies that might be abolished, still pay off? Will businesses still be able to recruit foreign talent for their vacancies? And to what degree should businesses adapt fully to this as-of-yet unformed cabinet, that does not seem to be able to rely on great mutual relationships or a real desire to govern together?

In other words, a lot is at stake. By taking notice of the opportunities and threats identified in this white paper, businesses can take several steps to enhance their public affairs policy to match the current situation and the political sentiment. Knowing your way around The Hague and knowing where and how to listen is key, now more than ever. We recommend the following to optimise your public affairs activities:

1. The queen is dead, long live the king

When major policy changes occur that can affect an organisation's core business, public affairs enter the picture. One of the first questions is usually: I am affected by this political development; can you help me stop it? While it is almost always possible to add some nuances that can make a substantial difference, it is a lot harder to stop something completely.

In most cases, the plan has already entered a mature stage: the idea originated years ago and is now firmly rooted, resulting in broad support among various parties. It is no different in the current situation. Although Rutte IV proudly calls itself the greenest cabinet, an undercurrent of citizens who no longer feel at home with the current political division of power has been visible for some time. The rise of the FVD, BBB and NSC are all examples of this. With this, the election result on 22 November 2023 did not come out of the blue, and one can assume that the ideology represented by these parties has wider relevance and is firmly embedded in the new political and societal reality.

In this new era, a lobby should take the current situation as a given and start from this new reality. Companies that really get to grips with this, that understand what is going on with the new political powers and that can bridge these developments with their own lobbying goals can achieve real successes.

New doors and possibilities to connect are definitely being opened; it is up to proactive business leaders to look for them and put them into use. An open mind set and sense of realism instead of fear or reservations are the way forwards to (re)connect and partner up with impact in the new The Hague.

2. Different angles

Although the coalition that will be formed will not go down as the most sustainable cabinet, there are several factors that will ensure that the next cabinet will also need to reserve funds for necessary climate policy. It is likely that a different angle will be chosen, and that climate policy that has a direct, positive effect for the Dutch people will increase. For instance, by focusing on local economies and making locally sustainably grown food cheaper, or focusing more on insulating the homes of those citizens with the lowest incomes.

Certain sustainability policies cannot be discontinued. This creates a challenge for the intended coalition partners such as the PVV and, to a lesser extent, the BBB, as they will have to take responsibility for upholding or even increasing these policies. Examples include the policies and actions that are related to the government's contribution to the (already weakened) Green Deal and to the COP28 agreements. Hence, they will look for reasons and frames that endorse them. Organisations that connect to these frames and can think within them or even create new ones that offer comfort to these parties have a greater chance of influencing the new coalition and how the policy will be formed.

'Local' seems to have become more relevant than international. However, globalisation has not ended, so we therefore have to become creative about how new solutions and business opportunities can tap into the local community strength that Dutch citizens want to feel.

3. Start by doing

There are organisations that proactively manage their public affairs and run effective engagements with stakeholders who influence policy making. On the other hand, we also observe organisations that are more reserved and are likely to be caught by surprise and feel ignored by the government. These organisations can make themselves less dependent on the government and get a better grip on new policy development.

Whilst, before the current political climate, a reserved or reactive stance was not the most effective, it will likely be even less effective in the new political situation. Any new coalition will give itself an important goal: to restore confidence in politics and improve the livelihood security (“bestaans-zekerheid”) of regular civilians. It seems likely that the new coalition will seek funding for that goal via the current climate subsidies for large (foreign) companies.

Beyond the implications of this on policy, it means a change to the role played by the process taken by the government. The current government proactively drives sustainability, for instance in making tailor-made agreements with so called ‘big polluters’ to make them more sustainable. In the new situation, the government will likely take a small step sideways or backwards. This means space will be freed up for companies to step forwards. Companies that take this chance proactively have an edge over their competitors. We see multiple reasons here. Firstly, these companies have more influence over the new policy if they are playing an agenda setting role.

Secondly, the government is more likely to listen to companies that are already living this ‘new reality’. This means that the government can back existing and thus proven initiatives rather than create them itself. Thirdly, there is an opportunity for these companies to build a distinctive advantage over their competitors. This does not only increase their attractiveness to clients, but also increases their influence, as policymakers will be willing to listen to the view of the frontrunner in terms of business.

Take the lead in the process and regulatory gap that is expected to arise on sustainability subsidies and sustainable transformations. The new governing parties do not yet know the ultimate way forwards and will be happy to trust your experience and sectorial partnership if you bring in fresh, pragmatic ideas that bridge well between your sustainable business growth and the desires of regular Dutch civilians.

4. Break your bubble and partner up

In some cases, we see an inwards-oriented culture in the business community. Some companies prefer not to talk to certain parties as a matter of principle, or do not pay attention to them for strategic reasons or simply out of ingrained habits. This can and will undermine your influence. Firstly, because you always need a majority in both chambers to adopt or reject policy, but also because your messages are not tested against the sentiment of an increasingly large group of Dutch people. As a result, lobbying messages emerge that resonate particularly well with parties that already support your views, but that are unable to touch dissenters.

Companies can get their messages tested by external experts representing a different bubble. For instance, it can be effective to test how your messages resonate with a group of residents or a group of random citizens. From this, new insights emerge that help make your messages more inclusive and thus effective. Organisations can also effectively use the opinion of the Dutch people to directly influence politicians. Showcasing the stand of the Dutch voter on a piece of policy will substantiate your lobby to change policy.

Another way to ensure that your messages will be more effective is to partner up, as this indicates that your messages transcend your own interest and tap into matters of national importance. Though there is nothing new about this – the current situation increases this urgency for cooperation. In a world where the government is taking a step backwards, organisations can seek support from each other, by working together to finance certain sustainability initiatives as well as by taking joint action towards politicians to achieve lobbying goals. Partnering up can also greatly help lobbying within your own organisation. For example, partner up with an NGO or residents to underline the urgency of changing your organisation. For this step too, the wider the representation, the more powerful the messages. So, look beyond your sector. What other non-obvious party has an interest in your dossier? And in which ways can you engage science and ordinary civilians to strengthen your message?

If your (political and regulatory) playing field is changing, make sure you continue playing and do not become an outsider, spectating from the gallery. Shake hands and make new partners, after analysing what binds you and what sets you apart.

CURIOUS HOW WE CAN GUIDE YOUR CHANGE FOR GROWTH?



MARJOLEIN RIGTER
Director Reputation Management & Partner OPRG
marjolein.rigter@omnicomprgroup.com



ELI SCHIM VAN DER LOEFF
Public Affairs Lead OPRG
eli.schimvanderloeff@omnicomprgroup.com



FLIP DÖTSCH
Sustainable Business (ESG) lead OPRG
flip.dotsch@omnicomprgroup.com

APPENDIX 1

METHODOLOGY

For this white paper we interviewed leading sustainability thinkers representing various sectors.

Our expert engagements started just before the elections in November 2023. We anticipated the potential political shift and decided to interview the most influential members of Parliament (MPs) that were driving the topic of sustainability. Namely the parties in the coalition, the VVD, D66, CDA and GroenLinksPvdA. In our podcast: OmniTalks: Sustainability thinkers, we asked these MPs about their expectations towards climate policy after the elections and talked about the role of the government, science and innovation, business and the financial sector in driving a sustainable economy. We designed the podcasts in such a way that the plans and ideas of parties such as the PVV, NSC and BBB were also part of the podcast.

Following the outcome of the elections, we invited prominent sustainability thinkers who represent different sectors and areas of expertise. We interviewed experts in the area of socio-economic system transformation, climate change, finance, science and innovation, sustainable business and strategy. These qualitative conversations were designed to reflect on current affairs, the views shared in the podcasts by the politicians, and understand the specific views on the role of each stakeholder in creating a sustainable economy.

We used these insights to define risks and opportunities for business in the Netherlands, and how organisations can navigate uncertain times by optimising their reputation management and public affairs activities.

APPENDIX 2

REFERENCES

> **WEF Risk report 2024**

> **FleishmanHillard Blog 30 January 2024**

Four Key Trends Shaping Sustainable and Responsible Business in 2024 - FleishmanHillard

> **VNO-NCW – Letter to Plasterk**

> **Klimaatonderzoek Initiatief Nederland**

> **TU/e Interview with Pieter Paauw**

“We kunnen ons niet helemaal uit de klimaatcrisis innoveren” (tue.nl)

> **Omnitalks - Sustainability Thinkers**

Tjeerd de Groot

> **Omnitalks - Sustainability Thinkers**

Silvio Erkens

> **Omnitalks - Sustainability Thinkers**

Sustainability Thinkers

Harmen Krul

> **Omnitalks - Sustainability Thinkers**

Sustainability Thinkers

Suzanne Kröger

This whitepaper only wants to be
printed on FSC certified paper.

