

Business & Society Research Seminar 2026

to be held at Vlerick Business School, campus Ghent (Belgium) on June 23-24, 2026



**Responsibility under Pressure: Sustainability & Inclusion in
times of polarization and backlash**

Call for Contributions

The [Faculty of Economics and Business Administration of Ghent University](#) and [Vlerick Business School](#), in collaboration with multiple academic institutions, are thrilled to host the [2026 edition of the Business & Society Research Seminar](#). The theme of this year's edition is:

Responsibility under Pressure: Sustainability & Inclusion in times of polarization and backlash

We are living in an era of intersecting crises (ecological, social, political, and economic) that increasingly reinforce one another. Societies face accelerating climate breakdown, biodiversity loss, resource scarcity, geopolitical tension, social inequalities, polarization, and rapid technological disruption. These crises reshape the expectations placed on organizations and intensify debates about their broader societal responsibilities.

In this turbulent context, organizational commitments to sustainability, inclusion, and societal impact come under pressure. What was long viewed as a moral and collective imperative is increasingly reframed in instrumental or strategic terms. As public scepticism rises and polarization deepens, efforts related to sustainability and diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) risk being deprioritized, diluted, or contested. This creates a pressing paradox: the need for responsible and inclusive organizational action has never been greater, yet its moral legitimacy appears increasingly fragile.

This seminar invites participants to explore how organizations, and the people within them, can continue to create meaningful societal value despite growing resistance, ambiguity, and competing demands. We aim to understand how responsibility is interpreted, practiced, challenged, or defended across different levels of analysis: from individual motivation and identity work, to organizational strategies and leadership, to shifting institutional norms and societal expectations.

By bringing together emerging and established scholars, the seminar seeks to foster dialogue on how sustainability and inclusion can remain credible, resilient, and transformative in an age of crisis, and what this means for research, practice, and the evolving relationship between business and society.

We welcome contributions from various organization-related research fields (e.g., business ethics and philosophy, management and organization studies, strategy, marketing, accounting, finance, entrepreneurship, and sociology) and research methodologies (qualitative, quantitative, mixed, and conceptual). **Potential topics may include, but are not limited to:**

- How can organizations effectively involve internal and external stakeholders in co-creating solutions that advance social, environmental, and ethical objectives?
- What role can social movements play in shaping organizational responsibility and fostering systemic societal change?

- How can social entrepreneurship initiatives be designed and scaled to generate both organizational resilience and measurable societal impact?
- How can business-nonprofit partnerships be structured to maximize shared value and long-term social and environmental outcomes?
- How can organizations maintain CSR and DEI initiatives during times of deprioritization?
- How can circular economy and sharing economy principles be integrated into business models and governance to support sustainable practices?
- What leadership, governance, and decision-making approaches enable organizations to embed corporate social responsibility at the core of strategy in turbulent contexts?

Keynotes

Will be announced soon!

Objectives of the seminar

The objective of this two-day seminar is to bring together PhD students, emerging scholars, and more experienced academics in a stimulating, developmental and friendly atmosphere where early-career researchers can present their work and receive constructive feedback.

We focus on identifying and appreciating both the common threads and the distinct aspects of each participant's research methodologies and themes in an inspiring and sociable academic setting. This seminar consists of a mix of plenary sessions, paper presentation sessions as well as several workshops around career development and publications strategy. All sessions will include fellow PhD students, emerging scholars, and senior researchers, including journal editorial board members from our scientific committee.

Who should attend?

Are you a PhD candidate or an emerging scholar conducting research in the fields of Business and Society, Sustainable Business, Corporate Social Responsibility, Sustainable Development Goals, Social Innovation & Entrepreneurship, or a related topic?

- Do you wish to discuss one of your research papers or your PhD project with leading scholars in the field and enhance your ability to write compelling scholarly publications?
- Are you looking for some mentoring from leading experts or do you want to develop your academic network?

Then we encourage you to submit your work and join us in Ghent!

Open call for papers

Beyond this year's seminar theme and reflecting the event's interdisciplinary orientation, we also encourage submissions from scholars with a shared interest in topics related to business and society, sustainable business, the UN Sustainable Development Goals, societal innovation, and inclusiveness and social justice. We welcome submissions from various organization-related research fields including business ethics and philosophy, management and organization studies, strategy, marketing, accounting, finance, entrepreneurship, economics, and sociology. We also encourage submissions drawing on a diverse array of methodologies, including qualitative, quantitative, and conceptual work.

Applications and deadlines

There are two possible formats for the conference: working papers and research idea papers.

- **Working paper** including introduction, theory/theoretical framework, research method and (preliminary) findings/conclusions: max. 30 pages (including references), double-spaced, Times New Roman 12.
- **Research idea paper:** submit a 2,000 to maximum 4,000-word paper (including references) to present your research idea.

Submissions exceeding the maximum number of pages (working paper) or words (research idea) will not be accepted.

- **Submission Deadline:** February 9, 2026. Please submit your contribution using the corresponding section on [this website](#): See section "Submission" in the Main Menu. In order to submit, you must first log in to this website.
- Submissions will undergo a **double-blind review process**. Notification of acceptance will be sent in early April 2026.
- **Registration:** Shortly after acceptance notifications in April 2026, authors can register for the conference on [this website](#): See section "Registration" in the Main Menu. Registration closes on June 5, 2026.

Registration is free but compulsory. The conference program and other details will also be released on the conference website in April and May 2026. Participation is free of charge, but participants are expected to cover their own travel and accommodation expenses.

Please note that the seminar is a physical event and that no online options will be made available.

There are limited possibilities to attend without presenting a paper or research idea. If you wish to participate without an accepted paper, please email us a separate motivation letter. Please acknowledge that due to space and budget constraints preference is given to those presenting a paper or a (long) abstract.

Organizing committee

- Saskia Crucke, Ghent University, Belgium
- Smaranda Boroş, Vlerick Business School and Ghent University, Belgium
- Lara Van de Sande, Ghent University, Belgium
- Marie Servaes, Ghent University, Belgium
- Helena Andre, Ghent University, Belgium
- Valérie Swaen, Louvain Research Institute in Management & Organizations, UCLouvain, Belgium
- Corentin Héricher, Louvain Research Institute in Management & Organizations, UCLouvain, Belgium
- Kenneth De Roeck, Skema Business School, France
- Christel Dumas, ICHEC Brussels Management School, Belgium
- Frederik Claeyé, ICHEC Brussels Management School, Belgium
- François Maon, Iéseg School of Management, France
- Frank De Bakker, Iéseg School of Management, France
- Emma Avestisyan, Audencia Business School, France
- Jennifer Goodman, Audencia Business School, France
- Sophie Pondeville, University of Namur, Belgium
- Catherine Janssen, CEBRIG – Solvay Brussels School of Economics and Management, ULB, Belgium
- Manal El Abboubi, University Mohamed V - Rabat / FSJES Agdal (Rabat), Morocco

Scientific committee

- Emma Avestisyan, Audencia Business School, France
- Petra Andries, Ghent University, Belgium
- Guido Berens, Erasmus University Rotterdam, The Netherlands
- Frank Boons, Maastricht University, The Netherlands
- Smaranda Boroş, Vlerick Business School and Ghent University, Belgium
- Flore Bridoux, Erasmus University Rotterdam, The Netherlands
- Frederik Claeyé, ICHEC Brussels Management School, Belgium
- Saskia Crucke, Ghent University, Belgium
- Frank De Bakker, Iéseg School of Management, France
- Kenneth De Roeck, Skema Business School, France
- Frédéric Dufays, ULiège and KU Leuven, Belgium
- Christel Dumas, ICHEC Brussels Management School, Belgium
- Laura-Marie Eddinger-Schons, Hamburg University, Germany
- Manal El Abboubi, University Mohamed V - Rabat / FSJES Agdal (Rabat), Morocco

- Assâad El Akremi, Toulouse School of Management, France
- Jennifer Goodman, Audencia Business School, France
- Andreea Gorbatai, Vlerick Business School and Ghent University, Belgium
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- Marek Hudon, CEBRIG – Solvay Brussels School of Economics and Management, ULB, Belgium
- Benjamin Huybrechts, IESEG School of Management, France
- Catherine Janssen, CEBRIG – Solvay Brussels School of Economics and Management, ULB, Belgium
- Arno Kourula, University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands
- Céline Louche, University of Waikato, New Zealand
- François Maon, Iéseg School of Management, France
- Esha Mendiratta, Vlerick Business School, Belgium
- Kenn Meyfroodt, Ghent University, Belgium
- Ingrid Molderez, KU Leuven, Belgium
- Sophie Pondeville, University of Namur, Belgium
- Neveen Saied, Vlerick Business School, Belgium
- Valérie Swaen, Louvain Research Institute in Management & Organizations, UCLouvain, Belgium
- Koen van Bommel, VU Amsterdam, The Netherlands
- Luc Van Liedekerke, University of Antwerp, Belgium
- Katrien Verleye, Ghent University, Belgium
- Christian Vögtlin, ZHAW School of Management and Law, Switzerland
- Christopher Wickert, VU Amsterdam, The Netherlands

And we hope to announce more to come!

Link to the website

[Here](https://ghent-bss2026.sciencesconf.org/?lang=en) you can find the link to the website for more information: <https://ghent-bss2026.sciencesconf.org/?lang=en>

Contact

If you have any questions, you can reach us at bss2026@ugent.be

Info on previous editions

Here you can find information about [last year's edition](#) and [the edition from two years ago](#).