

## SUMMARY NOTE

### Speakers:

- Jill Lofts, EY global sustainability finance leader, Financial Services Global Sustainability Leader
- Fiona Watson, Vice President of Corporate Performance & Accountability, WBCSD
- Sandra Gobert, ecoDa board member and executive director, Guberna

### Moderator:

- Andrew Hobbs, EY Center for Board Matters Leader (EMEIA)

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***This EY and ecoDa webinar on The Future of Sustainability in Business explored a central message for boards and executives alike: sustainability will only deliver long-term value if it is fully integrated into business strategy, governance, and decision-making.***

The discussion opened with Beatrice Richez-Baum (ecoDa, DG), who set the regulatory context by highlighting the growing uncertainty created by evolving and overlapping “omnibus” regulations. While the regulatory environment remains complex and in flux, she stressed that uncertainty should not become an excuse for inaction. Instead, companies must find ways to navigate regulatory change while maintaining strategic direction.

Jill Lofts then presented key findings from EY’s [Long-Term Value and Corporate Governance Survey](#) 2025, based on responses from 200 senior European business leaders. The survey revealed a striking divide: only 27% of companies qualify as “sustainability integrators”—organisations that embed sustainability into their core strategy rather than treating it as a compliance or reporting exercise. Crucially, these integrators consistently outperform their peers in achieving sustainability goals, demonstrating a clear link between integration and execution.

The panel discussion examined the mounting pressures companies face, including investor expectations, customer demands, and shifting regulatory requirements. Panelists agreed that incremental or compliance-driven approaches are no longer sufficient. To succeed, sustainability must be strategically aligned with the business model, supported by a compelling business case that clearly connects sustainability outcomes with financial performance and long-term value creation.

A concrete illustration of this transformation was provided by Sandra Gobert, who presented a

case study of Fluxys Belgium. She traced the company's evolution from a traditional natural gas infrastructure operator to a leader in broader energy solutions. The case highlighted Fluxys' significant planned investments in hydrogen infrastructure by 2025, while also addressing the unique challenges and opportunities faced by climate-sensitive industries undergoing large-scale sustainability transitions.

Geopolitical dynamics also featured in the discussion, particularly the impact of political pressure in the United States on ESG agendas. While panelists acknowledged some influence on corporate behaviour—especially in terms of communication—they noted that most companies remain committed to their sustainability objectives, even as they adapt their messaging to a more polarised environment.

The webinar concluded with practical takeaways for boards and management teams. Sustainability must be embedded into core business strategy, not siloed as a compliance function. Boards need stronger alignment with management on sustainability priorities and should actively build their own sustainability competencies through regular engagement with experts. Participants also highlighted five critical habits for success: strategic alignment, clear accountability, deep understanding, integration with finance, and effective use of technology.

Overall, the webinar reinforced that leadership, culture, and strategic integration are decisive factors in turning sustainability ambition into measurable business outcomes. Companies that treat sustainability as a driver of value—rather than an obligation—will be best positioned to thrive in an increasingly complex and demanding environment.