

ESCP Sustainability Manifesto

Identity and 10 Principles

Leaders educated at ESCP have special qualities that distinguish them from others: they are bold in their goals and considerate in their means. They do not only acknowledge and embrace complexity, they master it. They are grounded in ESCP's European roots and driven by universal values – solidarity, transparency, responsibility – in creating global impact.

These leadership qualities are shaped by ESCP's vision of sustainability and its 10 guiding principles.

Sustainability:

1. Is grounded in science. It demands rigour, evidence, complex thinking and the intellectual courage to change course when new facts challenge established assumptions.

2. Is central, not peripheral. Finance, strategy, operations, or marketing: each discipline must reexamine its own assumptions to create competitive advantage *and* shape a more sustainable world.

3. Requires collective mobilisation and aspires towards systemic change. It enables systems thinking, requiring future leaders to think in complex systems and develop the skills to drive change holistically. Business, policy, and civil society need to work together to reimagine economic systems that ensure prosperity for all while creating a thriving planet.

4. Is contextual with global ambition. Only by recognising the unique demands of different national and regional contexts, and operating through partnerships of equals, especially between Europe and Low- and Middle-Income Countries, can diversity shape shared sustainable practices.

5. Can be amplified by AI. Artificial intelligence should be met with discernment, frugality and a critical mindset, so that it strengthens human agency, reduces environmental impact and supports meaningful innovation, rather than unreflective adoption.

6. Demands measurable action. Awareness raising and climate literacy are not enough – efforts to enhance sustainability must be judged by the new solutions we implement.

7. Needs governance. Sustainability must be anchored in institutional strategy, leadership, and local operations, and subject to external scrutiny and critique for continuous improvement.

8. Must be lived. Proclaiming goals is insufficient. Success depends on leading by example and making our activities more sustainable and accountable each year.

9. Unites. Integrating research, teaching, and practice transfer can show how more sustainable practices are not merely a necessity, but how they contribute to a genuinely desirable future.

10. Is a multiplier. Students, alumni, and our partners are our ambassadors. Combining excellence with purpose, they transmit our shared vision into the world and into the future.

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Institutional Strategy and Actions

Leading in a disrupted world

The world that today's students will inherit is no longer governed by the assumptions that shaped yesterday's management education. Climate has become a financial risk. Resource scarcity is becoming a geopolitical issue. Supply chains have become questions of sovereignty. Artificial intelligence is transforming work, knowledge, power and decision-making faster than institutions can govern it.

In this disrupted world, sustainability is not a peripheral concern. It is one of the defining conditions of competitiveness, strategic autonomy and long-term value creation. The question of who gets to decide, and who bears the consequences, is being reopened in ways that business education cannot sidestep.

These forces are reshaping what it means to manage, to invest, to build: what counts as a good decision and what counts as an acceptable risk. ESCP takes that responsibility seriously, and this Manifesto is one expression of how.

Historical roots and future impact

Founded in 1819 by French entrepreneurs who believed that business, properly taught, could civilise as well as enrich, ESCP has always held a demanding ambition: to produce not merely capable managers, but bold leaders who are considerate in their means and who understand what value their decisions create for the world. That ambition has continued over two centuries and is becoming more urgent for the 21st century.

ESCP's new Bold & United Strategy asks us to meet disruption with something more durable than agility: a genuine sense of purpose and shared efforts to build resilience. This Manifesto is how ESCP's High-level Advisory Council on Sustainability translates that commitment into concrete actions to promote sustainable development.

How we view sustainability

Sustainability, as we approach it at ESCP, is a field of inquiry, grounded in scientific evidence. However, instead of asking how business will be constrained by ecological and societal limits, we focus on how business can transform those limits into sources of innovation, differentiation and durable progress. This reframing, from burden to asset, powers a shift from defensive response to disruption towards a proactive redesign of value creation.

This matters greatly because a sustainable transition that does not produce desire—which relies solely on constraint, regulation or moral duty—will not generate the depth or speed of change the world requires. At ESCP, this takes concrete forms: in Designing Tomorrow, our entry seminar that pushes students to build a more durable vision for the future; and through the Blue Factory, our entrepreneurship hub, where sustainability is built into the DNA of ventures we support. Both are laboratories for the kind of thinking that business schools should seek to cultivate.

Our role is not to smooth debate into consensus but to raise its quality by embracing friction before decision-making. This means bringing a critical approach to education that makes sure we recognise potential trade-offs of business decisions, and that what we conclude is actually usable by the people who have to act. This is why it is essential to show solidarity with the global academic community and support the [#StandUpForScience](#) movement. Protecting science and advancing its excellence is not a political act but a rational imperative.

How we act for tomorrow

We take external recognition seriously because it holds us to account. The DD&RS label, France's prime national standard for sustainable development and social responsibility, evaluates higher education institutions across five axes: strategy and governance, teaching and training, research and innovation, environmental impact, and social impact. Recently renewed for four years until 2029, our commitment is to maintain and build out the highest standard across all of them. Our academic partnership with ChangeNOW, the world's largest forum of solutions for the planet, held annually in Paris, places our researchers and students alongside the entrepreneurs, investors and policy makers who are actually building the transition.

We expose ourselves to scrutiny, not least through our Advisory Council, because progress requires pressure from outside as much as from within. ESCP sits within a

wide ecosystem of actors spanning business associations, the social economy, NGOs, international institutions such as the World Economic Forum whose Global Alliance we belong to, and the networks that connect them. Progress on challenges of this scale has always been collective, and therefore we must drive it together.

Education: Forming leaders who ask the hard questions

The challenges reshaping our economies do not respect disciplinary boundaries, they run through finance, strategy, operations and every other discipline we teach. At ESCP, sustainability is not a mindset grafted onto existing fields: it is the invitation to those disciplines to reexamine their own foundations, to revisit questions long treated as settled, and to account for what has historically been left out. Our ESCP Sustainability Fingerprint gives this ambition a concrete architecture: a guiding framework that maps the competencies, knowledge and dispositions we want every ESCP student to carry with them, whatever their programme or Campus. From BA to PhD, 100% of our students engage with ecological and social challenges not as an elective but as part of the core curricula.

In a world where public debate grows more polarised and where complexity is routinely flattened into simplistic positions, we believe that one of the most valuable things an education can do is teach people to sit with difficulty rather than resolve it prematurely. That conviction shapes the choices we make about how we teach. Through Design Fiction students project the world 15 to 20 years forward by collaborating with futurists and designers. Materialising their scenarios as speculative films or fiction, they generate debates today that lead to better decisions tomorrow. The Improbable Seminar works differently: it immerses students in the role of contemporary artists, asking them to question and express a message through creation rather than optimisation, on the premise that the people who change things rarely start by accepting the rules of what is already there.

The ESCP-trained leader is not only sustainability-literate, but also strategically equipped. They can read a financial model and ask what we are not pricing in. They have developed the patience to question what everyone else in the room has stopped challenging. They do not need to be convinced that purpose and performance can coexist. Instead, they build a business model that reconciles profitability, resilience and responsibility because they see that the ecological transition is not a structural headwind for Europe, but a defining source of distinctiveness on the global stage.

In the end, our students, alumni and partners carry this further than we can: into the organisations they run, the policies they shape and the ventures they found. While our DNA is European, the challenges we are working on are not, and neither are the most instructive responses to them. With students from over 140 nationalities, an alumni network of 90,000 graduates, and growing partnerships with the Global South, we commit to letting diversity shape the value we create for society.

Research: Knowledge that serves the world

At ESCP, sustainability research begins with a dedicated academic Department: more than 20 permanent faculty working across all programmes and disciplines, from sustainable business models and circular economy, to CSR, international business, or social entrepreneurship. What makes our structure distinctive is not only the beacon that the Department represents, but the multipliers across Departments: sustainability is represented across every faculty through ten 'connectors', professors whose role is to ensure that the questions sustainability raises do not stay confined to a single corner.

ESCP has also built two dedicated research structures: First, the [Sustainability Institute](#), which aims for practical transfer and brings together the natural and the social sciences to help leaders navigate the complexities of climate change and societal transitions. Second, [ESCP RESET](#), our impact-driven Research Centre that advances interdisciplinary work on emerging models of corporate sustainability or the future of growth within planetary limits. Together with other LIGHTS Institutes and associated Research Centres, they form an infrastructure for research that is serious about both rigour and relevance.

Impact: Living what we teach

We aim to lead by example, not only in what we teach but in how we run. A central Sustainability Team, working with local Green & Impact Offices across our five European Campuses—bringing together a team of 20 professionals—drives concrete impact on sustainability challenges. That work is structured and includes operations: a full carbon footprint calculation across all campuses is executed each year, a concrete action plan is built around eight priority areas, and a dedicated

sustainability and impact report makes our progress visible to anyone who wants to hold us to account.

On artificial intelligence: the technology is moving faster than the governance frameworks designed to contain it, and its costs, environmental and social, are neither evenly distributed nor fully accounted for. We take that seriously in practice. Our students can use a dedicated footprint calculator to estimate the carbon impact of their own AI usage, a small tool that makes an abstract problem concrete. We are developing custom AI models designed for sustainability education: one that helps all faculty integrate sustainability into the heart of their courses regardless of discipline, another that guides students in building impact-driven academic paths across ESCP's full curriculum. We believe that sustainability and AI can amplify each other. But that only happens when the technology is approached with real discernment and a willingness to ask whether it is actually needed and how it can serve humans.

The most memorable moments and the best multiplier of impact are the experiences our students and partners make. We have developed many flagship initiatives in sustainability that give each Campus its singular sustainability identity and serve as our joint trademark. Be it the week-long Social Impact Festival in London, the Impact Job Fair in Berlin, the Green Hackathon in Turin, or the emerging Way of St. James immersion in Madrid. All of them provide unique practice-based learning and create immediate impacts for those who participate, and for those we collaborate with across business, public administration, or civil society.

ESCP's Sustainability Manifesto is endorsed by our Advisory Council, whose role it is to challenge, strengthen and sharpen our ambition. Bringing together leaders from science, business, policy and civil society, the Advisory Council helps us to connect academic excellence with societal expectations, and to ensure that sustainability remains both intellectually rigorous and operationally relevant to the leaders our institution forms.