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Senior managers of sustainability and corporate social responsibility in Europe

Year 2019

ABSTRACT

Senior managers and heads of sustainability, corporate sustainability and/or corporate social responsibility (CSR) (or similar) are increasingly necessary professions within organisations. Given the widespread recognition the role of CSR professionals is receiving, an assessment of their situation in the European context is urgent. The European Association of Sustainability Professionals (EASP) used an online survey to more precisely define CSR/sustainability professionals' positions. Professionals from seven European countries were surveyed in collaboration with the EASP members, revealing, among others, that sustainability units are still small in comparison with other corporate departments, that communication with CEOs and boards happens regularly, that companies integrate sustainability into their strategy or decision-making and that climate change is an impactful challenge and is likely able to revolutionise entire organisations. Businesses need to redefine the concept of 'value' in order to go beyond traditional financial terms, and CSR/sustainability professionals play a key role in this journey.

Project sponsors



INTRODUCTION

An increasing number of organisations across Europe are recruiting sustainability and corporate social responsibility professionals (S-CSR professionals). Countries' national cultures and customs differ, but it seems they all perceive the necessity of these professional figures. The development of S-CSR professionals in Europe could significantly differ among countries, and it could be a signal of different evolution of the broad topic of sustainability among Europe. The European Association of Sustainability Professionals (EASP) managed a research to understand the peculiarities of CSR and sustainability related professions in different countries. This study contributes to the knowledge of CSR professionals' role in several European countries. How is their role/position defined? Do they report to other departments or functions? How do CSR managers differ between countries with different national cultures and institutional and business settings? These are the main questions answered in this study that is the result of the collaboration among 7 national associations: C3D (France); CSR Manager Network (Italy); CSR Turkey (Turkey); DIRSE (Spain); ICRS (UK); Responsible Business Forum

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Serbia (Serbia); VNU (Germany).

HIGHLIGHTS

- ▶ The average European S-CSR unit is made up of **less than two** people.
- ▶ **40,3%** of the sample appears to be an entity *per se* without reporting to any other function.
- ▶ Communication (34.2%) and human resources (15.3%) are the two main units that S-CSR professionals report to.
- ▶ 47.3% of the professionals hold the **title 'CSR Manager'**.
- ▶ **65.5%** of the managers interact with the CEO at least **once per quarter**.
- ▶ S-CSR professionals are formally (46.8%) and informally (37.6%) involved in strategic planning.
- ▶ The professionals oversee distinct activities with different priorities depending on the country.
- ▶ Remuneration is unequal, with an average gross salary ranging between **50K and 100K (in Euros)**.
- ▶ **Climate change** is the challenge that is most likely to affect the included organisations.

Methodology

The study comprises an online survey consisting of 10 multiple-choice questions¹. The survey was addressed to senior managers and heads of sustainability, corporate responsibility and/or CSR (or similar) in European countries regardless of the size, sector and legal incorporation. Data were collected between April and August 2019.

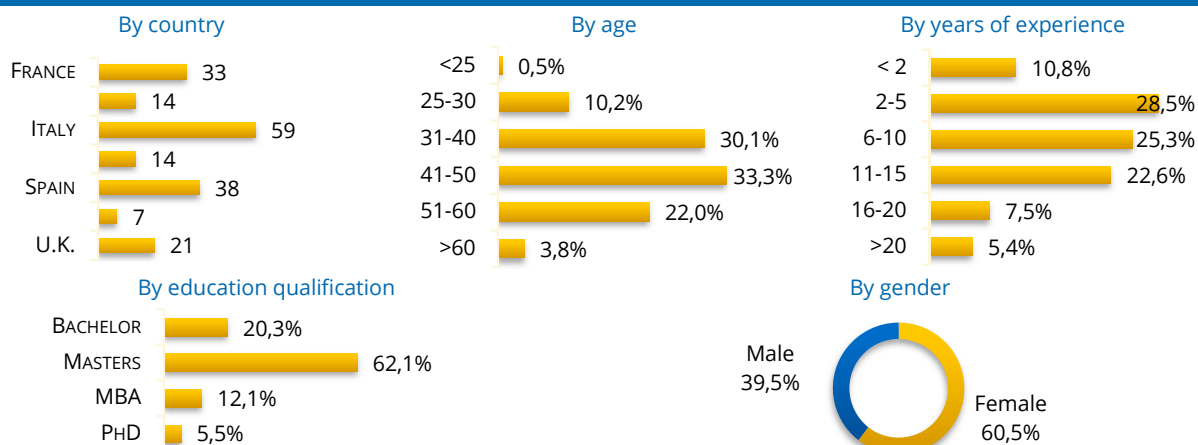
A total of 186 professionals from seven countries in Europe participated, including **France, Germany, Italy, Serbia, Spain, Turkey** and the **UK** (members of EASP). The greatest participation was from Italy, with 59 professionals (32%). The participants were all employed by organisations that were sensitive to sustainability topics and had dedicated professional figures in charge of S-CSR.

While 33% of the sample was aged 41–50 years, about a quarter of the respondents reported experience ranging from 2–5 years (28.5%). In addition, the **S-CSR profession seems to be more appealing to women**, who represented more than 60% of the sample. Excluding Germany, where most of the professionals were male, and Serbia, with an equal division between the genders, the S-CSR profession was mainly female in all the other countries.

¹ The survey has been designed based on national studies carried out by Italy (<http://www.csrmanagernetwork.it/files/ATTIVITA/RICERCHE/2012/la-professione-della-csr-in-italia-2012.pdf>), France

(<http://birdeo.com/diplomes-competences-salaires-professionnels-developpement-durable/>), Spain ([Estado de la profesión 2019: "El Estudio de la función dirse en la empresa española"](http://www.estado.de-la-profesion.es/estudio-de-la-funcion-dirse-en-la-empresa-espanola)), and U.K. (<https://crsalarysurvey.com/home>).

GRAPHICS 1: THE SAMPLE



ORGANIZATIONAL UNITS OF SUSTAINABILITY

A preliminary analysis of sustainability units within the organisation was carried out to achieve the study's main aim.

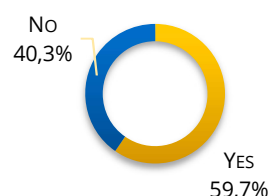
Position of sustainability organizational units

As interest in social and environmental issues is growing worldwide, and as organisations follow the trend of incorporating this concern into their activities, the position that sustainability units hold within their organisations may vary. According to the study results, 40.3% of the sample appears to be an entity *per se* without reporting to any other function. Instead, their two main functions involve the units that the professionals answer to: communication (34.2%) and human resources (15.3%). **These data may explain why this role still has such a small influence within an organisation.**

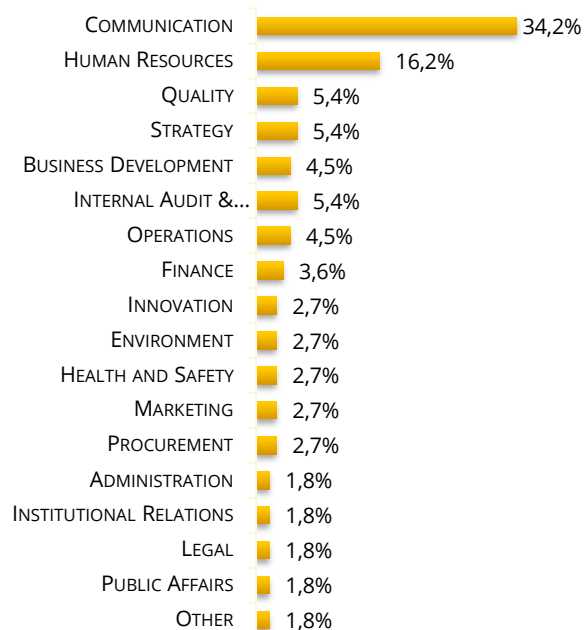
Looking at these two main functions, Italy leads in terms of reporting to communication units, whereas the UK mainly reports to human resources. When considering some of the last-ranked functions, very different percentages within the same function emerge. In terms of finance units, in Italy, the sustainability unit reports to finance only 2.9%, whereas in France, this number reaches 18.8%. Regarding internal audit and compliance, Italy is in the lead (14.7%), with Spain in last place (4.5%). Countries may differ one from another, but they all seem to have a commonality in their communication and human resources reporting.

GRAPHICS 2: THE POSITION

Report to another function



Function of reporting



N. of responses: 111

Table 1: The function of reporting by country

	France	Germany	Italy	Serbia	Spain	Turkey	U.K.	Total
Administration	-	-	5,9%	-	-	-	-	1,8%
Business Development	6,3%	9,1%	2,9%	-	9,1%	-	-	4,5%
Communication	25,0%	18,2%	29,4%	10-	27,3%	10-	25,0%	34,2%
Environment	-	9,1%	-	-	4,5%	-	6,3%	2,7%
Finance	18,8%	-	2,9%	-	-	-	-	3,6%
Health and safety	-	9,1%	5,9%	-	-	-	-	2,7%
Human Resources	18,8%	9,1%	11,8%	-	18,2%	-	31,3%	15,3%
Innovation	12,5%	-	2,9%	-	-	-	6,3%	3,6%
Institutional Relations	-	-	2,9%	-	4,5%	-	-	1,8%
Internal Audit & Compliance	-	-	14,7%	-	4,5%	-	-	5,4%
Legal	-	9,1%	2,9%	-	-	-	-	1,8%
Marketing	-	9,1%	2,9%	-	-	-	6,3%	2,7%
Operations	6,3%	-	2,9%	-	9,1%	-	6,3%	4,5%
Other - Write in	18,8%	-	-	-	9,1%	-	6,3%	5,4%
Procurement	-	-	2,9%	-	4,5%	-	-	1,8%
Public Affairs	-	9,1%	2,9%	-	4,5%	-	-	2,7%
Quality	-	-	-	-	-	-	12,5%	1,8%
Strategy	6,3%	18,2%	5,9%	-	4,5%	-	-	5,4%

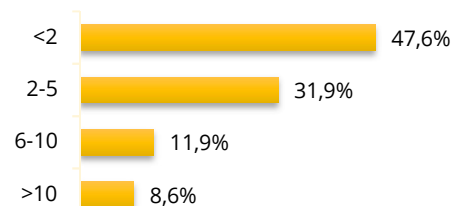
N. of responses: 111

Unit size

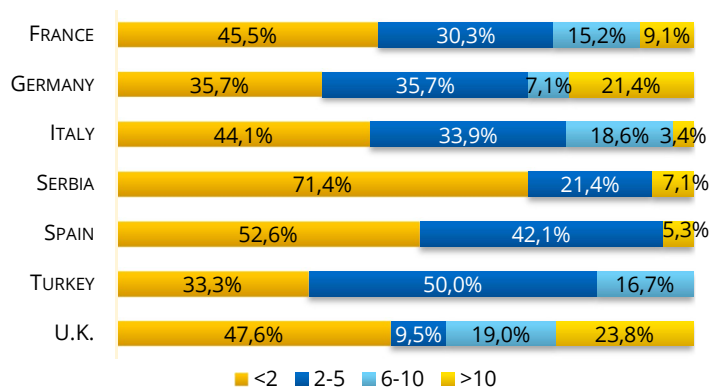
Although CSR and sustainability issues have been a topic of interest for many years, this study found that the number of authorised personnel working on them was **extremely low**. Roughly half of the respondents declared that less than two people in their organisations worked on S-CSR full time. Only sustainability/CSR practitioners and managers were considered in this estimate; thus, focal points in other units were excluded. It is worth noting that the sample was selected regardless of the size of the company, as this information was not collected. Regardless, the figure represents a small portion, given the importance that these social issues should have. This study found that **Germany** and the **UK** had the largest units; however, even here, most of the organisations still had fewer than two people.

GRAPHICS 3: THE SIZE

Number of FTE



Number of FTE by country



N. of responses: 185

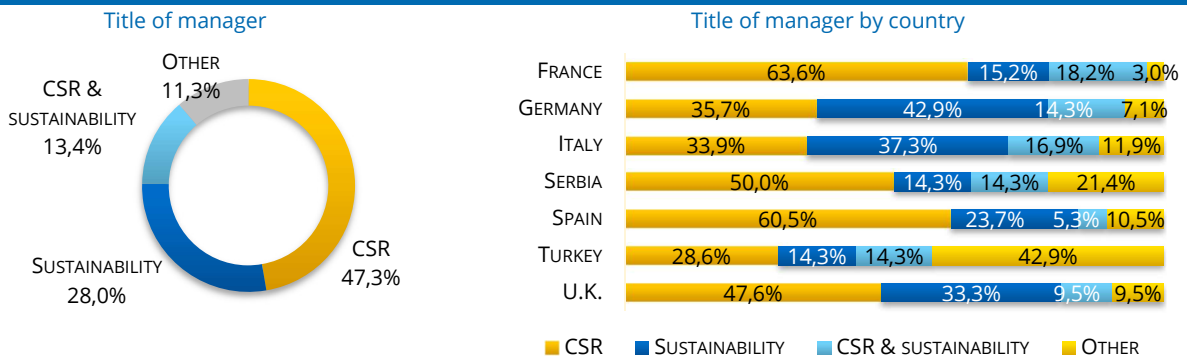
SUSTAINABLE MANAGER

The survey questions attempted to gain a complete view of the positions and the roles of S-CSR managers. Specifically, the questionnaire focused on understanding the definition of the role, how many organisational steps divided the managers' position from the CEO, how frequently the CEO was available for meetings with the S-CSR unit, the extent to which managers were involved in strategy development, the weight of the input they provided, their remuneration, etc.

Title of the manager

Across Europe, there is still confusion regarding the names and positions of S-CSR managers. While an average of **47.3%** managers in the sample were hired as **CSR managers**, 28% worked in sustainability and 13.4% used both terms. What are the differences? Does the way social and environmental issues are addressed depend on employees' titles? Answering these questions may help us to understand precise titles and how to assign them.

GRAPHICS 4: THE TITLE

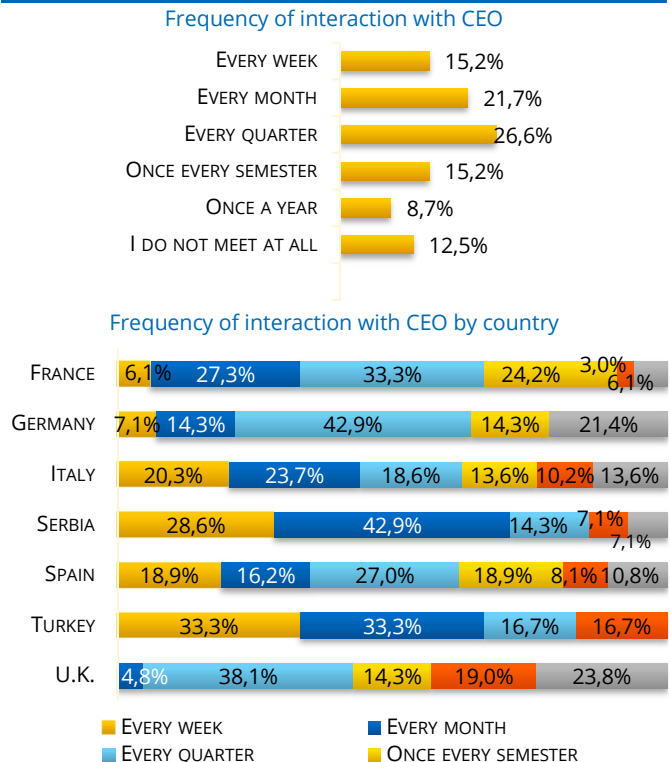


N. of responses: 186

Interaction with the CEO

Another focal point was the managers' interactions with their CEOs. A higher frequency does not imply a higher quality or a higher position within the company, but it could be an indicator of how much their function is taken into consideration in business decisions or how much the CEOs care about sustainability. Only 15% of the sample met with the CEO on a weekly basis, with **most managers meeting with the CEO almost every quarter**. According to the data, CEOs gave this role high importance in **Turkey**, with 33% of sustainability managers meeting with their CEOs once a week. **Serbia** had the second highest rate and Italy the third.

GRAPHICS 5: THE INTERACTION

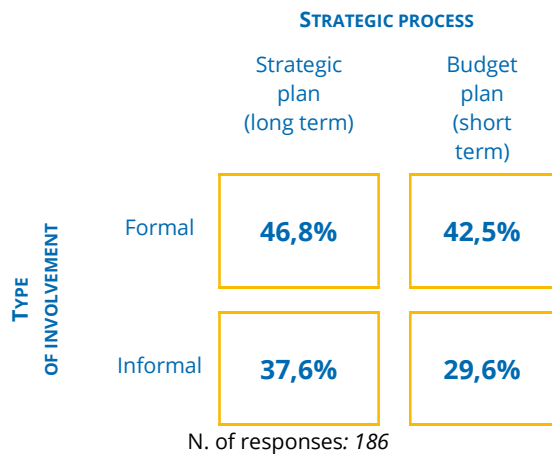


N. of responses: 184

This additional information is key when combined with the previous findings. For instance, even if **Serbia** ranked second in weekly meetings with CEOs, the data revealed that **only 36% directly reported to their CEOs**. The majority reported at least two organisational steps between them and their CEOs. Two steps are the European average (44.3%). However, **Turkey** still leads the way, with almost **70% of managers having direct contact with CEOs**. This could mean a greater, quicker and more concrete impact on the organisations' S-CSR strategies.

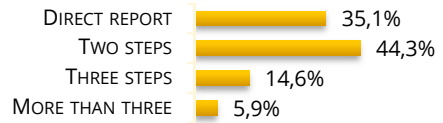
An additional element worth noting is that Italy, Spain and France showed organisational reporting to CEOs (more than three steps) that were equal to or less than 5%, greatly differing, for instance, from Turkey, at 16.7%. Thus, even if Turkey is in first place, it is second in that it has more than three steps, revealing that its distribution may not be as homogeneous as in other countries.

GRAPHICS 7: THE INPUT TO STRATEGIC PLAN

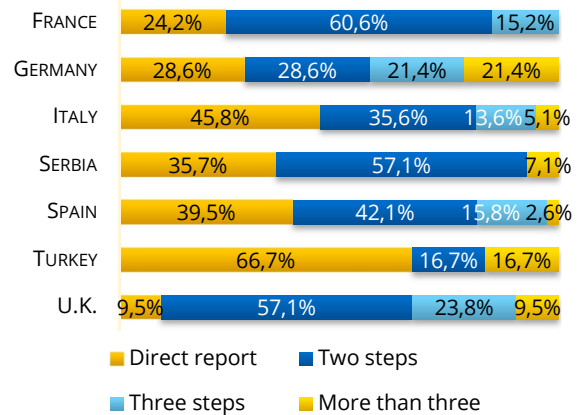


GRAPHICS 6: THE DISTANCE

Organizational reporting to CEO



Organizational reporting to CEO by country



N. of responses: 185

Involvement in strategic decisions

Once we understand how often managers meet with their CEOs or boards, and how many steps exist between these two positions, we must verify whether these interactions lead to concrete involvement in organisations' managerial and financial strategies.

Given the two types of involvement, formal and informal, there are two kinds of strategic processes that sustainability managers can influence: strategic planning, which has a long-term orientation, and budgeting, which is short-term. Out of a total of 186, 87 managers reported that they provided input to their organisations' business plans. **Serbia** ranked highest in this regard; however, there was a gap between formal input (60%) and informal input (26.7%). Turkey ranked lowest, showing high informal input (50%) but moderate formal input (25%). In addition, out of 186, 79 managers reported more formal input than informal input regarding budget planning.

Managed activities

Next, the survey attempted to unpack the activities of managers trying to answer to questions such as: What do managers do? Which areas do they oversee? It found that their activities ranged from financial areas, such as compliance, governance and performance measurement, to support, relationships with local communities and analysis of non-financial risks. Paying attention to the internal and external workforce is part of their job, where they oversee ad hoc welfare activities, employees' engagement and stakeholders' management. The respondents declared spending their time on S-CSR

activities as follows: **social and environmental strategy (54%); reporting (53.2%)**, split into voluntary reporting (26.9%) and mandatory reporting (26.3%); **and stakeholder management (25.3%)**. They cared about environmental management, but their attention was lower than the aforementioned areas. For instance, only 16.7% dealt with environmental trends in their everyday routines. With roughly 17% of total respondents, France led the way in dedicating its agenda to environmental management activities. **France's** leadership was also evident in its social and environmental strategy (67.6%). This was followed by **Turkey** (62.5%) and **Spain** (56.4%).

Table 2: Activities by country

	France	Germany	Italy	Serbia	Spain	Turkey	U.K.
Analysing non-financial risks	5,9%	6,7%	6,8%	-	12,8%	12,5%	4,5%
Charitable and community support	5,9%	6,7%	8,5%	26,7%	7,7%	-	27,3%
Conflict management	8,8%	-	1,7%	-	5,1%	-	4,5%
Employee engagement	23,5%	13,3%	15,3%	46,7%	10,3%	-	22,7%
Environmental management	32,4%	13,3%	13,6%	-	12,8%	-	22,7%
Ethics, compliance and corporate governance	11,8%	-	10,2%	-	15,4%	12,5%	18,2%
Human rights	2,9%	-	6,8%	-	-	-	-
Institutional relationships	8,8%	-	1,7%	13,3%	23,1%	12,5%	4,5%
Mandatory reporting	44,1%	20,0%	30,5%	6,7%	20,5%	-	18,2%
Performance measurement	14,7%	13,3%	20,3%	6,7%	10,3%	12,5%	13,6%
Relationships with local communities	-	13,3%	5,1%	53,3%	-	12,5%	13,6%
Responsible supply chain	8,8%	26,7%	6,8%	-	5,1%	-	-
Social and environmental strategy	67,6%	46,7%	44,1%	33,3%	56,4%	62,5%	54,5%
Socio-economic and environmental trends	5,9%	13,3%	8,5%	13,3%	20,5%	25,0%	4,5%
Special projects	11,8%	20,0%	13,6%	13,3%	23,1%	25,0%	-
Stakeholder management	2,9%	20,0%	35,6%	20,0%	25,6%	37,5%	27,3%
Voluntary reporting	17,6%	26,7%	33,9%	13,3%	25,6%	12,5%	31,8%
Workforce diversity and equal opportunities	5,9%	-	5,1%	-	-	-	9,1%

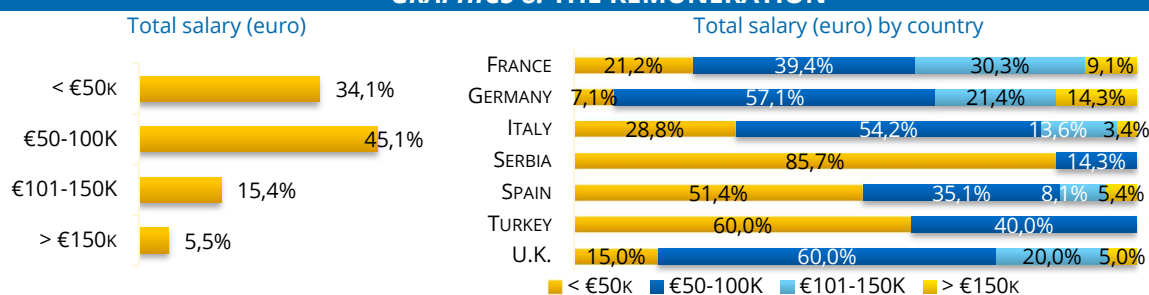
N. of responses: 183

Remuneration

It is worth remembering that the countries studied here have different national salary policies. Thus, salaries that here are low may be more than adequate in a specific country. A good indicator of the acknowledgement of the role of S-CSR managers is remuneration. The **average gross salary** of these professionals (including bonuses) ranges from **50K**

to 100K Euros. While a large portion earns a wage below 50K (34,1%), only 20,9% earn more than 100K. The most generous country was **Germany**, with 14,3% of the German managers surveyed paid more than 150K. Even if its majority remuneration was aligned with the European average, only 7% of managers were paid less than 50K. In contrast, **Serbia, Turkey** and **Spain** had the highest percentages of the lowest remuneration ranges.

GRAPHICS 8: THE REMUNERATION



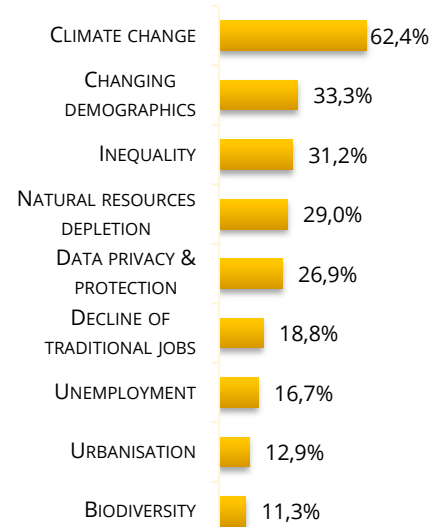
N. of responses: 182

FUTURE CHALLENGES

Global society faces several challenges, as stated by the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, and private organisations are becoming more and more aware of the importance of protecting natural resources and of the contributions they could make to preserving the natural environment. **Climate change** appears to be a challenge that most of the professionals surveyed here recognised as one of the main topics that would be relevant for the future of the company in which they work (62.4%). **France, Germany, the UK and Italy** had the highest levels of acknowledgement that climate change was likely to affect their organisations.

Additional relevant issues are characterised by changes in demographics (33.3%) and increasing worldwide inequality (31.2%). For example, data privacy and protection (such as consent to use personal data) have been the subject of constantly changing legislation in several countries. Turkey, with 37.5% of respondents in agreement, affirms that this represents a global challenge. This is followed by France, Germany and the UK, with 35.3%, 33.3% and 31.8%, respectively.

GRAPHICS 9: THE CHALLENGES



N. of responses: 186

Table 3: Challenges for the future by country

	France	Germany	Italy	Serbia	Spain	Turkey	U.K.
Biodiversity	14,7%	6,7%	11,9%	6,7%	10,3%	12,5%	9,1%
Changing demographics	23,5%	13,3%	30,5%	4-	35,9%	5-	45,5%
Climate change	76,5%	73,3%	61,0%	4-	51,3%	37,5%	63,6%
Data privacy & protection	35,3%	33,3%	18,6%	20,0%	23,1%	37,5%	31,8%
Decline of traditional jobs	8,8%	26,7%	23,7%	6,7%	23,1%	-	18,2%
Inequality	38,2%	6,7%	25,4%	33,3%	33,3%	37,5%	36,4%
Natural resources depletion	32,4%	4-	30,5%	20,0%	12,8%	37,5%	36,4%
Unemployment	5,9%	13,3%	8,5%	53,3%	28,2%	-	13,6%
Urbanisation	23,5%	-	11,9%	-	15,4%	12,5%	9,1%

N. of responses: 186

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report was conducted with the support of many people. First and foremost, the international research team of EASP would like to thank its sponsors, who generously supported this research. Special thanks must also go to all the professionals who gave their time to participate in the survey and consented to share their personal data.

Project sponsors

GreenFlex

GreenFlex is convinced that companies **must positively contribute to the changing world by transforming themselves**, as well as addressing both environmental and societal issues that their own activities are facing. By supporting them, GreenFlex contributes to **bring the Economy towards a new virtuous model, called the regenerative Economy**.

The multi-skilled GreenFlex teams work daily to develop operational, sustainable solutions designed to offer **support, data intelligence, and financing for tangible and quantifiable results**.

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GreenFlex boasts close to **450 employees**, working out of **17 offices throughout Europe**, for a **turnover of over 500 million euros in 2018**. Over the last **10 years, the company has offered support to over 750 clients**.

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KPMG is a global network of professional firms providing Audit, Advisory and Tax & Legal services. KPMG member firms operates in 152 countries, collectively employing more than 207,000 people, serving the needs of business, governments, public-sector agencies, not-for-profits and capital markets. Working closely with organizations and helping them to mitigate risks and grasp opportunities, KPMG drives positive, sustainable change for clients, our people and communities and society at large.

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According to KPMG vision sustainability is the future of business and Corporate Responsibility is a very important part of KPMG culture and strategy through ethical behaviour, environmental protection and communities support.

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