

Business in the Community is a member of WBCSD and Bernadette Phelan, Manager of BITC Membership Services, reported to the National Network meeting (April 20th) on a recent WBCSD event.

WBCSD and BITC

The ethos of WBCSD is one of shared responsibility, partnering for action and leadership on sustainability so it's a natural fit for BITC as we evolve our network in Ireland.

Ireland is one of the world's most open economies. It is important for us to know what business leaders elsewhere in the world are talking about in relation to sustainability. The recent WBCSD event was attended by 450 leaders in sustainability

Feedback from the event and from Peter Bakker, President & CEO, WBCSD

COP 21 and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will fundamentally change how we work, live, do business. There is a sense that we are now in the era of climate adaptation, that the 2 degree limit is not going to be achieved. Business is not the only actor in this but business and government need to work together. Business needs a healthy society in order to flourish.

What would your business look like in 2 degree world? BITC and WBCSD here to help you navigate that scenario.

Peter Bakker points to the need for a deep change in the way our economies work, and in the way our energy, mobility, urbanization, food and other systems contribute to the goals for 2030. But more than that, there is also the overwhelming recognition that we only stand a chance of realising our goals if we all work together: government, cities, business, civil society and individuals.

Business and the SDGs



The SDGs articulate the challenges the world needs to address but it's clear that business doesn't spend its waking hours worrying about them. Instead, business will approach the SDG agenda by thinking about how to improve the crucial systems in the world - such as **cities, energy and food**. These may well be the key systems where business will invest its resources, finance and innovations to come up with better solutions.

For example in relation to Ireland, it is predicted we will have the highest rate of obesity by 2030. What does that mean for your employees, customers, communities? What are the costs to us? What opportunities are open to business to help provide the solutions to this scenario in terms of employee wellness, customer awareness, what support is provided in local communities?

The message coming through is that leaders from around the world have openly acknowledged that state actions alone will not be enough to deliver the transformation that is inevitable, irreversible and irresistible. Business is now ideally positioned to become the implementation partner of choice for the Paris Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals. New types of partnership are needed – a new approach and new thinking to address critical issues of relevance.

WBCSD believes the role of business is important than ever. It is both our responsibility and our advantage to deliver the solutions that will accelerate the transition to a sustainable world.

How ready is Ireland to support the SDGs?

A report on ‘Sustainable Development Goals – are the rich countries ready?’ outlines the results of a ‘stress test of capacity to deliver on the goals’. <http://tinyurl.com/osqzaed>. Overall, the main challenges across the board are fostering an inclusive economic model (goals 8 and 10) as well as sustainable consumption and production.

For Ireland, the results are disappointing (see Figure on page 4) and we are ranked 20th out of 34 countries. We rank highly on particulates in the air and on energy intensity (energy intensity is a measure of the energy efficiency of a nation's economy) but poorly on the percentage of renewables, on biodiversity and gender equality.

Strengths

Ireland ranks among the top countries for goal 11 (making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable). We enjoy relatively generous domestic space, with 2.1 rooms per person, and particulate matter air pollution below World Health Organization safety thresholds. In addition, Ireland withdraws a mere 1.6% of its total renewable freshwater resources every year, placing it among the top ten in this study.

Weaknesses

Ireland's exemplary energy efficiency is offset by the low proportion of renewables in its energy mix: just 5.2%, putting it in 29th place. The report claims that fully meeting goal 7 (which calls for universal access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy) will require significant policy action to ensure that current energy needs are met without jeopardizing future generations. The Irish government faces other policy challenges: the country protects just 1.8% of its terrestrial biomes, putting it at dead last among OECD countries. By comparison, eight OECD countries have designated 17% or more of their terrestrial biomes as protected areas. The country also has appallingly low female

representation in parliament. At 24.9 tons per capita, Ireland's domestic material consumption level puts it among the bottom 5 countries; the average OECD country uses approximately 19 tons per capita of materials in the economy.

Why does our low ranking matter?

Apart from the fact that we are an open economy, dependent in large part on foreign direct investment and a need to remain attractive for investors and skilled employees, there continues to be a focus on the financial markets and the need for non-financial reporting. This has been given fresh impetus by a high-powered task force arising from the recognition that business is not accounting correctly for the risks of climate adaptation. This task force is highly influential; it includes Mark Carney Governor of the Bank of England, and is led by Michael Bloomberg. It will look at banks, investors and insurance and will report back to the G20 by the end of this year.

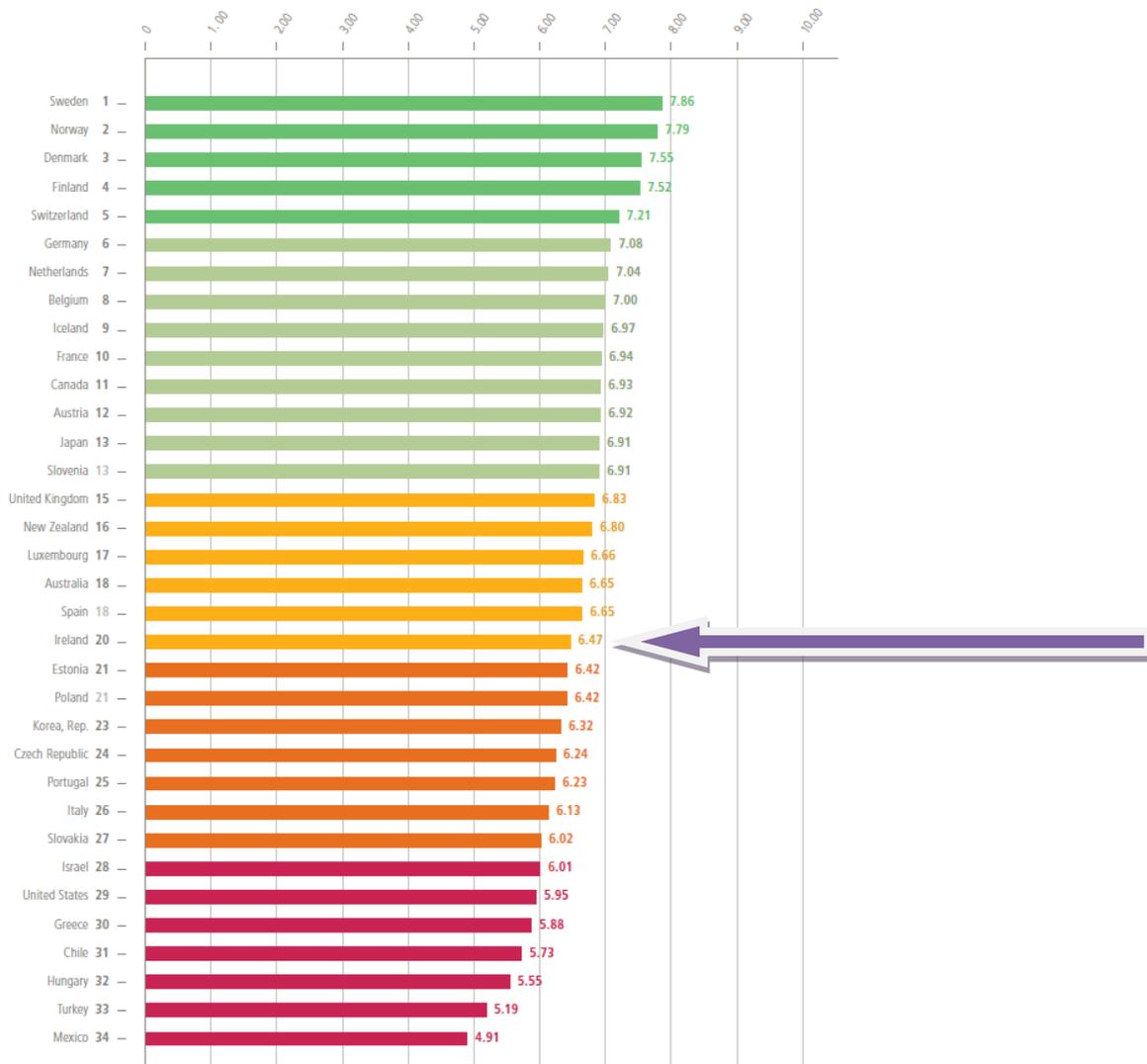
This will potentially drive changes in governance at board and government level within 3 to 5 years.

If interested in understanding more please see the speech from Mark Carney, Governor of the Bank of England and Chairman of the Financial Stability Board, September 2015:

<http://www.fsb.org/wp-content/uploads/Breaking-the-Tragedy-of-the-Horizon-%E2%80%93-climate-change-and-financial-stability.pdf>

The World Business Council for Sustainable Development will submit a response to the consultation process from their members' perspectives as part of their work under the [Redefining Value](#) programme.

The world's first SDG index



The SDG Index illustrates the overall performance of each OECD country based on the 17 goals and 34 indicators examined in the study. In sum, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Finland, and Switzerland are best prepared to meet the SDGs and in a good position to foster sustainable development by 2030. However, even these countries are faced with particular challenges, as the country profiles in this study illustrate.