



Sailing through perfect storms

How to navigate transatlantic public affairs and what is the compass?



Executive summary

In today's evolving business and political landscape, what does "transatlantic public affairs" actually mean? More importantly, what opportunities does the current political context offer for companies and organizations operating across borders?



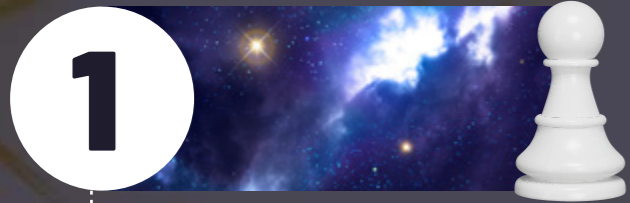
Diversity and environmental sustainability apparently no longer have the credence they had even six months ago. What does that mean for businesses and organizations trying to navigate the world where politics and business interact? Does that line even exist anymore?

In this paper, we explore the evolving macroeconomic and geopolitical terrain by analyzing how key policy trends are reflected in the media, how these trends shape business decisions, and ultimately how they influence public sentiment.



Your compass to navigate the transatlantic chessboard

How businesses should think about their public affairs activities



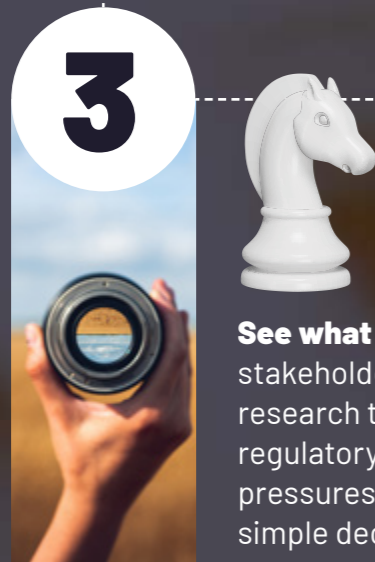
1

Stick to your North Star – the political climate will inevitably change: the best course of action is always what is right for your business, not today’s weather.



2

Foresight the unknowns – combining rigid double materiality analysis with design thinking allows us to see current and future trends that impact the core of business.



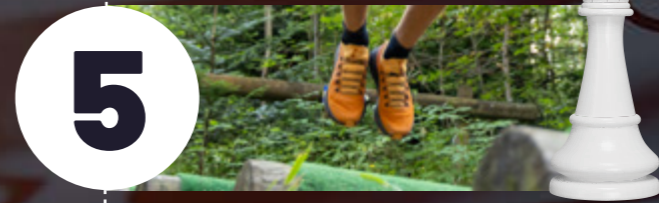
3

See what is not heard – use stakeholder and perception research to identify the future regulatory and stakeholder pressures going beyond simple declarations.



4

Hear what is not seen – use deep digital research to uncover trends within similar fields and industries which can impact core organizational objectives.



5

Build resilience but stay agile – reputational resilience requires strong focus on organizational vision and values while retaining operational agility to respond to changing landscape.



6

Accept that strategy is implementation – in the current context, the how and who of public affairs and advocacy is almost as important as substance.

Contextual overview

In public discourse, we often refer to global advocacy or global public affairs, yet in practice, these concepts are frequently applied through a top-down lens, driven primarily by the interests of one dominant party seeking advocacy outcomes favorable to its own agenda.

Traditionally, public affairs and advocacy are viewed as national or regional activities aimed at influencing political decision-making. The emergence of global public affairs has been largely tied to the narrative of market globalization. However, this

global approach often downplays the role of multilateral institutions and the broader multilateral system. Instead, the emphasis tends to shift toward bilateralism, a framework that inherently favors the stronger party, which can leverage its influence to extract concessions from weaker partners. Yet these power dynamics can prove deceptive: entities that perceive themselves as dominant may ultimately find themselves disadvantaged, while smaller or less influential actors can demonstrate remarkable resilience and strategic agility.

Multilateralism has faced increasing skepticism in recent years, particularly following the election of Donald Trump and the subsequent rise in nationalist and protectionist rhetoric. But is multilateralism truly obsolete? Should public affairs professionals abandon global approaches in favor of purely national or regional lobbying? And which actors still hold influence in this reshaped landscape?

Recent developments such as US-China trade discussions in Geneva highlight the enduring relevance of multilateral platforms and the strategic role of so-called “multilateral brokers.”

Key topics, key trends and why it matters

This analysis focuses on key themes identified in recent policy and media discourse: diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI); ESG and sustainability reporting; climate change; CO₂ emissions; foreign aid and humanitarian assistance; trade and development; and regulatory reform.

The review covers three distinct periods:

24.05.2024
5.11.2024



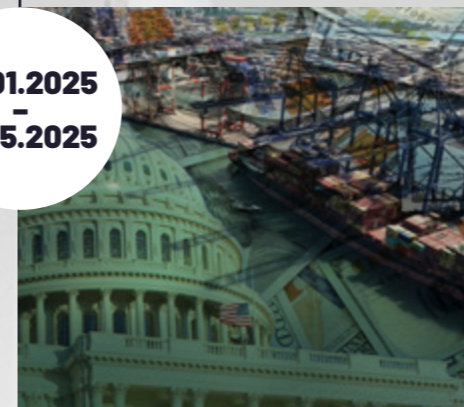
U.S. presidential campaign

5.11.2024
20.01.2025



Post-election, pre-inauguration

20.01.2025
12.05.2025



Post-inauguration

Across each theme, we examined volume, sentiment, and keyword associations to better understand evolving narratives and implications for business and policy.

Diversity and Inclusion: Higher Visibility, Slower Movement



During the election campaign, DEI remained a relatively low-volume topic, with a brief spike driven by accusations that Democrats were “weaponizing” DEI for political purposes. A clear trend emerged: DEI policies increasingly became associated with the term “wokeness,” especially between election day and inauguration. This rhetoric gained traction and visibility, particularly following a Trump executive order, prompting DEI to reach executive-level attention in corporate America.

Since inauguration, DEI-related conversations have more than doubled. The discourse is now shaped by polarized narratives: some companies are seen as aligning with imposed ideological positions, while others are actively defending DEI principles.

5.11.2024
20.01.2025

Mentions Trend



Top Keywords and Entities



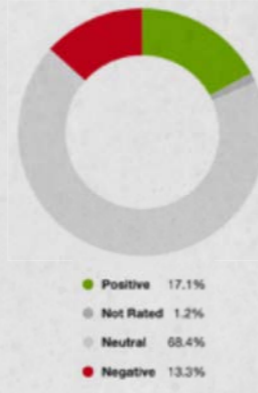
The increase in volume is due to a series of significant executive orders issued by Trump that focus on defining gender and dismantling Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) policies. These actions have sparked widespread discussion and debate, leading to heightened media coverage and social media engagement. Additionally, Trump’s return to the political spotlight and his declaration of a national emergency at the border have further contributed to the surge in news and social volume. The news, particularly its framing as a response to perceived “woke” policies, has led to multiple retweets and commentary from various users, amplifying the conversation around corporate DEI initiatives and their implications. Additionally, the contrasting recognition of companies like Tivuiti for their commitment to LGBTQ+ equality further fuels the discourse on corporate responsibility and social values.

24.05.2024
5.11.2024

Mentions Trend



Top Keywords and Entities



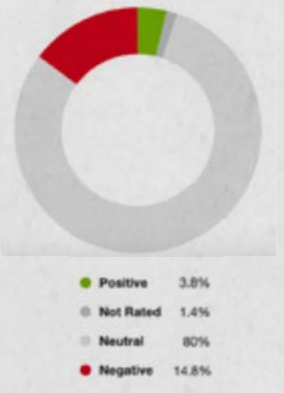
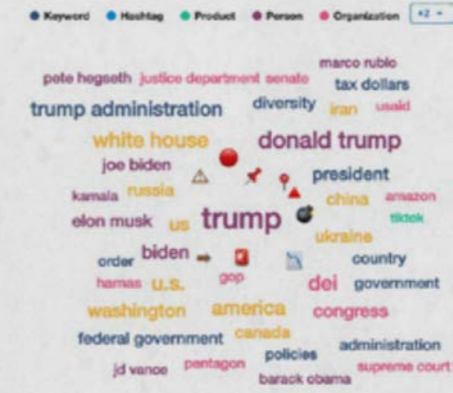
The increase in volume is due to heightened engagement surrounding political discourse, particularly related to the upcoming presidential election. The repeated statements from Vivek Ramaswamy criticizing the Democrats’ tactics have sparked a wave of responses and retweets, leading to a significant uptick in discussions about political strategies and perceived hypocrisy within both major parties. This has created a polarized environment where users are actively sharing and debating these viewpoints online.

20.01.2025
12.05.2025

Mentions Trend



Top Keywords and Entities



The increase in volume is due to a surge of media coverage surrounding Donald Trump’s recent actions and statements following his return to the presidency. This includes a focus on his executive orders, particularly those affecting marginalized communities, as well as reactions from notable figures like Elon Musk. The increase is also due to a significant shift in corporate and governmental approaches to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives, as evidenced by major companies like Google abandoning diversity recruitment goals. This trend is further highlighted by various legislative actions, such as the Utah Legislature’s ban on collective bargaining for teachers unions, and the Navy’s policy changes regarding uniforms. Additionally, political developments involving figures like Trump and the CFTC’s internal changes contribute to the heightened discourse surrounding these topics.

ESG and Sustainability Reporting: Broader Agenda, Narrower Focus



Prior to the election, ESG discussions were largely driven by coverage of natural disasters, most notably the California wildfires, rather than regulatory developments or reporting standards. This reflected growing public awareness of the link between corporate activity and environmental consequences.

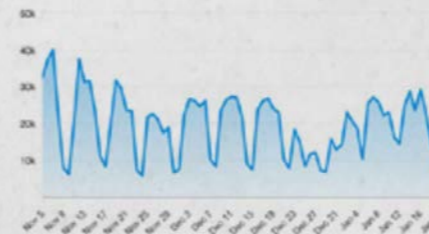
Since then, the tone of ESG discourse in the US has shifted. Conversations increasingly focus on the social ("S") aspects of ESG, with less emphasis on comprehensive reporting. In contrast, the EU's legislative agenda, particularly revisions to ESG reporting through the Omnibus legislation, has received relatively little attention in U.S. discourse.

5.11.2024
20.01.2025

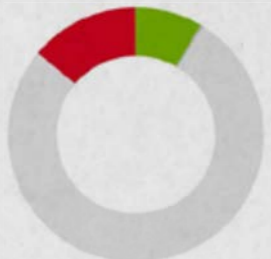
Mentions Trend

Total Mentions **1.52M**
↑ +1%
Previous period 1.52M

Daily Average **19.7k**
↑ +1%
Previous period 19.7k



Top Keywords and Entities



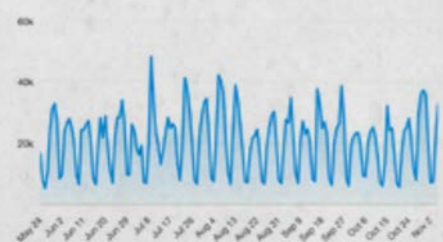
The posts are about news and updates from different platforms such as Amazon Editors, Samsung Electronics, and Twitter. There are mentions of new developments and launches related to carbon impact measurement, connected devices, and robot development. The posts also discuss the transformation of Twitter into X under Elon's leadership and the "democratization" of news gathering. The impact of citizen journalism and the democratization of news reporting is highlighted in the posts.

24.05.2024
5.11.2024

Mentions Trend

Total Mentions **3.4M**
↑ +3%
Previous period 3.31M

Daily Average **20.5k**
↑ +3%
Previous period 19.8k



Top Keywords and Entities



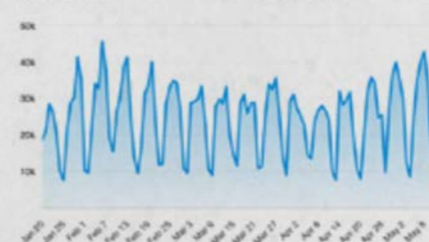
Several posts discuss the legal proceedings and decisions related to the former US president, Donald Trump. There are posts about the impact of cybercrime and online fraud, highlighting the need for increased awareness and security measures. Some posts focus on climate change and environmental issues, such as the California climate plan and the effects of natural disasters.

20.01.2025
12.05.2025

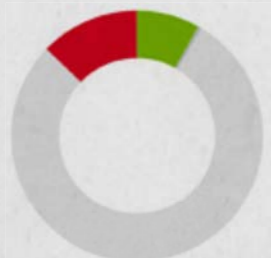
Mentions Trend

Total Mentions **2.77M**
↑ +26%
Previous period 2.19M

Daily Average **24.5k**
↑ +26%
Previous period 19.4k



Top Keywords and Entities



Several posts discuss political topics, such as cost-cutting measures by Elon Musk, the impact of immigration on the UK, and the rejection of sexual harassment training by Conservatives. There are also posts about environmental issues, including the approval of a battery storage site, the removal of a cycle lane, and the impact of pollution. **Not much relevant news.**

Climate Change: From Science to Political Flashpoint



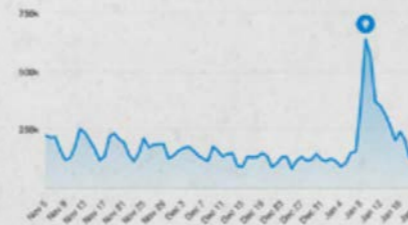
The volume of climate-related discussions has steadily declined as Trump 2 has consolidated influence. Prior to inauguration, conversations centered on the need for sustainable infrastructure and corporate climate commitments. Post-inauguration, the tone has shifted sharply toward **climate skepticism**, with rising expressions of doubt about the science behind climate change, and frustration with perceived inaction by governments and international bodies.

5.11.2024
20.01.2025

Mentions Trend

Total Mentions
13.4M
↑ 8%
Previous period 12.4M

Daily Average
174k
↑ 8%
Previous period 161k



Top Keywords and Entities

Keyword Hashtag Product Person Organization



Positive 12%
Not Rated 0.1%
Neutral 53.9%
Negative 34.1%

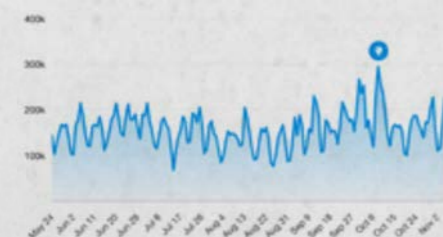
The increase in volume is due to heightened discussions surrounding climate change and environmental policies, particularly in relation to severe wildfires and carbon emissions. Articles addressing the impact of geopolitical events on climate, as well as innovations in sustainable industries and regulatory changes in the EU, are contributing to a broader conversation about the interconnectedness of environmental issues and industrial practices. This surge reflects a growing public interest in sustainability and the implications of policy decisions on climate action.

24.05.2024
5.11.2024

Mentions Trend

Total Mentions
26M
↑ 3%
Previous period 25.2M

Daily Average
156k
↑ 3%
Previous period 152k



Top Keywords and Entities

Keyword Hashtag Product Person Organization



Positive 16%
Not Rated 0%
Neutral 51.8%
Negative 32.2%

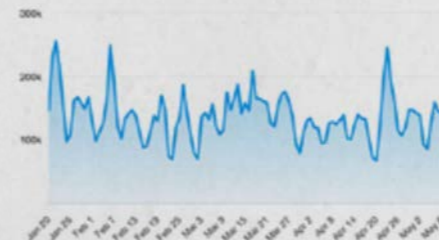
The increase in volume is due to a heightened focus on climate change initiatives and sustainability efforts across various sectors. Articles discussing AI data centers, sustainable aviation in Brazil, electric vehicle charging infrastructure, and corporate commitments to carbon reduction reflect a growing public and media interest in environmental responsibility and innovative solutions to combat climate change. This surge in related content indicates a broader conversation about sustainability and corporate accountability.

20.01.2025
12.05.2025

Mentions Trend

Total Mentions
15.2M
↓ 23%
Previous period 19.6M

Daily Average
135k
↓ 23%
Previous period 175k



Top Keywords and Entities

Keyword Hashtag Product Person Organization



Positive 11.7%
Not Rated 0.1%
Neutral 56.9%
Negative 31.3%

Many posts mention climate change, with some expressing skepticism or questioning the existence of climate change as a phenomenon. There is also a focus on the impact of climate change on specific industries, such as the pharmaceutical industry, the construction industry, and the energy industry. Some posts mention the role of governments and international organizations in addressing climate change, with some expressing frustration or disillusionment with their efforts.

Foreign Aid and Humanitarian Assistance: Rising Visibility, Rising Skepticism



Conversations about foreign aid have nearly doubled since the US elections, though the sentiment has turned more negative, by 11%. This is likely a response to policy moves such as the dismantling of USAID, which sparked concern over the humanitarian consequences.

The debate is being fueled by a mix of domestic skepticism and international solidarity efforts, such as the refugee response for Ukraine. Keywords frequently associated with this topic include: UN, WHO, USAID, Africa, vaccines, DOGE, global health, and Elon Musk, reflecting a convergence of geopolitical, philanthropic, and pop-cultural narratives.

5.11.2024
20.01.2025

Mentions Trend

Total Mentions **1.32M** ↑ 14%
Previous period 1,16M

Daily Average **17.1k** ↑ 14%
Previous period 15k



Top Keywords and Entities



The increase in volume is due to a surge in discussions surrounding U.S. foreign aid, particularly prompted by Ron Paul's recent statements advocating for its elimination. This has sparked a variety of reactions and debates on social media, with users expressing support or criticism of his views, leading to heightened engagement and discourse on the topic. Additionally, the mention of controversial figures and movements in the context of foreign aid has further fueled the conversation, drawing in a wider audience.

24.05.2024
5.11.2024

Mentions Trend

Total Mentions **2.29M** ↑ 41%
Previous period 1,62M

Daily Average **13.8k** ↑ 41%
Previous period 9,73k



Top Keywords and Entities



The increase in volume is due to heightened public interest and concern surrounding mpox, particularly following the World Health Organization's declaration of it as a global health emergency. This has prompted discussions on its spread, prevention, and treatment, alongside related news about the ongoing humanitarian crises and health challenges in various regions, such as Gaza and Kyrgyzstan. The convergence of these health-related topics has amplified media coverage and social media engagement.

20.01.2025
12.05.2025

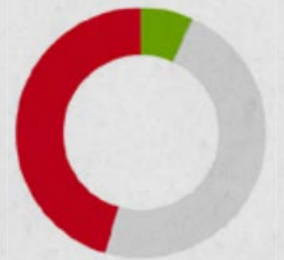
Mentions Trend

Total Mentions **4.84M** ↑ 102%
Previous period 1,50M

Daily Average **42.8k** ↑ 102%
Previous period 13,4k



Top Keywords and Entities



The increase in volume is due to heightened discussions surrounding U.S. foreign aid policies, particularly in relation to the Trump administration's actions and Elon Musk's influence on USAID. The recall of USAID staff and the proposed foreign aid freeze have sparked significant political debate and concern over humanitarian impacts, as reflected in various articles and social media commentary. Additionally, the juxtaposition of these actions with international solidarity efforts, such as the refugee response plan for Ukraine, has further fueled public interest and discourse.

Trade and Tariffs: From Technical Issue to Public Debate



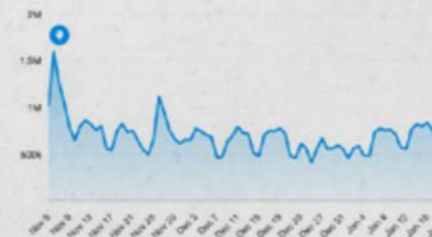
Discussions on trade and tariffs have grown significantly - up by 40 million mentions since May 2024 - accompanied by a 5% rise in negative sentiment. Before the election, discourse was largely externalized, focusing on non-U.S. contexts. However, post-inauguration, domestic attention intensified as new trade policies—particularly tariffs—were rolled out.

Debates around US trade relations with the EU, Canada, and China have drawn strong reactions, with divergent views on the economic impact of protectionist measures. The narrative is now event-driven, with spikes in discourse reflecting major policy announcements or negotiations.

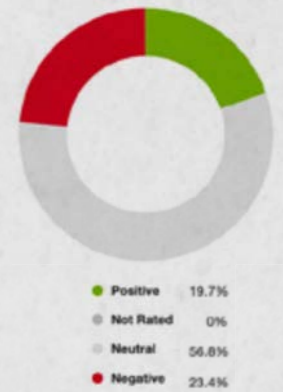
5.11.2024
20.01.2025

Mentions Trend

Total Mentions **52.8M**
Daily Average **686k**
Previous period 50.4M
Previous period 656k



Top Keywords and Entities



The increase in volume is due to a combination of political discourse surrounding the upcoming elections, particularly regarding voter motivations and opinions on candidates, alongside heightened interest in sports trade rumors, specifically concerning Giannis Antetokounmpo and the Houston Rockets. The juxtaposition of these topics reflects a broader societal engagement with both political and sports narratives, driving discussions and shares across various platforms.

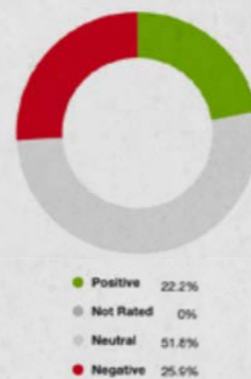
24.05.2024
5.11.2024

Mentions Trend

Total Mentions **101M**
Daily Average **610k**
Previous period 90.7M
Previous period 547k



Top Keywords and Entities



The increase in volume is due to a combination of significant financial and political developments, including a cattle market rally, advancements in energy security by the EU, and initiatives in fintech education. Additionally, notable commemorations and international diplomatic meetings, such as those involving PM Modi and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, are contributing to heightened public interest and discourse.

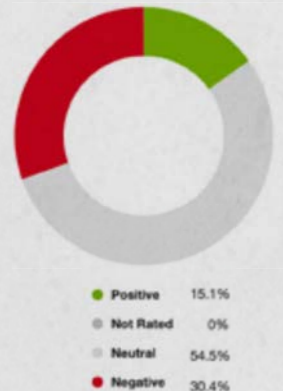
20.01.2025
12.05.2025

Mentions Trend

Total Mentions **143M**
Daily Average **1.26M**
Previous period 77.5M
Previous period 606k



Top Keywords and Entities



The increase in volume is due to heightened discussions surrounding Donald Trump's comments on tariffs and trade relations, particularly with Canada and the EU. The debate has sparked strong reactions regarding the implications of tariffs on the economy, with various opinions on their effectiveness and impact on American consumers. Additionally, the mention of a potential "Great Depression" scenario has intensified the discourse, leading to a surge in related articles and social media conversations.

What is the response from business and investor community

As already noted, the business community is split, with companies either being led by the anti-DEI agenda or sticking to their previous positions. High-profile examples of those that have publicly retreated from DEI initiatives include Meta, Harley-Davidson, Ford, McDonald's, and Walmart.

Conservative advocacy groups have intensified efforts to influence corporate DEI strategies by submitting anti-DEI shareholder proposals. These groups, primarily the National Center for Public Policy Research (NCPPr) and the National Legal and Policy Center (NLPC), have used such proposals to negotiate changes or

exert public pressure. For example, the NLPC withdrew its shareholder proposal at PepsiCo after the company agreed to drop internal targets for minority representation in managerial roles.

The volume of anti-DEI proposals has grown significantly. While they accounted for only 7% of DEI-related proposals in 2022, that figure rose to 23% in 2024. As of April 1, 2025, approximately 40% of all DEI-related shareholder proposals opposed DEI efforts, according to a report by The Conference Board. Despite this increase in activity, investor support for these proposals remains very limited, averaging less than 2% support

“Institutional investors and proxy advisors consistently oppose these resolutions, viewing them as misaligned with corporate governance best practices and investor priorities

The Conference Board

“These proposals tend to originate from a small number of activists rather than mainstream investor coalitions, further limiting their appeal.

The Conference Board

NOTABLE 2025 SHAREHOLDER VOTES:



GOLDMAN SACHS (APRIL 24)

The NLPC submitted proposals targeting diversity goals and executive compensation. 98% of shareholders rejected the proposals.



LEVI'S (APRIL 23)

The NCPPr proposed abolishing all DEI-related functions. Less than 1% of shareholders supported the resolution.



DEERE & CO. (FEBRUARY 25)

After scaling back its DEI program in 2024, Deere faced a proposal to publish hiring data by race and gender. The resolution received just 1.3% support.



APPLE (FEBRUARY 25)

Shareholders rejected an NCPPr proposal to end all DEI activities, including supplier diversity. More than 97% voted against it.



COSTCO (JANUARY 23)

NCPPr's proposal criticized Costco's ongoing DEI practices despite rebranding efforts. It received only 2% shareholder support.

While these proposals have generated headlines, they have had minimal influence on corporate governance due to lack of broad investor backing.

Legal and reputational risks emerging

Outside shareholder engagement, conservative legal and political networks have begun targeting law firms and institutions for their support of DEI. In March 2025, the law firm Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom announced a controversial agreement to provide \$100 million in free legal services to Trump-aligned causes and phase out most of its DEI initiatives. The move sparked internal and external backlash: over 80 Skadden alumni, including recent resignations, signed a letter condemning the decision as contrary to democratic values. One former associate, Rachel Cohen, publicly criticized the firm during a Congressional hearing convened by Democrats.

Navigating through the transatlantic storm

Is the pendulum swinging away from legal requirements around broader ESG agenda? Yes, to an extent. The political climate in both the US and the EU is shifting fast, based on a perceived dichotomy of sustainability and competitiveness.

Put simply, the narrative is that we need growth and that sustainability is a hindrance to a global level playing field. Therefore, we can't have both growth and sustainability.

A small caveat is that the EU is also looking at other ways to reduce red tape and the regulatory burden, so this is not simply an attack on sustainability.

As with so many things in early 2025, the result is uncertainty.



The European Commission, for example, has recently launched its Omnibus legislation, which seems to put more emphasis on competitiveness than on regulations around the CSRD, taxonomy and the CRDDD. And the postponement of the scope of application of the ESG reporting regulations, which will restrict the number of companies required to report, is also designed to support growth.



The same is true of the US: the activities of Musk's Department of Government Efficiency might not be specifically aimed at businesses but they are setting a very clear tone. And the Trump administration is openly hostile to ESG activity, to the extent of addressing the semantics of the words should companies use.



Will it mean companies rein back on ESG reporting, instead focusing on action?

Or will they simply abandon their climate commitments and go full-out for growth, regardless of the cost?

There is another important question, that we'll come to at the end, that should define people's response.

One thing we can be clear about now is that we are shifting away from the hard law requirements of ESG reporting. That is likely to be replaced, for now at least, by more flexible soft law frameworks based on standards and best practices. Some industries, and some companies, will choose to compete more on sustainability activities; others won't.

The extent to which this has a negative long-term impact on our climate is, of course, moot, though it is obvious it will not be zero.

More immediately, it will certainly have a negative impact on those companies, and their professional advisors, which focus purely on reporting to fit the CSRD indicators. This is anyway a short-term outlook, and a reduction in emphasis on ESG reporting means it is an activity that is even less relevant.

The long-term winners will be those who address sustainability from a risk management perspective; it is possible,

perhaps, to reduce this to a transactional level. However much some people want to ignore the need for sustainability, there is no question it is with us to stay. Acceptance is the best approach, achieved by the integration of climate into the corporate risk management framework.

This requires asking some difficult questions. What general and specific risks does the changing climate pose to business? What risks do the changing regulations pose? What actions are needed to mitigate those risks?

Those businesses not caught by CSRD, for now at least, also look like the winners at the moment. But there is a price to the flexibility they have. It can lead to regulation and indicator shopping, which distorts the competitive landscape. And the delay will not last forever: it is far better and more credible to start working now in preparation for the time when they will have to report, than to play catch-up later.

Which brings the final consideration. Democracies are inherently self-correcting and political pendulums swing. The question is when this one will swing back and what it will look like. But what is clear is that it will swing and the companies that assume the current mood is going to be the status quo forever could be in for a nasty shock.

Whatever politicians say now, there is still an important requirement for businesses to take care of their sustainability impact. Risk management, sustainability and communications professionals should take heed and plan accordingly. And every business should be asking itself:

What is the right thing to do?



Leidar is a global communication consultancy that helps clients set their course, navigate and communicate effectively.

This is Leadership Navigation.

We hope you have found this report useful.

If you would like further detail about the findings, or more information, please contact:



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Our clients include companies, both publicly listed and private, industry groups as well as international organisations and NGOs, across all sectors.