



# Sustainability

*starts from here*

A GUIDE TO SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES FOR ALBANIAN BUSINESSES, INSPIRED BY THE COMPANIES  
THAT PARTICIPATED IN THE FIRST EDITION OF THE SDG BUSINESS PIONEERS AWARD



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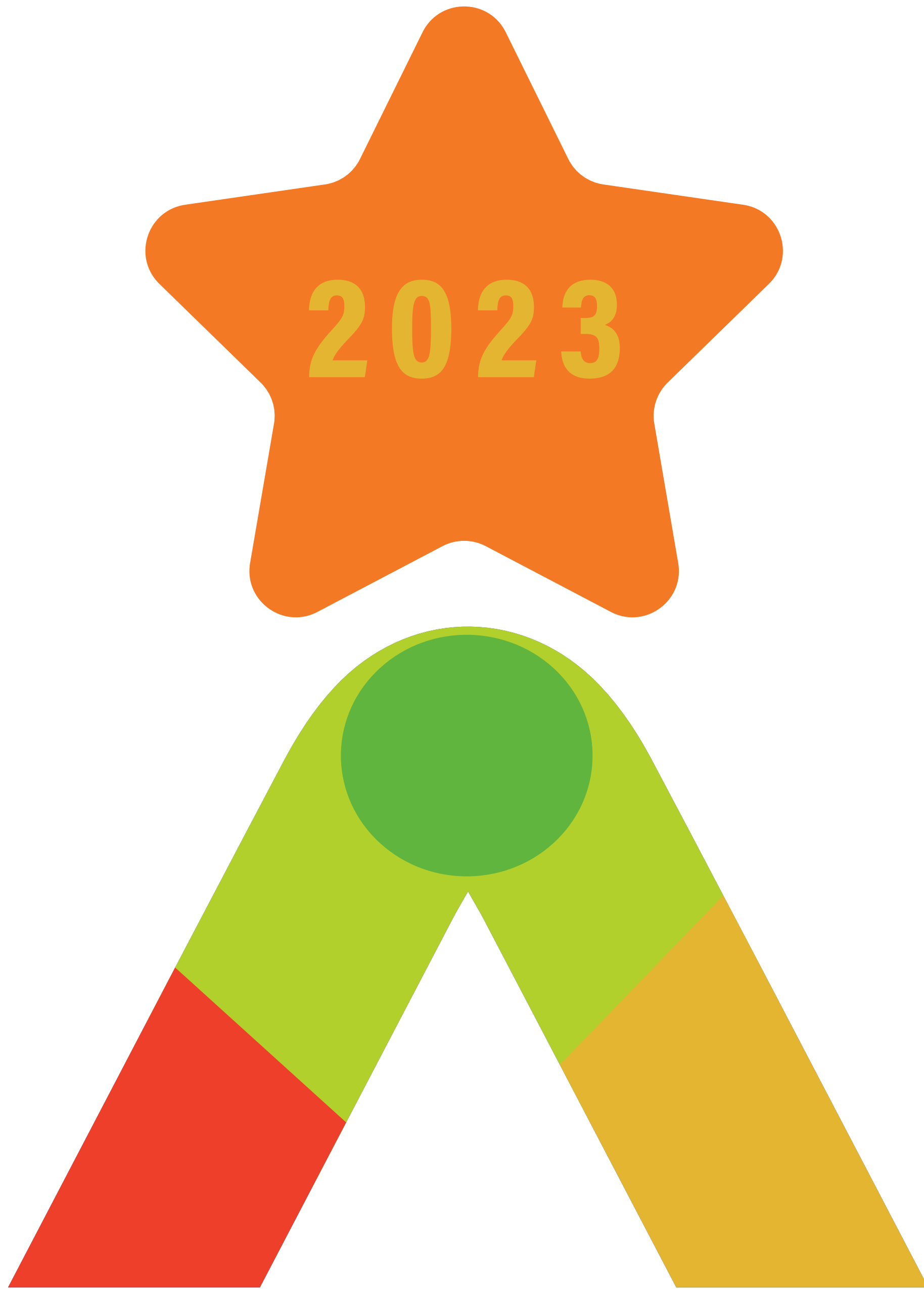
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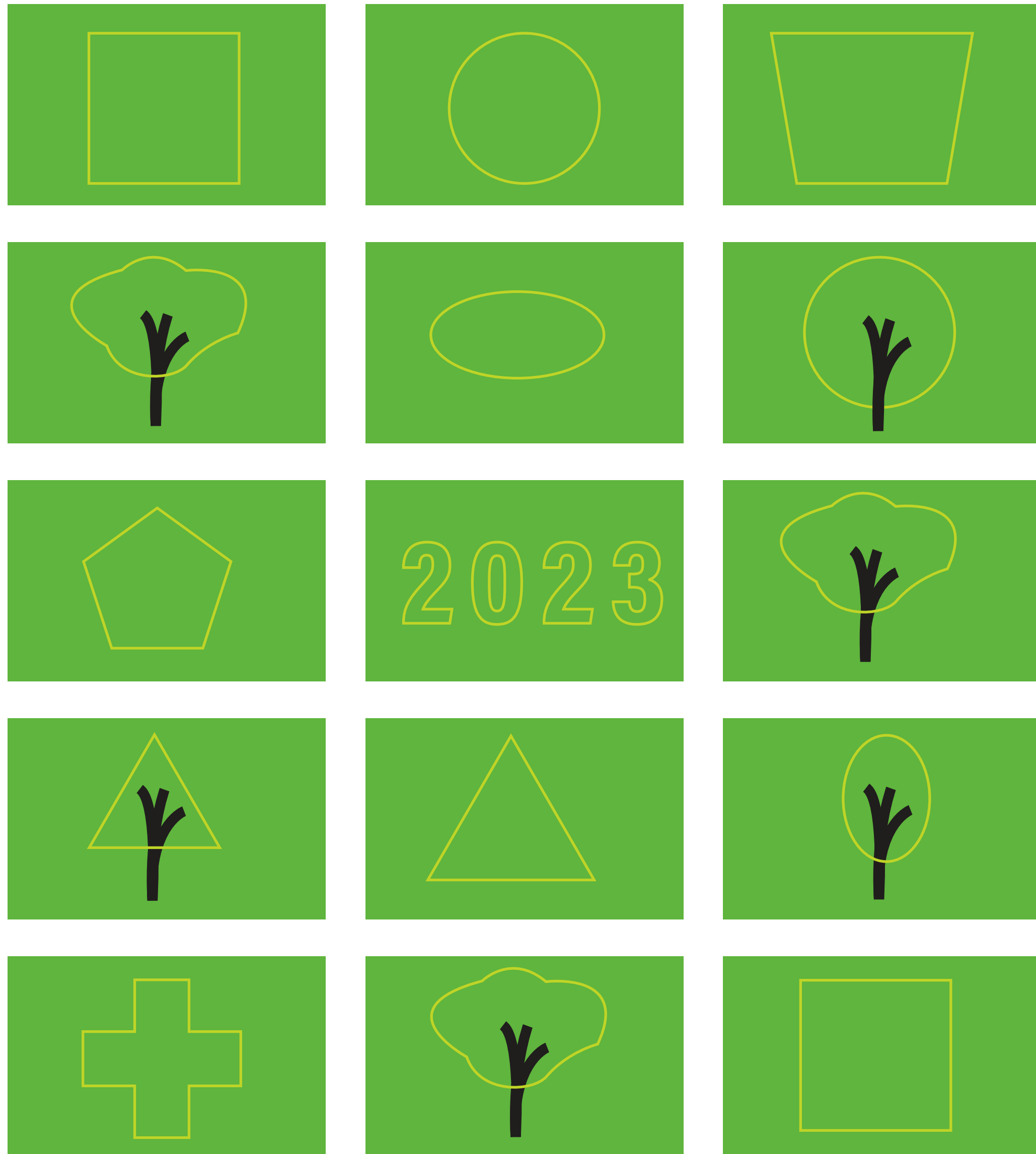


# ABOUT THE SDG BUSINESS PIONEERS AWARD

The SDG Business Pioneers Award is a national competition open to all companies operating in Albania, regardless of size or sector.

This award celebrates businesses demonstrating an exceptional commitment to sustainability and actively contributing to advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Through each edition, we seek Albania's SDG Business Pioneers: companies that inspire positive change through their practices, products, services, and operations.

By joining our community of sustainability pioneers, your company becomes part of a growing network of businesses dedicated to creating lasting social and environmental impact.



# INSPIRATION FOR SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES IN YOUR BUSINESS

The SDG Business Pioneers applicants of 2023 provided outstanding examples of what business leadership in sustainability looks like. As we believe that the best way to learn is through the example of one's peers, we have selected for you the most exemplary business practices they have implemented throughout their business development.

We hope that this will give you inspiration and some practical insights to embark on or boost your sustainability journey. We look forward to watching you become an actor for positive change in Albania.

The best sustainable practices from the I edition of the SDG Business Pioneers have been divided across five impact areas:

- Sustainability in your core business & operations
- For the employees: rights, diversity, inclusion and learning
- Making a difference for your local community
- Protecting the environment and combating climate change
- Partnerships to advance the Sustainable Development Goals



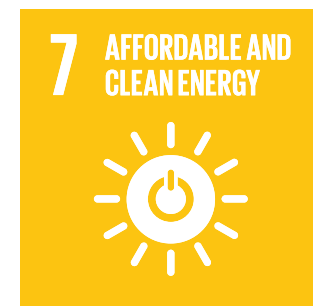
# SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) comprise 17 global objectives adopted by the United Nations in 2015, forming a roadmap to address the world's most critical social, economic, and environmental challenges. The SDGs provide a comprehensive framework for governments, organizations, and individuals to collaborate, mobilize resources, and work toward a more inclusive, equitable, and sustainable future for all.

# SUSTAINABILITY IN YOUR CORE BUSINESS & OPERATIONS

Companies have used these practices to improve the way they manage raw materials, energy, water & waste in order to reduce their impact on the environment.



- Reducing paper consumption, for instance due to better management and online signature applications.
- Reducing or eliminating the use of disposable goods, for instance by replacing plastic glasses with reusable mugs branded with the reduce, reuse, recycle message.
- Reducing printed materials, for instance cutting it by 60% over one year.
- Recycling paper from product packaging waste, for instance measuring it in tons of paper annually recycled.
- Using 100% recyclable shipping packaging.
- Managing waste according to HACCP and GMP standards with separate, documented disposal procedures for food, plastic, glass, and recyclable aluminum waste.

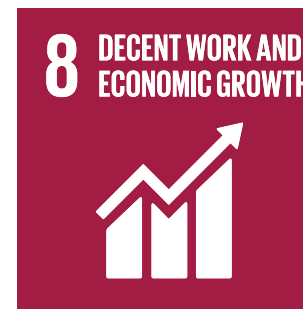




- Meeting electricity needs through renewable energy use, for instance reaching 80% of electricity obtained by solar panels.
- Reducing electricity consumption by promoting energy efficiency through LED or natural lighting, equipment shutdowns, and investing in efficient machinery.
- Encouraging annual "lights-off" hour for conservation across individuals, communities, and businesses.
- Replacing the corporate car fleet with electric vehicles, for instance setting a target by year.
- Signing contracts with suppliers with a code of ethics and best practices and contributing to building their awareness to environmental and social issues.
- Selecting suppliers and partners locally to shorten the supply chain.
- Use of organic and sustainable materials in production, for instance using or producing organic fruit and vegetables.
- Creating products with soluble or recyclable materials to minimize carbon dioxide and plastic pollution.

# FOR THE EMPLOYEES: RIGHTS, DIVERSITY, INCLUSION AND LEARNING

Sustainable companies have the ambition to create a diverse and inclusive environment in the workplace as well as contribute in a positive way to the lives of their employees and their families. These are some of the initiatives they have advanced.



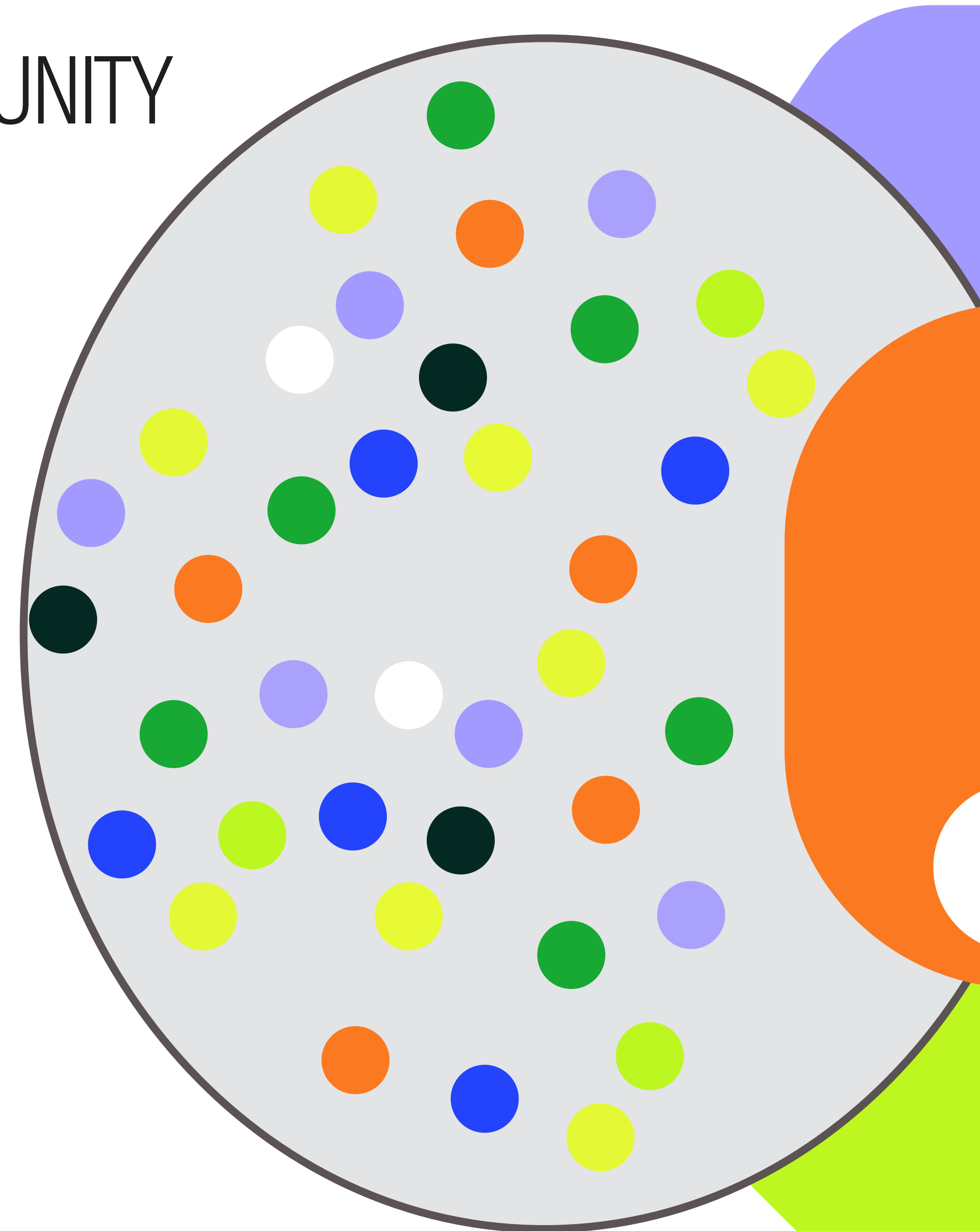
- Creating diversity and inclusion initiatives targeting women, youth, and people with disabilities to support career progression.
- Creating partnerships with youth projects to build professional skills and career readiness for young people.
- Posting inclusive job vacancies and creating diverse recruitment channels, including women-specific job boards and professional networks.
- Fostering inclusive workforce, actively overcoming biases towards gender, age, origin, sexual orientation or religious criteria for employment, for instance including women and members from Roma community.
- Participating in work fairs focuses on recruitment of individuals with disabilities and minority groups.
- Guaranteeing full workplace accessibility, both physical and digital for employees with disabilities.
- Senior leadership roles prioritize gender diversity.
- Women in management targets are embedded in long-term plans.
- Creating programs to support individuals to reenter the workforce after career breaks.
- Ensure proper benefits and leaves for employees, including sick leave and maternity leave.

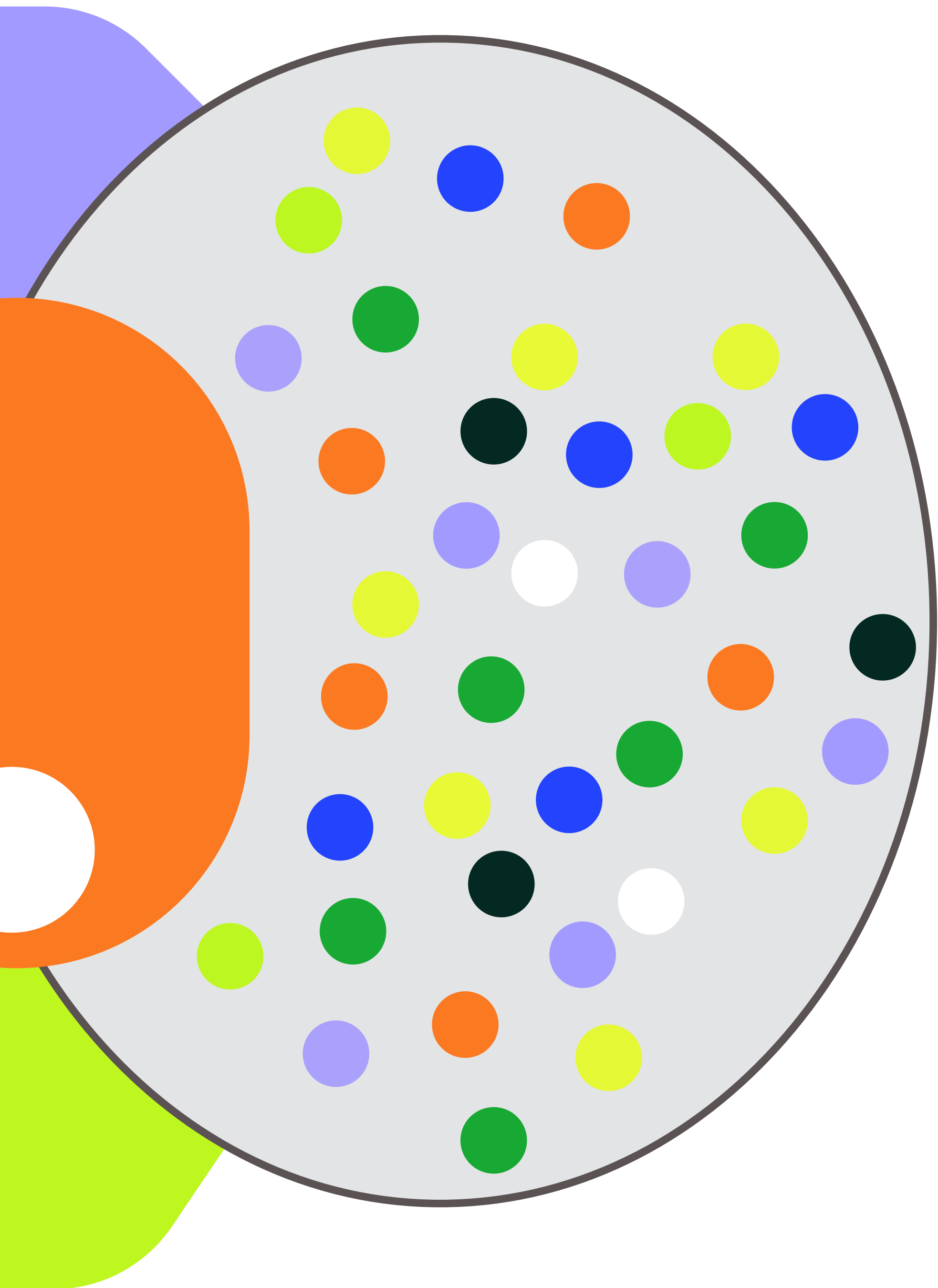


# MAKING A DIFFERENCE FOR YOUR LOCAL COMMUNITY

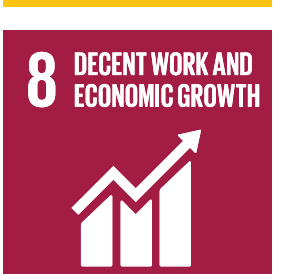
Companies who have given back to their communities can be found advancing these inspiring initiatives.

- Organizing mentoring and training programs for youth in local communities, including job fairs, courses, and certifications for workforce readiness.
- Donating a percentage of profits to local NGOs addressing community challenges, supporting services for marginalized groups.
- Organizing community events with speakers, artists, scientists, and innovators to advocate for sustainability and foster community vibrancy.
- Contributing to fundraising initiatives for urgent local causes, such as earthquake relief efforts.
- Awarding scholarships to students of the local community to support their education.
- Renovating and constructing projects for local kindergartens and playgrounds benefiting local children.
- Providing free advisory services for farmers and entrepreneurs on best practices, especially those reducing environmental impact.



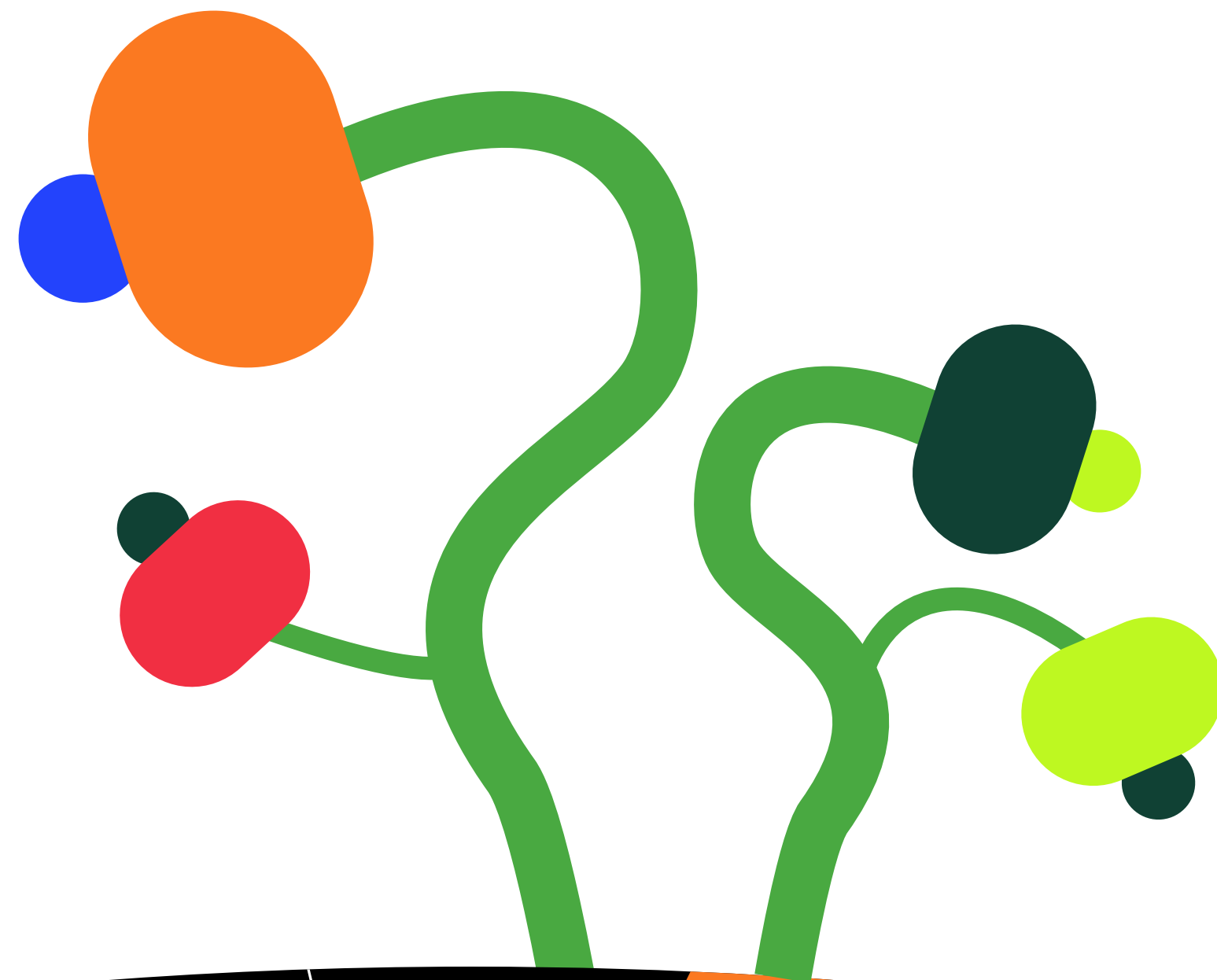


- Providing support to families in crisis, including donation of furniture and appliances following a devastating house fire.
- Sponsoring cultural events for positive impact, for instance a theater production featuring young people with autism.
- Organizing social impact awards to outstanding entrepreneurs, acknowledging contributions to a better society.
- Organizing educational campaigns on responsible sustainable practices.
- Sponsoring inclusive sports initiatives.
- Donating tablets or computers for online learning to children in need.
- Prioritizing employment opportunities for individuals from local communities.
- Contributing to the protection and preservation of local historical and cultural sites.



# PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT AND COMBATING CLIMATE CHANGE

Businesses can have a powerful role in protecting the environment and contributing to fighting climate change. Here are some ways to do it.



- Developing eco-friendly products and services.
- Minimizing environmental footprint through renewable energy use and underwater treatment systems.
- Promoting environmental preservation activities including energy efficiency, waste management, promotion of green transportation, and employee awareness campaigns.
- Planting trees in public spaces.
- No lending for projects involving deforestation.
- Participating in financing renewable energy projects.
- Achieving an annual Carbon Reduction Certificate.
- Committing to reaching net-zero carbon emissions by a certain year.
- Implementing an action plan for net-zero carbon, for instance including introduction of renewable energy, electric car fleet and sustainability reporting.
- Donating a percentage of profits to local NGOs for environmental preservation, including projects to protect rivers and biodiversity.

# PARTNERSHIPS TO ADVANCE THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Scaling up your impact by yourself can be challenging. Pursue partnerships with local actors to do so, taking inspiration from the SDG Business Pioneers!



- Partnering with the Albanian Red Cross to assist children with blood donations.
- Partnering with Caritas to donate clothing items and donations for children from families in need.
- Partnering with local municipalities to donate trees to public spaces.
- Partnering with Food Bank Albania to support families in need through food donations.
- Collaborating with NGOs by supporting ongoing hiring initiatives for people with disabilities and minority groups.
- Partnering with NGOs to provide free services in underserved communities, including healthcare and dentistry.
- Assisting victims of domestic abuse, in collaboration with NGOs or international organizations.
- Supporting the development of global networks for women and minorities' participation to society.
- Partnering with WWF to reduce emissions, eliminate e-waste, and promote a circular economy for the products produced.



# THREE STEPS TO SUSTAINABILITY

Now that you have some ideas of sustainable practices to implement, let's look at three steps you can take to integrate them in your business.

## 1 Measuring

Once you identify the key sustainability areas you want to improve in your business, identify indicators to help you track your progress. A few examples from this booklet are: % of electricity saved compared to previous year, % of sustainable materials used in production, tons of paper recycled yearly and so on.

## 2 Reporting

The second step is reporting. Once you have identified your metrics, collect them in reports that will crystallize your current sustainable practices. When updated regularly, which is usually every 6 months or one year, these documents will allow you to keep track of your progress over time and showcase it to your clients and stakeholders.

You can also use these documents to state your next sustainability goals.

## 3 Improving

Now it is time to work on your business, improve your processes and implement new sustainable practices. As you can see above, there is no limit in having a positive impact: from partnering with NGOs and international organizations to upgrading machinery and improving the relationship with your workforce and suppliers. Every small step counts, while focusing on your long-term objectives.

And when you have made the improvements, go back to Step 1 and measure your new results.

# BUSINESSES THAT APPLIED FOR THE SDG BUSINESS PIONEERS AWARD IN 2023



# RESOURCES FOR YOUR BUSINESS

Take Action | UN Global Compact

Sustainable Development Goals | United Nations Development Programme

GRI - Reporting support

Big shifts, small steps - KPMG Albania



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