

Business school collaborates on new platform to support sustainable entrepreneurship

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Nyenrode Business University in the Netherlands is collaborating with B Lab Benelux and Earth Law Center to launch the online platform 'Onboarding Nature'. The platform will encourage more companies to engage in nature-inclusive entrepreneurship and help them recognise nature as a shareholder.

Launching today (April 10th), Onboarding Nature provides companies with the inspiration, tools, and a legal framework to give nature a clearer role in governance and business operations, known as nature-inclusive governance.

Currently, the majority of Dutch companies are focused on maximising profits for shareholders, with nature's interests scarcely considered in business decisions.

Globally, there is growing awareness that humans are not separate from nature but are dependent on it and should protect it better. Nature is increasingly being granted rights and more (B Corp) companies are considering nature's interests in their decision-making processes.

For instance, rights have been granted to the Mar Menor lagoon in Spain, and in the Netherlands, D66 is working on a law to grant rights to the Wadden Sea.

Meanwhile, some companies are experimenting with nature-inclusive governance, naming Nature as a shareholder, board member, or CEO. Examples include Nature as the sole shareholder (Patagonia), Nature as a board member (Faith in Nature), Nature as an advisor (De Ceuvel), and Nature as a symbolic CEO (Willicroft and Blyde Benelux).

"By studying these pioneers, we have developed the Onboarding Nature toolkit. The toolkit includes step-by-step guides to integrate nature's voice into commercial organisations," says Tineke Lambooy, Professor of Corporate Law at Nyenrode Business University.

Daan van Apeldoorn, Impact Manager at B Lab and project leader, says: "By formally giving nature a place or voice in the company's mission and daily decision-making, employees will relate to nature differently, and the interests of nature will be systematically and prominently considered. This is crucial for future generations—they will inherit the environment created by today's companies.

"Therefore, during a symposium at Nyenrode Business University celebrating the launch of Onboarding Nature, the new platform is symbolically presented to Jan van de Venis, Acting Ombudsman for Future Generations."

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