

Frequently Asked Questions

For questions related to the Science Based Targets Initiative (SBTi), please refer to <https://sciencebasedtargets.org/faq/>

- **What is the Belgian Alliance for Climate Action?**

The Belgian Alliance for Climate Action (BACA) is a platform / community for organizations in Belgium that are serious about their climate ambitions and have chosen – or are willing to choose – the path towards Science Based Targets (SBT's).

By adhering to the Belgian Alliance for Climate Action, you commit to act on climate change by signing the Science Based Targets Initiative (SBTi) commitment letter within the first 12 months after joining. This means that, in the subsequent 24 months, you must set “science-based” targets to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions that are in line with what the latest climate science says is necessary to meet the goals of the Paris Agreement—to limit global warming to well-below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and pursue efforts to limit warming to 1.5°C.

Illustration of timeline:

- T = date of signing the Alliance Pledge
- T + 12 months = ultimate date of signing the SBTi commitment letter
- (T + 12) + 24 months = ultimate date to submit a science-based target for official validation

This means that signatories of our pledge have one year to get acquainted with the SBT framework (without formally engaging with the SBTi) before committing to set Science Based Targets.

- **Does it cost anything to join the Belgian Alliance for Climate Action?**

The Belgian Alliance for Climate Action is a joint initiative from The Shift and WWF and welcomes all organizations. However, as organizing workshops and events has a cost, we ask you to join The Shift, the Belgian network on Sustainability, if you want to participate in the full program and learning network.

Becoming a member of The Shift does require a financial engagement. If you are interested to join The Shift, please send us a message at hi@theshift.be. More information can be found here: <https://theshift.be/en/take-action/become-a-member>

- **What is the workload involved in defining SBT's?**

The exact workload is hard to predict as it depends upon your organizations' profile, activities, emissions, existing sustainability initiatives and carbon monitoring and/or reporting efforts...

We do promise that you will learn about the journey towards Science Based Targets while interacting with the BACA community and attending our events (e.g. case studies of organizations with approved SBT's regarding their SBTi commitment and the journey of developing and validating climate targets).

The SBTi has considered this workload, acknowledging it's not an easy exercise, and therefore gives organizations two years to submit climate targets for validation, after signing the commitment letter. This should normally cover the time needed to start and complete the trajectory of developing SBTs.

- **Do I need to commit to the SBTi immediately when joining the Belgian Alliance for Climate Action?**

Organizations that want to adhere to the Alliance must, within 12 months after signing the pledge, formally commit to the Science Based Targets initiative (SBTi), i.e. sign the SBTi commitment letter.

Subsequently, in the following 24 months after having committed to SBTi, you must set and submit climate targets for validation by the SBTi.

- **What if after joining the Alliance I decide not to define SBT's?**

By signing the pledge, you confirm to formally commit to the SBTi within year one and set climate targets for validation within the following two years.

If after the first 12 months as member of the Alliance, your organization does not (yet) wish to initiate the SBT route, you are free to leave the alliance. We will not make any public announcement or statement about this. Our aim is to help you get acquainted with and start the SBT journey.

If you have committed to SBTi but wish to withdraw before validation of the targets, the SBTi way of working applies. The protocol through which SBT manages expired commitments can be found [here](#).

- **Will the Belgian Alliance for Climate Action follow up on its signatories?**

The role of the Alliance is to facilitate a network and host a platform for organizations with serious climate ambitions that are willing to drive positive change. We will remind you of this commitment and would hope that you follow up on these. Note that the Alliance will not penalize The Shift members or other invited organizations for not signing the pledge, or not committing to the SBTi. We do however believe that it is in the interest of your organization to assess the risks and opportunities of climate changes for your organization and act upon it in the short term.

- **My group has already set SBT's. If I sign as Belgian subsidiary, do I need to do something extra?**

If your organization, either at local or at group level, already committed to the SBTi, you should ensure your organization sets and submits SBT's for validation by the SBTi within the timeframe of 24 months after having signed the commitment letter.

If your organization, either at local or at group level, has already set and submitted SBT's for validation, you should follow up with the progress towards having approved climate targets and apply the new business model and targets.

- **Do I need to commit to SBT as a group or can I start with one entity only?**

For organizations currently not adhering to the SBTi yet, it's strongly encouraged to set targets at group level. If a local branch is a legal subsidiary, they can technically set a target, but there is no preference for that.

- **Is there a deadline to join the Belgian Alliance for Climate Action, or may we join anytime?**

We'd like organizations to act upon their climate ambitions as soon as possible, but there is no deadline after which it will not be possible any more to adhere to this initiative.

In case you would like your organization's adherence to the Alliance to be made public on the official launch the 12th of October 2020, you must sign the pledge by the 15th of September 2020.

- **What are the incentives to join the Belgian Alliance for Climate Action?**

Joining the Alliance has multiple advantages:

- Be part of the movement of leading Belgian organizations recognizing the urgency of climate change and driving positive change by aligning their activities with the goals of the Paris Agreement, to limit global warming to well-below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and pursue efforts to limit warming to 1.5°C.
- Publicly demonstrate ambitious climate goals and be recognized for this
- Exchange information and provide and/or receive guidance regarding the SBT's journey: the Belgian Alliance for Climate Action will link different players facing the same challenges in the process of determining and reaching climate targets
- Inspire others and engage in dialogue on climate action with suppliers, employees, investors and peers and incentivize your partners to join the movement
- Publish and/or receive research/thought-leadership on practical steps to delivering a business model in line with climate science and in support of climate targets;
- Provide and/or receive mentoring or inspiration to/from other adhering companies in meeting the requirements of SBTi and accelerate climate action in your ecosystem

By becoming a member of The Shift, you can participate to the full program and enjoy:

- Knowledge exchange: testimonials, webinars, tutorials, supporting materials on the website + industry-specific workshops, ideation sessions on key sustainability topics, learning sessions on new tools and technologies, points of view from your peers...
 - Networking opportunities: access to a neutral platform to connect with your supply chain, major industry players and innovative start-ups, form partnerships and get in touch with similar international initiatives
 - Public visibility: all members of The Shift are displayed on the website and be recognized as part of the Belgian network for Sustainability.
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- **I already have set, submitted and/or approved SBT's: why should I join the Alliance?**

The Alliance allows you to:

- Showcase your current initiatives and the rationale behind the decision to set SBT's
 - Incentivize your suppliers, business partners and customers to address their emissions through a neutral platform
 - Share knowledge and learn from other member organizations
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- **I did not set or submit SBT's yet: why should I join the Alliance?**

The Alliance allows you to:

- Learn more about SBT's and why it is relevant for your organization to embark on this trajectory
 - Discover carbon monitoring and reporting tools/methodologies
 - Interact with peers and mentoring organizations to develop your own SBT roadmap
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- **I am a small organization and I see on the website that current SBTi participants are all very big players ... Is the Belgian Alliance for Climate Action something for me?**

The Alliance welcomes all organizations, regardless of size or sector, or their status with regards to SBTi:

- Organizations that have already set SBT's and are willing to share the lessons learned throughout that process
- Organizations willing to set ambitious climate targets, and looking for guidance & inspiration
- Organizations that have committed to set SBTs but are still in the process of defining them

On April 15, 2020, the Science Based Targets initiative launched a special, streamlined target validation route for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs are non-subsiary, independent companies which employ fewer than 500 employees). More details on the SME route can be found here:

<https://sciencebasedtargets.org/faqs-for-smes/>

- **My organization is not a for-profit company. Can I join?**

The Alliance welcomes all organizations, regardless of size or sector. This includes not only for-profit companies, but also other types of organizations such as academic institutions, associations, NGOs... We have decided to not include cities and municipalities as these are at this point better served by the Covenant of mayors initiative (<https://www.covenantofmayors.eu/en/>).

- **Would we always need a consultant to get involved?**

Not necessarily, the SBTi provides free guidance documents, webinars and other resources such as science-based target setting tools that are available on their website. Next to that, the BACA's activities, events and online available supporting materials will also help organizations throughout the process of setting SBT. However, it cannot be denied that developing these climate targets (especially for large organizations) requires a considerable effort and a data-driven approach, which is sometimes easier to

go through with the support of a professional services partner. Yet, this depends on the wishes and capacity of each individual organization.

- **Is there a list of relevant “SBT consultants” in Belgium?**

As we act as a neutral platform, we currently we do not provide specific recommendations on which consultant is best positioned to assist your organization in setting SBTs. Of course, we can provide an overview of organizations within our network that perform this type of consulting services. We encourage networking with other member organizations and hope that through our program of activities, you can get in touch with relevant partners and/or service providers to work together in order to reduce your environmental and carbon footprint.

In case you are actively looking for a consultant to assist your organization in setting SBTs, The Shift can facilitate and communicate this request within the BACA network, or you can ask peer organizations for recommendations.

- **Who validates the climate targets?**

Organizations can request the target validation service via the submission form available for download on the Step-by-Step guide page of the SBTi website. The completed form must be sent together with any supporting documents to targets@sciencebasedtargets.org. The SBTi technical experts team will perform the target validation process.

The review process includes a thorough evaluation of each individual target by a team of experts in the field. On top of this, the initiative’s experts will offer companies detailed feedback and recommendations (including one-on-one calls). Each target assessment requires that a technical expert familiarizes him/herself with a company’s inventory and activities to meticulously validate the submitted target against SBTi criteria. Each reviewer’s technical recommendations are then cross-checked by other experts in the team for quality control.

- **What is the cost of committing to the SBTi and when is this due? Is it a one-off fee?**

Committing to set science-based targets by signing the SBTi commitment letter is free of charge. Once your organization has developed climate targets, these need to be validated by the SBTi technical experts team (within two years after signing the commitment letter).

For large companies the target validation service costs USD 4950 (+ applicable VAT), which includes up to two target assessments (companies can choose between one preliminary and one official, or two official validations).

If you 1) have submitted at least once using the paid target validation service, 2) already have approved targets but need to update them, and/or 3) were approved through a preliminary validation under the free service, the target validation service is called ‘subsequent resubmission’ and costs USD 2490 (+ applicable VAT) per submission.

Apart from the direct cost of the target validation service, the entire process your organization goes through when developing climate targets also comes at a cost, which will be different for every organization and is not directly linked to the SBTi. This also depends on whether you choose to involve an external consultancy team to assist you on the SBT trajectory.

For SME's (organizations employing fewer than 500 employees) there is no need to go through the standard target validation process (SMEs can immediately set SBTs by choosing from predefined options). Please note that a one-time target validation fee of USD 1,000 (+ applicable VAT) applies. Of course, also for SMEs there might be other indirect costs related to SBTs, as measuring and reducing emissions requires time and resources to be invested.

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- **The educational activities that the BACA hosts for its members seem to be set up in a chronologic trajectory. Can we still join at a later stage?**

The program of activities that we offer BACA members is indeed built up from basic to advanced in terms of organizational sustainability knowledge. We will organize approximately one 'anchor' event per quarter. Jointly with these anchor events, we stimulate our mentor members to organize 'satellite' events such as workshops, webinars etc. that address a certain topic or industry.

While these satellite events are more ad hoc, the anchor events are indeed planned in such a way that the knowledge is built up progressively and in a logical order throughout the program. If you join after the official launch of the BACA, you can jump in any time you want, and choose to catch up with the educational track via online versions.

Apart from the educational track, it's also key to take part in the networking to create collaborative streams across the ecosystem and to ensure visibility of your organization towards your stakeholders via the BACA initiative.

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- **Can we participate in the activities that you host, without signing the pledge?**

Signing the Pledge is the entry condition to join the Belgian Alliance for Climate Action, as we want to gather ambitious sustainability actors, whom we will provide with the necessary tools to succeed in setting science-based targets.

To participate in the full program and learning network, we ask you to also join The Shift, the Belgian network on Sustainability, which requires a financial engagement. Organizing events and creating and managing a community comes at a cost, which we aim to cover via the membership fee of The Shift.

If you are interested to join The Shift, please send us a message at hi@theshift.be. More information can be found here: <https://theshift.be/en/take-action/become-a-member>

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- **What if I already have SBTs in line with the 2°C guidelines?**

Existing targets in line with 2°C will continue to be valid and will be labelled as 2°C targets on the SBTi website. Since the IPCC 1.5°C report from 2018 however, the SBTi methodologies have been updated and aligned with the report conclusions. New targets will only be accepted if they are consistent with

limiting global warming to 1.5°C or well-below 2°C. To ensure targets remain aligned with the most recent climate science, companies are required to review, and if necessary, revalidate their targets every five years from the date of the original target approval. This will become mandatory in 2025.

- **What is the timeframe for the targets (e.g. base- year and mid- vs. long-term target year)?**

To ensure targets remain aligned with the most recent climate science, organizations are required to review, and if necessary, revalidate their targets every five years from the date of the original target approval. This will become mandatory in 2025.

Mid-term targets must cover a minimum of 5 years and a maximum of 15 years from the date the target is submitted to the SBTi for an official validation. For targets submitted for an official validation in the first half of 2021, the valid target years are 2025-2035 inclusive. For targets submitted in the second half of 2021, the valid target years are between 2026 and 2036 inclusive.

Targets that cover more than 15 years from the date of submission are considered long-term targets. Companies are encouraged to develop such long-term targets up to 2050 in addition to mid-term targets.

The SBTi recommends choosing the most recent year for which data are available as the target base year. It is recommended to use the same base and target years for all targets within the mid-term timeframe, as well as for all targets within the long-term timeframe.

- **What are the requirements for long-term SBTs? Carbon neutral by 2050?**

Targets that cover more than 15 years from the date of submission are considered long-term targets. Companies are encouraged to develop such long-term targets up to 2050 in addition to mid-term targets. At a minimum, long-term targets must be consistent with the level of decarbonization required to keep global temperature increase to well-below 2°C compared to preindustrial temperatures to be validated and recognized by the SBTi.

- **Does the SBTi impose a methodology for scope 3 targets? How are the results from different companies compared?**

The SBTi provides recommendations on how to address Scope 3 emission reduction targets, using the same science-based target setting methods that were developed for Scope 1 and 2, with additional information on how to adapt those to Scope 3 targets.

The methodology starts with (1) conducting a complete scope 3 inventory (leveraging The GHG Protocol's calculation guidance), (2) identifying which scope 3 categories should be included in the target boundary, (3) determining whether to set a single target, or multiple targets, and (4) identifying an appropriate type of target.

Please note that methodologies differ per type of organization and per sector. The SBTi does not compare targets or progress of different companies against each other. The SBTi only assesses and approves targets but does not follow-up with the results achieved in terms of emissions reduction.