

Your EcoVadis Rating: An Essential Guide

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Introduction

For most businesses, the greatest environmental and social risks and impacts sit beyond their own operations, in their supply chains, spread across multiple tiers, geographies and partners. Greater visibility and accountability across value chains are now essential to tackling climate risk and strengthening business resilience.

EcoVadis is a sustainability ratings platform used by over 150,000 businesses to manage their supply chains. If you're a business in manufacturing, logistics, food and drink, or fashion, you may have already received requests from customers asking you to get rated.

This guide explains what EcoVadis is, how the rating process works, and where businesses typically need support. It's based on Seismic's direct experience going through the process ourselves and supporting our clients through their ratings.



What is EcoVadis?

EcoVadis is a system for rating a company's sustainability performance against 4 themes:

1 Environment

2 Labour and Human Rights

3 Ethics

4 Sustainable Procurement

The platform measures your formal sustainability management system, and you complete the rating on an annual basis. You're scored from 0 to 100, and based on your score, you may receive a bronze, silver, gold, or platinum medal.

After your rating, you receive a scorecard and corrective action plan which shows where you scored well, where evidence was rejected, and what improvements would increase your rating. You can use this plan as a tool to prioritise improvements and use the scorecard to benchmark yourself against other companies in your industry.

How it works

Your questionnaire is bespoke, tailored to your industry, size, the countries you operate in, and the level of risk associated with those locations. This is a global platform, so businesses with large international supply chains tend to get more value from it.

The questionnaire is split across the four themes. The assessment evaluates performance across 21 sustainability criteria within the 4 themes and are assigned a materiality or prioritisation score. Therefore for some businesses certain topics will be deprioritised and not activated based on a business' size, industry and locations of operation. The questionnaire is assessed under three criteria: Policies, Actions and Results (PAR), and this framework determines your score.

Understanding PAR is crucial because these categories are weighted differently

- Policies: Lowest weighted (easiest to implement but least impactful on score)
- Actions: Higher weighted (what you're actually doing carries more weight)
- Results/Reporting: Highest weighted (demonstrable outcomes score best)

This is why businesses that focus only on creating policies often score lower than expected. Ambition must be translated into action and measurable results, supported by credible evidence.

Critical differences from other frameworks

- Any policy you reference must have been in place for at least 2 months before submission.
- For every question you answer yes to, you must upload evidence that includes your company logo or your business name on every page, or it will be rejected.



Who needs EcoVadis and why?

EcoVadis gives businesses a recognised, external benchmark that customers, investors and private equity firms use to assess sustainability performance. A strong score can reduce friction in procurement, support customer retention and inform due diligence.

The assessment also acts as a central source of sustainability data, replacing multiple bespoke questionnaires with a single, credible framework. By structuring information on policies, actions and results, EcoVadis improves supply chain transparency and provides a clear focus for strengthening performance over time.

The primary driver: Customer mandate

The main reason businesses pursue an EcoVadis rating is because their customers are asking for it. Large companies are onboarding their supply chains onto EcoVadis to meet their own ESG targets, particularly around Scope 3 emissions and sustainable procurement.

This creates a domino effect. Once a business is on the platform, they often want their own suppliers rated too. Many clients are already using EcoVadis as their leading ESG requirement; without it there's a lack of transparency and trust.

Other drivers

Tenders and contracts: EcoVadis ratings are increasingly appearing in tender requirements. 46% of pharmaceutical tenders now include sustainability requirements, and EcoVadis is often specified.

Green investment: Private equity firms increasingly use EcoVadis scores to assess and benchmark portfolio companies, and to inform sustainability due diligence during acquisitions.

Risk management and resilience: EcoVadis helps businesses understand how suppliers manage critical risks, from labour practices and ethics to environmental compliance, strengthening oversight beyond internal operations.

Industries most affected

Any business (primarily B2B) with a lengthy, complex and likely international supply chain:

- Manufacturing
- Retail and wholesale
- Logistics
- Food and drink
- Beauty
- Fashion (whether you manufacture or outsource)

The potential impact is huge. As organisations adopt EcoVadis, their supply chains follow, driving system-wide change across the industry.

EcoVadis vs B Corp: Understanding the differences

Many businesses ask whether they should pursue B Corp or EcoVadis. Here's what you need to know:

Focus and scope



B Corp is a holistic assessment covering 7 impact topics. You must meet detailed requirements across the core impact areas and foundational criteria; without meeting each one, you can't certify. The mandatory minimum requirements across 7 key impact areas include Purpose & Governance, Fair Work, JEDI, Human Rights, Climate Action, Environmental Stewardship, and Collective Action, requiring deeper commitment and third-party assurance for improved credibility.



EcoVadis focuses on your internal processes and your supply chain. It outlines your high-impact topic areas (or material topic areas), depending on your industry, size and locations of operations.

Recertification



B Corp: Every 3 years. There are sequenced requirements and 12-month track records to ensure against last-minute actions and you are assessed via one assessment.



EcoVadis: Every single year. EcoVadis assesses your annual journey of progress. Once you receive your scorecard, the focus shifts to implementing improvements through small, iterative workstreams that build steady momentum for the year ahead. It is important to stay on top of these actions throughout the year to ensure steady, year-by-year progress; without this consistent focus, scores can plateau or even decline.

Audience



B Corp is consumer-facing. It's a certification that builds brand trust with the public.



EcoVadis is B2B. It's not consumer-facing; it's for supply chain management and procurement decisions.

The assessment process



B Corp: The B Corp assessment, run by B Lab, has been updated under the new standards to raise consistency, rigour, and credibility. Companies still complete the B Impact Assessment across key impact areas, but the focus has shifted from scoring points to meeting defined performance requirements. Evidence expectations are clearer and more specific, with closer scrutiny of how policies are implemented in practice. Assessment, verification, and certification roles are now more clearly separated, and where evidence does not fully meet the standard, it will not be accepted, even if a policy exists.



EcoVadis is very prescriptive about evidence requirements. As you work through your questionnaire there are suggestions of what evidence might be suitable. Even if the policy is the right type of evidence, it can still be rejected if it does not meet specific requirements, for example correct use of the company name and logo. In that case, its value will not be reflected in your score.

Can you do both?

Yes. If you're already B Corp certified, this is recognised within the EcoVadis questionnaire and can help your rating. Just keep in mind that they serve different purposes. If a client has requested EcoVadis for their procurement process, the B Corp status acts as a supporting asset rather than a substitute for the assessment itself.

The EcoVadis process

Timeline:

Minimum: 2 months.

For companies responding to an immediate customer mandate or tender deadline.

Realistic: 4-6 months.

Those businesses aiming for a stronger rating, this might include a specific medal.

Maximum: 6 months.

As recertification is required annually, a longer process reduces the time to prepare before the next assessment.

Understanding your ambition level

There are two main pathways which will affect how you approach the process and how much time you'll need.

- 1 **Compliance-focused**
You've been told by a customer that you need to get rated by a specific deadline. You're not necessarily aiming for gold; you just need to be on the platform and show you're making progress.
- 2 **Competitive advantage**
You're going for tenders where your rating matters compared to your peers. You want to be able to say, "We're scoring this versus competitors," and use it strategically showing year-on-year progress.

The typical journey

Phase 1: Setup and scoping

You can only have one profile per business and it's legally linked to your company name.

During setup, you define:

- Which legal entities are included
- Your industry sector
- Number of employees
- Countries you operate in

There are commercial considerations at this stage too. EcoVadis operates on different subscription levels that give you access to different tools and support. Work out how you want to progress before committing to a subscription level.

Your questionnaire is then created based on these factors. The platform indicates your high-impact material topics; these are marked with dots (4 dots = high impact, 3 dots = medium impact).

Phase 2: Understanding the methodology

This is where businesses stumble. EcoVadis provides extensive guidance, but it can be hard to know where to start and how to approach submission.

While EcoVadis provides free resources, these materials can feel dense and time-consuming to digest. Navigating the sheer volume of information can be overwhelming, making it difficult to pinpoint exactly what applies to your business. This is where expert support becomes valuable. We, your partner, help you navigate how the requirements apply by breaking them down into accessible, actionable steps, transforming them into a clear roadmap tailored to your business.

By working with an approved partner, you move past the trial-and-error phase of interpreting resources and move straight into practical application, ensuring your sustainability efforts are both compliant and impactful.

You need to understand:

- What are your most material areas within the questionnaire
- What the evidence criteria is
- How the PAR (Policies, Actions, Results) scoring works
- The 55-document limit (you can only upload 55 documents maximum)
- The 2-month rule (policies must be in place for at least 2 months before submission)

Phase 3: Gap analysis and prioritisation

You can download your questionnaire to work through offline and identify your high-impact areas. These are the questions that will have the biggest effect on your score.

This is where you work out where you'll score highly versus areas for improvement and how this needs to be implemented. You can approximate your potential score, however, this will not be a guarantee and is open to error.

Phase 4: Evidence gathering and implementation

For every question you answer yes to, you are required to provide evidence. This is fundamentally different from B Corp. For example, if you select 40 answer options in the affirmative, you will be expected to provide at least 40 documents to support each answer.

As a reminder, you are capped at adding 55 documents to your questionnaire. Therefore, you have to assess where you can appropriately use one document across multiple areas of the assessment.

Phase 5: Submission and review

You upload all your evidence and submit. An analyst assigned through the platform will then audit everything.

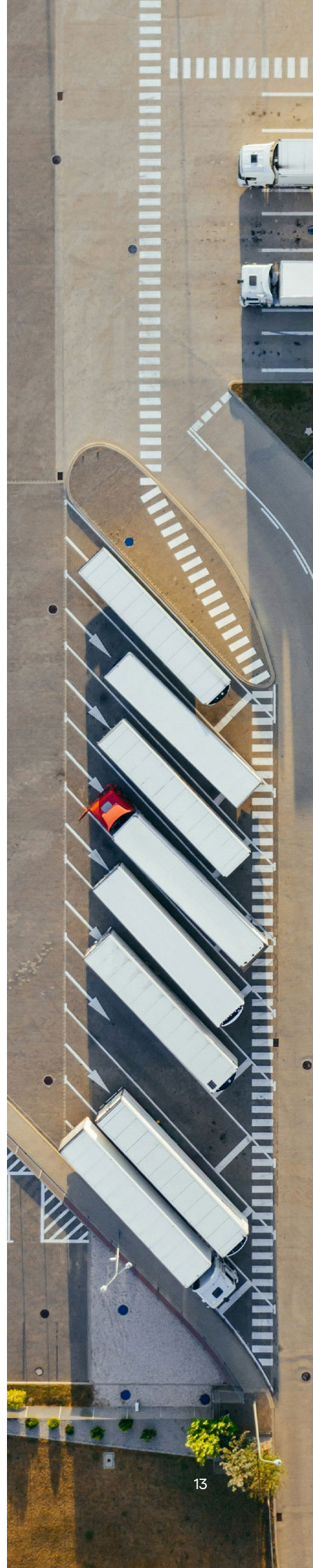
If evidence doesn't meet the criteria – missing logo, wrong format, insufficient content – it gets rejected and won't count towards your final score.

Phase 6: Rating and corrective action plan

You will receive your final rating and a detailed scorecard, which identifies where points were awarded or evidence was rejected. Alongside, you'll receive a Corrective Action Plan. This document outlines specific opportunities for improvement, such as strengthening your evidence or launching new initiatives to help you increase your score in the future.

But here's where you need expertise: some improvements might be flagged as more material to your industry, but not all will be the most impactful investment of your resources or align with your business priorities. For example, you could choose to not take the suggestion to sign up to the UN Global Compact as an early improvement action to increase your score, as it equates to a significant cost and currently won't affect how you operate as a business.

You need to take a strategic and pragmatic lens to look at the recommendations and work out what's really going to be meaningful for your business in the long term as well as improve your score.



Your EcoVadis checklist

Before you start

☐ Get senior management buy-in

Secure senior management buy-in. This requires a formal commitment from leadership to allocate the necessary resources like subscription costs and team capacity.

A senior lead should also be designated to sign off on policies and assume ultimate accountability for the programme's success.

☐ Appoint a project manager

One person must oversee the end-to-end process. A common pitfall is having multiple contributors review the questionnaire over long periods without a single point of truth.

While it is a team effort, having one person 'steering the ship' ensures data integrity, maintains focus, and provides clear accountability as you progress.

☐ Map your stakeholders

You'll need input from HR, Operations, Procurement, and senior leaders from the start. Early engagement prevents bottlenecks and aligns the business on the importance of their input.

This approach is key for navigating a faster paced annual ratings process effectively.

☐ Understand your drivers

Are you responding to a customer deadline or building credentials proactively? This will shape your approach.

During the process

☐ Check your track is correct

Even though a track might seem straightforward, there are nuances. Seemingly simple structures often have nuance, for example, an unknown subsidiary could change your reporting scope. Don't assume the track is correct without a full review.

☐ Focus on high-impact topics first

Don't try to answer everything; prioritise the questions that will actually affect your rating.

☐ Don't just create policies

Companies tend to focus on policies because that's the easiest thing to implement, but you need to show actions and results. These are weighted more heavily.

☐ Be conservative with your answers

Only give yourself credit for things you have in place and are doing consistently. Answer questions objectively; only choose responses when you're confident you can verify them with evidence.

☐ Keep detailed notes

Document the rationale behind each answer so that if someone new joins the process, or it's been months since you gathered the answer, it's still easy to understand why it's answered that way.

☐ Don't create evidence just for EcoVadis

They have rules around this. You have to have a policy in place for 2 months before you press submit. Don't create things purely to tick boxes.

After your rating

☐ **Review your corrective action plan carefully.**

It will show you what could improve your score, but not everything on there will be the most impactful or most effective use of resources.

☐ **Prioritise based on materiality and resources.**

Some improvements are quick wins. Others are bigger, longer-term projects that might need external support or coaching.

☐ **Plan for next year immediately.**

The annual rating means you need to start thinking about improvements straight away, not leave it until month 10.



Working with Seismic

Wherever you are on your supply chain journey, we help you take a clear, practical approach. We translate the methodology into a roadmap, focus resources where it matters most, and support your team from setup through to submission and beyond.

The roadmap to success

- 1 Set up and assess**
We help you set up your assessment correctly from the start, including stakeholder mapping and methodology education. We then run a focused gap analysis, reviewing your current position, existing policies, data, certifications and evidence to identify what matters most and where the gaps are.
- 2 Close the gaps and strengthen your submission**
We work with you to prioritise high-impact actions, strengthen your evidence, and build out the materials and commentary needed for a strong submission. Our focus is on what will materially improve your score and performance.
- 3 Embed and improve year on year**
Once your rating comes through, we help you interpret your scorecard, prioritise improvements, and plan for the next cycle. We upskill your team as we go, so your approach becomes stronger each year and less reliant on external support.



Next steps

If you're just starting to explore EcoVadis:

Speak to an expert

Book a discovery call with Seismic to understand your specific situation, timeline, and support needs. We can help you determine the right approach for your business.

Check what you already have

Before diving in, audit your existing sustainability policies, certifications (ISO, B Corp, etc.), training records, and supplier documentation.

Understand your drivers

Are customers asking for it? Do you have a deadline? Or are you building credentials proactively?

Sign up and scope your assessment

Create your profile on EcoVadis.com, but remember, you only get one per business, so take time to get your scope right.

If you've been asked to get rated:

Don't wait

The process takes 2-6 months depending on your ambition level and what you already have in place.

Map your stakeholders early

You'll need input from multiple departments, and they'll need time to gather information.

Why choose Seismic

We've done it ourselves

Seismic is Silver EcoVadis rated, meaning we are in the top 7% out of 150,000 companies globally. We understand the process firsthand and know where the challenges are.

We are approved EcoVadis Consulting Partners.

EcoVadis has approved Seismic as a partner to deliver the recommended level of support which meets their standards.

We make it practical

We combine EcoVadis support with wider expertise across frameworks, supply chains, carbon, procurement, and communications. That means we can identify transferable evidence, cut through complexity, and help you make faster progress.

About Seismic

We help businesses turn sustainability from a cost centre into a driver of growth, resilience and enterprise value. We deliver this through expert teams and AI-enabled capability, bringing clarity, pace and commercial focus to complex challenges. Grounded in leading frameworks and regulation, we translate complexity into action that delivers measurable results.

Seismic is your partner for change.

