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KBC and Encon join forces to advise companies on their transition to becoming more sustainable.

In their frequent contacts with (midcap) business clients, KBC's relationship managers have noted a growing interest in a more sustainable business model. That interest is being driven by the changing expectations in society, but also the changing regulations which are placing sustainability ever higher on the agenda. Many companies are in doubt that becoming more sustainable will make them more relevant as a business, but at the same time wrestle with the complexity involved in making this transition.

KBC some time ago defined sustainability as a cornerstone of its strategy, and plays a leading role in this field. KBC has always expressed a desire to actively support its clients in their transition to a more sustainable business model. To help it achieve this, KBC not only relies upon its network of highly trained relationship managers, but also on sustainability expertise of Encon, which is able to support and guide KBC's business clients in developing a more sustainable business strategy.

The partnership between KBC and Encon will ensure that KBC's business clients are provided with fully individualised, professional sustainability advice tailored to their specific business processes and needs, in combination with suitable finance options. This will ensure that the transition to a more sustainable business model develops organically from within the business itself, with KBC and Encon acting as catalyst and facilitator in the transition to more sustainable business operations.

Greater sustainability offers (midcap) companies a solution to the major business challenges they will face going forward

As well as pursuing a sustainable strategy in its own business activities, KBC is keen to play a leading role by helping business leaders in making their own businesses more sustainable. On the one hand, companies have to take account of changing and increasingly strict European relations and reporting duties, including on their impact on the climate. On the other hand, becoming more sustainable also offers a solution to a great many of today's business challenges. For example, investing in sustainability not only pays greater dividends in the long term, but often also delivers cost savings in the short term. Sustainable businesses are also better able to respond to the growing demand from aware clients, suppliers and employees, offering them an opportunity for sustainable economic growth in this regard, too.

However, becoming more sustainable not only demands a change in attitudes within the business, but also changes in the underlying business processes in order to identify, shape and finance the opportunities and impact of that transition. Companies often have the intention of working on their transition to greater sustainability, but do not always know where to start. KBC is keen to share its experiences and offer business clients the tools they need to become more aware of the impact that a more sustainable business model can have and the new opportunities and requirements it brings.

The partnership between KBC and Encon helps businesses on the path to sustainable growth

With this in mind, KBC proactively puts its business clients in touch with Encon. This is done through the KBC relationship managers, who are familiar with the uniqueness and business processes of each of the business clients for which they are personally responsible. To date, those relationship managers have held more than 500 conversations with their business clients to determine where their needs lie and what their expectations are as regards a sustainable business model.

KBC and Encon bring their complementary expertise to bear to support clients in the transition to sustainability. A referral to Encon carries no obligation for the client. Each company decides for itself what form any collaboration with Encon will take, but at the same time will find that the KBC relationship manager and the Encon expert form a 'challenger team' which, together with the business client, will analyse, discuss and evaluate the sustainability of the business model in order to identify the most interesting opportunities for transitioning to a more sustainable business model. The KBC relationship manager can also propose the appropriate finance models to enable that sustainable business model to be implemented in practice. Working together in this way, Encon and KBC guide the company through the entire sustainability project.

Wim Eraly, Senior General Manager Corporate Banking KBC: *'Mitigating the impact of climate change is one of the greatest challenges facing our society. In the near future, businesses large and small will have to adapt in order to reduce their ecological footprint. KBC will look to help them achieve this by supporting them as a bank, insurer and asset manager in their transition to a greener economy. That's after all something that's embedded in our business strategy.'*

Filip Ferrante, General Manager Group Corporate Sustainability KBC, adds: *'Several recent studies have made clear that we in Flanders and Belgium still need to make major efforts to achieve the ambitious European targets on reducing carbon emissions. Working in partnership with Encon means we are able to help our clients as a bank-insurer to reduce their impact on the climate. That fits in completely with our engagement philosophy. Working in partnership with its clients, both private individuals and companies, KBC is keen to take the necessary steps towards a more sustainable society.'*

Robin Bruninx, Encon CEO: *'Whether it concerns the increasing pressure on operational margins, the need for more profitable investments or the challenge of continuing to meet the critical demands of employees and consumers, a sustainable business strategy ensures long-term growth and risk avoidance. Such a strategy is also the basis for a credible sustainable image.'*

Note for editors

ENCON (www.encon.be)

Encon is an independent agency that supports companies through creative and innovative solutions in their transition to become more sustainable. Encon is a strategic partner for companies in their transition to sustainability: experts from Encon analyse the opportunities for each individual company in order to devise the most efficient sustainability strategy and create the greatest impact.

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