'Explorative research on Sustainable Human Resource Management'

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Abstract

Even though sustainability in general is an important topic in research and management practices, "Sustainable HRM" has received comparatively little attention from scholars, and what it entails is still unclear. The current study contributes to a more concrete definition of Sustainable HRM according to HR professionals, and reports which of the accompanying policies have already been embedded within organizations. Additionally, it examines what the possible role of HR could be in the sustainabilization of an organization.

First, interviews were conducted with CSR- and HR Directors of Dutch companies, to assess their associations with Sustainable HRM. The derived data were incorporated into a survey that was filled out by 205 HR professionals. The themes that were reported to be associated with Sustainable HRM most, were employees' development, flexible work hours, development in the field of sustainability, employees' emotional well-being and mobility policies. The policies that were reported to have been embedded most, were those related to employees' development, mobility and employees' physical health.

On average, HR professionals mostly looked for ways to facilitate, rather than enforce, sustainable behavior. Their possibilities for being able to put sustainability on the organization's map and HR's role in engaging employees for sustainability, led to a greater perceived presence of Sustainable HRM.

Introduction

Sustainability in general is an important issue in the field of management research, referred to as a "hot topic" (Wilkinson, 2005) and another mantra for the twenty-first century (Ehnert, 2009). However, sustainability in the context of Human Resource Management (hereafter: HRM) has received comparatively little attention from scholars (Zaugg, Blom, & Thom, 2001; Ehnert, 2006; Ehnert, 2009; Inyang, Awa, & Enuoh, 2011; Zoogah, 2011; Aggerholm, Andersen, & Thomsen, 2011).

Prior literature reveals a lack in the consideration of systematic links between sustainability and HRM and the studies that do, are still widely dispersed across different HRM subfields, use diverse interpretation of sustainability and are barely inter-related with each other or with mainstream HRM literature (Ehnert, 2006).

The terms "sustainability", "sustainable development", "corporate sustainability" and "corporate social responsibility" are used interchangeably by many. Sustainability transported to the business level is referred to as Corporate Sustainability (Dyllick & Hockerts, 2002). Even though Corporate Sustainability used to put most emphasis on the effects businesses have on the environment, while Corporate Social Responsibility also incorporated a social dimension (hence the added 'social' in the name), their separate paths have been noted to grow into convergence (Van Marrewijk, 2003).

The debate about the exact definitions of these phenomena is still ongoing, but this study will adopt the views of Wempe and Kaptein (2002) who define Corporate Sustainability the same way that Sustainable Development is defined: Seeking to meet the needs and aspirations of the present, without compromising the ability to meet those of the future (WCED, 1987).

In their perspective, reaching the ultimate goal of Corporate Sustainability is realizable through the *intermediate stage* of Corporate Social Responsibility (hereafter: CSR; Wempe &

Kaptein, 2002) in which companies balance the wish for financial profits with the effects they have on the environment and on their stakeholders. Figure 1 depicts this relationship.

It is especially the diffusion of CSR (Caroll, 1999) in the last decade, that has also contributed to a rising interest in linking sustainability to HR issues (Ehnert, 2009) because of the employees' position as one of the organization's most important stakeholders (Preston & Sapienza, 1990) and because of the importance of their contribution to the success of CSR (Collier & Esteban, 2007; Branco and Rodrigues, mentioned in Rodrigo & Arenas, 2008; Larson et al., 2008; Craig et al., 2010). According to Aggerholm, Andersen, and Thomsen (2011), organizations have begun to recognize that their license to operate depends on their willingness and ability to see (potential) employees as important stakeholders, but have not yet started to approach the issues strategically – and sustainability or social responsibility in HRM is still ignored.

Even though literature shows that "Sustainable HRM" is an upcoming topic (Ehnert, 2006), there is still limited research done on the concept due to its embryonic state (Wehling et al., 2009). This thesis builds partly on recently emerging literature discussing sustainability and CSR in the context of HRM and researches what Dutch and Belgian HR professionals' opinions are about what Sustainable HRM means and implies. An extended goal is to establish whether they have begun to integrate the topics they relate to the concept of Sustainable HRM into the organizations they operate in, and what their opinions are about HR's role in an organization's sustainabilization. In working towards the explorative research questions of the current study, a number of steps will be taken.

First, a short introduction in Chapter 1 will explain the onset of the definition of Sustainable Development, leading to the description of ways in which businesses have translated it into CSR-policies.

Next, Chapter 2 is dedicated to describing the definition of HRM, its goals and general practices.

Chapter 3 will then discuss what different takes on Sustainable HRM have been developed in the last few years, by scholars who are still in search of a widely accepted definition. Its following Chapter 4 will describe examples of how those perspectives might manifest themselves in specific HRM policies.

The interviews conducted in the first stage of this study explore which topics are related to Sustainable HRM according to Dutch HR- and CSR Directors, and what the HR Departments' roles have been in the sustainability strategies of their organizations. The survey, that was partly based on the information gathered in the interviews, aimed at combining these opinions with those of a larger amount of HR Professionals in both The Netherlands and Belgium. The overall aim of the study is to contribute to the existing quest for a definition by making "Sustainable HRM" more concrete, and highlight the possible role of Human Resource Management for Corporate Sustainability.

Chapter 1: Sustainable Development and CSR

Working towards a definition

As was described in the introduction, this study endorses Corporate Sustainability as a synonym for Sustainable Development. The next section will shortly outline the onset and meaning of this concept.

Sustainable development

The widely used definition of Sustainable Development has its origin in the World Commission of Environment and Development (WCED), also known as the Brundtland Commission, that was created to address growing concern about the accelerating deterioration of the human environment and natural resources, and its consequences for economic and social development (Van Wyk, 2008). In its report "Our Common Future" that was released

in 1987, the WCED defined sustainable development as follows: "*Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs*" (p. 49). It highlighted three fundamental components to Sustainable Development, being environmental protection, economic growth and social equity. The impact and reach of the report "was and is enormous" (Van Wyk, 2008), and lay at the foundation of the 1992 Earth Summit and the World Summit on Sustainable Development that ratified the Millennium Development Goals.

The WCED report was also picked up by John Elkington, who felt the agenda's social and economic dimensions would have to be addressed in a more integrated way, if real environmental progress was to be made (Elkington, 2004). The next section will discuss his theory and describe how organizations have used the it for their Corporate Sustainability, by translating it into CSR policies.

The Triple Bottom Line

Elkington aimed at simplifying Sustainable Development into a language that would be more apprehensive for businesses and introduced the "Triple Bottom Line" (1997), which is said to be central to understanding sustainability (Savitz & Weber, 2006).

Sustainable Development is indeed mostly identified by referring to this creation of a balance between Profit, Planet and People. In the same way Grundtlandt (1987) highlighted the environmental protection, economic growth and social equity, the Triple Bottom Line refers to a company's success not only being measured by the traditional financial bottom line –the ability to be profitable-, but also by its environmental ("planet") and societal and ethical ("people") performance. Of course corporations need to be profitable in order to ensure their existence; yet according to Elkington (1997), they cannot be interested in profits only when trying to reach Corporate Sustainability.

De Lange and Koppens (2004) therefore describe a transition going from shareholder's value to stakeholder's value, taking into account all the parties involved and affected by a company's doing. The fundamental argument of this stakeholder's theory framework is that organizations should be managed in the interest of more stakeholders than just the shareholder's (Laplume et al., 2008; Atkinson, Waterhouse, & Wells, 1997; Cronin et al., 2010; Hillman & Keim, 2001). Corporate Sustainability can accordingly be defined as meeting the needs of a firm's direct and indirect stakeholders without compromising its ability to meet the needs of future stakeholders as well (Dyllick & Hockerts, 2002). This can be reached by balancing the strive for profits with the way firms affect planet and people, which is referred to as practicing CSR, a "movement" of which Elkington is said to be "the dean" (Berkovic, 2010, p.4). The next section will briefly introduce this concept.

Corporate Social Responsibility

The Pyramid of Corporate Social Responsibility (Carroll, 1991; see Figure 2), is probably the most well-known model of CSR. It depicts the economic category as the base (the foundation upon which all others rest), and then builds upward through legal, ethical, and philanthropic categories. In the same way Elkington argues organizations should balance economic, social and environmental dimensions simultaneously, Caroll urges businesses to fulfill the categories "*not in sequential fashion but each at all times (…) Stated in more pragmatic and managerial terms, (…) the CSR firm should strive to make a profit, obey the law, be ethical, and be a good corporate citizen*" (Carroll, quoted by himself in Carroll, 1999).

The concept of CSR (in Dutch translated as Maatschappelijk Verantwoord Ondernemen (MVO)) is widespread and well known in today's society and corporate life (Pedersen, 2006). However, despite its popular use, there is not one definition of CSR, and it remains an ambiguous and much debated construct (Dahlsrud, 2008). In this study, CSR is

perceived as the intermediate stage towards reaching Corporate Sustainability. Like mentioned earlier, it is this spreading that has led to the rising interest in linking sustainability issues to HR, which will be discussed next.

There are a number of reasons why CSR is, or should be, closely related to Human Resource Management (HRM). An organization's employees are incredibly important for CSR to become a success (Collier & Esteban, 2007; Branco and Rodrigues, mentioned in Rodrigo & Arenas, 2008; Larson et al., 2008; Craig et al., 2010) and HR's main task is the management of these employees. To familiarize the reader with the concept of HRM and as an introduction to Sustainable HRM, Chapter 2 will first describe its definition and main goals. Afterwards, "Sustainable HRM" as an emerging topic and result of societal and organizational change, will be introduced.

Chapter 2: Human Resource Management

Definition of Human Resource Management

For an organization to be able to function, people's input is crucial. Therefore, an employer starts a work-relationship with one or a few employees, who are willing to put in their time and effort in exchange for a reward, in the broadest sense of the word. Human Resource Management (HRM) is the internal regulation of those work-relationships (Arnold 2005). It involves acquiring, developing, utilizing and retaining employees and is practiced in some form in all organizations, either by HR professionals or general managers (Ferris, Sherman & Rosen, 1995). HRM aims at managing the internal work-relationships in a way that makes sure they are productive and meet individual as well as societal demands and expectations (Arnold, 2005). The utilization of people within an organization is a function of a broad range of factors, such as the leadership, culture and objectives of the organization; the environment in which employees are expected to work; and the diversity and self-management of the employees themselves (Ferris, Sherman, & Rosen, 1995).

An often made distinction within HRM is that of there being a "hard" and "soft" HRM (Guest, as mentioned in Druker et al., 1996). The next section will outline the differences between the two and clarify how closely HRM is connect to both the internal organization and the external environment, which are key elements for Sustainable HRM as will be described later.

The Distinction of Hard and Soft Human Resource Management

Hard and soft HRM differ in their view of human nature and managerial control strategies (Truss, Gratton, Hope-Hailey, McGovern, & Stiles, 1997). Hard HRM –also referred to as core HRM (Brewster, Sparrow, & Harris, 2005)-, stresses the quantitative and calculative aspects of managing the "headcount resource" (Storey 1992, p. 29 as mentioned in Truss et al., 1997), which it treats like any other factor of production (Druker et al, 1996). Hard HRM is sometimes associated with the calculative Scientific Management approach, or Taylorism; a theory of management that attempted to apply science to the engineering of processes and management that started in the manufacturing industries at the end of the 19th century.

Like in Scientific Management, hard HRM refrains from referring to "people" and instead manages "employees" so that labor costs are minimized and used as flexibly as possible (Druker et al., 1996). Its policies are closely linked to the organization's strategic objectives and have the aim of increasing its competitive advantage. It therefore embraces all those elements in employment relations laying emphasis on employees' compliance, quantitative output, managers, tasks and the development of the organization (Mbongaya & Ivo, 2006).

While Hard HRM perceives employees like any other factor of production, the soft approach is mainly reflected in statements about employees being an organization's greatest asset and hence the key to organizational success. The emphasis on employees corresponds

with the human relations school, a movement that dominated management thinking until the 1950s and significantly influenced the development of HRM (Truss et al., 1997).

The map of HRM territory depicted in Figure 3, shows how closely HRM is connected to the external environment (stakeholder interest) as well as the internal organization (situational factors), which both influence HRM policies, that in turn have immediate organizational outcomes and long-term consequences. The immediate outcomes are called "four Cs"; commitment, competence, congruence and cost-effectiveness, and said to positively influence the long-term consequences (Cakar, Bititici & MacBryde, 2003).

In the essence of soft HRM, it's the employees whose creativity, commitment and skill add value to the organization and who should therefore be managed very carefully.

Goals of Human Resource Management

In summary, while the difference lies in the way to get there, what soft and hard HRM share is the ultimate goal of reaching organizational effectiveness. Soft HRM believes this to be a second-order consequence of employee commitment, while hard HRM wants to achieve it by control and using employees as flexibly as possible. So even though different meanings are attributed to these components and different assumptions of human nature underlie each approach, soft and hard HRM both give weight to a link with strategy and the importance of people (Gill, 1999). High performance is one of HRM's most important goals. This process starts by attracting, selecting and then retaining the workforce that the organization needs. Another important task and goal for HR is the enhancement of that commitment, motivation and job engagement so that, in the end, organizational results are achieved (Armstrong, 2003).

With the introduction of Corporate Sustainability, perceptions of what constitutes organizational effectiveness have started to change over the last years. This rise of interest in sustainability and the shift in going from a shareholder's to a stakeholder's perspective will

inevitably affect organizations and thus HRM practices. The next chapter will discuss the onset of Sustainable HRM as a result.

Chapter 3: The emergence of Sustainable HRM and related topics

Societal and organizational change

The rapid organizational and societal change (Van Eijnatten, 2000) that businesses have been faced with in the last two decades, has led to a shift in the perception of what constitutes organizational effectiveness and thus what goals must be pursued by HRM.

According to Losey, Meisinger, and Ulrich (2005), the way the world is changing puts HR in the spotlight. HR professionals will be confronted with changes in workforce demographics (e.g. aging employees), technology (e.g. the way HR is organized and delivered), globalization (e.g. a global competition for talent) and competitiveness (e.g. a rise in customer expectations and flexibility). Ehnert (2009) claims these trends highlight the need for more sustainable HRM practices and regards sustainability as having a strategic potential for HRM.

HR could guide the organization's leaders in the incorporation of sustainability in its strategy and help the realization of Corporate Sustainability-goals (Ehnert, 2009; Kellerman, 2010; Cohen, 2010; De Prins, 2011). Sustainable HRM is seen as 'the' opportunity for HR to prove its own legitimacy and strategic position. However, Sustainable HRM as a concept is still undefined and has not yet received much attention from scholars (Zaugg, Blom, & Thom, 2001; Ehnert, 2006; Kellerman, 2010; Zoogah, 2011; Aggerholm, Andersen and Thomsen, 2011; Inyang, Awa & Enuoh, 2011).

Zaugg, Blom, and Thom (2001) were one of the first scholars who empirically researched the topic of sustainable HRM and concluded that even though there seemed to be an interest for sustainability issues in HRM practice, the understanding of sustainability was

very heterogeneous. The different areas related to this new perspective that are emphasized by scholars, will be described in the upcoming section.

Topics related to Sustainable HRM

There are scholars who mainly concentrate on aspects of economic and social sustainability touching key HRM tasks, meaning the sustained future supply with qualified and motivated people (the economic aspect) and an emphasis on how companies treat their employees (the social aspect) while leaving out environmental issues (Zaugg, Blom, & Thom, 2001; Ehnert, 2009). Then there are scholars who combine these aspects with a focus on how HRM can contribute to Corporate Sustainability in general, through the engagement of employees in CSR practices. The latter definitely also take into account the environmental component of sustainability neglected by the others.

In summary, the three topics essentially related to Sustainable HRM are 1) sustained supply of future employees, 2) good treatment of employees, and 3) engagement of employees with CSR practices. These will be briefly discussed one by one.

Sustained supply of future employees. According to Ehnert (2009), scarce human resources and their threatened long-term exploitation are problems that HRM is faced with today. The scarcity is caused by the demographic developments mentioned earlier, the new skills and competencies that employees need because of globalization and the changed understanding of employment relationships; not only do employees change jobs more, they have also become more critical, look for a better work-life balance, expect employers to prevent the negative effects of business activities to be passed onto them or to society, and want employers to behave in a more sustainable or socially responsible manner.

Good treatment of employees. There are various reasons given for why employees' treatment is central to Sustainable HRM. On the one hand there are scholars who describe internal organizational pressures like increased staff turnover, dissatisfaction, declining firm

loyalty, increasing work hours and stress levels, that ask for sustainability in human resources (Wilkinson & Hill, 2001). One the other, there are those who argue the People component of the Triple Bottom Line has been explained too "externally", pinpointing philanthropic initiatives that have nothing to do with the organization's core business, while it should highlight the responsibility of the organization towards its own employees (Kellerman, 2010; De Prins, 2011).

Engagement of employees in CSR practices. In short, some simply summarize it as follows: "The idea is that if the management of a company hires capable people and treats them well, then those employees will be more inclined to take better care of the planet" (Liebowitz, 2010, p. 50). Others use the employees' talents, loyalty and motivation to explain why CSR can be a source of competitive advantage to a firm (Branco & Rodrigues, mentioned in Rodrigo & Arenas, 2008). The employees, rather than the board or consultancy firms, are the ones who carry the responsibility for implementing ethical corporate behaviour in the daily working life of the company. This means the achievement of those outcomes will largely depend on employees' willingness to collaborate (Collier & Esteban, 2007).

In conclusion, HR can leverage CSR strategies to deliver greater benefits for the business, for employees, for society, for the environment and ultimately, for HR professionals themselves (Cohen, 2010).

Having established these three focal points, Chapter 4 will discuss the specific policies which may be the accompanying elementary components of Sustainable HRM.

Chapter 4: Sustainable HRM manifested in policies

A large amount of the HR-related sustainability literature has not yet reached reviewed academic journals (Ehnert, 2009) but there are some frameworks that, even though they are still a "work-in-progress", shed light on which policies could constitute Sustainable HRM concretely. An example is the Sustainable HRM Framework of De Prins (2011), that appears

to incorporate the three main focal points of Sustainable HRM described earlier, by defining four approaches to the concept; a sociological, psychological, strategic, and green HRM approach. The next section will discuss this framework before ending the chapter with a short outline of research that was done on the possible contribution of HR to sustainability within organizations.

De Prins' model of four approaches to Sustainable HRM

De Prins (2011) argues Sustainable HRM focuses on optimally utilizing and respecting human workforces within the organization, in which an explicit relationship is built between an organization's strategic policies and its environment. Long-term vision and integration with an organization's strategy and CSR-policy are key. She distinguishes four approaches to the concept, of which the first, second and fourth are exhibited in concrete policies (see Figure 4).

The sociological approach aims at "societalizing" HRM practices. This specific form of personnel management is long-term focused and aims at continuity, whereby the interests of the employer, the employee and society are explicitly connected. Concretely translated, valuable themes are engagement policies, health policies and societal themes like diversity, age-conscious and family-friendly personnel policies.

The psychological approach draws on what topics employees themselves find important. According to De Prins (2011), if people are the centre of a sustainable competitive advantage, then the knowledge and fostering of what drives and characterizes them is of utmost importance. People are completely different from financial of technological capital because they function in time, look for purpose and have a soul (Graton, mentioned in De Prins, 2011). Essential themes within this approach are therefore work-life balance, autonomy, self-development, employability and dialogue.

The third approach asks how Sustainable HRM is related to strategic HRM, and focuses on how Sustainable HRM impacts on typical HR domains such as intake, employee turnover, appraisal- and employability-aspects of an organization. De Prins uses Ehnert's (2009) definition of Sustainable HRM for this approach, which is "the pattern of planned or emerging HR deployments and activities intended to enable a balance of organizational goal achievement and reproduction of the human resource base over a long-lasting calendar time and to control for the negative impact on the human resource base" (p. 74). It thus means HR works on the achievement of organizational goals, which entail more than profits only. Typical themes are the belief in humans as a sustainable competitive advantage, social achievements and the sustainable management of HR sources. However, the specifications of the related policies are still under review.

The fourth approach is "green HRM"; the ways in which employees and employee-management relate to the planet-component of the triple bottom line. Which HRM aspects can help "green" the organization, and also: what impact does a green character have on employer attractiveness- and branding? Relevant themes are mentioning green behavior as a competence, trainings in sustainability awareness, stimulating environmentally conscious behaviors and green employer branding.

Now that examples of concrete policies have been lined out, the question is if these theoretical examples are indeed accepted as belonging to Sustainable HRM by HR professionals in the field, and whether or not they have been adopted in practice. The present research sets out to establish this, by using a mixed research methodology (i.e., interviews and a survey).

Added to that, the Human Resource Department of a company is said to have the capability to play a significant role in the creation of their company's sustainability culture (Harmon, Fairfield, & Wirtenberg, 2010), but The HR function itself is still uncomfortable

with the way its role is regarded in organizations, and conflicted about its ability to impact (Cohen, 2010). Because the urge to "sustainabilize" an organization can be seen as a process of great change, one that businesses will be confronted with more and more (Van Eijnatten, 2000; Ehnert, 2009; Liebowitz, 2010), the extended goal of the present research is to explore what HR professionals report about HR's contribution to sustainability within their organizations. The next and last section of this chapter will delineate this study's explorative research questions.

The current study's Research Questions

The first aim of this study is establishing what HR professionals in The Netherlands and Belgium think Sustainable HRM constitutes concretely.

R1: What policies do HR professionals perceive as being "Sustainable HRM"-policies?

At the same time, whether or not they have already begun to integrate the exemplified HRM policies in their organizations, will be examined.

R2: What policies report HR professionals to have been embedded in their organizations?

The third aim of this study is exploring what HR's contribution to sustainability could be, by asking HR professionals to report about (a) the (un)importance of sustainability within their organization and the reported reasons for each option; (b) the extent to which they report HR facilitates employees in their contribution to sustainability, (c) the perceived role of sustainability in the attraction, retention and development of employees and employer's image, (d) HR's explicit involvement in the organization's sustainable strategy, and (e) HR professionals' perceived available resources and capacity in contributing to sustainability.

R3: What report HR professionals to be the (possible) contribution of HR to sustainability?

Method

Setting

The use of a quantitative research method following an initial qualitative research method was found appropriate in order to be able to combine the data derived from a small number of interviewees with the data collected from a larger amount of respondents. Sale, Lohfeld, and Brazil (2002) argue mixed-methods can be used for complementary purposes, which was also the goal of the current study. Therefore, a survey was designed after the interviews had taken place. This mixed-methods study was performed in The Netherlands and Belgium; for practical reasons, interviews were held in The Netherlands only. The survey was distributed via several channels, available to both Dutch and Belgian HR professionals.

Participants

Interviews. At first, a qualitative research method was used, in which selected informants from various organizations were interviewed under everyday circumstances (Yin, 2003; Mason, 2002). A qualitative methodology was deemed appropriate at the pre-paradigmatic stage of this study (Perry, 1998) because it investigates a "contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context" that has not yet been clearly defined (Yin, 1994, p. 13). The interviews were organized in a semi-structured face-to-face manner. Sekaran (2003) explains that doing face-to-face interviews improves the extent to which given responses are rightly understood, which was perceived suitable in this case because of the newness of the study's topic.

The first stage of this study therefore consisted of two orientating interviews with a CSR professionals and an HR professional, followed by eleven semi-structured interviews held with two CSR- and nine HR-directors of eleven Dutch companies that express a specific interest in sustainability on their websites or in commercials. The companies were selected with the help of independent management consultancy organization Kirkman Company. The

goal of these exploratory interviews was to examine the participant's and his or her organization's view on how Corporate Sustainability as a general concept is translated into HR practices and what sustainable HRM means according to them. The interviewees that participated can be found in Table 1. When presenting the data in the results section, each interviewee will be referred to by his or her number that can be found in this table, which will be put in between brackets. For example, interviewee 1 can be identified by [1].

Survey. A total of 363 respondents participated in this part of the study, of which 205 completed the survey online after clicking a link that was spread via direct mailings, several websites and social media in The Netherlands and Belgium. Of the 205 respondents (M_{age} = 44.10, SD = 10.02, 54.9% male) 41.5% worked in The Netherlands, 53.7% in Belgium, and 4.9% in another country. The majority of respondents reported being an HR professional (31.7%). Other often recorded functions were entrepreneur (17.8%) and HR Director or VP (15.1%).

The survey consisted of two tracks, which will be described next in the procedure section. The first track was shortest (60 items) and completed by all 205 respondents. The second track was longest (a maximum of 92 items, dependent on previously given answers) and completed by 95 persons operative within organizations (M_{age} = 43, SD = 8.96, 48.9 % male, 28.7% in The Netherlands, 71.3% in Belgium) of which 40% reported being an HR Director or VP and 47.4% reported being an HR professional.

Procedure

Interviews. A short description of the goals of this study was emailed to the participants, after which they were asked to share their thoughts on Sustainable HRM during an in-depth interview. The e-mail and explanation of the aims of the study can be found in Appendix 1. The interviews took place at the participants' offices and were tape-recorded with their permission. Before each visit, the company's website, its latest Annual Report and,

if available, its Sustainability Report was read thoroughly. Detailed notes were taken during the interviews, which took in between one and two hours.

Survey. The survey was created in online survey software program Qualtrics and put online for three weeks at the end of July 2011. Respondents were asked for their participation via several channels; Special announcements on the websites of MVO Nederland (Dutch national knowledge- and network organization for Corporate Social Responsibility), NVO2 (professional association for Human Resource Development professionals) and HNWb.nl (blog dedicated to 'the new way of working, independent of place and time'); two direct mailings by HRMInfo.net (the largest online community of HR professionals in Belgium) and twelve LinkedIn groups associated with HR or sustainability.

The survey consisted of two tracks, across which participants were divided depending on their choice made in the first question. Participants were asked to choose between two options: 1) "I am an HR Professional and want to give my opinion about what Sustainable HRM means concretely", and 2) "I am an HR Professional operative in an organization. I want to give my opinion about what Sustainable HRM means concretely and answer questions about the ways in which sustainability has, or has not, been integrated in our organization and what the role of HR has been in this process".

Participants who chose option one, skipped thirty-two questions and were asked to rate fifty examples of HR policies on their sustainable HRM character on a scale from 1 ("completely disagree this is an example of Sustainable HRM") to 5 ("completely agree this is an example of Sustainable HRM").

Participants who chose option two, were first asked about a) the (un)importance of sustainability within their organization and the reported reasons for each option; b) the extent with which HR facilitates employees in their contribution to sustainability, c) the perceived role of sustainability in the attraction, retention and development of employees and

employer's image, d) HR's explicit involvement in the organization's sustainable strategy, and e) their perceived available resources and capacity in contributing to sustainability. When they had finished these questions, they were given the same fifty examples of HR policies and asked to rate them on their Sustainable HRM character on a scale from 1 to 5. These respondents were also asked to specify which of the given examples of policies were embedded within their organization on a 3 points scale; 1 ("no"), 2 ("in part") and 3 ("yes").

Measures

Interviews. Semi-structured interviews were used with the intention to allow viewpoints to emerge freely. A loose interview schedule was designed on the basis of key themes identified from the reviewed literature and specific topics based on the information found during a thorough examination of the organization's website and in its Annual- and Sustainability Report. An example of one of the semi-structured interview schemes that was prepared and used can be found in Appendix 1.

Survey. The survey's first track consisted of fifty examples of HR policies, derived from the interviews held prior to the survey's design, input from HR experts such as Jeana Wirtenberg, Elaine Cohen, Bas van de Haterd and Thomas Zaugg, and the Sustainable HRM framework of De Prins (2011).

Policies related to the six themes that could be extracted during the interviews' analyses were grouped together and measured as a collection and separately.

Cronbach's α for the group of policies aimed at the creation of a diverse work-force was 0.86. The exact items of which this group consisted, can be found in Table 12.

Cronbach's α for the group of policies aimed at employees' development was 0.84. The exact items of which this group consisted, can be found in Table 13.

Cronbach's α for the group of policies that enable employees to engage in volunteerwork was 0.87. The exact items of which this group consisted, can be found in Table 14.

Cronbach's α for the group of policies related to flexibility was 0.76. The exact items of which this group consisted, can be found in Table 15.

The group of policies aimed at employees' 'green' behavior was divided in three, according to the interviewees' responses. The division consisted of policies aimed at green selection and performance appraisal criteria (green appraisal), policies stimulating the use of a more environmentally friendly car or public transport (mobility) and policies like trainings for all employees in the field of sustainability (green development). Cronbach's α for each group within this Green HRM group was .77, .78 and .88 for appraisal, mobility and green development respectively. An overview can be found in Table 16.

Cronbach's α for policies aimed at employees' health was 0.76. The exact items of which this group consisted, can be found in Table 17.

The survey's second track consisted of multiple single questions, and twenty-three questions that related to five different HR themes. The single questions were partly acquired from a report called "Advancing Sustainability: HR's Role" (2011) by the Society for Human Resource Management that was conducted among HR professionals in the United States, and explored the position of sustainability within the organization in general; the initiator(s) of the sustainability strategy and its perceived outcomes. Respondents who reported sustainability was no theme within their organization, were asked about the reasons why not and whether this was going to change in the next twelve months. The questions related to the five themes were partly derived from prior research by Zaugg, Blum, and Thom (2001) and Harmon, Fairfield, and Wirtenberg (2010) with explicit permission from the authors, and will be discussed hereafter.

Four items, related to the contribution of HR in an organization's sustainability strategy, were rated on a 7 point scale (1 = I completely disagree, 7 = I completely agree); the items were "Sustainability is an important theme within the HR department," "HR makes sure employees know what they can do in the area of sustainability," "HR makes sure employees are facilitated so that they can actually contribute to sustainability," "HR motivates employees for sustainability." Cronbach's α for this group of items was .95

Five items, related to the perceived importance of sustainability for activities within the HR cycle, were rated on a 7 point scale (1 = I completely disagree, 7 = I completely agree); the items began with the sentence "Within our HR department, sustainability is seen as important for:" and followed by "The attraction of talent," "The retention of talent," "The development of talent," "The building of an attractive employer brand," "The development of sustainable leadership". Cronbach's α for this group of items was .92.

Three items, related to HR's involvement in the organization's sustainability strategy, were rated on a 7 point scale (1 = I completely disagree, 7 = I completely agree); the items were "HR has been involved in the design of our sustainability policy from the beginning," "HR has put sustainability on the organization's agenda and initiated related policies," "The HR manager takes part in the Sustainability department or workgroup". Cronbach's α for this group of items was .85.

Six items, related to the perceived possibilities of the HR professional in contributing to the organization's sustainability strategy, were rated on an 8 point scale (1 = I completely disagree, 7 = I completely agree, 8 = Irrelevant; this is no personal ambition, which was transformed to 4 = neutral); the items were "I possess enough financial and human capital to start and promote activities related to sustainability," "I see clear advantages for me and my colleagues to spend time and energy on sustainability initiatives," "I risk failing or being embarrassed when I 'push' too much to get sustainability in a central position," "I am able to

find effective cooperative relations within the organization to promote sustainability," "My colleagues listen to me when I want to put sustainability on the agenda," "A large amount of my time is spent on the long term sustainability of this organization". Cronbach's α for this group of items was .75.

Five items, related to participants' opinions about the perceived presence of Sustainable HRM, were rated on a 7 point scale (1 = I completely disagree, 7 = I completely agree); the items were "I think this organization practices Sustainable HRM," "I think this organization practices Sustainable HRM that could be an example for other organizations," "I think that in general, HR misses the strategic position to implement sustainability within an organization," "I think sustainability is 'the' chance for HR to prove its strategic position," "I see and hear around me that sustainable HRM is on the agenda until profit is under attack". The last two items were deleted to heighten the reliability of this group of items. Cronbach's α for the remaining three items was .73

Data Analysis

Interviews. Multiple playbacks of the collected data served as a method for identifying a number of important themes that will be discussed in the result section, and concrete examples of possible Sustainable HRM policies that functioned as a source of inspiration for the survey that was designed afterwards.

Survey. Data were analyzed using statistical software program SPSS.

Results

Interviews

Analysis of the interview data confirmed the existence of a variety of perspectives concerning Sustainable HRM, ranging from an explicit link with customer service [10] to getting employees to deeply understand the concept of sustainability [1]. Table 2 shows

examples of quotes of the interviewees about their perception of how sustainability is related to HR or the organization's employees.

When attempting to answer the first two Research Questions, a number of themes that were discussed in almost every interview can be extracted. These are 1) diversity, 2) development, 3) volunteer work, 4) flexibility, 5) 'green' behaviors and 6) employees' health. These six themes will be discussed one by one in the next sections. First, the interviewees' opinions about Sustainable HRM will be described, before briefly discussing which of the policies they stated have also been embedded within their organization.

R1: What policies do HR professional perceive as sustainable HRM Policies?

Policies aimed at the creation of a diverse work-force. Six of the eleven HR professionals spoke of diversity issues when asked for their opinion about Sustainable HRM. One respondent said it is just "one of those things that you have to do" [1], while another wondered whether or not influential people are "hyping" the issue [8]. The positive outcomes of policies related to diversity were explicitly expressed by a respondent [11] who stated it is his organization's belief "that diversity in general leads to better decisions". Table 3 shows examples of interviewees' quotes on the issue of diversity.

Policies aimed at employees' development. All of the respondents spoke of their employees' development being of "central" [8] importance, stating for instance that "there is no other way to grow an organization than to grow its people" [1]. However, one respondent [5] argued development is not necessarily part of sustainable HRM, rather than it is "just good HRM". Table 4 shows examples of interviewees' statements about their employees' development.

Policies that enable employees to engage in volunteer work. Volunteer work was discussed in seven of the interviews as being a part of Sustainable HRM. Some regarded this as enabling employees to fulfill their "societal wants" [3] and others mentioned it leads to

motivation [2; 5]. The organizations of the HR Directors by whom the topic was not addressed, do mention volunteer work on their website [4], in their annual report [1] or in a message on Twitter [11]. Table 5 shows examples of the interviewees' opinions about volunteerwork.

Flexibility. A topic discussed in ten interviews was flexibility, mostly related to flexible work hours and referred to as "the new way of working" (the English translation of the concept "Het Nieuwe Werken" (HNW)). Interviewees stated flexibility is part of Sustainable HRM because it brings employees "more freedom" [3] and will "help sustainability" [5], for instance because it leads to a decrease in employees' car use. Table 6 shows examples of the interviewees' views on flexibility as a part of Sustainable HRM.

Policies aimed at employees' "green" behavior. Respondents differed in their opinions about whether "green HRM" policies constitute sustainable HRM. A distinction could be made between opinions about policies directed at "green" selection or performance appraisal, and policies like stimulating employees to choose a more environmentally-friendly car. When talking about the integration of sustainable behavior into selection criteria or performance appraisal, one respondent referred to it as "probably the holy grail" [1], when at the same time another said he would believe "none of it" [11] when companies would claim they successfully do this. Reasons given were the "immeasurable" character of sustainability as a criterion on the hand [8;11], and these policies sending employees the wrong message [2; 6] on the other. Table 7 shows the different responses of interviewees to the idea of green HRM.

Policies aimed at employees' health. Vitality of the organization's employees was discussed in eight interviews, in which all interviewees expressed their positive opinion about this topic being a part of Sustainable HRM. According to one respondent [2], investing in employees' health continues to lead to a significantly lower absenteeism figure within his

organization. Table 8 is a reference for interviewees' opinions in the area of health as a component of Sustainable HRM.

R2: What policies report HR professionals to have been embedded in their organizations?

Policies aimed at the creation of a diverse work-force. As discussed, six HR professionals spoke of diversity issues when asked for their opinion about Sustainable HRM and they all reported policies concerning this topic are embedded in their organizations. The existing policies aim at various target-groups, such as disabled employees [5], cultural background [1; 5] and gender [1; 2; 4; 8; 11]. "Women" were most often defined as a specific target for diversity policies (5 times), followed by the employee's age or "lifephase" (3 times). In multiple cases, diversity policies were described as principally aimed at creating awareness [2; 8; 11] without having a quota that had to be achieved no matter what. One organization [6] mentions explicitly on its website and in its annual report that "regarding diversity, there are no specific policies"; the topic wasn't discussed in three other interviews [3; 7; 9]. Table 3 shows examples of the interviewees' quotes on the issue of diversity within their organization.

Policies aimed at employees' development. Every interviewee not only perceived the development of employees as a part of Sustainable HRM, all of them also agreed on this theme receiving a lot attention within their company. Comments were all along the lines of "You can do many things here, really develop yourself" [3], even though there appeared to be great differences in the maturity of the programs available, ranging from still being designed [6] or just started [7], to very mature programs that have run for years. Table 4 shows examples of interviewees' statements about their employees' development.

Policies that enable employees to engage in volunteer work. Eight interviewees mentioned volunteerwork is a part of Sustainable HRM in their opinion; three of them also

reported having specific policies concerning the theme [2; 3; 5]. Other expressed the occurrence of volunteerwork on a more "ad-hoc basis" [7], only locally [8] or the opportunity of volunteering in your own time [6] for example by taking a sabbatical (long-term leave in order to achieve a personal goal). Two of the three organizations with which the topic was not discussed, do mention the existence of such policies on their website [4], in their annual report [7] or in a message on Twitter [11], all leading to the assumption that volunteering is indeed possible. Table 5 shows examples of the interviewees' opinions about volunteerwork.

Flexibility. All but one respondent expressed their positive opinion about flexibility, and especially the employees' control as a result, being a part of Sustainable HRM. Seven of them reported flexibility is a reality within their organization. For some this had been the case for decades [2], others mentioned they had only recently begun to introduce flexible work hours [3]. Yet, three interviewees expressed it was "not happening yet" [6] or stated they still had "some considerable steps to take" [7] in this area. Table 6 shows examples of the interviewees' views on flexibility as a part of sustainable HRM.

Policies aimed at employees' "green" behavior. Respondents not only differed in their opinions about whether green HRM policies constitute sustainable HRM, they also distinguished between policies directed at 'green' selection or performance appraisal, and policies like stimulating employees to choose a less polluting car or use public transport. Most often, interviewees expressed their green HRM practices manifested in those mobility policies [3; 4; 9; 11] while only one respondent [1] reported a leadership development program in which sustainability was fully incorporated. None of the respondents had embedded green or sustainable behaviors as part of the selection- or performance appraisal process. Some were specifically concerned with refraining from the risk of becoming "paternalistic" [10], and another expressed outright cautiousness to prevent being accused of "snatching away" lease

cars [4]. Table 7 shows the different responses of interviewees to the idea and presence of green HRM.

Policies aimed at employees' health. All of the eight interviewees who regarded a focus on their employees' health as a part of sustainable HRM, also reported policies concerning this theme. Activities were mostly aimed at either sport or fitness [3; 6], annual health-checkups [1; 2; 5; 7] and a healthier provision of food in the company restaurant [2; 3; 7]. One of the three organizations with whose HR Director the topic was not discussed, does mention their employees' health is a topic "high on the priority list" in its annual report [4]. Table 8 is a reference for interviewees' policies in the area of health.

In conclusion, a majority of the themes that were regarded as being a part of sustainable HRM were also manifested in policies within the different organizations. This holds true for diversity issues, employees' development and employees' health, and in a somewhat lesser extent to the enablement of volunteering. Flexibility was regarded as Sustainable HRM more often than it was reported a reality in practice. Opinions about sustainabilizing an organization through its employees by means of green HRM was debated mostly, and was least reported to have been embedded within organizations.

Even though the interviews' main goal was the exploration of which themes HR and CSR professionals associate with Sustainable HRM, whenever time permitted it, the role of the HR department in sustainabilizing the organization was also discussed. The next section will therefore briefly discuss the available data that was collected during the interviews about this study's third Research Question 3: What do HR professionals report is the (possible) contribution of HR to sustainability?

A theme related to sustainability and HR specifically that was expressed to be important in some cases, was the "preferred employer image" organizations worked on. Of the eight interviewees with which this topic was discussed, only one reported it was no theme

of importance [10]. Four interviewees [5; 8; 9; 11] mentioned their preferred employer's image in direct relation to the organization's sustainable character (with an emphasis on the environmental component), and two [3; 4] aimed at it but based, at least in part, on other criteria. Table 9 shows respondents' comments on sustainability as a driver for the preferred employer's image.

Wherever possible, the role of HR in the sustainability practices of the organization as a whole was discussed. A general question would be whether the HR department had been involved with its organization's sustainability strategy from the beginning, or had initiated this process itself. Answers to this question differed greatly. In some organizations, the HR Director was reported as the one leading the CSR department as well [3], or was said to take place in the organization's sustainability council [1] and thus engaged from the beginning. In another interview, a respondent [7] expressed his reluctance to become the one in charge of sustainability, stating: "To be honest, I hope it won't become my responsibility. I think the CEO should carry sustainability, because it needs to be integrated in the organization as a whole and shouldn't become one of the next HR 'parties', which is one of my concerns".

All but one [1] respondent disagreed to the assumption that sustainability was 'the' opportunity for HR to prove its effectiveness, with reasons ranging from a lack of need to prove the strategic position of HR, for its contribution was already clear [5], to a respondent [11] referring to such discussions as the "nonsensical" ones within the HR discipline.

Taken together, interviewees expressed many different 'roles' when it came to their contribution to sustainable behaviors, differing between being a stimulator to being cautious. Table 10 shows examples of statements the interviewees made about the HR department being the possible driver for sustainability in their organizations.

The three focal points of Sustainable HRM that were described in literature (sustained supply of future employees, good treatment of employees and engagement of employees in

CSR practices) were also mentioned by the interviewees. Examples of statement that may be attributed to these areas of focus can be found in Table 11.

Survey

Examples of policies related to the different themes discussed in the interviews, were incorporated into the survey that was filled out by 205 respondents with an HR background. The themes were diversity, development, volunteerwork, flexibility, 'green' HRM and employees' health. Figure 5 shows how they fit in De Prins' Framework of Sustainable HRM. Each group of policies related to a theme will be discussed individually when answering this study's Research Questions 1 and 2. Differences due to the size of the organization or the country in which the HR professional operated, were examined and will be mentioned only when they apply. This means that no mentioning signifies there were no recorded differences. First, *R1: What policies do HR professional perceive as 'Sustainable HRM Policies?* will be attended to.

Policies aimed at the creation of a diverse work-force. A one sample *t*-test showed the average score for this group of policies ($M = 3.70$, $SD = 0.77$) differed significantly from "neutral", $t(202) = 13.27$, $p < 0.001$ and "agree", $t(202) = -5.33$, $p < 0.001$. Thus on average, respondents reported being in between "neutral" and "agree" when asked whether they thought policies related to diversity are part of sustainable HRM. A one-way repeated measures ANOVA was conducted to test whether respondents made a statistically significant distinction between the different diversity policies. There was a significant effect for 'target group', Wilks' Lambda = .80, $F (5, 198) = 10.08$, $p < 0.001$, multivariate partial eta squared = .20 (large effect size according to the guidelines of Cohen; 1988, p. 284-7). The item that stood out significantly was "policies targeted at a diversity in competences". Table 12 shows the means and standard deviations of each of the policies in order of perceived importance.

Policies aimed at employees' development. A one sample *t*-test showed the average

score for this group of policies (*M* = 3.9, *SD* = .62) did not differ significantly from "agree".

Thus, on average, respondents "agreed" policies related to development are part of

Sustainable HRM. A one-way repeated measures ANOVA was conducted to test whether

respondents made a statistically significant distinction between the different policies related to

development. The analysis showed a significant difference between the nine policies, Wilks'

Lambda = .36, *F* (8, 185) = 40.32, *p* < 0.001, multivariate partial eta squared = .64 (very large

effect size; Cohen, 1988, p. 284-7). The variable that stood out significantly was "Put all of

the employees' development central to the organization". Table 13 shows the means and

standard deviations of each of the policies in order of perceived importance.

Policies that enable employees to engage in volunteer work. A one sample t-test

showed the average score for this group of policies (*M* = 3.07, *SD* = 1.09) did not differ

significantly from "neutral". Thus, on average, respondents perceived volunteer work to be

"neutrally" associated with sustainable HRM. A one-way repeated measures ANOVA was

conducted to test whether respondents made a statistically significant distinction between the

different policies related to enabling employees to volunteer. The analysis showed a

significant difference between the three policies, Wilks' Lambda = .76, *F* (2, 211) = 33.17, *p*

< 0.001, multivariate partial eta squared = .24 (large effect size; Cohen, 1988, p. 284-7).

"Sponsoring good causes or volunteer initiatives suggested by employees" was rated

significantly higher than the other two. Table 14 shows the means and standard deviations of

each of the policies in order of perceived importance.

Policies related to flexibility. A one sample t-test showed the average score for this

group of policies (*M* = 3.77, *SD* = 0.64) differed significantly from "neutral", *t*(208) = 17.50,

p < 0.001 and "agree", *t*(208) = -5.26, *p* < 0.001. Thus, on average, respondents reported

being in between "neutral" and "agree" when asked whether they thought policies related to

flexibility are part of sustainable HRM. A one-way repeated measures ANOVA was conducted to test whether respondents made a statistically significant distinction between the different policies related to flexibility. The analysis showed a significant difference between the six policies, Wilks' Lambda = .62, F (5, 204) = 24.92, $p < 0.001$, multivariate partial eta squared = .38 (very large effect size; Cohen, 1988, p. 284-7). ""The new way of working"; flexible workplaces and hours; focus on output rather than visibility" and "Put autonomy and control of the employee central" did not differ significantly from "agree" and were found most important for Sustainable HRM. They differed significantly from the other four policies. "Let employees decide what their own Key Performance Indicator are" also differed significantly from the other policies, but because it was found least associated to Sustainable HRM. Table 15 shows the means and standard deviations of each of the policies in order of perceived importance.

Policies aimed at employees' green behavior. In the interviews held prior to the survey, a distinction was often made between opinions about policies directed at 'green' selection or performance appraisal, and policies like stimulating employees to choose a more environmentally-friendly car or use public transport. Therefore, these were divided into two groups, "green appraisal" and "mobility". A third group consisted of policies related to training and developing employees in the field of sustainability, "green development". The assessed reliability of each group was 0.77, 0.78 and 0.88 for green appraisal, mobility and green development respectively. A one way sample t-test showed the average scores for mobility ($M = 4.01$, $SD = 0.85$) and green development ($M = 4.01$, $SD = 0.69$) did not differ significantly from "agree". The average score for green appraisal differed significantly from "neutral", $t(202) = 11.00$, $p < 0.001$ and "agree", t(202) = -5.03, p < 0.001. Consequently, a one-way repeated measures ANOVA showed respondents distinguished between these three groups of policies within Green HRM, Wilks' Lambda = .79, F (2, 198) = 26.09, $p < 0.001$,

multivariate partial eta squared = .21 (large effect size; Cohen, 1988, p. 284-7). The group of "green appraisal" policies differed significantly from the other two, and was found least associated with sustainable HRM. Table 16 shows the means and standard deviations of each of the separate groups of policies in order of perceived importance.

Policies aimed at employees' health. A one sample *t*-test showed the average score for this group of policies ($M = 3.7$, $SD = 0.61$) differed significantly from "neutral", $t(197) =$ 16.52, $p < 0.001$ and "agree", $t(197) = -6.31$, $p < 0.001$. Thus on average, respondents reported being in between "neutral" and "agree" when asked whether they thought policies related to employees' health were part of sustainable HRM. A one-way repeated measures ANOVA was conducted to test whether respondents made a statistically significant distinction between the different policies related to increasing employees' health. The analysis showed a difference between the policies, Wilks' Lambda = .42, $F (6, 192) = 44.33$, $p < 0.001$, multivariate partial eta squared = .58 (very large effect size; Cohen, 1988, p. 284-7). "Do health-checkups with a test" and "increase employees' mental health" differed significantly the other five policies and were most associated to Sustainable HRM. "Work out during work hours" also differed significantly from the other six, but was least associated to Sustainable HRM. Table 17 shows the means and standard deviations of each of the policies related to employees' health in order of perceived importance.

Overall comparison between the groups of policies. A one-way repeated measures ANOVA was conducted to test which of the groups op policies mentioned above were associated to sustainable HRM most. The analysis showed a difference between the groups of policies, Wilks' Lambda = .47, $F (7, 167) = 26.57$, $p < 0.001$, multivariate partial eta squared = .53 (very large effect size; Cohen, 1988, p. 284-7). Mobility-, green development- and general development-policies were significantly more often associated with Sustainable HRM than all the others. The second most often associated groups of policies were those related to

flexibility, employees' health, a diverse workforce and green appraisal practices. The last group of policies that was significantly less often associated with sustainable HRM was volunteer work. Table 18 shows the means and standard deviations of each of the scales in order of perceived importance.

Three focal points of HRM distinguished in literature. Respondents were meant to be asked about their general assessment of what constitutes sustainable HRM by answering whether they thought it was associated mostly with a sustained supply of personnel in the future, good employership or engaging employees in CSR practices and thus sustainabilizing the organization via HR. Unfortunately, due to a mistake in the design of the survey, the item asking about the sustained supply of personnel was empty. A paired-samples *t*-test was conducted to assess whether the opinions of respondents on the other two items differed significantly. Respondents reported they associated "Good employership" ($M = 4.39$, $SD = 0.78$) significantly more with sustainable HRM than "Help in sustainabilizing the organization via HR" ($M = 4.27$, $SD = .83$), $t(202) = 2.19$, $p = 0.03$. However, one-sample *t*-tests showed both items' scores were significantly higher than "agree", $t(203) = 7.15$, $p < 0.001$ and $t(202) = 4.67$, $p < 0.001$ for good employership and help in sustainabilize the organization through HR respectively.

Single policies. The survey explored respondents' opinions about six more policies, which were derived from De Prins' Sustainable HRM framework, but only mentioned once or twice in an interview. These were four policies related to De Prins' psychological perspective and two policies related to the sociological perspective. A one-way repeated measures ANOVA showed respondents made a significant difference between the six policies' association to Sustainable HRM, Wilks' Lambda = .62, $F (5, 196) = 24.01$, $p < 0.001$, multivariate partial eta squared = .38 (large effect size; Cohen, 1988, p. 284-7). Table 19

shows the means and standard deviations of each of the policies in order of perceived importance.

Next, R2: *What policies report HR professionals to have been embedded in their organizations?* will be discussed.

Policies aimed at the creation of a diverse work-force. A one sample *t*-test showed the average score for the embedment of this group of policies (*M* = 1.92, *SD* = 0.59) did not differ significantly from "in part". When transforming the average score to a percentage, policies related to diversity were reported to have been embedded for 46%.

A one-way repeated measures ANOVA was conducted to test whether respondents reported there was a statistically significant distinction between the embedment of the different diversity policies. There was a significant effect for 'target group', Wilks' Lambda = .75, $F(5, 84) = 5.57$, $p < 0.001$, multivariate partial eta squared = .25 (large effect size according to the guidelines of Cohen; 1988, p. 284-7). The items that stood out significantly, compared to the top two reported target groups of diversity policies (women and competencies) was "Diversity policies targeted at employees' lifephase". Table 20 shows the means and standard deviations of each of the policies' reported embedment in order of perceived importance.

Policies aimed at employees' development. A one sample *t*-test showed the average score for the embedment of this group of policies (*M* = 2.14, *SD* = 0.42) was significantly higher than "in part", $t(87) = 3.34$, $p = 0.001$. Accordingly, when transforming the average score to a percentage, policies related to employees' development were reported to have been embedded for 58%. A one-way repeated measures ANOVA was conducted to test whether respondents reported there was a statistically significant distinction between the embedment of the different policies related to employees' development. The analysis showed a significant difference between the nine policies, Wilks' Lambda = .25, $F(5, 80) = 5.57$, $p < 0.001$,

multivariate partial eta squared = .75 (very large effect size according to the guidelines of Cohen; 1988, p. 284-7). The items that stood out significantly, were regular progress reviews with employees, the offering of coaching and putting employees' development central to the organizations. Table 21 shows the means and standard deviations of each of the policies' reported embedment in order of perceived importance.

Policies that enable employees to engage in volunteer work. A one sample *t*-test showed the average score for the embedment of this group of policies $M = 1.70$, $SD = 0.71$) was significantly lower than "in part", $t(93) = -3.65$, $p < 0.001$. When transforming the average score to a percentage, policies related to volunteer work were reported to have been embedded for 37%. A one-way repeated measures ANOVA was conducted to test whether respondents reported there was a statistically significant distinction between the embedment of the different policies related to volunteer work. The analysis showed a significant difference between the three policies, Wilks' Lambda = .79, $F (2, 92) = 11.91$, $p < 0.001$, multivariate partial eta squared = .21 (large effect size according to the guidelines of Cohen; 1988, p. 284-7). "Sponsoring good causes or volunteer initiatives suggested by employees was significantly more reported than the other two. Table 22 shows the means and standard deviations of each of the policies' reported embedment in order of perceived importance.

A negative correlation was found between respondents' country of operation regarding these policies, $r = -.32$, $p = 0.003$, meaning Dutch respondents had embedded policies related to volunteer work significantly more often than Belgian respondents had (medium correlation; Cohen, 1988, p. 79). Also, a significant positive correlation was found between the size of the organization worldwide, and the reports of embedment for policies related to volunteerwork, $r = 0.22$, $p = 0.045$ (medium correlation; Cohen, 1988, p. 79), meaning larger organizations had embedded such policies significantly more often than smaller organizations had.

Policies related to flexibility. A one sample *t*-test showed the average score for the embedment of this group of policies ($M = 1.93$, $SD = 0.50$) did not differ significantly than "in part". When transforming the average score to a percentage, policies related to flexibility were reported to have been embedded for 47%. A one-way repeated measures ANOVA was conducted to test whether respondents reported there was a statistically significant distinction between the embedment of the different policies related to volunteer work. The analysis showed a significant difference between the six policies, Wilks' Lambda = .50, $F(5, 86) = 17.38$, $p < 0.001$, multivariate partial eta squared = .50 (very large effect size according to the guidelines of Cohen; 1988, p. 284-7). "Make part-time work possible" and "The new way of working"; flexible workplaces and hours; focus on output rather than visibility" were significantly more reported than the other four policies. "Provide training budget to be spent by employees themselves" also differed significantly from the other policies, but because it was reported least embedded within organizations. Table 23 shows the means and standard deviations of each of the policies in order of perceived importance.

A negative correlation was found between respondents' country of operation regarding these policies, $r = -.32$, $p = 0.004$, meaning Dutch respondents had embedded policies related to flexibility significantly more often than Belgian respondents had (medium correlation; Cohen, 1988, p. 79).

Policies aimed at employees' "green" behavior. A one sample *t*-test showed the average score for the embedment of mobility policies ($M = 2.20$, $SD = 0.76$) lay significantly higher than "in part", $t(87) = 2.35$, $p = 0.02$. When transforming the average score to a percentage, policies related to mobility were reported to have been embedded for 60%. A one sample *t*-test showed the average score for the embedment of green development policies ($M = 1.79$, $SD = 0.63$) lay significantly lower than "in part", $t(86) = -2.38$, $p = 0.02$. When transforming the average score to a percentage, policies related to development in the field of

sustainability were reported to have been embedded for 42%. A one sample *t*-test showed the average score for the embedment of green appraisal policies ($M = 1.54$, $SD = 0.60$) differed significantly from "no", $t(86) = 8.27$, $p < 0.001$ and "in part", $t(86) = -6.41$, $p < 0.001$. When transforming the average score to a percentage, policies related to green appraisal were reported to have been embedded for 28%.

A one-way repeated measures ANOVA was conducted to test whether respondents reported there was a statistically significant distinction between the embedment of the different groups of policies related to green HRM (being mobility, green development and green appraisal). The analysis showed a significant difference between the three groups, Wilks' Lambda = .62, $F(2, 84) = 25.32$, $p < 0.001$, multivariate partial eta squared = .38 (very large effect size according to the guidelines of Cohen; 1988, p. 284-7). The groups all differed significantly from each other; policies related to mobility were reported significantly more often than policies related to green development. Green development policies were in turn significantly more reported than policies related to green appraisal. Table 24 shows the means and standard deviations of each of the groups of policies in order of perceived importance.

A significant positive correlation was found between the size of the organization worldwide, and the reports of embedment for policies related to mobility, $r = 0.28$, $p = 0.012$ (medium correlation; Cohen, 1988, p. 79).

Policies aimed at employees' health. A one sample *t*-test showed there was no significant difference between the average score for the embedment of this group of policies ($M = 2.03$, $SD = 0.50$) and "in part". When transforming the average score to a percentage, policies related to employees' health were reported to have been embedded for 52%. A one-way repeated measures ANOVA was conducted to test whether respondents reported there was a statistically significant distinction between the embedment of the different policies

related to employees' health. The analysis showed a significant difference between the seven policies, Wilks' Lambda = .39, $F(6, 79) = 20.37$, $p < 0.001$, multivariate partial eta squared = .61 (very large effect size according to the guidelines of Cohen; 1988, p. 284-7). "Secure employees safety at all times" was significantly more reported than the other six policies. Table 25 shows the means and standard deviations of each of the policies in order of perceived importance.

A negative correlation was found between respondents' country of operation regarding these policies, $r = -.28$, $p = 0.011$, meaning Dutch respondents had embedded policies related to employees' health significantly more often than Belgian respondents had (medium correlation; Cohen, 1988, p. 79). Also, a significant positive correlation was found between the size of the organization worldwide, and the reports of embedment for policies related to health, $r = 0.26$, $p = 0.020$ (medium correlation; Cohen, 1988, p. 79), meaning larger organizations had embedded such policies significantly more often than smaller organizations had.

Three focal points of HRM distinguished in literature. Respondents were meant to be asked about the embedment of policies related to the sustained supply of personnel in the future, good employership or engaging employees in CSR practices and thus sustainabilizing the organization via HR. Unfortunately, because of the mistake in the design of the survey that was mentioned earlier, the item asking about the embedment of sustained supply of personnel was also empty.

A paired-samples *t*-test was conducted to assess whether there was a significant difference between the reported presence of good employership and sustainabilizing the organization through HR. Respondents reported "Good employership" ($M = 2.37$, $SD = 0.69$) had been embedded significantly more often within their organization than "Help in sustainabilizing the organization via HR" ($M = 2.06$, $SD = 0.77$), $t(84) = 4.07$, $p = < 0.001$.

Accordingly, a one sample *t*-test showed the score for good employership was significantly higher than "in part", $t(85) = 5.02$, $p < 0.001$, while the score for help in sustainabilizing the organization through HR was not. When transforming the average scores to a percentage, good employership was reported to have been embedded for 68% and sustainabilizing through HR for 53%.

Single policies. Respondents were asked about the embedment of the six separate policies derived from De Prins' Sustainable HRM framework, which were only mentioned once or twice in an interview. A one-way repeated measures ANOVA showed there was a significant difference between the respondents' reports of the embedment of the six policies within their organizations, Wilks' Lambda = .57, $F (5, 82) = 12.20$, $p < 0.001$, multivariate partial eta squared = .43 (large effect size; Cohen, 1988, p. 284-7). Table 26 shows the means and standard deviations of each of the policies in order of perceived importance. A one sample t-test showed the first four policies were all significantly higher than "in part", $t(89) = 2.88$, $p = 0.005$ for the least reported of those four items; "Engage employees in decisions that affect them".

Overall comparison between the groups of policies. To examine which of the groups of policies was reported to have been embedded in organizations most, a one-way repeated measures ANOVA was conducted. The analysis showed a significant difference between the groups of policies, Wilks' Lambda = .26, $F (7, 67) = 27.40$, $p < 0.001$, multivariate partial eta squared = .75 (very large effect size; Cohen, 1988, p. 284-7). Green mobility-, employees' development-, and employees' health policies were the significantly most often reported policies to have been embedded within organizations. The significantly least reported group of policies was green appraisal, with an average score holding the middle between "no" and "partly present". Table 27 shows the means and standard deviations of each of the groups of policies in order of most frequently reported.

A closer examination of the specific items per group of policies shows that respondents differed greatly in their reports of the embedment of the different policies, which is also signified by a few items' large standard deviations; in most cases approximately as many respondents answered they their organization had embedded these policies, as the amount of respondents that reported their organization had in part, or had not at all embedded these policies. In other words, it seems like approximately one third of the respondents indicated that their organization had embedded these policies, one third indicated this was partly the case, and one third indicated this was not the case. The only policy group which was reported by almost all participants as being embedded least in the organization was green appraisal, with a mean corresponding to the middle of 'no' and 'in part'.

The relation between opinion and presence. In general, are policies that are more related to Sustainable HRM in the opinions of the respondents, also embedded within their organizations more often (and the other way around)? A significant correlation was found when looked at the respondents' opinions and reports of embedment for each individual policy, $r = 0.66$, $p < 0.001$. Thus in general, there is a significant positive correlation between respondents' opinions and the embedment of the policies they relate to Sustainable HRM.

When testing this assumption for the specific groups, five of the eight groups of policies showed significant correlations between their perceived association to Sustainable HRM and their embedment within organizations. This was true for policies related to diversity, $r = .36$, $n = 87$, $p = 0.001$ (medium correlation according to the guidelines of Cohen; 1988, p. 79); policies related to volunteer work, $r = .66$, $n = 93$, $p < 0.001$ (strong correlation; Cohen, 1988, p.79); policies related to mobility, $r = .43$, $n = 87$, $p < 0.001$; policies related to green development, $r = 0.40$, $n = 86$, $p < 0.001$ (medium correlation; Cohen, 1988, p. 79) and policies related to employees' health, $r = 0.37$, $n = 82$, $p = 0.001$ (medium correlation; Cohen, 1988, p. 79). The three groups of policies that were not

significantly related were policies related to employees' development, policies related to flexibility and policies related to green appraisal. Thus, regarding the five groups for which significant correlations were shown, the more an HR professional thought this groups of policies was associated with Sustainable HRM, the more it was reported to have been embedded within their organization; or the more this groups of policies was reported to have been embedded within their organization, the more they associated it with Sustainable HRM.

Besides gaining more insight into what HR professionals think constitutes Sustainable HRM concretely and which of those policies they report are in fact rooted in their organization, the third aim of this study to explore what HR's contribution to sustainability is or could be. The next section will therefore discuss the third Research Question; *What do HR professionals report is the (possible) contribution of HR to sustainability?*

According to the survey results, sustainability is a theme in more than three-quarters (77.8%) of the 194 organizations about which was reported. Before the specific relation between sustainability and HR will be discussed, the next section will describe the single questions that were asked about sustainability in general. First, the organizations in which sustainability was reported to be no theme will be further examined, before describing the information gathered from the majority of organizations that reported it was.

The unimportance of sustainability within organizations. The 22.2% of the 194 respondents that indicated that sustainability was no theme within their organization, were asked about the reasons for this situation. The most often reported barriers for engaging in sustainability were a lack of knowledge and capacity for sustainability policies ($N = 16$), no support from leader within the organization ($N = 12$), the fact that practices associated with sustainability aren't mainstream and therefore won't lead to competitive advantages ($N = 9$) and a lack of interest from employees ($N = 6$). The other reasons were all listed less than 4 times. Figure 6 shows the percentages of all barriers that were reported ($N = 31$). Of these

respondents, 9.7% indicated that sustainability was going to be put on the organization's agenda within twelve months.

Next, the reports of the 77.8% of all participants that reported sustainability is a theme within their organization, will be discussed.

The importance of sustainability within organizations. Of the 151 organizations in which sustainability was reported to be a theme, more than half (54.8%) declared a formal sustainable policy was in place. A minority (34.1%) of the respondents also reported a specific department within their organization was responsible for sustainability or CSR. Figure 7 shows the percentages of answers given to the statement "*Sustainability is central in our strategy. Core values associated with social and environmental responsibility are deeply ingrained in our organization*". The majority of the respondents agreed or completely agreed (together: 56.1%) with this statement; 4.1% disagreed or completely disagreed with this statement. The size of the organization worldwide was positively correlated to the reported centralized position of sustainability in an organization's strategy, $r = 0.27$, $p = 0.023$ (medium correlation; Cohen, 1988, p. 79).

When asked about the primarily responsible department or person for the design of the accompanying sustainability strategy, for which respondents could identify multiple answers, the CEO or Managing Partner was rated as most important (50.9%), followed by the organization's higher management (39.1%), the HR department (29%) and a taskforce of employees (25.5%). The CSR Department came fifth in line (20.9%). Figure 8 shows the percentages of all primarily responsible parties for the sustainability strategy's design within organizations ($N = 110$).

A slightly different order was disclosed for the implementation of the sustainability strategy; higher management was deemed most important (37.3%), the CEO or Managing Partner came second (30%), HR department kept its third place (26.4%) and was again

followed by a taskforce of employees (24.5%) and the CSR Department (22.7%). Figure 9

shows the percentages of all primarily responsible parties for the sustainability strategy's

implementation within organizations ($N = 110$).

The positive effects most often listed as a consequence of sustainability were

improved image of the organization (52%), improved position as a preferred employer (50%),

heightened trust from consumers and clients (42%), improved motivation and involvement of

employees (38%) and improved loyalty of employees (32%). 8% said the focus on

sustainability had had no positive impact whatsoever. Figure 10 shows the percentages of all

the listed positive outcomes of organizations' sustainability initiatives ($N = 100$).

The following sections will discuss the survey's questions that related to five different

HR themes, which will shed light on the specific connection between sustainability and HR.

Questions related to the extent with which HR advances employees' contribution to

sustainability. Most HR professionals slightly agreed (16.9%), agreed (33.7%) or completely

agreed (18.1%) sustainability was indeed an important theme within their HR department.

Less than 20% reported some form of disagreement, the rest was neutral.

The opinions about whether HR clarified what employees can do for sustainability,

and if they facilitated and enthused employees in their contribution to it, were all

approximately along the same lines; the majority reported some form of agreement (59%,

61.4% and 56.7% respectively), about a tenth was neutral (12%, 9.6% and 14.5%

respectively), the rest disagreed in some way (28.9% in all cases).

The perceived role of sustainability in the HR cycle. Corresponding with the second

highest ranking of "improved position as a preferred employer" as a positive outcome of an

organization's sustainability strategy, sustainability within HR was also rated most important

for a "preferred employer's image" ($M = 5.70$, $SD = 1.3$ on scale from 1 to 7). A one-way

repeated measures ANOVA showed this item differed significantly from all the other items,

Wilks' Lambda = .79, F (4, 79) = 5,29 p = 0.001, multivariate partial eta squared = .21. Next were the development of sustainable leadership and attraction of talent (both M = 5.22, SD = 1.55), followed by the retention (M = 5.16, SD = 1.57) and the development of talent (M = 5.11, SD = 1.40). Less than 10% of the respondents completely disagreed or disagreed that sustainability was of importance to any of these five topics within the HR cycle.

There appeared to be a difference between HR professionals operative in The Netherlands and Belgium. A significant positive correlation was found between country of operation and the perceived importance of sustainability for the HR related themes just described, r = 0.35, p = 0.004 (medium correlation; Cohen, 1988, p. 79). This means respondents who work in Belgium appeared to assign a greater role to sustainability regarding these HR themes than did respondents who work in The Netherlands.

HR's explicit involvement in the organization's sustainable strategy. Little more than half (56.65%) of HR professionals showed some form of agreement when asked whether HR was involved in the design of the sustainability strategy from the beginning. A third (34.9%) either slightly, completely or just disagreed with this statement.

The opposite was documented when they were asked about whether HR was the one to put sustainability on the organization's agenda and initiate the accompanying policies. A third expressed some form of agreement, while nearly half of all respondents (47%) expressed some form of disagreement with this statement. 18% was neutral.

Organizations showed contradicting results in their responses about whether or not the HR Director takes part in the CSR or sustainability department or project group; nearly just as many people agreed (43.3%) as disagreed (43.3%) with this statement. The rest (13.3%) was neutral.

HR professionals' perceived available resources and capacity in contributing to sustainability. HR professionals also differed greatly in their reports of having enough human

and financial capital available for starting and promoting sustainability activities; 41.7% stated they disagreed, where little over a third (35.4%) agreed with having enough available resources. The rest (22.9%) was neutral.

The same didn't hold for their opinion about advantages they reported seeing for them and their colleagues in investing time and energy in sustainability; Less than 10% expressed some form of disagreement with this statement while the majority either agreed (33.7%) or completely agreed (36.8%) with seeing the advantages of input related to sustainability.

Yet, even though the majority (49.5%) expressed some form of disagreement, nearly a third (30.5%) said they either slightly, completely or just agreed with running the risk of failing or being embarrassed when pushing too much for sustainability to take a central position. Little less than a quarter (23.2%) of them also expressed some form of disagreement when asked whether they felt their colleagues or supervisor listened to them when they tried to put sustainability on the agenda. However the majority (54.5%), agreed they were listened to during such attempts.

Respondents were asked about being able to find effective cooperative relations within the organization for promoting sustainability activities; a small majority of the HR professionals either slightly (13.7%), normally (29.5%) or completely (18.9%) agreed with having this ability.

There were again great differences in time spent on the long-term sustainability of the organization, about which 41.1% reported some form of disagreement with spending 'a big part of time' while 44.2% expressed the opposite.

Presence of Sustainable HRM. Is sustainability 'the' opportunity for HR to prove its strategic position within an organization? Most of the HR professionals in this study slightly agreed (22.1%), agreed (44.2%) or completely agreed (12.6%) with this statement. Less than

10% of the 95 respondents disagreed (6.3%) or completely disagreed (3.2%) with this statement.

However, when asked whether they thought Sustainable HRM was practiced within their organization, again almost the same amount of respondents (40%) either slightly disagreed, disagreed or completely disagreed (13.7%, 15.8% and 10.5% respectively) as slightly agreed, agreed or completely agreed (17.9, 21.1 and 2.1% respectively; together 41.1%) with this statement.

More clear were the results on whether they thought their Sustainable HRM practices could serve as an example for other organizations. Only a quarter slightly agreed, agreed, or completely agreed with this statement (8.4, 11.6 and 4.2% respectively). The majority however, either completely disagreed or disagreed (together: 41.1%).

Another variety of answers was given when HR professionals were asked if they thought HR missed the strategic position to implement sustainability within an organization. 5.3% completely disagreed, 20% disagreed, 13.7% slightly disagreed, 13.7% was neutral, 17.9% slightly agreed, 17.9% agreed and 11.6% completely agreed with this statement.

Their responses to "I see and hear around me that Sustainable HRM is a topic on the agenda until profit are under attack" also lacked much resemblance, with nearly as many respondents expressing some form of disagreement (30.5%) as expressing a form of agreement (41%) to this statement.

Stepwise multiple regression was used to asses which measures are the predictors of the perceived presence of Sustainable HRM. Items related to the "possibilities of HR" (beta = 0.44, $p < 0.001$) and to the "Contribution of HR" (beta = 0.32, p = 0.003) appeared to be the significant predictors. Together, they explained 47.1% of the variance, $F (2, 73) = 32,54$, $p <$ 0.001.

To be able to see the bigger picture and asses which measures may lead to

possibilities of HR and contribution of HR, another stepwise multiple regression was used.

Items related to "HR's Involvement in sustainability" (beta = 0.57, p < 0.001) and

"Importance of sustainability for themes within HR" (beta = 0.33, p < 0.001) were both

significant predictors of "Contribution of HR". Together, they explained 60% of the variance,

F (2, 80) = 58, 66, p < 0.001. Items related to the "Involvement of HR in sustainability" was

the only significant predictor of items related to the "Possibilities of HR to sustainability",

beta = 0.56, p < 0.01). These items explained 56% of the variance, F (1, 74) = 33.50, p <

0.001. Figure 11 shows the relations between the predictors of Sustainable HRM.

<p style="text-align:center">Discussion</p>

Even though sustainability in general is referred to as a hot topic in research and

management (Wilkinson, 2005; Ehnert, 2009), it rarely appears in strategic HR plans and its

implications for strategic HRM have received little attention (Zaugg, Blom, & Thom, 2001;

Ehnert, 2006; Ehnert, 2009; Inyang, Awa, & Enuoh, 2011; Zoogah, 2011; Aggerholm,

Andersen, & Thomsen, 2011). This while Boudreau and Ramstad (2005) asserted that: "As

organizations increasingly embrace sustainability, however, so must HR," (p. 130).

First and foremost, this study's aim was to contribute to the current search for a

definition of Sustainable HRM, and find out the extent to which HR professionals had already

begun to embed such practices in their organizations. The scarce previous literature in this

area focused on many different subfields (Ehnert, 2006), but did not yet make Sustainable

HRM concrete by pointing out which exact policies are related to the subject.

This research therefore examined what the opinions of HR- and CSR Directors in

leading organizations in the field of sustainability were about Sustainable HRM, and gathered

examples of policies related to six themes they associated with it; a diverse workforce,

employees' development, flexibility, volunteer work, employees' health and Green HRM.

These themes' accompanying examples were incorporated into a survey that measured

whether other HR professionals also regarded these as associated with Sustainable HRM, and which policies they had embedded within their organizations.

Diversity. De Prins (2011) mentions policies related to a diverse work-force in her Sustainable HRM Framework, as part of the sociological perspective in which the interests of the employer and employee are explicitly connected to society. "Diversity" simply refers to differences between individuals, based on characteristics which can be used to distinguish between them. Most research around the topic focuses on gender, age, ethnicity, educational, and functional background (Williams & O'Reilly, 1998).

Indeed, more than half of the interviewees associated policies related to a diverse work-force with Sustainable HRM and also reported having embedded them within their organization. Interestingly, they only explicitly mentioned target groups such as women, employees with another cultural background and employees' lifephase, while survey respondents rated "diversity in competencies" as most associated with Sustainable HRM.

The importance of diversity within organizations can be described using three perspectives (Frouws & Buiskool, 2010), all of which were mentioned by the interviewees. Women and employees with another cultural background were discussed by those who emphasized their organization's efforts in striving for these target groups' fairer chance for specific positions (social perspective; Frouws & Buiskool, 2010). Only one interviewee [11] expressed his organization's firm belief in diversity "leading to better decisions and creativity" (economic perspective; Frouws & Buiskool, 2010), but the current aging of the workforce was a reality addressed by several of them. They for instance stated businesses are going to "need everyone in the future" [5], for which reason they had embedded policies related to employees' age and lifephase (demographic perspective; Frouws & Buiskool, 2010). These last mentioned policies also relate to the sustained supply of employees in the future, which is one of the main focal points of Sustainable HRM according to several

scholars (Ehnert, 2009). Even so, survey respondents reported policies related to employees' lifephase were significantly least embedded of all the diversity policies.

In general, survey respondents were in between 'neutral' and 'agree' when asked whether they associated diversity to Sustainable HRM and had embedded the accompanying policies for 46%. The positive correlation found between their opinions and the given reports of the diversity policies' presence, shows the extent of the policies' embedment corresponds with how much HR professionals associate them with Sustainable HRM.

In conclusion, literature points to diversity policies as being a part of Sustainable HRM (De Prins, 2011) but only approximately half of the interviewees and HR professionals share this opinion.

Employees' development. There is a widespread belief that a positive relationship exists between organizational performance and employee development, which has come to be defined in at least two ways. Some researchers appear to regard it primarily as a mechanism for helping individuals in achieving their own self-development and self-enrichment goals; others view employee development from a more organizational strategic perspective. The latter would expect employees to select learning opportunities in the context of agreed-upon development goals based on the needs of the organization. The overall intent of employee development programs is to provide a systematic path for increasing the employees' competence, regardless of whether that increased competence would be used for doing present or future work (Jabobs & Washington, 2003), which in this sense can be seen as a "sustainable" investment in personnel, not to mention an important personal driver for the employees themselves (De Prins, 2011).

Indeed, both interviewees and survey respondents agreed on the strong association of this theme with Sustainable HRM. Interviewees all reported having embedded policies regarding their employees' development; survey respondents reported a lower embedment of

58%. However, the lack of there being a positive correlation between the survey respondents' opinions and their reports on embedment of policies related to employees' development, showed they too thought there is still work to be done in this area.

In conclusion, employees' development is regarded as an important element of Sustainable HRM. Like one interviewee [10] said: "Constantly developing your people and indeed treating them in an appropriate way, is the entry ticket to reaching sustainability".

Volunteer work. Employer supported volunteering (ESV) has been defined as "the formal and informal policies and practices that employers use to encourage and help employees volunteer in community service activities" (Tschirhart, 2005, p. 14) and is placed within the sociological perspective of Sustainable HRM (De Prins, 2011).

Policies related to this theme were mentioned by eight interviewees in regard to their association with Sustainable HRM, of which three had embedded formal policies related to the topic within their organizations. Mentioned consequences of such programs were increased commitment [3; 5], heightened motivation [2] and fulfillment of employees' personal goals [4]. Others reported local programs or volunteer work on a more ad-hoc basis.

Survey respondents thought volunteer work was only neutrally associated with Sustainable HRM and reported a 38% embedment of related policies. Dutch and larger organizations had embedded such policies significantly more often than Belgian and smaller organizations had. The Netherlands is known to have a higher percentage of volunteers than Belgium (Curtis, Grabb, & Baer, 1992) which may have influenced the perceived importance of volunteerwork for Dutch corporations; larger organizations are usually (made) more aware of their responsibility regarding Corporate Sustainability than smaller organizations are, which may have led to their higher embedment of policies related to volunteerwork.

The strong positive correlation between survey respondents' opinions and their reports of embedment showed they did not feel much more had to be done in this area.

ESV programs come in a variety of forms and encompass many activities (Booth, Park, & Glomb, 2009).When asked about the possibility of volunteering during work hours, one interviewee [6] mentioned: "An employer can go a long way, but you need to set boundaries". Accordingly, the policy that was also significantly most associated with Sustainable HRM and significantly most embedded within organizations by survey respondents, was "Sponsor good causes or volunteer initiatives suggested by employees", instead of enabling employees to volunteer during or after work hours.

In conclusion, interviewees were more enthusiastic about volunteer work being a part of Sustainable HRM than were survey respondents. In both cases, approximately a third reported having embedded policies related to volunteer work within their organizations. Survey respondents thought supporting initiatives suggested by employees were significantly most associated with Sustainable HRM.

Flexibility. There is a wide variety of definitions used to describe flexibility in work. "Flexible working hours", "the new way of working", "the different way of working"; These policies referring to flexible hour arrangements within companies are a so-called hot item in scientific research and popular press these days. In essence, these employment arrangements or schedules vary from the traditional working day and week. However, flexibility may refer to an employee's choice of hours (flexible *work*), or to the companies' ability to organize labor resources (flexible *employment*) – the latter relating to hiring and lay off (MacEachen, Polzer, & Clarke, 2008). Flexible employment was pointed out by only one interviewee [4] who wondered whether this would become the future, while flexible work (choice of hours) was discussed in ten interviews. Interviewees agreed on the strong association of this concept with Sustainable HRM, not only because of the environmental benefits -due to working from home and thus less use of company cars and less need for large company buildings-, but also the employees' heightened satisfaction, freedom and control.

Control is described as the discretion permitted to the worker in deciding how to meet the demands, and it is control that separates the good from the bad jobs (Karasek, 1979). Figure 11 shows Karasek's Job Strain model, which featured four types of jobs. Passive jobs are the ones with high control and low demands, leading to passivity and learned helplessness. A job with low demands and high control is 'low strain', while a job with high demands and low control is 'high strain'. One might expect any job with high demands to lead to psychological strain, but high demands definitely do not automatically cause stress when the employee has a high degree of control.

In fact, jobs high in demands but also high in control, are called 'active' and are optimal for learning and developing strategies for dealing with job demands. Besides, the more active jobs are associated with satisfaction and reduced depression, even though they are more demanding (Karasek, 1979).

Today's society is full of demanding jobs, a reason for scholars to point out the need of more Sustainable HRM practices (Wilkinson & Hill, 2001). Survey respondents also associated "The new way of working" and "put employees' autonomy central" with Sustainable HRM, but reported an embedment of policies related to such flexibility of 47%, which was lower in Belgium than in The Netherlands. The fact that Belgian businesses are less prone to incorporate flexible work hours than Dutch companies are, can be a result of the ongoing discussions about "the new way of working" in The Netherlands and the many blogs and websites dedicated to the subject, which are not seen and heard in Belgium.

The lack of there being a positive correlation between the survey respondents' opinions and their reports on embedment of these policies did reveal they thought there was still work to be done in this area. The same sentiment was gathered during the interviews, in which interviewees who had not yet integrated the new way of working in their organization, for example mentioned they too had "some considerable steps to make" [7].

In conclusion, the embedment of policies related to flexibility in work hours falls behind compared to their strong association to Sustainable HRM according to scholars, interviewees, and survey respondents.

Green HRM. Green HRM has been defined as the use of HRM policies, philosophies, and practices to promote sustainable use of resources and prevent harm arising from environmental concerns within business organizations (Zoogah, 2011; De Prins, 2011). Green HRM is said to depend on the "unique and identifiable patterns of green decisions and behaviors" of HR managers (Zoogah, 2011, p. 118), who decide about the integration of such policies within their organizations.

Interviewees made a distinction between HR policies directed at the stimulation of environmentally friendly behavior such as those related to mobility (use of a less polluting car or public transport), policies related to employees' development in the field of sustainability, and policies related to selection and performance appraisal in which 'green' criteria could be incorporated. The latter was disregarded in all but two cases. Reasons given were the wrong message that would be sent by rewarding good behavior that should come naturally, and the "immeasurable" character of sustainable behavior. Scholars indeed denominate the challenges of measuring environmental performance standards across different units of the firm and gaining useful data on the environmental performance of managers (Renwick, 2008). Still, literature suggests that if environmental criteria are integrated into the process of appraisal (by writing such responsibilities into all employee action plans), a learning culture in Environmental Management can be encouraged (Rees, mentioned in Renwick, 2008). Survey respondents also associated "green appraisal" policies significantly less to Sustainable HRM than the mobility or green development policies, even though their association did not differ significantly from the association of policies related to health and a diverse workforce (all

three were in between 'neutral' and 'agree'). However, the embedment of these policies was reported least, compared to all the policies discussed in this study (28%).

Similar results were found in a study conducted in the United States (Harmon, Fairfield, & Wirtenberg, 2010) in which the least-implemented practices also related to infusing sustainability criteria into talent and performance management systems, including recruitment, selection and compensation. The authors called this "especially disconcerting, given the strong evidence for how environmentally and socially responsible business practices can serve to improve business performance by attracting, retaining and engaging the best talent, especially among the younger population" (p. 17). In line with this last point, respondents did rate a preferred employer's image as one of the most important outcomes of their organization's sustainability strategy, but did not agree this should extend to green appraisal practices. One might wonder why organizations who are serious about sustainability oppose to using such criteria in, for instance, their selection process. True, measuring or quantifying "sustainable behavior" with a test or questionnaire may be difficult, but I see no harm in specifically looking for individuals to whom sustainability is an important issue. In my opinion, if organizations really strive for sustainability, then asking their employees to endorse this new philosophy is not too much to ask.

Nevertheless, although skeptic about green appraisal, respondents were enthusiastic about the other two groups of policies within the Green HRM perspective. In fact, together with policies related to employees' general development, policies related to mobility and employees' development in the field of sustainability were significantly most often associated to Sustainable HRM of all the policies discussed in this study by survey respondents. Their reported embedment by survey respondents was 60% (mobility) and 42% (development in the field of sustainability). The figures correspond with the information gathered in the interviews, in which all interviewees described mobility policies and only one interviewee [1]

described a program for his organization's leaders in which sustainability was given a central role. Interviewees did mention other ways of developing employees in sustainability, for example focus groups or taskforces of employees concerned with sustainable themes.

Analyses of the survey data showed significant positive correlations between the respondents' opinions on their association to Sustainable HRM and their embedment reports for both the mobility and green development policies.

In conclusion, policies related to mobility were strongly associated to Sustainable HRM by both interviewees and survey respondents, and also reported to be embedded within their organizations most often. Such policies were more common in large organizations, perhaps due to the fact that providing employees with a car in the first place is more common for them than it is for smaller organizations. Policies related to employees' development in the field of sustainability were also strongly associated to Sustainable HRM, but reported to be embedded less frequently by both interviewees en survey respondents. Policies related to selection and performance appraisal based on environmental criteria were debated most, least associated to Sustainable HRM, and also least reported to be embedded within organizations.

Health. De Prins (2011) places policies related to employees' health in the sociological perspective. They were also mentioned in eight of the interviews, and described as embedded policies related to activities such as fitness and health check-ups, or a healthier assortment in the company cafeteria or restaurant. One interviewee [2] said his organization's health program was the driver of the ever declining absenteeism rates.

Survey respondents also reported an embedment of 52%, which was greater in Dutch large organizations, but their opinions showed a greater focus on policies directed at employees' mental health rather than their physique. Examples such as "support employees in their work-life balance" and "policies targeted at the prevention of stress" were one of most strongly associated policies with Sustainable HRM. Why small and Belgian organizations are

less inclined to embed health related policies in their organizations remains unclear; Belgium is for example confronted with the same, if not a higher, percentage of elder employees in the future for which such policies could be beneficial.

In conclusion, policies related to employees' physical health were one of the most reported to be embedded policies by both interviewees and survey respondents. Their association with Sustainable HRM was stronger according to the interviewees than according to the survey respondents, who lay more emphasis on employees' mental health.

HR's role in sustainabilizing the organization. A third aim was to examine the role HR can play in contributing to the sustainabilization of their organizations. The Human Resource Department of an organization is said to have the capability to play a significant role in the creation of their company's sustainability culture (Harmon, Fairfield, & Wirtenberg, 2010).

Even though scholars (Ehnert, 2006; Ehnert, 2009; Cohen, 2010; De Prins, 2011) point to HR departments as the drivers for sustainability, this study shows HR professionals regard themselves mostly as facilitators. The CEO, managing partners or higher management are deemed more important for the design and implementation of the organization's sustainability strategy.

This does not mean HR professionals are unenthusiastic about sustainability or Sustainable HRM. Reported benefits of an organization's focus on sustainability that directly relate to employees were their improved motivation, involvement and loyalty. Another important consequence according to survey respondents, that was also mentioned several times in interviews and which may help the sustained supply of future personnel, is an improved employer's image due to the organization's sustainability strategy.

Detert and Pollock (2008) regarded personal values, perceptions of what is in your own interest and available resources, as the key ingredients for being able to contribute to

change. The survey respondents reported finding sustainability "important" and 70.5% saw advantages for themselves and their colleagues for investing time in sustainability. The perceived possibilities were a significant predictor of the perceived presence of Sustainable HRM.

To illustrate the bigger picture, this study shows the involvement of HR with the organization's sustainability strategy and the perceived importance of sustainability for attracting, retaining and developing talent will positively influence the contribution of HR to engaging employees in sustainability and will benefit HR's perceived available resources and their own abilities instrumental to bring about change. These will in turn have a positive effect on the perceived presence of Sustainable HRM within organizations.

Limitations and suggestions for future research

Of course this study has a few limitations. First off, even though a mixed-methods study was conducted in order to heighten the generalizability of the results as much as was possible, the sample of 205 respondents and 13 interviewees is perhaps not representative for "the" HR professionals' opinions. A lot of this had to do with the period in which the survey was put online –the middle of the summer- which resulted in a failure to reach many potential respondents on time. Added to that, a number of magazines, newsletters and HR tradeorganizations offered to help distribute the survey after it had already been taken offline.

The attitude towards sustainability of the respondents who participated in the survey may be regarded as having a positive and negative effect; The interviewees were selected because of their organization's explicit interest in sustainability; when asked how important sustainability was to the survey respondents, their average score did not differ significantly from "important" ($M_{\text{sustainability importance}} = 5.92$, $SD = 0.98$ on a scale from 1 to 7). Moreover, 77.8% of them reported sustainability was a theme within their organization and 56.1% of them agreed or completely agreed that core values associated with social and environmental

sustainability were deeply ingrained in their company. This can be regarded as positive on the one hand, because asking HR professionals who are well grounded in sustainability as a general concept, might be the right people to ask about the association of sustainability within HR practices.

On the other hand, the stated importance of sustainability can be expected to have had an effect on the embedment of policies related to Sustainable HRM. Moreover, 40% of the survey respondents who filled out track 2 and thus reported on the embedment of policies, stated being an HR Director. One can argue that the HR Director's and organization's positive attitude towards sustainability may have resulted in more sustainable HRM practices within his or her organization. This could mean this research painted an inaccurate (and perhaps too positive) picture of the extent to which policies related to Sustainable HRM are already a reality within organizations. The same holds true for the interviewees, who were especially picked out because of their organization's focus on sustainability and may be expected to have integrated sustainability within their organizations more than other companies, thus also in their HR department and HR practices. Future research could set out to examine whether HR professionals in organizations which are less, or not at all, focused on sustainability, associate the same themes with Sustainable HRM and have embedded the accompanying policies to the same, or to a more or lesser extent, than this study's participants. This could be established by striving for a more balanced sample of interviewees and survey respondents, which will not be very difficult regarding the interviews, because it simply entails approaching HR directors from companies without an explicit interest in sustainability. Obtaining a balanced survey respondents sample may be somewhat more problematic, because questionnaires are usually filled out by persons who have a special interest in the subject matter. However, setting out the survey for a longer period of time and finding 'neutral' HR organizations and websites that can help with its distribution may be a solution.

A more balanced sample will also clarify whether organizations with or without a specific interest in sustainability differ from one another regarding their HRM practices, which may touch upon another issue: the much questioned difference between "good" and "Sustainable" HRM. A number of survey respondents noted they had filled in 'neutral' most of the time, because they thought the examples of policies were "just part of good HRM" and complained a "sustainable label" was being put on all sorts of phenomena these days. Because there was no answer-possibility in the survey with which respondents had the explicit option to distinguish between the two, the results may have been affected due to differences in respondents' understanding of the question. On the other hand, respondents reported thinking "good employership" was significantly more associated with Sustainable HRM than HR's role in helping the organization sustainabilize. This signals respondents think good HRM and Sustainable HRM are alike. Even so, I would definitely recommend future researchers to implement such an option within their questionnaire or highlight this point during an interview.

Establishing the difference between good and Sustainable HRM will also lead to the possibility of providing a more causal picture in future research. HR professionals will want to know what the effects of Sustainable HRM actually are; how it influences the organization's profits; if it really improves the organization's image and preferred employer status; if there is a relationship between Sustainable HRM and employees' productivity; examples of questions the current study was unable to answer due to the use of self-reports instead of using an empirical research design. Future research could thus gather information on the measurement of these practices as well as their actual relationship with organizational performance and other outcomes. This will help HR professionals "sell" the need for such practices within their organization.

If such a relationship can be established, the current study could be completed by

research that examines best-practices of how the policies related to Sustainable HRM can be integrated into organizations.

Implications

When organizations want to practice Sustainable HRM in order to be able to deal with the threatened long-term exploitation of scarce human resources (Ehnert, 2009), face internal organization pressures (Wilkinson & Hill, 2001), show responsibility towards their employees (De Prins, 2011) or improve the success of their CSR practices by engaging employees in sustainability (Branco & Rodrigues, 2007), this is the first study that sheds light on what HR professionals' perception are of what such Sustainable HRM practices should include.

It also shows employees' general development, the integration of flexibility ("the new way of working") in organizations, and the incorporation of criteria related to sustainable behaviours in selection, performance and appraisal criteria are areas which need more attention according to them.

Both the reported opinions and the reported embedment of policies provide HR professionals with the possibility to benchmark, which was the reason for many of them to participate in this study; they can use the reported results as a point of reference for measuring themselves according to their colleagues' opinions and reports.

Organizations and HR professionals new to the subject of sustainability or sustainable HRM, may use the fifty examples of policies and this study's results as a source of inspiration for their HRM practices.

CEO's and higher management will know they must give their HR departments the needed possibilities and resources for enabling and engaging employees for sustainability, in order to heighten the perceived presence of Sustainable HRM. Even if the current study's sample could have been more neutral, the results show HR professionals definitely see the benefits of doing so.

Conclusion

If an organization wants to practice Sustainable HRM, it should first and foremost focus on the following five topics:

Its employees' development, to begin with. This has been said to be the entry ticket to sustainability and will also positively influence organizational performance.

Secondly, besides a focus on general development, special interest should go out to developing employees in sustainability, by engaging them through taskforces, trainings and in the sustainability strategy's design and implementation. Not only has research shown that employee engagement is crucial for CSR to become a success (Collier & Esteban, 2007; Larson et al, 2008; Craig et al, 2010), respondents also regarded such practices as strongly associated to Sustainable HRM, yet reported a lack of the desired extent to which they were embedded within their organizations.

Thirdly, employers should ensure their employees drive an environmentally friendly car, which will lead to a smaller carbon footprint.

The same holds true for the fourth focus on flexibility; especially flexible work- hours and places will result in a lesser use of company cars and less need for large buildings, which will help the environment. Other than that, employees will benefit because of more freedom and control, which will lead to a better work-life balance and lower levels of stress.

In second order of importance follow the enablement of volunteerwork –or at least sponsorship of initiatives suggested by employees-, in order to help society and heighten employees' motivation and engagement; a focus on employees' physical health but especially their emotional well-being; and if necessary policies related to a diverse workforce.

HR professionals definitely see the benefits of HR's engagement with sustainability in general but mainly facilitate employees, rather than enforce sustainability onto them. HR professionals who wish to contribute to their organization's sustainability by practicing

Sustainable HRM, should strive to be involved with the sustainability strategy from the beginning, which will positively influence their perceived possibilities for putting sustainability on the map and their role in enthusing, facilitating and motivating employees for sustainability.

Ultimately, this will not only benefit the environment, but –according to HR professionals- also the employees and organization itself.

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Table 1 *Disidentified HR and CSR professionals that participated in an in-depth interview*

Name/Number	Function	Branche	Number of employees	Duration interview
Orientating interviews				
Anouk Wentink	CSR professional			
Johan Veeninga	HR professional			
Organization interviews				
1	Senior Vice President HR	Chemical industry	55.000	90 minutes
2	HR Director	Electronics and electrical engineering	420.800	65 minutes
3	Director HR & Business Excellence	Electronics	108.900	80 minutes
4	HR Director	Specialty chemicals	55.000	60 minutes
5	Senior HR policy advisor	Financial services	22.000	75 minutes
6	HR Director	Design and furniture	1100	65 minutes
7	HR Director	Steel pipes, valves and fittings	1000	70 minutes
8	Senior Vice President HR	Electronics	119.000	55 minutes
9	*former CSR-director	Financial services	59.000	30 minutes
10	Head of Sustainability	Financial services	51.200	90 minutes
11	HR Director	Property development	8200	70 minutes

Note. N = 11 * Questions concerning the embedment of Sustainable HRM policies were not discussed with this interviewee because he had left

the organization in which he had worked as a CSR Director for ten years

Table 2 *Interviewees about sustainability related to HR and/or its employees*

Company	Quote
1	"…of course it's the people who do all of this, so unless you get people in tune with this, and get them to deeply understand it, and that starts with leadership, it remains just an initiative that somebody launches"
2	"We're really good when it comes to keeping people at work in a healthy way," "Our employees are really engaged in this organization. Our engagement survey is filled in by 80% of the employees and results in a figure of 90% engagement. That's just magnificent, and that's what you feel around here"
3	"I think we take this quite far, especially in relation to the 'internal [employee] part, that's very important to us," "Our CSR charter features 'harmony with society', 'respect for people' and 'integrity', all very closely related to our employees"
4	"Our only real sustainable sources of energy are our people," "To me, the focus on customers is the focus on employees, and this is the stepping stone to sustainability," "People are sustainable. You want to retain them, so you work on their satisfaction"
5	"HR is an important contributor to our organization's culture, within which sustainability is a component. Besides, we practice good HR and we keep an eye on society.. we're increasingly incorporating 'green' policies… and we make sure outside is inside and inside is outside [practice what we preach]"
6	"Let's put it this way; if you look at our type of organization, a commercial holding with a great focus on production, you see the people-factor falls behind (…) First you make good products, you market them well, and then you realize 'oh god, there is also a number of employees walking around," "We are strongly focused on sustainabilizing though our employees; we have CSR ambassadors, it's integrated in work-meetings... it's everywhere"
7	"Sustainability is an integral part of this company, which for instance means we've been very critical about our suppliers for many years. About the working conditions in all countries," "I'm occupied with sustainability in terms of retention, working conditions; keeping people employed in a healthy way for as

long as is possible. But my HR plan does not have a chapter: sustainability"

8 "I want to work more pro-actively towards reaching corporate sustainability, so that you know that wherever you are, when you have to deal with this

organization, you know the working standards are just"

9 "What HR should do, is facilitate the right behaviors. Not force employees, but stimulate them"

10 "Sustainability means taking our customers extremely seriously and offer great service. The only way to achieve this, is great treatment of our employees"

11 "If you design your system in a way so that your people also benefit, you gain an advantage and you help out the planet, well, that is sustainability to me"

Note. N = 11

Table 3 *Organizations' take on <u>diversity issues</u> as part of Sustainable HRM practices*

Company	Is this an issue? *O **P	Quote
1	Yes Yes (gender, culture)	"One of those things that you just need to do. It's of course way broader than women and cultural background but you need focus in things rather than being too generic about everything"
2	Yes Yes (women)	"We don't focus on life phase because I think you should just have a good HR policy that's good for all ages," "We score well on all themes except for women"
3	Not discussed.	Website: "We offer a culture in which development, diversity and respect are self-evident"
4	Yes Yes (women)	Not discussed. Annual report: "Diversity leads to a better performance and atmosphere. It can be aimed at different target groups; age, ethnicity, gender. In 2009, we focused on women"
5	Yes Yes (lifephase, foreigners, disabled people)	"The core of a life phase-conscious diversity policy is not target groups; it's explicitly recognizing, developing and rewarding individual talents. Added to that, we want women and foreigners in top management position, and heighten disabled employees' visibility within our company"
6	Not discussed	Website: "There are no specific policies that focus on diversity. We believe a natural process will lead to an amount of diversity that fits our organization and resembles the labor market"
7	Not discussed	No mentioning on website or in annual report.

8	Yes	Yes	"We aim for 15%. No, I am not very impressed with that figure either. I think diversity is a difficult subject (…) There
	(women)		is a lot of intensity around the topic within our company, with many opposing responses. There are very high qualified,
			successful women who turn their back towards the initiatives. (…) They think it is nonsense"
9	Not discussed		
10	No	No	"Regarding diversity, there are no specific policies and we don't have quota"
11	Yes	Yes	"It's our belief that diversity in general leads to better decisions. Our focus on women is mostly a lazy one; it's easy to
	(women, lifephase)		measure," "Employees keep getting older, we think you should be able to work happy and healthily in this company"

Note. N = 11 * O = Opinion on whether this belongs to Sustainable HRM ** P = Presence of policies related are embedded within the

organization

Table 4 *Organizations' take on <u>employees' development</u> as part of Sustainable HRM practices*

Company	Is this an issue?		Quote
	*O	**P	
1	Yes	Yes	"Like we say, there is no other way to grow an organization than to grow its people," "Constantly developing your people and indeed treating them in an appropriate way is the entry ticket to reaching sustainability"
2	Yes	Yes	"We are.. I think we are intrinsically interested in people. This has to do with my own background, but also with the organization's culture, which is very much focused on developing people"
3	Yes	Yes	"You can do many things here, really develop yourself"
4	Yes	Yes	"We work on our employees' internal and external employability in all sorts of ways. We say: 'We're going to increase your sustainable deployability' and enable employees to obtain certificates that are valuable in the labor market"
5	Yes	Yes	"Sustainable HRM in the strict sense of the word is just good HRM; all is focused on employability and talent development"
6	Yes	Yes	"I simply do this: I put three young professionals in a room and ask 'What will you do?' and later on I tell my director 'If we have 6 young professionals, we need six positions for them next year,'" "The core is attention and personal space"
7	Yes	Yes	"We see our trainees as individuals. We're unable to offer them a traineeship like some other big corporations, but I believe in our program, trainees go abroad and will have to find their own way over there too"
8	Yes	Yes	"Central to this organization is our employees' development"

9	Yes	-	"'It's about you, we're here to facilitate you. And we're hoping that will lead to value for you, which will ultimately lead to value for the organization.' If HR would do that, then you'd get a different company"
10	Yes	Yes	"Quite simply put, in the area training and development are many possibilities. If people want to do something, then we will enable them 9 out of 10 times," "A lot of attention goes to training and briefing."
11	Yes	Yes	"I think people will recognize the fact that you can develop yourself in this organization. That is definitely an important element"

Note. N = 11 * O = Opinion on whether this belongs to Sustainable HRM ** P = Presence of policies related are embedded within the organization

Table 5 *Organizations' take on <u>volunteer work</u> as part of Sustainable HRM practices*

Company	Is this an issue?		Quote
	*O	**P	
1	Not discussed		Annual Report: "The Community Program encourages employees to engage in hands-on involvement in their local communities and gives them the necessary financial support"
2	Yes	Yes	"Within our '[organization name] helps'-program, employees get time to volunteer during their workdays.. those are just expressions and it motivates people. And besides, we definitely appreciate it when employees engage in a societal role in their own time"
3	Yes	Yes	"We want to be more than an employer. We want our employees to be able to fulfill their societal wants via the organization. Among other things, this increases employees' commitment"
4	Not discussed.		Website: "We are part of society, which means you give and take (…) This includes many activities, such as donations and sponsoring, or volunteering in the neighborhood"
5	Yes	Yes	"Employees are allowed to engage in volunteer work," "Volunteer work.. employees find this motivating, it leads to a greater commitment and adds to our society"
6	Yes	No	"Volunteer work is possible, but in your own time. We go a long way, but you need to set boundaries. But for instance one of our employees takes three months a year for building houses abroad. Other ideas are negotiable," "But are we an organization that stimulates employees to go on a 'good cause weekend'? No"

7	Yes	No	"It's more on an ad-hoc basis; say employees who want to run for a good cause. We then give them the opportunity, but there's no policy that 'entitles' employees to do this," "And no, honestly.. it's no topic on the agenda. I think because we've not yet thought of it"
8	Yes	No	"These initiatives are local. There is no corporate program to stimulate volunteer work. And if you'd ask me "are you about to design a policy?", that'd wouldn't be true. But you can see it gaining momentum"
9	Yes	-	"It's about cause and effect. If you focus on a core theme and combine that with your own (individual and personal) values, it's OK to go and do some running for a good cause e.g. KIKA. But don't do it only for raising money and showing that off. That's from the outside to the inside; that's just to keep up appearances"
10	No	No	"We don't, but our mother organization does have policies. The funny thing is not many employees take the opportunity"
11	Not discussed		Tweet message about this organization: "Ruim 200 collega's van [name organization] gaan morgen aan de slag in de Almeerse wijken" Translation: "More than 200 colleagues of [name organization] will volunteer in Almere's neighbourhoods tomorrow"

Note. N = 11

Table 6 *Organizations' take on flexibility as part of Sustainable HRM practices*

Company	Is this an issue?		Quote "
	*O	**P	
1	Not discussed		No mentioning in annual- or sustainability report
2	Yes	Yes	"Sometimes people ask me 'Have you already integrated "the new way of working"? and I tell them no, but we already have everything associated with it. We've had it for decades. Flexible work hours, flexible work times.. We have people who have never been to this office"
3	Yes	Yes	"Total flexibility," " On the one hand we expect a strong performance, on the other we give more freedom," "The first goal is cost-reduction, we say that out right. However, it does have to stimulate our culture," "We give -and let take- much more responsibility"
4	Yes	Yes	"We had 120 million work-home kilometers a year."The new way of working" makes you sit in your car differently," "On the one hand it works well, on the other.. all in one building? Not a success. We moved too quickly, were too much 'square meter' driven," [about flexible jobs] "I believe the future is flexible careers; work there for two years, then there, then come back.. etc," "Entrepreneurship is placed at the employee"
5	Yes	Yes	""The new way of working" helps [sustainability]"
6	Yes	No	"You have to look for the possibilities within the present limitations. What I'd want it to say 'There need to be people here between 8 and 6, you can figure it out ourselves'. No this is not happening yet, this would be what I'd want," "There are

			discussions about "The new way of working". (...) I think we have to find our own way in this, because "the" new way of working doesn't exist. It's different for every company and I'm not even sure it's suitable for us, we don't have the right culture for it yet"
7	Yes	No	"We have some considerable steps to take, like flexibility in functions; in work hours even. No, 'flex working' is hardly practiced here, if at all. And that too, is something that we'll have to form an opinion about"
8	Yes	Yes	"In 2009, we started a project called Social Innovation, of which flexibility is one of the four themes. It was already integrated within our organization, but we put new life into it"
9	Yes	-	"Don't focus on input, but on output; those are all things that you can do"
10	Yes	No	"Our mother organization is very busy integrating "the new way of working". But in here, departments will have to find their own way, they all have their own culture. So that will also differ depending on the specific department"
11	Yes	Yes	"This is a very clear topic on the agenda. We'll do this where the situation permits it. But employees don't have a 'right' to work at home. Managers are allowed to 'bias' based on the employee's perceived ability to handle the responsibility"

Note. N = 11 *O = Opinion on whether this belongs to Sustainable HRM **P = Presence of policies related are embedded within the

organization

Table 7 *Organizations' take on 'green HRM' policies as part of Sustainable HRM practices*

Company	Is this an issue? *O	**P	Quote
1	Yes	In Part	[Training] "We have started to create leadership development programs that are strongly focusing on the ability to understand that as an organization we need to be sustainable, as an individual we need to be sustainable and that indeed the inconvenient truth is something that we need to deal with in order to be able to help the organization and the planet" [Selection] "We're not at the stage of selecting and de-selecting on that basis, which ultimately would be the thing that you would want to achieve.. but for me that is still quite a way away" [KPI's related to green behavior] "I must say.. sometimes you just speak to things.. I haven't even thought about it like that, interesting thought," "That's probably the holy grail.. of course as a company, you could decide to go there"
2	No	No	[Reward] "We are not the kind of organizations that says 'one good deserves another'. And I am indeed very much against it. Because then money becomes the driver"
3	In Part	In Part	"You have your own car-budget for instance. You're allowed to under lease, but you must pick an A or B labeled car," "What I want to achieve is a conscious decision. When you choose differently, you'll have to pay a little more. Even though it's a small amount more, it leads to you thinking about It for a moment," [about directing towards sustainability] "I don't think you need to.. I think it'll happen by itself. For instance about that car policy; 87% orders an A or B label"
4	In Part	In Part	"Reward sustainable behavior? I've not yet heard anyone do this," "I think decreasing the amount of lease cars.. that's what makes

a difference. We provide employees with a mobility budget, with which they choose. We make it fiscally attractive to choose public transport, but we don't direct people," "Let's not deny HR is constantly trying to upgrade its image. You have to be very careful about not losing it again in an instant when snatching away employees' lease cars. That's just how it is"

5	In Part	In Part	"Green HR.. we have some, but we could do more," "All our cars are A, B or C labeled. We are redesigning our mobility policy and will incorporate these green aspects," "We will never start selecting based on someone's attitude regarding sustainability. But we do look for societal engagement, and that of course also includes the environment"
6	No	No	"I don't support rewarding good behavior. I want a person to think for him or herself. That's the kind of behavior I want. I just want someone to behave and understand why he behaves in a certain way," "When you start rewarding these things, you're unable to take it away, ever"
7	Yes	No	[Sustainabilize through employees] "This is a step that we still have to take, at least; take more than we do now. Engaging employees in what it means. But for instance our new building is top notch regarding sustainability; costs much more but we find this important. However, we realize this is a snap-shot of the situation; and what you mean is 'how do you make sure employees remain conscious on a continuous basis?'"
8	In Part	In Part	[Selection] "I believe none of this. You eventually select people on the basis of their competence. What I see here is inspiration, that's not necessarily a competence. I bring everything back to someone's capability. I think we're years before this will become a reality; the world will have to become even worse, the panic even greater"
9	Yes	-	"If companies communicate that they keep themselves to the Dow Jones Sustainability Index, then they need to at least internalize the same measures for employees up until the lowest levels"

| 10 | No | No | "We want to stay away from scaring people, by claiming they'll have to take the train or eat vegetarian meals. We want to be rather plain about these things," "You have to be aware of not becoming paternalistic, because that won't be appreciated within this organization" |
| 11 | In Part | In Part | [About rewarding sustainability] "I think makes no sense. It's immeasurable, just like many things are" |

Note. N = 11 *O = Opinion on whether this belongs to Sustainable HRM **P = Presence of policies related are embedded within the organization

Table 8 *Organizations' take on the organization's <u>focus on employees' health</u> as part of Sustainable HRM*

Company	Is this an issue?		Quote
	*O	**P	
1	Yes	Yes	"We have Wellness Checkpoint; a tool being offered by an outside party that we have subscribed to. We support employees to sit down with a doctor, and there are annual check-ups for every employee"
2	Yes	Yes	"We've been doing this for 15 years. We measure how 'workable' our employees are because of it. Our workplace absenteeism is very low, 2.5% and it tends to decrease. This is the result of an investment in such policies for years. The key is consistence"
3	Yes	Yes	"We strongly look at what they call 'vitality management' these days, which I think sounds a little exaggerated but we do really look at our employees' health. For instance the company restaurant; unhealthy food is still available but it's more expensive, a specific button gives you the amount of calories," "A fantastic project is also for instance the program in which we teach our employees to run. Clinics that teach about running, shoes, training, food, etcetera"
4	Not discussed		Website mentions employees' health as 'high on the priority list'
5	Yes	Yes	"We have annual health check-ups. This is incorporated in our structure; those questions are standard in our employee satisfaction research. That's the essence of that you should do: integrate these things in a company's operations"
6	Yes	Yes	"An integral health policy, that was made up in one of the production companies to make employees more aware of their health.

			An example of something that was initiated locally and spread itself throughout the organization"
7	Yes	Yes	"We don't have an international vitality program, however in Holland there are periodical health tests, and we're looking at our company restaurant; there's lots of healthy food and there's only a small display case in which you find unhealthy snacks"
8	Yes	Yes	"Part of our Social Innovation plan launched in 2009 is 'Health and Well-Being'. This was already a topic on the agenda, but revitalized because of its incorporation in this plan"
9	Not discussed		
10	Not discussed		No mentioning on website or in annual report.
11	Yes	Yes	[Focused on absenteeism] Annual report: "We have our own Work Service Centre that ensures the employer's guidance and engagement with the employee regarding absenteeism is optimal"

Note. N = 11 *O = Opinion on whether this belongs to Sustainable HRM **P = Presence of policies related are embedded within the organization

Table 9 *Organizations' take on the organization's <u>focus on sustainability</u> as a driver for a preferred employer's image*

Company	Is this an issue?	Quote
1	Not discussed	
2	Not discussed	
3	In part	"We want to be an employer of choice. We notice people want to work here, especially the new generation," "It's a general trend. People, the younger generation, are much more conscious of certain developments [sustainability]"
4	In Part	[independence as a form of sustainable HRM targeted at Generation Y] "Seventy-five percent of student want to start their own company. When you start here, you should become an independent worker on the payroll, sort of"
5	Yes	"Increasingly, the new generation will want to work for sustainable organizations. Look at you, for example, I don't think you'll work for any company that is not sustainable"
6	Still unclear	"We want to be a preferred employer. In that framework, we're thinking 'what are we going to do in this area?'. We've had employees forever, we don't have to be taught about retaining, engaging and interesting them"
7	Not discussed	Annual report mentions the 'Top Employer' certificate, however this is not explicitly connected to sustainability
8	Yes	"Definitely"
9	Yes	"At a certain point, your company culture will draw people by itself"
10	No	"We're not especially looking for sustainable-minded people. We are a normal company. And sustainability is normal, that's our

		belief"
11	Yes	"We were a little shocked to see it didn't really cause an effect, because this was sort of one of the reasons why we did it in the first place," "Perhaps it matters, but less strong that what I read and hear about"

Note. N = 11

Table 10 *Comments on HR as a <u>driver for sustainability</u> within the organization*

Company	Impression	Quote
1	Very important	"What I just laid out is not completely shared by all the leaders in the company, so some of these changes, you do them with the alliances and people that you can find within the organization," "There's nobody that "just" decides. You need the right leaders, the right conversation..."
2	Part of a whole	"It "lives" here, because we have employees that are really very engaged with the organization. (….) You can feel it"
3	Facilitator	"We don't want to be paternalistic; you create the possibilities and the right environment for people to be able to make their own choices"
4	Cautious	"On the one hand, you're constantly working towards improving HR's image and then before you know it you'll lose everything if you take away their lease car. So have you have to be very careful, that's just how it is"
5	Facilitator	"Our HR department is an important contributor to our organization's culture, of which sustainability is an element," "We make sure that inside is outside and outside is inside [practice what we preach]"
6	Passive	"Everything starts with consciousness and awareness. You mustn't force these things"
7	Transition	"We still have quite a way to go when it comes to this"
8	Not explicitly discussed.	
9	Facilitator	"What HR must do is stimulate the right behaviors without being forceful"
10	Cautious	[Refers to sustainability department] "We don't want to be paternalistic, because that's not a way of communicating with we're

		familiar with in this organization"
11	Facilitator	"I think discussions about HR's "contribution" are on-discussion within this discipline [HR]," "When people start thinking about it, it becomes an issue. But if that means you have to start driving a different car, it becomes a little harder. We say: 'Sustainability is a business case'. It's this business drive that enables us to 'sell' it to our employees"

Note. $N = 11$

Table 11 *Comments on interviewees that fit the focal points of Sustainable HRM: Future supply of employees; Good treatment of employees and Engagement of employees in CSR practices*

Company	Quote
1	"In the first place, what it comes down to processes and practices that are representative of a best practice company," "But again, that [good treatment of personnel] is a very narrow definition of sustainability, because once you've done these things, and they're absolutely instrumental, then the behavioral change actually starts," "If you don't do these things, then you've already stumbled [in achieving sustainable behavior]".
2	"We identify there will be a huge shortage in qualified personnel," "I am starting to miss out on young employees," "Good employee treatment is practiced throughout this organization," "The link with society is very obvious. We appeal to our employees, for instance through '[name organization] helps'"
3	"There is an explicit engagement of higher management with the people within this organization," "Within '[name of organization] Inspired', young people within our company are handed a task in sustainability. Last year for instance, this was the stimulation of [name of good cause]."
4	"I think sustainability means a sustainable career planning. I see a future of employees who work here for two years, then go somewhere else for two years, then perhaps come back, and so on," "The next generation of employees wants to be an entrepreneur. When you start here, you should become an independent worker on the payroll, sort of," "Me and the sustainability department within this organization work together, on trainings, awareness, etcetera."
5	"There will be shortage of qualified personnel in the future. We identified this in 2006, and started thinking about our lifephase conscious diversity policies in 2007," "Sustainable HRM in the strict sense is just good HRM," "We are an important contributor to this organization's culture in which sustainability is an important element."
6	"We've had employees forever, we don't have to be taught about retaining, engaging and interesting them," "We are strongly focused on sustainabilizing though our employees; we have CSR ambassadors, it's integrated in work-meetings.. it's everywhere."

7	"How do you keep employees productive? This is a very serious issue taking into account the upcoming aging of the population," "This is a step that we still have to take, at least; take more than we do now. Engaging employees in what it means"
8	"Good treatment of our employees is taken care of in detail," "Our Social Innovation program is concerned with how we are going to solve the problems with which we'll be confronted in 2020," "All of our employees were invited to engage in discussion within our Social Innovation program. 300 of them did, in 20 focus groups"
9	"'It's about you, we're here to facilitate you. And we're hoping that will lead to value for you, which will ultimately lead to value for the organization'. If HR would do that, then you'd get a different company"
10	"Sustainability means taking our customers extremely seriously and offer great service. The only way to achieve this, is great treatment of our employees." We want to engage everyone within this organization, with our program [name program]. This campaign is all-inclusive"
11	"We're concerned with sustainable deployability. We see the workforce grow older."

Note. $N = 11$

Table 12 *Means and Standard Deviations of the respondents' opinions about the association of each of the policies, related to diversity, to sustainable HRM (on a scale from1 to 5)*

	Policy	M	SD
1.	Policies targeted at a diversity in competences	4.10_a	0.90
2.	Diversity policies targeted at older employees	3.75_b	1.00
3.	Diversity policies targeted at employees' lifephase	3.75_{bc}	1.00
4.	Diversity policies targeted at disabled employees	3.62_{bc}	1.00
5.	Diversity policies targeted at cultural background	3.55_c	0.99
6.	Diversity policies targeted at women	3.54_c	1.00

Note. N= 203 Means with a different subscript differ significantly from each other.

Table 13 *Means and Standard Deviations of the respondents' opinions about the association of policies, related to development, to sustainable HRM (on a scale from1 to 5)*

	Policy	M	SD
1.	Put all of the employees' development central to the organization	4.45_a	0.61
2.	Provide interesting work that is compatible with to the employee's talents and interests	4.24_b	0.62
3.	Regular progress reviews with employees	4.14_b	0.70
4.	Offer coaching	4.04_b	0.64
5.	Give the autonomy and control of employees a central position	4.01_b	0.61
6.	Assign mentors to young and/or new employees	3.98_b	0.60
7.	Offer a training budget that employees are to spend themselves	3.68_b	0.70
8.	Let employees decide what their Key Performance Indicators are	3.36_{bc}	0.80
9.	Standard use of task rotation	3.35_c	0.70

Note. *N*= 193 Means with a different subscript differ significantly from each other.

Table 14 *Means and Standard Deviations of the respondents' opinions about the association of the different policies related to volunteer work to sustainable HRM (on a scale from1 to 5)*

	Policy	M	SD
1.	Sponsor good causes or volunteer initiatives suggested by employees	3.37_a	0.80
2.	Support employees in volunteer work after work	2.96_b	0.81
3.	Support employees in volunteer work during work hours	2.97_b	0.90

Note. $N = 213$ Means with a different subscript differ significantly from each other.

Table 15 *Means and Standard Deviations of the respondents' opinions about the association of the different policies related to flexibility to sustainable HRM (on a scale from1 to 5)*

	Policy	M	SD
1.	"The new way of working"	4.10_a	0.60
2.	Put employees' autonomy central	4.02_a	0.61
3.	Make part-time work possible	3.83_b	0.62
4.	Provide training budget to be spent by employees	3.69_b	0.70
5.	Give the opportunity of taking a sabbatical	3.61_b	0.71
6.	Let employees decide their KPI's	3.36_c	0.79

Note. $N = 209$ Means with a different subscript differ significantly from each other.

Table 16 *Means and Standard Deviations of the respondents' opinions about the association of the different groups of policies within the Green HRM perspective to sustainable HRM (on a scale from 1 to 5)*

	Group of policies	*M*	*SD*
1.	Mobility	4.01_a	0.85
	A 'green' mobility policy (for instance: facilitate carpooling or provide a train subscription)		
	Provide financial compensation for using public transport or another 'green' way of travelling		
2.	Development in the field of sustainability	4.01_a	0.69
	Create cross-functional team to support sustainable initiatives		
	Engage employees in the design of the sustainability strategy		
	Train all employees on knowledge about sustainability in general		
	Strive for sustainable leadership		
	Emphasize sustainability as an organizational strategy during trainings for all employees		
	Engage employees in the implementation of the sustainability strategy		
3.	Green Appraisal	3.69_b	0.89
	Use 'green' criteria in selection and recruitment of new personnel		
	Green behaviors as part of employees' KPI's		

Note. *N*= 200 Means with a different subscript differ significantly from each other.

Table 17 *Means and Standard Deviations of the respondents' opinions about the association of the different policies related to employees' health to sustainable HRM (on a scale from1 to 5)*

	Policy	*M*	*SD*
1.	Increase employees' mental health	4.15$_a$	0.60
2.	Do health checkups with a test	4.12$_a$	0.72
2.	Securing employees' safety at all times	4.05$_b$	0.71
4.	Increase employees' physical health	3.96$_b$	0.60
5.	Biological food in company restaurant	3.59$_b$	0.80
6.	Financially support employees fitness activities	3.09$_b$	0.77
7.	Work out during work hours	3.06$_c$	0.79

Note. N= 198 Means with a different subscript differ significantly from each other

Table 18 *Summary of respondents' opinions about the association of the different groups of policies to Sustainable HRM*

	Group of policies	Value	*M*	*SD*
1.	Mobility Green HRM Perspective	Agree	4.01_a	0.85
2.	Development in the field of sustainability Green HRM Perspective	Agree	4.01_a	0.69
3.	Employees' development Psychological Perspective	Agree	3.90_a	0.62
4.	Flexibility Psychological Perspective	In between 'neutral' and 'agree'	3.77_b	0.64
5.	Health Sociological Perspective	In between 'neutral' and 'agree'	3.70_b	0.61
6.	Diverse workforce Sociological Perspective	In between 'neutral' and 'agree'	3.70_b	0.77
7.	Appraisal Green HRM	In between 'neutral' and 'agree'	3.69_b	0.89
8.	Volunteer work Sociological Perspective	Neutral	3.07_c	1.09

Note. N = 174 Means with a different subscript differ significantly from each other

Table 19 *Summary of respondents' opinions about the single policies' relation to Sustainable HRM*

	Example given	Value	*M*	*SD*
1.	Stimulate dialogue with the employees Psychological Perspective	Agree	4.41_a	0.76
2.	Support employees in their work-life balance Psychological Perspective	Agree	4.29_a	0.79
3.	Engage employees in decisions that affect them Psychological Perspective	Agree	4.27_a	0.85
4.	Policies targeted at the prevention of stress Psychological Perspective	Agree	4.02_b	0.83
5.	Engage the future generation of employees Sociological Perspective	Agree	4.00_{bc}	0.86
6.	Family-friendly HR policies Sociological Perspective	In between 'neutral' and 'agree'	3.77_c	0.85

Note. N = 207 Means with a different subscript differ significantly from each other

Table 20 *Means and Standard Deviations of the respondents' reports on the embedment of each of the policies, related to diversity, within their organization (on a scale from 1 to 3)*

	Policy	M	SD
1.	Policies targeted at a diversity in competences	2.07_a	0.45
2.	Diversity policies targeted at women	2.07_a	0.50
3.	Diversity policies targeted at cultural background	1.92_b	0.62
4.	Diversity policies targeted at older employees	1.90_b	0.55
5.	Diversity policies targeted at disabled employees	1.82_b	0.65
6.	Diversity policies targeted at employees' lifephase	1.69_c	0.65

Note. $N = 89$ Means with a different subscript differ significantly from each other.

Table 21 *Means and Standard Deviations of the respondents' opinions about the embedment of policies, related to development, within their organizations (on a scale from 1 to 3)*

	Policy	M	SD
1.	Regular progress reviews with employees	2.68_a	0.62
2.	Offer coaching	2.48_a	0.50
3.	Put all of the employees' development central to the organization	2.43_a	0.60
4.	Provide interesting work that is compatible with to the employee's talents and interests	2.40_b	0.70
5.	Assign mentors to young and/or new employees	2.25_b	0.66
6.	Give the autonomy and control of employees a central position	2.13_b	0.54
7.	Let employees decide what their Key Performance Indicators are	1.83_c	0.62
8.	Standard use of task rotation	1.69_{cd}	0.57
9.	Offer a training budget that employees are to spend themselves	1.56_d	0.50

Note. $N=193$ Means with a different subscript differ significantly from each other.

Table 22 *Means and Standard Deviations of the respondents' reports on the embedment of the different policies, related to volunteer work, within their organizations (on a scale from 1 to 3)*

	Policy	M	SD
1.	Sponsor good causes or volunteer initiatives suggested by employees	1.93_a	0.48
2.	Support employees in volunteer work after work	1.70_b	0.60
3.	Support employees in volunteer work during work hours	1.56_b	0.55

Note. $N= 94$ Means with a different subscript differ significantly from each other.

Table 23 *Means and Standard Deviations of the respondents' report on the embedment of the different policies, related to flexibility, within their organizations (on a scale from 1 to 3)*

	Policy	*M*	*SD*
1.	Make part-time work possible	2.21_a	0.40
2.	"The new way of working"	2.14_a	0.54
3.	Put employees autonomy central	2.13_a	0.62
4.	Give the opportunity of taking a sabbatical	1.82_b	0.55
5.	Let employees decide their KPI's	1.80_b	0.60
6.	Provide training budget to be spent by employees	1.53_c	0.54

Note. *N*= 91 Means with a different subscript differ significantly from each other.

Table 24 *Means and Standard Deviations of the respondents' reports on the embedment of the different groups of policies within the Green HRM perspective within their organizations (on a scale from 1 to 3)*

	Group of policies	*M*	*SD*
1.	Mobility	2.19_a	0.76
2.	Development in the field of sustainability	1.83_b	0.63
3.	Green Appraisal	1.57_c	0.60

Note. *N*= 86 Means with a different subscript differ significantly from each other.

Table 25 *Means and Standard Deviations of the respondents' reports on the embedment of the different policies related to employees' health within their organizations (on a scale from 1 to 3)*

	Policy	M	SD
1.	Securing employees' safety at all times	2.57_a	0.55
2.	Increase employees' physical health	2.21_b	0.60
3.	Do health checkups with a test	2.15_{bc}	0.52
4.	Increase employees' mental health	2.14_{bc}	0.54
5.	Biological food in company restaurant	1.84_{bcd}	0.60
6.	Financially support employees fitness activities	1.84_{bcd}	0.57
7.	Work out during work hours	1.55_d	0.52

Note. $N = 85$ Means with a different subscript differ significantly from each other

Table 26 *Summary of respondents' reports about the embedment of the single policies' within their organizations*

	Example given	M	SD
1.	Support employees in their work-life balance Psychological Perspective	2.60_a	0.40
2.	Stimulate dialogue with the employees Psychological Perspective	2.54_{ab}	0.52
3.	Family-friendly HR policies Sociological Perspective	2.23_{bce}	0.60
4.	Engage employees in decisions that affect them Psychological Perspective	2.18_{cde}	0.32
5.	Engage the future generation of employees Sociological Perspective	2.12_{cde}	0.54
6.	Policies targeted at the prevention of stress Psychological Perspective	2.11_e	0.62

Note. N = 87 Means with a different subscript differ significantly from each other

Table 27 *Summary of respondents' reporting on the presence of the different groups of policies within their organization*

	Group of policies related to	*M*	*SD*
1.	Mobility Green HRM Perspective	2.20_{ab}	0.76
2.	Employees' development Psychological Perspective	2.14_a	0.42
3.	Health Sociological Perspective	2.03_{ab}	0.50
4.	Flexibility Psychological Perspective	1.93_{bc}	0.50
5.	Diverse workforce Sociological Perspective	1.92_{abc}	0.59
6.	Development in the field of sustainability Green HRM Perspective	1.79_c	0.63
7.	Volunteerwork Sociological Perspective	1.70_{cd}	0.71
8.	Appraisal Green HRM	1.54_d	0.60

Note. N = 74 Means with a different subscript differ significantly from each other.
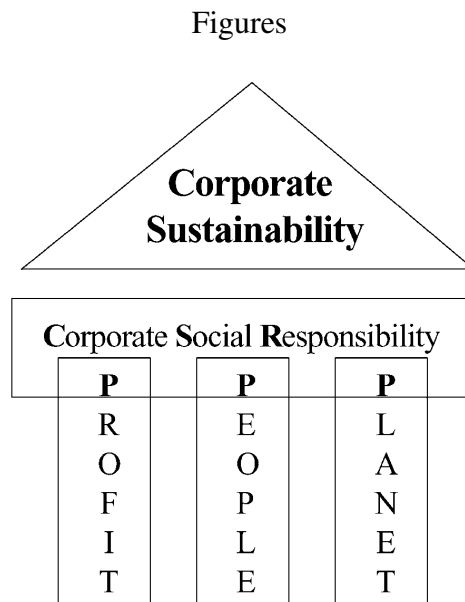
Figures

Figure 1. Relationship between the balance in Profit, Planet and People, CSR and Corporate Sustainability
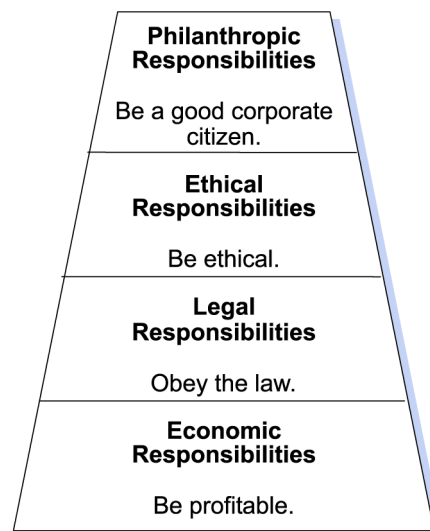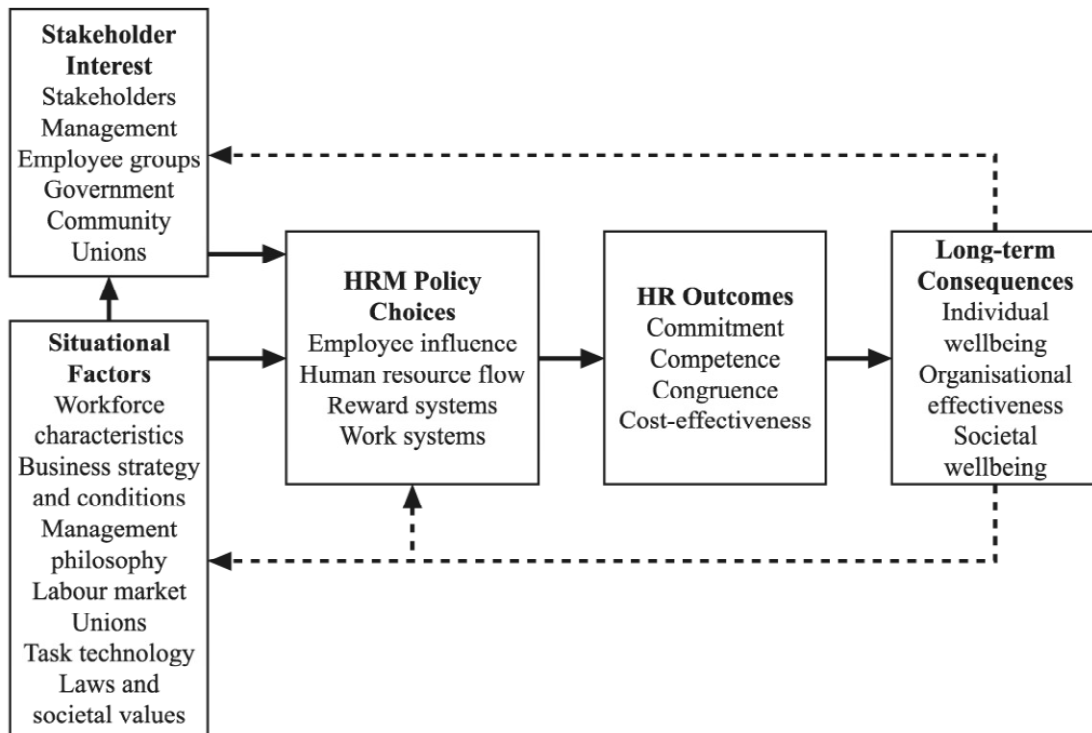

Figure 2. CSR Pyramid

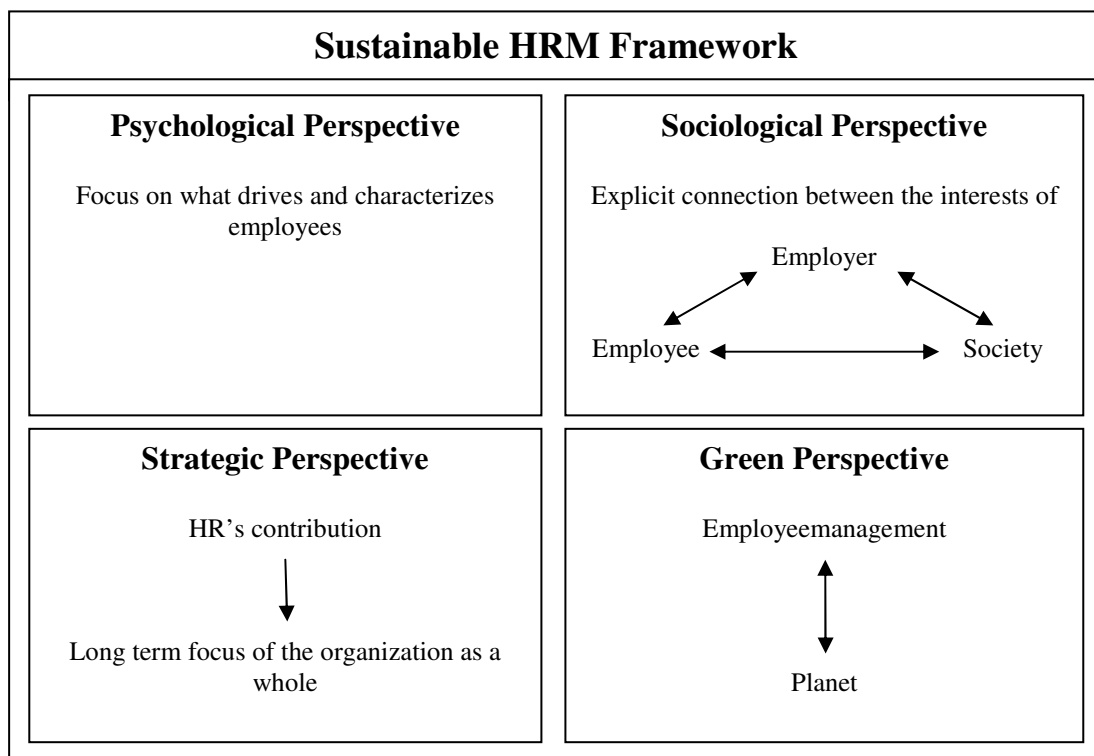Figure 3. Harvard School map of the HRM Territory

Figure 4. Sustainable HRM Framework

Sustainable HRM Framework	

Psychological Perspective
 	
• Employees' development
• Flexibility
	Sociological Perspective
	
	• Diversity
	• Volunteerwork
	• Employees' health
	  -Employees' physical health
	  -Healthier catering

Strategic Perspective Long term focus of the organization as a whole	**Green Perspective** • Mobility • Selection and performance appraisal • Development in sustainabiliy • Green employer branding

Figure 5. Division of the themes discussed in the interviewed according to De Prins'
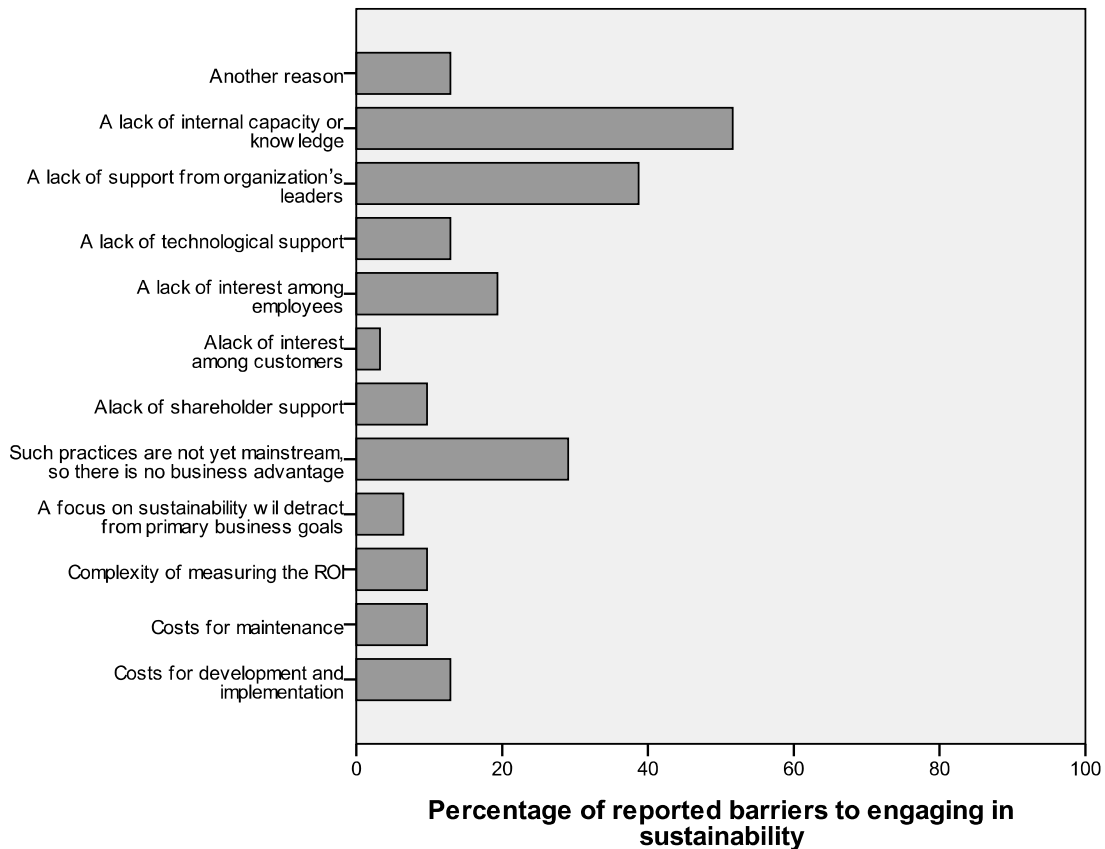Sustainable HRM Framework

Figure 6. The percentages of reported barriers to engaging in sustainability ($N = 31$)
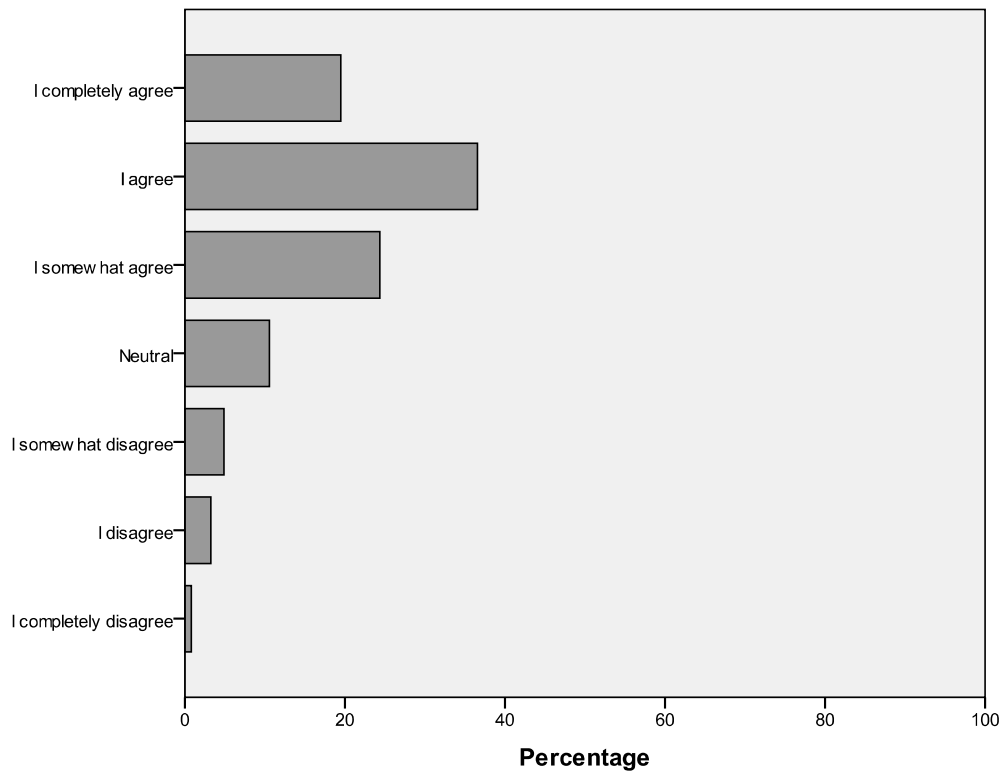
Figure 7. Answers given to 'Sustainability is central in our strategy. Core values associated with social and environmental responsibility are deeply ingrained in our organization' (*N* = 123)
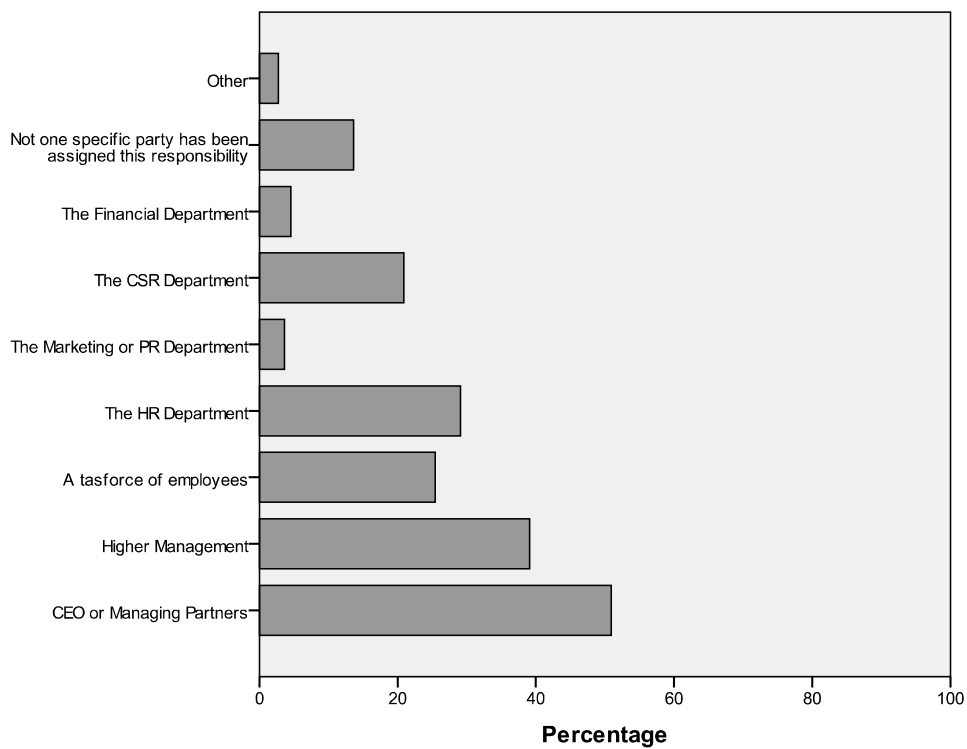

Figure 8. Percentage of primarily responsible parties for the sustainability strategy's design within organizations (*N* = 110)
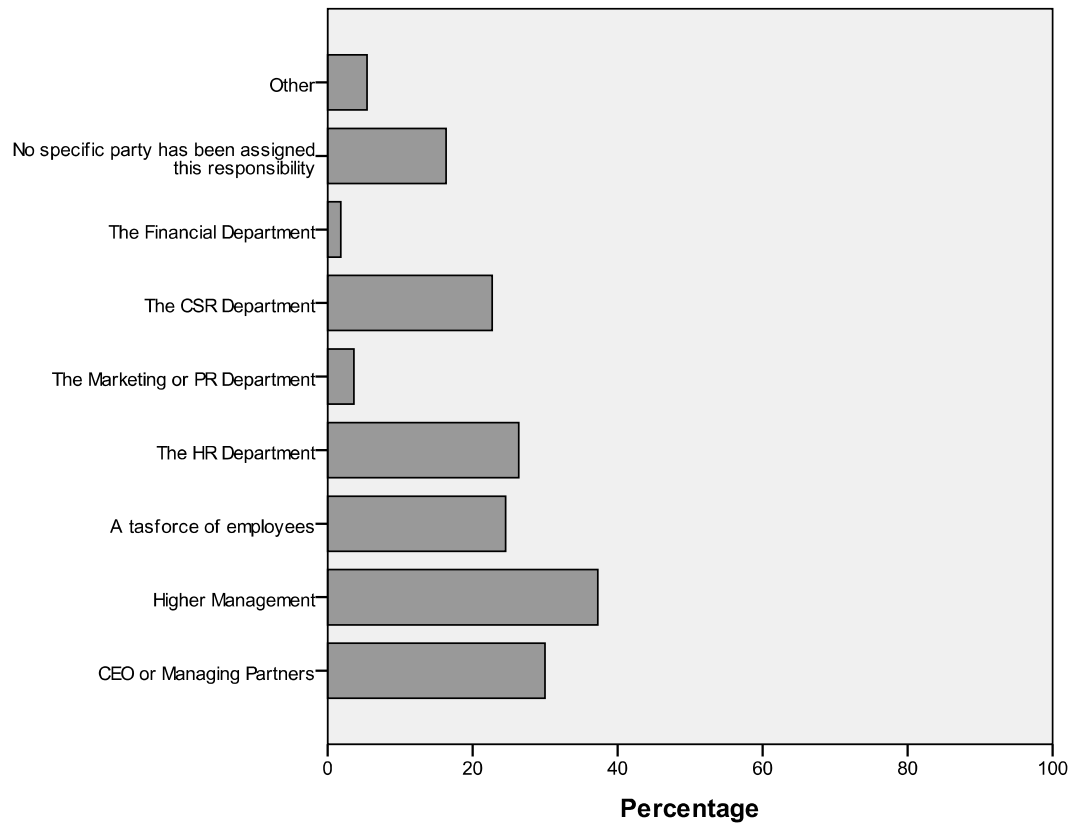
Figure 9. Percentage of primarily responsible parties for the sustainability strategy's implementation within organizations ($N = 110$)
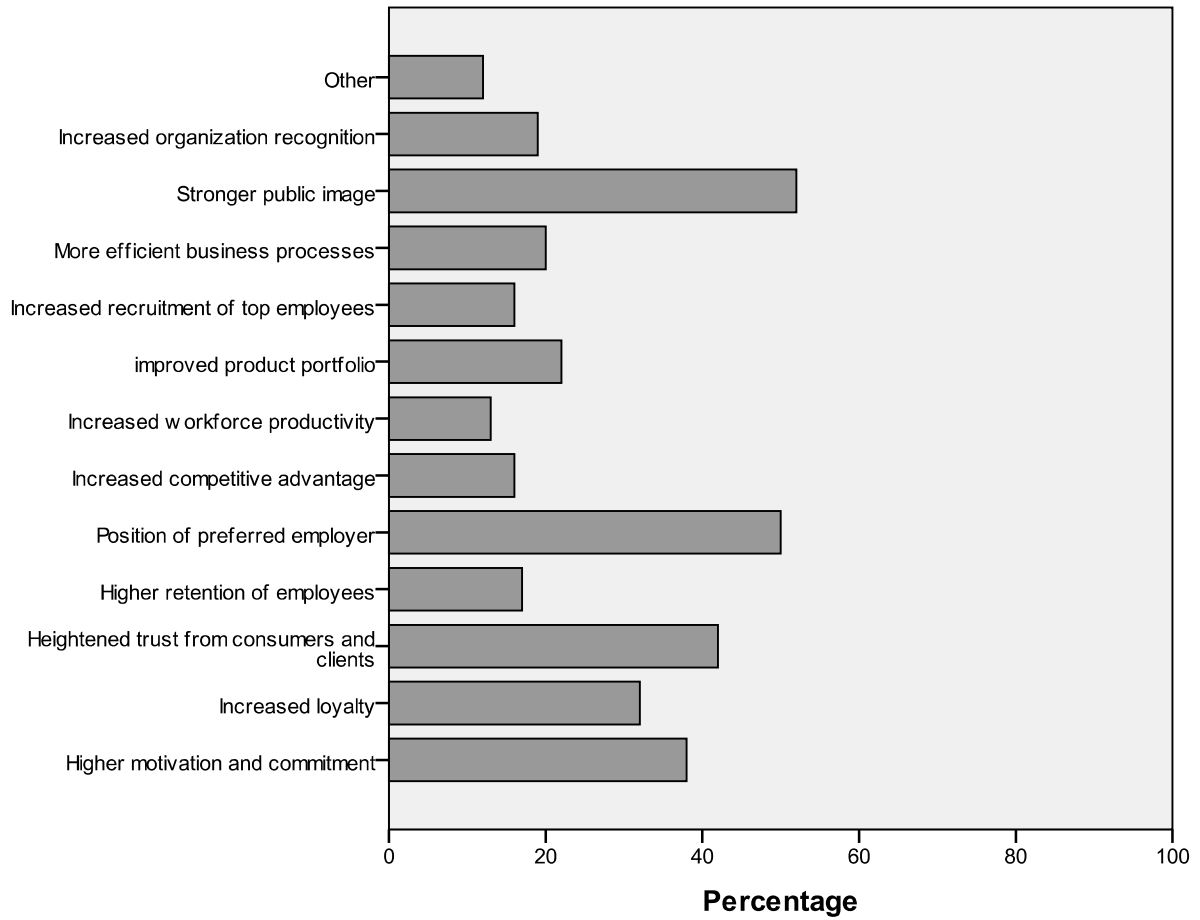
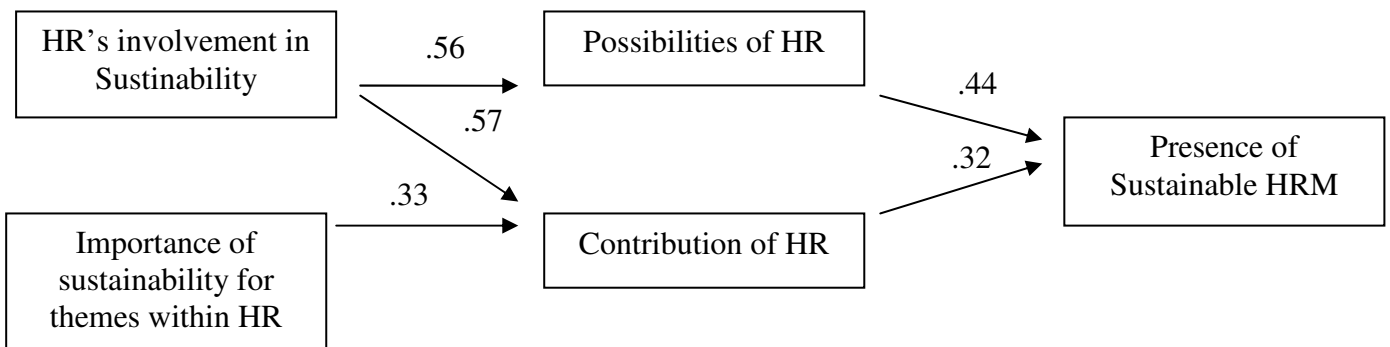Figure 10. Percentages of positive outcomes of organizations' sustainability initiatives ($N = 100$)

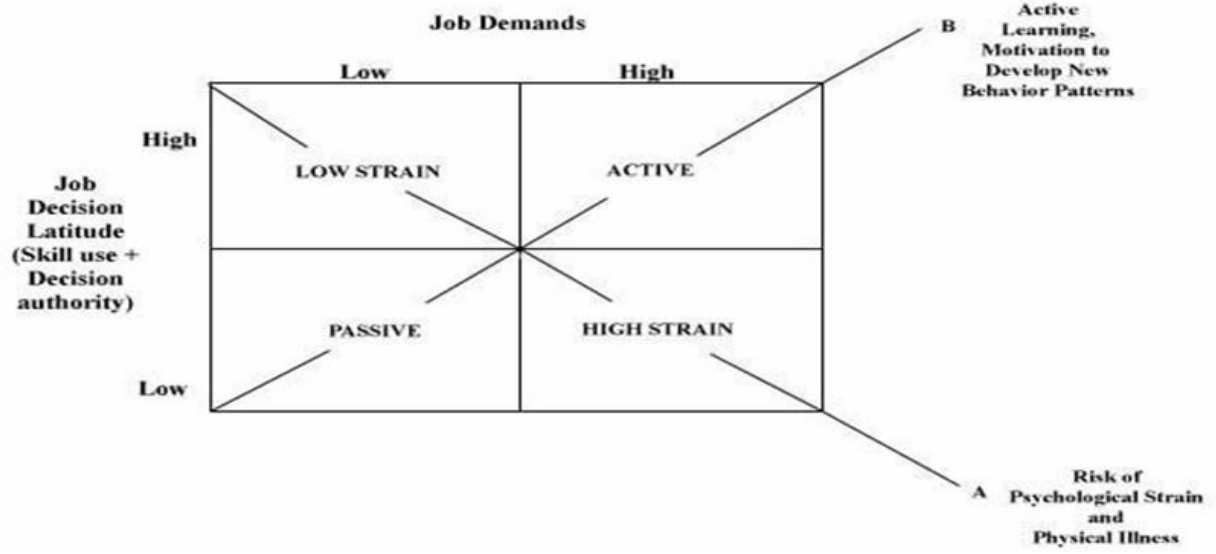Figure 11. Regression Analysis of the predictors of Presence of Sustainable HRM

Figure 11. Job Strain Model

Appendix 1

Example of an email sent to an interviewee when asking for their participation in this research

Beste [name of interviewee],

Heel graag zouden wij u ontmoeten om te praten over uw visie op duurzaamheid in het kader van personeelsbeleid.
"Duurzaamheid" is een begrip geworden in het hedendaagse bedrijfsleven en is veelal gericht op het milieu en de maatschappij als geheel. <u>Ons onderzoek spitst zich toe tot de duurzame omgang met 'de eigen werknemers' en de keuzes die bedrijven op dit gebied maken.</u>

In samenwerking met de Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam onderzoeken we daarom de visie op "duurzaam strategisch HR beleid" van HR directeuren werkzaam bij toonaangevende bedrijven in Nederland. Omdat duurzaamheid een groot thema is binnen [name organization], en omdat u zich binnen de organisatie bezighoudt met oa de strategische issues op het gebied van HRM, dachten we er direct aan u te benaderen om hierover van gedachten te wisselen.

Het is onze ambitie op deze manier de 'people'-component van Profit-Planet-People verder uit te werken, en daarin met HR directeuren gezamenlijk tot een meer volledige invulling van deze definitie te komen. Mogelijk publiceren wij de uitkomsten van het onderzoek in diverse media om op deze wijze een bijdrage te leveren aan meer balans tussen profit-planet-people.

Graag gaan we hierover met u in gesprek.
Zou u willen aangeven of u hieraan wilt bijdragen?
Alvast bedankt voor uw reactie.

Met hartelijke groet,

Irene Rompa, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam
Erik ten Berge, Kirkman Company

Example of semi-structured interview scheme that was prepared before an interview:

[Name organization]
[Date]
[Names of interviewee] & Irene

Research Design:
CSR, Sustainability or being a Social Enterprise is usually seen as keeping a balance between Profit, Planet and People.

The <u>People</u> component in this Triple Bottom Line is often 'externally' defined, handling themes such as human rights, Third World Countries and what initiatives companies undertake for the 'society' as a whole.

This research focuses on defining the People component in a more 'internal' way, so basically the companies' sustainable strategic HR policies, or good employership, and the ways in which HR contributes to the sustainability of an organization as a whole.

```
            ┌─────────────────────┐
            │  CSR /              │
            │  Sustainability/    │
            │  Social Enterprise  │
            └─────────────────────┘
         ┌──────────┼──────────┐
    ┌────────┐  ┌────────┐  ┌────────┐
    │ Profit │  │ Planet │  │ People │
    └────────┘  └────────┘  └────────┘
                         ┌──────┴──────┐
                   ┌───────────┐  ┌───────────┐
                   │ externally│  │ internally│
                   └───────────┘  └───────────┘
                               ┌──────┴──────┐
                        ┌─────────────┐ ┌──────────────┐
                        │    good     │ │ sustainabilize│
                        │ employership│ │  through HR  │
                        └─────────────┘ └──────────────┘
```
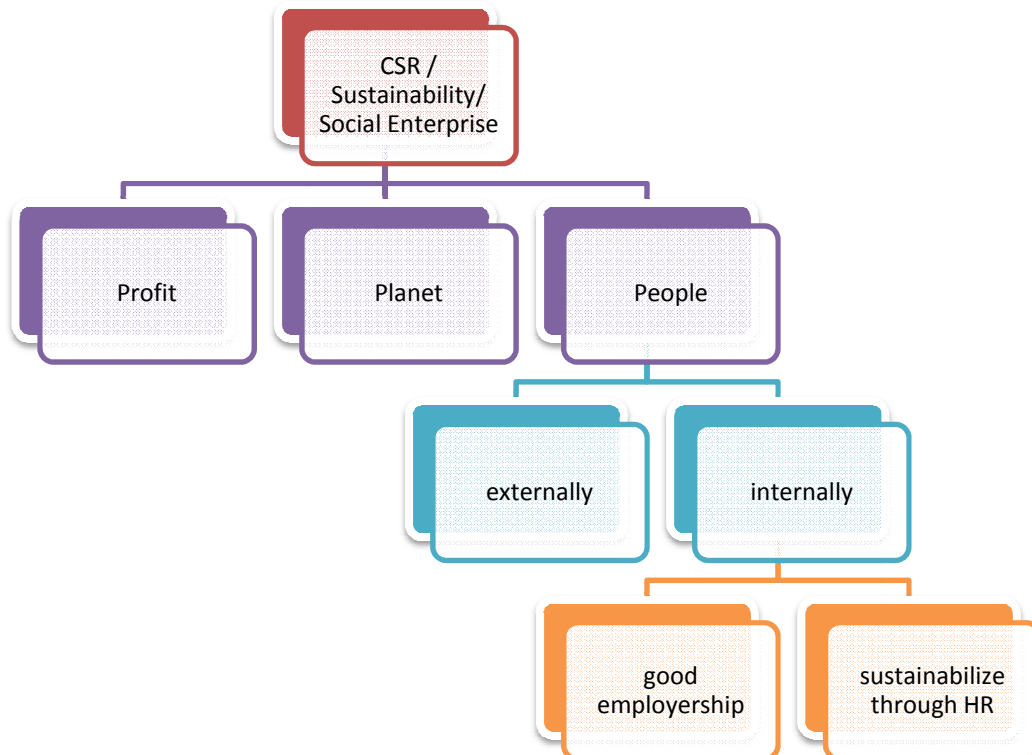
Introduction Irene:
Current research design and aim of this study – defining the people component of the Triple Bottom Line in a more 'internal' way.

Fundamental question of this research:
What does a company such as [name organization], for which sustainability as a whole in a very important theme, do for its own employees?

        Vision:
- What is your vision on 'sustainable' strategic HR management?
- What are possible initiatives a company may undertake?
- What are the goals?
- Can you measure such results?
  If yes; How? How does [name organization] measure its results?

        [name organization] itself:
- What does **[name organization] d**o in this area?
  (annual report: focus on [example] + [example])
- What are the effects?
- Who initiated these initiatives?
- Do you take part in the Sustainability Council?

        Employee & Areas of focus:
- Employee engagement is a very important theme according to the annual report; what initiatives are undertaken to improve the engagement of employees?

        Who & Whose responsibility:
- Did/does HR initiate these policies?

- What is the exact role and responsibility of HR's business partners?
- How do they make sure policies are being imbedded in HR practices in the correct ways? Who is held responsible for the successes?
- Basically: Is HR leading or facilitating?

Future:
- What are your ambitions in the field of sustainable strategic HR?