

A background image showing a crowd of people at a climate protest. In the foreground, a hand holds a blue globe. In the background, a person holds a sign that says "THERE NO PLAN".

# ANNUAL REVIEW 2019

asn  bank

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Interview with the ASN Bank Management Board

**'THE MORE CLIENTS  
AND CLIENT  
DEPOSITS WE PULL  
IN, THE MORE  
CHANCE WE HAVE OF  
BEING RELEVANT  
AND ACCOMPLISHING  
OUR MISSION'**

*(Joyce van der Est)*

How does the ASN Bank Management Board look back on 2019? We interviewed Arie Koornneef and Joyce van der Est about the AGM in Amsterdam, PCAF Global, other highlights and an upcoming anniversary.

***Looking at last year, what stands out to you?***

**Joyce:** ‘Basically every event we organised for our clients and employees. If I have to choose one, it would be the AGM of the ASN investment funds. On a Friday in May, more than 1,000 investors gathered in Amsterdam. That’s an incredible number for such a meeting. And they stayed until the very end to hear a climate presentation by a well-known meteorologist.’

**Arie:** ‘For me, it’s the launch of the Partnership for Carbon Accounting Financials Global (PCAF Global). Who would’ve thought back in 2015 that we’d develop into a global platform? That’s the year we started PCAF Netherlands, a partnership of 14 Dutch financial institutions that assessed and disclosed the carbon footprint of their assets.’

‘Can I pick another one? That would be the Platform for Living Wage Financials, which we co-founded, expanding its focus. PLWF is committed to workers in the garment industry, as well as in global retail and the agricultural sector, being paid a living wage.’

History has repeated itself where biodiversity, one of the pillars of our sustainability strategy, is concerned. In February 2020, ASN Bank took the initiative to establish the Partnership for Biodiversity Accounting Financials (PBAF). What lessons learned from PCAF were useful here?

**Joyce:** ‘What we know now is that you simply have to get started. That may sound like stating the obvious, but what I mean is sharing your ideas with the world, even if the product is unfinished. Another lesson is that we’ve got to decide ahead of time at what point we’re ready to step back from being the driving force behind a project.’

**Arie:** ‘We’ve discovered that some things are very difficult to achieve, such as capturing carbon from the air or promoting biodiversity with projects that are actually worth funding. We forget that sometimes. What I love is that no one in our organisation loses heart. Our inherent optimism prompted us to start exploring how we could get things done another way.’

***It was another tough year for interest rates...***

**Arie:** ‘True. In the past, Japan was the only country where negative interest rates were a thing. But, in 2019, this unfortunate scenario hit some savers in the Netherlands. ASN Bank still offers more than 0% interest on savings accounts held by retail clients. And we’ve promised to keep doing that in 2020 for retail clients whose savings don’t exceed € 25,000. Towards the end of the year, we’ll re-evaluate whether or not we can keep our promise in 2021.’

**Joyce:** ‘We’re seeing that clients continue saving money despite the low interest rates. It’s always wise to have a financial buffer.’

***De Volksbank adopted ASN Bank’s sustainability policy in 2017. How do you see this reflected in their actions?***

**Arie:** ‘We see it throughout the entire business of our parent company as well as at the three other banking labels, i.e. SNS, RegioBank and BLG Wonen, the mortgage business. The fact that the public values the policy is reflected in de Volksbank’s high ratings in the Fair Finance Guide.’

***Can you name an example?***

**Arie:** ‘Sustainability is gaining traction in policy-making. Together with Risk, we’re looking at the long-term impact of climate risks, such as the subsidence of residential properties due to rising water levels. And we’ve asked the Procurement department to look at how we can make de Volksbank’s procurement practices more sustainable.’

**ASN Bank welcomed more than new 38,000 clients in 2019. Why is growth so important for a bank that's wary of the downside of economic growth?**

**Joyce:** 'It's not about growth for growth's sake. The more clients and client deposits we pull in, the more chance we have of being relevant and accomplishing our mission.'

**A survey by the Dutch Consumers' Association showed that our overall rating was just over 9 out of 10 for the second time in a row. What's the plan for 2020 to maintain this rating?**

**Joyce:** 'We won't be resting on our laurels, that's for sure. There's room for improvement in a number of areas: at some point in 2020, we'll offer clients a chat option in the banking app. We're also looking at more customer-friendly ways of presenting FAQs, particularly outside office hours.'

**What do you look forward to?**

**Joyce:** 'ASN Bank will be celebrating its 60th anniversary in May 2020. This will be a time for looking back at our history and commemorating what we've accomplished.'

**Arie:** 'We'll also be including co-workers who've been with ASN Bank for 20, 30 and sometimes even 40 years in our anniversary celebrations. These diehards make up more than more than 10% of our organisation. That's pretty special.'

**Joyce:** 'Whether you've worked here as an intern for a few months or you've been with us for decades, ASN Bank leaves an imprint.'

**ASN Bank, a subsidiary of de Volksbank**

We'll regularly refer to de Volksbank in this Annual Review 2019. De Volksbank, which is based in Utrecht, the Netherlands, is the parent company of ASN Bank, as well as of banking labels BLG Wonen, RegioBank and SNS.

**Sustainable banking practices**

De Volksbank is a bank that seeks to make a relevant and positive contribution to society, focusing on financial resilience and sustainability. That's why it has adopted ASN Bank's sustainability policy in selecting loans and investments. De Volksbank aims to operate on a 100% climate-neutral basis by 2030, which is to be achieved by its four banking labels. ASN Bank's Expertise Centre Sustainability (Dutch acronym: ECD) supports de Volksbank in working towards this target.

**Corporate social responsibility**

At de Volksbank, we're committed to corporate social responsibility. This is what the parent company and the four banking labels stand for and what makes them unique in the Dutch banking landscape. We make good on our promise to society by never lose sight of the human dimension in our banking services and by making sure that our business practices benefit our clients, our employees, our shareholder and the public. We take ownership of our responsibility to society.

[Read more about de Volksbank and its labels](#)

# FOCUS ON SUSTAIN- ABILITY

*In 2019, the year in which she turned 16, climate activist Greta Thunberg travelled the world to demand action on climate change.*

There was no escaping it in 2019: the themes of climate change and biodiversity dominated the media. This was business as usual for ASN Bank; climate policy and biodiversity have been priorities for us for years.

**A** girl with braids calling world leaders to account at a conference. This could've been a scene from a 1990s children's movie, but it actually happened in 2019. 16-year-old Greta Thunberg did it several times, for instance in Davos, New York and Brussels.

Her public appearances were met with a mixture of admiration and irritation. She became the face of climate change activism and was on the cover of Time magazine as Person of the Year for 2019.

## Climate news

The Dutch government presented the long-awaited Climate Accord before the summer of 2019. This Accord, which follows up on the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement, outlines the measures the Dutch government plans to take to reduce carbon emissions by 49% in ten years' time. Pleased with this news, we posted a news item and a video on social media. In the video, Arie Koornneef, CEO of ASN Bank, gave the government a thumbs up by saying that, although it was a major challenge to make the Netherlands more sustainable and cut carbon emissions, the country has a history of overcoming challenges. As an example, he mentioned the Delta Works, which were built after the North Sea flood of 1953. He concluded on an optimistic note, saying that, as far as ASN Bank was concerned, past performance offered hope for future results.

### Climate promise – financial sector

A few days after the Dutch Climate Accord was published, a group of 50 financials, including banks, pension funds, insurance companies and asset managers, made a collective climate promise. As a co-initiator of the Svalbard Ambition, we laid the foundation for this collective promise in 2018.

### What's green?

We welcomed the European Union's Regulation defining what qualifies as green in an investment context. We hope that this green taxonomy will make it more difficult to greenwash products, services or investments. The list of definitions and categories is part of the European Commission's Green Deal, a plan to ensure that the entire EU will be climate-neutral by 2050.

### EIB stops funding of fossil fuel projects

In November, the European Investment Bank (EIB) announced that it would stop funding fossil fuel energy projects by 2021. Given the EIB's prestige, we see this as an important step. We hope that other financial institutions, both in the Netherlands and elsewhere, will decide to follow suit.

Not once since its establishment in 1960 has ASN Bank invested in fossil fuel projects. Other financial institutions argue that they engage with oil and gas companies to sway them to change course, but ASN Bank finds this hard to justify. To illustrate: engagement with major investors didn't stop Shell and Exxon Mobil from making further investments in oil and gas in the past year, while these two companies are nowhere near meeting the criteria described in the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement.

### Urgenda wins climate case

In December 2019, the Dutch Supreme Court handed down a landmark decision by ruling in favour of the Urgenda Foundation in a unique climate case that was being followed closely around the world. The proceedings had been ongoing since 2015, when the The Hague District Court ruled that the Dutch government was to tighten its climate policy to achieve the planned 25% reduction in carbon emissions by 2020 (compared to 1990 levels). Now that the Supreme Court has endorsed this ruling, the Dutch government is expected to do everything in its power to keep this promise.

### No more single-use plastics

Throwaway plastics, such as straws, disposable plates and cotton buds, will become things of the past in 2021. The European Council decided to impose a Europe-wide ban on these single-use products in May 2019 to prevent environmental pollution by plastic litter. The EU also announced that, by 2029, all its Member States will be expected to collect 90% of all plastic bottles and that 30% of all plastic bottles must be made of recycled plastics by 2030. Read more about our [policy on plastics](#) (pdf).

## Biodiversity news

In May 2019, the Dutch Council of State, the highest administrative court in the Netherlands, handed down a watershed ruling on the Dutch government's policy on nitrogen in the environment. In its ruling, it found the Nitrogen Action Plan (Dutch acronym: PAS) to be in contravention of European policy. The Council of State imposed a ban on new permits for farms or the construction of roads or housing and instructed the government to come up with a new plan. In November, the government went ahead and announced an unpopular measure: in March 2020, the speed limit on motorways was to be lowered to 100 kilometres per hour.

But nitrogen pollution wasn't the only debilitating factor for the economy. Another thing that frustrated economic activity was PFAS pollution. PFAS stands for polyfluoroalkyl substances, a collective name for chemicals found in teflon pots and pans, water-repellent clothing, extinguishing foam and soil. Stricter rules resulted in a ban on moving PFAS-contaminated soil. PFAS is regarded as a non-degradable forever chemical and is harmful to humans and nature.

## Human rights news

The Dutch Anti-Child Labour (Duty of Care) Act took effect in May 2019. The new Act forces Dutch companies to investigate whether there are instances of child labour in their production chain. It won't mean an instant improvement to the lives of 152 million child labourers, but it ties in with the collective commitment of UN countries to ban child labour by 2025. The Netherlands is one of the pioneers in introducing a duty of care for companies to fight child labour.

### Income inequality

In January 2019, Rutger Bregman, a Dutch journalist, drew attention to the growing gap between rich and poor in the world at the World Economic Forum in Davos, to which he had been invited as a panel member. He was applauded on social media for his idea to increase income tax for the rich. Later in the year, French economist Thomas Piketty made the same argument. Launching his new book, *Capital and Ideology*, he advocated taxing the rich, as he had done earlier in his best-selling book *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*.





# GROWTH AMBITION – WHY AND HOW?

It sounds like a bit of a contradiction. We're critical of companies that see economic growth as a priority, but our own ambition is to grow. How does that add up?

**E**ver since ASN Bank was founded in 1960, we've been committed to **building a sustainable society**. We use our clients' deposits to fuel sustainable progress, contributing to a world where people can live safe and healthy lives and where nature is protected, both now and in the future.

The more clients we pull in and the more money we manage, the more clout we have to promote sustainable growth. Our wish to grow is not an end in itself, but a means to increasing our impact.

We've defined three growth targets for 2025:

### 1. One satisfied million clients

We make sustainable banking accessible and appealing to every one: accessible by offering transparent and easy-to-understand products, and appealing by showing that our products benefit both the environment and our clients' wallets. We use the Net Promoter Score (NPS) to rate our client satisfaction. You can read more about the Net Promoter Score in the chapter 'Who are our clients?'

### 2. Growth in assets under management

For ASN Bank, assets under management consist mainly of clients' savings deposits and current account balances. We aim to achieve controlled growth in assets under management in correlation to loans and investments, so that our assets keep developing soundly. Technically speaking, clients' investments in the ASN investment funds are the responsibility of ASN Beleggingsfondsen N.V.; they're not included in ASN Bank's assets.

### 3. More sustainable loans

Our aim is to increase our sustainable loans by financing projects in areas such as wind and solar energy, and by investing in impact bonds. Some of these loans and investments also help us achieve our objective of being climate-neutral by 2030 and bring about a net positive effect on biodiversity.

## Championing sustainability

ASN Bank is looking to promote sustainable development by championing sustainable choices. We team up with other financial institutions where we can to achieve our long-term objectives, for instance in the Platform for Living Wage Financials (PLWF) for human rights, in the Partnership for Carbon Accounting Financials (PCAF) for climate issues and in the Partnership for Biodiversity Accounting Financials (PBAF), which was created in 2020, for biodiversity.

# OUR PROMISE TO CLIENTS

*Wind turbines and solar panels  
near Waalwijk, the Netherlands.  
We didn't finance this windfarm.*

Clients choose ASN Bank because our banking services are respectful of people, animals and nature. We've made four promises to our clients. And we deliver on them.

### 1. All our investments are sustainable and we're transparent about our investments

We only invest our clients' deposits in countries, businesses and projects that pass our [sustainability screening](#). We've posted our investment policy online. We publish details on all our investments, specifying the name of the project and the amount we've invested. This is how we demonstrate that we don't invest in the arms industry, nuclear energy, coal, oil and gas. We do invest in government initiatives and projects in the areas of housing, renewable energy and healthcare. We publish our sustainability policy for the public to read. We share our methodologies for measuring sustainable development with other organisations in the sector.

### 2. We offer the best of both worlds: a competitive return on savings and a more sustainable future

In 2020, we'll pay the [market rate](#) of interest to retail clients whose savings don't exceed € 25,000. We use our clients' deposits in accordance with the principles of our sustainability policy. Clients who have an ASN Ideaalsparen or ASN Jeugdsparen savings account or an ASN Credit Card support sustainable projects undertaken by ASN Bank's partners. Clients donate to these projects without eating into their interest income.

### 3. We help make innovative, sustainable ideas happen

We help advance innovative, sustainable ideas through the online platform offered by [voordewereldvanmorgen.nl](#) (For the World of Tomorrow). We also draw our clients' attention to carefully selected projects advertised on the OnePlanetCrowd crowd-funding platform. This is how we help sustainable businesses raise capital, whether they're just starting up or are more mature.

### 4. We make sustainability achievable for everyone

We're all about breaking down sustainable choices into small, manageable chunks and making them inspiring as possible. The stories we share on the For the World of Tomorrow platform, in our newsletter and in our Goedgeld (Good Money) magazine are there to prove it. But we're also happy to provide input in more impactful decisions, such as making your home more sustainable, for which we've developed the sustainable ASN Hypotheek mortgage, and we can set you up with offers from partners such as [slimwoner.nl](#).

*ASN Bank's position is clear. We refuse to invest in nuclear power because of sustainability risks: waste, safety and potential abuse by the arms industry. We'll continue to monitor developments in nuclear power, but we're not optimistic. Given the rush to meet climate targets, we prefer to focus our efforts on other, renewable and affordable options.*

# THE BASICS: OUR SUSTAINA- BILITY POLICY

Clients ask us sometimes how we know what qualifies as sustainable. That's what our sustainability policy is for. We'll explain what this policy means and how we live by it on a daily basis.

Our sustainability policy builds on the UN report [Our Common Future](#), which was published in 1987. As early as in the late 1980s, the authors of this report, including former Norwegian Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland, called upon world leaders to pursue sustainable development. The report defines sustainable development as 'development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.'

### Sustainable conscience

ASN Bank has a Expertise Centre Sustainability that implements our sustainability policy. At the end of 2019, the Centre employed 11 sustainability researchers (permanent staff) and three interns, who screen businesses, projects and partners against our sustainability criteria and publish their findings. Their expertise is used to select listed companies for the ASN investment funds, sustainable projects and community partners. They also review our sustainability policy on a regular basis and make adjustments where needed. Read on for more information.

## Scope of our policy

The Expertise Centre Sustainability prepares our sustainability policy. It advises the ASN Bank Management Board in its decision-making on adjustments or additions to the policy. The sustainability policy applies to de Volksbank as well as to the following activities of ASN Bank:

### Banking business

- All of ASN Bank's loans and investments.
- The choice of ASN Bank's community partners.
- The selection of projects for the ASN Bank World Award and support of sustainable initiatives using crowd funding.

### Investment funds

ASN Beleggingsinstellingen Beheer B.V. (ABB), which manages the ASN investment funds, shares ASN Bank's mission. ABB's sustainability policy is based on that of ASN Bank. This policy informs ABB's decision-making on:

- Accepting and rejecting businesses, countries and projects for the investment universe.
- Voting at AGMs of investees.
- Engaging with businesses in the investment universe.

## Pillars of our sustainability policy

Although ASN Bank is sometimes referred to as a green bank, our logo features a red squirrel. As a former trade union savings bank, we've been committed to human rights since our foundation. Red and green are the colours that match the three pillars of our sustainability policy: human rights (red), climate policy and biodiversity (both green). We've defined criteria for each pillar. All our loans and investments are screened against these criteria and each pillar comes with its own long-term goal.

### Human rights

ASN Bank subscribes to the view that human rights are universal values: they apply everywhere, always and to everyone. Giving paramount importance to justice, freedom and equality, human rights serve to protect the human dignity of all. Our [human rights policy](#) (pdf) is rooted in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the international standards based on this Declaration, such as the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.

### Partnership with de Volksbank

At the beginning of the year, de Volksbank published a Human Rights Report. Sjirk Prins, Sustainability Advisor at ASN Bank, was involved in writing this report, which has been posted on the website of de Volksbank.

The chapter ‘[Creating awareness of a living wage](#)’ in this Annual Review tells you more about our long-term goal and our efforts in 2019.

### Climate policy

The climate has changed from time to time throughout the earth’s history. Nowadays, climate change is mainly due to human activity: the earth’s heating up because we emit greenhouse gases. In our [climate policy](#) (pdf/20 pages), we endorse the reports of the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), which attribute global warming to human activity. We also endorse the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement. As a sustainable organisation, we’re committed to contributing to the preservation of a safe, healthy and stable climate for people and the planet, and to limiting the – now unavoidable – impact of climate change.

The chapter ‘[From climate-neutral to climate-positive](#)’ tells you more about our long-term goal and our efforts in 2019.

### Biodiversity

Biodiversity is declining rapidly on a global scale, mainly due to human activity. As a sustainable bank, ASN Bank is committed to contributing to maintaining and strengthening biodiversity and ecosystems. Our biodiversity policy is designed to reduce threats to biodiversity and to contribute to the recovery of nature.

The chapter ‘[Pioneering biodiversity](#)’ tells you more about our long-term goal and our efforts in the past year.

## Changes to our sustainability policy

Our sustainability policy is not set in stone and our policy is never really finished. The world around us changes all the time, as are our opinions and perspectives. What follows is an overview of policy aspects that’ve recently been added (alcoholic beverages, cannabis, biomass) and changed (animal welfare).

### Alcoholic beverages

ASN Bank and the investment funds decided in 2019 to stop investing in, or providing loans to, companies producing alcoholic beverages. This new criterion didn’t affect the loan portfolio and one listed company was rejected for the investment universe. Retailers selling alcoholic beverages can still meet our sustainability criteria if their revenue from alcoholic beverages does not exceed 10% of their total revenue.

### Cannabis

An increasing number of countries are legalising the medicinal – or, in some cases, recreational – use of cannabis. A number of cannabis retailers are listed now. The use of cannabis has two sides. It can be used as a recreational drug; its active ingredient is THC. There’s scientific evidence that recreational use of cannabis can be harmful to a person’s health. That said, some strains of the cannabis plant can be used for medicinal purposes as well.

Because of the health risks, we don’t invest in businesses focusing on the production of cannabis or cannabis-based products for recreational use, but we’re not averse to investing in businesses producing cannabis-based products for medicinal use provided that they produce and market the medicine safely and responsibly. Similar to other medicines, their product must be approved before it can be brought to market. We monitor closely whether these businesses operate within the bounds of the law and don’t engage in abuses.

## Biomass

In the new policy, we take a more critical stance on wet and wood-based biomass projects. We now also screen for the volume of freely available locally pruned wood in the Netherlands. If existing and planned biomass plants have excess capacity after having processed this volume, we won't finance any new biomass plants that are meant to burn locally pruned wood. In this context, 'local' refers to an area within a 200-kilometre radius from the plant. We established in mid-2019 that the volume of available locally pruned wood is too low, which is why it's impossible for biomass projects to meet our criteria.

## Animal welfare

We made a slight adjustment to our policy on animal welfare in 2019. We see animal welfare as a risk if a business generates more than 5% of its revenue from the sale of animal products. Based on the size of a company, we determine what the scope of its animal welfare policy should be. If a business refuses to provide information on the share of revenue from animal products in its total revenue, we'll ban it from our investment universe.

## SDGs and our sustainability policy

Our sustainability policy contributes to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which were set in 2015 and are intended to be achieved by 2030. There are 17 goals in total, graphically presented as a pie chart, the first one being 'No Poverty' and the 17th 'Partnership for the Goals'. The 17 SDGs have been fleshed out into 169 associated targets. We address all 17 SDGs in our sustainability policy. To find out more, please read the [Guide ASN Sustainability Criteria](#) (pdf).

The chapters on our long-term goals tell you how these correlate to the SDGs.





# SUSTAINABILITY POLICY IN ACTION



There are three ways in which we can exert influence on listed companies: by admitting them to our investment universe or rejecting them, by engaging with them and by voting at their AGMs.

## Selection

ABB uses sustainability research by ASN Bank to select the companies and countries the ASN investment funds invest in and the projects they finance. ASN Bank makes a selection of projects, government bodies and institutions to invest its clients' savings deposits in. The selection is based on our shared sustainability criteria.

This screening is one of the core processes we use to fulfil our mission. The screening process is an in-depth and thorough exercise for which we follow a standard procedure. In this process, we make allowance for information provided by companies or countries, specialist research institutes, the media and NGOs. Businesses, institutions, projects and sovereign states that meet our sustainability criteria are approved and admitted to the **ASN investment** universe.

### Companies

Admitted companies are screened every four years. In the intervening period, we monitor continuously whether they engage in any abuses. If our monitoring gives cause to bring the screening forward, we'll do so.

We screened 231 listed companies in 2019. These had either not been included in our investment universe or were due for rescreening. At the end of 2019, the total investment universe consisted of 332 companies, seven fewer than a year earlier.

## Engagement

ASN Bank represents ABB in engaging with the listed companies in the ASN investment universe. We enter into a dialogue with companies and institutions to educate them about their sustainability performance and to urge them to improve it, especially if we suspect that a company no longer meets the sustainability criteria, for instance because there are media reports about abuses or because its policies in certain areas are wanting. We'll contact the company in question to address the issue. If the desired response is not forthcoming, the company is removed from the investment universe.

## Engagement with pharmaceutical companies

Early in 2019, we reviewed our engagement efforts with a number of pharmaceutical companies over the past few years.

The results by company were as follows:

- Of all the pharmaceutical companies we engaged with, only British-based **GlaxoSmithKline's** sustainability performance was rated satisfactory across the board. The performance of British-Swedish **AstraZeneca** and Danish **Novo Nordisk** was satisfactory on average. That said, we'll continue to engage with these three companies because they're involved in abuses, for instance by asking critical questions, as we did in April at AstraZeneca's AGM.
- Although the sustainability performance of **Astellas Pharma** and **Orion** continues to be unsatisfactory, they're not involved in serious abuses. We'll also continue to engage with these companies.
- Since **BTG**, **Indivior** and **Merck & Co** showed little or no progress, we removed them from our investment universe.
- We also removed **Bristol-Myers Squibb** from our investment universe. Its ratings were clearly deteriorating and the company is involved in serious abuses.
- We added **Merck KGaA** to our investment universe. The company's policies meet our sustainability criteria and it's not involved in serious abuses.

### **Finger on the pulse**

Over the next few years, we'll continue to keep close track of the goings-on at the pharmaceutical companies in our investment universe, especially when it comes to abuses. We'll also continue to engage with them about issues we raised with them earlier. We'll report on the results of our engagement in 2020 and 2022.

## Voting

The ASN investment funds have the right to vote at AGMs of the companies they invest in. They decide how to vote based on the mission and sustainability criteria of ASN Bank and ABB, which are reflected in ABB's voting policy. They will, for instance, vote in favour of more diversity in a company's senior management and they'll vote against awarding bonuses to executives if these bonuses aren't contingent on achieving sustainability targets.

### **New voting policy**

ABB has decided to change the gender balance in its voting policy from 30-70 to 40-60, meaning that, if the appointment of an executive will result in 60% of the membership of an executive body being of the same gender, we'll vote against. This is how we send a clear message that diversity is important to us.



# CREATING AWARENESS OF A LIVING WAGE

In 2019, we once again teamed up with NGOs and partners in the financial and clothing sectors to advocate a living wage in the international garment industry.

**A**SN Bank has been a driving force behind promoting a living wage for textile workers since 2016. We engage with garment companies to address this issue and try to inspire others to get involved as well. Together with partners in and outside the financial sector, we develop initiatives to encourage garment companies to pay their workers a living wage.

### What's our goal?

The ASN investment funds invest in garment companies. As investors, it lies in their power to exert some influence on these companies' policies and the way in they put these policies into action. While the garment companies in the ASN Investment Universe meet our sustainability criteria, they don't unfortunately at this point ensure that their suppliers' textile workers are paid a living wage. That's why we'll continue to use our influence to achieve our long-term goal for the garment industry:

*'By 2030, the garment industry will have implemented all processes required to facilitate paying workers in the supply chain a living wage.'*

By working towards this target, we contribute to the achievement of nine UN sustainable development goals (SDG's).

#### Importance of living wage

In many countries, minimum wage is not a living wage. On a global scale, tens of millions of people are having to deal with this reality every day. The introduction of a living wage helps raise the standard of living of workers and their families. A living wage allows them to meet their basic needs and can serve as a catalyst for improving other working conditions. Parents will be less inclined to put their children to work, for instance, if they earn enough money to support them.

#### Methodology

When we introduced our long-term goal to promote a living wage in 2016, we developed a methodology to measure the progress garment companies were making in introducing a living wage. Based on this methodology, we engaged in an initial dialogue with textile companies about a living wage. Since 2018, we've based our methodology on the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and the accompanying Reporting Framework. These are recognised globally as authoritative guidelines for companies to demonstrate how they address key human rights issues. Global accounting firm Mazars,

which co-authored the Reporting Framework, is helping us fine-tune our benchmark for garment companies.

### Platform for Living Wage Financials

To increase our impact, ASN Bank teamed up with Triodos Investment Management and MN to create the Platform for Living Wage Financials (PLWF) in 2018. Just over a year later, the platform's portfolio of invested assets is worth € 2,500 billion in total, which more or less corresponds to France's GNP.

PLWF has adopted ASN Bank's methodology for measuring the extent to which garment companies make an effort to pay their workers a living wage. There's one key difference, though. The investors using the platform each apply their own investment criteria. As a result, the number of companies PLWF engages with exceeds the number of companies in the ASN investment funds' investment universe.

## Our activities in 2019

### Engagement

In the second half of 2019, we engaged with Adidas, Asics, ASOS, Esprit, Gildan, H&M, KappAhl, Lojas Renner, Marks & Spencer and Puma. We engaged with them in conference calls of an hour to 90 minutes, with multiple parties dialling in. Every call was moderated by one of the members of the Platform for Living Wage Financials. ASN Bank moderated seven calls. The questions that were asked were based on the outcome of the Living Wage Report 2019.

In most of the calls, the garment companies were represented by specialists in different areas, such as sustainability, labour rights and procurement. Most specialists were honest about the possibilities and impossibilities of promoting a living wage within their realm of influence. The input of procurement officers was particularly helpful because they're the ones having to implement the living wage policy commitments. Given that most garment companies have outsourced their manufacturing, procurement officers are in a perfect position to put pressure on suppliers to pay their textile workers a living wage, for instance by agreeing to pay a higher purchase price rather than negotiating lower prices every year.

How far does our influence reach? As a shareholder in a garment company, we're not in a position to decide on the wages of textile workers in sewing factories or on the best strategy for paying them a living wage. What we can do is offer constructive input to the companies in our investment universe on how to put their living wage policy into action and how to monitor progress.

### Living Wage Report

Our [Living Wage Report 2019](#) (pdf), which we published in 2019, demonstrates that some progress has been made. None of the 13 garment companies we screened is in the embryonic stage (2018: 1), four are in the developing stage, eight are in the maturing



stage and one is in the leading stage. Similar to last year, global accounting firm Mazars provided assurance on our report.

Most of the annual reports we studied addressed the issue of paying a living wage and described the actions that were being taken to improve the situation. The main challenge is to increase transparency on this theme. It would be an important step forward if factories were to disclose the wages they pay their factory workers.

In the report, we also announced that we would publish concrete targets for garment companies to meet. What's more, ASN Bank will partner up with an independent agency to look at ways of improving our engagement strategies for the medium and long terms.

### Telling the story

It's important to create awareness of the importance of a living wage, which we do by publishing papers and reports, and by telling the story in panels and at conferences. For Irina van der Sluijs, Senior Human Rights Advisor, and Sjik Prins, Sustainability Advisor, this is an important aspect of their work at ASN Bank. They spoke at events 18 times in 2019. Irina was a speaker at the OECD Forum in Paris, the UN Forum in Geneva and at a conference of the Dutch Banking Association. She was interviewed at the ACT festival in Rotterdam, one of our own events.



### Partnership with Solidaridad

China is one of the largest garment manufacturers. In July, Solidaridad, a development organisation, and ASN Bank launched a project in Shanghai to promote workers in local garment factories being paid a living wage. In the context of this project, we funded tablets with a fun tool for educating factory workers about their labour rights. Sjik Prins kicked off this partnership with a Skype call.

### Partnership with Fair Labor Association

We partnered up with the US-based Fair Labor Association (FLA) for the first time in 2019. This independent organisation has campaigned for the rights of workers in the garment industry since 1998. We made a financial contribution to the development of a living wage dashboard, which allows garment companies to monitor the wages their suppliers pay their textile workers. We believe that this tool will help garment companies increase their control of the wages paid by their suppliers. We can use the data we distil from the tool for our status meetings with garment companies. The Living Wage Report 2019 has an interview with two representative of the Fair Labor Association.

## Platform for Living Wage Financials

PLWF screened a total of 23 garment companies in 2019. The financial sector's efforts to advocate a living wage were chronicled in a [background article](#) in Het Financieele Dagblad, a Dutch newspaper. Irina van der Sluijs was happy with this media attention: 'The fact that mainstream financial media are picking up on this news shows that investor awareness is growing.'

### Awards for Platform

PLWF received a [PRI Award](#) in September. PRI, which stands for Principles for Responsible Investment, is a UN-supported network of investors working together to implement sustainability principles. The award was bestowed upon PLWF for achieving actual results in just one year. The judges said that companies such as Hanesbrands (a US-based producer of sweaters and t-shirts), Lojas Renner (the largest Brazilian department store) and PVH (the parent company of Calvin Klein and Tommy Hilfiger, among other companies) had included a living wage in their policies thanks to PLWF's efforts.

### Conference on living wage

The platform celebrated its first anniversary in October. This was commemorated with a conference at the Robeco offices in Rotterdam. The 120 delegates from the Netherlands and elsewhere were invited to attend panel discussions and break-out sessions. Irina van der Sluijs was at the conference as well. Garment companies such as H&M, Kering, Asics and Mondelez were actively involved in the conference. The message PLWF gave these companies was that they needed to increase the level of transparency about their procurement processes and wages in the supply chain, and that they should do more to showcase the actual steps they're taking to facilitate higher wages in the supply chain.

## Partnership with Fair Wear Foundation

We continued to collaborate closely with the Fair Wear Foundation in 2019. This organisation works with clothing brands and influential players in the garment industry to improve working conditions in this sector. We were able to rely on our extensive knowledge of the living wage issue in engaging with garment companies, for instance by giving them concrete examples.

### OUR PLANS FOR 2020

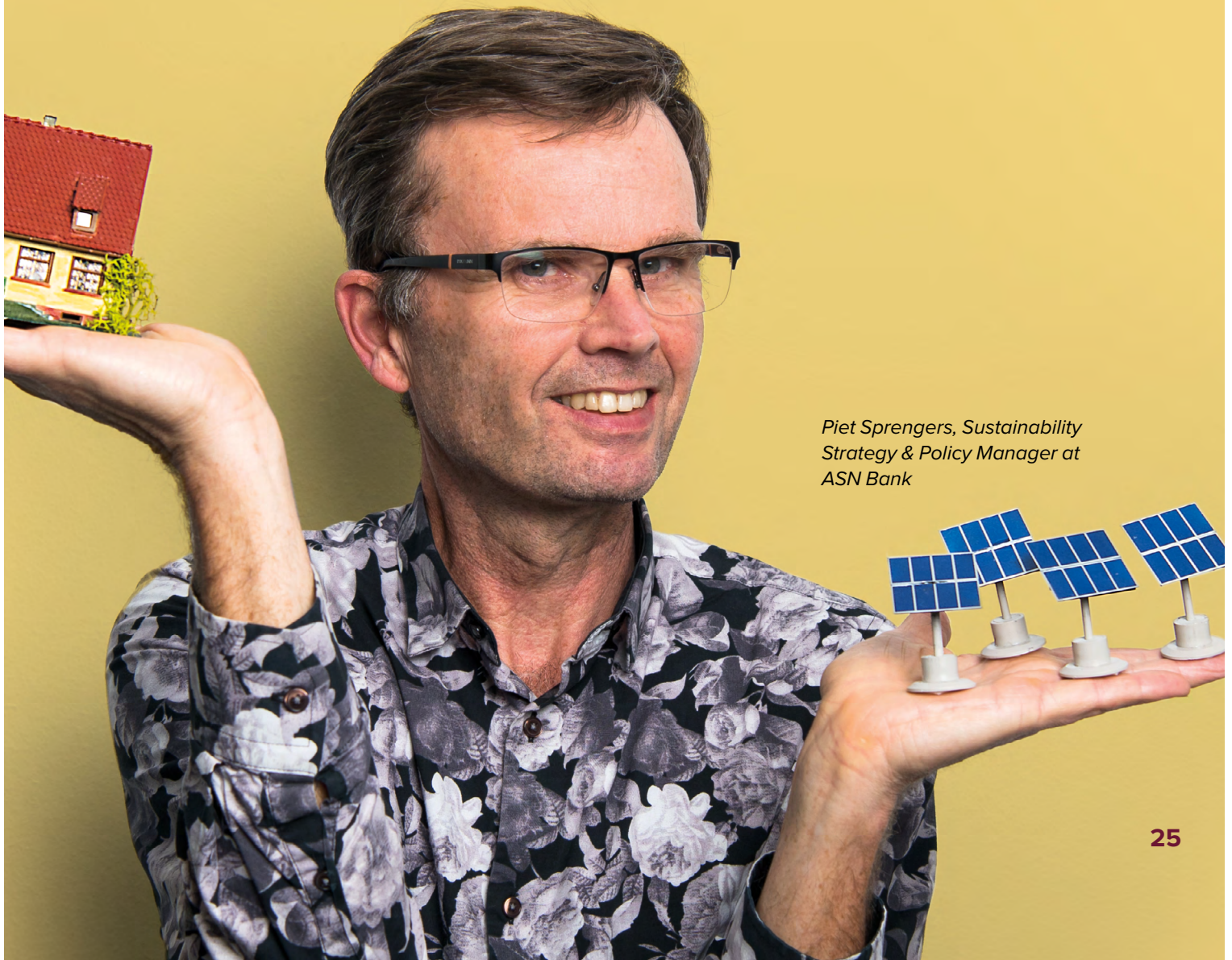
- Together with ASN Belegginginstellingen Beheer B.V. (ABB), develop concrete targets for the garment companies in our investment universe.
- Within PLWF, explore which engagement tools we can leverage even better to make our engagement more effective. Asking questions during an AGM could be such a tool.
- As we did in 2019, perform assessments of garment companies and publish our findings in a report.
- Organise a small symposium to engage with a select group of stakeholders about how we can speed up our efforts to achieve a living wage.

### More information

To find out more about a living wage and how we use your money to help make it happen, please visit [asnbank.nl](https://asnbank.nl).



# FROM CLIMATE-NEUTRAL TO CLIMATE-POSITIVE



*Piet Sprengers, Sustainability Strategy & Policy Manager at ASN Bank*

## Climate change dominated the news. And ASN Bank was on the front page. How high has the bar been raised?

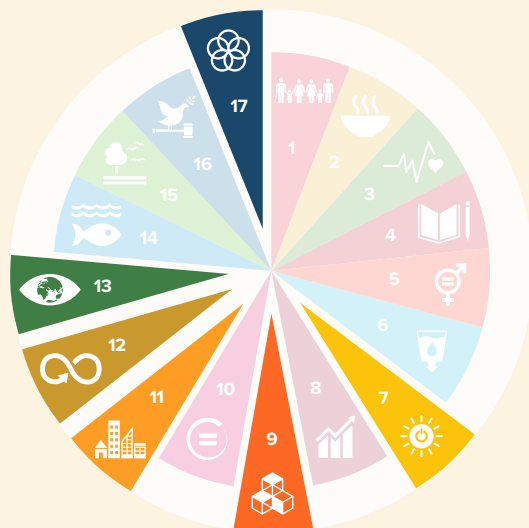
On 20 August, Trouw, a Dutch newspaper, carried a front page article on ASN Bank's ambition to be the first Dutch bank to be climate-neutral. In the article, Arie Koornneef, CEO of ASN Bank, answered the journalist's question as to whether large banks can actually deliver on this climate target, saying: 'I wouldn't know why not. They'll eventually have to divest from fossil fuels. They may not do it overnight, but it's definitely feasible.'

### Clearing the bar, but how?

Piet Sprengers, Sustainability Strategy & Policy Manager at ASN Bank, was involved in defining our climate target and the measuring methodology from the very beginning: 'Before 2012, banks didn't have any climate targets for their assets. In 2014, we set the bar at 'climate-neutral by 2030', but we had no idea whether that ambition was realistic or not. Looking back on it now, we did a Dick Fosbury. Fosbury, a high jumper from Oregon, set a world record at the 1968 Olympics at the age of 21 with a revolutionary new jump: the Fosbury Flop. We had set the bar for ourselves, but we still had to come up with a way of clearing it.'

## What's our goal?

There was no time to dwell on the climate neutrality milestone. As carbon emissions and global warming are steadily continuing to affect the planet, it wasn't difficult to define a new target: we want all our loans and investments to be climate-positive on balance by 2030. This raises the bar by another few notches.



By working towards this target, we contribute to the achievement of six UN sustainable development goals.

### How to become climate-positive

Our ambition of climate neutrality was based on reducing carbon emissions and avoided emissions. Now that we aim to be climate-positive, we'll also be focusing on negative carbon emissions, i.e. the absorption of carbon through forestation and nature restoration.

We currently calculate the emissions, avoided emissions and negative emissions of every loan we issue and investment we make. In doing so, we convert the emissions of these three types of emissions into carbon equivalents based on international standards. ASN Bank will be climate-positive if the emissions associated with its assets are lower than the negative emissions associated with its assets, also known as sequestered emissions.

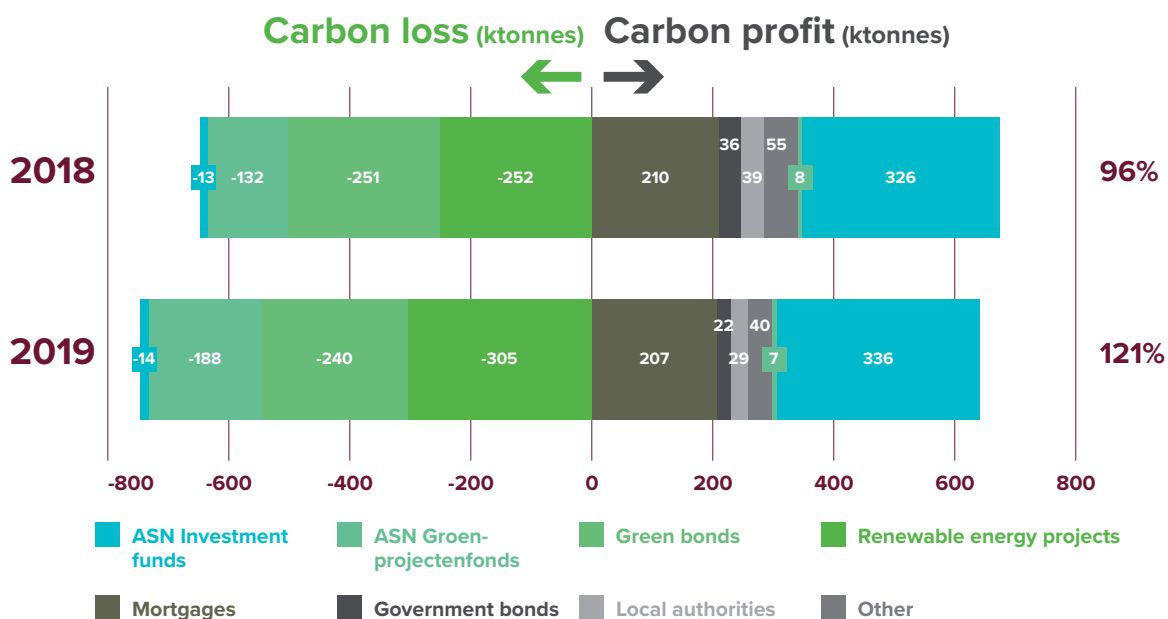
We're in the process of developing a methodology. We expect to be able to report on the status of our target of being a climate-positive bank in 2020.

**De Volksbank is in too**

ASN Bank was the first bank in the world to pursue a climate target for its assets. We still lead by example: with our climate target, we want to inspire other, larger financial institutions to do as we've done. De Volksbank also wants all its assets to be climate-neutral by 2030.

## Where are we on reaching our goal?

We had achieved climate neutrality for 96% of all loans and investments of ASN Bank and the ASN investment funds as early as by the end of 2018. We achieved our original climate target in 2019, reaching 121% climate neutrality for all our loans and investments at the end of the year. This sharp increase was mainly attributable to a substantial growth in carbon gains, particularly thanks to the funding of renewable energy projects by ASN Bank and ASN Groenprojectenfonds, the green project fund. The loan that was issued to AEB, a waste management company, and a number of wind energy projects contributed to this as well. This resulted in an additional 52 ktonnes in avoided emissions. Avoided emissions by the green project fund also rose by 55 ktonnes, mainly because of a net increase by € 62 million of investments in solar energy projects and a net increase by € 14 million of investments in wind energy projects. What's more, we made an additional purchase of green bonds for a net price of nearly € 50 million; this resulted in an extra 17.5 ktonnes in emissions.



## Partnership for Carbon Accounting Financials

The Partnership for Carbon Accounting Financials (PCAF), which was initiated by ASN Bank in 2015, was followed up internationally in 2019. PCAF Global's now more than 50 global partners jointly manage an asset portfolio worth € 3,000 billion. Over the next three years, the global partnership plans to continue working on standardising the calculation method for greenhouse gas emissions associated with loans and investments. PCAF Global has voiced the ambition to have 100 partners in three years' time, so that it can make even more of an impact.

## Championing the climate

We aim to increase our impact by encouraging other major financial institutions to follow our lead. This resulted in a number of milestones in 2019, such as the creation of PCAF Global and the joint signing of the Dutch Climate Accord by the financial sector (50 banks, pension funds, insurance companies and asset managers) at a meeting in The Hague.

As a co-initiator of the Svalbard Ambition, we laid the foundation for this collective promise in 2018.

Jeroen Loots, Senior Climate & Biodiversity Advisor at ASN Bank, was happy that the Climate Accord was signed, but he didn't want to dwell on it too much: 'Setting and measuring goals is important, but now's the time for action. Investing in fossil fuel really is a no-no in this day and age. We're happy to help the affiliated partners to make alternative investment choices. Ultimately, we need to invest in projects that actually capture carbon from the air so that we manage to reduce greenhouse gases in the atmosphere.'

### Climate Taskforce

Jeroen Loots also headed up the Dutch Banking Association's Climate Taskforce in 2019. In its [Climate Impact Measurement](#) (pdf), the Taskforce describes a number of climate initiatives and how their impact is measured. To bring about further improvements in the methodology, new partnerships will have to be forged, for instance with policy-makers and academia.

### PCAF

It's part of our championing role to hand over our coordinating role in due course and to explore new ways to call a halt to further global warming. The transfer of our executive duties for the Dutch branch of PCAF to others should also be seen in that light. Piet Sprengers (Chairman), Freek Geurts (Secretary) and Jeroen Loots (Project Leader) will still provide input at meetings of the task forces, but will no longer fulfil executive duties.

PCAF Netherlands published its [third report](#) at the Climate Summit in Madrid, Spain, in December. The 106-page report looks back at the past year and describes the next step that should be taken to expand and improve the methods for measuring the carbon footprint of loans and investments.

### Involvement in SBTi

In April, ASN Bank represented de Volksbank in piloting the methodology developed by the Science Based Targets initiative (SBTi), a global consortium of NGOs and knowledge institutes that translate climate scenarios into concrete objectives by sector to meet the 1.5-degree objective of the Paris Climate Agreement. During the pilot, we applied the SBTi methodology to de Volksbank's mortgage portfolio. The outcome showed us the speed and level at which the carbon emissions associated with de Volksbank's mortgage portfolio should be reduced to comply with national, European and global emission scenarios. Over the summer, we'll explore whether we'll incorporate the outcome in de Volksbank's climate target (i.e. all loans and investments climate-neutral by 2030) and, if so, how.

### OUR PLANS FOR 2020

- Participate in PCAF Global Steering Committee meetings.
- Implement the climate commitment of the Dutch financial sector (our chairing of the Dutch Association's Climate Taskforce reflects our close involvement in this project).
- Create an agenda for championing climate issues for the Dutch financial sector focusing on actions to achieve the required acceleration of the transition to a zero-carbon economy.
- Together with the Dutch Entrepreneurial Development Bank (FMO) and Triodos Bank, take the lead in developing a method for measuring negative emissions (projects that allow carbon to be captured from the air and stored in natural carbon sinks, e.g. through forestation, restoration of peatlands, timber construction and algae).

# PIONEERING BIODIVERSITY



The third pillar of our sustainable policy is to protect and improve the world's biodiversity. Although loss of biodiversity was reported on rather frequently in 2019, this silent disaster deserves to be spotlighted even more.

**H**ow can a financial institution make a positive impact on biodiversity? This question is at the heart of a report published by CREM, a sustainability marketing agency, in September 2019. The underlying study was initiated by the Dutch Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality at ASN Bank's suggestion. The report also describes the link with the Biodiversity Footprint for Financial Institutions (BFFI). This method, which we developed and adopted earlier, allows banks, insurance companies and pension funds to measure the negative and positive impact of an investment portfolio on biodiversity.

## Partnership for Biodiversity Accounting Financials

How many financial institutions actively promote biodiversity? ASN Bank singled out biodiversity as a priority a number of years ago. We're now a global leader in this area. We're happy to report that other financial institutions are now showing an increasing interest in biodiversity as well.

We teamed up with ACTIAM, an asset manager, in 2017 to explore the option of creating a Partnership for Biodiversity Accounting Financials (PBAF), but the time wasn't right. In 2019, ASN Bank, ACTIAM, CDC Biodiversity and Finance in Motion wrote a Common Ground Report on principles for measuring impact on biodiversity. In 2020, a group of financial institutions will develop and publish guidelines and a methodology for measuring positive impact in the context of the then created Partnership for Biodiversity Accounting Financials (PBAF).

IPBES, the UN Biodiversity Platform, published an alarming report on biodiversity in 2019. The conclusion was that humanity is overexploiting nature and undermining the survival of animals and plants, putting its own survival at risk in the process. The report will be the first priority at the UN Biodiversity Conference that will be held in China in October 2020.



It's not yet common practice for financial institutions to measure their impact on biodiversity. Roel Nozeman, Senior Biodiversity Advisor at ASN Bank, hopes that the biodiversity conference will result in a type of Paris Agreement for biodiversity.

***'All our loans and investments will have a net positive effect on biodiversity by 2030 (our long-term goal)'***



By working towards this target, we contribute to the achievement of eight UN sustainable development goals (SDG's).

## Ways to achieve our goal

### Developing and sharing methodology

We're developing the Biodiversity Footprint for Financial Institutions (BFFI), a methodology for calculating our ecological footprint and monitoring progress. We're also improving the quality of our ecological footprint data. By publishing what we do, we help financial institutions gain a better understanding of their impact on biodiversity and become more aware of their impact.

### Reducing loss of biodiversity

We aim to reduce the loss of biodiversity caused by the loans and investments of ASN Bank and the ASN investment funds.

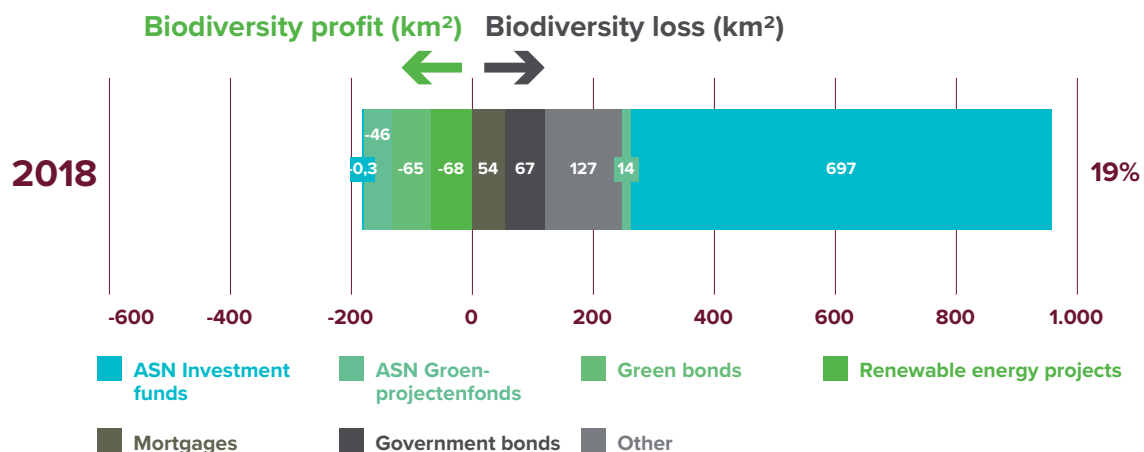
### Increasing biodiversity gains

We're exploring ways in which to increase our biodiversity gains, for instance by investing in nature development, renewable energy and the circular economy, and by forging partnerships with nature conservation groups, water companies and organisations running biodiversity projects.

## Where are we on reaching our goal?

We're the first bank in the world to measure its impact on biodiversity. As we're the first, we're still working on developing an appropriate methodology. We're running behind on our measuring: in 2019, we measured our impact on biodiversity for 2018 using a tweaked methodology. It's our aim for the future to report on the past calendar year. The chart shows the measurements for the different investment classes.

The net impact of ASN Bank and the ASN investment funds on biodiversity in 2018 was 77,380 hectares. This figure is higher than that for 2017 thanks, in part, to a change in measuring methodology: we now also include ASN Mixfonds. The increase in loans for wind and solar energy projects and investments in forestry and agriculture had a positive effect as well.



### In the limelight

Given that there are only few financial players that focus on biodiversity, we regularly tell our story. Roel Nozeman took to the stage at least once and sometimes twice a month to share our experiences with an audience. He presented at events for scientists, students, bankers, policy officials and representatives of NGOs, both in and outside the Netherlands.

### Input in stopping deforestation

In 2019, NWB Bank created a taskforce on biodiversity as part of the Dutch Central Bank's Sustainable Finance Platform. ASN Bank is the driving force behind the taskforce, which focuses specifically on the prevention of deforestation, one of the main continuing causes of biodiversity loss. Despite the availability of many tools that can help financial institutions measure deforestation, they're little used by financial institutions at this time. That's why, in 2020, ASN Bank will publish a list of all deforestation measuring tools and a manual on how to use them. ASN Bank, for its part, uses Global Canopy's SCRIPT tool.

## Partnership with Natuur & Milieu

Surface water is important for biodiversity. This includes water in small ponds and ditches. That's why we started a volunteer campaign for testing the water quality of ponds and ditches last year. No fewer than 850 volunteers used a test kit and submitted their results to Natuur & Milieu (Nature & Environment), a Dutch environmental organisation. Some of the measurements were validated by NIOO-KNAW, the Netherlands Institute of Ecology. The conclusion was that the water quality of as many as 77% of the small waterways that were tested was poor.

We'll be teaming up with Natuur & Milieu in 2020 to expand the test. The idea is to do the testing together with the water boards, the provincial authorities and the national government, and to fine-tune the testing method. We hope to once again enlist the help of our clients to do the testing.

### OUR PLANS FOR 2020

- Continue to expand the platform and improve the method for impact measuring.
- Update our biodiversity policy.
- Increase the scale of volunteer testing of water quality in partnership with Natuur & Milieu.
- Publish a list of tools for measuring deforestation.
- Help to create joint commitment to biodiversity of the financial sector at the UN Biodiversity Conference in China.

### More information

To find out more about biodiversity and how we use your money to promote it, please visit [asnbank.nl](https://asnbank.nl).



# TOGETHER WE CAN ACHIEVE MORE



Plastic Pact NL:  
Meer met  
minder  
plastic



We've been in the banking business for nearly 60 years. All that time, we've operated with respect for people, animals and nature. Since, globally speaking, we're only a small player, we like to partner up with other organisations and NGOs.

**T**his chapter tells you about our partners. We've not provided any further details on the partners mentioned earlier in the chapters on human rights, climate and biodiversity.

## Partners of ASN Bank

### Plastic Pact – since 2019

The Dutch Plastic Pact was signed in a collective effort to reduce the environmental impact of plastics as soon as possible. This pact, which we co-signed, is a strategic partnership between the business community, the government, knowledge institutes and NGOs. The aim of the pact is to document the ambitions, which involve dramatically reducing the use of plastics by 2025 and making sure that any remaining plastics are at least recyclable. The Dutch Plastic Pact adds to our ambition to prevent plastics from ending up in nature or the ocean.

### Access to Medicine – since 2019

The ASN investment funds have participated in the collective engagement effort of the Access to Medicine Foundation, a dialogue with 19 listed pharmaceutical companies, five of which are included in the ASN investment universe. This is a lengthy process in which the Access to Medicine Index is used to measure the progress pharmaceutical companies are making towards achieving SDG 3 (good health and well-being) by 2030. Access to medicine is a criterion in the screening for our investment universe, but it's not a part of our engagement dialogue with pharmaceutical companies.

### Consortium Zon in Landschap (Sun in Landscape Consortium) – since 2019

The Consortium, which is an initiative of TNO, the Dutch Organisation for Applied Scientific Research, focuses on supporting the large-scale integration of solar energy into the landscape. The three programme strands are visual integration, natural value enhancement and combination with agriculture. The consortium is multidisciplinary and is made up of property developers, financial services providers, designers, consultants, knowledge institutes and government bodies.

### Plastic Solutions Investor Alliance – since 2018

ASN Bank is a member of As You Sow's Plastic Solutions Investor Alliance. In the context of this Alliance, investors engage with multinationals that use a lot of disposable plastic packaging, such as Procter & Gamble, Nestle SA, Pepsico and Unilever. These companies are called to account for their use of materials and encouraged to identify their footprint, which is meant to nudge them towards changing their business practices. Of the four companies mentioned, Unilever is the only one that's been admitted to the ASN investment universe.

### Erasmus Platform for Sustainable Value Creation – since 2018

The purpose of the platform is to gain an understanding of sustainable value creation by conducting research in partnership with sustainability leaders in the financial sector and academics. We've teamed up with the Platform on deforestation issues.

### Statiegeldalliantie (Returnable Deposit Alliance) – since 2017

One aspect of our sustainability policy is that we aim to prevent and reduce waste and pollution. Tins and small plastic bottles make up half of all litter. In our opinion, introducing a returnable deposit on tins and small plastic bottles would be highly conducive to bringing about a significant reduction in the amount of litter. That's why ASN Bank is a member of the Alliance.

**Dutch Green Building Council – since 2015**

ASN Bank is a partner in the Dutch Green Building Council (DGBC), an independent non-profit networking organisation that's committed to improving the sustainability of the built environment. DGBC seeks to play a major role in the transition to a circular economy that will allow people to enjoy their work and private life. Jort Bakker, Head of Sustainable Financing at ASN Bank, joined the Board of DGBC in 2016.

**Nederlandse Vereniging van Duurzame Energie (Dutch Association for Renewable Energy) – since 2015**

ASN Bank has a seat on the Member Council of the Association. This initiative encourages the use of renewable energy and promotes the interests of many companies operating in the renewable energy sector.

**CoP FINC – since 2014**

In 2014, ASN Bank took the initiative to found the Community of Practice Financial Institutions and Natural Capital (CoP FINC). In this CoP, financial institutions share their experience of the practice and discuss how the financial sector can contribute to the conservation and improvement of biodiversity.

**Dutch Banking Association Sustainability Platform – since 2014**

We're affiliated with the Sustainability Platform (Platform Duurzaamheid) of the Dutch Banking Association (NVB). The affiliated banks work on solutions to the climate problem, the protection of human rights in international commercial chains, transparency of their loans and investments, and the climate agreement.

**Other memberships and sustainability pledges**

- Dutch Sustainable Development Goals Investing Agenda (SDGI Agenda) – since 2016
- Business and Biodiversity Pledge – since 2016
- Montreal Pledge – since 2015
- Statement by Financial Institutions on Energy Efficiency – since 2015
- Paris Pledge – since 2015
- EU Statement on Conflict Minerals – since 2015
- Dutch Climate Coalition – since 2014
- Natural Capital Finance Alliance – since 2012
- Carbon Disclosure Project – since 2007

## From ASN Bank to de Volksbank

**United Nations Environment Programme Finance Initiative (UNEP FI) – 2019**

UNEP FI is a partnership between UNEP and the global financial sector to mobilise private sector funding for sustainable development. UNEP FI has more than 300 members – banks, insurance companies and investors – and more than 100 supporting institutions to help create a financial sector that serves people and the planet while making a positive impact. ASN Bank had been a member since 1994 and transferred its membership to de Volksbank in 2019. As a result, the UNEP FI efforts now apply to all banking labels.

**Principles for Responsible Banking (PRB) – 2019**

Public expectations are changing and banks need to be more transparent and clear about how their products and services add value for their clients, investors and society at large. The Principles help match a bank's business strategy to the public's expectations by offering a framework for a sustainable banking system and allowing the sector to demonstrate how it's serving society.

**International CSR (IMVO) Banking Covenant – 2016**

Through its actions, the financial sector may be directly or indirectly involved in potential human rights violations. That's why, in 2016, the banking sector, NGOs, trade unions and the Dutch government entered into the International Corporate Social Responsibility Covenant, which is due to expire in 2019. The aim of the Covenant is to eliminate the risk of human rights violations. The joint approach enables the contracting parties to pool their knowledge and experience in this area.

ASN Bank joined the Covenant right when it was introduced in 2016. ASN Bank has been a division of de Volksbank since 2017; de Volksbank applies the principles of ASN Bank's human rights policy to all its operations. For this reason, de Volksbank has replaced ASN Bank as a party to the Covenant; ASN Bank's sustainability specialists perform the associated duties.

**Other memberships and sustainability pledges – de Volksbank**

- CSR Netherlands (MVO Nederland) – 2012
- Equator Principles – 2010
- Global Compact – 2008

# HOW WE USE OUR CLIENTS' MONEY



This chapter and the next tell you how we use our clients' savings deposits to help create a more sustainable society.

## Government bonds

The Dutch Central Bank and the European Central Bank require de Volksbank to hold part of its assets in readily marketable investments such as government bonds. We've decided that we'll only invest in government bonds of countries that meet our sustainability criteria. In 2019, we invested in government bonds of Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, Austria, France, Ireland, Luxembourg, Sweden and Spain.

## Home loans

We use most of our clients' savings deposits to provide residential mortgages to retail clients. Some of these are provided in the form of an **ASN Hypotheek** mortgages, but most of them are SNS and BLG Wonen mortgages.

We provide mortgage loans so that people can buy a home and we finance the social housing sector. Providing mortgage loans ties in with our policy of investing our clients' savings at the lowest possible risk.

### Working on climate impact

Energy consumption in the home is a major source of carbon emissions in the Netherlands. Within the scope of our long-term climate objective, ASN Banks aims to reduce the climate impact of the mortgage portfolio. De Volksbank also has a climate ambition. That's why both ASN Bank and de Volksbank have programmes to encourage clients to make their homes more sustainable, for instance by:

- Putting on campaigns for clients, such as offers to buy, rent or share solar panels and discounts on home insulation.
- Providing information to clients about energy efficiency in the home through various channels.
- Educating mortgage officers about sustainability issues, including sustainability in mortgage software and addressing sustainability in mortgage advice.
- Offering financial products such as ASN Duurzaam Wonen, an add-on loan to finance sustainability improvements to the home.

### Slimwoner.nl

De Volksbank has teamed up with community partners to help improve the sustainability of homes. Together with ASN Bank, BLG Wonen, RegioBank and SNS, it's the main partner of [www.slimwoner.nl](http://www.slimwoner.nl), a website that was launched by Natuur & Milieu in 2015. The website offers home-owners sound, independent advice on how to conserve energy in the home.

## Local authorities

Local and regional government bodies, such as municipal and provincial authorities, play an important role in how society operates. Once we've approved a country's government bonds based on our sustainability criteria, this country's local and regional government bodies have automatically been approved as well. This is how we come to provide loans to Dutch municipal and provincial authorities.

## Renewable energy

Funding renewable energy projects is a way to help us achieve our objective of being climate-positive by 2030. The market conditions for renewable energy project finance were challenging in 2019. We've listed some of the reasons for these challenging conditions below.

### Low interest rates

Interest rates were persistently low across the globe. This had an impact on refinancing, i.e. the secondary market. In the past year, too, multiple loans to existing solar or wind farms, tended to be concentrated into a single loan subject to new, more competitive terms.

### Increase in competition

More and more banks, insurance companies and pension funds are taking an interest in financing sustainable projects. Given that major players from Asia and the United States are looking to invest, competition between financial institutions has heated up.

### Outlook

In 2020, we'll continue to seek out partnerships with developers of renewable energy projects at an early stage. We want to keep playing our leading role in the energy transition, which is now widely supported. We've listed some of the renewable energy projects we funded in 2019 below.

### Blauwwind

We've teamed up with Shell New Energies, Mitsubishi, Eneco, dredging company Van Oord and Swiss-based investment company Partners Group to finance the construction and operation of a wind farm off the Dutch North Sea coast. This wind farm has a total capacity of 731 megawatts of green electricity, one year's worth of electricity for more than 800,000 households. ASN Bank provided a loan of € 40 million to this project in 2019.

### Fieva

Fieva is a solar park spread over 40 roofs of industrial buildings in Belgium. It was built in 2010-2011 and the roofs have supplied green electricity since November 2011. ASN Bank provided a loan of approximately € 17 million for a section of the park in 2019. All in all, the park supplies electricity to more than 3,000 households every year.

### Other loans

We also provided new loans to HalloStroom and Solease, two companies that rent out solar panels to Dutch home-owners. In the town of Meppel, we funded a wood pellet-fired biomass plant that supplies heat and hot tap water to homes. These three loans added up to just over € 13 million.

## Special building projects

In 2019, we funded the restoration and redevelopment of several monuments in the Netherlands. In their second lease of life, these buildings will be for social, community or cultural use.

### BOEi

The Dutch government has designated seven organisations to oversee the redevelopment and restoration of national monuments. BOEi is one of them. In 2019, ASN Bank provided a loan to BOEi for nearly € 13 million to fund multiple projects at different locations in the Netherlands, e.g. in:

- Ede, where the former cafeteria of the ENKA synthetic fibre factory was redeveloped into a primary school with an out-of-school care centre.
- Hilversum, where the former Clemenskerk church was converted into an indoor trampoline centre.
- Rotterdam, where a section of the former Zuiderziekenhuis hospital is being converted into a secondary school.
- Hengelo, where old factory buildings are being converted and outfitted as workstations and offices.

### Monuments – The Hague

Stichting Stadsherstel renovates and restores monuments in and around The Hague. We provided a loan of € 4.4 million in total for two developments. The aim in both developments is to implement sustainability measures so that the buildings will qualify for energy label C.

- De Drie Hoefijzers is a former beer depot in The Hague. This eye-catching complex was built at the beginning of the 20th century and was used as a beer storage and cooling facility until the end of the 1960s. The complex will be converted into apartments and a bakery.
- The former police station in Scheveningen, near The Hague, will be restored and renovated to accommodate offices and apartments.

## ESG bonds

ESG (Environmental, Social & Governance) bonds allow us to invest in fixed-income securities in the areas of renewable energy, energy conservation, social issues and biodiversity. These bonds help us become climate-neutral and climate-positive by 2030 and are a welcome addition to ASN Bank's assets. They also ensure a better spread of the risks associated with our assets and tie in well with our sustainability policy. In 2019, we bought more than € 250 million worth of ESG bonds.

### Microcredits in Sub-Saharan Africa

In 2019, we bought a bond from REGMIFA for € 14.5 million. REGMIFA is a private debt fund that has provided microcredits to businesses in Sub-Saharan Africa since 2010. The fund works with local partners to fund micro, small and medium-sized enterprises in this region. By doing so, it increases the financial resilience of the local population and creates job opportunities and economic growth in one of the world's poorest regions. Since the fund was created, its local partners have provided loans to approximately 170,000 businesses in 19 African countries.

### BNG Bank – green bonds

We bought € 21.8 million worth of sustainable bonds from BNG Bank. This brings our total investment in BNG Bank bonds to € 75 million. The money is used to fund sustainable projects and overdraft facilities of Dutch municipalities and housing associations championing sustainability and social policy.

### EIB – sustainability bond

We bought a European Investment Bank (EIB) green bond for € 39 million. This brings our total investment in EIB bonds to € 183 million. The investment bank uses the money raised by this green bond to fund sustainable and social projects.

### KfW Development Bank – climate bond

We spent more than € 37 million on a climate bond offered by German-based KfW Development Bank. This brings our total investment in KfW bonds to € 123 million. The bank uses the money raised by this climate bond to fund wind energy, hydropower, solar energy other renewable energy sources. A leading green rating agency awarded these climate bonds the highest possible rating.

### NRW Bank – green bond

We bought € 53 million worth of green bonds from NRW Bank, the development bank of the German federal state of North Rhine-Westphalia, bringing the total investment to € 158 million. NRW Bank uses the money raised by its green bonds to fund projects for renewable energy, clean transport, green public buildings and improvement biodiversity near rivers.

### German Federal State of North Rhine-Westphalia – sustainability bond

We invested nearly € 10 million in a green bond offered by this most populated German federal state that borders the Netherlands. The money raised by this bond is used to fund sustainable and social projects, such as sustainable urban development and the modernisation of school buildings.



### **Nordic Investment Bank – environmental bond**

We invested over € 21.7 million in climate bonds offered by the Nordic Investment Bank (NIB), bringing our total investment to € 92 million. The bank uses the money raised by its climate bonds to fund projects in the areas of clean transport, climate change adaptation, energy efficiency and renewable energy in Scandinavia and the Baltics.

### **NWB Bank – water bond**

And last but not least, we bought more water bonds from NWB Bank in 2019. Adding another € 40 million, we've now upped our investment in these bonds to € 67 million. One of the uses of the money raised by these bonds is to fund flood prevention projects undertaken by Dutch water boards, a worthy cause given continuing climate change.

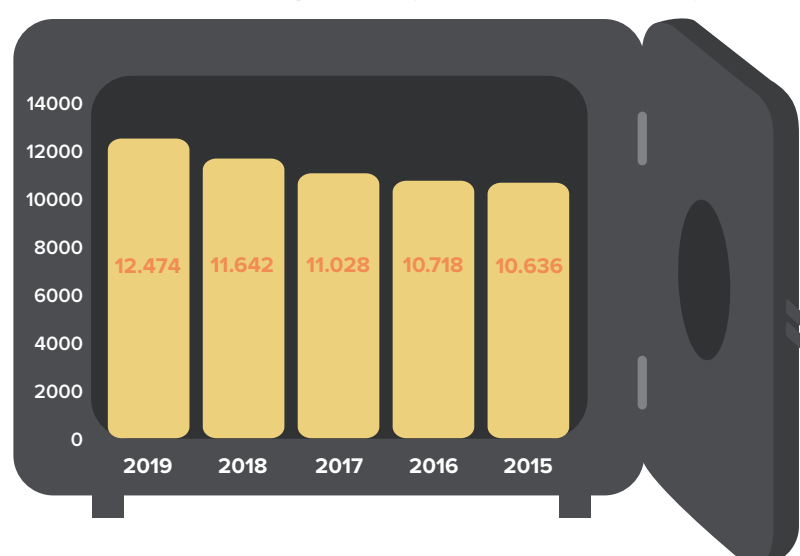
# ITEM BY ITEM

*Belwind wind turbine in  
the Belgian North Sea*

Don't say we didn't warn you. This chapter of the Annual Review 2019 will be mostly about figures. It'll also have some financial jargon here and there. We'll explain on an item-by-item basis how we've invested our clients' money (total assets under management).

Thanks to the more than 38,000 clients who switched to ASN Bank in 2019, total assets under management rose by € 832 million to € 12,474 million, which was the total of all our 738,870 clients' savings and current account balances on the last day of 2019. Of this amount, just over € 2.8 billion involved current account balances.

### Assets under management (in millions of euros)



## Loans and investments

ASN Bank's loans and investments comprise the following:

- Loans: residential mortgages, business loans and private loans of at least € 1 million.
- Investments: government bonds and ESG bonds.

(x € 1,000,000)	2019	2018
Loans*	5,925	6,098
Investments	3,745	3,826
Total loans and investments	9,670	9,924
* This amount represents the residual value of loans. These amounts don't include revaluations, share premium and accrued interest.		

While total assets under management increased by € 0.8 billion, total loans and investments fell by more than € 0.25 billion to just under € 9.7 billion. The total amount of sustainable loans and investments dropped slightly due to foreseen repayments of private loans and the fact that our clients' total savings grew faster than expected. We couldn't use this extra money to fund renewable energy projects right away. The

process of financing a project from signing the contract to making the payment is relatively time-consuming. We expect to be able to provide more ASN Hypotheek mortgages with ASN Duurzaam Wonen add-on loans in 2020. We'll also be focusing on funding renewable energy projects.

## Loans

(x € 1,000,000)	2019	2018
Home loans	4,571	4,501
Renewable energy	536	540
Housing	316	360
Health and welfare services	200	229
Water extraction and management	134	193
Local authorities	94	220
Nature & agriculture	33	33
ESG bonds	14	-
Monuments	14	10
Education, culture and leisure	3	3
Miscellaneous	10	9
<b>Total loans</b>	<b>5,925</b>	<b>6,098</b>

## Investments

(x € 1,000,000)	2019	2018
Government bonds	2,370	2,551
ESG bonds	1,200	1,056
Rail transport	154	198
Miscellaneous	21	21
<b>Total investments</b>	<b>3,745</b>	<b>3,826</b>

What follows is a breakdown by borrower of the amounts for 2019 shown in the two tables above.

## Total loans and investments of ASN Bank

Counterparty	amounts (x € 1.000)
<b>Government bonds</b>	<b>2.370.204</b>
Germany	962.031
The Netherlands	509.035
Belgium	383.446
Austria	175.923
France	171.056
Ireland	76.555
Spain	45.652
Luxembourg	43.455
Sweden	3.052
<b>Home loans</b>	<b>4.570.891</b>
Residential mortgages	4.500.000
ASN Hypotheken	70.891
<b>ESG bonds</b>	<b>1.213.840</b>
NRW Bank Green Bond	158.443
KFW Green Bond	122.658
FMO Sustainable Bond	109.584
European Investment Bank Climate Awareness Bond	96.230
Caisse d'Amortissement de la Dette Sociale (France)	95.620
Nordic Investment Bank Environmental Bond	92.134
European Investment Bank Sustainability Awareness Bond	86.748
Unedic (France)	80.527
Council of Europe Development Bank	80.261
Nederlandse Waterschapsbank NV Water Bond	52.096
IDF (France)	40.817
Country Nordrhein-Westfalen – Sustainability Bond	35.890
<b>BNG Bonds</b>	<b>33.007</b>
BNG Green Bonds	21.630
BNG SRI Bonds	20.093
Nederlandse Waterschapsbank NV - Social bonds	15.340
Regional MSME Investment Fund for Sub-Saharan Africa SA, SICAV-SIF	14.420
EUROFIMA Green Bond	11.988
TenneT Green Bonds	11.137
Caisse Francaise de Financement Local – Social Bonds	9.990
Green Storm – Social Bonds	9.663

Deutsche Kreditbank AG (DKB) – Social Bonds	7.951
SpareBank 1 Boligkreditt	7.613
<b>Renewable energy: wind energy</b>	<b>265.595</b>
Nobelwind NV	55.532
Belwind NV	50.439
Northwind NV	39.590
Westermeerwind BV	30.733
Northwester 2 NV	24.235
Blauwwind II CV	17.448
SeaMade NV	15.919
C-Power NV	12.926
Global Tech I Offshore Wind GmbH	9.843
Merkur Offshore GmbH	8.858
Dif Renewable Energy Fund	72
<b>Renewable energy: energy efficiency</b>	<b>131.076</b>
Green for Growth Fund	48.959
Global Climate Partnership Fund SA, SICAV-SIF	44.508
Stichting Nationaal Energiebespaarfonds	25.000
Energiefonds Overijssel I BV en Energiefonds Overijssel II BV	12.600
Impax New Energy Investors II	9
<b>Renewable energy: solar energy</b>	<b>101.976</b>
Sonnedix Aloe Holdings	40.469
Fieva VOF	15.264
Lavansol II SAS	9.926
GVC Zonne-energie Holding BV	8.167
Belfuture 2 CVBA	7.854
Belfuture CVBA	6.331
Lavansol M7 SAS	5.396
Hallostroom Huur Zon BV	4.000
NPG Willebroek NV	3.870
Boei BV	699
<b>Renewable energy: biomass</b>	<b>22.784</b>
AEB Bio-energiecentrale BV	20.525
Bio-energie Andijk BV	1.992
Bio-energie Next Garden BV	267
<b>Renewable energy, thermal energy storage</b>	<b>14.466</b>
Unica Financial Services BV	4.097

Eteck Warmte New Babylon BV	2.422
Eteck BV	1.839
Duurzame Warmte/koude Exploitatie BV	1.024
Vaanster VIII BV	1.016
Eteck Warmte Yours BV	782
Eteck Warmte Vijverberg BV	582
Eteck Warmte Waldo BV	581
Eteck Warmte Leidschenhof BV	475
Vaanster XIV BV	383
Eteck Warmte Solidhof BV	339
Eteck Warmte Motel One BV	251
Eteck Warmte Wibautveste BV	222
Eteck Warmte Drunen BV	189
Eteck Warmte Oosterhaar BV	151
Vaanster VII BV	113
<b>Housing</b>	<b>316.070</b>
Woonstichting SSW	35.000
Stichting Ymere	25.000
Stichting Duwo	25.000
Stichting R&B Wonen	20.000
Woningstichting Rochdale	20.000
Stichting Eigen Bouw	18.037
Stichting de Woonmensen/SJA	15.000
Stichting Area Wonen	14.109
Woningstichting Eigen Haard	13.000
Stichting Woonbeheer Betuwe	13.000
Woonstichting Domesta	11.828
Woningbouwvereniging Bergopwaarts	11.300
Stichting Waterweg Wonen	11.000
Woningstichting Servatius	10.000
Stichting Woonbedrijf SWSHvl	10.000
Stichting Woonstede	8.500
Bouwvereniging Onze Woning	8.000
Woonstichting Triada	7.500
Woningstichting SWZ	7.500
Woonstichting Groninger Huis	5.000
Woningstichting Weststellingwerf	5.000

Stichting Steelande Wonen	5.000
Woningstichting Leusden	4.600
Stichting Trivire	4.546
Stichting Omnivera GWZ	3.300
Stichting Mijande Wonen	3.250
Stichting Warmande	1.600
<b>Health and welfare services</b>	<b>200.274</b>
Maastricht UMC+	29.903
Stichting Zorggroep Noord- en Midden Limburg	13.712
Stichting BovenIJ Ziekenhuis	11.200
Stichting Volckaert	10.325
ZON PTC BV	9.973
Stichting GGZ Noord- en Midden Limburg	9.600
Universitair Medisch Centrum Groningen	8.168
Stichting MagentaZorg	8.130
Stichting Arduin	7.807
Stichting Dimence Groep	7.410
Stichting GGZ Breburg Groep	7.093
Stichting St Elisabeth Ziekenhuis	6.750
Stichting Christelijke Zorgcombinatie Zwolle en omgeving	5.760
Stichting Dimence	5.600
Stichting ZorgSaam Zeeuws-Vlaanderen	5.000
Stichting VieCuri, Medisch Centrum voor Noord-Limburg	5.000
Stichting Argos Zorggroep	4.800
Stichting Protestants Christelijk Ziekenhuis Ikazia	4.550
Stichting Antonius Ziekenhuis	4.201
Stichting Antoni van Leeuwenhoek Ziekenhuis	4.167
Stichting Zorg en Verpleging Goeree-Overflakkee	4.000
Stichting Catharina Ziekenhuis	3.333
Regionale Stichting Zorgcentra De Kempen	3.275
Stichting De Hoogstraat Revalidatie	2.552
Stichting Maastricht Radiology Oncology	2.550
Stichting Tragel Zorg	2.325
Stichting voor Regionale Zorgverlening SVRZ	2.200
Stichting Amphia	2.100
Stichting Dr Bernard Verbeeten Intsituu	2.009
Stichting Saxenburgh Groep	1.750



Stichting Amaranth Groep	1.274
Stichting Woon & Zorgcentrum 'Herfszon'	836
Stichting Interakt Contour Groep	832
Stichting Eindhoven Beheer	752
Stichting Treant Zorggroep	578
Stichting Odion	548
De Driestroom	155
Miscellaneous	56
<b>Rail transport</b>	<b>153.818</b>
EUROFIMA	54.256
ÖBB-Infrastruktur Bau AG	50.485
SNCF	32.941
Société du Grand Paris Sustainability Bond	16.136
<b>Water extraction and management</b>	<b>134.330</b>
Waterschap Brabantse Delta	24.600
Waterschap De Dommel	15.000
Waterschap Hollandse Delta	13.500
Hoogheemraadschap van Schieland en Krimpenerwaard	11.600
Waterschap Rivierenland	10.000
Waterschap Aa & Maas	10.000
Hoogheemraadschap Hollands Noorderkwartier	8.100
Waterschap Zuiderzeeland	7.000
Hoogheemraadschap Amstel, Gooi en Vecht	6.000
Waterschap Roer en Overmaas	5.280
Waterschapsbedrijf Limburg	5.250
Waterschap Rijn en IJssel	5.000
Waterschap Noorderzijlvest	4.000
Hoogheemraadschap van Rijnland	4.000
Waterschap Drents Overijsselse Delta	3.000
Waterschap Vallei Veluwe	2.000
<b>Local authorities</b>	<b>93.897</b>
City of Middelburg	16.000
City of Enschede	15.000
City of Zwolle	10.000
City of Weststellingwerf	5.000
City of Pijnacker	5.000
City of Gorinchem	5.000

City of Hengelo	5.000
City of Kampen	4.667
City of Maassluis	4.000
City of Leiden	3.500
City of Venlo	3.176
City of Bunschoten	3.120
City of Sluis	2.667
City of Nijkerk	2.600
City of Heusden	2.500
City of Elburg	2.400
City of Oldenzaal	2.000
City of Krimpen	1.667
City of Hoogezand	600
<b>Nature &amp; agriculture</b>	<b>32.629</b>
Eco-Business Fund	31.155
Dutch National Fund for Green Investments	1.474
<b>Monuments</b>	<b>13.985</b>
Stadsherstel Den Haag	13.985
<b>Education, culture and leisure</b>	<b>2.902</b>
Stichting Innovatie Bibliotheek Vlissingen	1.168
Stichting Texels Museum	854
Stichting kinderopvang 2Samen	760
Stichting Aktie en Informatiecentrum Lelystad	120
<b>Miscellaneous</b>	<b>30.902</b>
TenneT	20.786
Boei BV	5.266
CAI Westland	2.143
Stichting MagentaZorg	1.810
FMO aandelen	159
Nieuw Hengelman OG BV	147
Wereldwinkels	129
Miscellaneous	129
Stichting Ideële winkel	120
VOF Yuan	100
Stichting SCC de Lèghe Polder	74
Smit Hergebruik	39
<b>Total</b>	<b>9.669.637</b>

### **Equator Principles**

We didn't provide any loans subject to the International Finance Corporation's Equator Principles in 2019. The Equator Principles can be broken down into three risk categories, ranging from potential significant adverse social or environmental impacts (category A) to minimal or no social or environmental impacts (C). Besides our own sustainability criteria, we apply the Equator Principles to all project finance in excess of US\$ 10 million (i.e. € 8 million).

1e prijs

# SOCIAL IMPACT



We play an active role in society, raising and addressing relevant social issues together with our partners.

## Voor de Wereld van Morgen

[www.voordewereldvanmorgen.nl](http://www.voordewereldvanmorgen.nl) (For the World of Tomorrow) is ASN Bank's business community and inspiration platform. ASN Bank has helped sustainable business start-ups grow via this online platform. Businesses with a smart idea about how to create a better world can use the platform to present their proposition. At year-end 2019, 324 businesses had registered on the platform. ASN Bank helps them by offering coaching, advice, exposure, a network and training. The platform also puts on the annual ASN Bank World Award; this inspiring competition offers start-ups an opportunity for winning initial capital.

The website, which posts new blogs about sustainable initiatives almost every day, welcomed over a million unique visitors in 2019.

## 12th ASN Bank World Award

No fewer than 213 sustainable entries vied for the ASN Bank World Award in 2019. A select group of 30 sustainable businesses received an invitation for the training day, after which nine professional judges determined, based on the business plans they had submitted, which 15 businesses would be invited to make a three-minute pitch to the judges.

The judges selected six finalists that stood out for originality, feasibility, impact and comprehensiveness: Caffelnk, Circular Coffee Collective, Ptthee, Twenty, UnPlastic and WijkEnergieWerkt. The final, which was held in Amsterdam on 13 November, was won by **Ptthee**, 100% Dutch organic herbal tea made from ingredients with a restorative effect on nature. The two owners offer Dutch farmers a business model based on biodiversity by asking them to sow flowers and herbs for the herbal tea. The tea makers actually won two awards; besides being the judges' favourite (award: € 25,000), they also won the public choice award (€ 5,000). **Twenty**, which produces soluble shampoo capsules that reduce the contents of a shampoo bottle by 80% because consumers have to add the remaining 80% themselves in the form of water, was the runner-up (award: € 15,000). **Caffelnk**, environmentally friendly ink made from coffee grounds and vegetable oil, came in third (award: € 10,000).

### Will the ASN Bank World Award be held again?

Yes, definitely. The ASN Bank World Award will be back in 2020. [Hopefuls can sign up from mid-August onwards.](#)

## Crowd-funding

Since 2016, we've regularly drawn the attention of ASN Bank clients to sustainable businesses that meet our sustainability criteria on OnePlanetCrowd, a crowd-funding platform. Our clients showed an avid interest in these businesses in 2019 too. Moyee Coffee, a sustainable, Amsterdam-based coffee business, managed to raise € 400,000 in just one day.

In October, we published a [report](#) (pdf) on the share of sustainable businesses in crowd-funding in the period between 2016 and 2018. Our study showed that crowd-funding can provide valuable support to sustainable businesses and help them scale up.

### ASN Jeugdsparen partnerships

The ASN Jeugdsparen product allows ASN clients to invest in the future of children other than their own. Within the scope of this project, ASN Bank donates to projects designed to help underprivileged children in Africa and the Netherlands every year. In 2019, we donated 0.1% of the average of all ASN Jeugdsparen savings deposits in that calendar year, which came out to a total contribution of € 300,000, to the two partners (see below). Since the start of ASN Jeugdsparen in 2002, we've

donated nearly € 4.3 million in the context of this programme. In this chapter, we'll tell you more about how we spent this money.

### War Child

The Democratic Republic of the Congo has been in a state of war for years. The country's struggling with extreme poverty and famine, as well as with a huge influx of refugees from Burundi. War Child provides aid to these refugees in the relatively safe province of South Kivu. But the humanitarian situation in the country continues to be tenuous because of recurring conflicts. That's why many refugees from these conflict areas travel to Uganda in search of security. With the support of ASN Bank, War Child provides education and psychosocial support to refugee children in Congo and Uganda.

### Nationaal Fonds Kinderhulp

Nationaal Fonds Kinderhulp (Dutch National Children's Fund) is committed to helping vulnerable children in the Netherlands who live in poverty. It's the Fund's firm belief that all children deserve to be happy. Regrettably, over 300,000 children in the Netherlands grow up poor. They're at a disadvantage against their peers and they've got adult concerns. The Fund comes to the rescue by financing activities and things other children take for granted, such as sports, an outing, a course or a Christmas gift. ASN Bank supports the Fund in two areas: decorating children's rooms and courses.

### ASN Ideaalsparen and ASN Creditcard partnerships

ASN clients with an ASN Ideaalsparen savings account or an ASN Credit Card help make the world a better place because they support sustainable projects undertaken by our community partners at no extra cost to them.

To accomplish our sustainable mission, we collaborated closely in 2019 with six community partners focusing on human rights, biodiversity and climate policy, which also happen to be the three pillars of our sustainability policy. The ASN Foundation was one of our partners for the three sustainability pillars too.

In 2019, we donated 0.02% of the average of all ASN Ideaalsparen savings deposits in that calendar year, which came out to a total of € 1.35 million, to all partners (see below). We also contributed a share of the revenue stream from all cards in 2019; this donation amounted to € 143,250 in total. We'll tell you about these partners and their projects below.

### Amnesty International: college and university-level master classes

Although, generally speaking, human rights are pretty much respected in the Netherlands, they can still be compromised at times. Amnesty International is looking to give human rights a firm foothold in society via education. The fact that human rights education is in demand is reflected in the number of applications for its courses from college and university students who want to find out more about specific human rights issues. That demand is far greater than Amnesty International can handle, but ASN Bank helps it cope with a large share of the requests.

### Fair Wear Foundation: Living Wage

Similar to ASN Bank, the Fair Wear Foundation (FWF) also works to promote a living wage in the garment industry. FWF offers clothing companies independent advice and courses, and shares expertise, research and instruments. FWF also validates the steps garment companies take in their factory audits, local complaint helplines and fire performance checks. The Foundation independently screens garment companies' efforts to improve working conditions at their suppliers.

### Stichting De Noordzee: De Rijke Noordzee

Generating renewable energy while restoring nature: that's the essence of the pilot project De Rijke Noordzee (The Rich North Sea). The project is a joint initiative of Stichting De Noordzee, Natuur & Milieu and ASN Bank. The aim is to help strengthen nature in the vicinity of every offshore wind farm. Installing artificial reefs will allow shellfish banks to form, which provide food and shelter for fish. This is how wind farms can become nurseries for fish and shellfish. The idea is to create a robust ecosystem with a rich biodiversity and economic benefits.

### **Natuur & Milieu: Water Quality & Biodiversity**

By 2030, we want all our loans and investments to have a positive impact on biodiversity. The Water Quality & Biodiversity project initiated by environmental organisation Natuur & Milieu helps to achieve this. In the run-up to the water board elections in March 2019, it published a report on the poor quality of surface water in the Netherlands. This was followed in the summer by a successful pilot in which over 850 volunteers of all ages took surface water samples using a test kit supplied by Natuur & Milieu and ASN Bank. Now that researchers have validated some of the test results, we know that it's the small waterways in the Netherlands in particular that are in poor ecological condition.

### **IVN Natuureducatie: Nature in the Neighbourhood**

ASN Bank supports the Nature in the Neighbourhood project initiated by IVN Natuureducatie, an organisation offering nature education. This project has a positive impact on the living environment. Adding new trees and plants helps capture more fine carbon particles, which improves air quality and increases biodiversity, helping nature stay in balance and reducing the risk of pests (such as oak processionary moths). A green neighbourhood also has a positive effect on public health (both physical and mental) and encourages social inclusion. The Nature in the Neighbourhood project promotes growing tiny forests in gardens and the built environment, creating a nature-inclusive living environment and attracting bees.

### **Urgenda: Climate-Neutral Companies**

Urgenda is a Dutch organisation that seeks to bring about a fast transition towards a sustainable society in the Netherlands, with a focus on the transition towards a circular economy using only renewable energy. They work to accomplish their vision through a concrete action plan and projects. ASN Bank wants as many companies in its investment universe as possible to be climate-neutral by 2030. We engage in an in-depth dialogue with these companies to explore how they can gradually transition towards carbon-neutral operations.

## **ASN Foundation: miscellaneous projects**

The ASN Foundation supports projects in the areas of human rights, climate policy and biodiversity, which are ASN Bank's three sustainability pillars. In 2019, the Foundation collaborated with ten public interest groups in the Netherlands, which helped to create maximum impact with a relatively limited budget. Key projects the foundation supported in 2019 were:

- WWII Liberation Day Events: seven events on 5 May 2019
- Movies That Matter: a human rights film festival
- Jonge Klimaat Beweging (Young Climate Movement): vision of a sustainable society
- Naturalis Biodiversity Centre: a climate lab for young people
- Nationaal Ouderenfonds (National Foundation for the Elderly): outings for elderly people
- Orbis Experience: a yet to be developed sustainability pavilion
- De Bovengrondse, a platform for equality regardless of gender: project to end menstruation poverty
- IDFA, International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam
- Investico: partnership for investigative journalism
- VVOJ (Dutch Association of Investigative Journalists): encourage award for young journalists

The ASN Foundation is an Public Benefit Organisation (PBO). For more information about the Foundation's policy plan, governance, financial situation and activities, see its Annual Report.



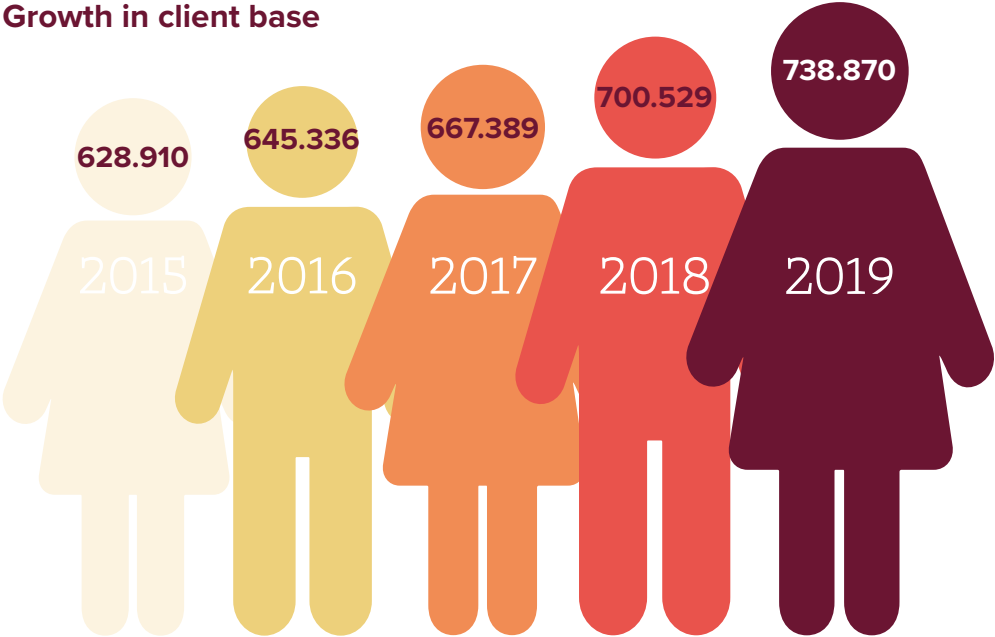
**WHO ARE OUR  
CLIENTS?**



ASN Bank gained more than 38,000 new clients in 2019. This brings our total client base to over 738,000. How old are our clients, what are their preferred banking methods and what do they think of ASN Bank?

In the summer of 2019, de Volkskrant, a Dutch newspaper, reported that one in five people in the Netherlands are interested in switching to a sustainable bank. We also saw this trend reflected in our figures: the net increase by 38,216 clients marked our highest growth rate since 2012.

**Growth in client base**



Number of retail clients by age	2019	2018	Growth rate %
Under 18	114,632	109,108	5.1%
18 to 34	121,922	107,184	13.8%
35 to 64	314,241	309,125	1.7%
65 and up	160,927	151,259	6.4%

## ‘Can I help you?’

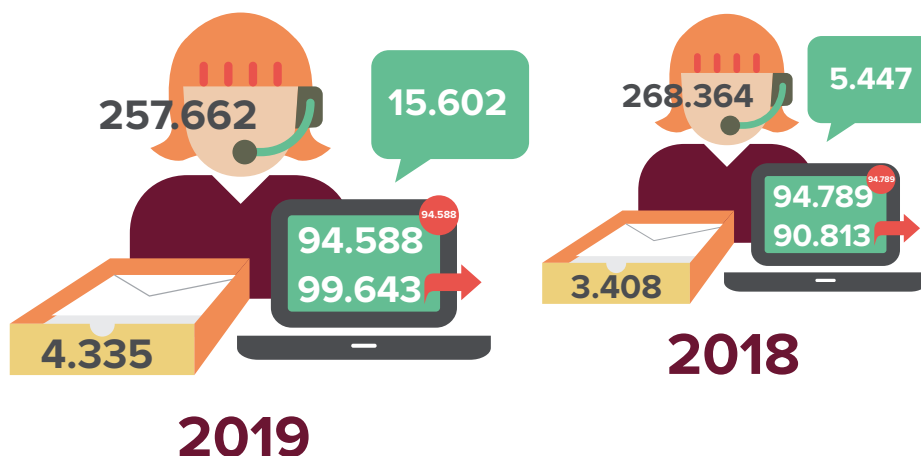
ASN Bank clients prefer to do their banking online or on the phone. That’s no surprise because we don’t have any actual branches. The 55 agents of the ASN Customer Service department are responsible for handling client calls, emails and chats.

### Our service

Our customer service agents interact with over 2,000 clients per day. Our clients are very happy with our agents, as is reflected in the high ratings they’re awarded on average. Still, there’s always room for further improvement in our interactions with clients and our service provision. To find out where we could do better, we ask clients to offer suggestions for improvement when they rate our performance.

The trend towards contacting the ASN Customer Service department via online channels continued in 2019. Our agents engaged in nearly three times as many chat conversations in 2019 than they did in 2018. Clients are also increasingly embracing the ASN Mobile Banking app. That said, clients are still wanting to contact us by phone, usually when they have questions about payment services.

### ASN Customer Services workload



### Addressing disruptions

In the first quarter of 2019, some of our clients’ phone inquiries were to do with disruptions in our online services. Such disruptions are unacceptable for us as a modern bank. That’s why we asked the IT department of de Volksbank, our parent company, to help us restructure our IT processes and we invested in capacity.

### What our clients think of us

The Net Promoter Score (NPS) reflects the degree to which clients would recommend a certain service provider or supplier. To calculate this score, clients are asked the following question: ‘On a scale of 0 to 10, how likely is it that you would recommend our organisation to a family member, friend or colleague?’ The percentage of clients awarding a rating of 0 to 6 is subtracted from the percentage of clients awarding a rating of 9 or 10. The NPS can be either positive or negative. The NPS was weighed down in 2019, but recovered in the fourth quarter (+17). The year-end closing score was +16 on average, which meant that we’d met our target for the year.

### What our clients say about us to others

KPMG carried out a survey of more than 5,000 Dutch consumers in 2019. Their [Customer Experience Excellence Analysis 2019](#) (pdf) rated 100 Dutch organisations from a range of sectors for their customer service. Just like last year, ASN Bank was the highest rated Dutch bank (28th place overall) thanks to the feedback provided by our clients.

A survey of 14,000 customers conducted by the **Dutch Consumers' Association** also showed us in a favourable light. In this survey, clients of all Dutch banks were asked to use a scale of 1 to 10 to rate their bank on a number of aspects, leading up an average score. Our average score was 9.1, just behind RegioBank (a fellow subsidiary of de Volksbank) and just ahead of Triodos Bank, which scored an 8.9. The traditional banks were rated considerably lower: Rabobank scored a 7.2, ABN AMRO Bank a 6.9 and ING came in last at 6.7.

Our website won 'Best Website' for the banking and investing category on the [websitevhjaar.nl](https://www.websitevhjaar.nl) (website of the year) platform. Our sister label RegioBank came away with the public choice award for most popular website.

Finally, we were happy to receive the **Sustainable Brand Index Award** in the banking category. The fact that we won this award, which was based on a survey of 6,000 Dutch consumers, tells us that both our clients and the general public recognise that sustainability is in our DNA. A total of 167 Dutch brands were rated, including eight banking labels. This survey was conducted for the third time in 2019. We came in first in 2018 as well.

## Our clients' choice of investments

At year-end 2019, 78,825 ASN Bank clients combined had invested an amount of over € 2 billion. For more information about the ASN investment funds, please visit the websites of ASN Bank and ASN Beleggingsfondsen N.V.

## Negative feedback on negative interest rates

The interest rate on savings has been lower than 1% for a number of years now. Unfortunately, interest rates continued to drop in 2019. Because we wanted to know how our clients feel about the possibility of negative interest rates, we started a dialogue with them in 2019.

In October and November, de Volksbank conducted a survey of ASN Bank, SNS and RegioBank clients. The survey was held in writing (among 3,000 clients) and in small panels. The message from our clients was clear: negative interest rates are unacceptable on a fundamental level.

On 3 December 2019, Maurice Oostendorp, CEO of de Volksbank, made a promise to the public about the interest rate on savings accounts held by retail clients of ASN Bank and its sister labels in 2020. He announced that, while savings accounts would accrue very little interest in 2020, the interest rate on balances of up to € 25,000 would still be higher than 0%.

Read more >>> [Why is the interest rate on savings as low as it is?](#)

## Meet-and-greet with clients

We're a bank without branches. We only have a head office. We communicate with our clients through our email newsletter or our Goedgeld magazine. But we very much enjoy meeting up with our clients in person from time to time. In 2019, we organised events for our clients in the cities of Rotterdam, Leeuwarden and Amsterdam.

### ACT. in Rotterdam

In September, we organised the third edition of the ACT sustainability festival. More than 1,000 paying delegates joined us for presentations about sustainability and climate issues by subject matter experts, attended interactive workshops taught by ASN Bank employees or listened to interviews. The day came to an end with an energetic performance by **Valvetronic** Brassband, which turned the closing drinks reception into a dance party.

### Live in Leeuwarden

A small ASN Bank delegation travelled to the city of Leeuwarden for an evening session in June 2019. During this session, Arie Koornneef and Joyce van der Est (our two Management Board members) elaborated on

the reasons behind sustainable banking. ASN Bank Account Manager Emiel van Zwet shared with the audience how ASN Bank finances renewable energy projects, thereby supporting the energy transition. Bas-Jan Blom (Managing Director of ABB) spoke to Angélique Laskewitz of the Dutch Association of Investors for Sustainable Development (VBDO) about the role of listed companies in sustainable transitions.

### AGM in Amsterdam

Investors in the ASN investment funds flocked to the AGM of ASN Beleggingsfondsen N.V., which was held in Amsterdam on 17 May 2019. They had the opportunity to attend exciting sessions before and after the official meeting. The day ended with an inspired climate talk by a well-known Dutch meteorologist.

Read more >> [minutes of the AGM](#) (pdf)

### For investors

ASN Bank organised a webinar (an interactive session via YouTube) in September. Bas-Jan Blom (Managing Director of ABB) and Mariëtte Smid (Senior Sustainability Manager at ABB) gave brief presentations and took questions from viewers. In the span of an hour, investors were updated on such aspects as the financial performance of the ASN investment funds and the selection method used for listed companies. This initiative will be followed up in April 2020.

Find out more >>> [Webinar on investing](#) (video of just over an hour)

### Podcasts

If you want to find out more about ASN Bank's sustainability policy, you can listen to a number of podcasts we were involved in 2019.

- [Geen cent in fossiele energie](#) (Not a penny towards fossil fuel) – Piet Sprengers on BNR News Radio (20 minutes)
- [118% klimaatneutraal, hoe helder is dat?](#) (118% climate-neutral, how clear do you want it?) – Piet Sprengers on Studio Energie (51 minutes)
- [Bedrijven moeten aantoonbaar duurzaam beleid hebben](#) (Businesses must be able to demonstrate that they live by their sustainability policy) – Arie Koornneef for NRC.nl (22 minutes)

# BEHIND THE SCENES

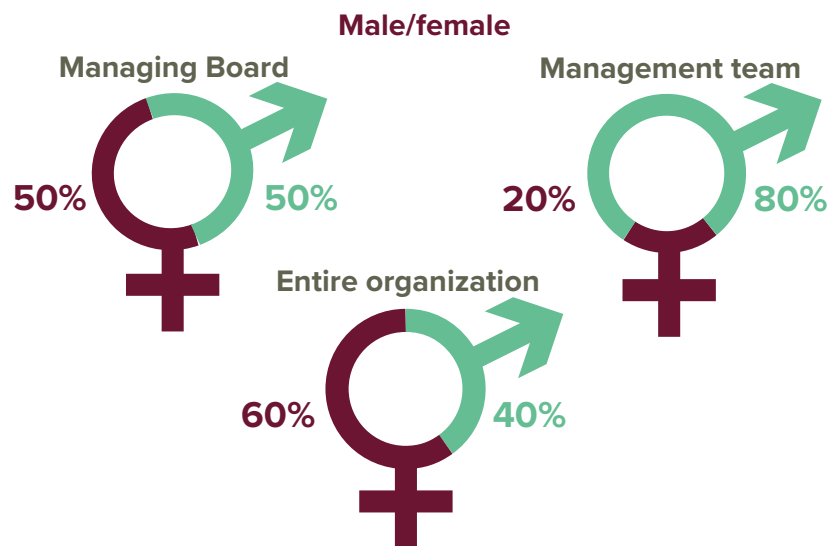
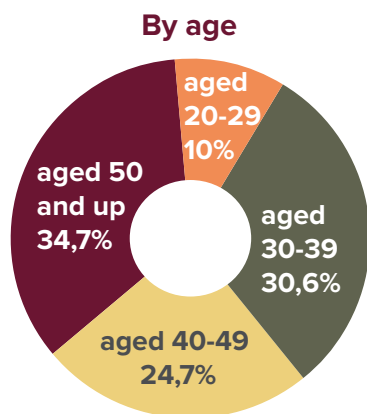


ASN Bank has its registered office at Bezuidenhoutseweg 153 in The Hague, the Netherlands. This chapter tells you more our staff base, our Management Board, the consumption figures and carbon emissions of our office, and our legal structure. Ready? Here we go.

## ASN Bank – details

In 2019, ASN Bank had 170 permanent employees (156.4 FTEs\*). Our organisation has the following departments (ranked by FTEs):

- Customer Service – 42 FTEs
- Client Account Management – 20 FTEs
- Sustainable Financing – 21 FTEs
- Information Management – 7 FTEs
- Marketing & Communications – 20 FTEs
- Sustainability Expertise Centre – 11 FTEs
- ASN Belegginginstellingen Beheer B.V. – 17 FTEs
- Support - Controlling & Compliance – 9 FTEs



\* FTE = fulltime-equivalent

## Our Management Board

The two members of ASN Bank's Management Board are Arie Koornneef and Joyce van der Est. Arie Koornneef has served as ASN Bank's CEO since 1 April 2017. In his previous career, he worked as Director of Marketing Strategy & Innovation at de Volksbank and as Director of Marketing at SNS. Before that, he worked at Youth for Christ and Simavi.

Joyce van der Est has been on the Management Board of ASN Bank since 2015. She's served as the bank's COO since 2003, in the role of deputy from 2013 to 2015. Before 2003, she worked at Robeco and Bank Labouchere.

## Executive pay

The remuneration policy for the ASN Bank Management Board is in line with de Volksbank's remuneration policy. Our executives receive a fixed annual income, a pension contribution and other fringe benefits. Similar to everyone else at ASN Bank and de Volksbank, Arie and Joyce aren't entitled to any variable pay or bonuses.

Executive pay (x € 1,000)	Fixed pay		Pension contribution		Other benefits		Total	
	2019	2018	2019	2018	2019	2018	2019	2018
Arie Koornneef	195	193	22	21	37	38	254	252
Joyce van der Est	161	158	22	21	28	33	211	212
<b>Total</b>	<b>356</b>	<b>351</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>465</b>	<b>464</b>

## Fixed pay

The fixed annual income of the Management Board members of ASN Bank consists of 12 monthly salaries, a holiday allowance and an extra month's salary paid at year end. The ratio between the highest and lowest salary at ASN Bank is 3.3.

## Pension contribution

This contribution corresponds to the employer contribution net of a personal pension contribution. The members of the Management Board of ASN Bank are covered by de Volksbank's employee pension scheme. This scheme has been formalised in de Volksbank's Collective Labour Agreement. In other words, similar to other employees, the members of the Management Board also owe 5% of their pensionable earnings in the form of a personal contribution as set out in the Collective Labour Agreement. No additional pension benefits have been awarded.

In accordance with statutory provisions, no pension is accrued on pensionable income in excess of € 107,593 (2018: € 105,075). Qualifying officers are paid compensation in the form of a gross supplement of 16.35% of their income in excess of € 107,593. In the table disclosing the executive pay, this supplement has been included in 'Other benefits'.

## Other benefits

This includes all other pay, such as the salary supplement paid to executives as compensation for their loss of pension accrual on income in excess of € 107,593 and the notional addition to their income for the private use of their lease cars (including for their commute), net of personal contributions. These fringe benefits are in line with the conditions that apply to all other employees.

## Consumption and emissions

ASN Bank is located in a sustainably renovated office building, which is powered, in part, by the solar energy system installed on the roof. The building also has a thermal energy storage system and a greywater system for toilet flushing. The cafeteria offers a range of sustainable food items.

The main environmental impact of our office is created by the carbon emissions of our office and other activities and paper consumption.

	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015
<b>Carbon emissions in tonnes</b>					
Carbon emissions – commuting	183	180			
Carbon emissions – air travel	3	4			
Carbon emissions – heating	8	12			
Carbon emissions (Scope 1 and Scope 2) <sup>1</sup>	194	196	168	178	160
Tonnes of carbon emissions by FTE* (Scope 1 and Scope 2)	1.25	1.28	1.08	1.20	1.14
Carbon emissions (Scope 3) <sup>2</sup>	39	76	90	153	158
<b>Energy consumption</b>					
kWh of electricity <sup>3</sup>	264,794	258,102	269,275	276,491	320,705
kWh of electricity by FTE	1,706	1,688	1,741	1,864	2,285
m3 of natural gas <sup>4</sup>	12,537	18,664	18,254	26,786	18,141
m3 of natural gas equivalents per m <sup>2</sup>	4	6	6	8	6
<b>Paper consumption in kilograms</b>					
Total paper consumption	59,542	118,891	140,550	250,686	238,254
Paper consumption per account in kilograms	0.06	0.12	0.16	0.29	0.29
<b>Water consumption</b>					
m3 of water	363	777	29	783	754
m3 of water per FTE	2.3	5.1	1.5	5.3	5.4
<b>Waste</b>					
Paper waste in tonnes	12.7	13.6	13.0	13.0	12.2

1 This figure includes all modes of transport (commuting and business travel, whether by car, train, bus or plane) and heating of ASN Bank.

2 This figure includes carbon emissions associated with the consumption of paper and water, as well as waste.

3 Electricity consumption is expressed in kWh (kilowatt hour). 1 kWh equals 0.0036 gigajoule.

4 The building is hooked up to the district heating system. Heating is expressed in gigajoules. These gigajoules have been converted into m3 of natural gas as per the statement provided by the utility company: 1 gigajoule equals 25.85 m<sup>3</sup> of natural gas.

### Carbon emissions

ASN Bank emits three types of greenhouse gases:

- Scope 1 emissions: direct greenhouse gas emissions caused by our own activities.
- Scope 2 emissions: indirect greenhouse gas emissions caused by our own activities, such as the generation of the electricity we use.
- Scope 3 emissions: emissions of greenhouse gases in the supply chain, such as the paper we use, the loans we provide and the investments we make.



Thanks in part to carbon emission offsetting, ASN Bank’s office building is climate-neutral where Scope 1 and Scope 2 are concerned. The office activities are climate-neutral for some of Scope 3. De Volksbank offsets any remaining emissions.

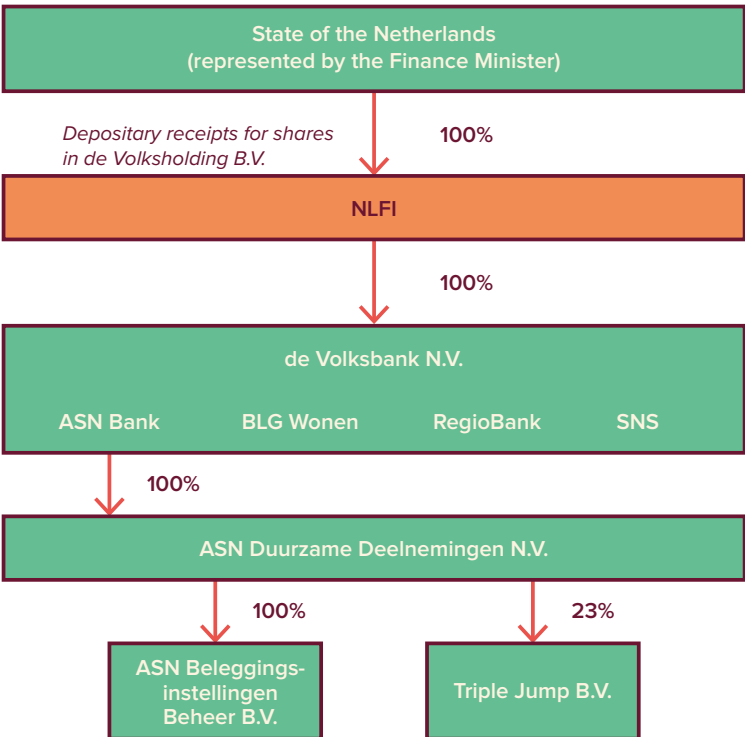
The carbon emissions due to commuting include well-to-tank emissions, i.e. emissions caused by the extraction, transport and refining process of fuels or during the generation and transmission of electricity. Earlier, we only made allowance for tank-to-wheel emissions, i.e. emissions caused by the combustion of fuel during the use of a vehicle.

**Paper**

The amount of paper we use dropped to 0.06 kilograms per account in 2019 (2017: 0.12). This drop was attributable to the further digitisation of our communication with clients. The process of opening an account now takes place online and clients are only sent hard-copy letters if we don’t have another option. In addition, an increasing number of clients are emailed the Goedgeld magazine rather than receiving it in the post and we’ve reduced its publication frequency.

**Legal structure**

ASN Bank is a trade name and one of de Volksbank’s four labels. The other labels are: BLG Wonen, RegioBank and SNS. ASN Bank operates under the banking licence that’s been issued to de Volksbank. ASN Bank offers its clients the opportunity to invest in the ASN investment funds, which are managed by ASN Belegginginstellingen Beheer B.V. (ABB). ABB has its own Management Board and filling requirements, but works in close collaboration with ASN Bank. ABB is a wholly owned subsidiary of ASN Duurzame Deelnemingen N.V. (ADD), which, for its part, is a wholly owned subsidiary of de Volksbank.



**Sustainability activities for funds**

The sustainability activities for the ASN investment funds can be broken down as follows. ABB is responsible for the sustainability activities associated with fund management: engagement, selection of the funds’ investment universe and voting at AGMs of the companies in the investment universe. ASN Bank plays an advisory and/or operational role in these activities.

ASN Bank screens companies and countries for the ASN investment funds and writes advisory opinions. On this basis, ABB, as the Management Board of ASN Beleggingfondsen N.V., decides which companies to include in the investment universe. On ABB’s instructions, ASN Bank engages with companies in the investment universe, such as pharmaceutical companies.



# REPORT OF THE ADVISORY COUNCIL

The Advisory Council of ASN Bank advises the Management Board on sustainability issues in the broadest sense; it provides both solicited and unsolicited advice. Please read on for their report for 2019.

The Advisory Council had five members in 2018: Carolien Gehrels, Maarten van Huijstee, Marleen Janssen Groesbeek, Jan van der Kolk and Tjerk Wagenaar. We, the members of the Advisory Council, work in a wide range of sectors, from the private sector and consulting to the public sector and academia. What we have in common is our extensive experience in the field of sustainable development, which we come at from different angles. We met four times in 2019. In the intervening period, we interacted with the ASN Bank Management Board and with the Board of Directors of de Volksbank, ASN Bank's parent company.

### Our role

Our role hinges on monitoring and promoting ASN Bank's sustainable strategy. We oversee ASN Bank efforts to deliver on its sustainability policy. We offer solicited and unsolicited advice. We ask the ASN Bank Management Board critical questions about the bank's sustainability strategy and serve as a sounding board. From our position as relative outsiders, we're perfectly placed to engage in debate about a wide range of topics. And every now and then we hand out a heartfelt compliment.

### Anchoring sustainability

De Volksbank, ASN Bank's parent company, is currently in the hands of the Dutch State. The idea is to sell the bank. To prepare de Volksbank for its sale, a number of actions have been set in motion. The Advisory Council monitors closely whether ASN Bank continues to live by its sustainability strategy. What services are being offered to ASN Bank clients, what products and services can they choose from, and how does ASN Bank plan to support social initiatives in the future? We regularly challenge the ASN Bank Management Board by asking them these types of questions. ASN Bank's sustainable strategy ties in well with banking with a human dimension, which is de Volksbank's mission.

In November 2019, the Dutch Minister of Finance mentioned the work-up to the sale of de Volksbank for the first time in Parliament. The strategy pursued by de Volksbank was widely supported; a number of studies will be carried out over the coming year to look further into the planned sale. The Board of Directors and the Advisory Council will keep close track of these developments.

### What's the status of the goals?

ASN Bank has defined a number of long-term goals: growing its client base to one million satisfied clients, increasing the volume of business loans, strengthening assets under management, and being a driving force behind sustainable development in the financial sector. Efforts and potential steps towards reaching these goals are discussed regularly within the framework of the objective of climate-neutral assets, which was achieved comfortably in 2019. When it comes to short-term goals, the Advisory Council is updated on the bank's operational performance on a regular basis.

### Sharper focus

ASN Bank uses its clients' savings deposits to provide mortgages to private individuals and loans to businesses, public institutions and sustainable projects, as well as supporting social initiatives. In 2019, the Advisory Council engaged with the Management Board about the bank's support of social initiatives and asked a number of critical questions about it. As far as we're concerned, the bank should be more discerning in the projects it supports financially and focus more on activities and organisations that make a real difference and demonstrably promote sustainable development.

### Operational plan

Towards the end of 2019, we cast a critical eye on the operational plan for 2020. Based on this plan, we foresee that ASN Bank will continue to develop robustly.

‘You can’t get through a single day without having an impact on the world around you. What you do makes a difference, and you have to decide what kind of difference you want to make.’

– Jane Goodall

