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Five themes that will shape sustainable investing in 2026

Building on recent political and market shifts, our 2026 themes explore sustainability challenges and industry-wide trends that now shape financial decision-making.

The key takeaway for 2026? A new era of pragmatism is emerging – building on the recent shift towards viewing sustainability as both a near-term and long-term resilience strategy, alongside growing awareness of the costs of misjudging environmental, social and governance factors. We expect this trend to accelerate throughout 2026, particularly in the following interconnected themes:



Matt Christensen
Global Head of Sustainable & Impact Investing



1. **Sovereignty** – mobilising investment

Sovereignty in Europe was a defining theme in 2025, and in 2026 it moves from concept to application within investment portfolios. Once associated mainly with defence, sovereignty now encompasses Europe's ability to act autonomously in strategically critical areas.

In our view, some key overlapping factors¹ shape European sovereignty: defence, energy, food, climate resilience, water, health, technology and the financial ecosystem. A mix of competitiveness initiatives,² future-readiness regulation,³ and European Commission policies designed to mobilise investment⁴ is enabling efficient capital deployment to strengthen autonomy across the bloc and its value chain.

We expect 2026 to mark sovereignty's evolution from a resilience theme into a core investment focus.



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2. Transition financing – improving definitions (and capital flows)

Transition is often used as a catch-all for sustainable change, but in 2026 we expect sharper definitions to drive progress. Greater regulatory clarity under SFDR⁵ around what qualifies as transition finance – combined with rising client interest and the need to position transition financing as a distinct asset class – will be key to accelerating capital flows.

Energy transition was a standout theme in 2025, as policymakers, regulators, industry and finance in most regions recognised the need to mitigate climate impacts. While transition finance currently centres on climate, environmental issues and risk mitigation, emerging guidance could broaden the scope to adaptation and resilience, as well as non-climate priorities.

The opportunity across the spectrum is vast, spanning the structural changes through global value chains and both private and public markets. In 2026, we expect these opportunities to drive the mainstreaming of transition as an asset class.



3. Digital resilience – strengthening guardrails

The pace of development in technology in recent years has been extraordinary, reshaping both daily life and the global economy. Yet, in our view, the rapid expansion of capabilities – especially in artificial intelligence (AI) – has outpaced the development of safeguards. Strengthening these guardrails will be critical to ensuring the long-term sustainability of technology-driven opportunities.

We have identified five essential factors for building resilient digital infrastructure: continuity and reliability, security and privacy, inclusion, health, and skills. Each of these will shape how fast-evolving technologies are positioned structurally – and determine their ability to seize opportunities while mitigating external risks.

Digital resilience is becoming indispensable as technology underpins the global shift toward models that can operate efficiently under future climate, planetary, and social



conditions. In 2026, we expect digital infrastructure to enter its next phase of development – driven by innovation and the need for robust safeguards.



4. Infrastructure – offering diversification opportunities

Well-functioning and resilient infrastructure is the backbone of a strong economy. Its scope is expanding beyond basic systems and services to a more advanced, technology-driven ecosystem that underpins socio-economic growth. We anticipate infrastructure development and financing to enter a new phase – driven by the urgent need for adaptation, mitigation, resilience, security and transition.

Economic reliance on robust infrastructure is growing fast, demanding stronger safeguards. Long-term resilience is now shaped by geopolitics, geoeconomic fragmentation, resource intensity, and physical risks – underscoring the critical role infrastructure plays in global stability.

Historically, infrastructure development was largely a government-led effort. Today, its growing importance for energy, digitalisation, water management and health is drawing private capital into the mix. Data centres are one clear example of the fast development in digital infrastructure, which is set to play an even bigger role in infrastructure projects in 2026. This shift will influence the scale, style and timelines of infrastructure financing – creating diversification opportunities and an attractive long-term risk-reward profile for investors.



5. Pricing risks – accounting for harm

Despite the high-profile politicisation and volatility surrounding sustainability, we have observed clients increasingly exploring how best to price evolving risks. In the year ahead, we expect significant progress in the pricing and integration of these risks into investment decisions.

This shift will be driven by several factors: enhanced modelling capabilities, growth in systematic and quantitative investment strategies, and improved attribution of financial impacts – including accountability for harm. Together, these developments will accelerate the formal integration of sustainability opportunities and risks into quantitative financial models.

Recognising the uncertain range of climate, planetary and social outcomes, improved integration of sustainability factors into financial models will be complemented by better scoping of scenario analysis. The insurance and legal sectors – both adept at identifying and quantifying risk – are well positioned to take the lead in determining how emerging risks are priced.

History offers a playbook: these industries helped reshape perceptions of toxins such as tobacco, asbestos and glyphosate. In the same way, pricing climate risks will lead the way, with biodiversity and social inclusion close behind.



Want a deeper dive? Look out for our **blog series** on these five themes, **starting in January**.

Footnotes

1. Allianz Global Investors, **Sovereignty – a growth catalyst?** October 2025
2. European Commission, **The Draghi report on EU competitiveness**, September 2024
3. European Commission, **White paper for European Defence Readiness 2030**, and **The Digital Europe Programme | Shaping Europe's digital future**, 2025
4. European Commission, **Commission Recommendation on increasing the availability of savings and investment accounts**, September 2025
5. Sustainable Finance Disclosure Regulation

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