



European
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EMAS

VERIFIED
ENVIRONMENTAL
MANAGEMENT

SUCCESS STORY

VO Group:

Being a driver of innovation and
change for the communications sector

December 2022

Environment

VO

VO is a communications group that has been based in Brussels for the past 30 years. We support private and institutional clients with everything from advice and strategy to implementation, while providing communication in all its forms (events, graphic, digital, artistic and technological media), including content creation. The group comprises 6 agencies with complementary expertise, grouped together at the rue de Stalle office, benefiting from a back office and consistent centralised management.

Industry:
Communications group

Size:
SME with 120 employees

Date:
16 December 2022



What is your approach towards sustainability?

For several years now, VO has been resolutely committed to a sustainable transition process in order to meet the challenges facing our society and the climate crisis. We have invested heavily in research and development, with the aim of drastically reducing our footprint and lessening our impact.

As active members of society, we consider it is our duty to play our part in contributing to the achievement of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. We are convinced that respect for the environment and for

human beings must be the natural corollary of economic development, innovation and creativity. For us, it is the expression of values that allow us to face the future together and to guarantee a positive future for coming generations. This conviction is not just a statement of belief; it is also translated into solid commitments, as well as a results obligation with regard to our internal management and our office management and, above all, with regard to our communication and event activities.

We aim to be a driver of innovation and change for the sector and to accelerate transition by developing partnerships with our stakeholders (customers, suppliers and partners) in order to mutually increase our positive impact on the environment.





Why did your company join EMAS?

By having finalised the implementation of EMAS in our company since June 2022, we take our commitment one step further to use our environmental management system to improve our activities with regard to the Sustainable Development Goals, from a position of continuous improvement, and in compliance with our regulatory obligations in terms of the environment, health and safety, both at our Stalle site and in the field.

Previously, our teams had been implementing actions to improve our environmental performance for a number of years.

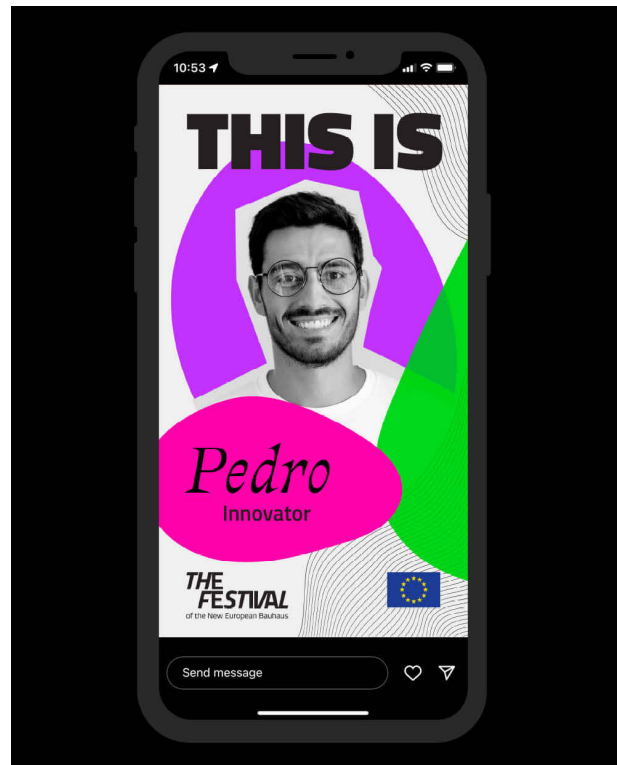
In 2015, we created a green team and obtained our first star in the Brussels regional “Ecodynamic Organisation Label” and then in 2016 a second star for our environmental performance in areas such as waste prevention and the circular economy, rational energy use, good management of worker mobility and sustainable food.

In 2018, our circular events toolkit project won the ‘Be Circular’ call for projects by Brussels Environment; it addresses 8 themes: furniture, decoration, food, venue, waste management, signage, goodies and mobility.

By 2019, we also acquired a CO₂ calculation tool for events and started to offset systematically.

In 2021, we have started sharing our Circular Event Toolkit open source, created a carbon calculator tool for campaigns and developed the tailor-made “My Impact Tool” which is now the core of our Environmental Management System.

Much more than a reporting instrument, the “My Impact Tool” is a platform dedicated to improving the environmental and societal performance of both event projects and communication campaigns. Specifically, this tailor-made tool enables us to meet multiple objectives/needs: centralising good practice, empowering stakeholders, increasing the sustainable expertise of project managers, measuring and valuing impact through better KPIs, and setting benchmarks.



Main results so far?

Within our Environmental Management System, the “My Impact Tool” now allows us to measure our progress over the long term, to monitor our environmental KPIs more professionally, and to set them better for the following year by easily identifying areas for improvement. The tool has been widely used for event projects since January 2022 and it will very soon be used for communication campaigns. Every event organised by VO has to be put through it. This has already enabled us to analyse the data and set improvement targets for 2023 based on real data. Notably, we can already say that we have managed to reduce the CO₂ per participant in face-to-face events by 15% compared to 2021.

In 2022, 100% of internal events were accompanied by an impact report, 88% of B2B events were labelled CO₂ Neutral and 80% of communication campaigns accompanied by a carbon footprint. Compared to the previous year, our events generated 54% less CO₂ emissions per participant in 2022; 57% of the ingredients for our menus were vegetarian and 65% seasonal.

By now, 59% of our employees have been trained in eco-design practices and internal tools and 73% of our customers have been made aware to the challenges of an ecological transition. In 2022, 60% of our employees used soft or electric mobility and 100% of the purchases related to our operations were certified, labelled or supplied by committed suppliers.



What do you have in mind for the future?

As the event sector has a greater impact on the environment than our other communication activities, it has been our priority for impact measurement and reduction. With the indicators in place, our objective for 2023 will be to reach the same level of maturity for communication and to develop additional indicators linked to the communication business.

Our concrete focus areas for continuous improvement of environmental performance through EMAS include the following.

In our support/office activities (Stalle site):

- Gain a better understanding of and reduce our energy consumption
- Raise staff awareness of digital sobriety practices
- Give preference to supplies and suppliers that meet sustainable criteria
- Encourage employees to opt for more sustainable modes of transport
- Prevent and sort waste

In our event and communication activities:

- Design our projects in a more sustainable way.
 - > More specifically, within our events business:
 - Minimise greenhouse gas emissions linked to the mobility of participants and service providers.
 - Promote certified, local and seasonal food.
 - Prevent and manage waste better.
 - Give preference to materials and equipment from the circular economy.
 - Choose best-practice venues (certified, energy self-sufficiency, etc.)
 - Aim for digital sobriety.
 - Minimise impact on biodiversity

> More specifically within our communication activities:

- Reduce our energy consumption by scaling back and controlling the data stored and transmitted and by opting for ecological storage providers.
 - Design our digital productions sustainably
 - Minimise the environmental impact of activities (filming or press conferences) by applying the same requirements as for any event.
 - Improve and train our teams in environmentally-friendly printing techniques (paper, ink, etc.) and encourage the reuse of printed materials.
- Ensure the design and production of inclusive projects that respect the working conditions of all stakeholders
 - Systematically measure the environmental impact of our communication and event activities (using our measurement tools – Carbon Footprint and the My Impact Tool)
 - Offset our residual emissions, with a particular focus on local, long-term, sustainable projects.
 - Train our teams to better detect and fight against greenwashing, and raise awareness among our customers in this respect.

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