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Commission

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EMAS

VERIFIED
ENVIRONMENTAL
MANAGEMENT

SUCCESS STORY

Glöckner Natursteine:

Pioneering sustainable craftsmanship

“Preserving the old - creating new things”

December 2022

Environment

Founded in 1967, the stonemason company **Glöckner Natursteine** specialises in the processing of natural stones, in particular the restoration of sandstone facades. Under the guiding principle “Preserving the old - creating new things”, the Saarland craft business is geared to the requirements of sustainability. Their focus is on reuse and use of regional stones instead of Asian imports. This strengthens regional value chains and avoids long transport routes. Many measures have been taken to improve the environmental performance of this small company, including the installation of solar power and the use of rain and service water for the cooling of the stone saws.

Industry:

Restoration, stonemasonry work in the construction sector, gravestones

Size:

Small company of 25 employees

Date:

EMAS registered since 19.05.2017



What is your approach towards sustainability?

The implementation of sustainability principles in our corporate strategy is a conscious decision. As a guide we use ISO 26000 and its core topics - organisational management, working practices, consumer concerns, environment, fair operating and business practices, involvement of society and human rights. In our two-year reporting periods, we set ourselves several small and 1 or 2 major goals with concrete measures for sustainable growth. By “sustainable growth” we mean being economically successful, while keeping negative effects as low as possible.

We consider it crucial to our Corporate Social Responsibility strategy to commit to all seven core themes of ISO 26000 and develop goals for each of them in a continuous improvement process. The reporting of our sustainability goals in general takes place at least every two years via the German Sustainability Code. We explicitly do not “only” want to drive one or two lighthouse projects that would monopolise our financial and human resources. Thanks to a materiality matrix we establish our priorities.



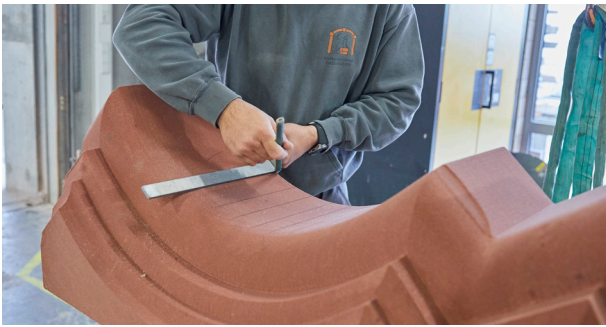
Why did your company join EMAS?

In 2015, the materiality matrix identified “environment” as a priority area for our company, mainly because the company still lacked standardised processes in this field, even though interest in environmental protection and resource conservation was high. We had already installed photovoltaic panels, used drain- and service-water to cool our big stone saws and minimize dust, and were giving preference to regionally available natural stones. What was missing were suitable instruments and a workable management system for systematic and continuous improvement of our environmental performance.

This is why, we committed to introducing a voluntary environmental management system in accordance with EMAS and the systematic organization of our work processes, taking into account laws and regulations affecting us, documentation, auditing of our environmental performance, and defining core indicators for our continuous improvement process.

We opted for EMAS because of three main advantages over ISO 14001:

1. The environmental statement is not only validated by a verifier, but the site is also officially entered in the EMAS register by the Chamber of Crafts.
2. Costs and efforts are considerably lower than for ISO 14001 certification, because the external audit is only carried out every two years.
3. The environmental statement can be used for public relations and thus facilitates communication with customers and employees.



Main results so far?

EMAS has had many effects: one of the first measures was the abandonment of Asian stone, which we have largely replaced with European ones. This affects us especially in the sales segment gravestones. What initially appeared to be a competitive disadvantage has now turned into a unique selling point, because we had to look for alternative materials and can now offer natural stones, which our competitors often do not have in their assortment. We have implemented this as far as possible. We do not use any Chinese material, we only purchase some Indian natural stone as a supplement for existing grave sites. We openly address the aspect of “avoiding complicity” (child labour, bad working conditions) in personal discussions with customers and suppliers.

Energy is also a priority area for us. We produce more solar electricity than we consume. Due to ongoing contracts, all of this electricity is currently fed into the grid. External expert advice helped us clarify that some measures we had planned in 2017 to save energy when working with compressed air would not be effective and enabled us to improve the overall concept. A better solution has since been found and implemented.

We have regularly involved our employees through training courses and working groups on topics such as waste management, occupational safety and digitalization. They contribute by taking on responsibility for projects, often on their own initiative, and by transferring knowledge to their colleagues. Obstacles to change processes were significantly reduced.

We have also shared what we have learned as a pioneering company in terms of sustainable craftsmanship. We notably helped develop a guide to use the German sustainability code in craft business, an initiative of the registered association “craft with responsibility” (Verein Handwerk mit Verantwortung e.V.) that we co-founded. Similarly, we advised the project “Handwerk hoch N” that supports SMEs in strengthening the sustainability of their business, a project led by the Central Agency for Continuing Vocational Education and Training in the Skilled Crafts (ZWH).



What do you have in mind for the future?

With the aim of conserving resources, we are working on a concept for the reuse of old grave stones - not for the individual case, but for entire cemeteries in our region. Since this task is too big for a single company, we want to cooperate with potential partners to explore possibilities, notably with the municipality, the environmental campus Birkenfeld, and the stone mason guild. At this stage, we have not yet met with interest from municipal administrations to address this issue.

As part of our current environmental programme we shall also communicate more strongly towards our stakeholders on environmental measures.

What guides our present and future implementation of EMAS is the following:

1. We are committed to protecting the environment. Therefore, we are committed to complying with the environmental laws that affect us and to continuously improving our environmental performance.
2. In the procurement of our raw materials, including stones and other operating materials, we respect internal standards based on ecological and social criteria.
3. We handle hazardous substances responsibly when using and storing them (e.g. stone dust) by training our employees and applying technical protective measures.
4. We offer our employees a wide range of training opportunities. Competence, responsibility and communication are key concerns.
5. We want to set an example. To this end, we are prepared to do more than the average. We are involved in many ways in the skilled crafts sector and the rest of the economy. Innovation and communication are essential for this. We communicate our corporate philosophy in our blog.

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