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EMAS

VERIFIED
ENVIRONMENTAL
MANAGEMENT

SUCCESS STORY

ITELAZPI:

Reducing the environmental impact of telecommunication infrastructures.

December 2022

Environment

ITELAZPI is the Public Company that manages the Basque Government's telecommunications infrastructure network to offer public services to citizens through a series of radio communication centers. The organization is attached to the Directorate of Information and Communication Technologies of the Basque Government's Department of Public Governance and Self-Government.

Its activity is focused on managing the telecommunication services provided from the headquarters located in Zamudio, where 17 people work. The staff manages a network of more than 200 telecommunication centers that are located in strategic locations in the natural environment. This particularity means that part of ITELAZPI's efforts is aimed at minimizing the impact of these infrastructures in the territory. Thus, one of the strategic axes of ITELAZPI is focused on achieving "A MORE SUSTAINABLE NETWORK".



Why did your company join EMAS?

As early as 2005, ITELAZPI was certified under the Ekoscan Standard (a regional standard used in Basque Country). It was in 2012 when ITELAZPI decided to move towards excellence in environmental management by adapting its environmental management system to EMAS, achieving EMAS registration the same year.

The main reason to opt for EMAS was that the organization had satisfactorily demonstrated the good results of having integrated environmental issues into its management and EMAS offered it the possibility of continuing to make progress and even being able to work more firmly and concretely with the indirect aspects of the activity and with stakeholders.

On the other hand, as part of the Public Administration to which ITELAZPI belongs, it considered it appropriate to lead by example and to make known through the annual Environmental Statement, the progress, and challenges in environmental improvement in which the company was working.

Throughout these 10 years of EMAS Registration, ITELAZPI has expanded and strengthened its environmental management, integrating topics previously considered more indirect, such as environmental traction towards its suppliers and contractors.

As for the benefits derived from having EMAS, it favored the attainment of other achievements such as having the Carbon Footprint Calculation and CO₂ Reduction Label, granted by the Ministry for Ecological Transition and Demographic Challenge and, above all, the ability to increase its environmental performance and improve its transparency and credibility.





Main results so far?

In the field of energy efficiency, the company has been working for several years on implementing technologies and devices with lower consumption, on committing to the generation and self-consumption of renewable energy, on contracting sustainable energy consumption and on applying energy management in its centers. With all this, it has achieved great challenges such as guaranteeing that since 2020 the electricity consumption of its offices and since 2021 the total electricity consumption of its telecommunications centers come from 100% renewable sources, resulting in zero GHG emissions. ITELAZPI has managed to reduce, in just 3 years, its Carbon Footprint (scopes 1 and 2), by more than 95%, going from 2,284.32 t CO₂-eq in 2018, to 110.28 t CO₂-eq in its last year of calculation (data 2021).

Regarding the offices, the main results are that with the adoption of solar energy generation and self-consumption systems, 16% of electricity consumption in 2021 came from these renewable sources and that it has also influenced the value chain through green criteria in purchasing and contracting services.

In telecommunications centers, ITELAZPI works on improving the control of energy consumption of cooling systems to ensure efficient operation without detriment to the proper functioning of the centers. A pilot project helped the organization to verify that the specific location of air conditioning systems and air outlets can ensure lower consumption of refrigeration equipment. Based on these results, the company will work on the adaptation of these centers to ensure optimal consumption, and at the same time, contribute to extending the life of the equipment thanks to better temperature conditions.

In many cases, these telecommunications centers were built many years ago, and for some of them, the characteristics with which they were conceived no longer meet current needs, so it is essential to adapt them with the least environmental impact. In this sense, the company has worked to integrate the environmental issues in these operations and to reinforce the knowledge and awareness of the contractors working in these centers. Thus, in large-scale adaptation operations, ITELZPI previously carries out an environmental study to determine the actions to be taken without having a negative impact on the environment. In addition, important aspects

are considered, such as the provision of bird protection systems in those power lines located in areas of special protection and the integration of these centers in the landscape through actions such as the mimicry with the painting of huts and towers, the installation of wooden beacons at the entrances and surroundings, the planting of native trees or the adequacy of adjacent viewpoints.

Indirectly, ITELAZPI also works in other areas to make it easier for society to approach these telecommunications centers. Specifically, the company adapts those centers that have been dismantled turning them into recreational areas for hikers, it also sponsors the mountain film festival MENDIFILM, on its website it invites to perform mountain routes that run through the areas near the telecommunication centers, it maintains a close collaboration with the Basque Mountain Federation, it promotes the routes along the water trails in collaboration with another entity (URA) and it celebrates “zuhaitz eguna”, open days for schools and citizens where more than 4,000 trees have been planted.



What do you have in mind for the future?

Looking to the future, the company intends to continue working on the definition of more efficient and environmentally sustainable telecommunications infrastructure models - for this, it has already started working on cataloging both the characteristics of each center and the natural environment in which they are located - and to contribute to the SDGs, particularly to goals 7 “affordable and clean energy”, 11 “sustainable cities and communities”, 12 “responsible production and consumption” and 13 “climate action”. In addition, as EMAS has allowed it to start working with its stakeholders, ITELAZPI intends to continue influencing suppliers and contractors, and other stakeholders.

Contact

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