
Our **responsibility**

VESCOOM

EN

reaches beyond

these
walls

Raw materials, energy and water, waste

Vescom focuses on developing, manufacturing and distributing premium-quality wallcovering and upholstery. Our products feature a varied and extensive range of colours and designs and contribute a strong 'wow' factor to interiors of all kinds in the major contract market. Vescom stands for high quality. We use that emphasis on quality to meet the aesthetic and functional needs of offices, hotels and healthcare institutions, retail outlets, schools, restaurants, airports and even ships.

However, it would be very short-sighted of us to solely relate concepts like 'atmosphere' and 'quality' to a narrow internal context of working areas and relaxation areas. There is a world outside the walls we decorate as well; our natural surroundings or the environment. In modern times, we cannot and will not ignore the impact that our actions have on this external world and our quality of life. Not venturing outside your own 'four walls' and exclusively concentrating on market requests and needs is no longer acceptable for a modern business. Nor is it acceptable for a growing group of buyers and end-users.

Because we develop, manufacture and distribute wallcovering, we control practically all the stages in the production supply chain. This means that we are also capable of limiting the impact of our activities on the environment. At Vescom, quality is never just related to the product, it is also part and parcel of the production process. We continually search for ways of making this process cleaner and more efficient.

The raw materials we process strongly depend on the use to which the end product will be put. The areas where the product is fitted, restaurants, hospitals or offices, all have their own specific requirements. For example, fire safety, hygiene, easy cleaning and durability. But also appearance and atmosphere.

Finally, price also remains an important consideration. The product must match the budget. As a buyer, you select the most suitable wall covering for your needs and weigh up the importance of environmental aspects in relation to other criteria. We offer you a collection that allows environmentally responsible choices and make sure that our business processes have as little impact on the environment as possible.

This booklet tells you more about how we integrate environmental care into our activities. It also outlines what we have achieved in the areas of raw materials, energy, water and waste.

environmental **VESCOM**

care

within the

supply

chain

Ever since Vescom was founded in 1971, environmental care has been a key element in our operations. This had led to the continual introduction of innovative measures to protect the environment.

Our quality assurance system was certified in accordance with ISO 9001 as long ago as 1993. Ever since, we have incorporated environmental legislation and policy in our work instructions as a matter of course. We have made drawing up and executing company environmental plans a mandatory element of business policy. In 1995, we were the first in our sector to start using water-based inks. Our colour inks and frame inks have been solvent-free ever since. We also required our suppliers to remove heavy metals from their products long before this was included in official legislation.

In 2001, we were the first company within our sector to introduce the ISO 14001 environmental management system. We continue to select our partners and suppliers based on a criterion of double quality standards: both in terms of the product and in terms of environmental care. Nearly all our suppliers of raw materials are ISO 14001 certified. The same applies for most of our suppliers of semi-finished and finished products. We identify specific environmental issues with these suppliers and continually collaborate with them in the search for better raw materials.

Environmental care

we have 

a responsible

approach to

raw

materials

Different raw materials are required for each product. Vinyl wall coverings account for a large part of Vescom's collection.

The continued debate on the use of vinyl is unjustified. Many of the drawbacks that were previously ascribed to PVC (polyvinylchloride) no longer apply. Vescom has eliminated the raw materials that have a negative impact on the environment to the greatest possible extent. For example, we comply with GREENGUARD Indoor Air Quality guidelines. This results in cleaner air and reduced consumption of non-renewable raw materials. In anticipation of REACH (European legislation relating to the Registration, Evaluation and Authorisation of Chemicals), we have replaced the plasticizers in the film we use with environmentally friendly variants. Currently, research is taking place into plasticizers made from sugar. We will test this product as soon as it is available.

One of the main benefits of vinyl wall coverings is their long life. A vinyl wallcovering has a minimum life span of 10 to 15 years depending on the market where it is used. Furthermore, in comparison to other materials, PVC possesses various properties that reduce its impact on the environment. These are the reasons why PVC can be described in broad terms as a sustainable and environmentally responsible material. PVC has scored just as well if not better than comparable materials in several LCA (life cycle assessment) studies*.

Making concessions in the area of product quality is not an option for Vescom. To date considerations of affordability, fire safety and durability have been the main factors preventing a move to raw materials that might be less harmful to the environment. We still continue to search for alternatives however. At the present time, we are investigating whether polyethylene and polypropylene could be suitable as raw materials for our film. The results of these tests will be available this year and will clarify when we can start using these alternative raw materials.

In addition to vinyl wallcovering, Vescom also offers various grades of textile wall coverings. Silk, for example, which is a pure natural product. This material is often used because of its opulent yet natural appearance. Furthermore, silk is an environmentally friendly choice because it is a naturally biodegradable material. We also offer Xorel in our range, which is as attractive as it is durable. This product is cradle-to-cradle certified.

As mentioned above, we only use water-based inks and never use inks that contain solvents. The same applies for Vescom adhesives, cleaner and substrate sealants and primers.

We use a significant quantity of paper for our brochures and collection presentation binders. This activity was FSC-certified in January 2009, meaning that the wood for our paper is harvested from responsibly managed forests in accordance with the rules of the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC).

As you can see, we continue to search for ways of reducing the impact that our raw materials usage has on the environment. We also offer our customers a choice between different types of textile and vinyl wallcovering.

* Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) or life cycle analysis is an international, standardised method that is used to quantify the environmental impact of a product or service by looking at the entire life cycle of the product (from raw material to waste).

we limit 

our use of

energy

and

water

When making new investments, we choose the most environmentally friendly alternative out of principle, even if it is more expensive. This approach has allowed us to achieve substantial savings in our consumption of energy and water in recent years.

Vescom has invested in new printing machines and currently operates the most modern production facilities in Europe. These machines consume far less energy than the old ones. Technical modifications have also been made so that the waste heat from the cooling machine can be reused to heat the factory. The energy saving measures we have implemented in our buildings are perhaps not as sensational, but no less effective. This involves our lighting, heating and insulation.

All these measures have resulted in a drop in our energy consumption per unit of product in the last few years. Our gas consumption is only slightly higher than 25 years ago even though our production levels have more than doubled and the number of factory buildings has increased. Our electricity consumption has developed in line with our growth in production.

In the mid nineteen nineties, we reduced our consumption of cooling water from 25,000 m³ to 1,000 m³ per annum by implementing a closed circuit system for cooling our machines.

we

VESCOM

reduce

waste

The major advantage of vinyl is that it lasts a long time, which therefore makes it a sustainable material. This is however also a disadvantage when the time finally comes for processing the material as waste. Consequently, the greatest challenge faced by Vescom in terms of further reducing the amount of waste lies in the area of post-consumer recycling. Recycling is technically feasible, but cost and organisational considerations make this impossible at present. The main problem lies in separating the backing from the vinyl. High level agreements are needed in order to make this a financially viable proposition.

Within the bounds of our own production process, we have already implemented a number of measures that have successfully reduced the quantity of waste. ISO 9001 certification has reduced errors and thereby reduced faulty product and waste. Monitoring and improving production methods has led to 20% less waste since the beginning of the nineteen nineties.

We sort the waste into materials that can and cannot be recycled. 100% of the pure PVC film waste is offered by us to recyclers. This is 2.5% of the total quantity of PVC that we purchase as film. Furthermore, our supplier of film also recycles 20% of the output from his own production process.

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ISO 9001

ISO 14001



**Our responsibility reaches
beyond these walls**

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