



Carbon Communication Strategy

Houben NV - Hasselt

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GENERAL PROJECT DATA

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 CO₂ PERFORMANCE LADDER

The CO₂ performance ladder is a tool and certification scheme that can be used in public procurement to encourage CO₂ reductions. By incorporating the ladder into public procurement, contracting authorities can help reduce CO₂ emissions in their activities.

The CO₂ performance ladder is a certified management system that encourages companies to reduce CO₂ in both a structural manner, within operations and in projects as well as in the supply chain. Certification is carried out by an accredited and independent body. To encourage certification based on the CO₂ performance ladder, a fictive discount is granted in procurement contracts to companies that score well on the ladder. Companies that are certified following a specific level ('niveau') on the CO₂ performance ladder and thus make efforts in CO₂ reduction, therefore, have a greater chance of obtaining public contracts.

In the CO₂ Performance Ladder, the Capability Maturity Model is translated into five levels, rising from 1 to 5. For each level, a fixed set of requirements is defined that are connected to the CO₂ performance of the organization and its projects. These requirements stem from four perspectives (A through D), each with its weighting factor. An organization's place on this ladder is determined by the highest level at which the organization meets all requirements. In the spirit of the CO₂ Performance ladder, an individual perspective cannot be viewed separately from the other perspectives. Each higher level includes the requirements of the lower levels. The organization must be permanently active with current performance at the lower levels.

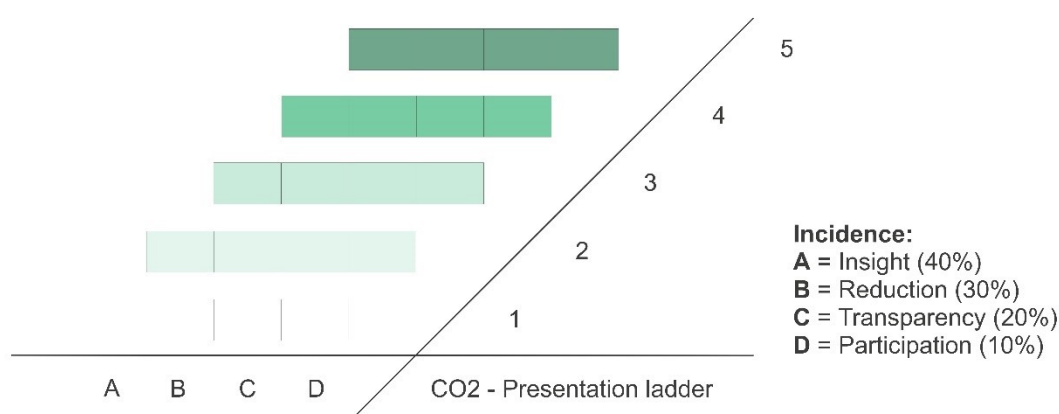


Figure 1: The CO₂ performance ladder perspectives and levels

1.2 GOAL AND STRUCTURE OF THE DOCUMENT

In April 2024, Houben NV started to take a structured approach to the organisation's CO₂ emissions. This Carbon Communication Strategy is part of this approach and aims to methodologically outline the communication approach of Houben NV, as part of the Reduction Strategy discussed in a separate report. The Communication Strategy is based on the requirements as formulated by the CO₂ performance ladder manual v3.1.

The purpose of this Communication Strategy is to arrive at the identification of stakeholders, the methods of reaching them and the content of the information to be conveyed. Using this document, Houben NV aims to communicate both internally and externally on their actions to reduce and monitor CO₂, as well as evaluate systematically if the communication reaches the identified stakeholder effectively.

The aspects that are covered in this Communication Strategy are discussed in the following chapters:

1. Chapter 1: Introduction
2. Chapter 2: Stakeholder identification & communication approach
3. Chapter 3: Yearly communication plan
4. Chapter 4: Monitoring and evaluation of carbon communication strategy

2. CO₂ STAKEHOLDER IDENTIFICATION & COMMUNICATION APPROACH

2.1.1 GOAL

Internal and external communication about the efforts made as part of the CO₂ performance scale is essential to ensure that:

- Our employees become aware of the importance of reducing our CO₂ emissions.
- Our employees understand how they can contribute to our ambitions.
- Our commitment to reducing CO₂ emissions.

It is essential to communicate our CO₂ policy internally so that all employees are clear about:

- What our concrete ambitions are;
- That our reduction measures are important and necessary;
- That these measures require well-defined efforts.

To position ourselves as a company ready to act in our endangered world, we must communicate regularly with the outside world about our CO₂ policy, our CO₂ footprint, our reduction targets and the progress of this reduction.

The aim of this communication to our external partners is to inform them of our actions in terms of environmental responsibility and to highlight our active role.

2.1.2 TYPES OF COMMUNICATION IN HOUBEN NV

Channels	Goal & explanation
External - Website	Our quarterly update on carbon reduction efforts aims to provide clear, accessible, and transparent information on the progress of our carbon footprint reduction. This update highlights the key initiatives we've implemented and tracks measurable outcomes.
External – Social Media (LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram)	The goal of quarterly LinkedIn communication on our carbon reduction includes the following objectives: 1. Showcase Commitment: Demonstrate the organization's dedication to sustainability and environmental responsibility. 2. Enhance Brand Image: Strengthen the company's reputation as a forward-thinking and eco-conscious entity. 3. Engage Stakeholders: Inform and engage stakeholders, including employees, customers, investors, and partners, about the organization's carbon reduction efforts. 4. Attract Talent: Appeal to potential employees who prioritize sustainability and want to work for an environmentally responsible company. 5. Compliance and Leadership: Highlight compliance with environmental regulations and showcase leadership in industry best practices for sustainability. 6. Customer Trust and Loyalty: Build trust and loyalty among customers who value corporate social responsibility and prefer to support sustainable brands. 7. Encourage Collaboration: Foster partnerships and collaborations with other organizations and stakeholders committed to carbon reduction. 8. Educate and Inspire: Educate the audience on the importance of carbon reduction and inspire others to adopt similar practices. 9. Transparency and Accountability: Provide transparency in reporting the progress and impact of carbon reduction initiatives, demonstrating accountability.

External – Press releases	Annual press releases serve to inform the media and public about Houben NV's key sustainability efforts, ensuring the message reaches a broad audience . By providing concise, accurate updates, these press releases position Houben NV as a trusted leader in environmental responsibility within its industry.
External - Magazine	Yearly update of our magazine aims to raise awareness about sustainability efforts and the importance of reducing carbon emissions. It provides in-depth articles, case studies, and practical tips on how Houben NV contributes to lowering the carbon footprint. By showcasing success stories, innovative technologies, and actionable strategies, the magazine fosters a community of environmentally conscious readers and supports the global transition to a low-carbon future.
External – Roadside banners	Our roadside banners can effectively communicate carbon reduction initiatives by displaying concise messages and visuals that raise awareness and encourage community engagement in carbon reduction practices.
External – Annual report	An annual report can effectively communicate Houben NV's commitment to carbon reduction by showcasing measurable sustainability goals , progress, and future initiatives, thereby enhancing transparency and accountability to stakeholders.
Internal - HiTribe Newsletter	General monthly overview of highlights in the organization. The goal of the newsletter is to bridge the gaps between the different divisions of Houben NV.
Internal – Team meetings	The purpose of bringing carbon reduction updates in monthly team meetings is twofold. First, this will enable more granular information distribution to all the different teams within Houben NV. Second, these team meetings can be used as a platform for bottom-up carbon reduction initiatives .
Internal – Posters at office	The goal of posters at the office is to serve as a constant reminder of the organization's carbon reduction goals, providing employees with information on sustainable practices and encouraging them to actively participate in efforts to lower our carbon footprint.
Internal – All-in website	The purpose of our all-in website is to centralize internal communication about carbon reduction by providing employees with accessible resources, updates on sustainability initiatives, and interactive tools.

Internal – Safety day	Our annual Safety Day can be utilized to promote carbon reduction by incorporating educational sessions and activities that raise awareness about the environmental impact of safety practices and encourage employees to adopt more sustainable behaviors in their daily work.
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Table 1: Types of communication channels within Houben NV

2.1.3 STAKEHOLDERS

	Stakeholders	Example	Why is it important?
External stakeholder	Clients	Architects, project developers, contractors	Clients and private companies today ask for the effort that Houben NV makes to protect the climate and nature. By communicating this element, this will be readily clear for potential new projects
	Bank	-	Banks readily support green investments today, meaning that clear communication on new initiatives can help to find support for Houben NV's plans and ideas.
	Suppliers	-	By connecting to our suppliers, they can bring information on how they are handling the transition to sustainable/green construction, helping Houben NV to identify new alternatives to reach their climate goals.
	Partners	Expliciet, TM-partners, engineering companies, Buildwise, PXL, CLB	By contacting our partners, they can help us identify ways to make our buildings less polluting. The mentioned partners have been identified as potential partners to work with in the future to achieve CO ₂ reductions.
	Governments	-	As a client and an institution providing operational permits, governments give Houben NV the license to operate. Governments can offer information, but also new opportunities.
	Sector initiatives	Embuild, VOKA, VKW, ADEB-VBA, vakbond	Sector initiatives grant projects and information on how the sector sees green business operations, and providing information to sector initiatives makes Houben NV a partner in the transition. The mentioned sector initiatives have been identified as potential partners to work with in the future to achieve CO ₂ reductions.
	Family and neighbours	-	Family and neighbors can provide valuable insights into community needs and concerns, allowing Houben NV to tailor its projects to enhance local well-being

			and address any potential issues related to construction, noise, or environmental impact.
Internal stakeholders	Employees	All employees within Houben NV	Communicating a company's carbon management system to employees is crucial because it engages them in the company's sustainability efforts, encourages active participation and innovation in emission reduction, and boosts overall morale and commitment to environmental goals.
	Contracted professionals	Subcontractors, self-employed freelancers	Communicating a company's carbon management system to contracted professionals is important because it ensures that all parties are aligned on sustainability goals and practices, promoting a cohesive approach to carbon reduction. It helps subcontractors and freelancers understand their role in the organization's environmental initiatives and fosters accountability.
	Shareholders	Board of Directors of Houben NV	Communicating a company's carbon management system to shareholders is vital because it aligns with their interests in sustainable business practices, informs them of progress towards reduction targets, and can positively influence the company's valuation and market reputation.

Table 2: Internal and external stakeholders within Houben NV

3. YEARLY PLAN COMMUNICATION

During a workshop held in August, the management team of Houben NV was able to pinpoint when and how frequent a specific type of communication could be used throughout a calendar year to communicate to stakeholders. This is shown in the figure below. On top of that, specific responsibilities were divided within the team to manage these moments in the year.

3.1 YEARLY CALENDAR

Quarter	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
External communication	Website	Website	Website	Website
	LinkedIn	LinkedIn	LinkedIn	LinkedIn
		Annual report		Magazine
	Banners			
	Press release			
Internal communication	Internal meeting	Internal meeting	Internal meeting	Internal meeting
				Safety Day
	Newsletter			
	Posters			

Figure 2: Yearly communication calendar

3.2 RESPONSIBILITIES

Governance of the Carbon Communication Strategy is vested in the following roles within Houben NV's management.

The RACI model is a project management tool that clarifies roles and responsibilities within a project by categorizing stakeholders into four distinct roles: Responsible, Accountable, Consulted, and Informed. "Responsible" refers to those who carry out the tasks, "Accountable" denotes the person ultimately answerable for the project's success, "Consulted" includes those whose opinions are sought during the process, and "Informed" are those kept updated on progress and decisions.

Communication channel	Management	CO ₂ - Performance ladder Project Manager (Peter) or CO ₂ team in future	Internal communication officer (Sylvie)	External communication agency (Expliciet)
External communication				
Website	I	C	A	R (executive)
LinkedIn	I	C	A	R (executive)
Press release	I	C	A	R (executive)
Banners	I	C	A	R (executive)
Annual report	I	C	R (executive)	R (executive)
Magazine	I	C	A	R (executive)
Internal communication				
Internal meetings	R		R	
Newsletter HiTribe			R	
Safety Day		R	R	
Posters			A	R (executive)

Table 3: Allocation of responsibilities within Houben NV

The CO₂-Performance ladder Project Manager will stay consulted of various communications that will be carried out. In the future, it is possible that a specific CO₂ team will be set up with people who will co-support the different parts of Houben NV's CO₂ strategy.

4. MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF CARBON COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

The CO₂ performance ladder framework is based on the principles of continuous improvement. This continuous improvement is supported in both frameworks using a Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) or Deming wheel. This framework has also been the basis for the Carbon Reduction Strategy of Houben NV.

To streamline any adjustments of the Communication Strategy to the adjustments that might happen in the Carbon Reduction Strategy, the management team of Houben NV has decided to fully streamline the evaluation process of the Communication Strategy with the one from the Carbon Reduction Strategy. The reader is referred to the Carbon Reduction Strategy to learn about the monitoring and evaluation cycle of Houben NV's reduction plan.