



# INSPIRED

**2018**

Tenth Communication on Progress

**UN Global Compact**

[www.vs.de/en/](http://www.vs.de/en/)







VS Vereinigte Spezialmöbelfabriken GmbH & Co. KG is Germany's leading manufacturer of school furniture and is present worldwide. Our family-run company is also successful as a supplier of fittings for office buildings and construction projects.

We have been developing, manufacturing and marketing furniture for the knowledge society for more than 120 years: for schools and universities, administrations and ministries, companies and corporations. Our head office

and sole production site is located in Tauberbischofsheim in Baden-Württemberg, Germany. We also have branches and subsidiaries in Europe, the USA and the Near East.

Throughout our history, **we have always been inspired by the challenges of the future.** To us, on the one hand, this means the question of the conditions under which people are best able to learn and work: How do they communicate with one another, how do they exchange ideas and expe-

riences? What do they need to help them concentrate and develop new ideas? With our furniture and room concepts, we want to create an environment that is conducive to all this.

In addition, we have always striven to ensure sustainable business activity by acting responsibly towards people, the environment and society and thus marketing outstanding products under economically sensible conditions. Because we are certain: Success is only possible through responsibility.

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## Tenth Communication on Progress 2018

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part of our everyday lives. Our improvement management scheme has generated many suggestions that are helping us to produce in even more energy and resource-efficient ways and further improve the ergonomic aspects of working conditions at VS.

The past twelve months 2018 have once again been eventful: A new record sales level; more employees than ever before in the 120 years of our company's history; changes to the make-up and structure of the company manage-



ment; new school and office furniture, including the JUMPER chair, which was developed in cooperation with the French architect and designer Jean Nouvel; innovative new machines in production; conversion, relocation and – already – further plans for our production facilities. And then there was our day-to-day business, which we love and which forms the basis for our corporate activities.

In 2018/19, all our business areas were also handed over to the next generation – another sign of sustainability. As a family-run, mid-sized business, we are and will remain independent in our economic activities and free to make our own decisions. We have a consistent, overarching philosophy framed within the long-term context.

The positive market environment is currently driving us forwards. We want to take advantage of this to make ourselves fit for the future in order to protect ourselves against the possibility of more troubled market conditions in the future. This includes maintaining our focus on the subject of sustainability and investing in this; consciously controlling energy consumption and constantly improving our energy performance; keeping primary energy requirements in new buildings within the permitted levels thanks to building insulation; using renewable energy sources and energy from cogeneration systems to cover our heating needs; manufacturing ever more efficiently through the use of modern plant technology; designing ergonomic work places and working conditions; creating an environment in which everyone can and wants to work well and is able to develop.

The fact that we were, in 2018, the first company to be certified with the new European Level sustainability standard once again demonstrates: For us, sustainability means thinking purposefully about the future in everything that we do. And this applies to environmental and climate protection just as much as it does to health, participation and fair treatment.

VS will therefore continue to support the principles of the UN Global Compact and implement them in its field of activity.

Philipp Müller  
Managing Director

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### Statement of support for the UN Global Compact

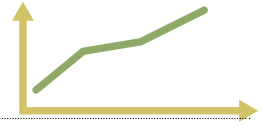
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Dear VS employees,  
Dear Sir or Madam,

On 22nd September 2008, we became a member of the United Nations Global Compact. This year, we are therefore submitting our tenth annual Communication on Progress. During these ten years, much has happened in our company and there have been significant developments. During this period, sustainable development has become even more important to us – including as a result of our membership of the UN Global Compact and our intense commitment to implementing its ten principles. This affects every area of our corporate activity. However, the behaviour, attitudes and awareness of our employees have also changed. This can be seen, for example, in the support and services available in the occupational health field, which are now enthusiastically called upon. Environmental protection and energy efficiency are also

# A Portrait of VS

## Facts, Figures and Dates



### Corporate development 2015 to 2018

	2015	2016	2017	2018
Sales (mill. euros)	176.4	206.5	227.8	238.8
Workforce	1 208	1 301	1 396	1 500

# 1898

### History

Founded in 1898, now managed by fourth generation of the same family

### Customers

Educational establishments, mid-sized companies, corporations and DAX-listed companies, banks, savings banks and insurance companies, authorities and ministries

### Environmental responsibility

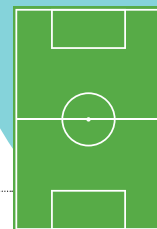
Cogeneration plant, district heating, photovoltaic system, burning of wood chips for heat, recycling concept for end-of-life furniture, powder coating recovery system, member of UN Global Compact, environmental and product certificates (Level, Cradle to Cradle, PEFC, LGA and many others)

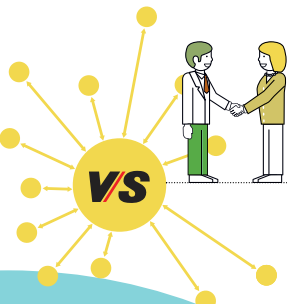
### Production area

More than 113 000 m<sup>2</sup> (approx. 15.75 football pitches) with 6 factories at the Tauberbischofsheim site

### Head office and production

In Tauberbischofsheim





**Sales structure**

Direct sales with more than 100 employees



**Areas of business**

Production and sale of school and office furniture

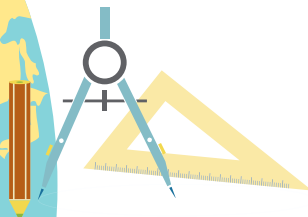
**The best-seller**

The famous wooden  
skid chair which has been sold  
6 million times



**Project planning and handling**

Delivery, installation and service



**Design-oriented, ergonomic creative principles**

Cooperation with, for example, Verner Panton,  
Jean Nouvel, Dion Neutra, Jürgen Greubel,  
Günter and Stefan Behnisch, Nicolai Fuhrmann,  
Hubertus Eilers, David A. Stubbs II



**Production capacity and material consumption**

1 050 000 chairs, 480 000 tables,  
100 000 cabinet-type units,  
1.3 mio. m<sup>2</sup> chipboard,  
3 800 km steel tube per year



**Corporate structure**

4 branches in Germany,  
subsidiaries in Germany, USA,  
France and the United Arab Emirates,  
international dealership network



## 2003-2012

2003

Introduction of an environmental management system.

2009

Construction of an additional chip silo for wood waste for use as heating.

2010

Optimization of the powder coating plant in order to reduce powder paint waste by a third. Installation of a further photovoltaic system in factory 5.

2011

Conversion of the spray booths in the paint shop in order to reduce the use of chemicals; elimination of the demanding water preparation activities.

2012

Construction of a district heating pipeline, resulting in a 10-percent saving in annual natural gas consumption. Creation of the VS kitchen garden, with vegetable production based on organic principles to supply the VS canteen and for sale to employees.

When we joined the United Nations Global Compact in 2008, we did this in the knowledge that we, as a mid-sized, family-run manufacturer of furniture for learning and working worlds, have a very special responsibility: for our employees and their families, for our customers, for our partners, for the people in our region and beyond, for our environment, for education, future generations and our future. In our first year of membership, one of our key aims was to significantly improve our energy efficiency.

***“Because there is reason to fear that the conclusion of the negotiations of the agreement on climate protection in Copenhagen in December 2009 will not be sufficient to meet the need to keep average global warming to below two degrees Celsius by 2050, VS wants to set an example and has set itself the aim of reducing the company’s CO<sub>2</sub> emissions as a proportion of sales by 30 % by the year 2015.”***

(First VS Communication on Progress, October 2009, Page 2)

## Looking back: Ten years as a member of the UN Global Compact

This aim was primarily to be achieved through the use of renewable energies that we produce ourselves, for example by burning wood chips and installing photovoltaic systems on the roofs of VS premises. To this end, we introduced the internal three-stage project 139, which prepared for the introduction of the energy management system in 2016.

Unfortunately, we were unable to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by the announced 30 percent. The approach adopted at the time, namely to calculate CO<sub>2</sub> reductions proportionally to sales, did not take account of the significant changes in our own value added at the Tauberbischofsheim site as a result of the ongoing expansion of the company and the construction of new facilities in recent years. We have therefore intensified our focus on an integrative corporate policy in which quality policy, environmental policy and energy policy complement one another. We are continuing to concentrate ever



2013–2018

2013

Redesign of the VS plant site with landscaping of the Hochhäuser Street, areas for break times in the outdoor area outside factory III, vine-covered area at silo 2 and redesign of the garden. Installation of more covered bicycle stands. Building bird nesting boxes for the company site.

2014

Approval of the Supplier Guideline. Construction of the VS insect hotel by the apprentice workshop to provide a nesting and hibernation space.

2015

Commissioning of the cogeneration plant for decentralized electricity and heating supply. This covers 40 % of VS's electricity consumption.

2016

Introduction of an energy management system DIN EN ISO 50001:2011. Reduction of solvent-based parting agents at the PU plant. Introduction of energy monitoring. Environmental and energy management are designated as key elements in the corporate strategy.

2017

Incorporation of the Supplier Guideline in the General Terms and Conditions of Purchasing. Construction of new factory 3.2 – exceeds legal energy requirements, including LED lighting.

2018

First and largest company to receive "European Level" certification in accordance with the sustainability standard of the European Federation of Office Furniture (FEMB). Conversion and optimization of the powder coating plant (PBA), resulting in a reduction of throughput times and reduced resource consumption.

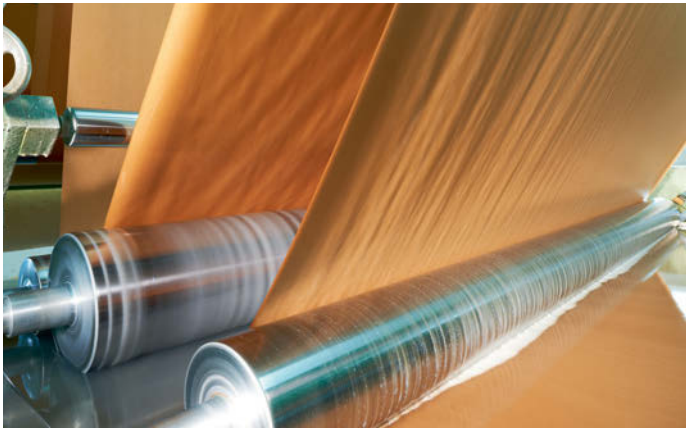
more intensely on our CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and have made this the focus of our environmental measures. The second goal in our first year of membership was to intensify our efforts to combat corruption robustly both in the company and in its relations with customers and suppliers. To do this, we developed our Supplier Guideline (Code of Conduct), which was introduced in 2014 and is applied every year on a rolling basis. The Guideline was updated in 2017 and is now included in our General Terms and Conditions of Purchasing.

To make our company's approach to sustainability even more transparent, to assess it more accurately and to improve it, we have developed a systematic corporate approach in the form of a sustainability pyramid. To do this, we have defined relevant corporate and product-related modules and assigned these to the different levels. At the lowest level, there are the basic modules, followed by statistics and certificates. These are followed by

standards relating to sustainability and then, at the apex of the pyramid, sustainability at VS. A descriptive fact sheet is stored for every module. This fact sheet contains detailed information on implementation as well as on responsibilities within the company and makes it clear how the individual modules are linked to one another.

This provides us with an overview of all the relevant information to be taken into account in connection with sustainability in the company. It also makes it possible to evaluate new requirements quickly and in full within the overall context.











### **UNGC Principles**

**Principle 1:** Companies should support and respect international human rights in their area of influence, and

**Principle 2:** ensure that their own company is not complicit in human rights abuses.

### **Our aims**

The protection and promotion of human rights within our sphere of influence are part of the VS corporate strategy. This is the result of the International Charter of Human Rights, consisting of the "General Declaration of Human Rights" of 1948 and the International Civil and Social Pacts of 1966. These human rights standards are enshrined in binding legislation in Germany. As set out in the Charter, we recognize the universality and indivisibility of human rights.

Our sphere of influence includes not only our core business, including principally our production site at Tauberbischofsheim in Germany, our German branches and our subsidiaries in the USA, France and the United Arab Emirates, but also our supply chain.

We refuse to be directly or indirectly involved in the violation of human rights, in particularly by states in which we have business relations.

through manufacturing activities at our production site in Tauberbischofsheim. On the other, a large proportion of supplies are sourced from companies in Germany or central Europe. These areas are subject to strict legal requirements which are monitored and adhered to.

### **Supplier Guideline – Code of Conduct**

In 2013, the senior management of VS decided on a guideline for suppliers based on the principles of the UN Global Compact. It has been incorporated in the General Terms and Conditions of Purchasing and has been applied every year since 2014. The hundred suppliers with the highest sales levels every year, our energy providers and the manufacturers of machines and plant that is specially designed for VS are contacted in this regard on a rolling basis. They must confirm their commitment to the VS supplier guideline. VS places orders with approximately 1 200 suppliers and the supplier database contains some 6 000 suppliers.

# Principles 1+2

# HUMAN RIGHTS

### **The measures and the results we achieve**

#### **Human rights standards**

We at VS can further be certain that human rights standards are strictly adhered to in our direct sphere of influence. On the one hand, a large proportion of total value added is generated

**UNGC Principles**

**Principle 3:** Businesses should uphold the freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining, and

**Principle 4:** eliminate all forms of forced and compulsory labour,

**Principle 5:** abolish child labour, and

**Principle 6:** eliminate discrimination in respect of employment and occupation.

# Principles 3<sup>to</sup> 6

## EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL STANDARDS

**Our aims**

VS fully acknowledges its employees' participatory rights and supports these. Participation is a prerequisite enabling employees to identify with the company's objectives, to commit to the company's success and to share responsibility for the company.

Independently of any existing legal requirements, VS considers the right to engage in collective bargaining and the rejection of forced and child labour and of conscious discrimination to be essential. VS also expects the same behaviour of its suppliers.

When it comes to discrimination, even Germany suffers from some weak points and certain learning processes are required. What in the past was taboo has now become the legal standard or is the subject of public debate. These subjects include, in particular, gender equality and the refusal of discrimination due to religious beliefs, origin, culture, age or sexual orientation. VS is open to such changes and participates in furthering them.

For VS, physical or mental disability is not necessarily a bar to employment. Instead, VS attempts to integrate as many people with disabilities as possible within the company.

**The measures and the results we achieve****Supplier Guideline – Code of Conduct**

The supplier guideline requires our supplier companies to adhere to social and employment standards. These standards include adherence to the ILO core labour standard, and in particular the rejection of child labour, the free choice of occupation, the freedom of association and the right of employees to form an employee representative body and conduct collective bargaining, as well as the prohibition of discrimination. In addition, the wages and welfare contributions paid by supplier companies should allow employees to live a dignified life and workplaces should meet internationally acknowledged health and safety standards. People with disabilities should be given special support.

**Language courses for employees with an immigrant background**

As of October 2018, two German courses have been available at VS. The courses are run by teachers of German as a second or foreign language or by university lecturers of German as a foreign language. VS employees with an immigrant background who have passed a language test and who have underdeveloped German language skills may take part. The courses are held on Saturdays and 25 employees take part at each of them. The courses are paid for by VS.

**Induction weeks and mentors for apprentices and students**

To make it easier for the annual intake of apprentices and students to familiarize themselves with VS and to encourage a spirit of comradeship and mutual support within the group, the first two weeks are designed to act as induction weeks. The aim is to help new recruits get to know the company better and familiarize them with its structure and the various departments. All this is complemented by shared excursions and leisure events.

During their induction weeks, the apprentices in the commercial departments and the students are looked after by the Human resources department. In addition to guided tours of the site, they are also given project tasks in order to help them work in teams to complete their first missions within the company. Induction for the apprentices in the technical sectors is designed by the Corporate Organization unit.

The apprentices and students are supported by mentors throughout their entire apprenticeship or period of study.

These are young colleagues who themselves have only recently completed their training at VS and act as the first point of contact for any questions or problems that arise. Twice a year, this approach is complemented by an apprentices' breakfast, which is also attended by the apprentices and students from the more advanced years of training as well as by the mentors.

### Extended promotion of health and safety at work

Human beings spend a lot of their time at their place of work. That is why VS considers it to be its responsibility to design its employees' working environment in a way that protects their health. Workstation design is always oriented around safety-related and ergonomic considerations. And we go far beyond legal requirements. For example, all administrative employees can change their seating arrangements as the situation requires throughout the working day. Naturally, height-adjustable workplaces are available.

Every year, we offer our employees a range of options relating to the topic "Healthy living and working" and we are constantly extending the possibilities available. Most of these are available to all employees, who can make use of them on a voluntary basis. Options available in 2018:

- Occupational-medical health examination and free preventive check-up by the company doctor
- Health Days – Information on various health-related topics
- Back check-up – Analysis of the strength of the core muscles
- Workshops – on the healthy way to lift and carry at work and during one's leisure time
- Ergo Balance Gym in the loading bay and special production areas – daily training programme adapted to the physical strains of each area of work administered during working hours
- Back fitness – weekly muscle training programme in the AOK

### Social commitment

Responsibility should not stop at the factory gates. As a part of society, we want to contribute beyond our immediate sphere of action and help promote a good quality of life in the community. With our school museum in Tauberbischofsheim, we have extended the diversity of the region's museums through the addition of an original exhibition and training space. Entrance is free.

In 2018, we were again sponsors of the international VS youth fencing cup, which brings together fencers aged from 9 to 12 years from both Germany and abroad in Tauberbischofsheim to measure their skills with the foil, épée and sabre.

In addition, we make regular or case-by-case financial contributions to support regional and supra-regional educational, cultural and scientific institutions as well as charitable initiatives. In Tauberbischofsheim, for example, these include the Grünwald Orchestra, the open-air cinema or the Live in Klosterhof series of concerts. At the supra-regional level, we also support the children's charity Verein Sternstunden Bayern e.V., the Bauhaus Archiv Museum or the Stiftung Pro DHBW (Baden-Württemberg Cooperative State University). We support international aid projects by donating school furniture and logistics services.

### Employment of women

VS is making efforts to increase the proportion of women in the workforce. Because a third of the jobs practiced at VS are in the industrial sector and involve intensive physical effort and shift-work, the proportion of women is relatively low. In response to advertised vacancies, we receive approximately ten times as many applications from men as we do from women. However, the proportion of women at VS is constantly growing, including in the industrial sector.

#### Number of women employed

	2015	2016	2017	2018
Overall proportion	12%	15%	16%	18%
Prop. office staff	25%	29%	30%	31%
Prop. industrial staff	6%	7%	10%	11%

#### Age of employees (average in years)

	2018
Office staff	43.55
Industrial staff	41.27
Overall	42.02

#### Length of service (average in years)

	2018
Office staff	15.70
Industrial staff	12.11
Overall	13.08

#### Employees with a disability

	2015	2016	2017	2018
Overall proportion	10.5%	9.5%	9.0%	8.0%

#### Order volumes placed with workshops for people with disabilities

	2015	2016	2017	2018
In thous. euros	263	366	374	537



### **Combining family and professional life**

One important aim for VS is to help ensure the successful balance of family and professional life. Since 2012, we have organized an educationally oriented full-day childcare facility for our employees' children on the company site for a period of three weeks during the summer holidays. We offer our employees a range of part-time working models to meet their own individual needs. Other options such as a company kindergarten or reserved places in the local preschool facilities are under discussion but are not currently considered necessary by the company's staff.

### **Employment of refugees**

Although the flow of refugees coming to Europe to seek protection against political persecution and the effects of conflict slowed during 2018, it has nevertheless not come to a halt. This continues to confront our society with major humanitarian challenges. Given that it has been recognized that the majority of refugees will not return to their countries of origin in the foreseeable future, the issue is not only to ensure that they can live in dignified conditions but also to integrate them in our society. In particular, this means that they must find work in order to earn their own living and establish social contact with their work colleagues. Forty-one refugees were employed at VS during 2018. In addition, three refugees are receiving training.

### **Employment of people with disabilities**

One of VS's long-standing social aims has been to support the participation and equal opportunities of people with disabilities in the labour market. This is demonstrated by the continuing high proportion of VS employees with disabilities. On average, across the year 2018, 116 disabled persons were employed on a fair and equal basis at VS. Two apprentices with a degree of disability (DD) of 50 percent or more have started an apprenticeship with VS.

At 31.12.2017, 74 of the company's employees were severely disabled with a DD of 50 percent or more. Due to the severity of the disability, four of these can be attributed to multiple mandato-

ry positions. Three others cannot be assigned to the compensation contribution because they are employed on a part-time basis and work less than 18 hours a week. 39 employees are considered equivalent to a disabled person, that is to say that they have a DD of at least 30 percent.

The proportion of people with a disability has therefore fallen by one percent to 8 percent compared to the previous year. It is nevertheless still significantly higher than the statutory minimum level of 5 percent and the German average level of 4.67 percent.

Source: Inklusionsbarometer Arbeit 2018 der Aktion Mensch e.V.

### **Cooperation with workshops for disabled people**

Despite the high level of employment of people with disabilities, VS also attempts to award as many orders as possible to workshops for disabled people. The order volume placed by VS with workshops for disabled people rose once more to 537,000 euros in 2018. This represents an increase of 50 percent compared with the previous year.

### **JobRad (JobBike)**

VS is one of the first businesses in the Main-Tauber district to offer its employees a company bicycle. Employees can choose between a mechanical bike driven by pedal power or an e-bike. The project was launched in June 2017 and, by the end of 2018, 227 employees had a JobBike. That is 62 more than twelve months previously. The JobBike initiative complements our efforts in the fields of promoting occupational health and environmental and climate protection. The monetary equivalent of using the job bike is subject to tax in the same way as the use of a company car. As a result, the bikes can also be used for leisure activities.

### **Basic and further training / personnel development**

Vereinigte Spezialmöbelfabriken GmbH & Co. KG places great value on personnel development. At VS, training is continuously offered in industrial, technical and commercial professions. In addition to cooperative vocational training, VS works together with the Baden-Württemberg Cooperative State University as a cooperative partner. Training is provided in the light of individual requirements. The aim is to offer employment to graduates from the cooperative training/study programme. In addition to this in-house training, VS also cooperates in training partnerships with regional academies. The aims are to provide support for students when they move from school to training, study and the professional world as well as to improve their maturity and ability to train and study.

In 2018, VS employed an average of 51 apprentices and students from the Cooperative State University. Training is offered in the fields of woodworking mechanics, industrial mechanics, warehouse logistics, commerce, commerce with additional qualifications, technical product design, IT for system integration. Cooperative work/study courses are available in the fields of woodworking mechanics, IT, business administration, international business, industrial business administration, mechanical engineering and business administration for industrial engineers.

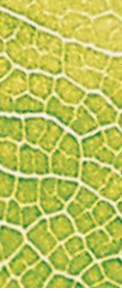
Various in-house further training activities were conducted in 2017. VS supports apprentices and students who wish to benefit from additional possibilities offered by the vocational colleges and cooperative universities, for example for language-learning visits abroad, qualifying to act as a trainer or basic REFA training. What is more, employees work as examiners on the Chamber of Trade and Industry's examination boards.

**UNGC Principles**

**Principle 7:** Businesses should support a precautionary approach to environmental challenges,

**Principle 8:** Undertake initiatives to promote greater environmental responsibility; and

**Principle 9:** Encourage the development and diffusion of environmentally friendly technologies.



# Principles 7<sup>to</sup> 9

# ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE PROTECTION

**Our aims**

Senior management at VS is convinced that the preservation of resources and climate protection are compatible with business activity. One of the main aims of the environmental policy at VS is to minimize environmental impacts in the supply chain and at the production site in Tauberbischofsheim and to be able to offer our customers long-lived products that are manufactured in a way that do as little harm to the environment as possible. Through our spare parts service, we encourage our customers to repair their products rather than dispose of them. When it comes to the disposal of packaging material, waste material or old furniture, VS is again committed to keeping environmental impacts low. Environmental policy is therefore a vital element in VS's corporate strategy and one that affects all the company's departments and processes. We want to take specific, down-to-earth measures to achieve all-embracing results that are sustainable in the long term.

We have formulated our strategic energy objectives as follows:

- The companies in the VS Group continuously strive to reduce their CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.\* To achieve this, we will do entirely without any trading in emissions certificates. Instead, we shall achieve this aim – as in the past – through responsible business activity. Our energy consumption has not risen in proportion to the extensions we have undertaken to our plant and buildings.
- In the case of new buildings, the primary energy requirements will be maintained below permitted levels (as set out in the Energy Saving Ordinance (EnEv) and the Renewable Energy Heat Act (EEWärmeG)) thanks to building insulation.
- In addition, renewable energies and energy from cogeneration systems will be used to meet energy requirements for heating.



One of the main aims of our environmental policy is to minimize environmental impacts at the production site and to offer our customers products that are manufactured in a way that does as little harm to the environment as possible. We consider our obligation to the natural environment to include

- protecting the environment, our employees and our customers by avoiding harmful influences during the manufacture, use and disposal of our products,
- preventing or minimizing emissions and waste,
- minimizing our consumption of the natural resources water, ground and air,
- being economical in our consumption of materials in all manufacturing sectors (recirculation), ensuring that VS products are particularly durable, selecting materials on the basis of environmental criteria and designing VS's products to ensure they are modular and recyclable.

### **The measures and the results we achieve**

Being responsible in the use of the natural resources in the environment is an important corporate principle at VS. That is why we implement measures for climate and environmental protection: at different levels and in a range of sectors.

\* On joining the UN Global Compact, VS set itself the goal of reducing the company's CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 30 percent as a proportion of sales by 2015. However, this approach did not take account of the significant changes at the Tauberbischofsheim production site resulting from the company's continuing expansion in recent years. The focus has therefore been placed more clearly on extending the integrative corporate policy. This includes not only the quality policy but also the environmental policy and the energy policy, following the introduction of an energy management system that has been certified in accordance with DIN EN ISO 50001:2011.

### **Packaging and waste concept as part of the environmental management system in accordance with DIN EN ISO 14001**

In accordance with the requirements for waste handling set out in the German legislation on the circular economy and waste (KrW-/AbfG), VS pursues a clear hierarchy of priorities: Avoidance of waste, preparation for recovery, recycling (recovery of materials), other forms of recovery (in particular for energy and infill), disposal.

What is more, we go beyond legal requirements and think of the future. As early as the design and manufacture of VS products, we do all we can to make sure that all the furniture produced at VS can, as far as possible, be separated into individual material types at the end of the product lifecycle.

When furniture is transported from the factory to the customer, unnecessary packaging is avoided through the use of recyclable packaging material, which is itself often manufactured from recycled materials. For this, we prefer to use reusable packaging, such as, for example, furniture covers.

To deliver furniture to customers, we use transport packaging and aids that are returned to the integrated manufacturing and dispatch process. If the customer wishes, we can take back their old furniture in the same vehicle after installing the newly delivered furniture. The old furniture is then disassembled in the VS recycling yard and the materials obtained are integrated in the external materials cycle by certified disposal companies.

If a complaint is received regarding a product then repairs are undertaken by VS's in-house customer service on-site if possible. If this is not possible then, in accordance with the VS re-utilization concept, furniture that is taken back is sold at the factory outlet or, if this is not possible, any individual parts that can still be used are returned to the production cycle.

Wooden materials obtained by dismantling old furniture or from the production process are burnt in the company's

incineration plant to provide heat which is used for the internal production process (for example, for heating presses for school desks) or for the heating of buildings at the production site. Any other reclaimed residue is entered into the public reusable material cycle.

Furniture manufacture gives rise to individual waste material types that are assigned to the internal material sorting cycle at the place at which they arise in accordance with the German Commercial Waste Ordinance (GewAbfV). These materials are collected by our internal service company and transported to the central waste collection point in Hall 5. Finally, a further inspection is performed before final sorting in order to obtain the finest possible level of sorting.

The individually sorted material types and non-reusable sorted waste are then handed over to certified, inspected waste disposal companies in accordance with §52 of the German legislation on the circular economy and waste (KrW-/AbfG).

VS is committed to sustainability. Long before the promulgation of the packaging ordinance (VerpackV) and the German legislation on packaging (VerpackG) came into force on 01.01.2019, VS had already introduced methods for re-using materials from its sales and transport packaging and returning them to its internal processes. This meant that it was easy for VS to adhere consistently to the provisions of the legal framework requirements without any extra effort. For many years, packaging that cannot be re-integrated directly into the VS cycle has been transferred to VS's long-standing partner, Duales System Deutschland (DSD GmbH). Here, the packaging is taken over into the external materials cycle for re-use.



**Investments in modern machine technology**

Due to the need to increase capacity in and around the powder coating plant, the existing chain conveyor technology was extended in late 2017. By doubling the number of mounting and dismounting stations at each of four lines, as well as through the introduction of various process-oriented, organizational optimization measures, it was possible to increase material throughput by a factor of approximately 1.7 in 2018. Thanks to these measures, it has been possible to boost thermal energy efficiency considerably in the pretreatment area (washing system and retained water dryer) and, in particular, the powder baking oven. When the units are transported through these energy-intensive sections of the system, the necessary process heat can be used correspondingly efficiently. This makes it possible to reduce heat loss to the ambient air.

As part of a replacement investment, an aging welding robot (constructed in 1996) was replaced by a modern model (constructed in 2017) in the steel tube production facility. This has not only increased productivity by 15 percent but also saves energy.

**VS garden**

We have set up a kitchen garden measuring 2 000 square metres on the company site. This supplies the VS canteen with fruit and vegetables cultivated in accordance with organic principles. In addition, employees are able to buy the produce once a week at the "market stall" during the summer months.

**Energy policy**

Environmental protection and the associated need to use energy economically have been guiding principles in the company for many years. The introduction of an energy management system in accordance with DIN EN ISO 50001 created the conditions necessary for the targeted control and continuous improvement of our energy performance.\* We do this by

- optimizing energy provision and generation,
- taking account of the energy efficiency of the production equipment at the time of procurement,
- making careful use of energy in all our production sectors,
- encouraging the use of regenerative energies, and
- reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

**Energy monitoring**

With the introduction of an energy management system in accordance with DIN EN ISO 50001 in 2016, we were able to intensify the acquisition of energy-related data. This supervision of energy consumption is known as energy monitoring and is a key standard element in the management system. The ascertained data is intended to make it possible to identify potentials for energy savings and assess the energy-related aspects of the implemented projects. The values recorded at VS are the so-called final energies. These final energies are converted (for example in the cogeneration plant, in the boiler systems and the electricity subdistributors) and is made available as useful energy to the energy consumers in the form of electricity and heat (building and process heat).

**Employed useful energy**

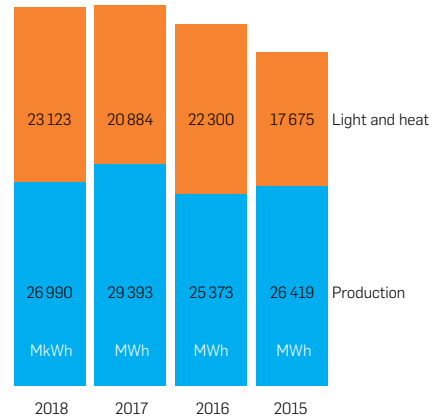
	MWh/a	Proportion
Electricity	13 301.50	26.54 %
Heat	32 804.30	65.46 %
Diesel	4 007.80	8.00 %
Total	50 113.60	100.00 %

**Photovoltaic systems**

	System [kWpeak]	Yield [MWh]	CO <sub>2</sub> saving]
Factory 1	486	411.86	206.75
Factory 5	449	419.89	210.79
Total	935	831.75	417.54

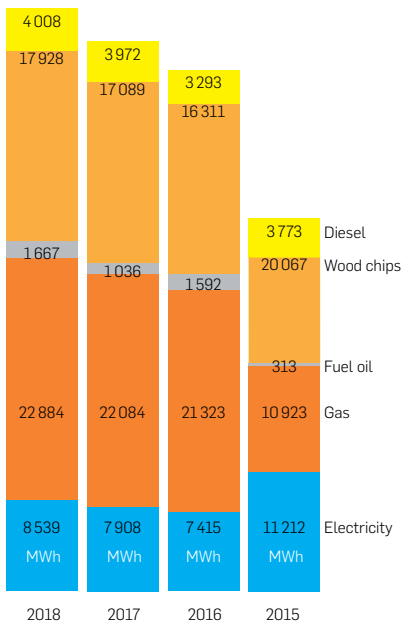
The CO<sub>2</sub> savings in 2018 were lower than in 2017 since the CO<sub>2</sub> equivalents have been adapted to GEMIS.

\* Energy performance is defined in terms of the energy consumed (quantity of energy that is required), the utilization of the energy (process for which the energy is needed) and energy efficiency (ratio between energy output and input for a process → efficiency).

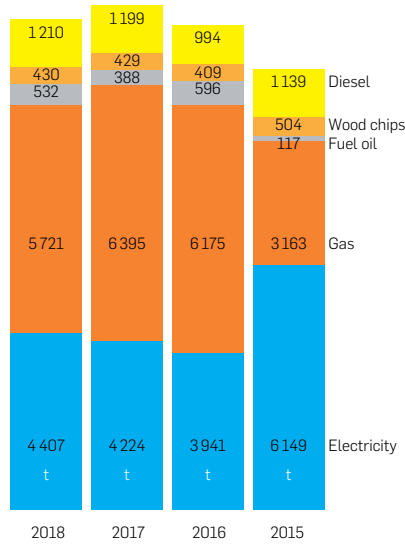


**Energy utilization**  
(breakdown)

At VS, there are currently 139 meters that are able to record final and useful energies. Because electricity is far and away the most expensive energy source, particular importance was attached to the measurement and analysis of electricity consumption. As a result, a large number of electricity metering points can now be digitally consulted via the building control system. This means that it is possible to identify the consumption in each VS building and call up current connection values online in real time. The detailed measurements reveal important information, for example regarding energy consumption by area of usage. The relevant energy management measures are derived from this information. In the year under review, these were:



**Employed final energy**  
(adjusted for weather)



**CO<sub>2</sub> emissions**  
(adjusted for weather)

- Revision of ISO 50001 as preparation for the forthcoming recertification in 2019 in the form of a bachelor thesis.
- Reinforcement of employee awareness of the topics "energy efficiency in the private sphere" and "energy efficiency at work" by means of regularly displayed posters.
- Training of an additional boiler attendant to ensure that the boiler systems (major energy converter) are operated without malfunction, economically, safely and ecologically, including in shift operation.
- Optimization of cycle steps in the powder coating plant. As a result, less energy is required per carrier.
- At the subsidiary VS Visuelle Medien: Optimization of compressed air generation through the introduction of an additional compressor that fully covers the basic load of the compressed air system. Previously, all the compressed air was generated by an over-dimensioned compressor operating in an inefficient partial-load range. It has been possible to improve the ratio of hours under load to idling hours by 12 percent.

**Energy consumption and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions**

No new production halls or factories were built in 2018. Our energy consumption was therefore similar to that of the previous year. The revision of DIN EN ISO 50001 means that the requirements set out in this standard have changed. As part of a bachelor thesis, the current state of affairs regarding energy consumption and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions at VS was therefore determined in order to identify what additional measures are needed for re-certification. The following measures are already being implemented:

- According to the revised standard, energy baselines (EnBs) and energy performance indicators (EnPIs) are created in the form of a static model. This should make it possible to obtain a picture (in some cases on a monthly basis) of energy consumption in particularly energy-intensive areas such as Lignodur board manufacture. Thanks to the static depiction, it will also be possible to incorporate influences such as outdoor temperature in the indicators.
- Updating the CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent makes it possible to identify a reduction in pollutant emissions in the statistics for CO<sub>2</sub> emissions



**Solvent consumption and proportion of VOC**

VS has been using water-based paint systems for more than 20 years, making it one of the first furniture manufacturers to do so. Unlike conventional solvent-based systems, these systems contain only 6 percent instead of 70 percent volatile organic compounds (VOCs). As a result, VS is significantly below the legally required limit values set out in the 31st German Federal Clean Air Act (Ordinance on Solvents).

**Solvent emissions**

	2015	2016	2017	2018
Target	25.6	28.8	27.5	25.3
Actual	7.9	6.7	6.4	6.5

in thousands of kg

**New sustainability certifications: European Level and Cradle to Cradle**

We regularly have ourselves certified as a company and subject our products to independent inspections regarding their quality, safety and environmental responsibility. In addition to our previous certifications (for an overview, see the Annex, p. 28), we obtained two new product-related certificates in 2018: European Level and Cradle to Cradle Certified™.

European Level is the first uniform sustainability certification system in Europe. It was developed by the European Office Furniture Federation FEMB. Certification is performed by neutral test institutes accredited according to national regulations. The standard specifies the sustainability requirements that the furniture must fulfil. It addresses the following four areas:

- material,
- energy and atmosphere,
- human and ecosystem health, and
- social responsibility.

The assessment relates to the products, their manufacture and the organizational framework. The certificate is awarded in one of three levels. VS is the first company to have been awarded the European Level sustainability certificate for its products, in every case in the highest level 3. With 57 certified products, VS is the most frequently listed company in the database.

Four of our products also have Cradle-to-Cradle certification. The aim here is to define the raw materials circuits at the technical and biological levels and to maintain these. The certification is underpinned by the idea of a waste-free economy that thinks exclusively in terms of production cycles. All the employed materials are part of a natural or closed technical cycle. Thus, all waste, in the conventional sense, is avoided because all the materials are reused or recycled or can be composted without leaving any harmful residue. Cradle to Cradle Certified™ is awarded in one of three levels: Bronze, Silver and Gold. VS's JUMPER Air Active chair for school and office use has successfully passed the demanding Silver certification process. The PantoSwing-LuPo school chair also has Silver certification. JUMPER Air Active and PantoSwing-LuPo are therefore the only student's chairs with this certification currently available on the market. The Uno-C and Euroline desks are also Cradle to Cradle Certified™ in Bronze.





**UNGC principles**

**Principle 10:** Businesses should work against corruption in all its forms, including extortion and bribery.

**Our aims**

VS considers the standards in the fight against corruption set out in the United Nations Convention against Corruption, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) Anti-Bribery Convention and promoted by the non-governmental organization "Transparency International" to be binding.

**The measures and the results we achieve****Compliance**

In 2004, senior management at VS decided on regulations according to which employees in the Purchasing department could only charge small amounts as expenses for customer support. Individual contractual dealers of VS furniture are also not permitted to obtain contracts through bribery. However, VS is not able to check whether any bribery is practiced by contractual dealers within the scope of their commercial margin. If such cases are identified then the business relations are examined jointly with a view to ending such practices. No complaints were reported during the period under review.

Accordingly, invitations and gifts may only be offered to VS employees if they are appropriate both for the occasion and in scope, i.e. if they are of low value and considered to be the expression of normal, locally recognized business practices.

VS also expects its suppliers to act fairly with regard to the competition and to respect applicable anti-trust legislation. They may neither engage in agreements with competitors that are against anti-trust regulations nor unfairly abuse any existing dominant market position.

VS also expects its suppliers to respect the applicable legal obligations on the prevention of money laundering and not to be party to any financial transactions that directly or indirectly support money laundering.

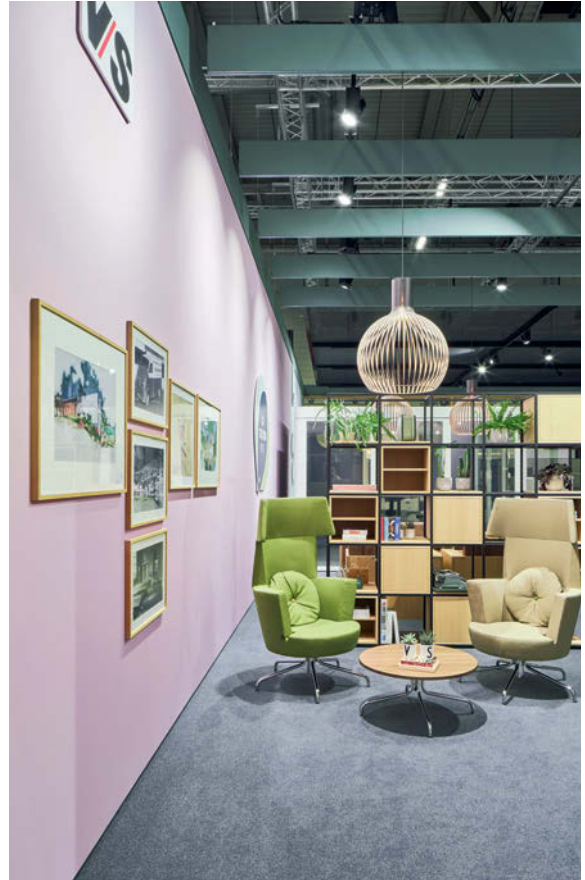


# Principle 10

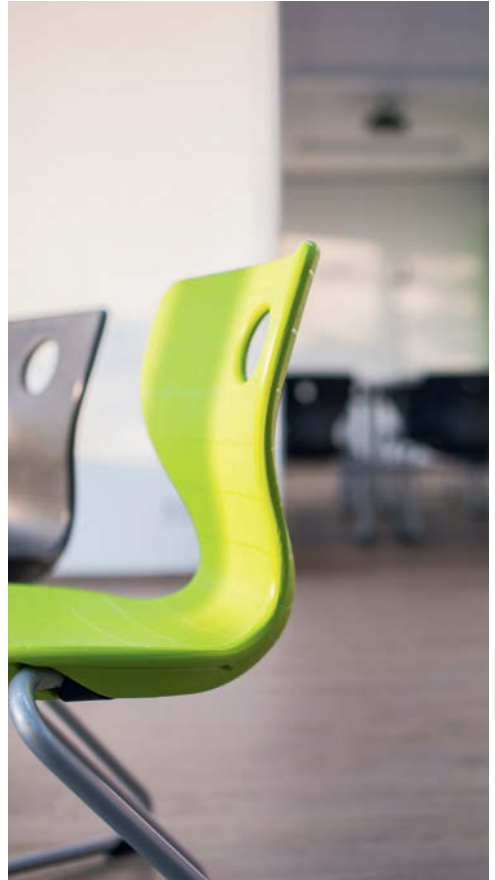
## FIGHT AGAINST CORRUPTION

**Supplier Guideline – Code of Conduct**

The VS guidelines for supplier companies (Code of Conduct) also demand that these suppliers show no tolerance for corruption. In particular, suppliers must ensure that VS employees are offered no inducements with a view to acquiring an order or other business







**Corporate image**

One main aim of our corporate policy is to safeguard the image of our company as a manufacturer of durable, high-quality products using ecologically responsible materials and production processes.

**Quality policy: Principles and objectives**

The most important principle underpinning our quality policy is to meet the demands placed by our customers on the quality and reliability of our products and services. We want to excel in the market through a uniform, high, durable product quality as well as through the uniformly high quality of all our services from initial contact with the customer through to customer support after the delivery of our products.

**Compliance with legal regulations: Environmental protection, product safety and accident prevention**

For VS, compliance with the requirements resulting from legal and administrative regulatory and administrative provisions at European, federal, state and local authority level is self-evident and we try to achieve levels significantly below the legal limit values. In the same way, we ensure the safety of our products by working together with neutral, authorized test institutes. Even before we start to develop and design our products, we take account of all relevant technical regulations (e.g. DIN) and other accident prevention requirements. One principle reflection our conception of quality is that all relevant product sectors must possess an up-to-date GS (safety tested) label. We also arrange for our products to be examined in respect of minimum pollutant emissions.

Annex 1

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**VS corporate policy – short version**

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**Quality, environmental and energy policy as part of the corporate strategy**

The quality, environment and energy policies (referred to together as the "corporate policy" below) are vital elements in the corporate strategy of Vereinigte Spezialmöbelfabriken. The principles and objectives of the corporate policy are defined by senior management, which is responsible for them, documents them and communicates them both internally and externally. They are harmonized with all the other corporate principles and corporate aims.

**Integrative approach and CIP**

VS operates a quality, environment and energy management system which is integrated in company activity. In this way, we ensure a continuous improvement process (CIP) for quality, environmental protection and energy consumption. The targets in terms of quality, environmental protection and energy use are regularly checked and revised.



When defining the quality requirements placed on our products and services, we always provide our customers with partnership-based advice to the best of our abilities.

The most important aim of our quality policy is therefore to achieve the greatest possible level of customer satisfaction. It is our company's stated aim to manufacture high-quality products that are as environmentally responsible as possible and that meet the needs and expectations of our customers. To this end, we use state-of-the-art processes, methods and production equipment.

**Environmental policy: Principles and objectives**

VS considers the responsible use of the natural resources in the environment to constitute an important corporate principle. One of the main aims of the environmental policy at VS is to minimize environmental impacts at the production site and to be able to offer our customers products that are manufactured in a way that preserve the environment as much as possible. We at VS consider our obligation to the natural environment to include:



- protecting the environment, our employees and our customers by avoiding harmful influences during the manufacture, use and disposal of our products,
- preventing or minimizing emissions and waste,
- minimizing our consumption of the natural resources water, ground and air,
- being economical in our consumption of materials in all manufacturing sectors (recirculation),
- ensuring that VS products are particularly durable,
- selecting materials on the basis of environmental criteria and designing VS's products to ensure they are modular and recyclable.

### **Energy policy: Principles and objectives**

Environmental protection and the associated need to use energy economically have been guiding principles in the company for many years. With the introduction of an energy management system in accordance with DIN EN ISO 50001, we are creating the conditions necessary for the conscious control of our energy consumption and the ongoing improvement of our energy performance. This will be achieved by

- optimizing energy provision and generation,
- taking account of the energy efficiency of the production equipment at the time of procurement,
- being economical in our consumption of energy in all manufacturing sectors,
- encouraging the use of renewable energies – reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

### **Responsibility and qualification of all employees**

Trained, qualified personnel perform the necessary work in every area of the company. VS's corporate policy, together with its principles and objectives, can be accessed by all employees and is binding and obligatory during the discharge of their responsibilities. In their



fields of work, all our employees have quality-related tasks and functions that are defined in corresponding process descriptions and work instructions. Through structures and workflows that are adapted to requirements, as well as through clearly described interfaces, we support our employees and avoid possible errors and wastage of resources as early as the development phase. In addition, all employees are obliged to report process or product errors as well as sources of resource wastage and potential environmental pollution directly to their manager without delay. By qualifying employees in the direct and indirect environmental repercussions of their area of activity, we encourage environmental awareness and action in all sectors

### **Corporate controlling g**

Senior management at VS Vereinigte Spezialmöbelfabriken GmbH & Co. KG is convinced that quality and the preservation of resources are compatible with business activity. Through quality, environmental protection and economic efficiency, we will ensure the long-term existence of our company.

### **Certification**

Certification of our management systems in accordance with the specifications of DIN EN ISO 9001, DIN EN ISO 14001 and DIN EN ISO 50001 provides documentary evidence of the effectiveness of our quality demands, environmental measures and energy performance.

Annex 2

**Supplier Guideline – Code of Conduct**

For VS Vereinigte Spezialmöbelfabriken GmbH & Co. KG, sustainable development is an important corporate objective. We can show that we have achieved this objective thanks to a certified environmental management system in accordance with DIN EN ISO 14001:2009 and membership of the UN Global Compact. In this context, we place concrete requirements on our suppliers in order to ensure sustainable business relations. Below, you will find the most important of the relevant requirements, adherence to which we ask you to confirm in writing.

**I. Human rights and working conditions**

**Rejection of child labour**

Child labour must not be used in any production process. Adherence to the ILO core labour standard is required: according to this, the general minimum age is 15 years, or 14 years in economically less developed countries.

**Freedom of association**

VS expects its suppliers to respect the right of employees to form an employee representation body and conduct collective bargaining as provided for in national law.

**Wages and social security contributions**

Employees should be paid at least the



minimum national wage or standard negotiated wage. The wage paid should enable employees to live a dignified life. The working hours and vacation or recovery periods must at least comply with national legislation and standards.

**Health and safety**

Workplaces should comply with internationally recognized health and safety standards. Supplier companies must take measures to reduce the frequency of accidents and prevent the occurrence of health risks. Employees must be trained appropriately and must be equipped with safety clothing if necessary.

If the supplier company arranges accommodation for employees then this must be fit for human habitation. If it provides meals then these must comply with acknowledged health and hygiene requirements.

**Integration of disabled persons**

Persons with disabilities should be particularly well supported by enterprises. The recruitment and training of persons with disabilities should be encouraged.

**Non-discrimination**

Suppliers to VS must encourage equality of opportunities and equality of treatment and prohibit discrimination when appointing employees, conferring promotions or offering training and further training possibilities.

No employee may be disadvantaged due to his or her gender, age, skin colour, culture, ethnic origin, sexual identity, the presence of a disability, religious faith or other beliefs.

**II. Environmental standards**

**Responsibility**

Nationally applicable environmental guidelines and legislation must be adhered to. Suppliers to VS should have set out their environmental objectives in their corporate principles. If no environmental management system is in force then suppliers should strive to introduce such a system.

**Environmentally responsible production**

For us, the most important points of environmentally responsible production are

- being economical in the consumption of energy and materials in all manufacturing sectors (recirculation),
- encouraging the use of renewable energies,

- minimizing the consumption of the natural resources water, ground and air,
- preventing or minimizing emissions and waste,
- to protect the environment and employees, there must be a regulation governing the handling of hazardous substances,
- environmental aspects of the production sites and equipment should be assessed at regular intervals.

### Environmentally responsible products

Materials and products supplied to VS must meet certain criteria:

#### Packaging

Goods should be adequately protected against damage; unnecessary packaging must be avoided. In addition, the employed packaging material should be recyclable and, if possible, should itself be manufactured from recycled materials. If possible, the use of reusable packaging should be preferred.

#### Harmful contents

- CMR substances (cancerogenic, mutagenic, toxic to reproduction) belonging to categories 1 or 2 must not be present.
- In addition, the requirements of the Chemicals Prohibition Order must be taken into account.
- Substances covered by the REACH Regulation must be registered.

#### Transport activities

To protect the climate and the environment and to reduce traffic noise, the personnel in transport and haulage companies have to be trained in energy-saving driving behaviour. In particular, this means avoiding unnecessary transport operations and developing an awareness for anticipatory driving in which the factors that affect the driver and the vehicle are explained.

## III. Business ethics

### Fight against corruption

Corruption must not be tolerated. The United Nations Convention against Corruption and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's (OECD) Anti-Bribery Convention must be respected. It is necessary to ensure that VS employees are offered no inducements with a view to acquiring an order or other business advantage.

### Gifts

Invitations and gifts may only be offered to VS employees if they are appropriate both for the occasion and in scope, i.e. if they are of low value and can be considered to be the expression of normal, locally recognized business practices.

### Free competition

VS expects its suppliers to act fairly with regard to the competition and to respect applicable anti-trust legislation. Suppliers will not engage in agreements with competitors that are against anti-trust regulations and will also not unfairly abuse any existing dominant market position.

### Money laundering

VS expects its suppliers to respect the applicable legal obligations on the prevention of money laundering and not to be party to any financial transactions that directly or indirectly support money laundering.

the right to demand information regarding the corresponding circumstances. In addition, VS has the right to terminate extraordinarily individual or all contractual relationships with suppliers that demonstrably do not comply with the supplier guidelines or do not attempt to develop and implement measures for improvement after having received an appropriate period of notification to do so from VS.

## IV. Compliance with the Supplier Guideline

Any violation of the principles and requirements set out here will be considered to be a significant breach of the contractual relationship on the part of the supplier. If there is any suspicion of a failure to respect the principles and requirements set out here, VS reserves



**DIN EN ISO 50001**

The standard refers to the factors that enterprises are able to influence and can be adapted to meet individual requirements. Thanks to this standard, businesses can systematically and continuously improve their energy efficiency.

**European Timber Regulation (EUTR)**

As of 3rd March 2013, it has been necessary to adhere to the European Timber Regulation (EUTR), which is based on the regulation on the marketing of timber and timber products, no. 995/2010. The aim of the regulation is to ensure that only timber from safe sources enters the EU market. The placing on the market of illegally harvested timber is prohibited. Importers of timber or timber products must implement and apply a due diligence system and, in Germany, register with the Federal Office for Agriculture and Food (Bundesanstalt für Landwirtschaft und Ernährung (BLE)). VS defined the due diligence system in a work instruction and has been registered with the BLE since 28. 8. 2013.



Annex 3

**Certificates**

**Company certifications**

**DIN EN ISO 9001**

Certification in accordance with ISO 9001 forms the basis for the continuous improvement of the company's internal quality management system (QMS).

**DIN EN ISO 14001**

The globally accepted and applied standard places requirements on environmental management systems that allow companies to develop and implement an environmental policy and the corresponding targets.



tem and, in Germany, register with the Federal Office for Agriculture and Food (Bundesanstalt für Landwirtschaft und Ernährung (BLE)). VS defined the due diligence system in a work instruction and has been registered with the BLE since 28. 8. 2013.

**Authorized Economic Operator (AEO F)**

Since July 2011, VS has possessed the status of Authorized Economic Operator (AEO), type C. This status is awarded to businesses that meet certain requirements for reliable global trade. The C stands for the simplification of customs procedures.



**PQ VOL**

Companies that are prequalified (PQ) in accordance with the Regulation on Procurement and contract procedures for Supplies and Services (VOL) are entered in the nationwide German PQ-VOL database. It is then considered that the proof of performance required under VOL for public contracts is present. VS is currently the only company in the Main-Tauber district that is prequalified in accordance with VOL.

**PQ VOB**

Building companies that are prequalified (PQ) in accordance with the regulations set out in the Construction Tendering and Contract Regulations (VOB) are entered in the nationwide German PQ-VOB database. It is then considered that the proof of performance required under VOB for public contracts is present.

**Dualis label**

The Dualis certificate issued by the Heilbronn-Franconia Chamber of Trade and Industry for "Companies offering outstanding training" is awarded based on an external audit in which all phases of training are examined and must be given the rating "good" or higher. VS was certified with the Dualis label for the first time in 2015 and this certification is regularly examined.





## Product certifications

### GS “tested safety” label.

Products with the GS “tested safety” label – which include all VS’s standard products – are tested by an accredited laboratory on the basis of German product safety legislation. Testing is performed at the manufacturer’s request and is free-of-charge.

### LGA pollutant-tested

All the materials used at VS have the “LGA pollutant-tested” label. This guarantees that the pollutant limit values correspond to or are well within the legal requirements. Given the current state of the art and knowledge, use of the products is therefore not expected to represent any risk to health.

### Greenguard

This certificate is the US-American equivalent to the LGA pollutant-tested certificate. It confirms that products comply with the upper limits for chemical emissions for use in office and other indoor spaces. Gold level GREENGUARD certification defines more stringent criteria for products that are used in schools, child day care centres or other environments in which children are present for extended periods. Many of VS’s furniture products have the “Greenguard” or “Greenguard Gold” certificate.

### AGR quality label

The AGR Healthy Back Campaign (Aktion gesunder Rücken e.V.) awards the AGR label to products that are certified as having a design that contributes to back health by an independent inspection committee consisting of experts from various areas of medicine. The quality label has been awarded to selected VS chairs and tables that meet particularly stringent ergonomic requirements.

## Overall product certifications

### level – The BIFMA Sustainability Standard

Since October 2013, many of VS’s products have been certified in accordance with the sustainability standard of the American BIFMA (Business and Institutional Furniture Manufacturers Association). During the recertification in 2016, all the products received the highest level of the applicable BIFMA certification, i.e. Platinum.

### European Level

“European Level” is a certification programme developed by the European furniture association FMB in order to boost the sustainability of office and non-domestic furniture. The “European Level” standard sets out very comprehensively the sustainability-related requirements that office and non-domestic furniture has to meet. It covers four areas: Materials, Energy and Atmosphere, Human and Ecosystem Health; and Social Responsibility. The assessment conducted for this certification relates to the products, their production and the organizational framework.

The certification programme has been accredited by the German national accreditation body (DAkS). Certification must be awarded by independent, previously accredited certification authorities such as TÜV Rheinland. The certificate is awarded in one of three levels:

Level 1 (Basic), Level 2 (Intermediate) and Level 3 (Advanced). VS was the first company to be certified in accordance with the new standard and has achieved the highest level, 3, for all its school, office and other non-domestic furniture.

### Cradle to Cradle Certified™

Cradle to Cradle is underpinned by the idea of a waste-free economy that thinks exclusively in terms of production cycles. All the employed materials are part of a natural or closed technical cycle. Thus, all waste, in the conventional sense, is avoided because all the materials are reused or recycled or can be composted without leaving any harmful residue.

The Cradle to Cradle™ label proves that the tested product is manufactured exclusively using materials that are harmless to people and the environment (Material Health), that the employed raw materials can be recycled (Material Reutilization), that the use of energy and water is carefully controlled during production (Renewable Energy and Water Stewardship) and that the manufacturer adheres to the principles of social responsibility (Social Fairness). The certificate is awarded in one of three levels: Bronze, Silver and Gold. VS’s JUMPER Air Active is the first chair for school and office use to successfully pass the demanding Silver certification process. The Pan-toSwing-LuPo school chair and the Uno-C and Euroline desks also have Silver certification.



## Material certifications

### PEFC

Since September 2014, VS has been entitled to use the PEFC logo for its furniture containing wooden components that is manufactured at the Tauberbischofsheim site. PEFC stands for "Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification Schemes".

### FSC

FSC (Forest Stewardship Council) is an international certification for more sustainable forestry management. The timber comes from forests that are managed in accordance with ten strict ecological and social principles. At the customer's request, VS can provide proof of FSC certification for products containing wooden materials.

### STANDARD 100 by OEKO-TEX

STANDARD 100 by OEKO-TEX is an independent product label and is awarded to pollutant-tested textiles by the "International Association for Research and Testing in the Field of Textile and Leather Ecology". The certificate guarantees that textile products pose no risk to health. All the materials and material groups used at VS have OEKO-TEX certification, with the exception of two artificial leathers and the Blazer fabric group.

**TSCA Title VI** (Formaldehyde standards for wood materials and furniture in the USA)

TSCA Title VI is a legal regulation issued by the US environmental authority EPA (Environmental Protection Agency). It specifies limit values for formaldehyde emissions from wood materials (hardwood-plywood, medium-density fibreboards, chipboard) and all products that contain these wood materials. All products manufactured from the corresponding wood materials at VS have "TSCA Title VI" certification. This also applies to a large number of purchased parts.



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