



NELISSEN

Sustainability report Nelissen Bricks 2023-2024



Version 1 - October 2024

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02 About the sustainability report

Next step: initiatives linked to the sustainability strategy

In this first edition of the sustainability report, we will not report on efforts made as a result of these analyses and the strategy. Their integration and implementation are not yet sufficiently advanced. As an organisation, we aim to take a thorough and integrated approach to this and let ourselves be guided in this context. We would also like to take the time to communicate the approach within our organisation first, and with our own employees, as important stakeholders. We will therefore report on the full, integrated sustainability strategy in 2025 (reporting period 2024).

This report was compiled, validated for completeness and approved on 17 October 2024 by the Board of Directors. In doing so, we applied our judgment with regard to the disclosure of Nelissen Bricks' strategic plans and satisfied ourselves that this disclosure would not put the company at a competitive disadvantage.

"We are already publishing our first sustainability report because we are convinced of the added value; not because we have to."

Statement from the Board of Directors

We are very proud to present the first edition of our sustainability report. It covers the reporting period from 1 January 2023 to 1 August 2024, combines financial data with sustainability data and covers N&G Group and Nelissen.

Together with the executive committee (DirCom) and the management team (MT), we developed a sustainability strategy in 2021-2022, under the guidance of independent sustainability expert Encon. The process to integrate and implement this strategy in the organisation, together with the executive committee, has been ongoing since 2024. This process has not yet been completed at the time of writing this sustainability report. With this in mind, we have not omitted any specific information relating to intellectual property, know-how or the results of innovations.

Towards CSRD reporting

This report reflects not only the efforts we make, but also how the company views sustainability. Indeed, we are convinced that value can only be created and maintained by striving for the right balance between financial, environmental and social aspects. It is precisely for this reason that we decided to report on the 2023 financial year and the first seven months of 2024, even though we are not yet obliged to do so. According to CSRD regulations, a report for our company is not mandatory until 2026 (reporting period 2025). But we are deliberately starting early because we are convinced of the added value; not because we have to.

As far as we can, we already take the specific CSRD guidelines into account in this process. And, to maximise compliance over time, a stakeholder analysis and a dual materiality analysis were conducted during the strategy process in 2021-2022.



Publisher

N&G Group, whose registered office is Kiezelweg 458 - 460, 3620 B-Lanaken (Kesselt)

Scope

N&G Group (KBO company number 0476.386.497) comprises the operational holding company Nelissen Steenfabrieken nv (KBO company number 0401.333.639), a public limited company under Belgian law. The shares are not listed on the stock exchange.

In this report, we refer to both entities collectively as 'Nelissen Bricks' or simply 'Nelissen'.



Introduction

A substantive and visual explanation of the **content of this report and its structure.**



3.1 Conversation with the CEO's

At the top of Nelissen we find three CEO's, one of whom focuses full-time on sustainability. This illustrates its importance. Although Carlos Jorissen, Joeri Gevers and Burt Nelissen openly admit that they also have their doubts. A conversation.

Nelissen has been around for more than 100 years and has developed from a family business into an international player. How do you ensure you stay relevant?

Carlos Jorissen: "We took the most important strategic steps about 10 years ago, when we took over the company from the previous generation. At that point, we formulated the ambition to appeal to the widest possible market. Now, we operate in 50 countries. That means addressing a range of different cultures and consequently adapting our offering."

"Innovation is key; we want to capitalise on trends and set the tone. A major innovation has been our N70 size, which was launched back in 2015. It is 24 cm long and 7 cm wide, requires less raw material (as a traditional brick is 10 cm wide), but still looks great from an aesthetic viewpoint. Or take our DUBIO brick, which creates a very special effect with shadow joints and can be placed both horizontally and vertically."



We are at a **tipping point** and our generation must ensure that this movement is successful.

Joeri Gevers: "We have always invested in growth and innovation. The move towards dematerialisation has come about over the last decade. But another evolution has been going on for much longer. Over the past decades, we have evolved from manual to semi-automated to fully automated production. This is also beneficial for the well-being of our employees."

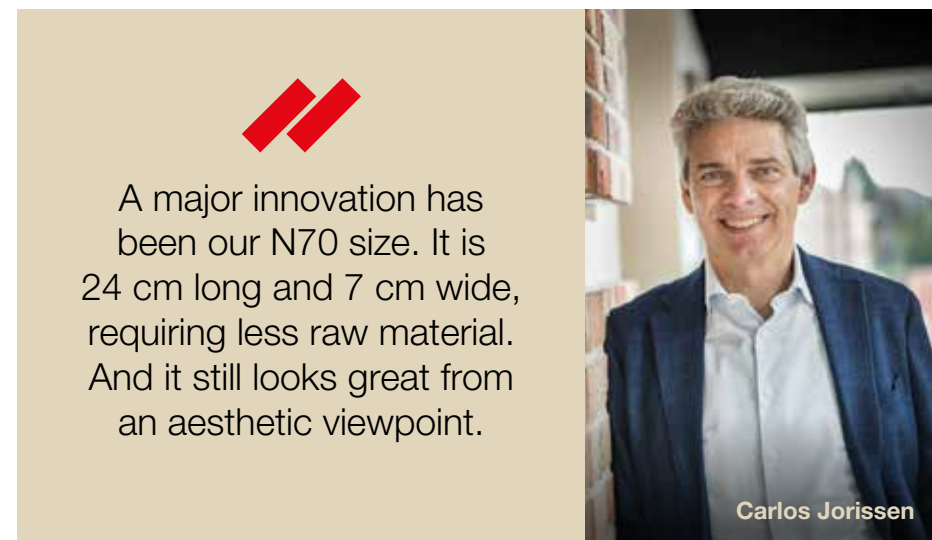
"The most recent evolution is towards total solutions. Bricks used to be considered purely as a building material. Now, the aesthetic aspect is becoming more important and we guide architects from A to Z, including details regarding the footprint of our products."

Growth is key at Nelissen. Will sustainability create that?

Burt Nelissen: "First and foremost, we cannot simply ignore sustainability. Consumers are aware of the issues and focus on this area during the buying process. Then, there are the government obligations. Here, I am thinking of the Green Deal (by means of which the European Commission aims to make the continent more sustainable) or the CSRD regulation (which requires companies to disclose their sustainability strategy and reporting). The third aspect is financial; banks are no longer inclined to finance businesses that are not sustainable. And finally, there are the employees: they too attach great importance to well-being and sustainability."

"But all of that is not the only reason for us committing to sustainability. We believe it is crucial to consider shareholders but also other stakeholders as we develop the company. By this, I mean the climate, our employees, the people in the neighbourhood, and so on. We are convinced that you must do things differently if you want to ensure your ongoing existence in the future."

Joeri Gevers: "To make the right decisions in this context, we carried out a Mission-Vision-Values exercise with the shareholders. We set out the results in a family compass. Going forward, this will be the guiding principle when we take decisions."



Can sustainability also be cost-saving, creating more room for investment?

Burt Nelissen: "That is definitely the case. When we renovated our kilns and drying chambers, it involved an investment of 50 million. But that investment provided greater energy efficiency. And any energy we generate and use ourselves makes us less dependent on other parties."

Sustainability, of course, is not the only evolution in your market. What place does it have in relation to other developments?

Joeri Gevers: "Until 2023, there was a clear acceleration in construction, which started during the corona crisis. Demand has now fallen, partly because building has become more

expensive, and this creates a field of tension. We cannot reduce prices because we need the resources to focus on sustainability. We assume we will reap the benefits of this decision, albeit in the long term..."

Let's delve into your strategy and initiatives for a moment. Where does sustainability sit in your operations?

Burt Nelissen: "We don't necessarily want to be an early innovator, but we have been looking at sustainability in a pragmatic and realistic way for many years. We started in 2005, when we became subject to EU ETS (Emissions Trading System), which allows emission rights to be traded. This made energy efficiency much more important and the process of reducing the amount of raw materials used, known as dematerialisation, began in 2014. We now need to accelerate that evolution. Our eco-sizes, such as the N70, now account for about 9% of our sales but we need to increase this share."

Carlos Jorissen: "It is now time to take bigger steps. In essence, a brick is a sustainable product as it lasts longer than the house itself. But there are still opportunities to make production more even more eco-friendly. That too is a work in progress."

Burt Nelissen: "Production-wise, we have a few major challenges ahead of us. Our process emissions, for example, must be reduced. This can be achieved by working on the raw material mix, which may result in changing the colours of the bricks. We are also electrifying and looking at how to reduce our CO₂ emissions using the combination of hydrogen and oxygen."

Where do you stand on the sustainability strategy?

Burt Nelissen: "In 2021 and 2022, we kicked off our journey with some workshops. We organised a stakeholder survey and created a materiality matrix, from which our priorities emerged. These are our sustainability topics, the ones we focus on because they have the biggest impact."

"Currently, we are making sure the strategy is known throughout the organisation; from the executive committee to management and all the operational teams. Everyone has to buy into this process. Now, the strategy is also due for an update. There will be new topics, stakeholder changes, and so on."

"In this context, it is important that the sustainability strategy is and remains part of the business strategy. These two things cannot exist separately. Several projects have already been launched in different departments, but they are not yet fully integrated into the strategy. Therefore, the reporting we provide here is a first step to show the outside world the direction in which we want to grow."

Which initiatives have been set up recently?

Burt Nelissen: "First of all, we started with a climate roadmap. In it, we mapped scenarios and identified projects that will be rolled out over the next few years. We have also registered this climate roadmap with the Science-Based Targets Initiative (SBTi), to ensure it complies with the Paris Agreement."

"We also installed additional solar panels. Furthermore, our pallet packaging is fully recyclable and the waste from brick slips is collected and resold, so there is no waste. Finally, we are committed to optimising the use of materials. When we produce brick slips, for example, we sell the centre piece as a separate size. This means nothing is lost."

Carlos Jorissen: "In terms of products, our eco-sizes really stand out. In spring, for instance, we launched a new variant of the N70, the N70/6,5. We are also trying to adjust the raw material mix of our yellow bricks and are currently carrying out trials using our stocks of raw materials. We hope to find out whether the new colour works and what it looks like."

Are sustainability and aesthetics compatible?

Carlos Jorissen: "All I can say is that we are doing all we can. Smaller sizes are both durable and aesthetic. Architects want to be creative but, as a result, do not always choose the most sustainable solution. In our showroom, we are fully committed to combining the two; we try to look at sustainability from a systemic perspective - from product development and production to sales."

How does your expertise help you make the right sustainability decisions?

Joeri Gevers: "We always put our experience in production and sales to good use. In sales, for instance, it is important to know what is going on in different countries; are new regulations on the horizon, for example? But equally, it is about sensing new trends. This is how we discovered a market for the central part of the bricks when making brick slips."

"In terms of production, it is about adopting a proactive attitude. We ask our colleagues in production to address issues in an efficient and sustainable way."



It is my dream to develop a ceramic product on the way to being CO₂-neutral. Then, we would have a product with a long lifespan that is produced in an energy-efficient way.

Burt Nelissen

Which initiatives would you like to launch or realise in autumn 2024 and in 2025?

Burt Nelissen: "I already mentioned testing our raw material mix for yellow brick and our ambition is to install our first facade with it by 2025. We also want to encourage pallet returns, which will require us to adapt the packing machine."

"Furthermore, we are aiming to get our sustainability reporting on point by 2025. On the HR front, we have a training matrix for every employee and need to link these, in turn, to the appropriate actions. Our investments in solar panels will continue, although that also means replacing old roofs, and the installation of dust booths that take into account the new standard for fine dust, also takes care of our employees' health. Finally, we want to set KPIs for our dematerialisation process and make our commercial teams more aware of our eco-sizes. On top of all this, we are also working hard to integrate the initiated projects into our sustainability strategy."

What is your ultimate ambition?

Joeri Gevers: "We have seen this company grow from a very small factory to the company it is today. In ten years, we would like to be able to look back on further growth which was achieved using sustainable methods. Moreover, we want to remain a family company, passing on a robust business to the next generation."

Carlos Jorissen: "Sustainability forms the foundation for this. Our focus on sustainability, circularity and innovation has taken the company to a new level in 10 years. We want to take that even further."

Burt Nelissen: "It is my dream to take a ceramic product towards being carbon neutral. Then, we would have a product with a long lifespan that is produced in an energy-efficient way. To make that dream come true, we need to raise the levels of company professionalism even higher."

Carlos Jorissen: "Our generation faces the most difficult challenge. For previous generations, it was all about increasing sales. The next generation is 100% committed to sustainability. But we are in between and we have to make the switch. We really are at a tipping point."

Joeri Gevers: "This is precisely why we decided to have one of the three CEOs (Burt Nelissen, ed.) dedicated to sustainability. We think it is important that he leads the way."



04

Our company

What do we do, why do we do it and how do we create **added value**?



Hand moulded bricks

In the past, hand moulded bricks were really made by hand, but nowadays this is done with modern machines, making production more efficient and ergonomic.

4.1 Nelissen in a in a nutshell

Nelissen produces bricks and brick slips. We also distribute facade insulation systems, (adhesive) mortar and quick-build blocks. Since its establishment in 1921, we have developed from a local family business into a major player in the international market. For four generations, we have supplied bricks of the highest quality. This is the result of continuous innovation, both in our working methods and at product level, and working with construction professionals to create forward-looking projects.

4.1.1 Our offer

Bricks

Nelissen produces and sells its own and buys in other bricks. As a result, we can offer a **wide range of different bricks**. This also allows us to respond to any architectural style request, whether it is a classic design, something more modern and contemporary, or a more pastoral style. We offer a total of more than 100 colours and 10 sizes but, if the client wishes, we can even go a step further with a colour tailored to the project in question.

We are known for our **hand moulded bricks**, which we produce ourselves and which have a unique shape and colour. Other techniques, of course, have evolved too. In the past, our bricks were genuinely made by hand, but nowadays they are made using modern machines, ensuring production is more efficient and ergonomic. Perfectly imitating the artisanal production method gives this brick its typical shape with an irregular surface, varied hues and grains.

We also supply bricks with a different finish, as a supplement to our own range. We retail smooth bricks (wasserstrich), as well as grained bricks from Caprice.

Our bricks are ideal for **traditional masonry**, as well as **modern techniques** such as bonding or masonry with thin-bed mortar. The range not only includes bricks that are relevant and aesthetic; they are also more sustainable in terms of design and the production process than other alternatives on the market. Consider, for example, the narrower sizes from the N70 range.

See p.97 for more info on our eco-sizes and products.

Facade insulation systems

We also offer customers who want to reduce the carbon footprint of their property project other solutions to build, finish and insulate their facade. One example is Iso-Façade, an energy-saving construction technique where brick slips are glued onto insulation boards and used for cladding. It offers a total system for both newbuilds and renovations, allowing customers to insulate their facade and give it a totally new look in one go.

Quick-build blocks and mortars

We also sell other building materials, such as quick-build blocks and various types of mortars such as thin (bed) mortar, joint mortar, adhesive mortar and whitewash.



Traditional brickwork

Joints of 10 -12 mm are common with traditional brickwork, but there are other options. The joint can cover up to 25% of the facade, and therefore largely determines the appearance of the facade brickwork. For example, a light joint colour will emphasise the colour of the facing bricks, while a dark joint colour will give the facade a darker look. If the client opts for tone on tone, the colour intensity of the facade is further enhanced.

4.1.2 Our customers

We are active in both the **B2B** and the **B2C** business segments so our customer portfolio is very broad. It covers all possible buyers of brick cladding for renovations or newbuild projects, ranging from private individuals, the building trades and businesses, to architects and property developers. **Architects and property developers** are the main target group and always purchase their products through the building trade. After all, Nelissen has its own showrooms, but no sales channel of its own.



80%

of total turnover comes
from Belgium, the Netherlands
and the UK

4.1.3 Our activities

Our **head office is located in Belgian Kesselt** (Lanaken). There, we have a dynamic **showroom** to familiarise customers with the products. Other showrooms can be found in Drongen and Marche-en-Famenne. Behind the head office, **production** takes place once the clay has been sourced from projects, the local clay plateau or from neighbouring countries.

Our main markets are Belgium, the Netherlands and the UK, which together account for 80% of total sales. In addition, our company exports to 50 countries around the world, including France, Germany, Norway, Sweden, Japan and the Middle East region.

50

countries to which
we export

Head office = showroom = creative hub

Since 2019, the state-of-the-art project in Kesselt has formed our new headquarters. Commercial Director **Kim Vandebosch** shows us around: "Our head office is obviously a calling card for a facade manufacturer like Nelissen. It is a **combination of creativity, sustainability and innovation** so, when it was built, we decided to provide a showroom here as well. When designing the showroom, we linked it to a museum which showcases the brick as an art object. There are real world but also digital elements, allowing visitors to experiment with brick colours, sizes, brick bonding, and so on. We then show the result at the end of the visit in the Brixperience Room on a big screen, on the chosen type of home(s)."

"The building also provides creative spaces for designers and meeting rooms where we work with partners to innovate within the construction industry. And besides all that, the exterior of the showroom is a fantastic example of the qualities of bricks. The unique facade with floating bricks is the result of specially adapted double glazing and brick bonding."

"During the design and construction of the new office building, we were fully committed to reducing energy consumption," Kim Vandebosch continues. "Very little energy is used for heating, ventilation, cooling and hot water and 18% of the energy we do need comes from green sources."

Finally, Kim Vandebosch shows us the Brick Academy. "This is where we train our own employees, but other interested parties can also use the facility," she explains. "We showcase our history and our production process here; it's our own mini-museum."

You can read more about the Brick Academy in the "Our company" chapter (4.5.2).



4.1.4 Our key figures

Nelissen Bricks can produce
185 million bricks per year.



100+

Colours



10

Sizes



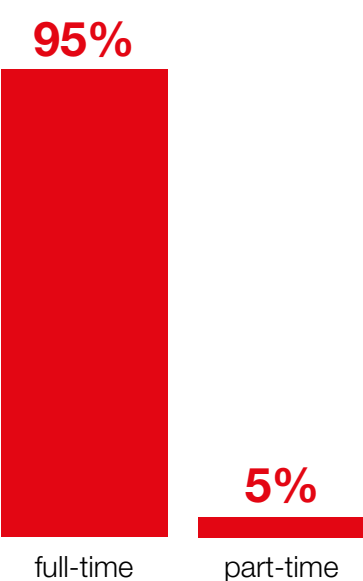
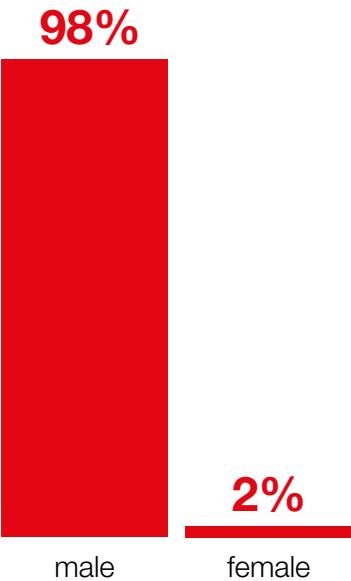
Nelissen as a brand name, encompassing 10 series.

Nelissen also sells quick-build bricks from Lücking and mortar from Seifert.

In 2023, the company realised turnover of EUR 51 million, with a consolidated operating profit of EUR 6.7 million.

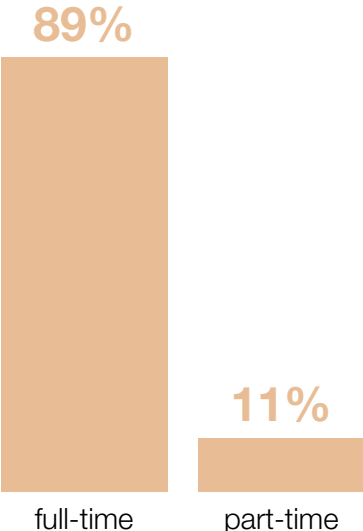
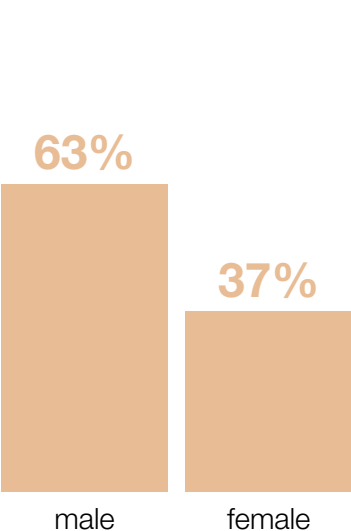
Manual workers

68%



Office workers

20%



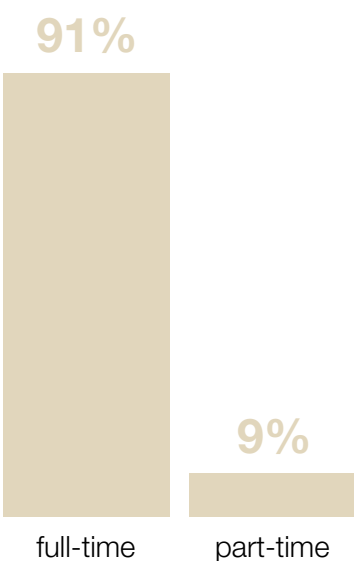
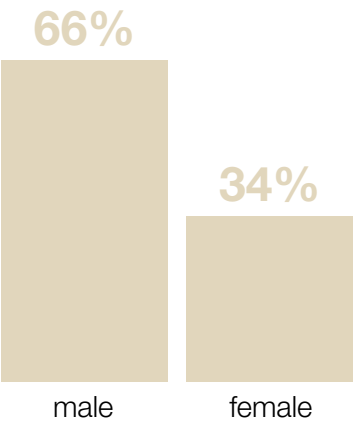
Temporary staff

1%



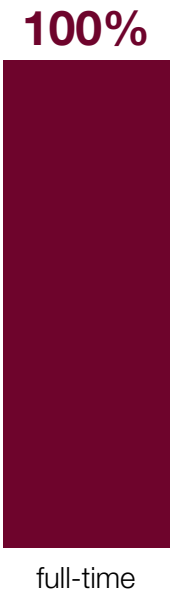
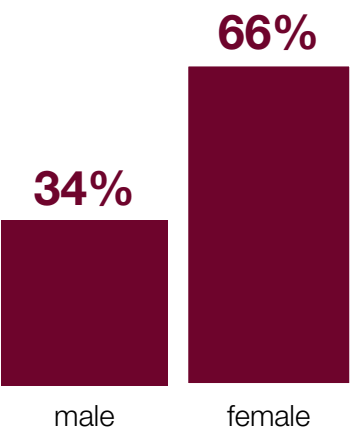
Management

7%



Directors

1%



Yontec/Easer

3%



How do we treat about our employees?

- We only offer permanent contracts. For some positions, employees are first given a temporary contract and then, after six months, moved to a permanent, open-ended contract.
- Employees are generally given full-time contracts unless they would prefer part-time employment. They also have the opportunity, of course, to obtain a temporary or permanent reduction in their working hours through the career break system while maintaining their full-time contract.
- To cope with peak periods, particularly in the Creative Ceramics Department (CCD), where brick post-treatment processes are carried out, we employ temporary staff according to the workload. The numbers vary from month to month and can reach up to around 15 temporary employees.
- For our technical service, we have an agreement with Yontec and Easer whereby the workers they provide are considered to be our own employees and enjoy the same conditions and benefits.
- We aim for local employment and no fewer than 72% of our employees live within a 20-kilometre radius of the company.

4.1.5 Our continued focus on quality

We expand and maintain our quality management system (KMS) according to the **ISO 9001**-provisions, with the aim of continuously improving quality performance. This was included in our 2024 policy statement. We focus on several elements.

- We strive for **optimum customer satisfaction**.
- We aim for **optimum quality** in our finished products.
- We continuously optimise our **internal processes**.
- We strengthen the professional **relationship** between our stakeholders and the company.
- We permanently pursue an **optimal organisational structure** with clear responsibilities and powers.
- We conduct regular **controls, internal audits and reviews** on all activities and services that could potentially affect the quality of our products.
- We select suppliers and subcontractors based on predefined requirements and expectations. Our **supplier assessments** are conducted via the digital tool Phronesys based on criteria such as product quality and service, communication in case of complaints, price/quality and attention to sustainability.

Bricks from our own production plant in Kesselt (Lanaken) comply with:

- ISO 9001 (quality)
- ISO 14001 (environment)
- Factory Production Control (FPC)
- BENOR (the post-treatment on the surface of the brick and its durability do not fall under BENOR certification)
- NL BSB
- BUW



4.2 The Nelissen DNA

Nelissen is in the hands of its fourth generation. They are all entrepreneurs who continue to build on the expertise underlying the Nelissen family's life's work. We have evolved and grown significantly over the years, and this is due to a number of fundamentals.

Vision

We do our bit for your dream project

Mission

We continue our life's work in a sustainable and innovative way. As a family business, we take extra care of our employees, our customers and our environment.

Values

We are strongly committed to these values in order to keep our typical Nelissen work culture alive.

VALUES



FUTURE-ORIENTED

We build on a durable future, together.



MODEST

We keep both feet on the ground.



GRATEFUL

We value each other and our relationship.



CARING

We take care of people, nature and our surroundings.



CONNECTED

We're one big family



4.3 Our evolution

1921

Foundations laid

After World War I, the Belgian government urges industrialists to manufacture products to facilitate reconstruction after the destruction caused by the war. Alfons Nelissen takes this request to heart and starts producing bricks in 1921. Nelissen Bricks is then founded in Kesselt. We are the first in Belgium to market a handmade brick.



First generation

1930

Nelissen develops into major employer

The second generation comes on board in the 1930s, with Mathieu and Maria Nelissen. In 1937, production is expanded with an additional factory in Tienen.

In the 1950s, activity in Kesselt increases. Nelissen Bricks becomes an important employer. Originally, the handmade bricks were dried on open-air drying racks before being fired in the ring kiln. It was a labour-intensive activity.



Second generation

1960

Technological innovation, diversification and the first steps towards sustainability

In the 1960s, the third generation makes its appearance with Gaston Nelissen and Gisela and Guido Gevers. Thanks to the installation of the first tunnel kiln and tunnel drying plant, production is no longer seasonal and can now proceed all year round. Numerous innovations follow in the subsequent decades, from fully automatic hand-forming machines to new drying chambers, setting machines and tunnel kilns. They are the first steps towards more sustainable production. Production increases to 160 million bricks a year.

There is also a focus on expanding the range. With the Iso-Façade system, launched in 2008, Nelissen is responding to the growing demand in the renovation market and the trend to apply energy-saving construction techniques in the new construction market. The growing demand for brick slips, in turn, creates a new factory hall with industrial sawing machines.



Third generation

2014

Exports and further sustainability

Cousins Carlos Jorissen, Burt Nelissen, and Joeri Gevers, children of the 4th generation, take the helm in 2014. Under their guidance, exports continue to be pursued; our company exports to 50 countries around the world, including France, Germany, Norway, Sweden, Japan and the Middle East region.

Besides the classic brick size, 2015 will see the introduction of the N70, a narrower brick with several advantages in terms of sustainability (see later in this report).

In addition to investments in production, efforts are also focused on increasing efficiency through the modernisation of hand-moulding machines and drying chambers, as well as the adaptation and renovation of kilns and packaging machines. This leads to a maximum capacity of 185 million bricks per year.

The new headquarters with showroom and Brick Academy opens in 2019.



Fourth generation



+62%

5,132 training hours were recorded in 2023, up 62% from 2022.

-10%

When building with the N70/6,5, you need 10% fewer bricks per m² compared to the WV 65.

4.4 Our business model

4.4.1 Our business strategy

What started out as a small family business has now, a century later, grown into a major player on the international market. Meanwhile, our fourth generation of entrepreneurs continues to build on the Nelissen family's life's work. Those years of experience ensure that we have an excellent appreciation of how bricks can be a **relevant and aesthetic solution** for facade covering. In so doing, we strive for the best and the most innovative brick. In short, we continue to grow through our **experience**, combining it with **product development, a focus on sustainability and a service-oriented approach** while also cooperating effectively with our customers. It is also vital that, as a family business, we take extra care of our employees, customers and environment.

Strategic priorities

At Nelissen, we work according to a number of strategic focal points. The executive committee has been working specifically on these strategic priorities since 2024.

Sustainable value retention

In the **long term** we aim to be an **international and profitable player** in Europe. Well-considered investments in the existing organisation (people and resources) perpetuate continuity and lead to sustainable value retention.

Creating sustainable added value

By investing in **forward-looking innovations and developments** with calculated risks, we aim to create long-term added value.

Sustainable organising

Sustainable organising leads to a company with a structure in which everyone's responsibility and role is defined. This creates a clear framework. Respect for family values and Nelissen culture ensure a **safe and pleasant working environment**. Each department has started working on this initiative and has translated it into action points.

Nelissen has been building a sustainable business for many years. The **strategic exercise** at its heart has since been **completed**. In the next step, this sustainable business practice is implemented throughout the organisation, encompassing the launch of concrete projects. Its integration management ran from June to September 2024.

However, this strategy will not be included until the **next sustainability report**. We are making this choice because we think it is important to build internal support first. Consequently, we will initially focus on **internal communication**. The **sustainability efforts** detailed in the following chapters, were undertaken in **2023** and **2024** but are not yet **linked** to this new strategy.

While not directly linked to the new strategy, however, they indirectly connect into our broader direction and goals and emerged in a more organic, bottom-up manner.

More information on our projects and efforts can be found in the next chapter.

4.4.2 Our services

On the one hand, Nelissen **produces** its **own bricks** which are sold through distributors. On the other hand, we also **offer** other brands **to** our **partners**. Finally, we also offer our customers **other solutions** for facade covering, such as facade insulation systems, quick-build blocks and mortars.

Co-creation is hugely important to us. For years, when working on larger projects, we have offered architects the option of determining the colours of a brick themselves (within our production capabilities). In addition, they can turn to us to develop certain solutions. For example, our DUBIO brick is an idea from designer Roel Vandebeek of Maasmechelen-based product design agency 'It's a Roel'.

See page 45 for more info on DUBIO.

We also try to take on the role of proactive **inspirer**. Our showroom is set up as an innovation hub, with the aim of bringing professionals together, helping customers make more conscious choices and raising awareness around the production process of bricks.

4.4.3 Our key products and brands

Bricks

Nelissen offers a **wide range** of different bricks; we have a brick for every architectural style, be it classic, modern or pastoral. The range includes **more than 100 colours** and, at the request of our customers, we can also look for tailor-made colours for their construction projects.

Own brands

Hand moulded bricks

We are well-known for our **hand moulded bricks**. We produce these ourselves and they have a unique shape and colour. Until a few decades ago, hand-moulded bricks were actually made by hand, but today we produce them with modern machines that allow us to produce more efficiently and ergonomically. Using a perfect imitation of the traditional production method, we obtain the typical hand-moulded brick with its irregular surface, varied hues and grains.



We therefore opt for our own hand-moulded collections based on colour, look & feel, and aftertreatment. This creates an extensive range, divided into several series, e.g. the Pastel series contains softer hues.

Using a perfect imitation of the traditional production method, we obtain the typical hand-moulded brick with its irregular surface, varied hues and grains.

We offer **10 sizes** in total. This wide choice is important because brick size helps determine the look of an overall project. Size is also particularly important in the context of sustainability. The entire brick sector is focussed on sizes such as N70/4, N70/5 and N70/6,5, in the context of its dematerialisation efforts. These sizes reduce the use of raw materials and energy without compromising the functionality and quality of the product. It is no coincidence that we refer to these as **eco-sizes**.

Find more information on eco-sizes at <https://www.baksteen.be/federatie/over-ons/3271/sectoraal-charter-eco-sizeen-gevelsteen/>

Brick slips and half-bricks

Our full range is also available as **brick slips or half-bricks**. Both slips and half-bricks are cut from original bricks on request and, as a result, possess the same properties and quality as full bricks. Furthermore, they are lighter and more convenient to handle. A half-brick is 4.5 to 5 cm thick (N70 is 3.5 cm) and slips are about 2 cm thick.

Brick slips are always **glued** with specially designed mortar glue. Also, thanks to the thinness of brick slips, the normal detailing around windows and doors can be maintained. This avoids high adaptation costs in a renovation or newbuild. This technique also encompasses special corner slips for corner finishing on facades and window and door openings. As a result, the selected bonds do not change and you are guaranteed a perfect finish.

Both brick slips and half-bricks possess the same properties and quality as solid bricks.

None of the brick's characteristics are lost in the production of brick slips. The middle of the brick is not used for the slips, but this waste product is recycled and becomes another useful product. Indeed, the intermediate elements are used as building materials or granules.

Finally, there is another important element: you can only draw from stock and not reorder. The technique used with half bricks is similar, although these bricks are always **laid** against an existing facade. In the corners, the method is the same as for full bricks: you work with a corner joint.

DUBIO

The last of our own products is **DUBIO**. This is our own size, **designed by Roel Vandebeek**, with its own finish. This brick, with shadow joints, creates the illusion of two or three thin bricks stacked together. It offers architects creative options that translate on site into higher returns with an ecological touch.

After all, the **N70** is the basis for DUBIO. This slim brick is three centimetres thinner than a standard brick, creating space for extra insulation in the exterior wall or creating a larger living space.

The innovative brick has already won **multiple awards**; alongside the Henry Van de Velde Efficiency Award, DUBIO also won the Product Innovation Award at the Belgian Building Awards. It also won a German Design Award, an Architecture & Design Collection Award and a BLT Built Design Award.

Partner brands

In addition to our own brands, we also distribute bricks with **other finishes**, as a supplement to our own range. As a retailer, we offer smooth (wasserstrich) and engineered bricks from Caprice.



High load bearing capacity

Excellent thermal insulation

Strong sound insulation

Fireproof



© Photo Nelissen: Lücking quick-build blocks

Facade insulation systems

To meet the increased demand for insulation and renovation products, we offer the **Iso-Façade**-system. Combining insulation with brick slips provides an answer to the demand for facade renovation with insulation. It features a practical tongue and groove system and rebate on the left and right, thus guaranteeing perfect insulation without cold bridges.

The product is **very user-friendly** allowing DIY-ers and craftsmen alike to install it in no time. The boards are also light and easy to cut, without causing skin irritation.

Due to the **maximum moisture resistance** Iso-Façade boards can even be installed below ground level because - even there - they are extremely resistant to mould and micro-organisms.

Quick-build blocks

We also distribute quick-build blocks as a retailer, more specifically those of the brand **Lücking**. They are often used in the shell construction of walls and load-bearing structures, and then finished with plaster, plasterboard or an exterior brick wall for a nicer finish. Their size and weight make bricklaying **faster**, and **fewer bricks** are needed per square metre of wall, saving labour time too.

In addition to their high load-bearing capacity, quick-build blocks also offer **excellent thermal insulation**. They are made of clay fired at 950°C. This, together with a high thermal conductivity ($\lambda_{10, \text{dry}(90/90)}$) of 0.24 W/mk at a thickness of 14 cm and even 0.18 W/mk at a thickness of 19 cm, ensures excellent thermal insulation. In winter, the perforations and pores in the quick-build blocks provide extra warmth in the house, while in summer they ensure a cooler climate.

Thanks to a density of 850 kg/m³, the quick-build blocks guarantee **great sound insulation** inside the building. External noise is also kept outdoors.

Furthermore, quick-build blocks are **fireproof**; they contain no flammable substances and are classified A1 for non-combustible material. All Lücking variants are CE-approved, some are also BENOR-certified.

Other building materials (grout, glue, whitewash)

Of course, construction projects do not just consist of bricks. We are happy to provide further support to our customers by offering a number of other building materials.

Grout

For grout, we work with **Seifert**, a Belgian company, founded in 1912, which also specialises in the production of plasterboard. With more than 1,000 colours in its range, Seifert leads the field in tinted grouts and the most commonly used colours are invariably in stock, allowing customers to get started right away. A high-quality, colour-intensive grout is essential to make our bricks really stand out.

The grout is composed of fine (cleaned) raw materials, dried and prepared in special kilns. The product is mixed mechanically when dry, ensuring even quality and colour. Being water-resistant and dust-free, it is suitable for grouting masonry for both newbuilds and renovations.

Whitewash

We also work with Seifert for whitewash. The company produces **mineral cement paint** which has been used for centuries to finish facades, interior walls and ceilings. Because it is applied only a few millimetres thick, it creates a beautiful structure where the old brickwork remains visible and the facade retains its authentic character.

The great advantage of whitewash is that it breathes. This makes it resistant to weather and wind but prevents the defects that affect hermetically sealed facades over time.

Thin-bed mortar

Seifert thin-bed mortars are an alternative to bonded facing bricks. This involves traditional masonry applied with a trowel, but with joint thicknesses ranging from 4 mm to 8 mm. Thin-bed mortar has the same aesthetic properties as bonded brickwork and a higher adhesive strength than traditional brickwork. The mortar is applied to leave a recess and a joint iron is used, during thin jointing, to attain the appropriate depth so that further pointing is unnecessary later on. In contrast to glue mortars, a thin joint can be used with very irregular brick sizes.

Adhesive mortar

Finally, there is also a collaboration with Seifert for adhesive mortar. This allows bricks to be bonded, increasing the **colour intensity of the brick**. After all, in a traditional masonry facade, the joints cover 25% of the surface area. Seifert's adhesive mortar is dust-free and serves to bond both absorbent and non-absorbent bricks with a joint height of 3 mm to 6 mm.





4.5 Our context

4.5.1 Value chain

We are currently in the process of mapping out our value chains and we hope to communicate these in early 2025.

4.5.2 Caring for our employees, customers and environment

At Nelissen, we are aware of the impact we have as a brick manufacturer on our employees, our customers and our environment. We are therefore careful to involve these stakeholders in our activities and are interested in their opinions.

Employees

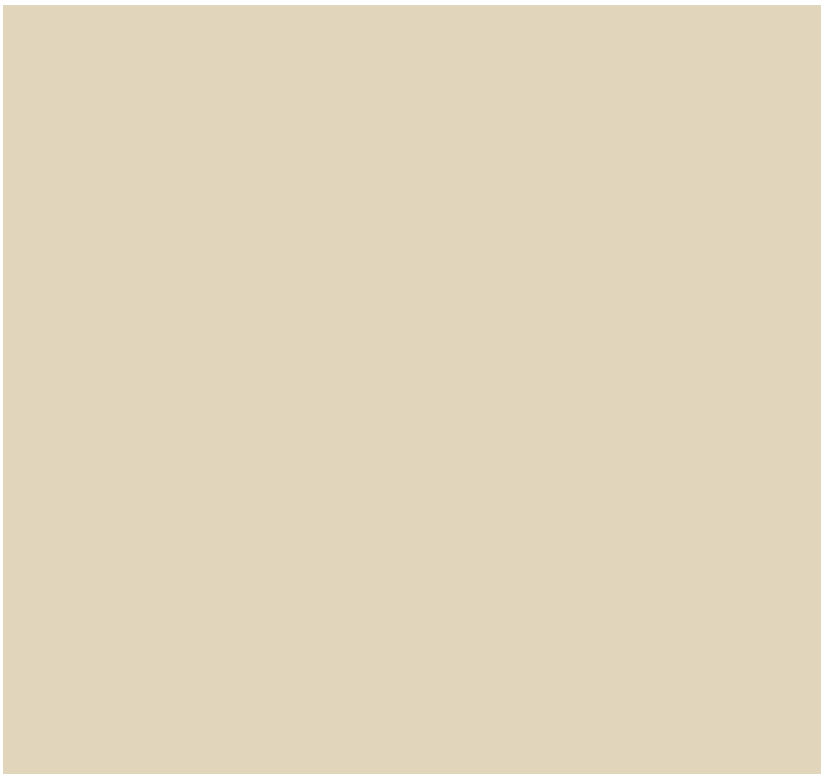
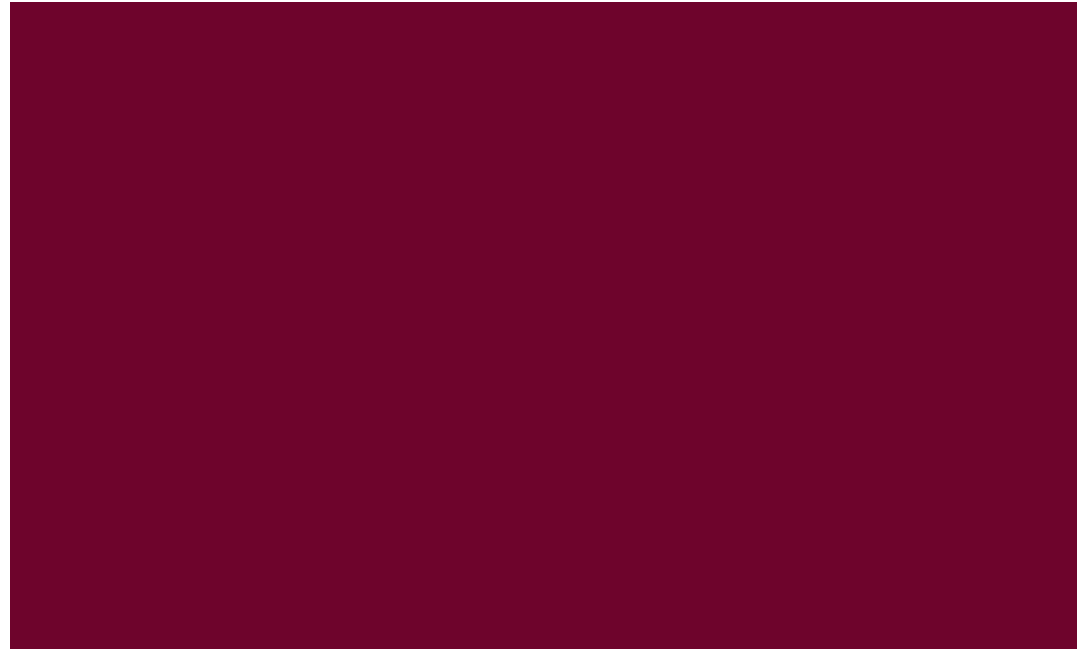
In 2023, the foundations were laid for a **sustainable and innovative HR policy**. Although our human resources policy had been modern and professional for some time, several initiatives have contributed to a more strategic approach, with clear objectives for both the short and long term.

One such initiative was the organisation of **workshops around the corporate values**. These workshops introduced employees to the values of our family business and allowed them to be transferred to the workplace. Employees committed to actively applying and supporting the values within their teams and across the whole organisation. Our employees were also given the chance to create “dream themes” or themes that demonstrate our concern for our employees and reveal areas for improvement that we can work on as an organisation.

We pooled this input with that of the shareholders to come up with an HR strategy which allows us to support and guide the employee throughout the full “employee life cycle”.

This includes an important role for our **Brick Academy**. This is the starting point for tours of the company and the home venue for events but, first and foremost, it is the training centre where we continuously train our employees, both in technical and soft skills. In 2023, for example, we organised a first aid refresher course, performance appraisal training and time management, and Microsoft Excel training.

During workshops, employees were introduced to the **values of our family business** and were able to translate them to the workplace.





Nelissen is a member of the Belgian Brick Federation (Belgische Baksteenfederatie) and is committed to an industry charter that puts the sector on the path to carbon neutrality by 2050.

Nelissen also participates in the EBO, the energy policy agreement. This is an initiative for large-scale consumers who, through their participation, demonstrate that they are energy-conscious.

Customers and residents

We also use the **Brick Academy** for presentations, lectures, receptions and other events. It also serves as a mini-museum. Visitors learn about the current production process, gain an overview of our daily operations and see what goes into making a brick.

To minimise the impact on our neighbours, in 2018 we purchased a **sweeper truck**. As a result, we keep both our own sites and a stretch of public road (Kiezelweg) dust and litter-free. The Kiezelweg, going towards Lanaken, has been swept up to the boundary of Kesselt for some time now in response to a local resident's question during a public enquiry about planning re-zoning.

4.5.3 Evolutions and changes

Energy transition

Bricks have the advantage of longevity and circularity. However, there is also the challenge of making the **production process**, in particular the brick firing, more **energy efficient**. We fire our bricks in tunnel kilns using natural gas and are aiming for a total CO₂ reduction of 42% by 2030 compared to 2022. By 2050, climate neutrality should be a reality.

This reduction results not only from the energy transition, but also, for example, from the introduction of **eco sizes** (which require less raw materials and energy due to their narrower dimensioning) and from investments in heat recovery. The next major challenge is to adjust the **raw material mix** to reduce CO₂ emissions during the firing process, along with **electrification** of machines or heating of kilns.

This reduction in CO₂ results not only from the energy transition, but also, for example, from the introduction of eco sizes.

In this context, we will apply a **step by step** approach. In the first step, we will focus on reducing or minimising energy consumption by, for example, switching off installations completely when not in use. In the second step, we will turn to renewables, a sustainable way of generating energy. In the third step, we will focus on increasing the efficiency of existing facilities. The **move away from natural gas** as an energy source will be the **final piece** of the puzzle.

The energy transition is accompanied by **ever-stricter environmental rules and regulations**. We have been investing in our raw materials, production processes and products for years in order to comply with emission standards and energy efficiency requirements, such as EU ETS, and this generates an additional administrative workload. Moreover, traditional energy sources, such as gas and electricity, have become more expensive in recent years.

Business transition

In parallel with the energy transition, we are also going through a business transition. We are adapting **production processes** to consume less energy, but that comes with its own, additional challenges, as we are in a market where supply currently exceeds demand. In response, we have adjusted our **sales strategies** to attract environmentally conscious customers and overhauled our business model by switching from being a simple brickworks to a company with a smart business model that focuses on returns and margins.

Market transition

The brick remains a traditional and much sought-after product. For the Belgian producers, this resulted in a production volume of 2,172,000 tonnes in 2023 (exterior facades and interior walls). That means a **decrease** of 16% compared to 2022 (figures: Belgian Brick Federation). Market trends are clearly affecting the brick. Both building permits for renovation and newbuilds saw a 7% decrease in 2023 (figures: Stabel). This is due to the rise in material prices and mortgage rates.

However, we do see a **positive trend for narrower bricks and brick slips** and a **growing demand for environmentally friendly products**. This is precisely why we are investing heavily in the development of sustainable innovations such as N70/4, N70/5 and N70/6,5. Research and development remain important, and this will extend into the future.

However, sustainability is a two-sided coin for brick manufacturers. **Challengers** have the wind in their sails in this area. **Timber construction** has long been well established in northern Europe, Austria and Germany, and is also gaining a foothold in Belgium. According to figures from WOOD.BE, the knowledge centre for the wood and furniture industry, timber construction in Belgium accounts for a market share of some 11% in new construction and 3% in renovation.

Generational transition

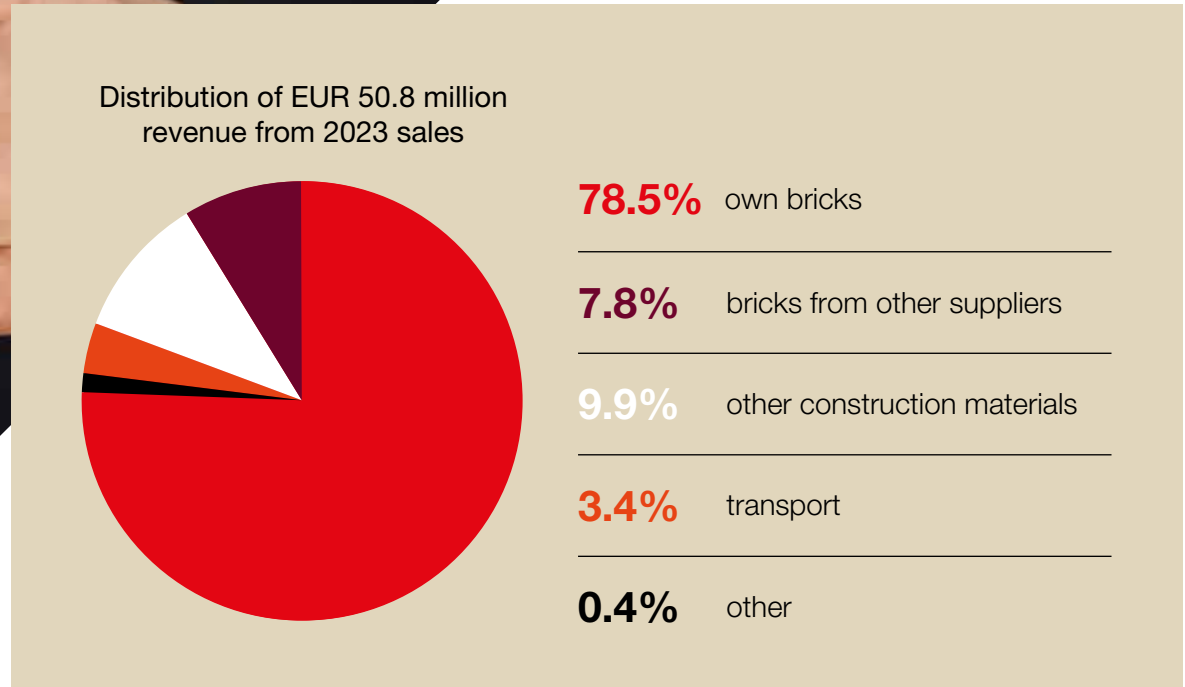
The final transition is the generational transition. Nelissen is a company with masses of experience, thanks to the handover from generation to generation. This provides in-depth knowledge of production processes, market dynamics and operations and it is crucial to effectively transfer this knowledge to the new generation. To achieve this, an executive committee has been set up to manage day-to-day operations. The three CEOs are responsible for the long-term vision and were each given separate roles in this context.

The family forum allows us to engage with the fifth generation; they can ask questions, we can share ideas with them, and they can have a say. In this way, we create engagement and stay updated on what's happening in the company while they gain experience elsewhere.



We are overhauling our business model by switching from being a simple brickworks to a company with a smart business model that focuses on returns and margins.



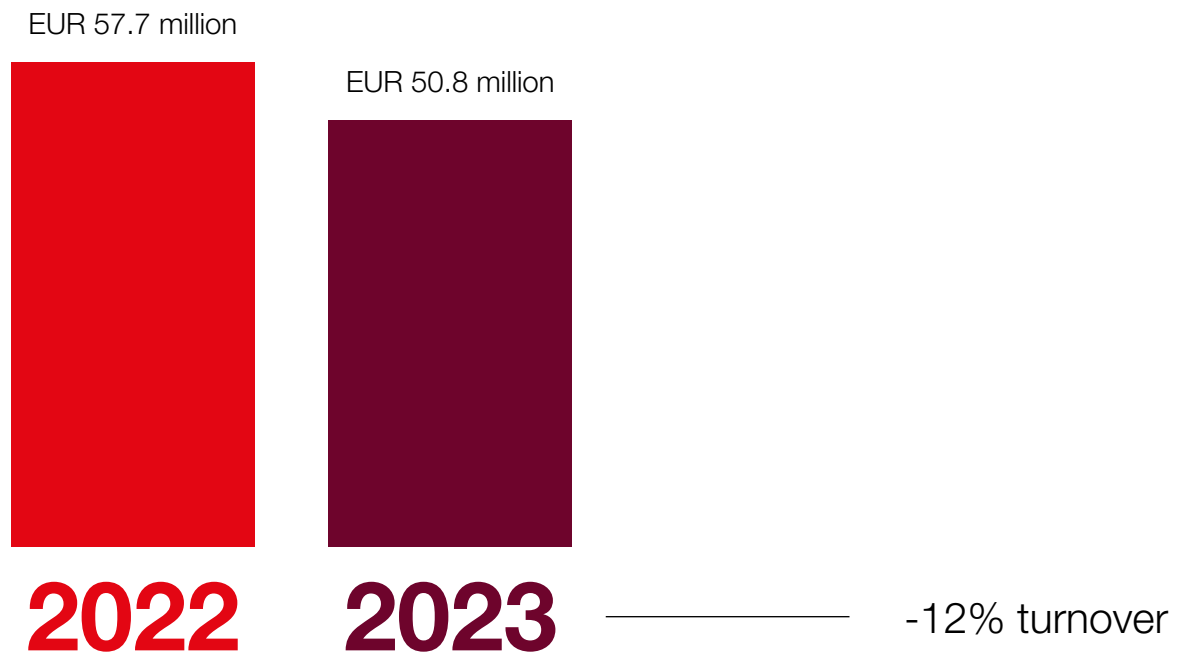


4.6 2023 in a in a nutshell

4.6.1 Financial figures

As a family business, Nelissen prioritises the provision of robust financial figures which form a solid foundation for further progress and reflect a long-term vision.

Consolidated result		EBITDA	
2023	EUR 4.8 million	2023	EUR 11.4 million
2022	EUR 5.5 million	2022	EUR 11.5 million
-13%		-1%	



05

Sustainability

How do we deal with **sustainability** and what efforts have we made?



5.1 Our sustainability approach

5.1.1 Building sustainable operations

Nelissen has a strong commitment to sustainability. As a result, we have completely changed our orientation and organisation over just a few years. In **2021** and **2022** we started down a **pathway** towards raising the sustainability level of our operations and making the issue an **integral part** of our business processes. We now wish to take further steps towards finding the right balance between financial and sustainable growth.

Together with external sustainability expert **Encon** the CEOs developed a **sustainability strategy**, underpinned by a stakeholder survey and materiality exercise. That said, however, no sustainability projects have yet been initiated. While working on the processes of strategy integration, several departments launched a number of projects in parallel in 2023 and 2024.

The strategic exercise has since been completed and will be further communicated internally in the next phase. This will then be followed by **implementation** throughout the organisation, as well as the launch of defined projects. The integration management ran from June to September 2024.

5.1.2 Sustainability projects 2023-2024

The balance between ecology, economy and the social aspect is increasingly central to business decisions. In this context, we challenge each department to think out-of-the-box, innovatively and with a long-term view. Parallel to the development of a sustainable strategy, we are already rolling out projects at the operational level. In doing so, we focus on **raw materials**, the **production process**, **eco-sizes** and **dematerialisation**, and **our own employees**.



Raw materials

We work with 100% natural raw materials. The primary raw material for the production of our bricks is Loess, also known as Limburg clay. It is the basic raw material for the production of bricks. Loess is remarkably suitable for the hand-moulded facade brick that was first marketed by Nelissen in Belgium in 1921. On the Kesselt plateau, the site where our brickworks has been shaping and firing bricks for 100 years now, the Loess layer is as much as six to eight metres thick.

It is mined at the quarry (see box about the Leembank) and then transported to the factory halls. Uniquely, the soil there contains red and yellow loam, which allows Nelissen to manufacture red, yellow, pink, grey and black bricks.

Most of the raw material does not come from the quarry, however, but from construction projects and includes, for example, a waste product that is used as the basis for producing bricks. In 2023, there was no mining at all on the Kesselt plateau.

Nelissen pays very close attention to the distance from the factory and the number of crane movements required when mining raw materials. The fewer crane movements, the more sustainably we can process this precious resource.

The loam bank

In 2007, the Flemish government decided to tackle the fragmentation of quarries. This suited the brickworks of Limburg as there was an urgent need to secure loam reserves in order to keep up with the long-term demand for bricks. As a result, the three Limburg brickworks set up a cooperative society. The loam bank coincided with the adoption of the spatial implementation plan or RUP Leem in Zuid-Limburg. It's worth noting that brick factories are also required to restore pits to their original state once the loam has been extracted.



Production process

The production of bricks releases a great deal of CO₂ because the ceramic process is energy-intensive. And the government knows that too. The production process is therefore **subject to legislation** to reduce CO₂ emissions. Since 2005 it has been part of the **emissions trading system** (EU ETS), where the number of available allowances decreases every year, encouraging producers to reduce their emissions.

We are committed to this goal. To reduce our emissions, between 2017 and 2019 we thoroughly **updated our production process**. We renovated our ovens and drying rooms, **invested EUR 50 million** and realised energy efficiency improvements.

We are also aiming for a production process with **maximum recovery**. This means that the amount of waste is limited, partly thanks to the resale of residues in the production of brick slips. The bricks are also recycled after demolition, after which they serve as foundation material. In the production process, we also focus on the efficient use of water. Moreover, for several years now we have been transporting our bricks in **packaging** which consists of 50% recycled material, of which a maximum of 10% is printed. This allows the packaging to be recycled again.

What is loess?

Loess is a special type of loam that was deposited during the ice age, almost two million years ago, by the dominant north-westerly wind in the valleys of rivers such as the Waal, the Rhine and the Meuse. The loam layer is estimated to be 300 kilometres long and several kilometres wide. It runs from Germany and Maastricht through southern Limburg to Tienen as far as Kortemark (West Flanders). Its thickness varies between six and eight metres from one location to the next.



Design according to eco-sizes and dematerialisation

We also innovate in our sizes while taking aesthetics and sustainability into account. A major innovation in this area are the **eco-size bricks** which we have been making for several years, better known as N70. These bricks are thinner and narrower, so you need less raw materials and energy to fire and dry them. These sizes fit within an industry-wide charter we entered into to produce thinner bricks and ensure dematerialisation.

Thanks to the smart design of our N70 line, we can transport more bricks per full load and, as a result, fewer freight movements are needed. These bricks also require less mortar (another resource saving) and provide more space for insulation (making the building more sustainable).

	N70/4 vs. RF 4	N70/5 vs. WV 50	N70/6,5 vs. WV 65
Format	±240x70x40 mm	±240x70x50 mm	±240x70x65 mm
Cost	At least -6,5% per m ²	At least -13% per m ²	At least -10% per m ²
Transportation (pieces, not m²)	+16,6%	+13,6%	+14,5%
Mortar savings	-30%	-30%	-30%
Weight per piece	-11,5%	-12,5%	-14,5%



N70 in the spotlight

The N70 is an exclusive brick size of $\pm 240 \times 70 \times 40$ mm (N70/4), $\pm 240 \times 70 \times 50$ mm (N70/5), and $\pm 240 \times 70 \times 65$ mm (N70/6,5) that is 3 cm narrower and longer than a traditional brick.



New N70/6,5:

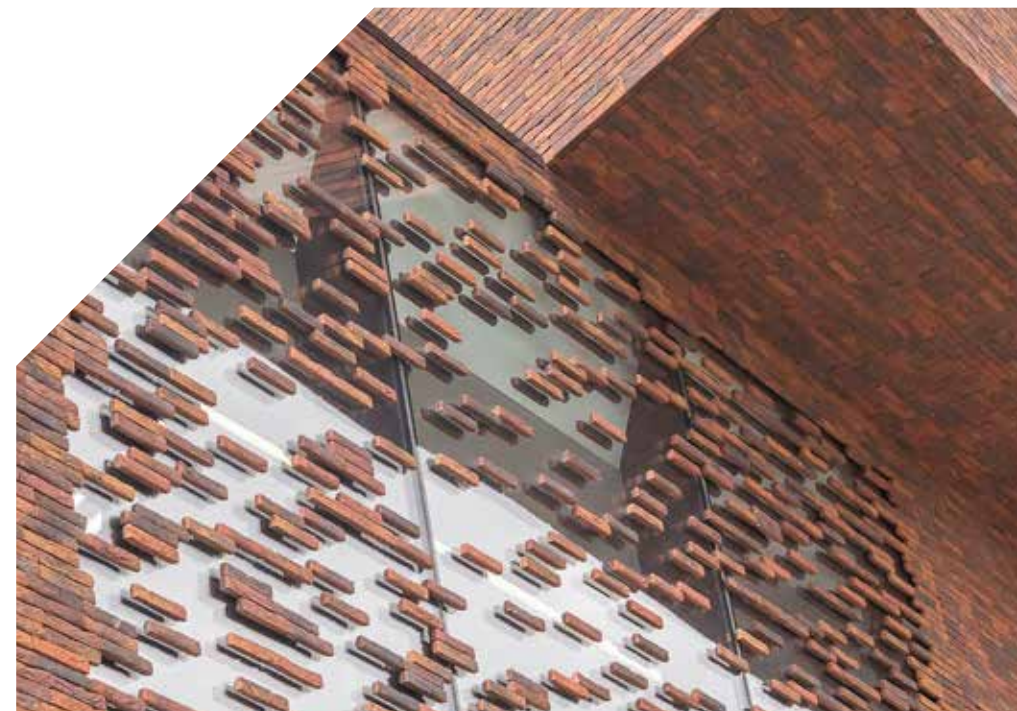
10%

Fewer bricks required per m² versus WV 65



30%

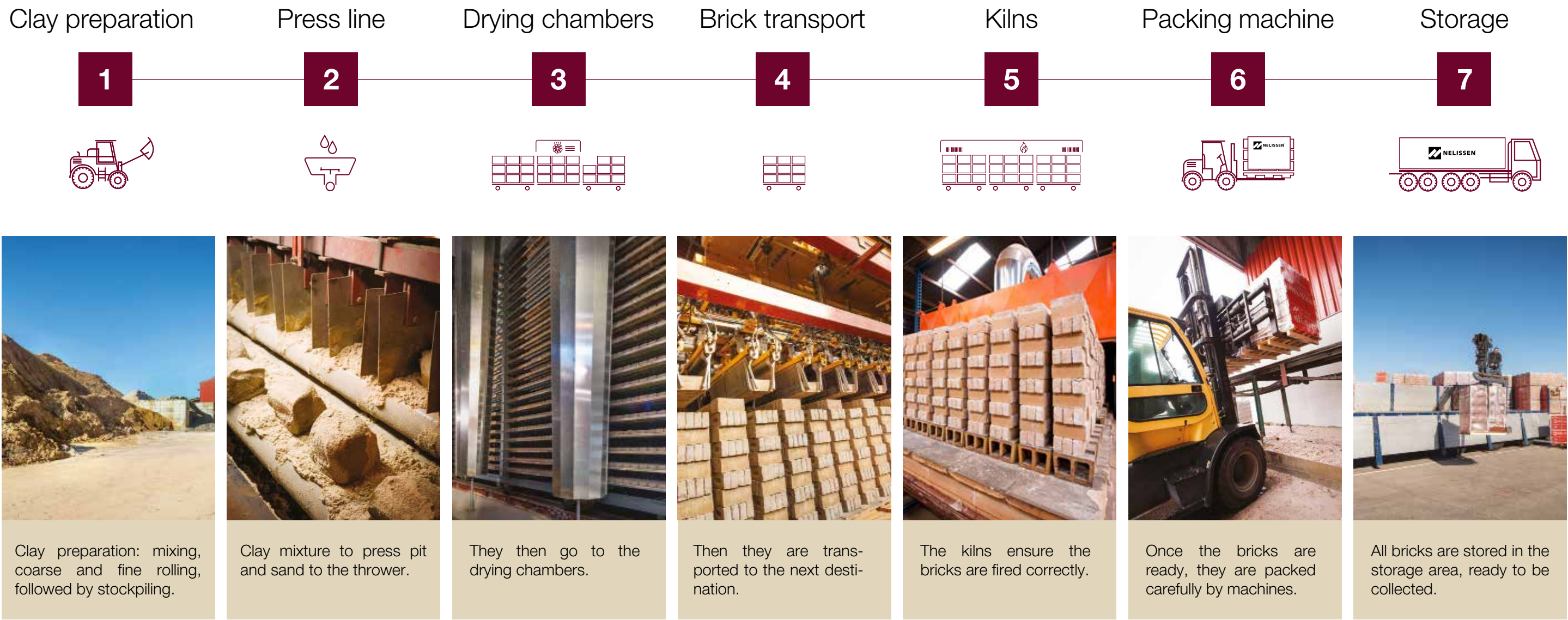
Shallower and therefore more space for insulation



2024: launch N70/6,5
Proposed in all quotes

Eco-sizes

Our goal for 2024 is to achieve 10% of sales, with an ambition to grow this to 50% by 2028.





Sustainability within HR is already a reality at our company, more specifically with regard to the pillars of mobility, remuneration and sustainable careers.

- **Mobility:** launch of a bicycle leasing scheme in 2022 (see below).
- **Remuneration:** cafeteria plan for our office workers. Regular update with new trade-ins for better work-life balance, among other things. Ambition to open this up to our manual workers in the future (condition: agreement with own and sectoral unions).
- **Sustainable careers:** à la carte menu of courses since 2023 (see below).

5.1.3 Responsible bodies

To give the sustainability transition the position it deserves within our business operations, responsibility in 2024 has been assigned to **co-CEO Burt Nelissen**. Along with **Sustainability Manager Paul Sino** and our **Climate Cell** which consists of employees from different departments, he is responsible for the realisation of the strategy, its implementation and the follow-up of the various projects. We also take advice on this from independent external parties such as Encon and Embridge.

An executive committee has also been set up with four experts, each of whom will be given an **autonomous mandate** to take action related to the challenges involved in the four transitions mentioned earlier. The executive committee consists of the people listed below and is supported by CEO Joeri Gevers:

- Kim Vandebosch, Commercial Director
- Ronald Wijnants, Production Director
- Kathy De Bruyne, HR Director
- Betsy Lathouwers, Finance & IT Director

5.1.4 Voka Charter Sustainable Entrepreneurship - SDG PIONEER

The development and implementation of a supported, sustainable strategy is a multi-year project. In order to **accelerate the process**, we decided to participate in the Voka Charter for Sustainable Business (VCDO). This has allowed us to continue to develop projects and take steps to help make our business more sustainable. The charter provides a label to communicate this with our stakeholders.

After the successful completion of the first phase of the UNITAR | CIFAL Flanders PCA2030 Pathway through the VCDO, we received **United Nations certification** as an SDG PIONEER 2023 in 2023.

- **Long-term objective:** Becoming SDG Champion involves a 20% reduction in the carbon footprint/m² for ceramics via dematerialisation and alternative raw materials
- **Status (start and end date):**
 - Start of Pioneer pathway: 2020
 - End of Pioneer pathway: 2023
 - Start of Champion pathway: 2023 (first year successfully completed)
 - End of Champion pathway: 2025

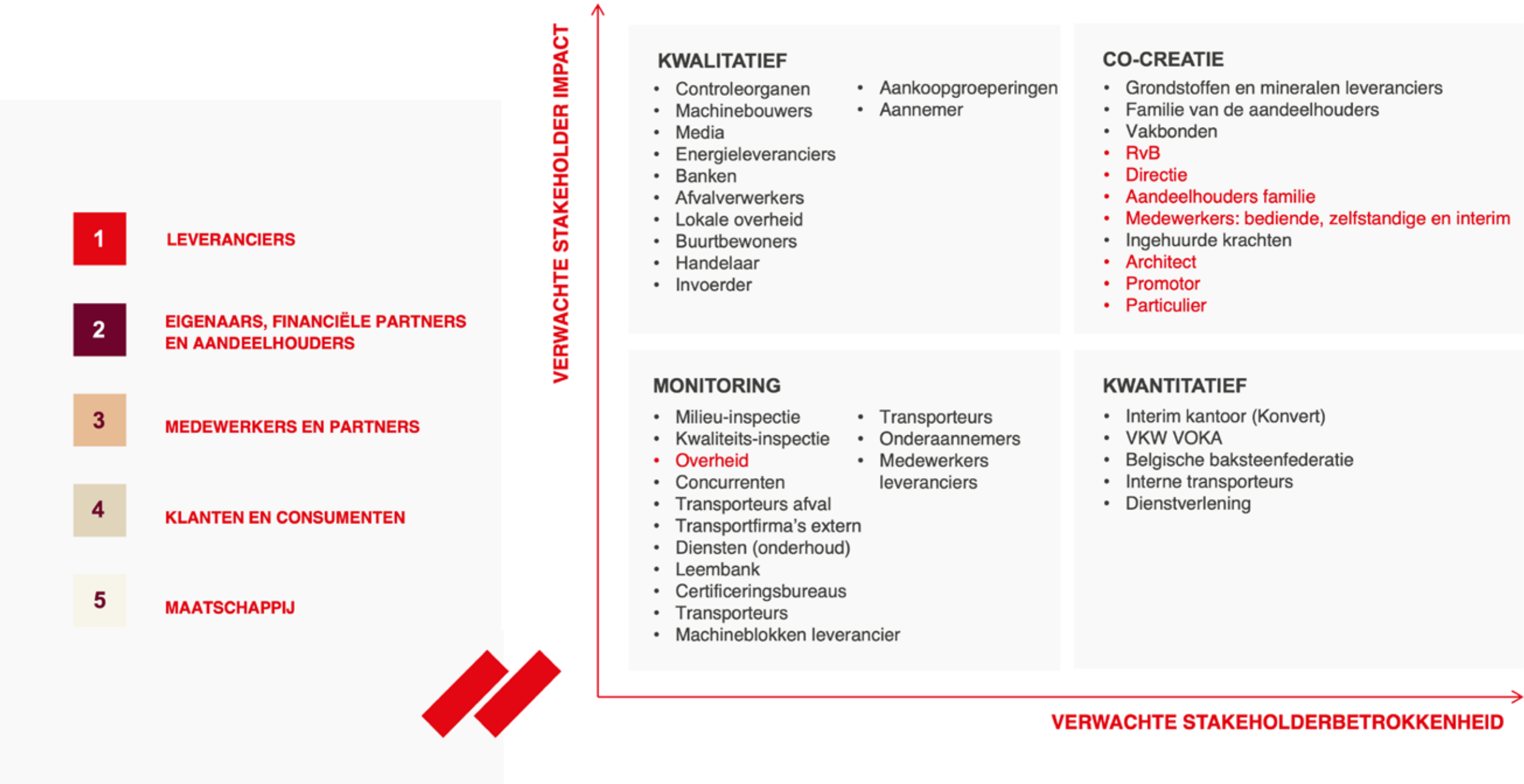


5.2 Stakeholders and their concerns

During a workshop in 2022, under the guidance of external partner Encon, we assessed our stakeholders, who were then divided into five groups (see diagram). The top layer indicates the extent to which these stakeholders are “top of mind”, or involved in multiple collaborations.



This was further categorised in a subsequent workshop, which helped establish the extent to which we will engage them to gather insights. How involved do we expect them to be? From which groups do we expect to gain relevant insights? If the involvement and expected stakeholder input is high, then we engage in co-creation with this group. If the group scores relatively low on both aspects, the situation will be monitored.



5.3 Materiality matrix

Materialiteiten Matrix

- 1 LEVERANCIERS
- 2 EIGENAARS, FINANCIËLE PARTNERS EN AANDEELHOUDERS
- 3 MEDEWERKERS EN PARTNERS
- 4 KLANTEN EN CONSUMENTEN
- 5 MAATSCHAPPIJ



As part of the same strategic exercise, we used desk research to map out the risks and significant opportunities for Nelissen, based on our strategy and how we create value. We thus arrived at a longlist of themes of material importance. These impact on Nelissen's financial performance and we, in turn, have an impact on society through these themes as an organisation.



During a management workshop, we then went on to plot this longlist of sustainability topics in this matrix. One axis indicates the extent to which they affect our stakeholders, the other axis how important it is to strengthen our market position. The quadrant in the matrix in which each risk and opportunity is placed indicates their priority. The themes at the top right then emerged as material topics.

This matrix provides a clear picture of which aspects are important for Nelissen's growth and shows how we can further improve our impact on society and our business by applying focus.

We had already mapped our stakeholders and materialities in 2022. As part of CSRD, we will continue to work on this in Q3 and Q4 of 2024. We will provide a more detailed explanation in our next sustainability report.

5.4 Sustainability efforts

In parallel with developing the sustainability strategy, we are working on operational issues too. This has generated various principles that are already being applied today.

5.4.1 Policy statement 2024

In the next phase, we will integrate the sustainability strategy into business operations and, based on this framework, decide which principles are prioritised, which are missing and which KPIs/targets are applied. We will also write the corresponding policies in the future.

We included a number of targets in the 2024 policy statement and are building on them accordingly.

Welfare, health & safety

Ensuring the well-being, health and safety of employees in the workplace is one of our biggest responsibilities. We are also committed to supporting social projects at home and abroad.

- We make every effort to prevent personal injury and damage by working and thinking proactively and by providing all necessary resources.
- We create pleasant, safe and healthy working conditions to minimise absenteeism.
- We promote the working atmosphere and working environment by incorporating frequent consultation moments with short lines of communication.
- We actively participate in social projects.
- We promote anti-slavery principles in and around our activities.



Environment and climate

We integrate protection and care for the environment and climate into our daily operations. In this context, we attach great importance to the commitment of all our employees. With the implementation of the environmental management system **ISO 14001** we continuously strive to improve our environmental performance.

- We use our raw materials and resources as efficiently as possible.
- We minimise nuisance from dust and noise to our local residents.
- We avoid waste wherever possible and sort as much as we can, with a view to recycling.
- We comply with relevant environmental laws and regulations.
- We make responsible investment and purchasing choices.
- We follow a procurement policy that supports environmentally and climate-friendly products and services.
- We organise consultation moments for the local area to provide information and gather feedback.
- We invest in new technologies to reduce CO₂ emissions.
- We are continuously focusing on process innovation and working on our climate roadmap in which we define various scenarios for achieving the climate goals (CO₂ emissions reduced by 42% by 2030 and CO₂ neutrality after 2050).
- One of our priorities is energy transition, where our focus is on switching to hydrogen and green electricity/energy production, among other things.

Energy

We strive to continuously improve energy efficiency to comply with relevant (environmental) laws and regulations, and optimise our operations. We have established a fully-fledged **energy management system** to realise the energy policy. In this policy:

- energy consumption is systematically assessed;
- energy flows are evaluated and archived;
- energy-saving measures are planned and implemented;
- the result of those energy saving measures is assessed periodically;

- the waste heat produced by our production is used in our other processes as much as possible; and
- planned activities for improving energy efficiency are continuously updated.

We asked an **energy expert** to implement our energy policy. We also provide annual funding to pursue long-term energy efficiency. The goal? Using available resources and time as efficiently as possible through a pragmatic approach. In our energy policy we constantly strive to:

- measure, record and monitor the various energy consumption data;
- investigate the causes of deviations in energy efficiency and take possible preventive measures;
- actively involve employees in the implementation of the energy policy;
- carefully assess energy-efficient alternatives;
- apply a procurement policy that supports energy-efficient products and services;
- generate green electricity;
- comply with the relevant laws and regulations;
- apply the best available techniques (BAT);
- take appropriate and cost-effective measures in the areas of technology, organisation and behaviour.

We ensure the continuity of our policy adjustments and process improvements by applying the four steps of the **PDCA model** (plan, do, check, act) according to the **ISO 9001:2015** and **ISO 14001:2015** standards.

In doing so, we provide the necessary resources so that we can achieve and maintain environmental, quality, energy, safety, welfare and health objectives. This includes investments in infrastructure, equipment and the corresponding competences, as well as information provision and employee training. We formulate concrete objectives and KPIs annually, which we evaluate thereafter, at regular intervals.

To realise our policies, we rely on the involvement and commitment of our employees. We thus inform and motivate them about the **SHEQ policy** (safety, health, environment, quality) and, in turn, each employee assumes individual responsibilities for safety, welfare, environment, quality and energy. Employees report any points for improvement, unsafe situations and near-misses/accidents relating to the environment, quality and energy immediately to a manager.

This policy statement is reviewed annually during a management review and, if necessary, adjustments or additions are made to ensure continuous development of the policy and the associated quality management system.

Sustainability

Sustainability is an important part of our business philosophy. We actively pursue sustainable process innovations and define and implement a well-considered sustainability strategy.

- We are working to develop and promote ecological products and aim to eventually establish product passports by product type.
- We deliberately communicate the sustainability issues we are working on.
- We are committed to the physical and mental well-being of our employees and are always looking for solutions to ensure good health is sustained.
- We prepare an annual CSRD (Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive) and report transparently on our various environmental, social and governance efforts.

5.4.2 CO₂ strategy and ecological projects

CO₂-strategy and climate roadmap

In 2023, we launched a strategic exercise to develop and implement a carbon reduction strategy based on science-based targets. We developed this strategy in three phases.

1. As-Is analysis

Action

We started measuring our carbon footprint for the year 2022 in May 2023. This analysis provides a detailed overview of our emissions, focusing mainly on the largest CO₂ sources within scope 1 (direct emissions from the company). The analysis also included using various databases to gain a complete picture of our emissions.

Result

The As-Is analysis has given us insights into the main emission hotspots within our organisation, i.e. the organisation's process installations that have the greatest impact on its carbon footprint. The hotspots within our scope 1 emissions are the kilns, the drying plant and direct process emissions (from the different types of raw materials that release CO₂ during the firing process). These insights allow us to take targeted measures to significantly reduce our CO₂ emissions, focusing on the largest sources of emissions.



2. Climate roadmap

Action

Together with our partner Encon, we have developed a climate roadmap, which was finalised in December 2023. During several brainstorming sessions, we examined which reduction measures are relevant to Nelissen in both the short and long term. These include the partial switch to green methane and the possibility of running our kilns (partly) on hydrogen in the future. We are also improving the sustainability of our energy supply by producing and buying our own green energy.

Result

In scope 1, thanks to the partial switch to green methane, we expect a 16% reduction in the short term. The partial switch to hydrogen-powered kilns represents a 31% long-term reduction, which will affect scope 1 direct emissions.

In scope 2, we will focus on the production and purchase of green energy through guarantees of origin. We will then have proof of the origin of sustainably produced energy. We have largely quantified our various measures and we are conducting further research for a few other options. Finally, we also have scope 3, where we are currently in the process of mapping our value chains. Our ambition is to communicate these in early 2025.

3. Objectives and level of ambition

Action

Based on our carbon footprint and reduction opportunities, we have set targets to comply with the Paris Climate Agreement. We will thus ensure that our targets for greenhouse gas emissions from our operations (scope 1 and 2) match the reductions needed to limit warming to 1.5°C, also the target of the Paris Agreement.

Compared to the base year 2022, in the short term we are aiming for a 42% reduction by 2030. In the long term, we would like to be carbon neutral by 2050. These targets cover both scope 1 and scope 2, with a future focus on scope 3 (emissions from our suppliers), which we will also include in the targets.

Result

Our emission reduction targets have been approved by the Science-Based Targets Initiative (SBTi) and aligned with targets to limit global warming to 1.5°C. In this context, we are contributing to the global efforts to combat climate change and ensure that Nelissen is prepared for the challenges of the future. To remain compliant with the SBTi, we are committed to recalculating our carbon footprint annually and to closely following the climate roadmap.

For more info, see: www.sciencebasedtargets.org/companies-taking-action#table



Why 1.5°C warming as a starting point?

According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), a temperature rise of more than 1.5°C will bring about sharply rising costs and serious consequences for business and put extreme pressure on our society. To avoid this, a substantial reduction in CO₂ emissions is needed: global emissions should be halved by 2030 and net zero by 2050.

More efficient energy consumption in the drying process

Action

During the brick drying process, a considerable amount of energy is required to heat the air to the desired temperature and pass it through the drying chambers. We have increased the efficiency of energy consumption in the drying process by harmonising the drying cycles more effectively. Thanks to the drying agenda, we can make optimal use of the residual heat of the ovens. Indeed, the drying agenda allows for better planning and coordination of drying cycles, thereby reducing gas consumption in the drying plants.

Result

Agenda-based drying results in reduced gas consumption in the drying plants. Furthermore, the installation and commissioning of a new drying plant in 2019, equipped with the latest technology, will not only improve energy efficiency and reduce heat loss, it will also reduce noise pollution and consequently have a lower impact on the environment.

Summary

- **Strategic site or pillar:** more efficient use of energy in drying process
- **Short-term objective:** match minimum energy consumption to drying conditions
- **Long-term objective:** optimise residual heat recovery from wet air extraction
- **Status:** continuous

Redistribution of cooling air through more efficient drying

Action

We reuse the cooling air from the kilns in the drying lines to dry the bricks. In 2023, we made the necessary adjustments to better distribute the cooling air from the kilns between dryer 1 and dryer 2. Previously, drying plant 1 received an excessive amount of cooling air, so it was not used to its full potential. By directing more hot air to dryer 2, dryer efficiency improved and natural gas consumption decreased.

Result

Dryer 1 remained stable in energy consumption, while the redistribution of cooling air in dryer 2 led to significant savings and better utilisation of available energy resources. Dryer 2 has become up to 32% more energy efficient in natural gas consumption due to this optimisation.

Summary

- **Project name and department:** cooling air optimisation - Drying Plant 1 and Drying Plant 2
- **Strategic site or pillar:** more efficient use of energy in drying process
- **Short-term objective:** optimisation of cooling air distribution between drying plants
- **Status:** completed by 2023

Electrification of technical lift trucks

Action

We have invested in electric forklifts to reduce CO₂ emissions and noise pollution in the surrounding area. This project, which has been running for several years, involves replacing diesel forklifts with electric variants. In 2023, we ordered an electric forklift for the technical department to replace a diesel model forklift. The brush machine's diesel engine was also replaced with an electric version.

Result

The new order for Technical Services is a supplement to the electric forklifts already in use for the packing machine and Creative Ceramics Department (CCD). The intention is to further extend electrification to heavier machines in the coming years.

Summary

- **Short-term objective:** replace all 3-tonne diesel forklifts with electric forklifts
- **Long-term objective:** replace heavier machines (8-tonne forklifts) with electric alternatives
- **Status:** ongoing - annual investments



Expansion of photovoltaic installations

Action

We have been investing in photovoltaic solar panels to increase energy efficiency since 2012. The first installation of 290,880 Wp was followed by two additional installations totalling 281,481 Wp in 2019. In 2023, Nelissen further expanded the PV installation with 86,100 Wp on the roof of the sand canopy. As a result, we are using all available roof space to generate renewable energy.

Result

In 2023, the solar panels produced 525,453 kWh of green electricity. We currently have 658,460 Wp of installed capacity spread across 2,330 solar panels. In future expansions, we will always evaluate the possibility of additional solar panels.

Summary

- **Short-term objective:** maximum utilisation of roof area for solar panels (achieved) - intention to expand when new roofs are constructed
- **Status:** ongoing - since 2012

Interventions to improve the production process

Action

Nelissen is committed to a continuous improvement process within production by using the ISO 9001 quality management system, as well as the ISO 14001 Environmental Management System. This enables it to set ever-higher quality standards and combat waste. Through a local platform, we also engage employees to identify waste, such as compressed air leaks, and any anomalies can be reported quickly.

Result

In 2023, we completed several projects, such as the optimisation of waste heat recovery, the update of processing instructions to improve customer information and the installation of an automatic sintering device on production line 2 to improve ergonomics for our employees. Other projects, such as the installation of a robot for shape changes, will be completed during 2024.

Summary

- **Strategic site or pillar:** continuous improvement of production process

Update processing instructions

- **Objective:** prevent mishandling to improve customer information and reduce complaints
- **Status:** completed by March 2024

Automatic sintering device production line 2

- **Objective:** improve employee ergonomics and increase output
- **Status:** completed in first quarter 2023

Robot shape change

- **Objective:** improve employee ergonomics and increase output
- **Status:** completed by March 2024

Rainwater harvesting

Action

We minimise our water consumption with various techniques, including water recycling and efficient production methods.

- Rainwater falling on our site is collected and directed to a wadi, a storage and infiltration system. At high water levels, we pump this water to a buffer basin, after which it is used in our production process.
- We use this rainwater for wetting clay and for toilet flushing in our office building.
- The rinse water from the moulds in the plant is also cleaned and reused in a closed circuit.

Result

Through these measures, we efficiently reuse rainwater in production and in our buildings, significantly reducing our water consumption. This contributes to our goal of minimising the use of piped and groundwater. In 2023, we used 45,823 m³ of rainwater for production and 113 m³ for sanitary applications in our office building. The estimated total for 2023 is 60,000 m³.

Summary

- **Project and department name:** rainwater harvesting - production and office building
- **Strategic pillar:** efficient water management
- **Short-term objective:** reduce pipeline and groundwater consumption
- **Status:** completed

Pallet packaging made of shrink wrap with recyclable material

Action

Since 2023, we have been using shrink wrap made of 50% recycled material and with a maximum print coverage of 10% for our pallets. This is a significant improvement on the previous situation, where the film was less recyclable. With less printing, the film can now be recycled as transparent film, facilitating its return to the chain.

Result

In 2023, we purchased 137,299 kg of shrink wrap, of which 50% was recycle and 50% virgin plastic. We incorporated a total of 35,190 kg of plastic back into our films. This improvement has significantly reduced our carbon footprint and ensures more efficient use of resources.

Summary

- **Project and department name:** recyclable pallet packaging
- **Strategic pillar:** sustainable packaging management
- **Short-term objective:** use of recycled material in packaging
- **Status:** completed



Pallet recovery

Action

We offer customers the opportunity to return used Nelissen pallets, contributing to a sustainable future by reducing waste and promoting circularity.

Result

In 2023, our customers returned 5,584 pallets, mainly from the Netherlands. This initiative helps us reduce waste and extend the life of our pallets.

Summary

- **Project name & department:** pallet recovery - warehouse (storage area)
- **Strategic pillar:** waste reduction and circularity
- **Short-term target:** cost savings and waste reduction - target 2025: increase returnable pallets by 3% vs 2024
- **Long-term objective:** reusing 50% of scaffolding pallets
- **Status:** ongoing - started in 2023

Brick waste as a raw material for substrates

Action

We use brick waste as a raw material for sub-foundations and as a sustainable component in roof garden substrate. In 2023, we made several adjustments to optimise this process. On 17 July 2023, we submitted an application to OVAM for a resource declaration, allowing us to officially use the brick rubble as a soil improvement agent. Through an external partner, we ensure that the disposed brick waste is processed sustainably.

Result

In 2023, 3,732 tonnes of brick waste was disposed of and put to good use in products such as soil improvers. This contributes to the circular economy and significantly reduces our waste streams.

Summary

- **Project and department name:** brick waste as raw material for substrates - production
- **Strategic pillar:** circular economy and waste reduction
- **Short-term objective:** reuse of brick waste in roof garden substrate
- **Status:** continuous

Burners (kiln 3)

Action

In 2023, we installed new side burners on kiln 3. These currently run on natural gas, but are also suitable for hydrogen as a future fuel. Comparisons show that even with natural gas, the new burners have lower NOx emissions than the old burners. This was verified on the basis of linking emission data to specific energy consumption.

Result

The new burners reduce our NOx (nitrogen oxide) emissions and we are prepared for a future switch to hydrogen, supporting our commitment to renewable energy sources.

Summary

- **Project name & department:** burners (Kiln 3) - Production
- **Strategic pillar:** emissions reduction and energy efficiency
- **Short-term objective:** reduction of NOx emissions and preparation for hydrogen
- **Status:** completed by 2023

Residual waste converted into separated waste streams

Action

Since 2023, we have been dismantling mould containers and splitting them into different materials so that they can be separated and recycled. Previously, we placed these containers with the residual waste because they were difficult to separate but now we take them apart mechanically, after which we process them separately. Plastic streams are recycled and metals go to the iron container.

Result

By 2023, we will have disposed of 14.96 tonnes of plastic separately for recycling. This process reduces our residual waste and promotes the reuse of valuable raw materials.

Summary

- **Project and department name:** waste separation mould containers - Production
- **Strategic pillar:** waste reduction and recycling
- **Short-term objective:** separate and recycle mould containers
- **Status:** continuous

What does the recycling of mould containers involve?

Mould containers are made of polyethylene, polyurethane and metal, three different (raw) materials that cannot be easily separated. In the absence of processors able to separate these different materials, we opted for a different approach: an employee now mechanically separates the materials, after which we collect and dispose of them separately. The plastic streams go to a processor responsible for recycling.

Eco-sizes and products

Action

We promote the use of eco-sized bricks. Eco-sizes are a great example of dematerialisation: the use of raw materials and energy decreases without sacrificing functionality and quality.

In 2024, we reduced the price of the N70/5 size to the same as the WV 50 size. N70/6,5 was launched in 2024. The price of N70/6,5 is set at a par with that of a WV 65 size.

Result

By introducing eco-sizes, we reduce CO₂ emissions by 30% and contribute to a more sustainable construction industry.

Summary

- **Project and department name:** eco-sizes and products - Product development
- **Short-term objective:** launch a new eco-size within the N70 range and raise awareness around eco-sizes
- **Long-term goal:** a low-carbon society by 2050 by focusing on eco-sizes
- **Status:** ongoing

5.4.3 Social projects

Training plan and offer

Action

We invest in the continuous development of our people to transform our brick factory into a modern, sustainable and profitable production company. We encourage both manual workers and office staff to pursue continuous professional development. Office workers tend to be highly motivated to attend training, both on-the-job and off-the-job. Among our manual workers, we pay extra attention to encouraging proactive participation in training, given their tendency to be a little reactive.

The training plan includes a broad offer for all employees. For manual workers, the focus is on technical skills, while office staff can explore personal, social and team development. With this plan, we not only aim to meet the legal obligation to provide five training days per employee per year by 2030 but also, in the short term, to achieve a corporate goal aimed at increasing training hours for workers.

Result

In 2023, we achieved and exceeded our goal of increasing the number of training hours for our workers by 40% compared to 2022. Training hours increased from 3,177 in 2022 to 5,132 in 2023, representing a 62% increase.

Training hours Nelissen		Worked hours Nelissen	
2023	5,132 hours	2023	212,778 hours
2022	3,177 hours	2022	222,099 hours
62% evolution		1.43% evolution compared to hours worked 2022	
		2.41% evolution compared to hours worked 2023	

This result remains strong even when comparing the number of training hours with the number of hours worked, which was slightly lower in 2023 than in 2022. The percentage of training hours relative to the percentage of hours worked rose from 1.43% to 2.41%. Despite this progress, a great deal of work must still be realised if we are to reach the target of five training days per employee by 2030. It's worth noting that although average training hours are favourable, we are not yet meeting the target at the individual level.

Summary

- **Project name:** training plan
- **Strategic pillar:** human capital development
- **Objective:** meet legal requirement of five training days per employee per year and achieve a 40% increase in training hours for manual workers in the short term
- **Status:** target exceeded in 2023, further guidance needed to meet individual targets

Cooperation with 37 graden

Action

We have entered into a sustainable partnership with 37 graden, a social cooperative that connects creators, makers and buyers. 37 graden supports a welcoming society where everyone is valued, with respect for nature and Mother Earth. Our friendly process of co-creation generated a few original and sustainable corporate gifts.

Result

Since we started working together in 2020, we have received positive feedback from our partners. They appreciate the sustainable business gifts for their originality and their respect for nature and people. This contributes to a friendly and long-lasting partnership.

Summary

- **Project name:** cooperation with 37 graden
- **Strategic pillar:** sustainability and community engagement
- **Short-term objective:** select and distribute sustainable, handmade corporate gifts to our partners
- **Long-term objective:** continue and expand the cooperation
- **Status:** ongoing - started in 2020

Bicycle leasing scheme

Action

Since the launch of our bicycle leasing plan in 2022, we have been offering our employees the opportunity to lease a bicycle on favourable terms. Employees can lease a bike on advantageous terms for 36 months and take over the bike at residual value at the end of the lease period.

This plan encourages the use of bicycles for commuting, contributing to employees' well-being and reducing their carbon footprint. As well as the leasing programme, we provide a bicycle allowance of EUR 0.35 per kilometre, even for employees with a company car. This means that employees are more likely to choose bicycles than company cars for commuting.

Result

By the end of 2023, our lease fleet encompassed 34 bikes. On average, each participant used a bicycle for commuting 85 days a year, which resulted in a combined distance of 40,248 kilometres in one year; just over the circumference of the earth. This corresponds to an average of 1,183 kilometres per participant and, with one exception, all cyclists achieved the target of making at least 20% of their trips by bicycle.

Summary

- **Project name:** bicycle lease plan
- **Strategic pillar:** mobility and carbon footprint
- **Objective:** motivate as many employees as possible to use bicycles for commuting, and achieve at least 20% of trips by bicycle each year
- **Status:** ongoing - launched in 2022, in 2023 there were 34 participants and 40,248 kilometres cycled





Future

How will we deal with sustainability in the **coming years** and how will we integrate it into our business strategy and operational management?



If bricks are still a Belgian priority in 2050, that should at least be a **CO₂-neutral brick**.

6.1 Integration and implementation of sustainable strategy

The strategic exercise has since been completed and will be further communicated internally in the next phase. This will then be followed by implementation throughout the organisation, as well as the launch of defined projects. The integration management ran from June to September 2024.

In order for this to succeed it must be ascribed **sufficient weight** within the organisation. We do this by allocating the corresponding responsibility to one of the three CEOs; they, in turn, work with the Sustainability Manager and the Climate Cell, which consists of employees from different departments.

This clearly shows that we mean business. In a few years, we will choose a different orientation and organisation. Henceforth **the balance between ecology, economy and the social aspect** will be central to business decisions and every department will be challenged to think out-of-the-box, innovatively and with a long-term view. This will maintain sufficient speed in our sector.

6.2 Commitment to dematerialisation

Belgian brick manufacturers are committed to a climate-neutral brick sector through a sector charter. This carbon neutrality must be realised by 2050. The ambition to make the narrow size the industry standard is part and parcel of this challenge. We too are committed to this and signed the Belgian Brick Federation's Eco-sizes charter to this end.

Then, of course, there is the housing stock in our country. According to a report by the Belgian Brick Federation, 85% of homes do not currently meet energy standards and, to meet climate targets by 2050, the number of renovations needs to triple or even quadruple. Anyone who wishes to continue to play a significant role as a manufacturer will have to organise efficiently in order to contribute to this evolution. If the bricks and mortar are still a Belgian priority in 2050, that should at least be a CO₂-neutral brick.

In 2024, we mainly focused on the new N70/6,5 size.

6.3 Sensitisation

To meet the aforementioned challenge, we want to focus on raising awareness at the product level. Our **Sales and Marketing** departments thus have an **important task** ahead of them. They will have to show our customers which solutions are available and explain, in an accessible manner, the impact of the choices they make. We then hope that they will choose products with lower emissions.

6.4 CO₂

In recent years, Nelissen has **worked incredibly hard** on reducing CO₂ emissions. These efforts will continue, with a target of reducing emissions by 42% by 2030 (compared to 2022). Like all European companies, we must be carbon neutral by 2050.

The next challenge in this context is to adjust the **raw material mix** to reduce CO₂ emissions during the firing process. At the same time, we are working on the **electrification** of machinery and using electricity to heat the kilns. We also already have burners in the drying ovens that can operate with **hydrogen**.

6.5 Hydrogen

We will only be able to take the big step in terms of energy efficiency in a few years as this requires alternative energy sources (instead of natural gas). Currently, **green hydrogen** is best suited for this purpose but, for now, this is not feasible due to the cost, the lack of connections and supply, and the amount of hydrogen available.

Very little green hydrogen is currently produced and transport is not easy. We are, however, already in the process of **preparing for the switch** and are in contact with **Fluxys**. This gas and electricity infrastructure operator is currently expanding the network and this will be near our site, making it easy for us to be connected. This is expected to be the case by 2028.

6.6 Car policy and public charging points

2022 saw the first steps towards “greening” our fleet with the introduction of **hybrid company cars** for managers.

With this in mind, a **charging infrastructure** which includes eighteen charging points has also been provided. This is accessible to management, but also to employees who have a hybrid car through the cafeteria plan (or have their own hybrid or electric car) and to local residents. For ease of use, employees with a company car are given a charging card as well as a financially advantageous rate. This is how we are actively encouraging electric charging.

A new phase started on 1 July 2023 and, since then, new cars for members of the management team are invariably full **EV cars**.

To make electric charging even more attractive for all office and manual workers, we will provide **eight additional charging stations** in the production site car park in the future.





Share your opinion

We look forward to hearing what you think of this report. Please share your views by scanning this QR code.

If you have any questions about this report, please do not hesitate to contact us on sustainability@nelissen.be



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