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A photograph of a stone arch bridge spanning a river in a lush, green forest. The bridge is made of dark stone and has a large, rounded arch. The river is calm, and the surrounding trees and foliage are reflected in the water. The sky is clear and blue.

Mind the gap

How to avoid the key mistakes German businesses make when crafting ESG reports in English

MIND THE GAP

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Introduction



“As the complexity of the reporting landscape intensifies, adopting a more audience-led approach can make sure we’re getting more out of reporting, focusing our attention on creating impact beyond reporting itself.”

Juliette Child in [Reporting Matters 2021](#)

A missed opportunity?

Your company knows that adopting Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) principles is essential to running a successful business. You've dedicated resources to developing a sustainability strategy, setting targets, and defining measures to reach these goals. And now it's time to report on your ambitions, actions, and achievements.

The importance of getting the public-facing record of your efforts right - whether you call it an ESG, a CSR or a sustainability report - cannot be understated.

A compelling report capitalises on opportunities to reach customers, employees, and potential investors. It also enhances the credibility of your endeavours.

Over the past 15 years, I've read dozens of English-language reports drawn up by companies headquartered in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland. These businesses were doing great things to reduce their environmental footprint and advance equality, but their message was quite literally lost in translation.

- In some instances, the English was almost impossible to understand.
- In a few cases, the translation had errors that put the firm's reputation at risk.
- Many times, though, the English copy just didn't sound right because it conformed with German rather than English stylistic conventions. Put simply, it was a missed opportunity.

A few weeks ago, I came across the following quote on the CSR Reporting blog:

“But when a Company produces a CSR report in English which is badly translated and full of errors, I wonder what went wrong.”

It made me think: what **is** going wrong?

How can we raise the standard of English reports produced by companies based in German-speaking countries?

What are some quick ways to avoid standing out like a sore thumb?

This guide attempts to answer all of these questions and a few more.

Thanks for reading,

Abigail Dahlberg at Greener Words.

The rock of mobility

“We’re moving on!” Consistently since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, we have played a substantial part in getting people and goods safely and reliably to their destination. Our brand image and customer satisfaction figures both reached new highs in 2020. In particular, this shows that our customers highly value our commitment and our reliability during the pandemic.

The image above from the Deutsche Bahn 2021 Integrated Report is one example of lacklustre messaging.

The original German copy (**‘Wir fahren weiter’**) is turned into an English text that came across as a little insensitive at a time when the pandemic response was in the headlines every day.
(We’re moving on!).

What the German rail company likely meant to say?
We keep moving.

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Disclaimer:

The information contained in this document is for general guidance based on 20 years in the translation business. All information contained in this guide is provided in good faith, but I make no representation or warranty regarding the accuracy, adequacy, validity, reliability, availability or completeness of any information contained herein.

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A few questions



“When looking at brands highly regarded as great sustainability communicators, they all had one thing in common: they explained the why.”

[Words that work: effective language in sustainability communication](#) by Radley Yeldar.

Who is the best person to translate/write your report?

More and more companies in Germany, Austria and Switzerland are breaking with tradition and taking an English-first approach to ESG reporting. In the majority of cases, though, businesses are still looking for a translator to create an English version of their German-language report.

No matter whether you choose to have your report translated or drafted in English from scratch, you'll need someone who is an English native speaker with outstanding writing skills, an excellent command of German and in-depth knowledge of sustainability standards and issues.

Don't forget to choose between British and American English and be consistent throughout your communications. This guide, for instance, is written in British English. You can help your writer/translator by providing them with any in-house style guides or language preferences.

Unless you are a native English speaker, resist the temptation to do it yourself or hand the project off to a bilingual non-professional writer. Even if you regularly do business in English, your writing can easily come across as 'foreign'. After all, you want readers to focus on your endeavours, not puzzling over what you might have meant.

Don't forget that the GRI Standards, for instance, stipulate that the reporting organisation "shall make information available in a manner that is understandable and accessible."



Is your deadline realistic?

Stand-alone sustainability reports have an average of 111 pages. And the span between the reporting period and the date of publication averages just four months (source: Reporting Matters).

In other words, there's a lot to get done in not a lot of time.

Add in multiple layers of review and an audit, and time becomes even more compressed. If you've spent four months carefully crafting your German-language report, don't treat translation as an afterthought and demand overnight delivery. A good translation takes time.

And while online tools are tempting in terms of their speed, they can serve up a pile of gobbledygook that bemuses investors and puts off customers. At a minimum, you should always have any machine translation reviewed by a native speaker to avoid costly blunders.

It's also worth remembering that the best writers and translators get booked up early during sustainability reporting season.

In short, it's important to plan ahead. Make sure to include translation into your reporting process from the outset.



Who is your target audience?

Your report will be most effective if your writer knows who they are writing for.

As the [UK Government notes](#), to understand the target audience, a writer/translator should know:

- how the audience behaves, what they're interested in or worried about - so the copy will catch their attention and answer their questions
- their vocabulary - so that the writer can use the same terms and phrases they'll use to search for content.

Ideally, the messaging in your report should be tailored to the needs and interests of your target audience, whether that's investors, ratings agencies, suppliers, employees, or the general public. A savvy writer will know that investors are primarily interested in facts and figures, while potential customers can be engaged with storytelling elements, such as interviews, profiles or case studies.



Will your content be online-only?

Another trend: more businesses are opting to publish their reports as micro websites that can be updated throughout the year. While downloadable PDFs are still the most common way of distributing sustainability reports, the days of only sending out printed copies (with all of the related greenhouse gas emissions) have been largely consigned to the history books.

Here's more from Reporting Matters: 24% of reports provided a digital-first experience in 2021, up from 20% in 2018. What's more, 65% of companies taking an offline-first approach **still** produced complementary online content.

Writing or translating for an online audience means taking a slightly different approach.

Do you want your writer or translator to take SEO principles into account as a way of drawing a wider audience to your report?

Do you want them to help you come up with instructions for user-immersive experiences where readers can compile the information that they are looking for in a single handy download?

Make sure to discuss this with your service provider ahead of time.



Mind the culture gap

When reporting on your sustainability efforts, it's important to remember that German and English have different communication styles - and that readers have different expectations when they start reading a report.



"Finding the right voice is crucial, because even if you have amazing content, graphics and designs, that won't matter in the end if your target audience isn't the one you are looking for, because your communication might seem too (in)formal and not respectful enough."

Adapted from Mila-Theres Wendland

From facts and figures to storytelling

“Whether you are a data scientist, marketing director, policymaker, or research analyst, the accelerating volume, velocity and variety of data beg one critical question: How are you going to communicate the meaning and implications of massive quantities of relevant information to your audience, to get them on board with your ideas and plans? The answer is simple: story. Using principle storytelling elements will boost the impact of your message dramatically and prevent you and your audience from drowning in an ever-rising sea of information.”

Esther K. Choy, *Let the Story Do the Work: The Art of Storytelling for Business*.

”

For native English readers, storytelling prompts emotion and connection to a business. Stories capture their attention. Indeed, a study conducted for the book *Made to Stick* found that 63% of people remembered a story ten minutes after it was told, whereas just 5% could recall a statistic. Of course, statistics have an important place in ESG reporting. But, for a customer-facing business, it might be worthwhile compiling a separate fact book for investors looking to dig deep into the nitty gritty, rather than overwhelming all readers with hoards of dry data.

Broadly speaking, German readers expect to be persuaded by data, with plenty of key points, facts and figures, and information used to build trust in a company. Conversely, English readers are won over by storytelling elements and emotional language used to create a feeling, especially when the story is about a person rather than a company.

On the next page, I've created one quick example of how a straight translation can be turned into a story, making the main point (expanding charging station infrastructure) more memorable for an English reader.





STRAIGHT TRANSLATION

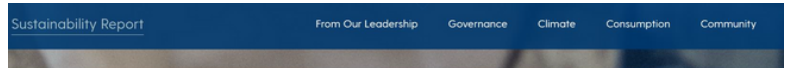
"Altogether, 207 e-charging points are available at 58 filling stations in seven countries. Around 300 charging points at 150 additional locations are planned to be rolled out in 2020. We are continuing to develop our charging network via partnerships and joint ventures. Our company is also part of a network of more than 435 e-charging points, powered 100% by renewable energy. By way of another strategic partnership, we are supporting the construction of a network of 350 kW ultra-fast charging stations throughout Europe."

LET'S TELL A STORY

"The sun is just peeking over the horizon as Jan starts his day. He's almost ready to head out on his next work trip, but he's got one last job to do: unplugging his electric car. His company vehicle, added to our fleet last year, is Jan's mobile office for the day. Even though he can take the train to many destinations, serving some of our more remote locations means hitting the road. But Jan knows that no matter where in Austria he drives, he's never too far from one of over 100 ultra-fast charging stations. Next year, he'll have even more stops to choose from in Austria and six other countries thanks to our enhanced charging network that is powered by 100% renewable energy..."

Add alliteration

English loves alliteration. And, in my experience, English-language reports use alliteration much more often than their German counterparts. Here are a few of many examples from recent reporting seasons.



The 2020 Levi Strauss & Co. sustainability report showcases our commitment and approach to sustainability, along with our priorities and performance results in three areas: Climate, Consumption and Community.



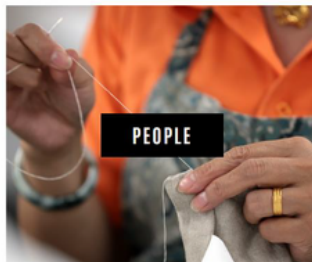
At Kingfisher, we're committed to being a responsible business and to having a positive impact on the lives of our customers, colleagues and communities.

Our Pillars



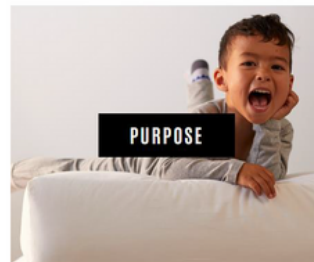
Here's how we're protecting the planet, from mindful manufacturing to energy efficiency.

[READ MORE](#)



We're committed to positive change for our customers and the communities we call home.

[READ MORE](#)

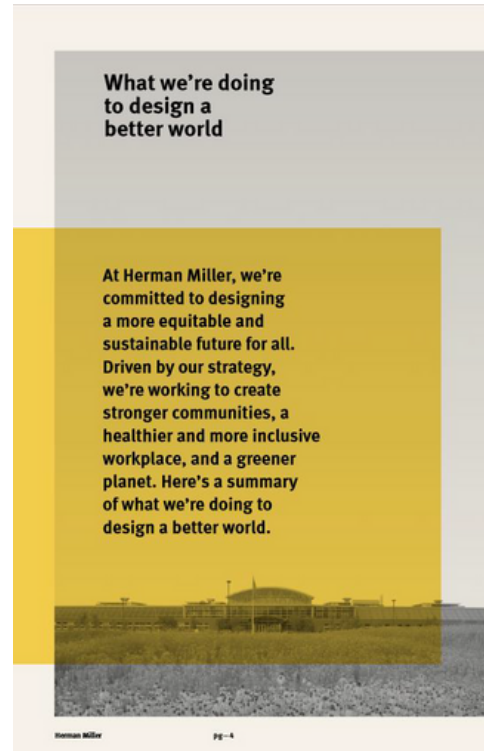
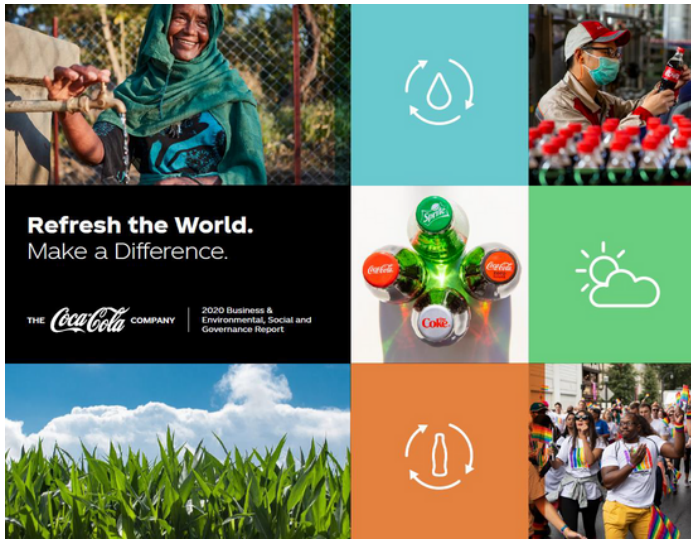


From local volunteering to industry-wide impact, we're making a difference at home and beyond.

[READ MORE](#)

Embrace idiom

English-language reports sprinkle idioms throughout, often related to the company's core business. Taking the example of a rail company, phrases like journey and destination and phrases like 'full steam ahead', 'on the move', 'slam on the brakes', 'on the right track', and 'end of the line' featured heavily in English versions but were rarely seen in German texts. Again, a few examples of companies using idiom, this time in their slogans.

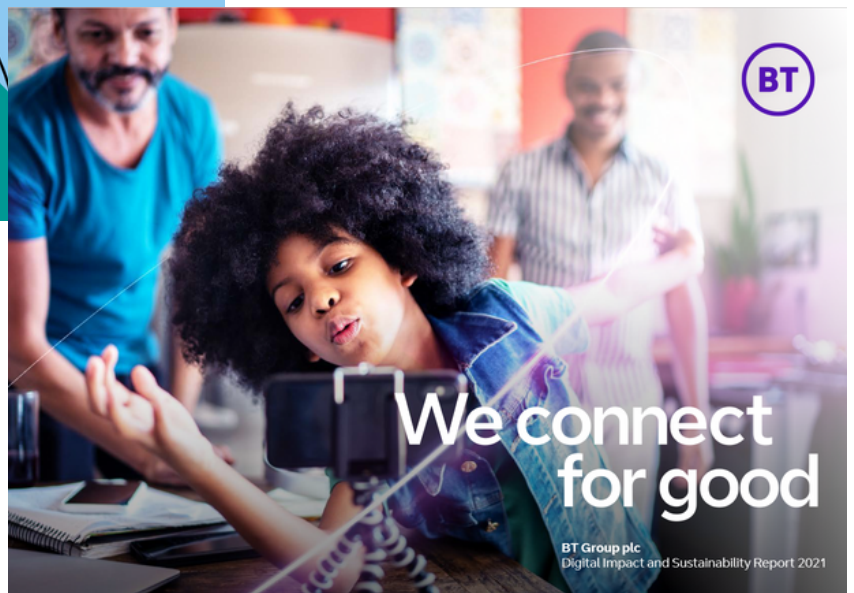
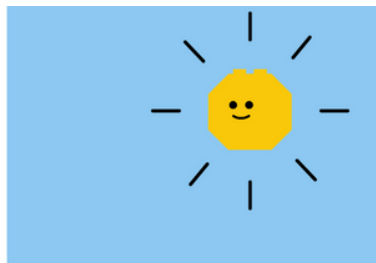


Together, we can rebuild the world

At the LEGO Group, we're playing our part in building a sustainable future and creating a brighter world for our children to inherit. We're joining forces with children and parents, our employees, partners, NGOs and experts to have a lasting impact and inspire the children of today to become the builders of tomorrow. We are proud of the journey we are on and recognize that there is much more to do and learn. We will continue to do everything we can to achieve our ambitions.

On our sustainability reporting website you can find more information about our initiatives, ambitions and progress.

In our annual report you can read about the financial results of 2020.



Make it colloquial

One of the biggest differences between German and English ESG reports is register. As a rule, German reports tend to be much more formal. If you compare CEO messages, for instance, you will find that the English version sounds like something that the CEO might say in an interview. Sentences start with 'But', 'And,' 'So' and 'Because'. Here are a few more examples:

At Netflix we aspire to entertain the world, with best in class stories across a wide variety of different genres and languages.

Because as we've learned over the years, great stories are universal: they can come from anywhere and be loved everywhere. It's why we're so excited to offer creators a global platform for their shows and films and members a window onto the world through the breadth of our programming.

But as we grow—we now have more than 200 million members—we recognize that our responsibilities increase too. So we're focused on ensuring that: more people can see their lives and cultures reflected on screen; our employee base and the creators we work with are as diverse as the communities we seek to serve; we contribute to the local creative communities in which we operate; and we minimize our impact on the environment.

Below is our second report covering our environmental, social, and governance (ESG) performance. It looks back at the previous year and gives investors as well as other stakeholders information about our broader impact in society. The report will focus on what's material to our business and our industry using the Sustainability Accounting Standards Board (SASB) framework as a benchmark.

Finally, my message is simple: Do better. Keep improving. Every small decision we make has an impact. It's not too late, it's not too hard and it doesn't cost a lot. And in fact, it will cost us more if we choose not to act.

Move to natural

Greg Smith
Brand President, icebreaker

MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

Kellogg is a company with Heart and Soul.

Our founder, W.K. Kellogg, was a man far ahead of his time. Long before sustainability and corporate purpose were part of the mainstream, he cared about leaving the world a better place than he found it. Health and wellbeing mattered to him; so did caring for communities. Because of our visionary founder, these are the values we continue to demonstrate every day. We call it our Heart and Soul, and it's never been more apparent as our company and employees support each other and our neighbors during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic as well as the broader climate of racial discrimination and intolerance.



Over the past year, we've all dealt with the many complex challenges the world faces. But we can't just wait for change to happen. We must drive that change.

The world is now more interconnected than ever — a fact that was reinforced by the pandemic. While COVID's impact wasn't felt equally, it's incumbent on all of us to work together to rebuild. Amid this moment of recovery, there's opportunity to create an economy and society that work for all of us.

At Mastercard, we're combining our compassion with our strengths in business — innovation, inclusivity, flexibility and trust. That work continues, now with greater urgency.

Several years ago, we set science-based targets to focus our efforts to address climate change. We're building on that with our recent pledge to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050, and creating the Priceless Planet Coalition to plant 100 million trees over five years.

In 2020, we met our goal to bring 500 million people into the digital economy, but we can't stop there. We raised that commitment to bring 1 billion people, 50 million small businesses and 25 million women entrepreneurs into the digital economy by 2025.

To tie the environmental and social pieces all together and accelerate our efforts, we issued a Sustainability Bond. We formally linked executive compensation to three real and measurable sustainability priorities. These efforts illustrate how serious we are about making real change.

Why do we do this kind of work? It's because we know we succeed when the world succeeds. Added to that, we know inclusion and diversity are major strengths of our business.

Those principles are opportunities to drive impact and will continue to guide us as we keep raising the bar for ourselves in building an inclusive, sustainable digital economy.

At the root of sustainability is the word sustain — to hold up. We all need to sustain each other as schools, shops and economies reopen and we can come together again.

Sustainability isn't possible without everyone's involvement — that includes major businesses like ours. Making sustainability initiatives commercially viable helps them become a part of everyday commerce and mainstream business practices. This is where companies like Mastercard are uniquely positioned to do our part.

We've navigated through the pandemic together. We should move forward together to create change.

Michael Miebach
CEO, Mastercard

LOWE'S 2020 CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITY REPORT [CEO LETTER](#) [OVERVIEW](#) [HIGHLIGHTS](#) [OUR PEOPLE & OUR COMMUNITIES](#) [PRODUCT SUSTAI](#)

CEO LETTER

This last year has been one of uncertainty, change and great tragedy. From a global pandemic and economic hardship to social unrest and natural disasters, our communities, our culture and our company have experienced a year unlike any other. But through it all, we have persevered and remained focused on making homes better for all. I am exceptionally proud of the efforts of our more than 300,000 associates at Lowe's for the way our team stepped up to provide essential products and service to millions of customers in a time of crisis.

Looking at many English translations of reports originally written in German, you are more likely to come across phrases like 'however', 'therefore', 'consequently', and 'nevertheless'.

Mind the language gap

Over the next few pages, you'll find a variety of ways to make your ESG communications sound more authentically English. I've included some basic information on the stylistic differences between German and English, a sheet of tips for typesetters, and a list of German phrases that may be redundant in English.



NOUNS OR VERBS?

One of the biggest giveaways that a text hasn't been written by a native speaker? A sentence packed with a string of nouns. Try changing some of those nouns to verbs, for instance:

Old: Tesla is the inventor of...

New: Tesla **invented**...

Old: Our contribution to the achievement of the SDGs

New: **How we contribute towards the SDGs.**

PASSIVE OR ACTIVE?

In English, we like to specify who is doing something rather than leaving it open to interpretation. Here's one example of how a company could change the way it talks about its achievements:

Old: Recycled materials are used and our material loops are being optimised

New: **We use recycled materials and are optimising our material loops.**

Basic rules

LONG OR SHORT?

German sentences are famously long and complex. Many times, they can be parsed into two or three sentences in English without losing meaning. The sentence below could easily be split in two to improve readability.

Old: We want to make electromobility even more convenient for both private customers and companies who operate whole fleets and continue to expand our product and service portfolio for state-of-the-art charging solutions.

New: **We want to make electromobility even more convenient for both private customers and companies operating entire fleets. That's why we're continuing to expand our portfolio of state-of-the-art charging solutions.**

Literally, be careful!

If you've ever wondered whether employees and CEOs might work at eye-level (**auf Augenhöhe**) rather than on an equal footing or why a company might perceive (**wahrnehmen**) rather than perform its duties, this section is for you.

GERMAN	LITERAL	TRY THIS
Klimaschutz	climate protection	climate action climate change mitigation
Konstruktiven Austausch	constructive exchange	constructive conversations, constructive dialogue
vertrauensvolle Zusammenarbeit	trustworthy collaboration	cooperation in an atmosphere of trust
im Rahmen von	within the framework of	as (a) part of, within the parameters of, during, through, in
Bevölkerung	population	general public, people, communities

False cognates

Some German words sound temptingly like English ones. But related roots don't always mean common connotation! Try some of the tips below to avoid stumbling into these traps. You can find a fuller list on this website.

GERMAN	LITERAL	TRY THIS
Impressum	Imprint	Publishing credits
Informationen	informations	information (it stays singular in English, as do training, potential, and cooperation)
kompetent	competent	skilled, expert
konkret konkretisieren	concrete, concretise	tangible, specific firm up, flesh out
Perspektive	perspective	prospects outlook

Redundancy corner: Many German texts are sprinkled with phrases like **auch** (also), **bereits** (already) and **doch** (after all). In many cases, you can safely dispense with their English cousins. The same goes for **insbesondere** (especially), **jeweils** (respective), **unter anderem** (among other things), **unterschiedlich** (various, different), and **zuständig** (responsible).

Typesetting tips



Here's a quick handy guide to the four biggest typesetting mistakes. Even if the glitch is small, the overall effect can leave English readers disengaged with your company.

	German	Wrong	Right
Grouping numbers	0,5 Liter 2.000 mm 100.000 Tonnen	0,5 litres 2.000 mm 100.000 tonnes	0.5 litres 2,000 mm 100,000 tonnes
Capitalise the first word	Lieber Leser, Ich freue mich, Ihnen unseren ESG-Bericht..	Dear Reader, it's a pleasure to introduce our ESG report	Dear Reader, It's a pleasure to introduce our ESG report
Quotation marks	„Gänsefüßchen” «Chevron »	„Quotation marks” «Quotation marks»	“Quotation marks” or ‘single quotation marks’
Don't capitalise nouns in English	Das Team bereitet sich...	The Team is preparing	The team is preparing

Don't forget: texts contract and expand depending on the source and target language. As a rule of thumb, an English translation may end up being 20-30% shorter than the German source text. For layout, that means that your original copy and the translation are unlikely to be the same length.

Case study: Aldi Nord vs Asda

We can learn a lot by comparing similar reports from companies in the same sector. Here let's look at CEO messages from Aldi Nord (translated from German) and Asda (written in English).

Aldi Nord (translated from German)

GRI 102-11, 14

DEAR READERS,

We are confronted with historic events which have impact on all of us and cause global supply chains to disrupt. Current political and global events are further exacerbating the situation: Supply bottlenecks, raw material shortages and rising prices are having significant social consequences. As a company, we are part of global society and we are particularly in demand at this critical time. Our sense of responsibility as a food retailer is greater than ever before because customers rely on us to provide them with most essential food products – today and tomorrow. Making our supply chains resilient and fit for the future is therefore extremely important at this time. Sustainability aspects are central to this – our aspiration to make sustainable shopping affordable for everyone endures, especially in these difficult times.

Even though recent developments are at the forefront of public debates, the climate crisis remains one of the greatest challenges of our time. We have therefore defined the goal of reducing our greenhouse gas emissions by 55 per cent across the entire ALDI Nord Group of Companies by 2030 compared to 2020 (Scopes 1 & 2). In May 2022, the target was approved by the Science Based Targets initiative (SBTi) – we were one of the first discounters to join this initiative in 2020.

We are aware that climate change can only be contained in cooperation with strong partners. That is why we believe it is crucial for us to involve our key suppliers in our climate protection efforts. They have therefore been requested to set their own climate targets in accordance with the SBTi by 2024. Our joint leverage is particularly high because emissions generated in the supply chain (Scope 3) account for a significant share of our total emissions.

However, we are not simply taking responsibility in climate and environmental protection – we have also been working for years to ensure that universal human rights are protected in our global supply chains. In the reporting period, we further sharpened our position on important human rights aspects. In May 2021, we published our 'International Position Paper on Living Wages and Living Incomes' to underline our commitment to decent living standards in global supply chains. The paper was followed by our 'International Policy on Gender Equality along ALDI's Supply Chains' and the 'Gender Equality Action Plan' in November 2021. This highlights our ambition to improve working conditions for women along our global supply chains. The action plan includes time-bound targets and concrete measures – these range from raising internal awareness among our employees to combating violence and harassment at the production sites.

The solid foundation of our sustainability work is provided by the ten principles of the Global Compact (UNGC) and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations. However, our principles also encompass critically questioning our actions again and again and adapting them to new findings and developments. This is the roadmap for continuous improvement. Accordingly, we are constantly honing our sustainability strategy. In our current sustainability report, you can read about our achievements so far – and our plans for the coming years.

At the same time, I encourage you: Write to us! We can only make good decisions to meet the challenges of our time if we are open to different perspectives, engage in dialogue, and share our knowledge.



Timo Dietz
Managing Director
Corporate Responsibility Quality Assurance (CRQA) International
ALDI Einkauf SE & Co. oHG

Aldi Nord's report is much more formal. Just read the first line: 'We are confronted with historic events which have (sic) impact on all of us and cause global supply chains to disrupt'. It also contains 'however', 'therefore' and accordingly. After the first paragraph, there is no mention of what the company actually does. The message is also very text-heavy and could definitely benefit from visual elements like pull quotes and shorter paragraphs.

Case study: Aldi Nord vs Asda

Asda (written in English)

Message from our CEO

For decades, supermarkets have been part of the fabric of daily life, fulfilling the most basic needs of consumers – to feed their families. At Asda, we have always been proud to be more than just a retailer and to play an active role in the communities we serve, but 2020 and the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic brought that role into the spotlight more than ever before.

Alongside other essential workers, we've been at the frontline of feeding the nation, operating our stores and home delivery services in the most challenging of circumstances. Throughout this time, our first priority has been keeping our customers and colleagues safe. We've enabled vulnerable colleagues to stay at home on full pay while recruiting 23,000 temporary team members, supporting local economies.

And we've worked shoulder to shoulder with our suppliers to give them the certainty they've needed – with clear communication and faster payment terms. Within our communities, we've pulled together to support vulnerable customers in accessing essential groceries, and worked closely with our charity partners the Trussell Trust and FareShare to set up e-referral systems for food banks to ensure that surplus food was redistributed to those in need.

While this year has been exceptional, I am proud that we have not lost sight of our wider environmental, social and governance (ESG) responsibilities – because, even with a thousand plates spinning, doing the right thing is baked into who we are. Through this report, we will share with you how we're progressing on the key ESG issues that matter to our business and to you, our stakeholders, and where we stand to make the greatest difference.

Despite the significant challenges of this last year, we have never lost sight of the other great challenges our society faces. Climate change represents a threat to human safety on an unparalleled scale and presents very material risks to our food chain; we are committed to playing our part in accelerating solutions which protect and regenerate our environment. Public health has never been more under scrutiny than this year, or the inequalities affecting health outcomes starker. Access to an affordable healthy diet is a fundamental requirement and we take our opportunity to contribute here seriously. Social inequality has never been greater – and we are determined to continue to drive positive change, both within our organisation and externally.

“AT ASDA, WE’VE ALWAYS PUT OUR CUSTOMERS’ NEEDS FIRST.”



Asda's report is much more colloquial. Its first line: 'For decades, supermarkets have been part of the fabric of daily life, fulfilling the most basic needs of consumers - to feed their families' (look at the alliteration with for/fabric/fulfilling/feed/families). Asda's version also uses contractions and repetition. Look at the second paragraph with its three repetitions of 'we've' and a sentence starting with 'and'. Interestingly, Asda's version doesn't have a salutation. Many ESG reports written in English don't in fact start with 'Dear Readers', 'Dear Stakeholders', or 'Ladies and Gentlemen,' as you will often find in translations from German.

Case study: Deutsche Bahn

Sehr geehrte Damen und Herren,

es mag paradox klingen, aber 2020 war für die DB ein Jahr, das uns gestärkt hat. Wir durchleben eine Corona-Krise, keine Krise der Deutschen Bahn. Im Gegenteil. Das vergangene Jahr hat eindrucksvoll bestätigt: Wir sind unverzichtbarer Teil der Lebensadern dieses Landes. Wir sind systemrelevant. Auf uns war und ist Verlass.

Das ist der Kern unserer Unternehmensstrategie Starke Schiene. Eine starke Schiene bedeutet, für unsere Gesellschaft da zu sein – für die Mobilität der Menschen und für die logistische Versorgung von Bevölkerung und Wirtschaft. Ganz besonders dann, wenn vieles nicht mehr so selbstverständlich ist wie bisher. Wir stehen zu unserer Verantwortung.

Wesentliche Werte und Prioritäten haben sich im vergangenen Jahr weltweit verschoben. Noch immer bestimmt Corona unseren Alltag. Noch immer ist Abstand halten die Devise. Noch immer ist ein unbeschwertes Miteinander weit entfernt.



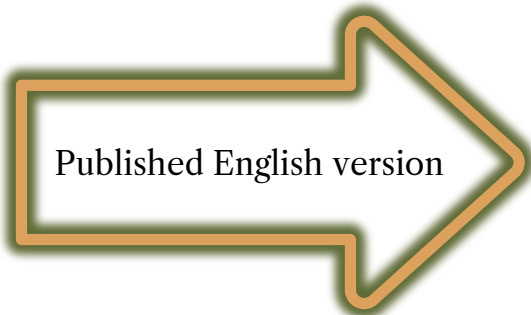
German version

Ladies and gentlemen,

It may sound paradoxical, but for DB Group, 2020 was a year that strengthened us. We are living through a Covid-19 crisis, not a Deutsche Bahn crisis. On the contrary, the past year has provided impressive confirmation that we are an essential part of this country's lifelines. We are systemically important. We are and always have been dependable.

This is the core of our Strong Rail corporate strategy. A strong rail system means being there for our society – to help people get where they need to go and to provide logistics supply for the population and the economy. This is particularly true in times when old certainties can no longer be taken for granted. We are living up to our responsibility.

The world has experienced a shift in its key values and priorities over the past year. Covid-19 is still defining our everyday lives. Social distancing is still essential. Carefree socializing is still a long way off.



Published English version

Here's one way that you could take a translation that is too close to the German and adapt it to the expectations of a native English reader by breaking down sentences, adding idiom, and making it more conversational.

It might sound strange, but 2020 made Deutsche Bahn stronger. We find ourselves weathering a Covid crisis, not a Deutsche Bahn crisis. Indeed, last year confirmed once again that we serve as a vital lifeline for Germany. We are essential. People have always relied on us – and that hasn't changed.

It's something that is at the heart of our Strong Rail strategy. A strong rail network means being there when it matters – keeping people and the economy moving. That's truer than ever when we can't count on the things that we used to take for granted. And it's the reason why DB Group continues to live up to our responsibilities.

Our basic priorities and values changed last year – no matter where in the world we live. Covid is still affecting our lives, day in, day out. Social distancing is still essential. And we are still far from being able to socialise without having to worry about the virus.



My draft version

Recommended resources

For more information, try some of these excellent resources

- ATA, [Getting it Right in Translation](#)
- Esther K. Choy, [Let the Story Do the Work: The Art of Storytelling for Business](#).
- Chip Heath, [Made to Stick: Why Some Ideas Survive and Others Die](#)
- Radley Yelder, [Words that work: Effective language in sustainability communications](#)
- WBCSD, [Reporting Matters: Time for a shared vision](#)

Need a hand maximising the impact of your ESG communications?
Visit my website www.greenerwords.com or drop me a line at hello@greenerwords.com to learn more about how I could help.



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GREENER WORDS

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TRANSLATOR AND WRITER

Hello, I'm Abigail. I've been helping clients in Germany, Austria and Switzerland with their international communications since 2005.

I'm a GRI Certified Sustainability Professional and specialise in writing and translating about ESG and sustainability issues with a focus on waste and water. Drop me a line at hello@greenerwords.com.