

# Corporate Responsibility and Sustainability Report

# 2020.

**This is a positive report, filled with hope and with eyes set on the future we are building; increasingly stronger and more committed the more uncertain that future may feel in these current times.**

Corporate  
Responsibility  
and Sustainability  
Report

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**I.**

## **Opening Message**

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In 2020, we responded to the chaos brought by the pandemic by enhancing our investment in the various dimensions of Sustainability, naturally including its social dimension given our sustained commitment to this priority area.

Every report on 2020, regardless of its nature, is condemned to start by mentioning the pandemic and the tragedy it has represented for many people, society at large, the economy and our way of being and living in community. This report is no different and is certainly not indifferent to the terrible consequences of Covid-19, which has challenged our humanity as gregarious and compassionate beings.

However, this is a positive report. A report filled with hope and with eyes set on the future we are building; increasingly stronger and more committed, the more uncertain that future may feel in these current times. In 2020, we responded to the chaos brought by the pandemic by enhancing our investment in the various dimensions of Sustainability, naturally including its social dimension given our sustained commitment to this priority area.

Considering the enormity of the challenge with which we were faced – the pandemic crisis severely tested organisations, putting pressure on the limits of their internal cohesion, and assessed the consistency of the “social contracts” established with stakeholders – we decided to incorporate ESG (Environment, Social and Governance) factors in our strategy, management and business, well aware that the pact for Sustainability is a long but absolutely critical journey.

This was the year in which we undertook larger and more public commitments on this front and achieved more goals. We strengthened our ties to the community,

having provided a record level of pro bono legal services (almost 9000 hours). We deepened our commitment to reducing carbon emissions by consuming electricity exclusively from renewable sources across all our facilities. We equipped the Vasco Vieira de Almeida Foundation with increased means and funds to invest in new projects and successfully respond to the concrete needs resulting from the pandemic crisis. We raised our ambition with respect to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), having been pioneers in joining the SDG Ambition Programme of the United Nations Global Compact, and in the context of our special focus on SDG 5 we adopted the global United Nations Women’s Empowerment Principles and joined the Target Gender Equality project. We are and will continue to be actively engaged in setting ambitious goals, always guiding our action based on the ten principles of the United Nations Global Compact, an initiative that we are profoundly committed to. The fight for a fairer, more inclusive and sustainable future is a collective challenge for all those who are a part of VdA. This joint effort brings us closer and makes us increasingly stronger in the face of adversity. I thus want to thank the entire team, as well as our partners and other stakeholders who have paved the way with us towards a better world.

**João Vieira de Almeida**

*Managing Partner*





# **Facts & Figures 2020**

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## What does collaboration mean to us?

2020 was the year in which we worked remotely more than ever. The world changed drastically, but our action became more concerted to respond to the growing needs of the Community in general and particularly of those groups most affected by the pandemic. The numbers below, which we are proud of, testify to the results we were able to achieve despite the challenges presented this year.

Notwithstanding the fact that 2020 was a year unlike no other, social responsibility and sustainability continued to be a mission shared by ALL. The apprehension naturally felt in relation to the pandemic's impact on the economy (and consequently on VdA's business) did not distract us from our mission towards the Community but rather reinforced our commitment, anchored in this shared responsibility.

<b>8909</b>	Pro bono legal support
<b>414</b>	3rd sector capacity building
<b>706</b>	Corporate volunteering
<b>3</b>	Internal campaigns
<b>+100</b>	Organisations supported
<b>17</b>	Institutional partners

3.

## **The Impact of our Action**

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# 3.1

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**On the Community**

IN THIS CHAPTER, WE HIGHLIGHT THE MAIN PROJECTS AND INITIATIVES DEVELOPED IN 2020 AND WHICH REFLECT OUR INVESTMENT IN SUPPORTING THE COMMUNITY THROUGH DIRECT INVOLVEMENT IN NUMEROUS PROJECTS DURING THE FIRST WAVE OF THE PANDEMIC, WHETHER BY ASSISTING THE CAPACITY BUILDING OF SOCIAL ORGANISATIONS OR PROVIDING PRO BONO LEGAL SUPPORT.

# Helping through the crisis



In such a difficult and atypical year, we became even closer to communities facing greater difficulties and the social organisations working on the front line in the fight against poverty, social exclusion and inequality.



We reinvented ourselves, seeking to overcome distance to continue supporting institutions and social entrepreneurs in tackling the challenges faced during and in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic.



For the fourth consecutive year, we participated in the Community Dinner promoted by [Serve the City](#). This event, which was held before the start of the pandemic in Portugal, was backed by a group of 50 volunteers (VdA lawyers and staff, as well as their family members) who came together to serve a meal for more than 140 homeless people, in an environment of exchange, inclusion and service.



**Magda Cocco**  
Partner | VdA



“Serving those most in need alongside our VdA team and their families allows us to witness first-hand how together we can have a direct impact on society! A simple smile or conversation can have an extraordinary impact on the life of these people! Be sure to participate in the next Community Dinners organised by “Serve the City” and other initiatives promoted by VdA or the VVA Foundation. This was yet another proof that we are so much more than just a law firm, we’re an incredible group of human beings at the service of our Community!”

“ It is important to understand the meaning of the collective. The sense of Community. The knowledge that we are not isolated beings, that we are interdependent. The truth is that we often give very little because we think we have nothing to give. But it is precisely when we give that we realise that our little can mean so much to others — even if it is only a drop in the ocean. Serve the City’s dinner, promoted by the Vasco Vieira de Almeida Foundation, was yet another unforgettable moment where we contributed as a team to the wellbeing of our guests and the Community. If I hadn’t been there, it would have been just one less drop in the ocean. But without these drops, where is the sense of it all? Thanks to the entire VVA Foundation team, to all who shared in this moment and to Serve the City for the incredible work they do for all of Us. ”

**Tomaz Sousa de Macedo**  
Coordinator | VdA



In 2020 students suddenly found themselves forced to embrace remote schooling. We could not remain indifferent to those most in need and at risk of exclusion from access to education. Therefore, the VVA Foundation, with the support of various partners, promoted the crowdfunding campaign [LIGA-TE@ESCOLA](#), with the aim of ensuring that underprivileged students could also have access to remote schooling, thus mitigating inequalities in the access to education.

Through this campaign, 150 donors (including VdA lawyers and staff members) and companies raised a total of 20,000 euros, which went towards the purchase of 70 computers in cooperation with the [Student Keep](#) project. These computers were distributed to several public schools to guarantee that remote schooling would not represent, at least for 70 families, a barrier to underprivileged students' right to education.





The [Encontro\(s\)com Impacto](#), project was developed and implemented in 2020 in the context of the "VdA Got Social Talent" competition – an internal initiative encouraging VdA lawyers and staff members to design projects related to the VVA Foundation's mission. This project aims to "build bridges" between companies and innovation / social entrepreneurship initiatives which already have a close relationship with VdA. Developed based on a logic of shared resources and the joint construction of projects with a highly relevant impact on the Community, the Encontro(s) com Impacto project has helped restructure organisations that in 2020 faced increased difficulties in terms of project management and financial sustainability.

In this context, 26 mentors from different companies/ organisations offered their advice and insights to 13 organisations with a relevant social or environmental mission during the project's initial "mentoring journey". A panel of 7 "heavy-weight" jurors (top corporate managers) then assessed the selected projects pitched in the context of a "Shark Tank" style competition, having contributed with suggestions and provided resources and support to those projects where synergies were identified. The winner of this competition was the organisation [55+](#), which has the mission of empowering professionally inactive people 55 years or older, using an innovative approach. The prize, in the amount of 10,000€, will be used to expand the project, including to other areas of Portugal, thus scaling up its impact and putting the knowledge and experience of (more) people over the age of 55 to good use. An Honourable Mention was awarded to the projects presented by the associations [VilacomVida](#) and [Cozinha com Alma](#).

**Elena Duran**  
Founder | 55+



“ Participating in this competition and winning the prize has proved invaluable to defining and developing 55+'s 2020-2023 strategy: the maximisation of our social impact. I am especially grateful to have had the opportunity to meet my fellow contestants, all of whom had brilliant ideas, to work with the mentors, who became friends and a part of the team, and learn from our trainers, who made the most of every session, and to come before a Jury so committed and motivated to strengthen and improve the social and environmental impact ecosystem in Portugal! ”



In the context of our longstanding partnership with [Junior Achievement Portugal](#), the VVA Foundation participated once again in the *Braço Direito* – A Day in your Future programme. During a week, VdA welcomed, at its Lisbon headquarters, nine high school students who had the opportunity to experience the atmosphere and reality of a law firm and have first-hand contact with the day-to-day business lives of VdA's professionals. Seven VdA lawyers and staff members also participated in the *Programa Escolas* (Schools Programme), sharing their experience and knowledge with primary students.



In the context of the partnership established between VdA, the VVA Foundation and [Girl MOVE Academy](#), we received (virtually due to the constraints imposed by the pandemic) four Girl Movers in 2020: Eunice Russoca, Geth Tangune, Palloma Matusse and Nádia Porfírio. During their internship at VdA, the Girl Movers established contacts with the practice areas and departments they were most interested in and deepened their knowledge in fields such as Business & Human Rights, Corporate Social Responsibility, Litigation & Arbitration and Tax Law. Eunice and Nádia, who are both law graduates and share the dream of becoming judges, also had the chance to meet with Portuguese judges to discuss their paths and career options in the field of law, as well as the requirements for entry into magistrate training in Portugal. At the end of the internship, they presented their life stories in an Impact Talk that will be long remembered by those who attended.

## Lourenço Guimarães Barbosa

### Associate | VdA



“The *Braço Direito* project is a real asset for those who participate in it. From the student's perspective, because it is a unique opportunity to have contact with professional reality and to clarify any doubts and concerns, as well as to understand the practical application of subjects they study or intend to study. For the volunteers, because they have the chance to guide and help students become aware of their vocation, thus contributing to their personal growth and giving them the pleasure of feeling that, for one day, they were someone's right hand man or woman.”

## Eunice Russoca

### Girl Mover



“It is true that 2020 was an atypical year, very intense and turbulent. However, with the support of VdA's mentorship team we managed to achieve excellent results in this new virtual internship model. When I think of my internship, the first words that come to mind are 'thank you'. I am grateful for everything VdA has offered me. Far more than just a professional experience, I know that I have evolved as a person and gained more tools to work towards achieving my dream. I not only take from my internship teachings that will help me in my fight for human rights, but also the affection shown by all. This experience will mark my life forever.”





The first edition of the [Professor Francisco Vieira de Almeida Award](#), launched in partnership with the Faculty of Arts of the University of Lisbon (FLUL), received 25 academic papers in the fields of Humanities and Social Sciences submitted by undergraduate, Master's and PhD graduates and postdoctoral researchers of FLUL. The VVA Foundation presented the award, in the amount of €20,000, to Maria Luísa de Oliveira Resende, the author of the winning paper which will be published by the University of Lisbon Press.



#### Delivery of Semear's organic produce to the Casa de Santo António

In the context of the partnership established with [Associação BIPP – Semear](#) every year we receive hampers of organic produce harvested from the "Horta VdA", VdA's vegetable garden. In 2020, we donated this produce to the Casa de Santo António, an organisation with almost 90 years of history whose mission is to shelter and support teenage mothers and their babies, thus ensuring that these families have the possibility of building a new life project while living at this institution.



### Mafalda Simões Coelho

Director | Casa de Santo António



“ Although 2020 was a difficult year for this institution, given the obstacles faced as a result of the pandemic, we carried on with our work for our mothers and children. This would not have been possible without the support of partners such as the Vasco Vieira de Almeida Foundation. With the fresh produce provided we were able to make several meals for the mothers and children of this House and thus we cannot thank you enough. ”





Convinced that “the whole is greater than the sum of its parts” and inspired by SDG 17, in December we launched VdA's traditional Christmas Campaign. In this context, we challenged our lawyers and staff to support the families of the [Conservatório d'Artes de Loures](#) with solidarity hampers filled with essential foodstuffs and hygiene products. Together we raised more than 3,000 euros, which allowed CAL to provide these hampers to more than 35 socially vulnerable families.



## Elisabete Fernandes

### Teacher | Conservatório d'Artes de Loures

“ We were truly overwhelmed by the solidarity shown by each member of the Vieira de Almeida Family. We could hardly believe it when the Conservatory received a van filled with hampers to warm the hearts of those so dear to us during this special time of the year. Thank you VdA. On 24 December, all our families received your help in their homes. We wish we could describe the emotions shared when the hampers were being distributed, but they cannot be put into words. All we can say is that our families are eternally grateful and that in the midst of tears and many smiles we and you made a difference. Thank you for everything! ”



Still on the topic of community support, and because we are firm believers in the power of social investment, we reinforced our commitment as investors in three projects being developed in the field of social entrepreneurship and innovation. These projects have proven impact on the communities supported and specifically promote social integration through education (Teach for Portugal), through art (Manicómio) and through interculturality (SPEAK).

Teach for Portugal aims to empower children and young people by equipping them with leadership, management and entrepreneurial skills, taught by volunteers with leadership potential in the context of classroom-based educational programmes that run for two years. Besides being a social investor, the VVA Foundation assists Teach for Portugal with the implementation of its development plan in the fields of strategy and operations, recruitment, training and employment. VdA also provides this innovative project with legal support under its pro bono programme, contributing to the definition of the most appropriate governance model and ensuring its compliance with all applicable legal obligations.

## Pedro Almeida

Co-Founder and CEO | Teach For Portugal



“Through Vieira de Almeida we receive extensive pro bono legal advice regarding the Association’s more bureaucratic domains (bylaws, legal procedures, compliance, powers of attorney, etc.), as well as strategic advice. The Vasco Vieira de Almeida Foundation was absolutely vital for the launch of Teach for Portugal and the implementation of its disruptive movement in Portugal. The Foundation has been a true partner on various levels, ensuring that Teach for Portugal has the conditions necessary to grow and, more importantly, fulfil its vision that ‘all children deserve an Education that allows them to achieve their full potential.’ Our huge thanks for everything you have helped us achieve in these two years. ”



[Manicómio](#)'s main goal is promoting the empowerment and psychosocial and professional reintegration of people with mental illness who have an artistic vocation, through the sale of artworks produced by these artists and awareness-raising efforts to help society (at the social, employment and institutional levels) better welcome and integrate these people.

The VVA Foundation assists Manicómio in the implementation of its development plan. It also promotes the project among VdA's lawyers and staff, as well as the Foundation's partners, with a view to maximising Manicómio's access to funding and raising awareness among different groups of the importance of the subject of mental illness and its negative stigmas.

Under its pro bono programme, VdA has contributed to the evolution of Manicómio's project, notably by assessing and implementing the most appropriate legal structure for the project's development and by providing legal advice on its operations. The Firm has also promoted advocacy actions aimed at correcting certain flaws in the system, thus contributing to the establishment in society of (more) rights for people with mental health problems.

## Sandro Resende

### Founder | Manicómio



“ With our work, we are seeking a new way of looking at social impact and sustainability and of directly promoting the social transformation of our society. It is here that VdA and the Vasco Vieira de Almeida Foundation are indispensable partners. With their capacity to think further ahead, their experience in corporate education, their knowledge of rights and justice, and their constant pursuit of innovation. Our relationship has been characterised by close understanding between the social partner and social entrepreneur, who share the same ideas, ways of acting and, most importantly, willingness to change. Thank you for everything. ”

[SPEAK](#) aims to promote sociocultural integration through a linguistic and intercultural exchange programme between immigrants and local citizens. In January 2020, SPEAK launched the three-year EMPIS AML project in the context of the *Parcerias para o Impacto* (Partnerships for Impact) initiative run by Portugal Inovação Social. This project is co-financed by the European Union, through the European Social Fund, and by the social investors Almada City Council, Rodolphe Haegelsteen and the Vasco Vieira de Almeida Foundation.

VdA supports and closely collaborates with SPEAK under its pro bono programme, having provided help in dealing with strategic and legal issues since the very start of the project, over a decade ago. This relationship of ongoing support and collaboration (which today also includes the Vasco Vieira de Almeida Foundation) represents an opportunity to be a part of one of the most emblematic social entrepreneurship and innovation projects in the national landscape and is a source of pride and satisfaction for the entire VdA ecosystem.

## Hugo Menino Aguiar

Co-Founder & CEO | SPEAK



“2020 was a particularly difficult year for society’s most vulnerable groups. Many refugees suffered greater social isolation and extended delays in the processing of their legal status, reduced job opportunities, and increased difficulties in accessing health services and reliable information on the pandemic. In its new online format, SPEAK was for many the only way to remain connected to their new community, while progressing with their learning of Portuguese. In 2020, more than 7,000 people participated in SPEAK, including more than 300 refugees. The support provided by Portugal Inovação Social and by the Vasco Vieira de Almeida Foundation and the Almada City Council have been vital to guarantee this experience in the Lisbon Metropolitan Area. Thank you!”

# Capacity building for empowerment

In the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, numerous temporary legislative measures were approved to support the social and solidarity sector, which also benefitted from measures approved for the corporate sector. The uncertainty and insecurity felt by the social sector in relation to the waves of support measures being introduced motivated the Vasco Vieira de Almeida Foundation and VdA to mobilise resources to bring greater knowledge and clarity to the sector, in the hope that better access to this information would help ensure the survival of many organisations grappling with the unexpected and severe limitations and restrictions imposed by the pandemic.

Therefore, within the scope of its commitment to the social sector, and with a view to supporting, informing and empowering these organisations during a time of great anguish and uncertainty, VdA organised a series of free webinars for its pro bono clients and other social sector partners.

These information sessions sought to clarify legal issues related to the application of the abovementioned legislative measures and access to the legally established forms of support. Based on the main challenges identified, the webinars addressed the topics "Covid-19 related employment impacts", "Main Covid-19 support measures available to the social sector" and "The impact of Covid-19 on the management of contractual relationships".

We also highlight VdA's participation in the webinar series of two institutional partners – [TrustLaw](#) and [Plataforma Portuguesa das ONGD](#) – devoted to the topic "Employment Law Issues in the context of Covid-19". These webinars discussed issues faced by NGOs in the context of the measures adopted by the Portuguese government. VdA's participation helped clarify concrete questions affecting the work and mission of NGOs, having contributed to a better understanding and application of the measures legally foreseen for these organisations.

However, legislative developments in 2020 were not limited to the pandemic. VdA and the Vasco Vieira de Almeida Foundation's commitment to third sector capacity building was thus extended to include other topics, such as the most recent wave of European legislation on the duty of due diligence and corporate human rights and environmental responsibility, through initiatives organised in partnership with the [European Investment Bank Institute](#) e no âmbito do and in the context of the Human Rights Course promoted by the [Centre for Human Rights of the University of Coimbra](#).

## Luisa Ferreira

Head of Social & Economic Adviser  
| European Investment Bank, EIB Institute



“ I believe in the power of partnerships to create a positive change in our society. Collaborating with VdA in the dissemination of knowledge, through the organisation of webinars directed to the Social Innovation Tournament (SIT) Alumni network, represents an added value for these social entrepreneurs to act as agents of change and innovation, by doing more and better. Personally, this has been an extremely enriching experience and I believe I can say that the feeling is mutual. ”





We continued to be involved in the project [InclusivaMente: Human rights in ageing and mental health](#) in partnership with the European Anti-Poverty Network/EAPN Portugal. The goal of this project is to provide institutions working in the field of caregiving to the elderly or people with diminished capacity with greater knowledge on how they can effectively protect the human rights of their users/beneficiaries. Despite the challenges brought by the pandemic, the schedule of sessions was maintained, having simply been adapted to an online format from July onwards. More than 220 professionals, representing over 170 social organisations, participated in these sessions.

2020 also saw the launch of the **InclusivaMente Practical Guide**, co-authored by Paula Guimarães and Rosário Zincke dos Reis, which hopes to be an instrument of support to professionals from the social sector. The launch event was attended by the Minister of Employment, Solidarity and Social Security, Ana Mendes Godinho.





# Legal pro bono in Covid-19 times

2020 tested everyone's resilience and the Firm's capacity to move forward faster and further, seeking to confirm that we deserve the trust of our pro bono clients, especially in unexpected times of crisis.

We highlight VdA's partnership with the [Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation](#) in the context of the Emergency Fund, in the amount of 5 million euros, set up to enhance the resilience of Portuguese society during the Covid-19 pandemic. The pro bono assistance provided by VdA in the context of this partnership was secured by a team of lawyers of different seniorities (including partners) from 10 areas of practice (particularly the areas of Health and ICT). The Firm's contribution helped strengthen collective capacity to adopt the measures necessary and appropriate to address the uncertain times faced, based on models of cooperation and commitment.

The [Associação Pão a Pão](#) sought out our help in interpreting the Covid-19 support measures and how best to apply them to ensure the organisation's survival during the first wave of the pandemic. In the case of [TESE](#), VdA was called upon to strengthen the organisation's governance model, helping it overcome the structural challenges faced during the pandemic.

VdA also collaborated with the World Economic Forum, SDSN-TReNDS, [The GovLab](#) and the [University of Washington's Information Risk Research Initiative](#) on the project [Contracts for Data Collaboration](#), having participated in the preparation of a [Guide](#) containing a checklist to support organisations in the preparation, drafting and negotiation of data sharing contracts. This document aims to help organisations grasp the main legal issues involved, foster trust among all relevant actors and, more specifically, assist them in the drafting of data sharing contracts.

Lourenço Fernandes Thomaz  
Associate | VdA



“ The Pão a Pão Association is a partner of VdA's pro bono programme, which I have had the pleasure of assisting since the start of 2019. When its activity was threatened by the pandemic, it was only natural that we sought to help it understand and overcome the challenges faced. In March 2020, we helped Pão a Pão identify solutions to deal with the pandemic's impacts and to safeguard the individual situations of those working on the project. Despite the urgency and gravity of the challenges it was grappling with, Pão a Pão always showed great concern for the wellbeing of its people and we were more than happy to help in this regard. ”



In 2020, VdA reinforced its commitment to [ProChild CoLab – Against Poverty and Social Exclusion](#), which the Vasco Vieira de Almeida Foundation is a founding member of. This was achieved through extremely active involvement in the organisation's administration, the provision of the legal support necessary to allow the Foundation's governing bodies to effectively perform their duties, and legal advice on all aspects of ProChild's activity, notably the establishment of protocols, partnership agreements and other contractual instruments required for the development of the child protection projects implemented by this organisation. 2020 also brought signs of hope. VdA's role in the creation of two new social companies ([Manicómio](#) and [Zero Desperdício](#)) and our contribution to both the establishment of the [Parley Foundation's](#) permanent representation in Portugal and the formalisation of the project of [IRIS-Incubadora Regional de Inovação Social](#), through the incorporation of a non-profit association, make us believe in the potential of the year ahead in the field of social innovation.

The pandemic did not prevent the growth of VdA's impact in 2020, with the integration of a set of new pro bono clients developing innovative and socially relevant projects, thus reinforcing the Firm's commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations 2030 Agenda.

By starting to provide pro bono legal support to [CAPITI](#) – which supports underprivileged children and young people with developmental and behavioural problems – to [Vencer Autismo](#) – which works to increase understanding of autism and reduce its negative stigma – and to [VilacomVida](#) – which develops innovative social businesses promoting the inclusion of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities in the labour market – VdA deepened its commitment to SDG 3 (Good Health and Wellbeing) and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities).

The support also provided by VdA to [Stand4Good](#) – which developed a scholarship granting system for university students who, due to the economic challenges caused by the pandemic, were at risk of leaving higher education – to the [Conservatório d'Artes de Loures](#) – which fights against the exclusion of children and young people through specialised artistic and musical education – and to [Paper Wings](#) – which develops a programme of study grants and academic internships – reinforced the Firm's commitment to SDG 4 (Quality Education).

## Francisca Gorjão Henriques

### President | Pão a Pão



“ The pandemic was a huge shock to everyone. But for restaurants it was a catastrophe. Until the appearance of Covid-19, the Pão a Pão Association prided itself on being self-sustainable through its Mezze project, a restaurant that employs and empowers refugees from the Middle East. However, the closure imposed by the pandemic, followed by the restriction of numbers and opening hours, and then another period of closure, resulted in a huge loss of revenue and doubts as to whether all jobs could be maintained. In other words, it brought into question our capacity to pursue our mission. VdA, and more specifically Lourenço Fernandes Thomaz, provided invaluable help in analysing all possible alternatives to dismissals based on the measures gradually being announced. He was our beacon during a particularly turbulent time, always available and willing to help. We were able to maintain almost our entire team. At the end of the day, that is what really matters. ”

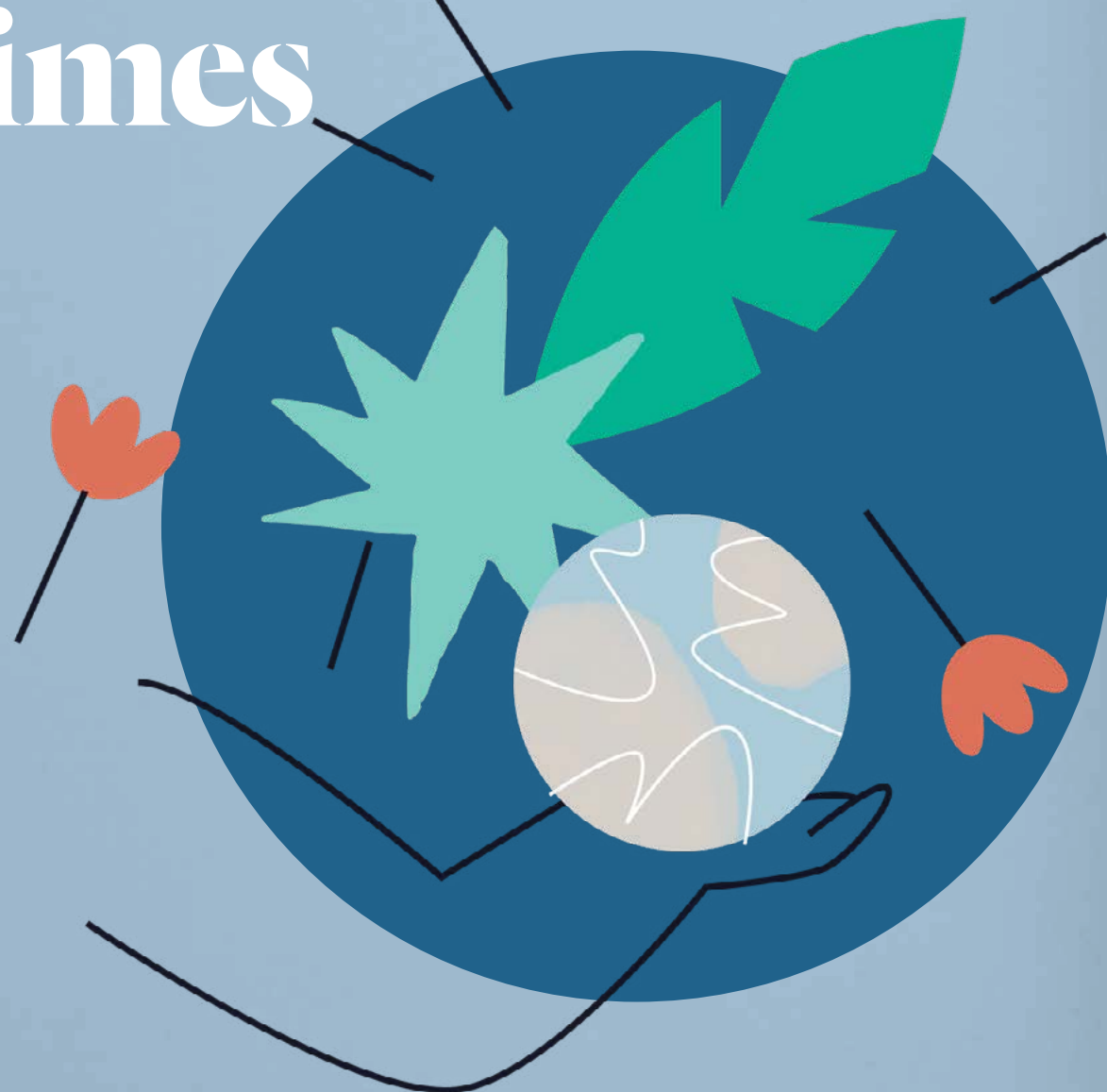
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**On the Environment**



# Working for a sustainable world in uncertain times



Environmental sustainability is part of VdA's identity, underlining our corporate commitment to future generations as components of an ecosystem the Firm aims to add value and actively contribute to, acting as a catalyst of positive change.

It was with this purpose in mind that the Projeto Verde (Green Project) was created more than a decade ago. To promote not only a culture of awareness in relation to this increasingly important topic but also of effective action, focused on reducing the environmental impact of VdA's activity and eventually achieving carbon neutral status.

As members (since 2011) of the [Legal Sustainability Alliance \(LSA\)](#) – an international organisation of law firms committed to promoting and adopting environmentally sustainable practices in the context of their activity – we regularly calculate our carbon footprint in line with the Legal Sector Alliance Carbon Footprint Protocol. The results are disclosed annually in VdA's Carbon Footprint Report, a reporting mechanism that, together with our "Green Barometer", allow us to assess compliance with the environmental goals set and encourage practices to improve the Firm's performance.

The results of the 2020 Green Barometer were very positive, with all goals having been met. Largely due to the lockdown period and remote working,

the Firm's electricity, paper and water consumption levels registered significant drops, as did the use of transport. Although these results can be largely explained by the fact that VdA's offices were never fully occupied from March 2020 onwards, we believe that certain lessons may be taken on board to further improve our environmental performance in the post-pandemic phase.

VdA has continued to pursue the goal of carbon neutrality as a critical element of its activity, with a special focus on energy and water consumption, waste production and the use of materials and transport. A self-produced renewable solar energy system is installed at its office, as well as smart lighting using LED technology, high efficiency exhaust air heat recovery units (nominal recovery of up to 95%), with variation of air renewal flow depending on level of occupation and of CO<sub>2</sub>, integrated control units ensuring the optimal functioning of this equipment (notably in terms of air flow variation and energy recovery levels) and, finally, a climatization system connected to the Centralised Technical Management system, allowing for a more efficient use of all relevant equipment, the analysis of consumption levels and the establishment of benchmarking leading to better performance measures. The best available technology installed at VdA's office has reduced electricity consumption by up to 80%.

# 2019

## 14 352 km

TRAVELLED PER LAWYER/STAFF MEMBER IN WORK-RELATED TRIPS

## 35 kg

OF PAPER CONSUMED PER LAWYER/STAFF MEMBER

## 60%

OF WASTE RECYCLED

## 12 m<sup>3</sup>

OF WATER CONSUMED PER LAWYER/STAFF MEMBER

# 2020

## 3 754 km

TRAVELLED PER LAWYER/STAFF MEMBER IN WORK-RELATED TRIPS

## 20 kg

OF PAPER CONSUMED PER LAWYER/STAFF MEMBER

## 71%

OF WASTE RECYCLED

## 8 m<sup>3</sup>

OF WATER CONSUMED PER LAWYER/STAFF MEMBER

All electricity consumed at VdA's facilities is from renewable energy sources, certified by Guarantees of Origin, which certifies the generation of zero-emission electricity at wind, solar or hydro power plants.



As regards recycling, waste separation is rigorously carried out at VdA. One-use plastic cups were altogether eliminated, rechargeable batteries were introduced, the better management of used cooking oils is promoted, and used cork stoppers are recycled through the [Green Cork](#) project. This project, implemented in cooperation with Quercus, ensures that the value of recycled cork is applied towards the replanting of Portugal's forests with native species, through the Floresta Comum (Common Forest) initiative.



VdA also promotes a sustainable mobility policy internally, which has had a positive impact on its greenhouse gas emissions. This measure was adopted in the context of the European Commission's approval of the Green Deal. Electrical bicycles and scooters are available to all lawyers and staff members in the office parking garage, as are Power Dot charging stations for electrical cars.

VdA's longstanding partnership with the [Tapada Nacional de Mafra](#) também tem contribuído para a promoção da importância da reflorestação, e traduz-se no apoio à gestão de uma área de 31 hectares, com uma capacidade de sequestro de 60t de CO<sub>2</sub> (Zona de Carbono Zero VdA). Esta colaboração envolve a realização de operações de silvicultura (desramação e plantação) e de defesa da floresta contra incêndios, incluindo iniciativas em que colaboradores da Firma participam ativamente, nomeadamente em ações de plantação e limpeza da floresta.

Another initiative fostering cooperation among VdA's lawyers and staff members to achieve a common environmental objective, and which has promoted a strong sense of citizenship and belonging to the community, is the [Gorongosa Project](#) in Mozambique. This project involves equipping 5 schools located in the Human Development Zone of the Gorongosa National Park and includes environmental awareness-raising among the local population as to the importance of preserving this globally unique protected area.

2020 also saw the creation of the newsletter "Sabia que..." ("Did you know that...") which is published on our internal Portal and sent on a monthly basis to all lawyers and staff members. It has aimed to increase awareness about the recycling of cork stoppers, one-use plastic items, the proper disposal of masks, green energy, the Ponto Electrão available in VdA's parking garage for the deposit of electrical and electronic waste, and the environmental impacts of Covid-19, among other relevant topics.







In a bid to preserve biodiversity and bolster our position in the fight against climate change, in 2020 VdA joined two important initiatives: *Compromisso Lisboa Capital Verde Europeia* (Lisbon European Green Capital Commitment) and *act4nature Portugal*.

Lisbon European Green Capital 2020 promotes several measures in the different areas of sustainability: namely, mobility, air quality and noise, circular economy, water, citizenship and participation. VdA has undertaken to implement 15 actions, among which we highlight

#### Energy

5% reduction in energy consumption per lawyer/staff member (compared to 2018)

#### Water

5% reduction in water consumption per lawyer/staff member (compared to 2018)

#### Mobility

Increased availability, to lawyers/staff members, of the number of hours of monthly use of a shared mobility solution as an alternative to car use

#### Climate

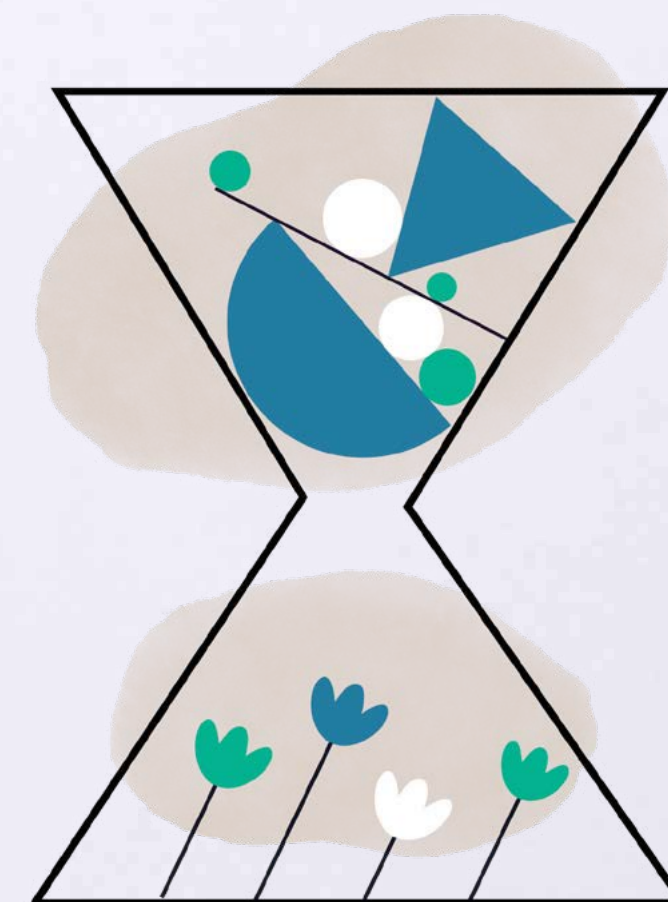
20% reduction in the emission of greenhouse gases (Scope 1, 2 and 3) per lawyer/staff member (compared to 2018).



*Act4nature Portugal* was launched in 2018 by BCSD Portugal to encourage companies to actively collaborate in the fight against the global loss of biodiversity. This movement includes 15 Portuguese companies which have undertaken to achieve the 10 shared commitments, as well as certain individual commitments defined by each member company. VdA established 10 individual commitments, among which we highlight:

- Maintain up to date, in an open knowledge format, a repository of knowledge on national and European Community legislative changes with respect to the environment, including regulations related to biodiversity
- Collaborate with the Portuguese Institute for Nature Conservation and Forests (ICNF) and with the intersectoral forum of ENCNE 2030, providing suggestions for the legal solutions to be foreseen in the XXI Conservation of Nature and Biodiversity Action Plan
- Ensure a minimum of 50% of indigenous species of vegetation in the green spaces located in VdA's Lisbon and Porto offices, with the aim of promoting urban biodiversity
- Exclusively use phytopharmaceuticals and fertilisers authorised in organic farming in the green spaces of VdA's Lisbon and Porto offices, with the aim of minimising any potential negative impacts on biodiversity associated with highly toxic chemicals.

*act4nature*  
Portugal





# **Collaboration for Impact**

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# Stronger Together

In 2020, Margarida Sameiro, Bárbara Tschoepe Mendes and David Vieira won the VdA Corporate Responsibility and Sustainability Awards.

We are firm believers that Corporate Responsibility and Sustainability have a concrete and lasting positive impact. The determination to catalyse change is very present in our DNA and these ideals inspire us and give us energy to advance on this promising journey.

Congratulations to all!

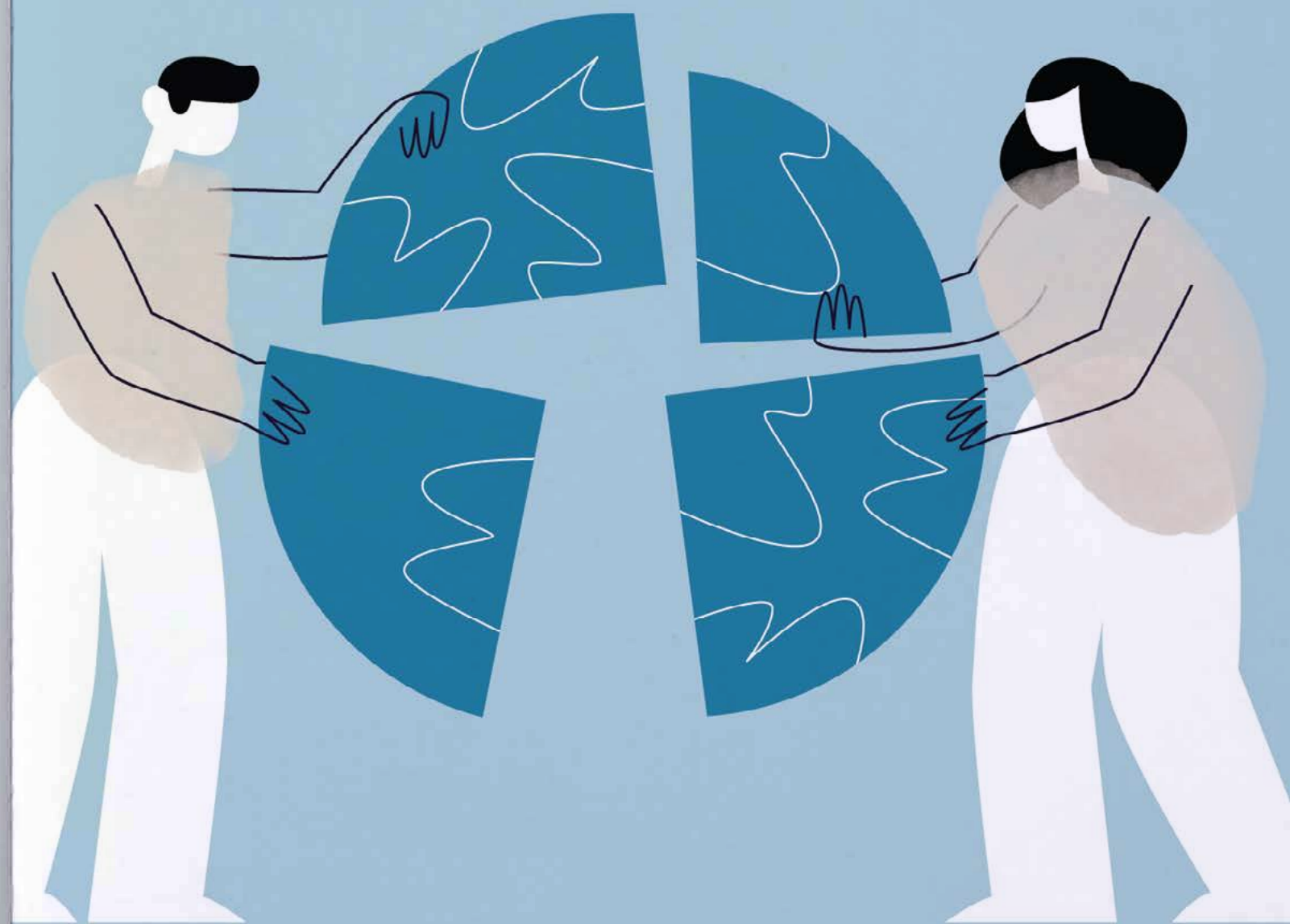


**The inclusion of partnerships (SDG 17) in the 5Ps (People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace and Partnerships) of the United Nations' action plan for the 2030 Agenda is explained by the key role close collaboration between the public, private and social sectors can play in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. Sharing this conviction, which has always guided the Firm's approach to corporate social responsibility, VdA has continued to lead, promote and participate in initiatives involving institutional collaboration with other law firms, companies, NGOs and the academic community, hoping to thus contribute to a more sustainable future and inclusive society.**

In the belief that concerted efforts, framed by a structured partnership between law firms, individual practice lawyers and in-house lawyers, would help explore synergies and create complementarity, largely increasing capacity of response in the provision of pro bono legal services, the [Pro Bono Alliance](#) as established by VdA's initiative in 2019, having taken its

first steps in 2020. This informal network created by 11 law firms, 3 individual practice lawyers and the legal department of a company aims to increase the offer of pro bono legal support in Portugal, thus mitigating inequalities and promoting greater (and better) access to justice, particularly among those without resources to secure top quality legal services.

In 2020, VdA's commitment to SDG 17 was also reflected in its collaboration with some of its main competitors in the organisation of the 2nd edition of the Pro Bono Day, this year devoted to the topic "Pro bono reinvented in response to the crisis(es) – Preparing for the Future". This event, which was held within the context of the European Pro Bono Week and adapted to an online format due to the pandemic, saw lawyers, local government representatives and NGO leaders share their stories. It also included by a debate between an assistant attorney general, a lawyer and a judge on the legal constraints and courts' response to the new pandemic reality, stimulating greater awareness and joint reflection on these issues.



In the context of its Presidency of [GRACE – Responsible Companies](#), VdA oversaw the creation of the Legal Cluster, which brings together ten law firms which are members of this network. In 2020, they joined forces to share best practices and identify advocacy opportunities to improve legislation and public policies with an impact on sustainable development.

Because VdA is such a believer in the power of partnerships, including communication partnerships, it accepted the challenge launched by [BCSD Portugal](#) para, em colaboração com a [PwC](#), to guarantee, in cooperation with PwC, the bimonthly publication of the newsletter "[Diretrizes da Sustentabilidade](#)"

providing a legislative survey and other ESG-related information, of relevance to corporate sustainability, on decarbonisation, biodiversity and sustainable finances.

Two other important initiatives were developed in 2020 in collaboration with NOVA SBE. Firstly, VdA participated in the legal diagnosis component of the 2nd edition of the [Social Leapfrog Program](#), and, secondly, in the context of the [Data Science Knowledge Center](#)'s project, the Firm contributed to an analysis of the legal requirements to be established for the classification of an entity as a "social economy organisation" and the delimitation of the concept of "social company".



**João Wengorovius Meneses**  
Secretary-General | BCSD Portugal



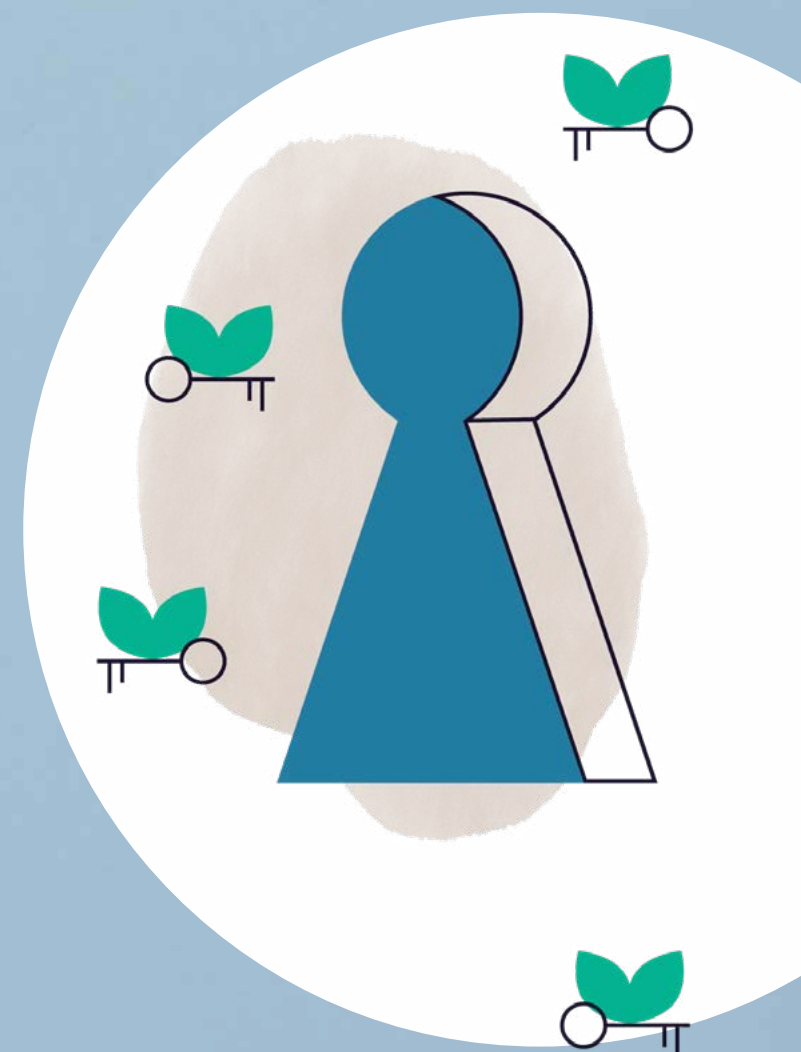
“ A journalist once asked Luís Figo what makes a good football player. Figo replied that a good football player is one who helps his teammates shine. As a services company, VdA could have found it difficult to embrace the topic of sustainability, i.e. integrate the social and environmental dimensions in its business model, seeing as it does not have a value chain that involves suppliers and raw materials, a manufacturing floor, packaging and distribution. That is why many services companies end up only focusing on internal measures — for example, reducing the ecological footprint of their staff, treating them with dignity and adopting ethical principles of management. VdA also shares these concerns; however, it goes a lot further. In fact, its greatest contribution to a fairer and more sustainable world is the generosity with which it uses its greatest superpower — the talent of its lawyers and staff members — to support other organisations. For BCSD Portugal, VdA's (pro bono) legal counselling is a tremendous help. We feel that they are not only a part of our team but are always available to help us shine. They are our Luís Figo. A heartfelt thanks to the entire VdA team! ”

Still on the topic of collaboration for impact, VdA participated (alongside Católica Lisbon School of Business & Economics and BI4ALL) in “The Financial Times Innovative Lawyers — Global Legal Hackathon Challenge”, an initiative backed by the Vasco Vieira de Almeida Foundation and VdA Academia. For three weeks VdA worked intensely with the abovementioned partners to respond to the challenge “How to facilitate risk groups' equal access to fundamental rights while locked down or subject to restricted movement?”. The multidisciplinary team participating in this Hackathon sought to identify an effective way of helping isolated elderly people exercise their fundamental rights and access essential goods and services. The result was the [I-Dial](#) platform, which uses artificial intelligence and natural language to establish a connection between the elderly user and a volunteer available to provide the required service in the area in question, thus ensuring the user's access to medication, meals, doctor's appointments or assistance in their home, among other needs.

This global initiative of the Financial Times received 170 project proposals from 225 organisations, totalling 2700 participants. This was one of the largest legal innovation events ever held!



IS WITH YOU TO KEEP YOU SAFE



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## **Our Commitments**

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# “Commitment is an action not a word.”

Abraham Lincoln



## Statement from Business Leaders for Renewed Global Cooperation

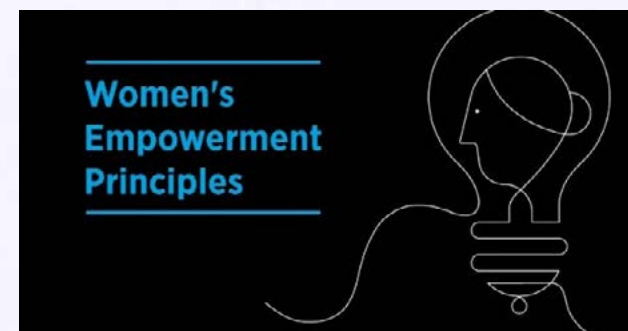
On the occasion of its 75th anniversary, the United Nations disclosed a “Statement from Business Leaders for Renewed Global Cooperation” aimed at mobilising international cooperation and bringing companies and governments closer together. João Vieira de Almeida, Managing Partner of Vieira de Almeida, responded to this appeal and committed to:

- Showing leadership, ethics and good governance through strategies, policies and cooperation;
- Investing in breaking down inequalities and systemic injustices;
- Acting in partnership with the UN, the government and civil society to improve access to justice and ensure accountability and transparency;
- Providing legal security;
- Promoting equality;
- Respecting human rights.

The complete list of CEOs who joined this initiative was presented to António Guterres, Secretary-General of the UN, by Sanda Ojiambo, CEO and Executive Director of the United Nations Global Compact.

“The evidence is clear: when women are empowered, everybody benefits.”

**Sanda Ojiambo**  
CEO and Executive Director |  
United Nations Global Compact



**In 2020, VdA also bolstered its commitment to SDG 5 (Achieving Gender Equality and Empowering all Women and Girls) by joining two United Nations initiatives: Women's Empowerment Principles and Target Gender Equality (TGE).**

## Women's Empowerment Principles

The Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs) aim to guide companies in their approach to gender equality and the empowerment of women in the workplace and in society. Promoted by UN Women and included as a chapter of the UN Global Compact, the WEPs follow international employment and human rights standards and are founded in the conviction that it is companies' responsibility and in their best interests to bring this issue to the agenda and actively contribute to gender equality and female empowerment in the work context.





## Target Gender Equality

Within the context of its participation in the United Nations Global Compact, VdA joined the Target Gender Equality (TGE) accelerator programme which has the mission of helping companies involved in the Global Compact define objectives related to female representation and leadership in the corporate sector. The team set up within VdA has participated in the workshops organised by Global Compact Network Portugal and is working towards achieving the objectives set by the Firm in this regard. VdA's concern with SDG 5 led to its participation in the 15th edition of the Social Responsibility Week, an initiative of the Portuguese Association for Business Ethics developed in partnership with the Global Compact Network Portugal. Margarida Couto, partner at VdA and CEO of the Vasco Vieira de Almeida Foundation, participated in the session "Target Gender Equality: Business Leading the Way" as a speaker in the roundtable discussion on "Genderless Leadership: Redefining the pipeline for top management".



## GRACE — Responsible Companies

In December 2020, VdA was re-elected as President of the Management Board of GRACE – Empresas Responsáveis, a position held by partner Margarida Couto, in representation of the Firm. GRACE is a non-profit public interest business association working in the field of Corporate Responsibility and Sustainability.

In addition to the (new) commitments undertaken in 2020, VdA renewed its human rights, gender equality, equal opportunity and diversity commitments taken on in previous years, among which we highlight:

[Portuguese Charter for Diversity](#)

[United Nations Global Compact](#)

[iGen – Companies for Equality Forum](#)

[BCSD Portugal's Principles Charter](#)

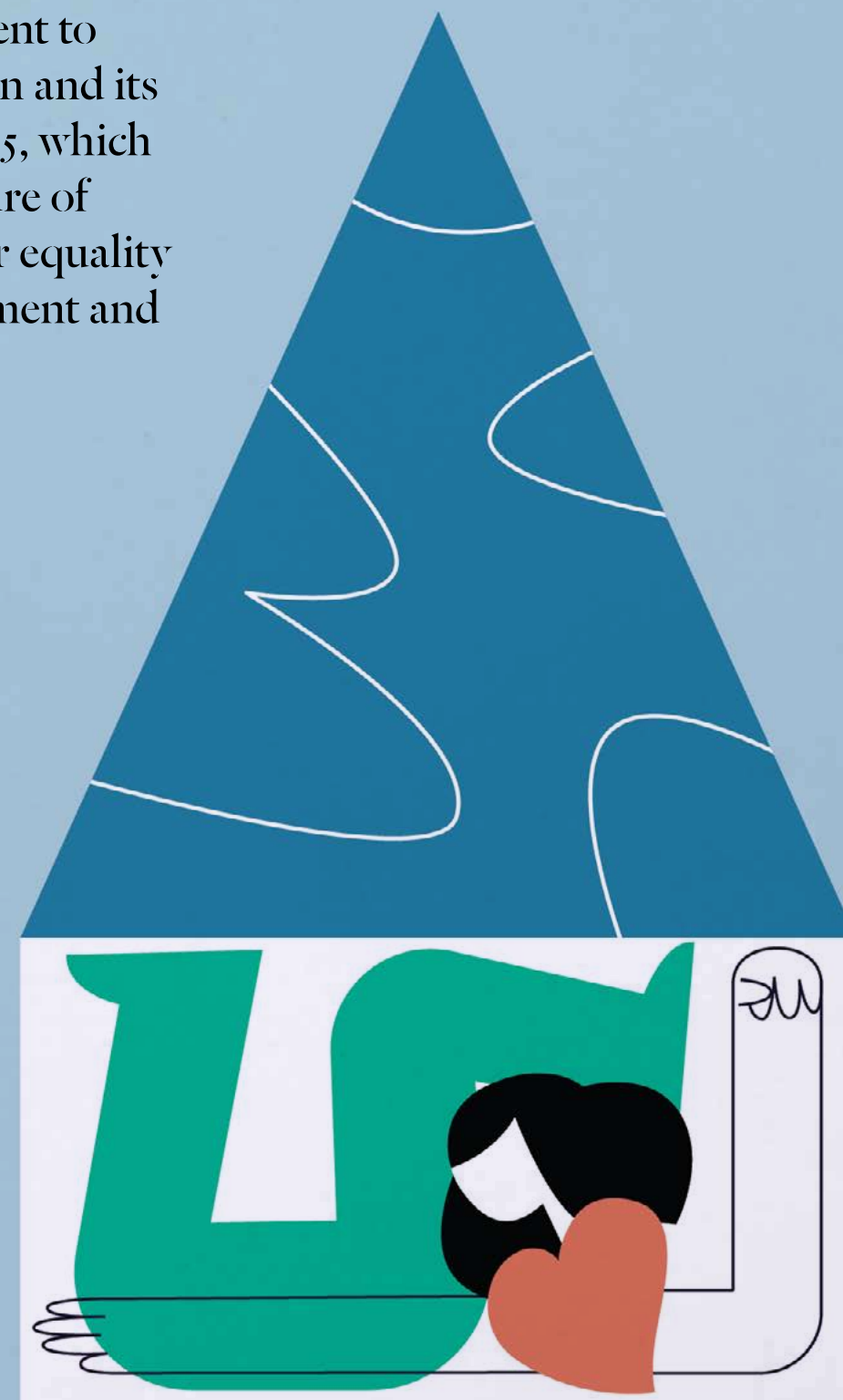
[CEO Guide for Human Rights](#)

[Inclusive Community Forum](#)

In the context of this last commitment, and despite the increased challenges brought by the pandemic, in 2020 VdA organised its first inclusive internship. We welcomed a university student with disability who is studying Digital Literacy for the Job Market at the Polytechnic Institute of Santarém, one of our partner entities. Her internship was carried out in our Corporate Affairs department.

“VdA joined Target Gender Equality in a bid to bolster the Firm's commitment to diversity and inclusion and its contribution to SDG 5, which is anchored in a culture of recognition of gender equality as a pillar of development and sustainability.”

Margarida Couto  
Partner | VdA





**With our eyes  
set on the  
Future**

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This report presents a retrospective view of the 2020 highlights of Vieira de Almeida and the Vasco Vieira de Almeida Foundation's commitment to corporate responsibility and sustainability.

In what was one of the most atypical years of our lives, which confronted us with unimaginable challenges, we did not slacken our efforts, but rather fought even harder to achieve our goals. The challenges brought by the Covid-19 pandemic ended up strengthening VdA's commitment to its pro bono clients, supported organisations and institutional partners, "forcing" us to be by their side during some of the toughest times they have ever faced and when all the support they could get was truly decisive for their futures.

In a sense we can say that this difficult and unexpected pandemic crisis has made us better and more resilient and taught us to reimagine hope. It is for this reason that in 2021 we propose to not only deepen our commitment to sustainability, but also to extend what we are doing in Portugal to the VdA Legal Partners network, internationally scaling up our action and impact in the field of Corporate Responsibility and Sustainability.

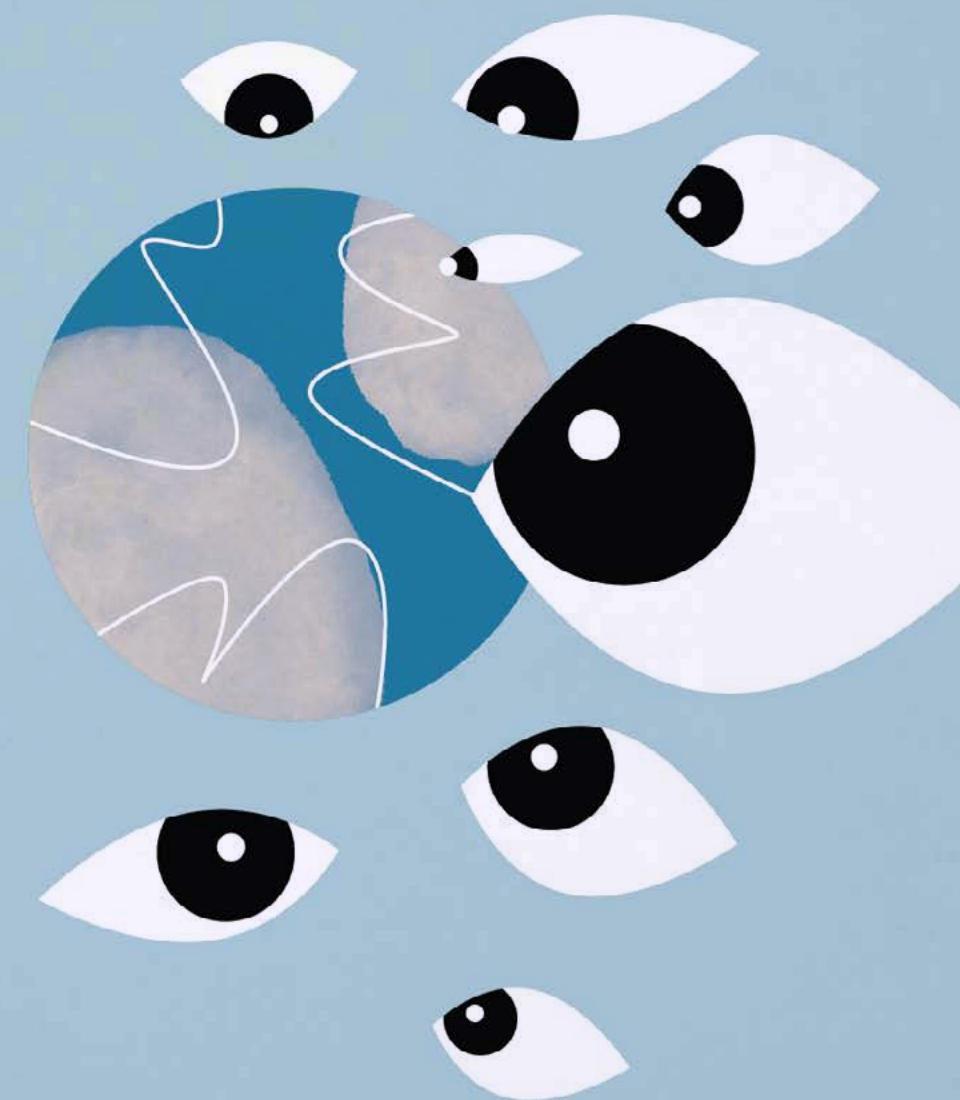
It was with this goal in mind that VdA responded positively to the appeal for action launched by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, António Guterres, by joining SDG Ambition, an accelerator initiative that aims to promote a better and more rapid integration of the Sustainable Development Goals in companies' management (including systems and processes).

In the context of its participation in this initiative, VdA chose to focus its efforts on a specific set of SDGs to reinforce its commitment to diversity and inclusion, considering their importance and triple reference in the United Nations 2030 Agenda, namely in SDG 5 (Achieve Gender Equality and Empower all Women and Girls), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities).

With this choice, VdA will not only maintain gender equality at the top of its agenda but significantly broaden its commitment to inclusion through the adoption of more inclusive measures internally and the promotion of inclusive work-related best practices among its stakeholders.

Aware that there can be no people or companies without the planet, and in the hope of seeing the European Climate Law approved during the Portuguese Presidency of the EU, in 2021 VdA plans to further pursue its environmental commitments, notably by reducing its emissions in line with the global warming under 1.5C strategy.

These are our commitments for 2021. We know that we have set ourselves ambitious targets that are impossible to achieve alone. We thus count on our partners, as we always have, to continue paving this path together, scaling up our impact and aiming to get closer to fulfilling the objectives of the United Nations 2030 Agenda.



**João Vieira de Almeida**  
Managing Partner | VdA

“ Sustainable Development is aligned with the values that shape VdA's identity, underlining our commitment to future generations as components of an ecosystem the Firm aims to actively contribute to as an agent of positive change. ”



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**VdA** VIEIRA DE ALMEIDA



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