



Beyond classical logistics

by Przemysław Myszka

Traditionally, during the transport logistic trade fair in Munich, we sat with GEODIS to get a taste of the market. This time around of sustainability as we met Virginie Delcroix, the company's EVP in charge of sustainable development. We talked about GEODIS' environmental footprint across all scopes and how the organisation intends to lower it, among others, through electrification and circularity, but also the company's engagement in wider societal affairs, including what it means to offer ethical logistics.

■ *Can you walk us through the company's carbon emissions and the ways of axing them?*

Even though GEODIS isn't a listed company, it's important for us to be transparent with our stakeholders. Last year, we emitted – across all scopes – 4.8 million tonnes CO_{2e}, of which scope 3 accounted for 92% (particularly sub-contracted transportation). Road transport is by far the biggest 'contributor,' responsible for 35% of our total greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. But by looking at it from a tonne-kilometre perspective, road accounts for 20% of transport performance. Air freight, 30% of our GHG footprint, is 3.0% in t-km. Shipping goods by sea is, respectively, 12% and 75%. This shows the difference in the carbon intensity of each transport mode. And while logistics is about flexibility, swapping air for road and the latter for sea or rail isn't always possible. At the end of 2024, the Science Based Targets initiative (SBTi) validated our emission reduction commitments. From the baseline of 2020-22, our 2030-aim for scopes 1 & 2 is to reduce the footprint (in absolute terms) by 42%. For scope 3, there are different targets. The two main ones concern sub-contracted air transports (-25%, also in absolute terms) and road-rail-sea (-25% but here in carbon intensity).

In 2024, we were on track with the targeted trajectory thanks to a few contributions. GEODIS has around 10 million square metres of operational sites (mainly logistics centres and warehouses). These are becoming more energy efficient by switching to renewable or low-carbon electricity as well as reducing the demand for it overall (with the focus put in the first place on the most energy-consuming facilities). Second, fuel switch for our truck fleet, coupled with measures such as eco-driving and investing in Euro 6 vehicles that consume less. Also, our e-truck park essentially doubles every year (some 100 units at the end of last year, mostly for urban deliveries in France, but also electric tractors that operate directly between manufacturing and logistics centres). The e-fleet ties to our operational sites, as they are charged there. We are waiting for the heavy-duty charging infrastructure to catch up with the developments made by truck producers to electrify long-haul forwarding as well.

GEODIS counts on the continued development of electric vehicles, so that in the (hopefully not so distant) future, an e-truck won't cost up to three times more than a diesel one. We see electric vehicles as the dominant technology in the future, with their total cost of ownership rivalling and

then outpacing trucks with combustion engines – maybe even within a decade.

■ *Speaking of trucking, have you been affected by the persistent lack of drivers in Europe?*

GEODIS is fortunate in that it has never had to cancel a shipment because there wasn't a driver to sit behind the wheel. We treat our truckers well – in terms of contracts and safety. Especially the latter is crucial as drivers can get under a lot of pressure – loading, unloading, and delivering that cargo. That said, safety is a golden standard at GEODIS – and a two-lane road in which we carry out a lot of training but also are open to trucker feedback on how to improve this-and-that. The working environment should never be a point of concern when recruiting and retaining personnel. Also gone are the days when the trucker workforce comprised people in their 20s and 30s. We need to assist older truckers in meeting their needs to keep them and their experience. Interestingly, in the context of the aforementioned electrification of trucks, drivers already love their e-machines because of less noise and vibration.

■ *You seem to place a particular emphasis on the circular economy. How are you engaged in this field?*

We support circularity on several levels. First, at GEODIS' sites (some 1,000 of them) where we handle a lot of materials, inevitably producing waste. Here, for starters, we've begun measuring the in- and outflow. We do that to know what we can recycle – and we currently recycle three-quarters of the materials that go through our hands, so to speak. Second, reverse logistics. Third, monitoring our equipment – we fix rather than replace (and if we have to, we dismantle the entire thing so it can be recycled).

We are conducting awareness campaigns and engaging our 50,000 employees, and we can see that more and more of them are proud of their involvement in the sustainability movement. There are certain regions where waste management isn't so developed at the country level, and it's rewarding to see GEODIS people doing their best to minimise waste output. Other areas have circularity competitions between the sites who will perform better.

To encourage business decision-makers, climate-related criteria are integrated into senior executives' variable compensation at our company. To achieve that, leaders need to engage their teams in meeting those GEODIS' SBTi-verified goals.

■ ***Apart from circularity, GEODIS also underscores the ethical side of logistics. What is in the company's Code of Ethics?***



It covers anti-corruption, competitive practices, compliance, human rights, environmental issues, etc., and it includes both GEODIS and the parties we conduct business with. Whoever wants to work with us needs to commit to GEODIS' code of conduct – it's part of the tender process. But commitment alone isn't enough – they need to act accordingly. And we diligently check if they do – across the 60 countries we are present in and the 100 more we connect. If there are gaps, we help our partners fill them. It is sometimes a delicate affair, as cultural differences may come into play. That said, if there are violations and an

insufficient effort to stop them, we cease working with them altogether.

In line with its purpose, GEODIS is doing everything it can to position the company as a deliverer of efficient, innovative, sustainable, and ethical logistics. That is what we believe to be the future of transport – irrespective of what geopolitics or the global economy throw at the sector. This is certainly more than the classical logistical issues of, say, optimising the supply chain, but that's the lay of the land – already today and increasingly more tomorrow. Hopefully, the market will recognise the value of such logistics. ■



Photo: GEODIS