

**AQUATOR GROEN & RUIMTE**

**COMMUNICATION ON PROGRESS**

***G3 SUSTAINABILITY REPORT 2018***

## COMMUNICATION ON PROGRESS

to: whoever it may concern

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## INDEX

<b>1</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>STRATEGY AND ANALYSIS</b>	<b>2</b>
2.1	Statement of continuing support	2
2.2	Actions, performances and ambitions on all principles	4
2.3	Description of key impacts, risks and opportunities	11
2.4	Organization profile	11
<b>3</b>	<b>GOVERNANCE, COMMITMENTS AND ENGAGEMENT</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>REPORT PARAMETERS</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>GOVERNANCE, COMMITMENTS AND ENGAGEMENT</b>	<b>14</b>

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Aequator Groen & Ruimte is an independent advisory firm from the Netherlands, with a leading role in (re)vitalizing rural areas and making them a better place to live, work and enjoy.

Our advisors are keen to match public and private goals and will always search for creative solutions that meet the ambitions of both the (local) government and the farmers, landowners and other users of the rural domain. To think in opportunities instead of threats is our central slogan. In the Netherlands we are forerunners in the design of environmental services agreements and financial constructions for the management of the rural space. Sustainability is therefore partly 'in our genes'.

Our expertise concentrates on the interfaces of agriculture, nature, soil, water and land use planning and is based on many years of experience as intermediaries between policy and practice. Our roots lie in the world famous Dutch agricultural extension service. Our working method is creative and aims to implement, to 'move' and to 'do'. Sustainability is leading for all our activities. Reporting on the sustainability of our own internal business processes perfectly fits this philosophy.

## 2 STRATEGY AND ANALYSIS

### 2.1 Statement of continuing support

Sustainable development is our core business and priority. As advisors active in the rural and green areas of the Netherlands, we can not underestimate the importance of the sustainability of our activities, advices and efforts.

#### *Achievements in 2018*

- Aequator is continuing its support to the abovementioned goals.
- The injury frequency rate was nil (in 2009-2017 also nil).
- The number of workdays lost due to accidents was nil (in 2009-2017 also nil).
- The number of workdays lost due to sickness amounted to 47 days (2017: 8 days, in 2016: 19, in 2015: 85; 2014: 75, in 2013: 61, in 2012: 152, in 2011: 100, 2010: 130 and in 2009: 426 days). None of the absences was longer than 1 week.
- There were no pregnancies.
- One individual personal coaching was applied for and granted to a junior colleague; 6 professional courses on specialised subjects in the field of agriculture, hydrology and soil science were provided to 6 colleagues. A team session was held with the entire company for 2 days to discuss the long term strategy of the company.
- No case of human rights violation has been reported during the year.
- All the workmen are subject to collectively agreed the Terms of Employment (AVR).
- During the reporting period no worktime was lost because of rift or strike by employees.
- No form of forced or compulsory labour was resorted to.
- The male : female ratio among employees was 2,26 : 1. However, 3 new employees, all female, were contracted during the month of December 2018 and will join our company in 2019, pushing this ratio to 1,79 : 1.
- Regarding electricity use Aequator uses energy saving bulbs and adheres to the policy of 'lights off at night after work'.
- Aequator continued its support, as knowledge partner, to the Stichting Veldleeuwerik, a knowledge and extension NGO active throughout Netherlands. Aequator is also partner of het Netwerk Groene Bureaus, an association of advisory firms active in the field of ecology and nature management.
- Aequator continued its savings account at the largest Dutch sustainable bank: ASN Bank ([www.asnbank.nl](http://www.asnbank.nl)), to help finance sustainable development worldwide.
- Aequator qualified for the second year to the new ISO 9001:2015 standards (holding the 9001-2008).
- Communications through digital and social media are further promoted (over printed copies).
- Public transport is promoted when employees travel large distances and especially to the cities of The Hague and Utrecht, where many governmental institutions reside.
- Printers are selected (and maintained) according to the latest environmental standards.
- New lease contracts for cars, used by Aequator staff, are of categories A, B or hybrid, guaranteeing lower levels of suspended particulate matter and SO<sub>2</sub>, No<sub>x</sub>, Co to the ambient air.

*Ambitions 2019*

- Our main ambition is to hold on to our achievements so far (and detailed in this report).
- We aim to further decrease environmental effects caused to the ambient air by the emission of lease cars.
- Further reduce paper use by increasing the share of digital reporting to our clients.
- Waste disposal in our new offices according to type of materials (paper, plastic, ink cartridges, general waste).
- Re-qualify for ISO 9001: 2015 standards
- Provide coaching and training to colleagues.

We express our support for the Global Compact and how the ten principles on human rights, labour standards, environment and anti-corruption influence our company's strategy. We adhering to the principles of Global Compact and GRI will further strengthen our serious intentions.

Signed: 

Peter Sloot  
Director Aequator Groen & Ruimte

## 2.2 Actions, performances and ambitions on all principles

**Principle 1:** **Business should support and respect the protection of internationally proclaimed human rights.**

### Commitment

Aequator vows allegiance to the Dutch Constitution, which resolves to secure to all its citizens justice, liberty, equality and fraternity and which also encompasses the fundamental human rights as envisioned in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Aequator stands committed to support and respect the protection of internationally proclaimed human rights.

### Systems

Though there is no specific provision as such for human rights in statutes and guidelines of the company, the essence of all our working procedures ensures that our employees enjoy the fundamental human rights.

Aequator has in its management system provisions for health, safety, pension and education.

### Actions

#### Health

- Aequator offers specific plans for re-integration of employees that have been ill for more than a week;
- Aequator offers a very attractive access to post-retirement scheme with ABP, the largest Dutch pension plan, for all its employees.
- Aequator offers advice on healthy working conditions and positions (chairs, desks and so forth) and invests in specially adapted seats for those personnel who require as such;

#### Safety

- Personnel at both our offices receives basic medical and emergency training (BHV-training), including refresher training
- Safety appliances such as fire blankets, fire extinguishers etc. are taken, also for lease cars.
- An externally performed Risk Analysis show no safety hazards for employees. Only minor suggestions for improvement had to be followed up (such as working desks with adjustable heights).

#### Education

- Aequator trains its employees regularly to update themselves, professionally, managerially and technically.
- Aequator encourages its employees to better their educational and professional qualification by giving suitable incentives, study leave, etc.

### Performance during the year 2018

- The injury frequency rate was nil (in 2009-2014 also nil).
- The number of workdays lost due to accidents was nil (in 2009-2014 also nil).
- The number of workdays lost due to sickness amounted to 47 days (2017: 8 days, in 2016: 19, in 2015: 85; 2014: 75, in 2013: 61, in 2012: 152, in 2011: 100, 2010: 130 and in 2009: 426 days). None of the absences was longer than 1 week.
- There were no pregnancies.
- One individual personal coaching was applied for and granted to a junior colleague; 6 professional courses on specialised subjects in the field of agriculture, hydrology and soil science were provided to 6 colleagues. A team session was held with the entire company for 2 days to discuss the long term strategy of the company.

### Ambitions for the year 2019

- It is the ambition of Aequator to continue our policies and restore performances in this field to the situation prior to the economic crisis.

## **Principle 2: Business should ensure that they are not complicit in human rights abuses.**

### Commitment

Aequator vows allegiance to the Dutch Constitution, which resolves to secure to all its citizens justice, liberty, equality and fraternity and which also encompasses the fundamental human rights as envisioned in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Aequator stands committed to support and respect the protection of internationally proclaimed human rights.

### Systems

- Aequator aims to support the protection of human rights and ensures that it is not complicit in human rights abuses, as a natural extension to all our policies and projects.
- Aequator has legal Terms of Employment (AVR) in which employees' rights, job review and performance procedures as well as the pathways for formal objections and grievances are described.

### Actions & Performance during the year 2018

No case of human rights violation has been reported during the year.

### Ambitions for the year 2019

It is the ambition of Aequator to continue our policies and performances in the field of human rights.

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

**Commitment**

Aequator stands committed to the protection of freedom of association among its employees and business partners.

**Systems**

Aequator distinguishes no hierarchic layers in its organization, besides that of the Management Team (general director, director and office manager). All personnel has the same type of contract, with the only exception being the general director, who has a managerial contract through his private consultancy.

1. Employees have the freedom to become member of an union. More than one Union is functioning in the Netherlands.
2. Upon invitation, employees can become shareholders of the company.

**Actions**

By Dutch law, Aequator does not need to have a legal entity (OR) that represents its workers in their dialogue with the directors. Important decisions concerning employees' direct interests, such as wages, incentives, bonus, line of promotions, working conditions, welfare measures, are all taken in plenary sessions, with all employees and ruled out in our Terms of Employment (AVR).

**Performance during the year 2018**

- All the workmen are subject to collectively agreed the Terms of Employment (AVR).
- During the reporting period no worktime was lost because of rift or strike by employees.

**Principle 4: Business should support the elimination of all forms of forced and compulsory labour.**

**Commitment**

Aequator stands committed not to resort to any form of forced and compulsory labour.

**Systems**

- No employee is required to deposit any sum of money for employment in Aequator, nor do service bonds exist, forcing employees who have been specifically trained at the cost of the company to remain for certain period.

### Actions

- Printed copies of Terms of Employment and other rules are distributed to all employees upon contracting, and after each alteration.
- Handbooks containing the rules and regulations of the company are available online on the company's Intranet facility.
- Employees are given incentives for achieving higher levels of output.

### Performance during the year 2018

No form of forced or compulsory labour was resorted to.

### Principle 5: Business should support the effective abolition of child labour.

#### Commitment

Aequator stands committed not to engage any child labour and do all that it can to abolish it from its surroundings.

#### Systems

- For appointment in the company, the minimum age prescribed and scrupulously followed is 18 years.
- All employees are paid much above the minimum wages prescribed.

#### Actions

No specific actions were considered necessary.

### Performance during the year 2018

- No child labour was employed by Aequator.
- No child labour was allowed to be employed by the subcontractors working for Aequator.
- Aequator does not promote trade with organisations engaging child labour.

### Ambition for the year 2019

Aequator will include in its procurement procedures the official criteria that articles produced by child labour will under no circumstances be bought or otherwise acquired.

**Principle 6: Business should support the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation.**

**Commitment**

Aequator stands committed to follow the policy of non-discrimination in all matters – recruitment, employment opportunity, promotion, etc.

**Systems**

- The Dutch Constitution unambiguously prohibits discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth.
- As a Dutch company, Aequator is bound to follow the Government directives, which are abundantly clear against any discrimination in any matters.
- Employees have easy access to the management to discuss and resolve discriminations, if any, quickly and effectively.

**Actions**

No specific actions were taken.

**Performance during 2018**

- Total number of employees 17
- Female employees 6

**Principle 7: Business should support a pre-cautionary approach to environmental challenges.**

**Commitment**

Aequator stands committed to prevention and control of environmental pollution due to its activities, products and services, in a sustained manner. In fact, our core business, by order our our customers and our internal activities, is aimed at creating a more sustainable, hence environmentally more sound world.

**Systems**

In order to ensure pollution-free environment, norms and regulations as laid down by the Dutch Government are meticulously followed.

### Actions and performance during the year 2018

- Regarding electricity use Aequator uses saving bulbs and adheres to the policy of 'lights off at night after work'.
- Aequator continued its partnership of de Stichting Veldleeuwierik, contributing both financially and with our knowledge and network to a more sustainable agriculture throughout the Netherlands. Aequator is also partner of het Netwerk Groene Bureaus, an association of advisory firms active in the field of ecology and nature management.
- Aequator continued her savings account at the largest Dutch sustainable bank: ASN Bank ([www.asnbank.nl](http://www.asnbank.nl)), to help finance sustainable development worldwide.
- New lease contracts for cars, used by Aequator staff, are of categories A, B or hybrid, guaranteeing low levels of suspended particulate matter and SO<sub>2</sub>, NO<sub>x</sub>, and CO to the ambient air.

### Ambitions for 2019

Aequator aims to continue replacing lease contracts of relatively 'dirty' cars for new contracts of cars that emit low levels of suspended particulate matter and SO<sub>2</sub>, NO<sub>x</sub>, and CO in the ambient air. The use of hybrid and electric cars will be encouraged.

**Principle 8: Business should undertake initiatives to promote greater environmental responsibility.**

### Commitment

Aequator stands committed to promoting greater environmental responsibility in agriculture, nature development, water management and rural development in general. Aequator also encourages employees and contractors to do so.

### Systems

- Environmental aspects are carefully considered and appropriately incorporated at the planning stage of a project itself.
- Employees are frequently made aware of their environmental responsibility, e.g. in use of (lease) cars, paper and other stationary, electricity, etc.

### Actions and performance during the year 2018

- Aequator received her first formal annual qualification for adhering to the international ISO 9001:2015 standards, replacing our ISO 9001-2008 qualification.
- Communications through digital and social media were further promoted (over printed copies).

**Principle 9: Business should encourage the development and diffusion of environmentally friendly technologies.**

**Commitment**

Aequator stands committed to encouraging the development and diffusion of environment-friendly technologies.

Aequator shall therefore endeavour to adopt safe and environment-friendly methods of advisory and commits itself to total compliance of all applicable environmental laws.

Aequator will maintain office equipment in excellent condition to ensure minimum impact of their operation on health and environment.

**Actions and performance during the year 2018**

- Public transport is promoted when employees travel large distances and especially to the governmental capital of the Netherlands, the Hague.
- Printers are selected (and maintained) according to the latest environmental standards.
- Aequator continues to adhere to Sustainable Procurement for all government projects (Duurzaam Inkopen).

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

**Commitment**

Aequator stands committed to eliminating corruption from all aspects of its functions.

**Systems**

- Surprise and regular checks are carried out of all sensitive functions of work.
- For their monthly declarations, employees are required to submit full details, i.e. receipts.
- Independent and qualified Registered Accountants perform legal checks on the book keeping of our larger projects.

**Actions and performance during the year 2018**

No specific actions were taken.

### **2.3 Discription of key impacts, risks and opportunities**

Please refer to 2.1 above

### **2.4 Organization profile**

The full name of our organization is Aequator Groen & Ruimte bv. In this report the company's name will often be abbreviated as "Aequator".

We are an advisory firm, active in the market of governments (national, regional and local) and land owners/land users of the rural parts of the Netherlands. Our services and produce are advisory reports, process advice and the like. In 2013, all our services were sold under the label / brand of "Aequator".

We are a commercial company, with limited liability (BV), under Dutch law. As of 31 December 2016, the company is owned by 3 shareholders, being 2 employees and 1 former employee, who is contracted under a management contract. Our office locations remain in Harderwijk (c/o Postbox 1171, Harderwijk, NL-3840 BD) and Ede ((Bovenbuurtweg 27, Ede, NL-6727 XA).

Aequator is, as for now, active in the Netherlands only.

Our markets are remain governments (national ministries, regional provinces, local municipalities), water boards, organizations that own and manage the Dutch natural areas, private land owners, farmers, drinking water companies and other advisory firms.

### **3 GOVERNANCE, COMMITMENTS AND ENGAGEMENT**

#### 3.1 Governance structure of the organization

The company is directed by the Management Team (MT), consisting of the director and the office manager. The Board of Shareholders controls the MT.

3.2 Since December, 2016, the Board of Shareholders consists of 3 persons, all of them working for Aequator, either directly or through a management contract. The chairman of the Board of Shareholders is Mr. Ruud Mantingh. The board of directors consists of Ruud Mantingh and Peter Sloot.

3.4 Several mechanisms exist for shareholders to provide recommendations or directions to the Board. Important decisions have to be taken unanimously (the list of 'important' decisions is part of the Shareholders Agreement); others require a majority of more than 75% (also listed in the Shareholders Agreement). By Dutch law, a company the size of Aequator does not require an Ondernemingsraad (OR) or Working Council to represent its employees in dealing with the Management Team or Board of Shareholders. Personal contacts are frequent and open and most managerial information on turn over, costs and benefits are openly communicated with all employees. Only information regarded as private (salaries, health related topics and so forth) and/or confidential is excluded from this rule.

## 4 REPORT PARAMETERS

4.1 The reporting period is the calendar year of 2018.

4.2 This is the eleventh Aequator report to the GRI/Global Compact standards.

4.3 Our intention is the report annually.

4.4 Questions on this report may be directed to Peter Slood, director, [pslood@aequator.nl](mailto:pslood@aequator.nl) or [www.aequator.nl](http://www.aequator.nl).

4.5 Scope of this report is Aequator Groen & Ruimte, active in the Netherlands.

4.8 Aequator has no joint ventures, no subsidiaries and no leased facilities. Outsourced operations are Finance, Personnel (salaries, pensions, et cetera) and IT.

4.10 NA

4.11 There are no changes in scope, limitations or measuring methods compared to earlier reports.

## 5 GOVERNANCE, COMMITMENTS AND ENGAGEMENT

5.14 The list of stakeholders engaged in our company and its activities is:

1. employees, their families, other workers and their trade unions;
2. our customers (75% public, 25% private);
3. our customers' clientèle', in specific: land users in the rural areas (for agriculture, nature, recreation etc);
4. shareholders and providers of capital;
5. suppliers;
6. neighbouring s companies sharing the same building facilities;
7. civil society.

5.15 The identification and selection of stakeholders for possible engagement is an active part of Aequator 's working processes. Employees (group 1) are contacted for advisory matters and social company affairs (such as Christmas dinner parties and so forth); our customers (group 2) are an important and obvious group (of demanding and paying entities); the third group is much broader (some 50% of the Dutch population) and less easily contacted and, hence, less frequently approached (only on a project scale). Shareholders are employees (see group 1); suppliers are not specifically engaged; with fellow companies, sharing office facilities (entrances, hallways, toilets etc) we engage on an incidental manner and with group 7, the civil society as a whole we correspond only through mass media .