# SUSTAINABILITY REPORT USS GROUP AB



USS Group Sustainability Report provides an overview of our organization's commitment to corporate sustainability and environmental and social responsibility.

In alignment with our sustainability goals and core values, we collaborate with environmentally conscious partners, commit to employee welfare, and strengthen our dedication to advancing environmental initiatives.

We invite you to explore our sustainability efforts and progress. In collaboration, we are laying a groundwork for a future where environmental consciousness guarantees a better tomorrow for the next generations.



UNITED SHIPPING SERVICES

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## 01 Introduction and our CEO perspective

At USS United Shipping Services, we stand at the frontline of the Liner Shipping Agency business and Logistics, as an independent Pan-European Holding Company engaged in global transportation.

Our journey has been defined by a constant commitment to delivering unparalleled services, while upholding the highest standards of quality, competitiveness, and, above all, integrity.

Our primary goal remains to achieve profitability, while ensuring that every transport solution we provide to our valued customers and partners, is not just competitive, but also with a quality that sets us apart.

Yet, our ambitions extend far beyond financial success, as we take immense pride in conducting our operations with thoughtful respect for the society and the environment, recognizing that our business is strongly connected with the well-being of both.

As a company, we encourage all our colleagues to strive for greatness, to push the boundaries of what is possible, and to constantly seek improvement in all facets of our work. In this pursuit, we foster an environment, where excellence is not just a goal, but a way of life.

We understand the demands of the high-paced Shipping and Logistics industry and acknowledge that a joyful work environment is pivotal to our collective success. Our aim is to create an atmosphere within our company that feels like family, a place where each member feels proud to be a part of something bigger, and where every voice is heard and valued.

Corporate Sustainability has become increasingly important for our company, and we are committed to not only talking about sustainability, but actively integrating it into our corporate DNA.

We are committed to foster collaboration and partnerships with environmentally conscious suppliers and customers. As an example, by prioritizing the promotion of eco-friendly transport solutions to our customers and partners, we take part in reducing the global carbon footprint.

Together, we are setting a course that not only ensures our success, but also contributes positively to the world around us.

Let us continue to work hand in hand, driven by our shared values, to build a future that is profitable, sustainable, inclusive, and filled with pride, in what we achieve as a united team.

Henrik R. Mejlstrup, CEO

#### USS at a glance

USS United Shipping Services AB is a leading Pan-European holding company, engaged in the global transportation industry within the segments of maritime shipping agency, freight forwarding, and logistics services.

Since its inception in 2001 in Scandinavia, the group has pursued dynamic organic growth paired with successful acquisitions, gradually expanding its regional coverage, and increasing the scale of activity.

Today, USS United Shipping Services AB owns and actively manages a range of transportation companies in the region of Northern Europe, Central Europe, the Baltic Sea countries, and the Adriatic region.

The subsidiary companies of USS Group are operating under dedicated brands, enhancing their regional identity within the segments of liner shipping agency, logistics, and freight forwarding. High attention to service quality, reliability, and focus on customer satisfaction have throughout the years contributed to their excellent reputation, positioning them as leading market players within their focus areas.

USS Group, as a parent company, provides corporate management services, efficient organisational structure, finance, and IT expertise to all its subsidiaries.

The USS Group's own Shared Services Centre UNILOG, located in Estonia, plays an important role in optimising various repetitive working processes for the subsidiaries of USS Group of companies and external customers.

Streamlined procedures, together with economies of scale, contribute to measurable efficiency benefits and compliance to the highest quality standards.

With our entrepreneurial capabilities and venture experiences, USS Group is geared to capitalise on business opportunities in our regions and beyond.





Our operative identity consists of two main lines of activities, Liner Agencies and Logistics. By taking the advantage from economy of scales, the USS Group has centralized the administrative and other support functions in a Shared Service Centre.

In this state-of-the-art set-up, the operative entities will have the liberty to maximize their resources in the operative and commercial areas of the business, whilst at the same time, relying on an inhouse team of experts that will ensure compliance towards authorities, rules and regulations both national and directly form the EU.

# **Our Mission**



The preferred long-term partner, supporting the global supply chain of our customers with sustainable, innovative, competitive, and quality logistics solutions, based on various modes of transport.

# **Our Vision**



Together, we share the same vison of who we are and where we want to be, and consequently, the USS Group of companies aim to be recognized as:

"A leading independent provider of services within shipping and logistics, connecting people, businesses and communities across continents, through sustainable and environmentfriendly solutions."

# **Our Values**



Trust Compassion Excellence Integrity Responsibility

#### Our word is our bond.

We care for our colleagues, fostering an environment of support and respect. Every day we strive to be better. We comply to legal and ethical rules. We care for the society and for the environment.

# Our mindset and business

Integrity stands at the core of our values. We are committed to maintaining the trust of our stakeholders, including adherence to USS Code of Conduct, anti-corruption policies and the protection of data and privacy.

The USS Group policy strictly prohibits anti-competitive practices, which include price-fixing, market manipulation, unfair competition, and any actions that hinder fair competition or limit market access for other enterprises. Employees must not engage in agreements with competitors that violate these principles, including price collusion, market division, or imposing unfair conditions on commercial partners.

Anti-corruption is not just a policy but a fundamental aspect of our organizational DNA. We firmly believe that a corruption-free environment is essential for sustainable business practices and the well-being of our stakeholders. Our policies and procedures are designed to ensure that every action taken within our organization aligns with the principles of fairness and honesty. We do not tolerate any form of bribery or corruption.

Our employees are obliged and dedicated to respecting and protecting the confidentiality of information belonging to USS United Shipping Services, its subsidiaries, clients, suppliers, and other business partners.

USS being an international European holding company in the transportation and logistics industry, to conduct our daily business, we exchange data on regular basis, including personal data. All data is transferred in strict adherence to local laws and the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).



# 02 The USS view on sustainability

As a Pan-European holding company deeply rooted in maritime shipping agency, freight forwarding, and logistics services, we understand the responsibility that comes with our expansive reach. Sustainability, in our view, is not a checkbox but a commitment we carry in our everyday decisions and actions.



We strive to provide greener and more efficient transport solutions through meticulous planning, the integration of the latest technologies and innovative approaches. In doing so, we are not just adapting to change; we are committed to leading positive change within the transportation industry.

Responsible business goes hand in hand with ethical practices. Ethical sourcing, fair labour practices, and transparent business dealings are not just ideals for us - they are non-negotiable standards.

At USS Group, sustainability encompasses a dual commitment to social impact and community engagement. Internally, we foster inclusion and diversity and commit to health and safety initiatives. Externally, building lasting and meaningful partnerships and collaborations is part of our strategic and holistic approach. We believe and know that together we will go further and achieve goals faster.

By intertwining social impact within our organization and active community engagement, we strive to be a positive force for sustainable change, recognizing that our responsibility extends far beyond logistical operations.



# Contributing to common sustainability goals

In the context of the UN sustainability goals, the impact from our activities are centred around the following areas in the UN Sustainability structure. By supporting and contributing to these goals we will, in our way, contribute to a better and more sustainable use of the resources handed to us to our input and output.



# Goal 8: Sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all

Providing our youth the best opportunity to transition to a decent job calls for investing in education and training of the highest possible quality, providing youth with skills that match labour market demands, giving them access to social protection and basic services regardless of their contract type, as well as levelling the playing field so that all aspiring youth can attain productive employment regardless of their gender, income level or socio-economic background.

Implementing adequate health and safety measures and promoting supportive working environments are fundamental to protecting the safety of workers, especially relevant for health workers and those providing essential services.

Ensuring the well-being, diversity, and inclusion of employees in office activities is crucial for fostering a supportive and productive workplace environment.

#### Goal 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries

We cannot achieve sustainable development and make the planet better for all if people are excluded from the chance for a better life. Good workplace is where we can contribute to this goal as well as reaching out to the local communities that surrounds us.

Inequalities based on income, sex, age, disability, sexual orientation, race, class, ethnicity, religion and opportunity continue to persist across the world. Inequality threatens long-term social and economic development, harms poverty reduction and destroys people's sense of fulfilment and self-worth. This, in turn, can breed crime, disease and environmental degradation.

It is important to empower and promote inclusive social and economic growth. We can ensure equal opportunity and reduce inequalities of income if we eliminate discriminatory laws, policies and practices.

#### Goal 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns

It's in businesses' interest to find new solutions that enable sustainable consumption and production patterns. A better understanding of environmental and social impacts of products and services is needed, both of product life cycles and how these are affected by use within lifestyles. With this in mind, we need to focus on two key aspects:

- 1. Reducing the waste.
- 2. Exercising and promoting a sustainable option whenever possible both when purchasing and when offering products and services.

We need to ensure not to throw away food and reduce the consumption of plastic one of the main pollutants of the ocean. Carrying a reusable bag, refusing to use plastic straws, and recycling plastic bottles are good ways to do your part every day.

Making informed purchases also helps. By buying from sustainable and local sources you can make a difference as well as exercising pressure on businesses to adopt sustainable practices.

It is important to develop products and services to include sustainability as a natural element of what is offered. Additionally, this involves procuring more environmentally friendly options.

Enhancing awareness and providing knowledge on environmental impact to our employees and clients, in combination with the development of Policy procedures and practices, as well as communicating our sustainability expectations to our suppliers are all means within our reach to make contributions to more efficient use of our resources.

#### Goal 13: Combat climate change and its impacts

To address climate change, we must vastly raise our ambition at all levels. Much is happening around the world – investments in renewable energy have soared. But more needs to be done. The world must transform its energy, industry, transport, food, agriculture and forestry systems to ensure that we can limit global temperature rise to well below 2°C, maybe even 1.5°C. In December 2015, the world took a significant first step by adopting the Paris Agreement, in which all countries committed to take action to address climate change. However, more actions are critically needed in order to meet the targets.

Businesses and investors need to ensure emissions are lowered, not just because it is the right thing to do, but because it makes economic and business sense as well. Developing own products, as well as the way of running business, will contribute to the conservation and improvements of our environment.

# Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources

Healthy oceans and seas are essential to human existence and life on Earth. The ocean is our planet's life support and regulate the global climate system. It is the world's largest ecosystem, home to nearly a million known species and containing vast untapped potential for scientific discovery.

Oceans and fisheries continue to support the global population's economic, social and environmental needs. Despite the critical importance of conserving oceans, decades of irresponsible exploitation have led to an alarming level of degradation.





### 03 Our overall sustainability work

The USS group has dealt with sustainability in its individual elements throughout our history of existence - initially with another structure and today's definition(s) that emerge in the current EU directives and future demands of reporting. Therefore, today we have, rather than a single structured concept, a variation of philosophies and principles of business, cost perspectives and long term focus in our strategies.

Now, as these days the sustainability is being subject to stricter regulation on reporting from the EU on one side but also our partners on the other, we are starting the work on how to structure and formalize what has been an integrated part of our way to do business for decades.

This report will be the first in a series of many, ensuring a sustainable existence and way of business in a continuous process of constant adaptation to our environment and our surroundings.

#### **Business**



Our success is built on accountability. USS is committed to complying with all applicable laws and regulations relating to government (public procurement) contracts and services and to ensuring that its reports, certifications, and declarations to government officials are accurate and complete and that any deviations from contract requirements are properly approved.

Our solid internal and external processes throughout the organization and all management levels are to secure the accountability of our activities. We are dedicated to incorporating ESG (Environmental, Social, Governance) principles into our management structures and day-to-day operations and by that, contribute to the global sustainability goals and minimize our negative impact on our surroundings. We are working on Standards to document our progress and achievements. Oversight and the responsibility for these practices is provided by the Corporate Management Team (CMT).

#### **Employees**

Impact on:



#### Our demographics

All in all, the USS group counted 300 full-time employments in 2023: Liner activities employ the largest part of our human resources (114 FTEs), followed by Logistics (97FTEs) and Shared Service Centre and support functions (89 FTEs).

The USS group has seen a reduction of staff in 2023 compared to previous years, however demographically the organization has had a stable distribution the past three years with only minor variations.







AGEGROUP (AVG 40)



YEARS OF EMPLOYMENT (AVG 6)



How we treat our own staff and colleagues is the most important contribution we can show for. To be an example to follow. We can also require from our collaborators and suppliers that they also uphold standards of compliance to ensure proper conditions and equality for people within our own sphere of influence. The compliance to labour market regulations, human rights, equal opportunity, health and safety, non-discrimination, and fair conditions for our own staff, as well as for the workers of our suppliers is a focal point.

We do have USS Code of Conduct that safeguards these issues. We are reporting on the equal pay for equal work status on corporate level. Furthermore, we are in the process of developing and implementing systems and software to investigate and monitor the conditions related to our suppliers' employees in line with the EU Transparency act requirements.

#### Equal pay

USS Group is dedicated to fostering an environment where every individual is valued for their contributions regardless of gender.

Since we started measuring Equal Pay Index in 2021, we have witnessed a steady upward trajectory, reflecting our dedication to close the gender pay gap. Starting from 87.4% in 2021, our index has risen to the current enhanced level of 90.3%.

#### EQUAL PAY INDEX

90.3%

While our global measure stands at 90.3%, it is essential to acknowledge the existence of disparities within our business segments, regions, countries, and even job categories.

The Equal Pay Index measured in our five geographical regions varies between 89.6% and 100.1%. Our ambition is to reach an Equal Pay Index of 100.0% within each geographical region, in their corresponding business segments.

Achieving equality requires continuous effort, but through targeted initiatives and continuous dialogue, we are determined to narrow the gaps further.



#### Appraisal talks

In 2023, the USS Group introduced a global programme for mutual evaluation and dialogue between employer and employee, known as Appraisal interviews. Multiple companies already had implemented the use of this tool for mutual feedback, conversation and motivation. With this initiative, we have ensured that all our employees, as our most important resource, are seen and heard in all sections and fragments of our organization.

#### Trainee programmes

In several of our countries we have trainee programmes and collaboration with either education institutions or social security to provide training and opportunities for the participants to enhance their possibilities to achieve permanent jobs. National regulations and practices make it difficult to create uniform programmes. In 2023, we have had trainee initiatives in Denmark, Finland, Norway, Poland Slovenia and Sweden.

A total of 15 trainees have had training in our USS Group of companies and, in addition to this, we have employed 25 low entry positions (assistants) to start up professional careers. All in all, approximately 12% of our employment capacity is dedicated to people starting up their professional careers.

#### Specifically, we work to achieve:

- Our equal pay index to reach 100 by 2028.
- Increase the proportion of female managers to reach 45% by 2028
- Expand trainee programmes to include more USS countries where possible.

#### Environment

# Impact on:



Our focus on the environment starts with the impact from our activities on air pollution. Providing specific information and educating our own organization as well as serving our clients' needs for input is the base for the creation on our counter measures, environmental policies and programmes.

Being a commercial actor and not in direct contact with the sea as a result of our activities, our contribution will be centred around reduction of our use of plastic (recycling greater part) and minimizing pollution to be flushed out in the sea as spill water. We will seek to find and develop environmental initiatives we can collaborate with the goal to improve and support the conservation and regeneration of our seas and oceans.

#### CO<sub>2</sub> emissions

We already offer a wide range of CO<sub>2</sub> calculators related to the individual shipments. The calculators are developed and updated by the principals of our Liner Agencies.

Related to forwarding activities, our Transport Management System (TMS) is designed to assist customers, to visualize and aggregate the CO<sub>2</sub> impact, based on the choice of routing, distances, and mode of transport. This is currently offered as an on-demand feature and that we are progressively developing and improving with the aim of providing standard impact reports to our clients in the future.

#### **Company cars**

Our pool of company cars has been dominated by fossil fuel driven cars. We have set our minds to change that and want to remove all emission vehicles from our fleet.

During 2023, we replaced 20% of the fossil fueled cars with greener options. With that, by the end of 2023, our car fleet consists of 46% of cars with alternative to exclusively fossil fuel.



The USS Group has implemented a company car renewal policy, stipulating that any car replacement or new acquisition must be either electric (zero-emission) or hybrid. Our long-term goal is to transition the entire company car fleet to exclusively zero-emission vehicles through the natural renewal process of phasing out fossil fuel and hybrid models.



#### USS GROUP COMPANY CARS BY FUEL TYPE

#### **Company travels**

USS Group has over several years focused on minimizing company travels, and for all practicalities and to the extent possible, substituting travels with Video conferences and TEAMS meetings. We have had a travel policy since before the pandemic, and by that, shown moderation and reduction in travel costs and consequently reduced our environmental impact.

#### Alternative energy sources

As a general practice, USS Group is leasing office space in all countries where present. The exception to the rule is our premises in Gdynia where we own the building where our offices are located. Here we have installed solar panels that generate electricity for our proper use, and in the case of excess production, it is included and sold to the public electricity grid. The solar panels are installed on the roof of our building and the production capacity is 9,43 KWh. 2023 has been the first full year of production, and we generated a total of 23,7234 MWh, equivalent to a saving of 9299,38 kg  $CO_2$  or the equivalent of planting 277,56 trees.

Environment issues consists of far more than CO<sub>2</sub> pollution. The choice and the use of resources is an important part of our impact on the environment.

#### Office waste

The European Union has set goals for environmental achievements. The EU member states initiate their measures and create infrastructure at individual pace and content.

As a Pan-European group, we must adapt to the national approaches. If waste is not recycled in a given area, there will be no effect in separating and classifying office waste. We have categorised our recycling initiatives into three levels.

- i) Full recycling programmes[1]ii) Basic recycling programmes[2]
- iii) No recycling activities[3].





Our goal is to reduce the "No recycling" offices to a minimum and boost the Full recycling programme participants to a maximum.

[1] Represents a wide range of waste classification, typically paper, plastic electrical equipment, biowaste, glass/metals, toners, batteries, light sources, and the logistics to deposit and recycle of each category.
[2] Separates and recycles basic categories of office waste: one to three categories such as paper, toner and/or batteries.
[3] All kind of office waste is dispatched together without any recycling.





# ICT (Information and Communication Technology) equipment

ICT equipment is the category of tools we mainly apply in all our activities. Every employee has a dedicated computer or laptop, PC Screens, mobile phones, printers, scanners etc. Servers are in decline as we have migrated to the cloud.

Using leasing companies as main provider for our computer park[1], equipment is automatically returned to the leasing company who remains with the responsibility of recycling. However, in many cases we decide to buy out a fully leased equipment and prolong the life span of the equipment. This alone has an environmental effect as the turnover rate of our computer park is reduced.

Every prolonging of one year represents a 33% saving in the environmental effect per computer, calculated on a 3-year lease period, which is the norm for our computers. In our smaller representations, we buy equipment directly; hence, we have environmental responsibility for recycling of ICT equipment at a local level. As a result, we do have an equipment park that is our responsibility to recycle and dispatch in a sustainable manner.

There is no global policy as of yet on how to recycle the ICT equipment, however there are individual arrangements depending on national requirements. In 2024, we aim to make a global policy on the registration of computer park, and the principles for its life span. As of today (2023), we have individual national practices:

- Agreements and routines to deliver used equipment to recycling points.
- Agreements with 2nd hand actors for the purchase and dismantling / recycling of equipment.
- Collaboration with NGOs for donation of used / phased out equipment.

These practices and arrangements shall be aligned and structured into a group policy and combined with a corporate register of equipment renewal / acquisitions, enabling to quantify the environmental effect of our structure and actions.

USS shall report on the 2025 figures for the first time; hence our setup will be ready within the termination of 2025. However, our ambition is to have the setup ready well ahead of this point in time.



# Society and Social responsibility



We are developing the Corporate Sustainability Reporting structure for the entire group, in order to comply with the EU Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD) according to the established time schedule.

The compliance of labour market regulations, human rights, equal opportunity, health and safety for our own staff, as well as for the workers of our suppliers, is a focal point.

We do have USS Code of Conduct that safeguards these issues. We are making equal pay for equal work analysis and reporting on corporate level to the Swedish authorities – and taking our findings into account in our salary adjustments. Furthermore, we are in the process of developing and implementing systems and software to investigate and monitor the conditions related to our suppliers' workers according to the EU Transparency act.

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#### Increased employee awareness

Introducing new policies, supplier demands and above all, impact reporting to our employees, will raise awareness on how to do business in a more sustainable way. Hence, promoting the awareness of sustainability will have effects not only in a work related situations but also in employees' private life.

#### Enhanced customer education

We are working on solutions to help our clients make informed choices, by offering CO<sub>2</sub> calculators for individual shipments, and somewhat further ahead also being able to provide periodic reports in collaboration with our principals and suppliers of services. We believe raising awareness and providing environmental friendlier alternatives (either as standard products or as options) will provide results and change behaviour.



Within the USS group, we already have taken initiatives in interacting with local communities, for example in the form of sponsorships to sport and youth activities. Our intension is to build support and encourage our employees', our clients or our suppliers' enhanced social engagement.

#### Strategic environmental partnerships

In the near future, we will seek for actors with environmental and social initiatives to collaborate with. Theoretically, we can report on actions that are "equivalent to" the planting of a given number of trees or cleaning up a given length of a beach. All such initiatives are good, and we should work relentlessly to achieve our "virtual forest or plastic free beach". In addition to that, if we can contribute to the actual planting of trees or regeneration of marine sources, such as kelp and seaweed forests or natural reefs, the effect will accumulate and multiply every year.

Implementing environmental initiatives to our appreciation system within the organization and maybe also extending to 3rd parties, we will make a lasting effect to compensate for some of our impact on the environment by establishing the USS Forest - be that above or below sea level.



# 04 Facing forward

We are preparing for the future and want it to be a better one. The coming year we will put our minds to establish a sustainability strategy and implement a reporting system with the structural changes this will imply. Step by step, we will evaluate our efforts and results, for it to become a natural part of our evolution and way of doing business.



From where we stand today, we will focus on the following areas of action:

#### 1. Environmental Impact Aspect:

- Emissions and energy consumption associated with office activities, port transportation, and feeder services.
- Policies and practices for minimizing the environmental footprint in these areas.

#### 2. Social Responsibility

- Employee well-being, diversity, and inclusion in office activities.
- Labor practices, community impact, and social engagement in port transportation and feeder services.

#### 3. Supply Chain Transparency

- Disclosure of supply chain practices, including subcontracting relationships in port transportation and feeder services.
- Assessment of environmental and social risks within the supply chain.
- 4. Regulatory Compliance
  - Adherence to relevant regulations in all aspects of operations, with a specific focus on environmental and social standards.

#### 5. Stakeholder engagement

 Reporting on engagement with stakeholders, including employees, local communities, and suppliers, in the context of office activities and subcontracted services.

#### 6. Continuous Improvement

• Reporting on mechanisms in place for continuous improvement in environmental and social performance.

We thrive in doing business, serving our clients and transporting goods around the world. We take the challenge to evolve our business with a stronger sustainability consciousness and we are looking forward to the next years report, where we can tell you about our achievements and new goals.

