

Bringing the Nordics out into the world



Vestre manufactures high-quality urban furniture and receives a great deal of interest in Nordic design and sustainability in the export markets. This makes it obvious to use the Nordic Swan Ecolabel in its marketing activities, including in countries like the USA and Germany.

Vestre is a company that has a long tradition of thinking holistically. Not content to simply make tables and benches for public spaces, Vestre has a vision of improving the quality of life in our cities – where people have good access to high-quality meeting places that contribute towards inclusive neighbourhoods and communities.

Vestre's ambition is to be recognised as the world's most sustainable furniture manufacturer. To achieve this, it must be able to communicate that the products meet ambitious require-

” The demand for sustainability is also increasing outside the Nordic region, and there is a need for clear certifications that make it easy for buyers to choose the right product. The goal must be to have such good standards that a buyer in the USA or Asia can easily understand what it means when a product is certified with the Nordic Ecolabel.”

Stefan Tjust, CEO of Vestre

ments for climate impact, resource consumption and chemicals. What's more, they are adapted to the transition to a more circular economy, and that they are of high quality.

Easier to communicate environmental standards

”Producing as sustainably as possible has always been important to us, but

we also wanted to be able to show a standard for what is considered as more environmentally friendly. That's why we started certifying the products with the Nordic Swan Ecolabel. It was also important to us that the Nordic Swan Ecolabel has a life cycle perspective. We want to make it easier for buyers to own things that last a long time. I think that a good



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certification makes it easier, both for the buyers and the manufacturers. We don't want to have myriads of different certifications. It's much better to have a gold standard that everyone relates to," says Øyvind Bjørnstad, Strategy and Sustainability Manager at Vestre.

"The strength of the Nordic Swan Ecolabel is that you can compare it with other brands globally, because it is a type 1 ecolabel. While there is a high level of awareness for the Nordic Swan Ecolabel throughout Scandinavia, the label is not so well-known in countries like the USA and Germany, so it's important for us to provide people with references that they understand. For example, in Germany we can say that the Nordic Swan Ecolabel is equivalent to Blaue Engel. There is a lot of confusion about what means what and what actually is environmentally friendly, and being able to show a standard everyone understands, such as another type 1 label, is the greatest strength," says Bjørnstad.

Greater control of your own value chain

Vestre has recently opened a brand new factory, The Plus, a 7,000 m² building with a Passive House Standard in Magnor close to the Swedish border. With The Plus, Vestre wants to show that it is the world's most environmentally friendly furniture factory, that it is possible to compete globally from Scandinavia and to help inspire everyone to participate in the green transition. When we ask what effect Nordic Ecolabelling has had on Vestre, Bjørnstad replies:

"One of our goals is to be recognised as the world's most sustainable furniture manufacturer. To achieve this, it



is extremely important to have control of your own value chain. We had a previous in-house production rate of 50%, and now we've managed to go over 90%. This gives us greater control over our sustainability ambitions and how efficient we are. We think long-term at Vestre. For example, how can we ensure that we continue to meet the Nordic Swan Ecolabel requirements as they become even stricter? This makes it vital that we remain at the forefront of the production process," says Bjørnstad.

Reusing materials

The circular economy, where we use resources many times instead of throwing things away, has become something of a buzzword in these times. While Vestre meets the Nordic Swan Ecolabel's requirements for the use of recycled materials, they have also experienced a shortage of recycled materials on the market. This led the company to look into the idea of getting its products back after a long period in use, in order to disassemble them and reuse the materials in other Vestre products. In this way, Vestre en-

sure they have all the information they need about the used materials, which can often be a major challenge.

Vestre also takes urban furniture back to the factory after many years of use and restores them so that they can have a new life and be put into new projects.

Climate at the core of the business

The climate crisis has caused many people to chase after the term 'climate neutral'. But even though the commitment is there, Bjørnstad is sometimes unsure about how deep it actually sticks.

"We buy carbon offsets today, but the goal for us – as well as for the rest of the world – is naturally to have a zero-emission society. That's why we are working hard at how we can decarbonise our value chain as quickly as possible. We need to get past the stage where we only buy quotas and otherwise continue just as before. At Vestre, we not only think about carbon and climate, we are also focused on the environment, biodiversity, social sustainability and the entire value chain. You have to look at it holistically, because everything is connected. It is the core business that must be at the heart of our sustainability," says Bjørnstad.

FACTS ABOUT VESTRE

- Vestre's turnover tops NOK 240 million annually
- Up 75% in the last 5 years
- 70–80% of turnover is from export
- Vestre sells globally to over 30 countries
- 350 product lines are Nordic Ecolabelled