

First-hand...

“In 2022, we achieved an important milestone: 50% of our EBITDA came from international activity”

Aqualia's action is closely associated with sustainable growth and its international expansion responds to the global need for clean water and sanitation and the tailor-made service offered by the company where it operates, to all its clients and users. In recent years, we have achieved a number of milestones in the international arena, making expansion one of the pillars of the company's growth.

2022 has seen major growth in Europe, America and MENA, successfully responding to the specific nature and demands of each region. Has Aqualia consolidated its position as a multinational company?

Without a doubt, and not only because 2022 marks the coming of age of Aqualia's international activity, which dates back to 2005, but because 18 years later, there is cause for celebration having achieved a significant milestone: 50% of our EBITDA comes from international activity.

This achievement has been accomplished thanks to the solid structure we have, with a

track record that legitimises our position in the water sector, a specialisation that means we are a technical point of reference and, of course, an achievement that would not have been possible without our people, from the International area, who now account for 47% of Aqualia's workforce and who boast a tremendous capacity of adaptation. We have been able to expand our local impact through international expansion thanks, undoubtedly, to our powerful dedication to service. And there's no letting up with our commitment, it stays with us at all times: we are committed to a just transition, leaving nobody behind.

Aqualia's 2021-2023 Strategic Sustainability Plan (PESA) entails getting the entire company involved in contributing to the 2030 Agenda. How have you integrated this in the different regions?

The major global challenges (the social gap, climate emergency, and technology) included in the 2030 Agenda and that aim to

contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals are the same for everybody. To this end, despite the fact that each region has its own specific nature, we have been able to relay and standardise the indicators included in our Strategic Sustainability Plan, which measure and quantify our performance in all the regions where we are present. Our international activity not only contributes to the company's EBITDA, but it also contributes to the constant improvement of our performance in the seven lines of our sustainability strategy.

Take the Climate Emergency for example, innovation in water technology and transferring innovations to the operation of our international contracts is a key factor. To this end, we have promoted innovation centres like those in Portugal, the Czech Republic, France, Egypt, and Colombia. The aim of these is to convert our treatment plants into resource recovery plants from the perspective of the circular economy. Although our activity is directly related to SDG 6 (Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and

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sanitation for all), consideration must be given to the fact that it is transversal, to the extent that caring for water contributes to health, social well-being, and economic development.

We also contribute to the social impact and partnerships through public-private partnership projects. Our commitment is reflected in the nature of the contracts that we have developed over the years as part of our international activity. New Cairo (Egypt), El Realito (Mexico), and El Salitre (Colombia) are three case studies developed by PPP for Cities, an organisation that forms part of the International PPP Centre of Excellence programme and is led by the IESE Business School. Furthermore, we have contributed through a variety of strategic communication actions (sectoral and technological summits, collaborations with local media, etc.) that foster much-needed partnerships in our sector.

Looking back to 2022, what international actions would you make particular mention of?

I would emphasise the tireless work of those involved in the implementation of the compliance system in France and Colombia and the agreements reached with partners, both in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. It really is an achievement to be able to say that, at present, 100% of our international activity is governed by the principles of our system. When operating in such diverse countries, having a solid

framework for common action is so important.

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Another of the challenges posed by international expansion has been testing the flexibility of our team and its ability to collaborate. I would like to draw attention to this as it has been key in achieving another milestone: the construction of multidisciplinary work teams to manage the contracts in Saudi Arabia in which fourteen nationalities were involved as well as the agreement of three partners (one European and two Saudis).



To conclude, looking at the company as a global player, what challenges do you see on the horizon for Aqualia?

The context of polycrisis has led to the emergence of deglobalisation or new globalisation, which involves countries reducing foreign dependency and reorienting value chains; this has the potential to erode confidence in sustainability and is something we will have to manage in the near future.

We believe that there is no better solution for 21st century society than the transition towards a more sustainable economic model, which is key to our long-term survival. And we believe that we move towards this model hand in hand. To achieve this, we aim to be more ambitious when it comes to the digitalisation and integration of systems in our services. Aqualia Live is already in place, but we must continue working on it to offer a better and more efficient service for the management of the end-to-end water cycle each and every day. This is how we have gone about it in France.