

Quo vadis

Jan Van Geet

Interview with CEO of VGP

2020 has been an extraordinary year in every respect. And it has called for an extraordinary effort by every member of the VGP Family to ensure that the company could meet its commitments to its customers. Jan Van Geet talks about the biggest challenges as well as milestones VGP was facing and what he expects for the coming year.

Q The year 2020 is presenting a challenging market environment for many companies due to the Covid-19 pandemic. How did you experience this special situation for VGP?

It is true, this year was exceptional in every respect. First of all, I am very happy that the entire VGP team – I like to call it the VGP family – was fully operational. We had unrestricted access to our central systems and were therefore able to complete numerous projects on schedule over the past months. I am very grateful for this and that is why VGP's business has also developed well despite the pandemic. All construction activities are currently running according to plan.

Q From your customers' perspective what were the biggest challenges?

The measures taken by the governments of the countries where VGP is active to combat the spread of the virus have led to far-reaching restrictions in many sectors of the economy. Some of our tenants have been unexpectedly and severely affected by the loss of their business activities. We have always tried to find flexible solutions together with the affected customers.

Others were suddenly faced with the challenge of using new technologies and automating their processes much more quickly than expected in order to cope with the increased turnover resulting from e-commerce – especially with food. Many customers were forced to work from home, which inevitably led to many more online orders. The demand for storage capacity

has increased enormously, and everything was happening at breakneck speed at the same time.

Q What do you think were the biggest milestones for VGP in 2020?

The year 2020 was marked by many milestones for us. Examples include the start of construction work for a new park in Bratislava and the expansion of our parks in Göttingen, Laatzen and Magdeburg in Germany, Nijmegen in the Netherlands, San Fernando de Henares in Spain, and Braşov in Romania. In addition to the acquisition of great new properties and the opening of future VGP parks, the launch of our new VGP Renewable

Energy Division is of course a real highlight. Many of our customers are facing the challenge of operating more sustainably, but also cost-consciously at the same time. This in turn is expected by their customers, the end consumers. As VGP we want to offer solutions here.

Let's take the area of "green electricity": the roofs of our halls are ideal here. One example is the VGP Park in Parsdorf near Munich, which will house the largest photovoltaic system ever installed on a building in Europe. A total of 12.5 MWp of power will be generated here.

Q How can your customers benefit from this business area in the future, and how important is it to your customers that you integrate sustainability measures into your daily activities?

Ten years ago, it was all about standardised warehouses. Today, however, it is all about an integrated total package. The customer is faced with the ever-increasing demands of new technologies and wants to be able to react quickly and concentrate on his core business. For this reason, as many of his building equipment requirements



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as possible should already be integrated. Automation should be possible, but therefore – and this may come as a surprise to many – more people usually work inside the buildings. Therefore, special foundations, special fire protection, and much more are required. Sustainably generated energy and alternative drive methods for the vehicles are in demand, and fossil fuels are to be replaced. We are thinking about how we can offer our customers hydrogen for their delivery fleet, or geothermal energy for heating and cooling. This trend cannot be stopped. This is the VGP of the future, and we are already working on it today.

The establishment of the VGP Foundation also reflects these sustainability efforts and ambitions. With the VGP Foundation we want to promote nature conservation, support citizens and communities through social projects and preserve Europe’s cultural heritage.

We want to help improve the quality of life in all European regions and municipalities, not just where we operate our logistics and industrial parks. In our foundation work, we can learn a great deal through the exchange with our partners and foundation board members. Through NABU*, for example, we can learn what an enormously valuable ecosystem moorlands are and why they are worth protecting. But we will also continue to be active in education. Investing in the future of socially disadvantaged children is another of the foundation’s goals. Much remains to be done for the future.



Photo © NABU

Conservation program of snow leopard in Tajikistan



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