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Sustainability Strategy & Organization

As a media and technology company, we have a particular social responsibility toward our internal and external stakeholders. We want to avoid any negative impact on the environment or society and to contribute to sustainable development with our products and partners. Since the start of the 1990s, we have particularly championed the topic of environmental sustainability — see our [Sustainability Roadmap](#).

With the opening of “a_new chapter,” in 2020 Axel Springer initiated a far-reaching strategic process to anchor sustainability in the corporate strategy. The core linchpin is the Sustainability Journey, with the four associated strategic sustainability fields of action at Axel Springer, which were developed in discussion with the CSR officers of the subsidiaries and the group departments: Environment, Governance, People and Products & Services. In addition to our activities’ footprint, our strategy thus also focuses on our portfolio’s “brain print.”

"Axel Springer can make a significant contribution to a more sustainable world. We will exploit this potential by integrating sustainability in the departments and units."

Marcus Werner Blank, Head of Sustainability

Sustainability management

In 2019, we defined sustainability as an official corporate value and established a sustainability management system with the sustainability team, to which additional staff members have been added. This team has been set up as a Group executive department in the Chairman and CEO’s area. The Director of Corporate Communications and Sustainability is responsible for it. The Head of Sustainability at Axel Springer SE is in regular contact with the subsidiaries and group departments’ CSR offices and the sustainability ambassadors. These more than 50 people have acted as ambassadors for sustainability in their companies or departments since the end of 2020 and have so far particularly advanced the calculation and reduction of CO₂ emissions.

In addition, we actively involve additional employees in the topic: For example, the Axel Springer crowd campaign on the topic of sustainability was run in 2019. As part of this, employees submitted more than 70 ideas. These were shared across the business and in some cases implemented. In order to make this exchange of ideas permanent, the Axel Springer Sustainability Community was created — a group-wide network for all those interested and committed to sustainability, which currently has almost 200 members.

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We use the IntegrityNext platform for this, which provides automated social media monitoring of suppliers and collects self-assessments — including on the topic of human rights. The social media monitoring sifts through various sources such as Twitter or news from the media or NGOs.

If there are negative reports, we receive a warning and can begin appropriate measures. In the 2020 reporting year, we collected self-disclosures from 149 suppliers through IntegrityNext. No critical findings in the area of human and employee rights arose here. We did not perform any audits in the reporting period.

We have set ourselves the objective of developing a strategy for sustainability in purchasing and the supply chain by the end of 2021 and implementing measures derived from this from 2022.

(journalistic) independence

02 Products & Services

We have dedicated ourselves to integrating sustainability more deeply into our core business. This determination is based on our strong belief that we can become a vibrant company with a long-term future only if our products, value chains and business decisions are sustainable and responsible.

Three of the eight key sustainability focal points identified by our materiality analysis involve products & services. These include journalistic independence, diversity in media content as well as data privacy and security.

diversity in media content

sustainability in the business model

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Axel Springer is a leading media and technology company with a focus on digital classified activities and journalism as measured by the revenues that its digital classified business generates and its digital subscriptions. Our digital activities produce more than 70 percent of our revenues. In business terms, the classified business, particularly job and real-estate ads, is the Group's main pillar. In addition, the offerings in the News Media segment consist of a wide portfolio of successful brands, including the BILD and WELT Group in Germany and Insider Inc. in the United States.

(Journalistic) Independence

The independence and integrity of our editorial staffs and all other segments, departments and companies of Axel Springer form the foundation of the work we do each day. As a result, their role in the company was given a high priority in our [materiality analysis](#).

**„We empower free decisions.
Both our editorial staffs and
our classified portals stand
firmly behind this principle.“**

Mathias Döpfner, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer

Journalistic Code of Conduct

The journalists at Axel Springer are keenly aware of the major responsibility that arises from the role that our media, be it content that is presented in print, online, video or any other form, plays in the dissemination of information and the formation of opinions in society. Inde-

pendence is the indispensable element of the work that our journalists do. We have developed a code of conduct for the purpose of promoting journalistic independence. Our Code of Conduct expands on and supplements the ethical principles employed by the media, a set of [guidelines](#) that was developed by the German Media Council in cooperation with press associations and is strongly supported by Axel Springer. Observance of these principles during the work performed by all journalists or by any other employees who support the company's journalistic brands or come in contact with its journalistic activities in any way reinforces the foundation from which Axel Springer can perform its independent and critical journalistic work.

The Code of Conduct addresses a range of issues:

- The separation of advertising from editorial content,
- The independence of reporting from journalists' private and business interests,
- Personal gain,
- Dealings with sources.

Editors in chief are responsible for assuring that our Code of Conduct is observed and applied on the job every day.

Diversity in Media Content

In addition to freedom of the press, diversity in opinion is one of the pillars of a democracy and a free society. We want our media products to reflect the diversity of views found in society. This commitment also facilitates balanced reporting by our journalists. Decisions about journalistic content are made solely by our publications' editorial staffs.

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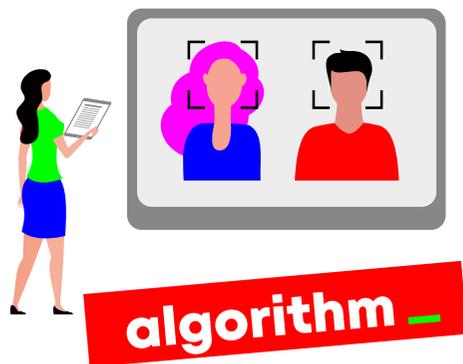
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Equal Voice Initiative

Ringier Axel Springer Media AG Switzerland launched the [EqualVoice-Initiative](#) the end of 2019. With the help of a proprietary semantic algorithm, the percentage of women and men who appear in media reports can be measured. The percentage of men in media content exceeds that of women around the world. The initiative is designed to increase the visibility of women, create more female role models and give an equal voice to women and men.

Analysis of the EqualVoice factor is now being offered as a service to other media companies and for corporate communications purposes. Ringier Axel Springer Poland began [using the EqualVoice factor in 2020](#) as well.



to measure the balance between women and men who appear in media reports

Sustainability in the Business Model

Initiatives of idealo and Ringier Axel Springer Poland

Our idealo subsidiary has taken a range of steps that are designed to make its business activities more sustainable. In its role as a digital shopping and price-comparison platform, idealo helps users make consumer decisions. In the process, idealo provides them with some

helpful assistance: It lists product alternatives that are more sustainable and encourages the reuse of items that are already available. As part of this effort, idealo introduced a filter for used products in 2012 and helped extend the lifecycle of products in the process. Additionally, in 2015, a set of service guidelines was developed and implemented. It developed and implemented a set of service guidelines in 2015. These guidelines prohibit the platform from selling products that conflict with the values of idealo. In 2018, it added another filter that can be used to find products that are more sustainable. These products are selected on the basis of 60 specific sustainability certificates and seals. You will find more information about this topic on [idealos Website](#).

In 2019, our subsidiary Ringier Axel Springer Poland became the first Polish media company to join the "United Nations Global Compact". In doing so, the company committed itself to achieving the 17 global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the U.N. Agenda 2030. The platforms of the company's brands, including ONET, NOIZZ, Ofeminin and Newsweek, report to readers about climate change and initiate activities to promote sustainable development. One example of this work is the [UN ACT NOW campaign started by the ONET brand](#) in 2020. As part of this campaign, ONET informs its users about such things as ways that they can reduce their own carbon footprint.

Data Privacy & Cybersecurity

The relevance of data privacy has been increasing for years now. The same can be said for social and political sensitivity for individual privacy and security vulnerabilities in digital areas as well. As a result, we have made data security and data privacy one of the top priorities of our media services. As part of its efforts to protect our customers' data and comply with data privacy regulations, Axel Springer continuously examines and improves data privacy management and creates standards governing quality. These standards serve as a guarantee for secure, legally compliant usage of our customers' data, facilitate the application of their rights and address in particular their desire to have their data handled confidentially and carefully.

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As part of this work, Axel Springer has intensified its efforts to sensitize all employees about this issue and has continued to expand the required structures and capacities in all parts of the company. It takes a decentralized approach that is supported by a central contact point and support center, the AS Data Privacy Hub. The hub brings together the expertise and experience of all parts of the Group and provides all employees with helpful know-how and best-practice recommendations that they can use to set up and improve their own structures. As part of this decentralized approach, the company has encouraged the development of data privacy structures in individual Group companies. These companies conduct their data privacy management independently. But they also perform them in close collaboration with colleagues in the Group and in consultation with Data & IP in Group Legal. This work includes training opportunities, information about a wide range of data privacy issues, templates, sample contracts and process recommendations. It also extends to an opportunity for employees to share their experiences in the data privacy hub. In doing so, the company ensures that its customers' data and their data subject rights are addressed effectively and as efficiently as possible.

The Group Policy on Data & Privacy (DS policy) and the Principles (CP) also spell out clear areas of responsibility, organizational obligations (DS policy) and minimum standards (CPs). The organizational structures are backed up by two groups of individuals: data privacy officers who work in each individual company and data privacy managers and product owners who work with one another and in consultation with the data privacy legal team and promote efficient data privacy compliance. The Group-wide data privacy-IT system also enables all parts of the company to legally fulfill the documentation and accountability requirements of the GDPR.

Axel Springer also does more than simply assure that the data subject rights of our customers are observed by setting up the appropriate structures and central contact offices. The company also examines and improves the lines of defense it has developed to shield customer data from unauthorized access and loss by tightly integrating data privacy into all systems and processes.

The company's Information Security Management System (ISMS), a structure based on the pertinent industry standard ISO 27001, forms the technical and organizational basis for the confidentiality, availability and integrity of data processing. The ISMS includes the organizational assignment of responsibilities to top management and experts in individual company areas. Other core aspects are the systematic compilation and updating of risks as well as the development and monitoring of related measures to minimize risks.

Corporate digital responsibility

We at Axel Springer are seizing the opportunities offered by digitalization for the good of our company. We also are consciously aware of the environmental, economic and social challenges associated with these opportunities. We intend to responsibly and sustainably carry out our digital transformation and do more than simply meet legal requirements. As part of this commitment, we joined the Corporate Digital Responsibility Initiative of the German Association for the Digital Economy (Bundesverbandes Digitale Wirtschaft e.V. - BVDW). The goal of this initiative is to develop a shared consensus about corporate digital responsibility in the business, political, academic and social communities and to devise practical measures on the basis of this understanding.

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Accounting climate emissions

We performed cross-company carbon accounting for Axel Springer for the first time in 2021. We closely followed the [Greenhouse Gas Protocol](#) (GHG Protocol) with regard to the emission sources included. We have broken down the key emissions categories as follows:



1. Buildings

Emissions related to our buildings



2. Employees

Emissions produced by transportation or remote work



3. Print products

Emissions produced in the value chain of our print products



4. Digital products

Emissions produced by our digital business models



5. Other emissions

Emissions produced in other ways (estimated on the basis of purchasing costs)

emissions by category

We have primary data from emissions categories 1 to 4 for the 2019 and 2020 reporting years. For category 5, we have converted our financial expenses—for example, for office supplies or consultancy services—into an emission figure.

Axel Springer's total emissions decreased by around 13 percent compared to the prior year in 2020. This decrease is firstly due to falling circulation in the print segment, the pandemic-related reduction in employee emissions, and the completion of our new headquarters. Further details and a footprint according to the GHG Protocol can be found in the following sections.

Emissions category [t CO ₂ e]	2019	2020	± [%]
Buildings	35,787	29,942	-16.3
Employees	28,524	13,571	-52.4
Print products	149,655	126,838	-15.2
Digital products	143,008	160,788	12.4
Other emissions	92,867	60,328	-35.0
Total	449,841	391,468	-13.0

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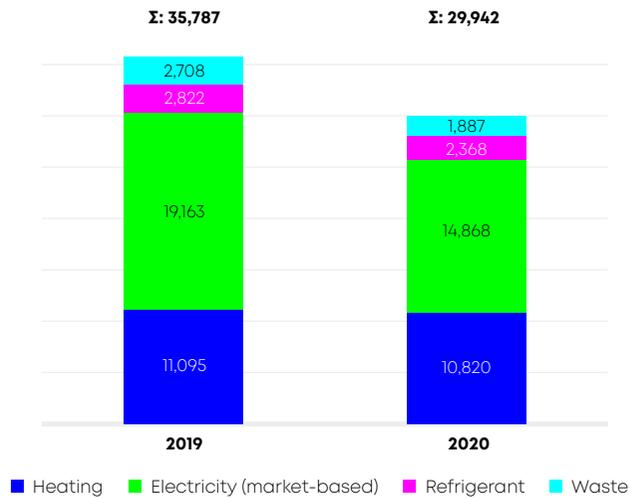
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There continue to be various gaps in the data, which we have filled with conservative estimates to achieve a comprehensive footprint. In the next few years, we will work on increasing the proportion of primary data. For print products, we want to work together with various partners along the value chain to do this. In the area of digital products, we expect progress through the [Responsible Media Forum's DIMPACT project](#).

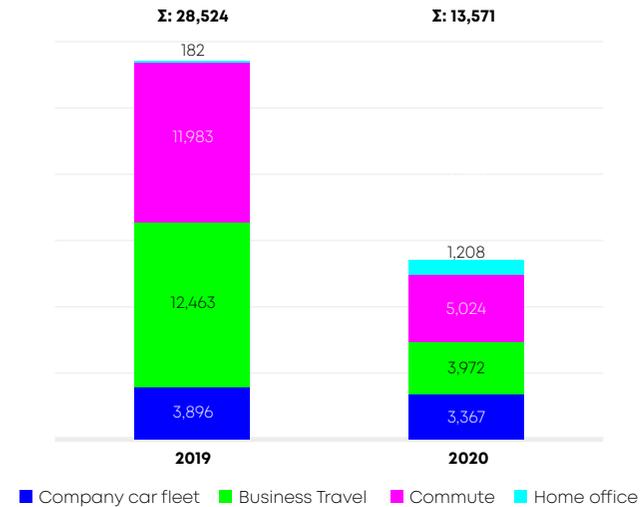
 **Emissions category 1 – buildings**

Electricity and heating make up the largest share in the buildings emissions category. These emissions decreased in the reporting years, partly as a result of the purchase of green gas and green electricity. In addition, emissions from refrigerant use and waste decreased. The Covid-19 pandemic and the associated lower rate of employee office attendance also made a major contribution to this.



 **Emissions category 2 – employees**

In this category, we look at our company fleet, business trips, commuting, and the home office. Whereas business trips and commuting fell significantly due to the coronavirus pandemic, emissions from home offices increased sharply.



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**Emissions category 3 — print products**

As described in the “[Environmental impact of our value chains](#),” our printed products represent a significant proportion of our total emissions.

The emission intensity depends on numerous factors. For our carbon accounting, we worked on the basis of a conservative value of 1.3 metric tons of CO₂ emissions per metric ton of printed newspaper. For the emissions intensity of magazines, our assumption is 1.6 metric tons of CO₂ emissions per metric ton per magazine.

Lifecycle phase [t CO ₂ e]	2019	2020
1. Paper production	102,337	86,730
2. Paper transportation	3,010	2,551
3a. Printed materials (aluminum, ink ...)	8,749	7,417
3b. Printing energy	12,881	10,910
4. Onward transportation	15,153	12,852
5. Disposal	7,525	6,377
Total	149,655	126,838

Our almost 95,000 metric tons of printed products in 2020 caused 126,838 metric tons of CO₂e emissions. The 15.2 percent year-on-year decrease in emissions is due to the cross-sector decline in circulation.

At 68 percent, the majority of printed product emissions arise in paper production. The incomplete primary data situation means that these values are approximations. We are going to improve data situation in the next few years.

**Emissions category 4 — digital products****Digital emissions by lifecycle phase**

Lifecycle phase [metric tons of CO ₂ emissions]	2019	2020	± [%]
1. Overhead IT infrastructure	35,716	37,554	+5.1
2. Data centers	2,413	2,688	+11.4
3. Data transmission	26,001	29,134	+12.1
4. End-user devices	78,878	91,413	+15.9
Total	143,008	160,788	+12.4

As a result of our increased activity in digital products, emissions have increased in all lifecycle phases. Most emissions were caused by electricity consumption by user devices. The largest proportion of this is in the TV product category, as these devices use the most electricity.

Digital product emissions¹

Digital products [metric tons of CO ₂ emissions]	2019	2020	± [%]
Websites (excl. videos)	31,088	34,244	+10.1
Video streaming	3,956	4,539	+14.7
TV	73,919	86,207	+16.6
Total	108,963	124,989	+14.7

¹The difference to the first digital table is because Axel Springer's general IT infrastructure was not individually attributed to the respective products.

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 **Emissions category 5 – other emissions**

In the 2020 reporting year, this category caused 60,328 (PY: 92,867) metric tons of CO₂ emissions. The “real estate” item is of particular note here. This was higher in 2019 on a one-off basis due to the new Axel Springer headquarters at the Berlin site. It was opened during 2020 and there were subsequently no further significant construction activities.

Climate neutral subsidiaries

Six of our subsidiaries are climate neutral after offsetting the CO₂ emissions generated: idealo, Ringier Axel Springer Poland, Bonial, Axel Springer Ideas Engineering, Axel Springer hy und APX. More than 15 percent of Axel Springer’s employees thus already work in climate neutral companies. idealo’s carbon offsetting is particularly progressive. Not only are the company’s emissions offset but so are 50 percent of employees’ personal CO₂ emissions. To do this, they have carried out their own project **rewilding a moor in Lüttwisch**. Ringier Axel Springer Poland also opted for a progressive approach. Its detailed data models cover all Scope 3 emissions. As a result, it takes responsibility for all indirect emissions and reduces or – as a final resort – offsets them completely.

emissions by scope

Our carbon footprint by Scope

The GHG protocol distinguishes between three scopes. At Axel Springer, Scope 1 covers direct emissions by the company fleet, refrigerants, and heating. Scope 2 relates to indirect energy-related emissions from electricity and district heating. All other indirect emissions are assigned to Scope 3. More than 90 percent of total emissions at Axel Springer fall under Scope 3.

Scopes pursuant to the GHG Protocol [t CO ₂ e]	2019	2020	± [%]
Scope 1	7,267	5,158	-29.0
Scope 2 (market-based)	23,291	20,017	-14.1
Scope 3	419,227	366,126	-12.7
Total	449,785	391,301	-13.0

Emissions by Scopes of the GHG Protocol

Within the 15 Scope 3 categories of the GHG Protocol, the “Purchased products & services” category causes a high proportion of emissions. More than a third of this is due to purchased paper. User devices such as TVs and PCs also cause a high proportion of our Scope 3 emissions.

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Scope 3 Emissionen

Scope 3 category [metric tons of CO2 emissions]	2019	2020	± [%]	Comment
3.1 Purchased products & services	280,964	234,761	-16.4	incl. newspaper, IT infrastructure, data transmission
3.2 Capital goods	-	-	-	Printing presses are included under 3.1; there are no other capital goods
3.3 Fuel- & energy-related emissions	6,370	6,163	-3.2	Network infrastructure for electricity, gas, district heating, fuel
3.4 Transportation & distribution (upstream)	3,010	2,551	-15.3	Transportation of paper to the printing plants
3.5 Waste	2,708	1,887	-30.3	Waste generated in printing plants and office buildings
3.6 Business trips	12,463	3,972	-68.1	Business trips by car, train, plane, public transportation
3.7 Employee commuting & home office	12,157	6,150	-49.4	by car, public transportation, bicycle, electricity/heating in the home office
3.8 Leased/rented property, plant, and equipment	-	-	-	Not applicable to Axel Springer
3.9 Transportation & distribution (downstream)	15,153	12,852	-15.2	Newspaper transportation to distribution centers and customers

3.10 Processing of the goods sold	-	-	-	Our products are not further processed
3.11 Use of the products sold	78,878	91,413	+15.9	Electricity consumption when using our digital products
3.12 End of life of the products sold	7,525	6,377	-15.3	Disposal of our newspapers and magazines
3.13 Rented or leased property, plant, and equipment	-	-	-	Not applicable to Axel Springer
3.14 Franchise	-	-	-	Not applicable to Axel Springer
3.15 Investment	-	-	-	Not taken into account, more relevant for investors and banks
Total	419,227	366,126	-12.7	Decrease partly due to decline in circulation and finishing the new headquarters building

Climate strategy objectives

We have set out to:

- adopt a climate strategy for Axel Springer by 2022 — for example, in line with the Science Based Targets initiative (SBTi),
- support at least four more subsidiaries to become climate neutral by 2023, and
- discuss our carbon accounting with other media and tech companies and further develop it as part of an industry-wide working group by 2023.

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Resource Consumption

Waste reduction and recycling are important to us, even though the quantities are often low and no significant hazardous waste is generated at Axel Springer. Responsibility for the conservation of resources is held by the Sustainability team and the relevant departments, such as Building Management, Distribution, Logistics, Food Service or Printing Plants. In many cases, Axel Springer's subsidiaries are only tenants, which is why the landlord has the responsibility for waste. At the German publishing sites, the Group's own Axel Springer Services & Immobilien is in some cases responsible for waste management. There are separate contacts in the printing plants.

Waste generated in tonnes

Segment	2019	2020	± [%]
Classifieds Media	961	499	-48.1
News Media	10,257	8,139	-20.6
Marketing Media	93	104	+12.4
Services & Holding	187	421	+125.2
Total	11,498	9,164	-20.3

As a result of the new headquarters building at the main site, the quantity of waste increased somewhat in the Services & Holding segment. Overall, however, there was a decrease, which is due partly to the coronavirus pandemic and partly to the decrease in print runs in the printing plants.

Minimizing plastic consumption

Plastic is generally used to protect newspapers and magazines when transporting them. The “No Plastic” project, which the Management Board initiated in 2018, led to a reduction. Following an analysis of the quantities used, we were able to reduce the expense by almost 50 percent between 2019 and 2020 through initial measures. For example, the packaging was eliminated for magazine subscriptions. Instead, the recipient addresses are now printed directly on the newspaper or stuck on it in the form of labels. In addition, the “No Plastic” initiative is working on further reducing the use of plastic in food service and real estate management (cleaning) as well. Plastic products for catering events have since already been largely replaced.

Using IT hardware prudently

With a view to our IT hardware, we set great store by the longest possible service life of technical devices. Following the end of the minimum service life, depending on their condition, used devices are refurbished and further used, donated to charitable organizations, or professionally disposed of.

New Axel Springer headquarters: Green dominates

After four years of construction, the new headquarters building in Berlin officially opened. It is located in the heart of the former newspaper district and brings together more than 3,000 employees. The design relies not only on an inspiring aesthetically appealing work landscape but also on an environmental construction method. The building achieved Gold certification in the **German Sustainable Building Council's (DGNB)** certification standard. For example, mainly recyclable and durable materials were used and only LED lighting with high energy efficiency and performance were installed. Crops are grown in the raised beds on the planted roof terrace and are used, among other things, for the canteen food.

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Material topics from the action field People

In our materiality analysis, the two topics of diversity & inclusion and initial & advanced training were ranked as particularly material for Axel Springer. This chapter also provides information on related topics where we are particularly active.

The Management Board of Axel Springer SE has ultimate responsibility for all human resources topics. The "Global People & Culture" department is responsible for the implementation of the HR strategy and HR management across the group. The Head of Global People & Culture is in charge. Our [Code of Conduct](#) provides the key guidelines for our conduct. It describes our values relating to work culture of fairness, respect, equal opportunity, diversity, responsibility, and empathy and what we understand by these. These measures apply worldwide to the entire Group. "Global People & Culture" works together with the Axel Springer Group's business units' People & Culture departments. All People & Culture departments have the task of supporting managers and employees in developing, networking, and shaping Axel Springer's future success.

Employees by headcount and segment*

	2019	2020	± [%]
Classifieds Media	5,284	5,393	+2.1%
News Media	9,243	9,450	+2.2%
Marketing Media	969	1,084	+11.9%
Services & Holding	621	519	-16.4%
Total	16,117	16,446	+2.0%

*after reporting date of December 31

Personnel Structure**Data situation of our personnel key figures**

We generally state personnel figures as of the reporting date (as of December 31 of the year in question). For Axel Springer, the number of employees and diversity metrics stated for the entire Group are consolidated figures. However, the majority of the other personnel figures are currently only available for Axel Springer SE and the subsidiaries accounted for through Personal-service GmbH. In addition to BILD GmbH, this includes another 40 companies. We label the figures in question with the abbreviation **SSC**, which stands for Shared Service Center. As of the reporting date, this covered 6,678 employees, whereas we employed 16,446 people across the Group. The coverage ratio for many of the figures mentioned in this chapter is therefore 40.6 percent.

The People & Culture department records these figures systematically and plans to expand data collection for next year in order to increase the coverage ratio.

As of the reporting date, Axel Springer employed 16,446 (PY: 16,117) employees. This does not include trainees or trainee journalists. Outside of Germany, we had 8,019 employees (PY: 7,641). This is equivalent a share of 48.8 percent (PY: 47.4 percent). In the 2020 reporting year, the employees at the companies managed in the Shared Service Center (SSC, see info box) had been employed for an average of 9.6 (PY: 9.9) years. 37.7 percent (PY: 39.6 percent) of the workforce had belonged to the SSC's companies for longer than ten years. The largest age group in the SSC (56.9 percent) is 30 to 49 year-olds, the over 50s constitute 24.7 percent and the under 30s 18.4 percent.

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Where freelance workers work for Axel Springer, the assignments are carried out in very diverse ways and no statement can be made about the number or duration of the assignments.

Worker age structure in the SSC, incl. temporary staff and trainee journalists

Age	Editors	Salaried employees	Skilled staff	Temporary staff	Trainee journalists/trainees	Total
Under 30	7.5%	14.6%	0.3%	88.3%	94.5%	18.4%
30 to 49	56.5%	64.0%	33.7%	11.2%	5.5%	56.9%
Over 50	36.0%	21.4%	66.0%	0.6%	0.0%	24.7%

Diversity and Inclusion

Ensuring diversity & inclusion (D&I) apply in practice is a corporate objective for us. Axel Springer added a fifth principle to its business principles, known as the [Essentials](#), in 2020:

“We reject political and religious extremism and all forms of racism and sexual discrimination.”

By doing this, we want to ensure the best possible teamwork, innovation, and solution-finding processes, recruit new talent, and give everyone the opportunity to use their full potential at work and to develop.

So as to institutionalize D&I at Axel Springer, we created the role of Global Head of Diversity & Inclusion in July 2020 and set up a D&I team. The D&I team sets the strategic direction of D&I at Axel Springer. The Head of Diversity & Inclusion reports to Axel Springer SE's Head of Global People & Culture and works closely together with the senior management of all Axel Springer's national and international subsidiaries. In addition, the team's task is to shape the transformation to a more diverse and inclusive workplace across the whole Group and to establish a support network within the company and the subsidiaries. Gender equality in management positions will be one of the focuses in 2021 and beyond. The group-wide proportion of female managers in the reporting year was 31.6 percent (PY: 32.0 percent). In 2021, we will set ourselves new objectives for the proportion of men and women in the various management levels.

In the past, we reported the group-wide share of female managers separately for top management and the subsequent four management levels. Because People & Culture is currently developing a new, uniform definition of the various management levels, we can only report the total proportion of female managers this year. With regard to the breakdown of men and women on the Management Board and Supervisory Board, we have not currently defined any target figures. In the reporting period, the Management Board was reduced to four members, meaning that it has consisted of three men and one woman since May 2020. The Supervisory Board has nine members, seven of whom are men and two are women.

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Managers

	2019	2020
Female managers	571	529
Male managers	1,215	1,146
Total number of managers	1,786	1,675
Proportion of female managers	32.0%	31.6%

The D&I team looks at the topic of diversity and inclusion holistically. For this reason, we have defined **7 diversity dimensions**, which reflects potential forms of discrimination and thus serve as guidelines for initiatives. At the same time, we are aware that there are many overlaps between these categories and intersectional experiences need special attention.

1. Age & generations
2. Background & personal context
3. Ethnic origin & nationality
4. Gender
5. LGBTQ+
6. Physical and mental abilities
7. Faith & ideology

The D&I team wants to introduce its group-wide strategy in 2021. Several initiatives were already launched in 2020. The publication of three manuals is intended to create awareness of D&I among employees and serve as a basis for discussion. The **D&I manual** was published at the end the 2020 and forms the basis for the D&I work, sets out the vision

and mission, and establishes a common language on the subject. On the International Day of People with Disabilities on December 3, the Group published its **disability etiquette** document, which is intended to encourage more empathetic and respectful interaction with others and gives specific tips for certain situations in day-to-day office life. In 2021, a D&I calendar with international public holidays and commemoration days was published to inform the departments and teams of possible dates for carrying out initiatives.

We have also organized several events:

- Mental Health Awareness Week took place in October 2020 to remove the taboos from the topic of mental health and provide a platform for addressing difficulties. Especially during the pandemic, employees' need for support in this regard became apparent.
- In March 2021, we held a panel discussion on the topic of gender-balanced leadership for International Women's Day.
- In the same month, we organized an internal "Week against racist discrimination" for the first time.
- In May 2021, LGBTQ+ allyship training took place.

We have developed a **D&I website** as a central information and communication platform. It was launched in July 2021 and is directly linked with the career and corporate website. Its purpose is to reach all Axel Springer Group employees with D&I topics. It offers content on raising awareness, information and networking options, and advice on relevant contacts. In addition, the subsidiaries and group-wide ERGs (see explanation below) can present themselves together with their D&I activities and thus share best practice examples. In parallel with the website launch, we launched a monthly D&I newsletter, which interested employees can sign up for, and organized a virtual D&I lunch for sharing information and ideas.

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If discriminatory behavior occurs, all the employees directly or indirectly affected are urged to use the anonymous reporting channels that have been set up. These include the electronic whistleblower system and the network of confidential advisors. More information on compliance is available in the “[Sustainable Management](#)” chapter.

Employees are getting involved in employee resource groups

Since 2014, a number of employees have been active in employee resource groups (ERGs). These are based on voluntary involvement by employees and are formed on topics that are underrepresented in the Group and in society. The D&I office supports these ERGs with expertise, advice, and funding, which is provided from the D&I budget. At the start of 2021, the D&I team published the „ERG Playbook“, which describes the process for founding ERGs at Axel Springer. In addition, employees founded a new ERG: inbetween. The D&I team advises and supports the ERGs during their foundation and beyond. The team works closely together with the ERGs on a topic-specific basis and consults the members. In addition, the D&I team supports networking and communication between the global ERGs and between ERGs from individual companies.

Axel Springer currently has the following [global ERGs](#):

queerseite – which has represented the interests of Axel Springer’s LGBTQ+ community since 2014.

„as_women“ – a network founded in 2019 for all employees who are interested in and champion gender equality.

inbetween – an ERG founded at the start of 2021 for employees with a migration background and people of color. The name refers to the feeling of growing up between different cultures.

Being able to work with personal data in our own business is a great advantage for the development of diversity initiatives. However, there are restrictions that must be observed—for example, the collection of diversity data for new hires is only permitted on gender and nationality. Apart from legal restrictions on data collection, it is also important not to promote the stigmatization of minority groups through the manner in which data is collected. Some Axel Springer subsidiaries have therefore begun to acquire a more profound understanding of their workforce by means of anonymous questionnaires on self-identification.

The following numbers represent the data set that is available to us on group level and that in some cases includes data from the **SSC** (see [info box](#)). We are working on being able to collect the data at group level in the future.

As of the reporting date, 7,239 women (PY: 7,047) and 9,207 men (PY: 9,070) were employed in the Group. At 44.0 percent, the proportion of women was similar to the prior year (43.7 percent). Among the 6,678 employees in the SSC, 94 (PY: 87) nationalities are represented and there are 811 (PY: 671) people of non-German origin. The proportion of employees with a severe disability was 3.2 percent in the SSC as of the reporting date (PY: 3.5 percent). We are working toward a more inclusive working environment, where people with severe disabilities can make a contribution as an employee and workers feel secure to disclose even invisible disabilities.

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Employees by employment relationship (full-time/part-time) in the SSC	2019	2020
Number of employees (total)	6,774	6,678
Of which female	2,706	2,652
Of which male	4,068	4,026
Full-time employees	4,834	4,812
Of which female	1,717	1,692
Of which male	3,117	3,120
Part-time employees	1,940	1,866
Of which female	989	960
Of which male	951	906

Group-wide breakdown of employees by gender as %	2019	2020
Number of employees	16,117	16,446
Female	43.7%	44.0%
Male	56.3%	56.0%
Not specified	0.0%	0.0%

Diversity in top management Breakdown by gender as %	2019	2020
Total	14	13
Female	28.6%	23.1%
Male	71.4%	76.9%
Not specified	0.0%	0.0%
Age structure in %		
< 30 years old	0.0%	0.0%
≥ 30< 50 years old	14.3%	23.1%
≥ 50 years old	85.7%	76.9%

Attractive Working Conditions

Our employees are key to our success. Demographic change, the skills shortage, and the growing need for IT expertise therefore also represent a challenge for Axel Springer. We offer attractive packages to retain employees in the long term and also to attract the best young employees in the future. For example, our permanent employees can make use of numerous corporate benefits—irrespective of whether they work full- or part-time. These include, for example, tax-free compensation to employees for capital accumulation purposes, accident and international health insurance, and the option of sabbaticals. Axel Springer offers all employees of the holding company and the wholly owned subsidiaries in Germany an occupational pension plan as the Vario-Pension or direct insurance.

* Part-time: The employee did not work 100 percent of the weekly working hours usual in a company. The weekly working hours vary depending on the company.

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Fair pay and part-time guaranteed

We want to pay our employees fairly and appropriately for their work. Our wages and salaries and social benefits provided are in line with or above the relevant national legal minimum standards. In terms of pay, we primarily orient ourselves on the job evaluation and on which role, work, and responsibilities someone takes on. Across the Group, the pay consists of a fixed and – for those eligible, additionally – a variable amount. We take account of individual performance, professional experience, and the development of the labor market. The variable pay is based on performance- and success-oriented target agreements. Individual subsidiaries including AWIN, Insider, and Axel Springer News Media & Tech conducted a gender pay gap analysis in 2019 to investigate any gender-specific pay differences.

We at Axel Springer want to offer modern working conditions for people in a wide variety of life situations—for example, with flexible working time models. Numerous managers work part time and models such as job sharing are already used successfully in individual subsidiaries. In 2020, 405 of our employees spent at least a month on parental leave. We explicitly also encourage fathers to use their parental leave too.

Parental leave

Number of employees in the SSC that have made use of parental leave	2019	2020	± [%]
Female	231	238	+3%
Male	190	167	-12%
Total	421	405	-4%

Improving work/life balance

We are aware that it is not always easy to achieve a work/life balance. To support parents with child care, we have two [company kindergartens](#) — one with 65 places and one with 36. Emergency care, vacation provision by various external partners and a nanny agency are also available. In cooperation with service provider pme Familienservice, our employees can also use an extensive range of counseling and coaching options. Since 2017, they can also communicate with each other through our own Teams community called “AS Familiennetzwerk”. During the pandemic in particular, the virtual childcare and discounted rates for learning assistance and homework supervision proved themselves in 2020.

Representing and safeguarding employee interests

Many companies in the Axel Springer Group are members of employers' associations that have concluded collective bargaining agreements regulating fundamental employment conditions with trade unions. This primarily affects editors, but also commercial employees or else employees at our internal catering company PACE. In total, 28.5 percent of German employees were covered by collective bargaining agreements. In addition to the BDZV's, the ZVV's, and DEHOGA's framework collective bargaining agreements on general employment conditions, there are special company collective bargaining agreements—e.g., on partial retirement or participation in the virtual employee participation program.

Employee codetermination and dialog are important to us. We conduct regular surveys of employees and derive concrete measures from the results—for example, on the obligatory introduction of a hybrid working model. We thus expect an average of approximately 50 percent of people to continue to work remotely even after the pandemic. In various, regular town hall formats, our Management Board seeks dialog with our employees. In addition, they have the option of talking directly with members of the Management Board in a small group at regular “virtual coffee breaks.”

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The works council members represent employees' interests in the individual companies. For matters affecting the Group or several Group companies that individual works councils cannot deal with within their companies, there is the Group Works Council and a European Works Council (SE Works Council). In total, 44 colleagues from all the general works councils and the 30 works council members from individual Axel Springer SE companies currently belong to the Group Works Council. The Management Board, the senior management teams, the People & Culture departments, and the employee representatives are in close contact. They communicate regularly about all issues relevant to employees. That ranges from regular weekly meetings at local level to regular quarterly meetings with the respective divisional management boards.

Training & Education

Axel Springer has evolved considerably in recent years in order to remain successful. We empower our employees to manage their professional development as learning journeys themselves, to exchange ideas, and to actively shape their plans regarding forms of work, because only with motivated and empowered employees can we remain successful in our fast-paced, digital, and constantly changing business environment.

The Global People & Culture team is responsible for the topic of training and education and the development of managers throughout the Group. In addition, there are Learning & Development teams in the individual subsidiaries, which are closer to the brands and their requirements. The teams have the task of supporting and advising employees and managers on professional and personal development. Axel Springer offers its employees a comprehensive training and education program with diverse learning and development options. These offers are bundled in the Learning Hub. As an additional location for inspiration and innovative learning, we have set up an innovative training

space in the new Axel Springer headquarters. This space, known as the Learning Lab, invites experiential learning and makes it possible to try out new technologies independently.

Diverse learning options

In 2020, around 30,000 hours of training was carried out in the News Media National segment. The training was mainly on general skills. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, we had to switch classroom training to shorter online formats, as a result of which the number of training hours completed decreased significantly compared to 2019. Our positive experiences with digital learning options reinforce our intention to offer more digital learning content and use more "blended learning." By this we mean a combination of face-to-face events and online content as well as forums for sharing ideas and practicing with study buddies extending over a period of several weeks. As of July 2021, all learning and training options have been bundled on a central learning platform, the Learning Hub, to make knowledge more easily accessible. This learning platform includes training, talks, e-learning, and the Axel Springer learning podcast "mindsnack".

Annual training hours in the News Media National segment

Annual training hours in the News Media National segment	2019	2020
Training hours on employee training	22,402	12,487
Training hours on management training	15,664	8,655
Training hours on e-learning	2,714	8,210
Total training hours	40,780	29,352

The departments organize specialized training themselves.

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Encouraging young talent

We want to retain talented employees and support them in taking on new challenges within the company. The Talent Management team uses networking events and targeted talent initiatives to uncover potential managers at divisional and management board level and to provide information about development opportunities and vacancies at Axel Springer. The support options include a mentoring program. In the 2019/2020 year, 50 pairs took part and accompanied each other for a year.

We have devoted ourselves to encouraging the next generation of journalists through our own journalism school since 1986. From 2007, it has been called the Axel Springer Academy, and has since trained up to 40 journalists a year, with 34 completing their training in the reporting year. In 2020, the academy was renamed [FreeTech—Axel Springer Academy of Journalism and Technology](#). The objective of this is to expand our own technology skills in the long-term, combine journalism and technology and lay the foundation for close collaboration between journalists and tech experts. The first twelve tech scholarship students started their training at the FreeTech Academy in September 2020.

Another of the FreeTech Academy's tasks will be to anchor technology topics even more firmly in Axel Springer's training programs, so that as many employees as possible can deepen their technology skills and use these to a greater extent for their work. The FreeTech Academy will also act as a think tank and facilitate research projects at the interface between technology and a free society.



34 young journalists successfully completed their training at the Axel Springer Academy in 2020

Enabling development

An outside view is often helpful in recognizing your own development potential. We encourage a culture of constant, appreciative feedback, which is intended to drive independent learning and personal development. At the end of 2020, we also began the rollout of the "reflect" tool. It offers annual 360° feedback and is intended to encourage more situational feedback. This feedback serves as the basis for annual development meetings with the employee's superior, at which targets and measures for developing the employee are set. Since 2009, we have systematized this exchange as a development dialog and further advanced it in 2020 with the "reflect" feedback system.

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Health

A safe, healthy, and motivating working environment is the best foundation for maintaining and promoting our teams' innovative strength and performance in the long term. We want to avoid work accidents and occupational illnesses, whether physical or mental. Axel Springer offers a large number of health-promotion measures on a country- and area-specific basis. We also intend to introduce systematic occupational health management (OHM) with a steering committee in the next few years. The Head of Benefits & Health in the People & Culture division is responsible for the promotion of health. The Head of Axel Springer Services & Immobilien is responsible for occupational health and safety at the German sites. At every site or department, local safety officers and a representative of the senior management are responsible for the Occupational Safety and Health Act, fire protection, and risk assessments (RAs), both of a physical and a psychological nature (psych RAs). We review the situation through regular surveys among employees, monitoring the health data, and by systematically evaluating accident reports. Problems can be reported using the facility management service portal. The management and works council of the respective sites meet at least four times a year at Working Committee meetings (WCM) to discuss incidents and take any countermeasures. At the main site in Berlin, there were 13 work accidents (PY: 19) and 23 commuting accidents (PY: 39) with more than one day's absence in the reporting year. None of these were serious or fatal. The decrease is partly due to lower attendance during the coronavirus pandemic.

Coronavirus task force

Protecting our employees' health always has top priority for us. During the coronavirus pandemic, we quickly formed an interdisciplinary task force with around 70 members for the German companies, which addresses the task of supporting employees as needed. We followed the German Federal Government's guidelines and facilitated remote working for our employees within a matter of days. The attendance rate has never been more than 50 percent since March 2020. During the pandemic, this rate was adapted as needed on the basis of the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation, with the overarching objective of protecting the health of our employees as well as possible. In addition, we provided detailed information internally on the coronavirus situation, including with regular update emails and video messages from the Management Board. Not least, we attempt to mitigate psychological stress and provide a range of mental health options across the group. We offered a coronavirus care package for support during the lockdown. This included (largely digital) options and services on topics such as physical and mental health in the home office, increased child care services, team building, and communication. In addition to the national task force, we also set up an international task force with around 50 members.

Prevention is key

On the topic of health, we place a strong emphasis on prevention. In Berlin, Hamburg, and other sites, our company physicians offer surgery hours. They are also involved in all occupational health and safety issues. The Health Management team offers regular screenings, courses, talks, or webinars on the relevant health topics. In addition, we offer our employees numerous options on the topics of prevention, support, and fitness, but also mindfulness and meditation. We cooperate with several health insurance providers to do this. We make our employees' lar-

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gely sedentary working lives easier through ergonomic office furniture, computer glasses, and advice on ergonomics. In the reporting year, we switched the activities to virtual formats and introduced the "Humanoo" digital health app. Employees can network and share ideas on health topics in the Health Community. Mental health was in focus in 2020, not least in the Mental Health Awareness Week in October.

In order to prevent lack of exercise in the long term, we promote cycling mobility and offer cycling safety training, minor maintenance and bicycle stands; Berlin additionally has capacity for freight bikes and e-charging stations. With the [JobRad](#) (Job Bike) program, employees can lease bicycles at attractive conditions through gross salary sacrifice. In order to support the most individual possible mobility, we have developed the mobility budget pilot project with 50 participants at the Hamburg site, which is due to start in 2021. Instead of transit passes for public transportation, a monthly budget of €50 can be used without restrictions, whether for the journey to the office, to the work location, or for private purposes. The aim of the project is to analyze the effects on our employees' mobility.

There is a special situation for journalists who work in war zones or crisis areas or are exposed to attacks on press freedom and freedom of opinion. Our group guidelines for journeys to war zones, risk regions and crisis areas apply to them. Journalistic staff who travel to crisis areas additionally receive safety training, which prepares them for the proper behavior in dangerous situations.

Social Engagement

For Axel Springer, being engaged with society as a whole is not just a question of responsibility but also of credibility. Wherever Axel Springer is active, we also want to have a positive impact beyond our business activities. For this reason, we have been supporting charitable initiatives in various areas with donations of cash and in kind for many years. Responsibility for our social engagement is borne by the Head of Corporate Communications, whose work at group level is based on our donation policy. This policy prohibits donations to political parties and party-affiliated foundations or institutions. For all German and foreign majority interests, donations of €3,000 or more must be submitted to corporate headquarters for approval.

The „Ein Herz für Kinder“ (A Heart for Children) campaign founded by Axel Springer in 1978 supported aid programs around the world with a total of €1.8 million during the Covid-19 pandemic. The international BILD aid organization supports children's hospitals, kindergartens, soup kitchens, schools, and families in need and has so far been able to collect a total of €385 million in donations and fund more than 21,422 projects. In the reporting year, €44 million was collected, around €26 million through the donation gala in December 2020 alone—a new record.



€26 million donation record for the "Ein Herz für Kinder" (A Heart for Children) campaign in December 2020

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Since 1987, employees have been funding charitable causes such as Welthungerhilfe through the “Small Change Campaign” by donating cents of their salary. €17,000 was collected in this way in 2020.

In order to increase the impact of individual efforts, we are considering systematizing our social engagement. To this end, we want to unify the donation strategy, promote topics that are close to our core business (e.g., media skills), and also enable voluntary work by employees for this purpose.

"Friede Springer Stiftung"

"Friede Springer Stiftung" received the "Wissenschaftsstiftung des Jahres" (Science Foundation of the Year) award from Deutsche Universitätsstiftung (DUS) and Stifterverband in 2020. Now equipped with €150 million from the private assets of Friede Springer, it is the largest charitable foundation established by an individual person with its registered office in Berlin. It particularly funds scientific, artistic, and cultural projects. Founded in 1953, "Axel-Springer-Stiftung" funds, among other things, young academics who research German-Jewish history.

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