



# COBALT ESTONIA'S SUSTAINABILITY REPORT

FINANCIAL YEAR 2023/2024





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# Statement from the management of COBALT Estonia



**Kristel Raidla-Talur**  
Member of the Board  
COBALT Estonia

The 2023/2024 financial year was a success for COBALT's Estonian office, both internally as well as externally. This also applies to the sustainability aspects of our activities.

Internally, our focus remained on our people, placing their well-being and personal development at the centre of our efforts. We continued our involvement in the Mindful Business Charter, taking the issue of avoiding unnecessary stress and fostering mental health seriously. Recognising the significant impact that physical spaces have on mental health, a major step in this area was moving back to our renovated offices at Pärnu mnt 15 (Kawe Plaza) in January 2024. The renovation completely transformed the interior design, which has since been commended and featured in several magazines. The ventilation, other technical systems and energy efficiency of the building were also improved. Consequently, the renewed offices both provide additional space for our employees (with the entire 8th floor designed for recreation) and improve the indoor climate while minimising environmental impacts.

Externally, COBALT continues to provide legal services to many companies and projects aimed at transforming the Estonian economy into a more sustainable model. This includes our legal support to several high-capacity renewable energy and electricity storage projects, financial institutions seeking to enhance their sustainability, Greentech startups etc. Among other issues, we have helped our clients creating ESG-policies that align with current legal and policy trends, clarifying and implementing EU Taxonomy requirements and navigating EU sustainability reporting rules. To keep our clients up to date with the ever-changing regulatory landscape, we launched a new sustainability newsletter.

At the start of 2025, the outlook for ESG might seem bleak, given the ongoing and escalating armed conflicts, trade wars and political backlash. However, as respect for planetary boundaries, ensuring proper treatment of employees, customers and other stakeholders, and good corporate governance are not luxuries, but necessities for modern businesses, we believe that sustainability issues are here to stay in the long run. We at COBALT Estonia are ready to play our part.



# COBALT at a glance

## General overview of the firm

COBALT is a leading law firm in the Baltic region, with offices in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. Our team of over 250 professionals supports clients across a variety of industries, handling more than 300 significant transactions and cases annually. In 2024, we were honoured to receive the **Baltic Law Firm of the Year** award from **Chambers Europe** and the title of **Best Law Firm in the Baltics** title from the **Prospera Law Firm Review**. These recognitions, along with our top rankings in international legal directories, reflect our commitment to providing practical, high-quality legal solutions.

## The culture

At COBALT, our core values are **respect, engagement and fair play**. We foster an inclusive and diverse work environment where every team member feels a sense of belonging and equal opportunity.

Our efforts extend beyond our own organisation: we work on legislative committees, before constitutional courts and with public institutions to support causes we believe in. As the legal environment plays a vital role in society, our mission is to deliver messages and empower governmental and non-governmental organisations to transform our shared community into a better place.





## Our services, incl. ESG

We offer a full spectrum of legal services, including corporate advisory, mergers and acquisitions, banking and finance, intellectual property, dispute resolution, tax, and real estate. An increasing share of our work focuses on **Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) consulting**, helping clients navigate regulations, incorporate environmental, social and governance requirements and principles into their operations, mitigate sustainability-related risks and meet their sustainability goals. Our goal is to support clients in achieving long-term success while addressing ESG challenges.

<div><div>Real Estate &amp; Construction</div><div>Regularly involved in the most complex transactions and projects across the region</div></div>	<div><div>Banking &amp; Finance</div><div>Extensive experience in client representation for asset and project finance, and AML and compliance advisory</div></div>	<div><div>Corporate &amp; Commercial</div><div>From assistance with daily matters to advice in large scale cross-border projects, including ESG issues</div></div>
<div><div>Competition</div><div>Advising on all aspects of national and EU competition laws, public procurement and PPP matters</div></div>	<div><div>Employment</div><div>A full range of counselling and compliance advice related to human resources</div></div>	<div><div>IP &amp; IT</div><div>Highly active IP&amp;IT practice with unique experience in IP protection</div></div>
<div><div>M&amp;A</div><div>Counsel of choice for financial and strategic investors in the most complex M&amp;A transactions</div></div>	<div><div>Dispute Resolution</div><div>One of the largest and most mature dispute resolution teams in the region</div></div>	<div><div>Tax</div><div>Tax structuring for transactions, daily advice and representation in tax disputes</div></div>



## Membership in associations and organisations

Our active memberships help us stay informed about industry trends and contribute to the advancement of legal profession. We are members of:

- International Bar Association
- Lex Mundi
- World Services Group
- Mindful Business Charter
- CSR Estonia (Vastutustundliku Ettevõtluse Foorum)
- Lawyers Associated Worldwide
- Ius Laboris



Vastutustundliku  
Ettevõtluse Foorum



Mindful  
Business  
Charter



**LexMundi**  
Member





# Sustainability at COBALT

## Sustainability management (ESG policy)

COBALT Estonia adheres to a structured ESG policy, with the latest version (Version 3) being approved by management on **6 May, 2024**.

## Sustainable development goals

Our efforts are aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), focusing on:

- **Goal 3:** Good Health and Well-being – We support the wellbeing of our colleagues by striving to identify and address avoidable stress in the workplace.
- **Goal 10:** Reduced inequalities – We are committed to fostering a diverse and inclusive environment where everyone has equal opportunities.
- **Goal 12:** Responsible Consumption and Production – We advocate for sustainable business practices that minimise waste and promote resource efficiency.
- **Goal 13:** Climate Action – We proactively work to reduce our environmental footprint and support initiatives that address climate change.
- **Goal 16:** Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions – We uphold the highest standards of integrity, transparency, and justice in all our dealings.





## Priority ESG themes last year

Priority themes for COBALT Estonia included:

- The wellbeing of our employees – under the auspices of the Mindful Business Charter.
- Reduction of our office's environmental footprint on the renewed premises (we moved back to our renovated offices at the start of 2024).
- Refining the ESG-related services offered to our customers, which are now detailed on our Estonian ESG services web page.
- Raising awareness of our clients on ESG issues, by introducing a new regular newsletter and organising a client seminar on sustainability reporting.





# Environment

## Energy consumption

Our office carefully monitors and analyses its energy consumption, including electricity and heating. Efforts are underway to set targets for the continuous reduction of the carbon footprint of our office space. To improve energy efficiency, we have installed motion sensors in areas that are less frequently used, allowing lights to switch on and off automatically. During the 2023/24 financial year, our office consumed 39,979 kWh of electricity and 132.051 MWh of heating energy<sup>1</sup>.

## GHG emissions - Scope 1 and location-based Scope 2

In 2022, with the help of Sustinere, we conducted a CO2 footprint measurement covering scopes 1, 2, and 3. The results indicated that COBALT Estonia's carbon footprint per employee was 5.2 tons, with business flights being the most significant contributing factor. These measurements were carried out across all COBALT offices, providing valuable insights that have shaped our annual ESG goals. Every year, we gather data related to scopes 1 and 2. The next CO2 footprint measurement covering scopes 1-3 is scheduled for the next financial year.





## Water usage

Our office aims to follow environmental and sustainability principles in its daily operations. We promote the use of tap water over bottled water through the installation of water dispensers that filter tap water. These dispensers are conveniently located in work areas and meeting rooms on all floors of our offices. In the 2023/24 financial year, the COBALT Tallinn office consumed 241.744 m<sup>3</sup> of water<sup>2</sup>.





## Waste management and generated volumes

The precise volume of waste generated in the previous financial year has not been measured. During this period, we moved from a temporary location to a newly renovated office. Due to the relocation and increased employee presence in the office, the amount of waste generated was likely higher than in the previous financial year, spent at the temporary location. However, we have set a goal to reduce mixed waste and have taken specific steps to achieve this. Waste sorting facilities are available on every floor both in the temporary space and the renovated office. Additionally, we have removed individual waste bins from workstations to encourage employees to dispose of their waste in the appropriate containers, rather than mixing everything at their desks. In the next financial year, we will continue our efforts to reduce the volume of mixed municipal waste and further encourage waste sorting among employees.

After our office relocation, we repurposed surplus furniture through employee take-backs and donations.

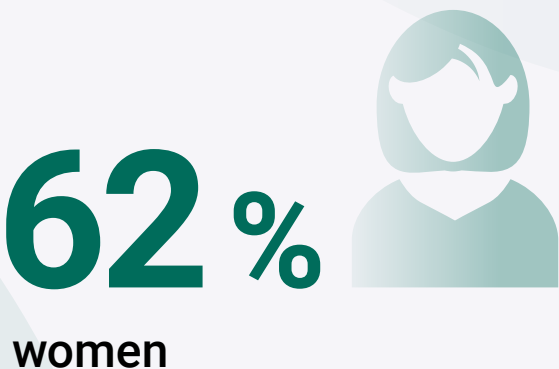
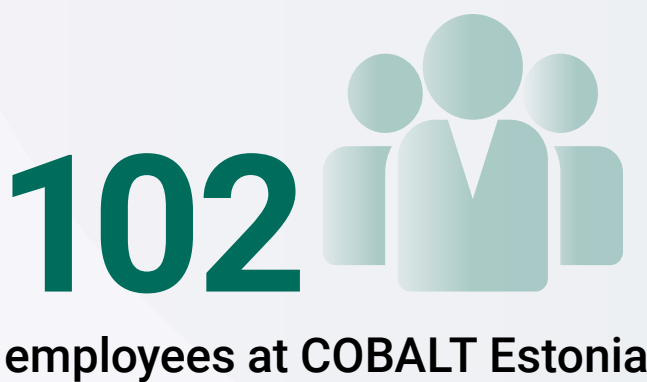




# Social responsibility

## Employees in numbers

During the financial year 2023/2024 we had on average 102 employees at COBALT Estonia, of whom 62% were women and 38% were men. The average age of the employees was 34.8 years.





## Working conditions

Halfway through the financial year, we relocated to the newly renovated Kawe Plaza building. As part of the renovation, both the ventilation and heating systems were modernised. We prioritise providing our employees with a comfortable, functional, and ergonomic work environment.

Our office features an abundance of plants, carefully selected for their air-purifying qualities, contributing to a healthier workspace.

In addition to ensuring a high-quality work environment, we have a human resource management programme comprised of clear development stages. Our career plan consists of 8 main levels, each linked to years of experience, level of education and specific expectations that must be met to progress. All these expectations are discussed at

the start of employment and reviewed quarterly during check-in meetings and annually in performance reviews. Our HR department oversees all promotions, ensuring equal treatment for male and female lawyers, with promotions based on merit, results and ability. We consistently monitor our mean and median pay ratios across all levels within the firm. We are systematically running analysis on the salaries of our associates at different levels and other administrative staff. We are also closely reviewing our bonus procedures as part of the annual salary review, and we commit to treating men and women equally when bonuses are considered.

For support team employees, salary agreements are based on the specifics and nature of the role, the employee's qualifications, and the level of responsibility. The same principles also apply when determining bonuses.





## Work-related accidents

We have had zero work-related accidents. We continue to ensure that our employees can enjoy a comfortable, functional, and safe work environment. To guarantee workplace safety, we have conducted a workplace risk assessment and implemented an action plan. We have a designated working environment specialist and a work environment representative from the employees.

## Professional competency

We place significant importance on continuous learning and professional development for our employees. Each year, we organise a variety of in-house training sessions covering not only legal topics but also practical skills to enhance workplace efficiency, such as Excel and Word training. Additionally, we offer sessions on topics of interest to our employees, including various mental health workshops.

The requirement for continuous training for lawyers arises from the rules of the Estonian Bar Association. Lawyers are required to complete a mandatory annual amount of training hours and every five years, they must submit a report to the Bar Association demonstrating compliance with this requirement.

In addition to this, our employees further develop their skills by attending external training sessions and conferences.

On average, our employees participated in 19 academic hours of training per financial year.





## Ethics and respect

COBALT has a zero-tolerance policy towards discrimination or unequal treatment, ensuring similar opportunities for all employees, irrespective of nationality, race, skin colour, gender, age, sexual orientation, language, origin, religion, political or other beliefs, financial or social status, or any other factors.

Our recruitment process complies with the laws of the Republic of Estonia and focuses on candidates' personal qualities and expertise to identify, integrate, and develop the best talent. Although we do not impose gender or other quotas in hiring or promotion decisions, we invite representatives of the underrepresented gender for interviews if the number of applications from one gender exceeds the other by at least 70%, provided the candidate meets the qualification requirements.

Our team, management, and partners include both men and women in comparable proportions, distinguishing us positively from other law firms in Estonia. We advocate a healthy work-life balance and provide opportunities for part-time and remote work. Our workforce is diverse in age, comprising of both young professionals and experienced experts.

We regularly collect feedback on diversity and inclusion through employee satisfaction surveys to assess engagement and identify areas for improvement. Additionally, our office premises are accessible to employees with disabilities.





## Wellbeing and the Mindful Business Charter

The mental and physical wellbeing of our employees is paramount to us, and we strive to support it.

We offer our employees with additional health insurance. We actively encourage sports activities by providing a sports allowance and collaborating with MTÜ Spordiselts, allowing our employees to enjoy various sports opportunities at a reduced rate. Additionally, we have a partnership with the PadelStar padel centre.

COBALT has been a member of the Mindful Business Charter (MBC) since 2021, and it offers numerous advantages. For example, our membership grants us access to MBC's online Insight Sessions, where industry experts share valuable insights. These sessions cover a wide range of topics, from digital wellbeing and the importance of rest to staying mindful under pressure and recognising cognitive biases.

At COBALT, we prioritise self-awareness, self-care, empathy, and effective collaboration through various internal initiatives. Twice a year, we publish a wellbeing newsletter to maintain wellbeing at the forefront. We also organise activities around two key awareness dates - World Mental Health Week in May and World Mental Health Day in October - to foster engagement and discussion. Additionally, we share practical MBC tips based on its four core pillars: Openness & Respect, Smart Meetings & Communication, Respecting Rest Periods, and Mindful Delegation. To further support mental wellbeing, we implement various initiatives, such as sports challenges that encourage physical activity and overall wellness.





## Our social projects and initiatives

At COBALT, we actively encourage our people to utilise their legal expertise for pro bono work, providing voluntary legal assistance to communities that would otherwise lack access to our services. Over the years, we have supported organisations such as Let's Do It World, the Arvo Pärt Centre, the Estonian Centre for Contemporary Art (CCA), The Good Deed Foundation, and Ukrainian refugees.

During our relocation, we donated well-maintained furniture and other office equipment that we no longer required for reuse.





## Our social projects and initiatives

COBALT is strongly committed to nurturing future legal talent. We maintain close partnerships with various student organisations and welcome more than 20 interns each year. These students gain invaluable hands-on experience under the mentorship of top legal professionals, providing them with insights into the legal profession.





## Our social projects and initiatives

Beyond the legal field, we contribute to cultural and sports initiatives. We have been long-time supporters of the Estonian Equestrian Federation, and we engage in annual collaboration projects with the Art Museum of Estonia and the Estonian Centre for Contemporary Art (CCA), including supporting the Estonian Pavilion at the Venice Biennale. We also support Tallinn City Theatre.

Through these efforts, we remain dedicated to making a meaningful impact in our community, supporting both social and professional development while fostering cultural and environmental sustainability.





# Governance

## Organisational structure and top management bodies (board)

The firm is committed to acting in good faith, with honesty, and strives to ensure that its management policies, business procedures, and governance structures are as transparent as possible. The firm's daily and strategic management is handled by the management board, which coordinates key strategies, financial matters, and organisational issues with the partners.

## Internal control and risk management (ISO standard)

The COBALT Estonia office holds the ISO 9001:2015 quality management system certificate. Compliance with the ISO standard requirements is audited at least annually, based on an audit plan prepared by an auditor.

Furthermore, we have developed an internal audit process to ensure the effective functioning of the office's quality

management system. The internal audit process falls under the responsibility of the management board and is carried out by an auditor appointed by the board, following the provisions of the internal audit regulations. Employees associated with to the audited area are required to assist the auditor in obtaining documents, preparing reports and extracts, gathering data, and providing both oral and written explanations.

The COBALT Estonia office has also been awarded the Estonian Bar Association's quality management certificate. In relation to this, the office reports its activities to the Estonian Bar Association every twelve months by completing a compliance questionnaire. Additionally, the Estonian Bar Association conducts an audit of the office every three years.



## Anti-corruption and anti-bribery measures and numbers

The firm complies with all applicable laws and regulations related to the prevention of corruption. Measures necessary for preventing corruption are included in the guidelines for client identification, anti-money laundering and compliance with international sanctions, as well as in the risk assessment guidelines.





# Our ESG team

Our core ESG-team in the financial year 2023/2024 included:

## Partners



Marina Kotkas



Aivar Taro

## Specialist Counsel



Siim Vahtus

## Head of ESG



Mervet Kägu  
(on maternity leave since the  
start of 2024)

## Assistant Lawyer



Siim Jürgens



# Methodology

This report has been compiled based on data either gathered and registered internally (data on employees) or externally, by the lessor of our office space (data on energy and water consumption). Draft voluntary sustainability reporting standards developed by EFRAG were used as the basis for choosing the data points covered in the report. A similar structure will be used for sustainability reporting for the 2024/2025 financial year, to enable easy comparison year-on-year.





