

VaLoo

Annual Report 2023

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VaLoo, the Network for Circular Sanitation Switzerland, was founded on the 19th November 2021 on World Toilet Day. VaLoo brings together engaged actors collaborating to promote and facilitate the implementation of resource-oriented sanitation systems in Switzerland.

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Preface

Dear Members, dear interested readers,

Almost 100 members and partners are part of VaLoo. Our network is not only growing steadily in numbers, but is also gaining visibility. Whether in newspaper reports (p. 12), in parliament, in the cinema with the documentary film "Holy Shit" or in exhibitions (e.g. currently in the Gewerbemuseum Winterthur), more and more people are concerned with the urgency of converting our sanitation system to enable circularity. Soon, the VaLoo touring exhibition (p. 13) will further spread the word. We have already achieved a lot in such a short time, but – don't worry – we won't run out of work.

Many thanks to all members, partners and supporters who have made this possible in the two years since VaLoo was founded. The wide variety of backgrounds and contacts and, in turn, other networks that our members bring with them were and are very important. We experienced this very impressively at the international network meeting "Connect the Networks" (p. 7) in Zurich in November 2023. At the same time, we still have important sectors that are underrepresented in our network, such as agriculture. It is now crucial that we continue to strategically link the network in order to close the loops as completely as possible.

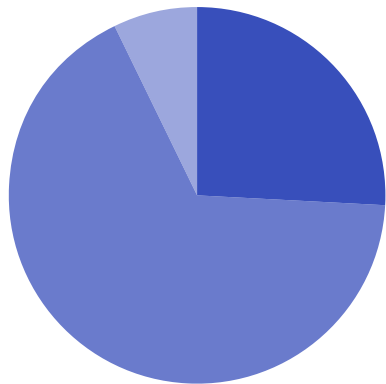
We look forward to seeing you all at the member assembly on 12 April in Bern and continuing to work together for the sanitary transition. Of course, we would also be delighted if you could bring new members or interested parties along to the visits, working group meetings and member assembly and thus further expand our network!

Bastian Etter for the Board

Questions or inspirations? Feel free to contact us as info@va-loo.ch

Members and engagement

Co-creation and the related volunteer work are at the heart of VaLoo. In 2023, dedicated members contributed around 1,200 hours of voluntary work. This commitment was crucial to the success and realisation of numerous projects that would simply have been impossible otherwise. In addition to these valuable hours, we can also count on the broad-based expertise that is available in our network. This is constantly growing, not least due to new members. In 2023, we gained 23 new members in our association. VaLoo is now composed as follows:



Member segments

- 22 Housing & Living (+ 14)
- 57 Collection & Treatment (+ 5)
- 6 Reuse & Production (+ 3)



Voting at the members' assembly in Lausanne. Photo: Gina Marti

Gathering

After the successful first member assembly for World Toilet Day 2022, the second meeting was held in the spring of the following year. In March, 29 VaLoo members came together in Lausanne to make groundbreaking decisions. Among other important decisions, the charter ([link](#)) was adopted. There were also various optional events throughout the year, such as a "shit-storic" city tour, working group meetings on site and a cross-border network congress in November.

Text: Gina Marti



Snow and cold in Bern's Jura don't stop our Board of Directors. Photo: Bastian Etter

Board

Alongside the monthly online meetings to discuss ongoing activities, the board met for 4 half-day workshops with the Secretariat throughout 2023. Some key activities in these half-day meetings include:

- In January, VaLoo member Michael Kropac (cewas) got everyone brainstorming about the financial future of VaLoo during a business-model canvas workshop. Here we discussed where we want to go and which activities we should prioritize to get there. These discussions continued throughout the year.
- Our organizational development coach Nathalie Schneider guided us in adapting an agile working environment for VaLoo. Strategic groups (called circles) and working groups are structured along with personal roles and responsibilities were defined to ensure a healthy and sustainable internal working community.

The board also visited two different decentralized treatment installations: A vermi-filter followed by a planted filter in the Jura Bernois and a dry toilet at a co-working space in Lenzburg. The end of the year was celebrated at a Christmas dinner, where everyone raised their glass to celebrate VaLoo's accomplishments in 2023.

Text: Kayla Coppens

Secretariat

Our Secretariat has expanded in 2023. Our network now has a four-person team with a total workload of 210 per cent behind it. With Till-Baptiste Römmelt, we gained an event manager for our upcoming touring exhibition who is bursting with ideas and drive. Andri Heidler is still responsible for political work and fundraising, Louise Carpentier for coordination and Gina Marti for communication.

Text: Gina Marti



Till. Photo: Lothar Schnebel

Working groups

Expertise meets involvement in our working groups - they are fundamental to almost all of our network's activities. The thematic working groups were also busy in 2023:

- The Roadshow working group picked up speed and worked eagerly on the realisation of our travelling exhibition.
- The International Collaboration working group organized an unforgettable 3-day congress.
- Towards the end of the year, the Advocacy WG was rewarded for the work done in the spring on the Environmental Protection Act and was able to initiate and support further exciting processes.
- Following the launch of the website, the Knowledge and Awareness working group has already put its feet back on the ground and is working on case studies.
- In addition, a new working group has been set up around aneco's impact project.

You can find out more about the results of the working groups on the following pages.

Text: Gina Marti



Our working groups meet on site for the members' assembly. Photo: Gina Marti

International network meeting

This year, the work of the International Collaboration Working Group was all about networking. In November, after almost a whole year of preparation, the first international network meeting took place under the motto "Connect the Networks". The three major European umbrella organisations for resource-oriented sanitation systems RAE from France, NetSan from Germany and VaLoo from Switzerland came together at Eawag for the first time. Over four days, the almost one hundred participants enjoyed a programme of panel discussions, workshops and presentations. The focus was on content-related topics such as advocacy, knowledge management and outreach, but there were also opportunities to exchange views on structural issues such as association funding. In addition, various projects at Eawag could be visited. Participants were also able to present their own projects on the "marketplace". After the work was done, there was of course also time to relax by the fire, enjoy a film screening or get active on the dance floor.

Not only at the network meeting, but also during the preparations, many new cross-connections were made across national borders. With a core group of 7-10 members from Germany, France and Switzerland, we initially met monthly and later every two or one week. Together with our partners from NetSan and RAE, we also applied for further funding (Lush Charity Pot and Fondation pour le Progrès Humain), of which one was successful. As VaLoo also co-financed part of the event and the organization committee was able to budget carefully, we can now use some of these funds for other activities, such as translating documents.

Text: Michel Riechmann



Almost one hundred participants came together at the international network meeting in November. Photo: Laura Baquedano.

Workshop

On 23 June, we organised a workshop together with the ZHAW at the KREIS-Haus research project in Feldbach, ZH. The workshop used the KREIS-House and other practical examples to show how water and nutrient cycles in buildings can be closed using eco-technologies. Together with the eight participating building owners, architects and home planners, we discussed the potential of eco-technologies, the quality of treated water, fertilizer products and legal requirements. We were delighted to have gained two new members with this workshop.

Text: Louise Carpentier



We work together in the KREIS house to close loops. Photo: Devi Bühler



Visit to the construction site in Geneva. Photo: Andri Heidler

Impact projects

VaLoo is enabling three impact projects between 2022 and 2024 to strengthen cooperation with authorities and decision-makers and to improve the framework conditions for the implementation of resource-oriented sanitation systems. These projects are intended to address the regulatory challenges identified by our members and to be driven by our members and actively involve regulatory stakeholders such as authorities or associations. VaLoo supports these projects with workload, strategic advice and financial resources.

The first project was already initiated in 2022. We launched a call for two further projects at the 2023 member assembly. After the presentation of four exciting projects, attendees voted for their favourites. From these, two additional impact projects were developed. One of the projects, which is supported by aneco, was able to get off the ground quickly. For the other, however, we had to learn together with the RenoLoo project owners that the proposed project was at a too early stage to tackle the regulatory challenges within the limited time of 1.5 years. It was therefore decided not to pursue the RenoLoo project any further for the time being. Subsequently, a project was developed with the third-placed “VaLueNext” (ZHAW). The project will start in 2024.

Impact project 1: Nutrient cycle (2022-2024, Uster, Kompotoi)

As part of continuing the composting pilot project in Uster, we further intensified our collaboration with the Federal Office for the Environment (FOEN) in 2023. The focus was on converting human excrement into safe fertilizers and discussing possible regulatory framework conditions. A constructive dialogue was also conducted with the cantons' ERFA green waste group to include the various perspectives in the discussion.

The research work was driven forward by ETH researcher Inna Nybom, who analyzed the compost from the 2022 trial in Uster for micropollutants. The preliminary results reflect international research projects and we are looking forward to the publication of these findings soon (Nybom et al, in preparation). In 2024, we are planning additional composting trials to further expand the data set. These will be carried out not only in Uster, but also in the canton of Thurgau.

Impact project 2: Legal framework for circular sanitation in urban environments (2023-2024, Geneva, aneco)

This project aims to contribute to the creation of a clear regulatory framework for circular sanitation systems in urban areas. The project is in intensive dialogue with cantonal authorities who has put in place a cantonal piloting committee in June 2023 in order to share knowledge and experience and set together the right framework. The project is currently developing guidelines for the (self-)regulation of closed-loop sanitation systems in urban areas by compiling a synthesis of existing regulations that are potentially applicable. The project partners include aneco, Équilibre, atba and la bistoquette.

Impact project 3: Recommendations for guidelines on grey water reuse (2024-2025 - Zurich, ZHAW)

Another important project is the development of recommendations for guidelines for grey water reuse. This will take place in Zurich in 2024-2025 with the participation of the ZHAW. Interviews with national and cantonal authorities will be used to identify current hurdles and possible incentives for the approval of greywater reuse plants. Data from existing lighthouse projects in Zurich and Switzerland will be collected and compared with guidelines in Switzerland and abroad. The project will help to shape future guidelines for the reuse of grey water.

We would like to thank everyone involved for their support and commitment, be it in the call for proposals, the project submission or in the impact project working groups. We look forward to continuing these projects in 2024 with as much impact as possible and by overcoming regulatory obstacles together.

Text: Louise Carpentier & Marius Klinger



Collective visit to the pilot project in Uster. Photo: Andri Heidler

Advocating

For 2023 the main goal of VaLoo's advocacy work focused on moving from analysis to action. The thorough assessment of member challenges and needs with regards to regulation guided the identification of different opportunities to advocate for the explicit and enabling regulation of circular sanitation in Switzerland.

At the national political level, main hindrance for circular sanitation in Switzerland is the ambiguity between the water protection and environmental protection acts with regards to the regulation of resource recovery from human excreta. Therefore, VaLoo worked hard to include the material recycling of nutrients from human excreta into the environmental protection act (EPA). To this end, a workshop at the parliament was organized to inform interested politicians about the potential of circular sanitation and to advocate for the explicit treatment of human excreta in the EPA. The exchange was very fruitful and a major success was that members of all parliamentary fractions were either part of the workshop or informed about our cause. The EPA is still debated in the parliament and we are very happy that the topic of circular sanitation has entered the discussion in the council of the states.

Beyond the law, standards are a key mechanism that can foster an enabling regulatory environment as they convey both the security as well as the added value of resource recovery from human excreta. In this regard, VaLoo has participated in the consultation on standards of SIA and VSA in 2023.

Together with our members, various responses to SIA and VSA regulations were compiled and submitted. Both statements address the fact that rainwater is limited, especially during dry periods, and that purified (grey) water can provide a substitute. The consultations have been completed, but the final revision of both regulations is still pending.

In the revision of "SIA-2066 Sustainable planning, construction and maintenance of open spaces", we have advocated an additional chapter on the water cycle, which suggests the use of purified (grey) water for heat-reducing measures as a supplement to rainwater. Rainwater management has been more strongly integrated into the VSA's GEP model specifications. Here, too, we pointed out the potential of local water reuse. By placing these topics in the spotlight, we hope to raise awareness for a more sustainable use of water.

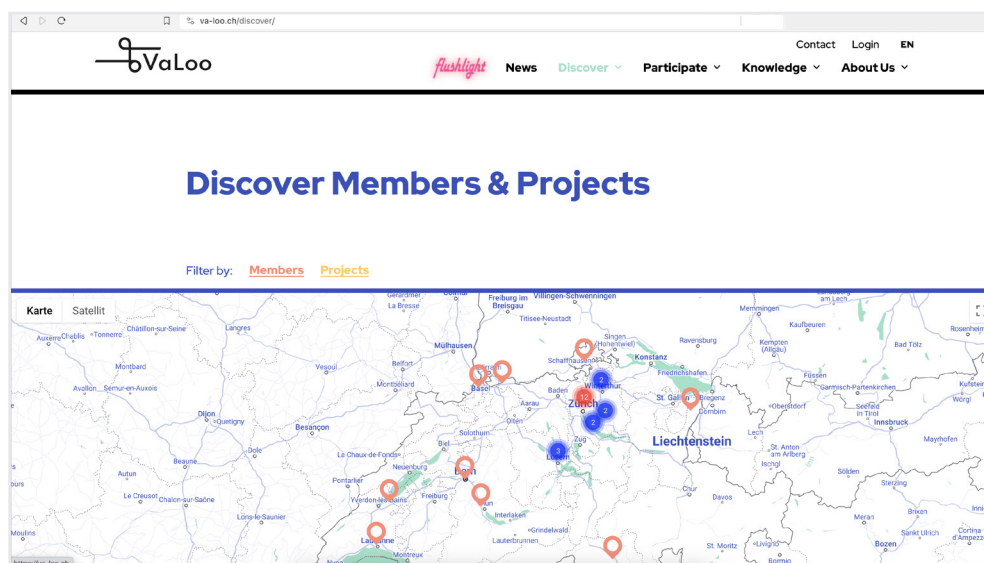
Text: Andri Heidler & Louise Carpentier



VaLoo in parliament. Photos: Gina Marti

Outreach

In addition to our existing channels such as LinkedIn, the newsletter and community updates, our website went live in 2023! In collaboration with web designers and thanks to the huge effort of the Knowledge & Awareness working group, our network is now presented on the Internet. On five subpages you can find out more about our members, the association and the topic. You can explore our website on your own [here](#).



Screenshot of the members & projects on the VaLoo website

Resource-orientated sanitation not only looks good on the desktop, but also on the big screen: "Holy Shit" is a new documentary film that makes our topic accessible to a wide audience. As part of the "Films for the Earth" festival, panel discussions were also organised before and after the film, which some of our members were invited to.



Dorothee Spuhler at a film screening of Films for the Earth. Photo: Andi Schwinger

The media have also increasingly taken up our topic and reported actively on our network and our members. We have put together a small chronological selection for you:

- [Wir spülen jeden Tag Gold das WC runter, Migros Magazin](#)
- [Alt und neu – Abwasser, Schweiz aktuell](#)
- [Abwassersysteme neu denken, Rendez-vous SRF](#)
- [Die Toilette von morgen, Wissenschaftsmagazin SRF](#)
- [«Einmal Brünzle = drei Rüebli», Bauernzeitung](#)
- [Dünger, den wir selbst produzieren, AZ Medien](#)
- [Holy Shit, taz.de](#)
- [Auf dem Klo, Greenpeace Magazin](#)
- [Wertvolles aus dem WC, Beobachter](#)

Touring exhibition

In summer 2023, our touring exhibition (formerly a roadshow) entered the implementation phase under the project name "Flushlight":
Initial ideas were developed, locations sought and funding applied for. But then things suddenly had to move quickly: 10 days, 300,000 visitors and 4m2 of space - VaLoo was given the opportunity to take part in Olma, Switzerland's largest agricultural trade fair. An exhibit and content were developed within just a few weeks. "1 x Brünzle = 3 Rüebli" (1x peeing = 3 carrots) - the roadshow team broke down the core content of the theme to this slogan and visualised it using a pink toilet from which the carrots spill. This image made visitors pause on their quick walk through the trade fair and encouraged them to talk to our members who were in charge of the exhibition stand. The exhibit was displayed in the Forum Chriesbach of Eawag in Dübendorf after the Olma. As a library with literature around toilets, it drew attention to the "Connect the Network" event and the topic in general. Based on the experience and positive feedback from both events, the existing concept ideas for the roadshow were adapted and the exhibit in the "Flushlight" was further developed - Coming soon!

Text: Till-Baptiste Römmelt



Flushlight at the Olma. Photo: Louise Carpentier

The year in figures

The annual accounts for 2023 were externally revised by ATO Treuhand.

Revenues: The Migros Pioneer Fund is the main source of revenue for VaLoo. Other revenues include support for the participation at Olma as well as membership fees and donations from events and workshops.

The annual accounts 2023 are subject to approval by the General Assembly in April 2024.

The year in figures - Financial report for the association period 01.01.2023 - 31.12.2023			
Erfolgsrechnung		Balance	
Ertrag	CHF	Assets	CHF
Income from foundations and projects	255.399	Current assets	
Membership fees	8.725	Cash equivalents - ABS Bank	479.913
Donations	1.294	Receivables	400
Income from events and Workshops	20.609	Prepaid expenses	1.090
Total Income	286.027	Total Assets	481.403
Expenditure		Liabilities	
Project expenditure		Current liabilities	
Events	16.496	Accounts payable	39.311
Workshops	3.820	Notes Payable	431.067
Member projects, impact projects, legal advice	25.275	Total current liabilities	470.378
Communication and marketing	10.218		
Further expenses Migros Pioneer Fund project	2.707	Equity	
Roadshow expense and service agreement	17.619	Association assets	8.094
		Profits	2.931
Personnel costs		Total equity	11.025
Wages	160.830		
Social Security	18.587	Total Balance	481.403
Other personnel costs	3.388		
Operating costs			
Room rental, property insurance	4.629		
Office supplies, bookkeeping, consulting	3.280		
Member assembly, board meetings	3.214		
Other administrative expenses	0		
IT expenses	1.805		
Advertising expenses (advertising, travel, memberships & networking)	3.968		
Interest, bank charges	70		
Change in valuation reserves	7.131		
Non-operating expenses	59		
Total expenditure	283.096		
Total revenue	286.027		
Total expenditure	283.096		
Profit of the association	2.931		

Outlook

2024 will bring some changes for VaLoo, as the Migros Pioneer Fund project comes to an end in the second half of the year. The support enabled VaLoo to set the course for the future and build a strong network. Despite the end of the project, we will not lose our pioneering spirit and will continue to drive forward our movement for circular sanitation.

Our priorities in 2024:

- Finding funding opportunities to continue pursuing our mission
- Raise awareness of our cause with the touring exhibition "Flushlight"
- Holding workshops to share practical knowledge
- Support the developed impact projects

We would like to thank everyone who has supported us this year and look forward to an exciting next VaLoo year.

We look forward to another eventful year.

Between 2021 and 2024 VaLoo is made possible by the Migros Pioneer Fund. It looks for and supports ideas with social potential. It enables pioneering projects that break new ground and seek out forward-looking solutions. Its impact-oriented funding approach combines financial support with coaching services. The Migros Pioneer Fund is part of the Migros Group's social engagement and is enabled by the Migros Group with around CHF 15 million annually.

For further information: www.migros-pionierfonds.ch/en

Made possible by  **MIGROS**
Pioneer Fund



Till paints a Flushlight exhibit. Photo: Janik Schäfli

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