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# PROFILE AND FUNCTIONS OF THE ECO-MANAGER: ITS ROLE IN SUSTAINABILITY IN THE AUDIOVISUAL INDUSTRY

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## ABSTRACT

**Introduction:** Green Shooting represents the audiovisual industry's emerging commitment to sustainability. It involves the progressive adoption of environmentally friendly practices and measures to reduce impact and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions throughout all stages of audiovisual product creation. To ensure this process and verify the implementation of green measures in a production, new professional roles have emerged within the industry, one of which is the eco-manager. **Methodology:** In order to describe the work and functions of this role, as well as to detail the expected responsibilities and skills required to perform it, this research conducted a survey of eco-managers in the Spanish audiovisual industry and held in-depth interviews with experts from the field of environmental consulting applied to the audiovisual sector. **Results:** The eco-manager is the person responsible for sustainability on a film set, who, together with other members of the sustainability team —the eco-consultant and eco-PA (production assistant)— is responsible for ensuring that production is as

environmentally friendly as possible and that all professionals involved internalize sustainable behavior. **Discussion and conclusions:** The eco-manager is a recent professional figure in the audiovisual industry, but one whose presence on film sets is increasing. In view of the growing need for audiovisual productions to incorporate these profiles in order to effectively meet the challenge of minimizing their impact on the environment, it was also necessary to define this role and frame its responsibility and mandate within film crews.

**Keywords:** sustainability, eco-manager, Green Shooting, audiovisual production, professional profile, survey, in-depth interview.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

It is only five years ago that the audiovisual industry in Spain began to assume its responsibility towards the environment by adopting actions aimed at mitigating, compensating for, or eliminating the most polluting activities of its operations and those with the greatest impact on the environment (Doñate, 2023). This recent behavior is known as Green Shooting and refers to the set of sustainable measures implemented in the process of generating an audiovisual product throughout all its phases: pre-production, production, post-production, distribution, exhibition, and consumption (Lopera-Mármol & Jiménez-Morales, 2021), with the objective of making it possible to "create fiction and entertainment without compromising natural resources" (Secuoya Studios, n.d.).

This transformation of companies in the audiovisual sector towards a sustainable production model has accelerated in recent years due to several factors:

- i. greater awareness of the considerable impacts of audiovisual activity on the environment, as revealed by numerous studies<sup>1</sup> that in recent years have measured the carbon footprint of the sector, whose CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, "unlike most other European industries, are continuously increasing" (Gassmann & Gouttefarde, 2021, p. 18);
- ii. greater regulatory pressure, increasingly demanding on the sector, through international (Paris Agreement and the 2030 Agenda), European (Green Deal) or national (National Climate Change Adaptation Plan) legislation and regulations that emphasize the need for all sectors and business and industrial players to act collectively, decisively and immediately to reverse global warming;
- iii. greater dependence of the granting of financing (private and public) on environmentally respectful performance by audiovisual players and progressive establishment of sustainable standards to grant such resources (Asenjo McCabe & Herrero Bernal, 2024);

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<sup>1</sup>SPA (March 2021). Carbon Emissions of Film and Television Production; AICP Town Hall: Green the Bid – (2022, December 1). Introducing the Complete Green Production How To; Albert (2022, June 13). Our 2021 Annual; Albert, The National Lottery, BFI Research and Statistics Fund and Arup (2020). "A screen new deal: a route map for sustainable film production"

- iv. greater awareness in society<sup>2</sup> about the climate emergency and a growing call for all social players, including companies in the audiovisual sector, to contribute to the fight against climate change;
- v. greater pressure on corporate leaders in the sector regarding the environmental cost of the life cycle of an audiovisual product as a consequence of the recent presence in academic literature of voices that have focused their attention on the environmental impact of this industry (Maxwell & Miller, 2012; Bozak, 2012; Rust et al., 2022; Maxwell et al., 2015; Starosielski & Walker, 2016; Cubitt, 2017; Kääpä, 2018; Vaughan, 2019 or Kääpä & Vaughan, 2023) analyzing the different ways in which each phase in the process of creating images leaves a significant environmental footprint.

To address the climate challenge in audiovisual productions, it is essential to consolidate the practice of Green Shooting, as it involves the eco-efficient environmental management of all processes and resources involved in the creation of an audiovisual product. This management focuses on the efficient use of materials and energy and the minimization or elimination of waste (Badii et al., 2017). To lead this eco-management, it is important that sustainability specialists be included as permanent members of film crews. Professionals should be specifically assigned responsibilities in this area and ensure compliance with the "green" measures implemented in each production (Spain Film Commission, 2023). Continuous monitoring is vital to guarantee the success of the sustainable strategy. Therefore, it seems advisable to hire a green consultant for planning, research, and communication, as well as green assistants to ensure that the measures are consistently respected and applied (Vaccaro & Topper, 2023).

The Green Screen Project, in its proposals for the future decarbonization of the audiovisual industry, also indicates that productions should seek the help of eco-managers as the most qualified professionals to create a strategic plan that helps reduce the impact of production (Green Screen Project & Secoya Eco-tourange, 2020). Meanwhile, the European Commission study "Greening the European audiovisual industry" (Gassmann & Gouttefarde, 2021) affirms that, based on the evaluation of numerous film and television productions, having an environmental expert or consultant on the team is very useful for achieving the best environmental results. Thus, roles such as environmental manager, eco-consultant, or eco-manager are progressively gaining prominence in the entertainment and cultural industry to achieve the goal of creating sustainable productions (Jiménez-Morales & Lopera-Mármol, 2022).

In short, for the audiovisual industry to be considered sustainable, a key measure will be the promotion of the role of "environmental manager" in audiovisual productions. It is necessary to institutionalize this function to ensure a smooth transition towards

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<sup>2</sup>As evidenced by numerous studies, including: the 2019 Pew Research Center report in 26 countries; the Ipsos "Essentials" report in 15 countries in 2022; The 2021 study La Sociedad Española frente al Cambio Climático (Spanish Society and Climate Change) by Ideara and the Biodiversity Foundation for the Ministry of Ecological Transition; INJUVE's 2020 report on young people in Spain, covering those aged between 14 and 29; Study entitled 'Valores, actitudes y conducta medioambiental de los españoles' (Values, Attitudes, and Environmental Behavior of Spaniards) (BBVA Foundation, 2022)

environmentally friendly policies and practices in the industry (Lopera-Mármol & Jiménez-Morales, 2022), given that efforts to maximize the environmental sustainability of filming will be difficult to implement and measure without a specific person or team being assigned to organize them (Victory, 2015).

### **1.1. The Eco-Manager in the Practice of *Green Shooting***

It can be inferred from the above that a reliable indicator of the expansion of Green Shooting is the growing demand from audiovisual content producers for eco-managers (Tena, 2024) and the fact that their inclusion in teams is becoming increasingly common (García Higuera, 2024). Indeed, gradual awareness of the negative environmental impact of the audiovisual sector has led some production companies to implement more sustainable practices, notably the increasing hiring of eco-managers on film sets (Lupu et al., 2023).

These professionals are responsible for advising on the drafting of a sustainability plan and the design of a strategy for measuring and reducing the carbon footprint, through the adoption of a series of actions to be implemented throughout the life cycle of an audiovisual product (Spain Film Commission, 2023). These individuals are responsible for the sustainability of the production and undertake the tasks of educating and assisting production staff in all aspects, from pre-production conceptualization to the practical aspects of filming, in accordance with the principles of sustainability (Lopera-Mármol & Jiménez Morales, 2022).

Since being environmentally friendly on set means much more than simply placing a recycling bin on set—it also involves educating the crew, providing resources for sustainable alternatives, and monitoring initiatives and progress in this area—hiring eco-supervisors is advisable. Including these specifically trained and informed individuals in productions, who pay attention to these details, guarantees higher success rates in achieving environmental goals and the proper oversight of a production's sustainability efforts (O'Brien, 2014).

The eco-manager, along with the eco-consultant or eco-advisor, would be responsible for managing eco-efficiency in audiovisual production, identifying production impacts, and proposing sustainable practices to reduce them. These two roles are complementary and work together to successfully implement sustainability plans in the industry, in such a way that “one is the brain and the other is the muscle, and they are perfectly matched to make production more sustainable” (Mrs. Greenfilm, 2022). Ultimately, both professionals would be responsible for implementing the sustainability plan and ensuring good environmental practices in production (Creast, 2022), ideally being part of a structure comprised of the two of them and reinforced by an eco-PA or green delegate/assistant on set.

In the Green Book being developed by the Secuoya Group (Secuoya Foundation, 2022) these three roles are identified, which are also recognized by the Basque Green Film (2022) as the main professionals in the audiovisual sector trained in the management of sustainability on set, where the eco-manager is the person responsible for sustainability throughout the entire production, their main functions being to write the sustainability plan and ensure compliance with it.

Ruiz Guzmán (2022) points out the importance of adding the role of the greener and an ecological department to film shoots, a group of people in production dedicated to keeping the set clean, he adds. The author therefore links these figures to the production department and describes their functions as follows: establishing recycling, composting, and trash stations; separating, sorting, and managing waste and places where the production can make donations; educating staff on how to reduce individual waste; and establishing reward programs with team members who minimize the amount of waste.

Due to the relative novelty of the position, considering that professionals in this role have been practicing for no more than four years (Asenjo-McCabe & Herrero Bernal, 2025), there is still a lack of understanding regarding the responsibilities of the eco-manager, their decision-making capacity, and how this role should function within a production (Lupu et al., 2023). There is also a lack of standardization of the work and functions of sustainability departments, as there is no standardized job description detailing the expected responsibilities or the skills required to perform these roles (Hadas, 2024). Therefore, in order to broaden and deepen the definition and characterization of this profile, this research surveyed the professionals responsible for ensuring (designing, planning, proposing, monitoring, implementing, guaranteeing, measuring, and evaluating) sustainability on film sets: eco-advisors and eco-managers.

## **2. OBJECTIVES**

The objective of this research is to delineate the characteristics of the recently emergent professional role, designated as the "eco-manager," which is tasked with the mitigation of the environmental impact inherent in the development of audiovisual productions. This research aims to specify the eco-manager's primary functions, its integration within the filming team, its designated position and rank within the framework of sustainable teams, and its distinct role in relation to other figures that ensure sustainability in the domain of audiovisual production.

The authors start with a series of research questions:

- RQ1: How are sustainability teams usually configured in audiovisual productions in Spain, what is the place and what role does each professional assume in them, and particularly the eco-manager?
- RQ2: What are the tasks and main functions assumed by the eco-manager and what responsibilities does this role entail, unlike other sustainable roles?
- RQ3: What qualities, training, skills, and competencies are necessary for a professional to effectively fulfill the role of an eco-manager on an audiovisual production?

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

To achieve the objective of this article, a quantitative-qualitative methodology will be applied, offering diverse perspectives of analysis through the combination of two research tools, namely:

- (i) Survey aimed at a sample of professionals in the audiovisual sector who currently perform the role of eco-manager in the industry in Spain.
- (ii) In-depth interviews with a panel of eco-consultants, expert informants who work for environmental consulting applied to the audiovisual field in Spain.

#### **3.1. Quantitative Methodology**

The survey has been considered the ideal instrument for measuring the phenomenon under study through the systematic collection of participants' self-reports (Meneses & Rodríguez, 2011) and for obtaining data of sociological interest by questioning members of our population (Sierra Bravo, 1994). In this case, it has been considered a suitable technique for achieving the objectives of this article because it is particularly appropriate for questioning subjects who contribute to a subject of study due to their level of knowledge and professional expertise (López Roldán & Fachelli, 2015) and because it "collects and analyzes data from a representative sample of cases from a larger population or universe, whose characteristics are to be explored, described, predicted, and/or explained" (García Ferrando, 1993, p. 124).

The target group of this research consists of audiovisual professionals currently working as eco-managers on film and television productions in Spain. The size of this group was determined by using information gathered from various sources: film commissions, environmental consultancies focused on the audiovisual sector, LinkedIn profiles, and production companies, and further refined through the snowball effect.

Thus, in the directories of local professionals working in film commissions, there are only four of them that have registered 22 individuals under the categories of eco-friendly/sustainable (Málaga Film Office) or eco-manager (Madrid Film Office, Film Madrid, and Illes Balears Film Commission). However, only 6 of these 22 actually work as eco-managers. Three other film commissions have categories under which these profiles could be listed, but no professionals are registered.

An additional 24 professionals were contacted, located in consulting firms, production companies, or on the LinkedIn social network. This highlights that our sample belongs to a very small, known, and finite universe, where it is possible to identify each of its constituent units. Since the researcher's interest lies not in the specific individual answering the questionnaire, but in the population to which they belong (Casas Anguita et al., 2003), the number of elements/cases in our sample ( $n=28$ ) represents a significant proportion of the population, reflecting almost all of it. Therefore, a high degree of representativeness can be expected.

In conclusion, a non-probabilistic survey based on purposive sampling is presented, and it is especially suitable for collecting data from small and very specific populations,

useful in characterizing social forms and as an indicated procedure to reach cases that possess a lot of qualified information on the subject being studied (Alaminos, 1993).

An anonymous questionnaire was prepared according to the steps recommended by Igartua Perosanz (2006) and Santesmases (1997) and it consisted of 19 questions (Q1 to Q19) which was made accessible through a link distributed by email between June and October, 2024. The received responses were subsequently coded and processed in the SPSS computer software which, together with the Excel program, assisted the authors in carrying out the descriptive statistical analysis (percentiles, means, modes, medians and cross tables) as well as the preparation of graphs and tables.

### 3.2. Qualitative Methodology

Regarding the qualitative methodology, semi-structured, focused in-depth interviews (Scribano, 2007) were used as a technique that allows the gathering of information and knowledge on a given topic through a long personal conversation, in which the interviewee freely expresses the personal opinions, attitudes, or preferences on the subject of study. It is, therefore, "a social interaction between two people in which a communication of meanings will be generated; one will explain his/her view of the topic to the interviewee, and the other will try to understand or interpret that explanation" (Varguillas Carmona & Ribot de Flores, 2007, p. 250).

The sampling was purposive (Izcara Palacios, 2007) and based on the selection of informants according to the quality, breadth, or depth of the information they could offer the researchers regarding the subject of investigation (National System for Evaluation, Accreditation, and Certification of Educational Quality [Sineace], 2020). These are professionals dedicated to advising on the eco-management of film shoots and hiring the professionals for the sustainability teams who will be responsible for implementing the environmental plans agreed upon for each production, as shown in Table 1. They were therefore considered relevant individuals to be part of the sample because they are professionals who know their field (Robles, 2011) and, according to Grounded Theory, have the potential to help the researchers understand the phenomenon under study (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

**Table 1.**

*Table with the list of informants interviewed*

INFORMANT	CONSULTING FIRM	INFORMANT	CONSULTING FIRM
Paloma Andrés Urrutia	Mrs. Greenfilm	Francisco Javier Gómez Elvira	The other green production
Yolanda Costas	Creast	Eneko Muruzábal	Bilibin Circular
Marta García Larriu	Another Way	Jennifer Castañeda	Sustainable Filming
Oliver Lupiañez	K is for Knowledge	Yanira Cáceres	Freelance
Asia Jarzyna	Willco/ freelance	Anna Cassina	Amazon Studios

**Source:** Elaborated by the authors.

The ten interviews were conducted in accordance with the recommendations of Kvale (1996), Martínez (1998), and Hernández Sampieri et al. (2014) and were carried out virtually between October, 2023 and February, 2024. They were then subjected to Thematic Content Analysis (TCA) as a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns or themes within the data that represent a certain level of response pattern or meaning. This analysis allows to organize and describe in detail the information collected and capture what is important in relation to the research questions, helping to properly understand/interpret the phenomenon studied (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The analysis guide has been followed in six phases, and the process has been completed by measuring the validity, reliability, and accuracy of the data, checking the credibility (Castillo & Vásquez, 2003), conformability, and transferability of the information (Valles, 1997).

## **4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **4.1. Survey Results**

#### **4.1.1. Results From the First Section (Q1 to Q5). Demographic Profile**

The sample, slightly represented by more women (57.1%) than men, is made up of professionals of Spanish nationality (100%), aged between 30 and 45 years of age (50%) —followed by those over 45 years of age (28.6%)— with higher education in 78.6% of cases (53.6% fall into the postgraduate category), mainly from the field of communication (in 60.7% of cases) followed by environmental studies (25.5%).

#### **4.1.2. Results of the Second Section (Q6 to Q10). Professional Profile**

A total of 42.9% of respondents have been working as eco-managers for between 2 and 3 years, with those having less than a year of experience forming the second largest group (28.6%). A mere 17.9% of respondents have been in this role for more than three years, thereby confirming the relatively recent emergence of the profession. However, a significant proportion of the participants, specifically 89.3%, have prior experience in the audiovisual industry, with a notable majority of these individuals holding roles in production (75% of the sample).

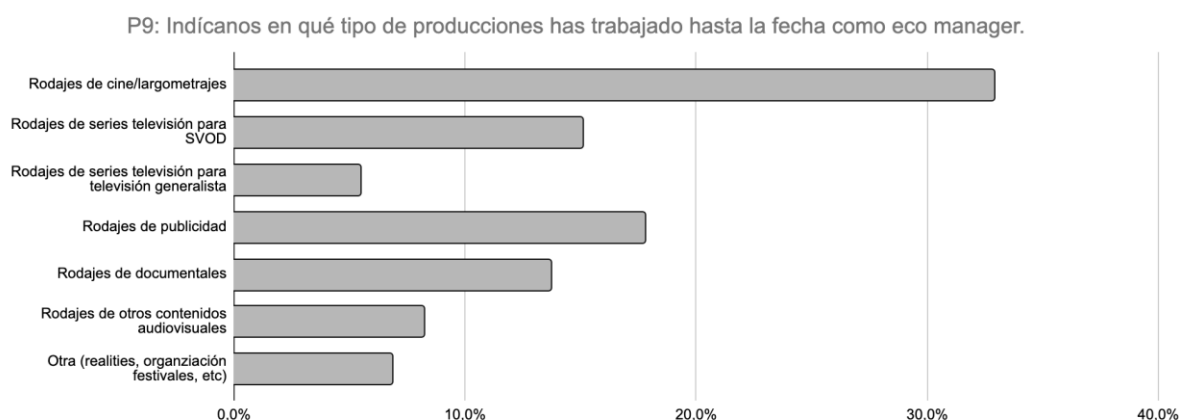
A significant proportion of these professionals, 46.4%, engage in freelance work, being contracted directly by production companies on a project-by-project basis. A substantial percentage, 42.9%, are employed by environmental consulting firms that specialize in the audiovisual sector. A mere 10.7% of respondents reported affiliation with a production company's sustainability department.

The ensuing graph (Figure 1) elucidates the type of productions for which respondents have primarily worked as eco-managers. Film productions are the most frequently mentioned, a fact surely linked to the inclusion of environmental criteria in the granting of aid for the production of feature films (general and selective aid for the production of feature films from the ICAA).



**Figure 1.**

*Graph with the answers to question 9*



**Source:** Elaborated by the authors.

When asked about the most common and recurring structure in which they have been integrated into the productions they have worked on, it was highlighted that the most frequent model (35.7%) is that of a complete sustainability team, made up of an eco-consultant, an eco-manager, and an eco-runner. This is followed, in 21.4% of cases, by the integration of the eco-manager as another member of the production team, who assumes sustainability responsibilities in addition to the tasks typical of this department. Eco-managers who work alone, as the sole person responsible for sustainability matters on set, represent the third largest group (17.9%). Some variations on these implementations have also emerged. For example, a team of eco-consultant + eco-manager without an eco-runner; an eco-consultant team with eco-PA support on set, without an eco-manager; The eco-manager collaborates directly with the location manager and the department assistants who assume the role of green runners; a production person (assistant or helper) who takes on these sustainable functions, as one of the respondents states, "In my experience, the eco-manager is not present on set most of the time. A production person is in charge of carrying out these tasks" (Anonymous, 2003).

#### **4.1.3. Results of the Third Section (Q11 to Q14). Training Profile**

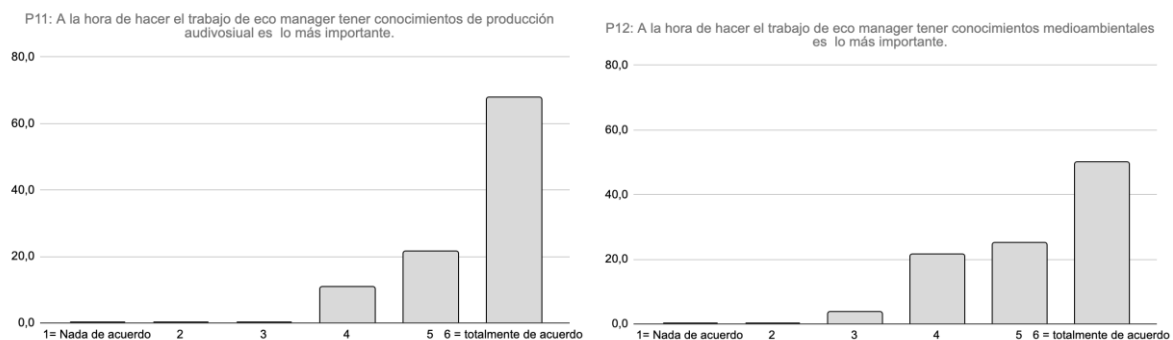
For the most part, the respondents agree that to perform their job effectively, it is paramount to have a thorough understanding of how the industry and each department within an audiovisual production operate. It is also essential to have a deep familiarity with the unique nature and idiosyncrasies of such a distinctive ecosystem as an audiovisual shoot. This is evidenced by the fact that only values 4, 5, and 6 were selected on a 6-point Likert scale (67.9% of the sample chose 6 = I strongly agree). None of these professionals consider this knowledge to be of little or no necessity (values 1, 2, or 3). The data exhibits a right-skewed distribution, with the mode and median (6) being higher than the mean (5.57).

Conversely, as shown in Figure 2, knowledge of environmental regulations and environmental management, which is essential for offering sustainable alternatives in

each of the processes involved in audiovisual filming, is not considered as important for performing the job of an eco-manager effectively. This is evidenced by the fact that responses are more dispersed between values 3 and 6 on a 6-point Likert scale, with values 1 and 2 (indicating that this knowledge is not considered important) not being selected in any case. Value 6 (= I strongly agree) is again the most frequently chosen value, with 50% of the responses. However, although the mean is 5.21, there is a greater deviation in the responses (SD=0.91).

**Figure 2.**

*Graphs with the answers to questions 11 and 12*



**Source:** Elaborated by the authors.

In any case, Figure 3 shows how 64.3% of the sample has received specific training to perform the role of eco-manager, compared to the rest who have learned on the job and through experience (21.4%) or from other eco-managers who have taught them the trade (14.3%).

**Figure 3.**

*Graph with the answers to question 13*

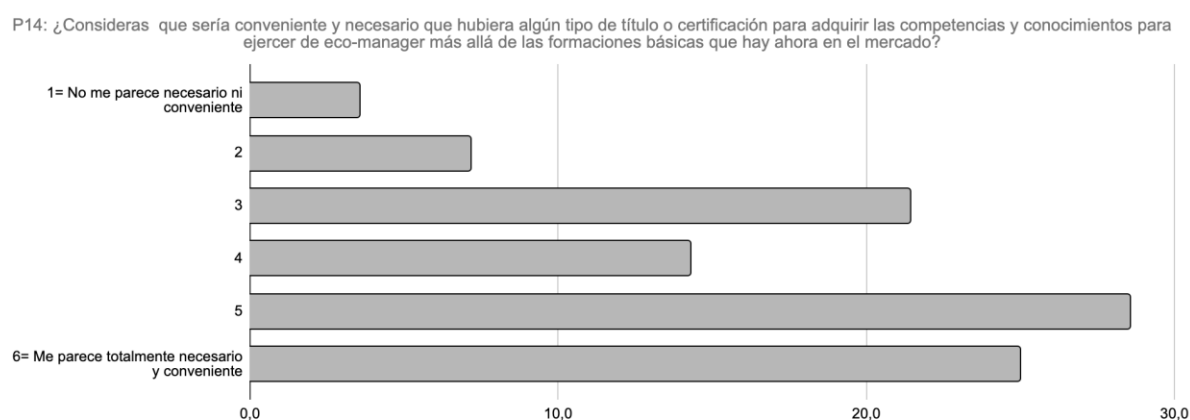


**Source:** Elaborated by the authors.

Even so, more than half of the sample considers that it would be convenient and necessary to have some kind of degree or certification to work as an eco-manager (53.6% choose values 5 and 6 on a 6-value Likert scale, where 6 = Totally necessary and convenient). In any case, the distribution of responses to this question is platykurtic due to negative kurtosis (-0.62), with the data values not very concentrated around the mean (4.32) and resulting in a dispersed and quite heterogeneous distribution. The high variability is corroborated by the standard deviation (1.44) and variance (2.07) coefficients, which implies that there is no unanimous and clear opinion regarding this issue (see Figure 4).

**Figure 4.**

*Graph with the answers to question 14*



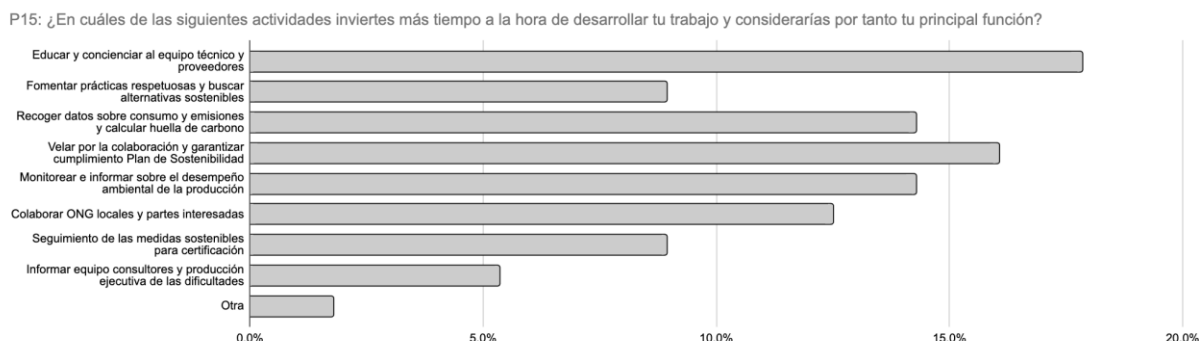
**Source:** Elaborated by the authors.

#### 4.1.4. Results of the Fourth Section (P15 to P19). Main Functions

The activities to which respondents dedicate the most time, and which they therefore consider their main functions in audiovisual productions, are shown below in Figure 5:

**Figure 5.**

*Graph with the responses to question P15*



**Source:** Elaborated by the authors.

It is highlighted that the educational work carried out by these individuals, together with the general task of ensuring compliance with the commitments agreed upon in

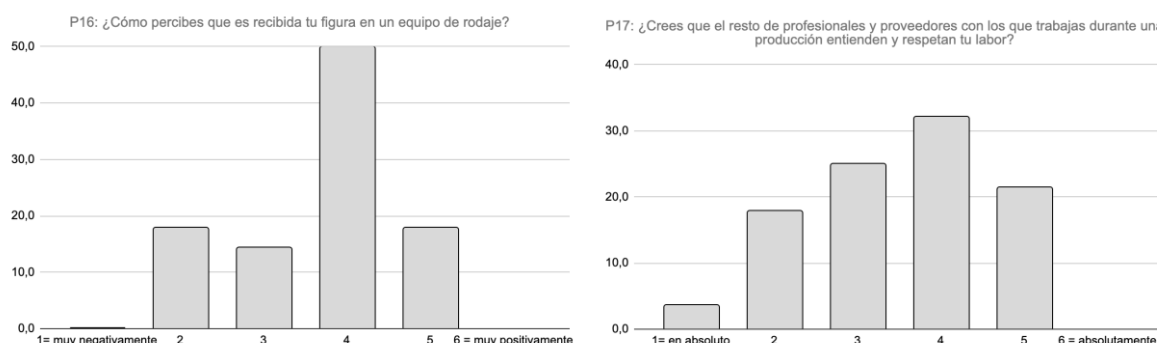
the sustainability plan, is the most relevant, followed by the more procedural and technical tasks, such as the collection of evidence and data and the monitoring of production performance.

The following question reveals that the professionals surveyed are received lukewarmly by the rest of the filming professionals, as the average is 3.68 (mode 4) on a 6-value Likert scale, and while none choose the value 1 (=Very negatively), neither does any respondent choose the value 6 (=Very positively), denoting that the responses are concentrated in the central values, but with a certain dispersion (SD=0.98).

In turn, the eco-managers surveyed held widely differing opinions when asked whether they believe the other professionals and suppliers they work with during production understand and respect their work (see Figure 6). With a mean of 3.50 and a mode of 4, the standard deviation (1.14), variance (1.30), and kurtosis (-0.72) confirm the dispersion in the responses. No respondent selected the value 6 = Absolutely (understood and respected).

**Figure 6.**

*Graphs with the answers to questions 16 and 17*



**Source:** Elaborated by the authors.

Related to this aspect, the most prominent obstacles that respondents encounter when performing their work are detailed in Table 2:

**Table 2.**

*Table with the answers to question 18*

Question P18		Alternative Response	Cases	Percentage
What are the main obstacles you encounter in performing your job as an eco-manager on a	V18.1	Sustainability is, or is perceived as, expensive	4	5.1%
	V18.2	The rush and deadlines in each department (the inherent chaos and whirlwind of a film shoot)	17	21.8%
	V18.3	Inertia and customs or attachment to traditional methods in the sector when addressing its different processes ("this has always been done this way")	13	16.7%
	V18.4	The perception by film crews that environmental parameters are secondary or unnecessary compared to other priorities	17	21.8%

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production?		of each department		
	V18.5	The egos of certain individuals within the filming who do not give up their privileges (casting, for example).	5	6.4%
	V18.6	The lack of conviction among key managers and team leaders who see sustainability as an inconvenient obligation that must be fulfilled	13	16.7%
	V18.7	Widespread lack of awareness about the impacts of the industry: there is a willingness but a lack of training and information for the teams	8	10.3%
	V18.8	Resistance to sustainable measures because they are seen as stifling creativity	1	1.3%
	V18.9	Other	0	0.0%
<b>Total</b>			73	100.0%

**Source:** Elaborated by the authors.

The results of these last three questions reveal that while the educational work for teams is considered to be the most important thing, it must be intensified so that these professionals can perform their work more effectively and so that the teams are more receptive and have a more positive attitude toward the principles championed by sustainability professionals. They also highlight the importance of key figures within a production supporting the work done by eco-managers so that, by being validated by the mandate issued by the main production managers, environmental guidelines are received with less resistance and skepticism and with greater authority and conviction.

Regarding the achievements obtained after their involvement in a production, the surveyed sample highlights the following results collected in Table 3:

**Table 3.**

*Table with the answers to question 19*

Question P19	Alternative Responses		Cases	Percentage
Regarding the latest production in which you have been involved as eco-manager, which of these statements do you identify	V19.1	We have managed to reduce our carbon footprint	8	28.6
	V19.2	We have managed to measure our carbon footprint effectively and accurately so that we can offset it	6	21.4
	V19.3	We have done what we can due to lack of time/budget and/or support from the team and production managers	5	17.9
	V19.4	We have managed to raise awareness among team members so that they will be conscious of their impact during the next shoot and work to reduce it	6	21.4

with?	V19.5	Other	3	10.7
<b>Total</b>			28	100.0

**Source:** Elaborated by the authors.

In Other, the achievement of having managed to avoid serious environmental impacts or having managed to implement the environmental sustainability plan, designing measures adapted to the project, is highlighted. The responses are consistent with the greater efforts and main tasks carried out by these individuals in a production.

## **4.2. Results of the In-Depth Interviews**

### **4.2.1. Results in Relation to RQ1**

According to those interviewed, the work of eco-management is divided into three general functions:

- (i) consulting, management and design of the sustainability plan; then, during filming,
- (ii) recording of evidence and monitoring of the Plan and compliance with the objectives and the sustainable mandate; and, finally,
- (iii) impact measurement and footprint calculation in order to design compensation.

These tasks are usually divided among the three professionals that typically make up a complete sustainability team: the eco-consultant, the eco-manager, and the eco-PA, who assume, respectively, the functions of director, head, and assistant in sustainability, replicating the structure of any other department (P. Andrés Urrutia, personal communication, December 4, 2023). Both the terminology used to describe these roles and the proposed hierarchy are models coined by American platforms and subsequently adapted by Spanish consulting firms (P. Andrés Urrutia, personal communication, December 4, 2023; A. Cassina, personal communication, November 2, 2023).

Most of the sample agree that these three separate professionals are recognized in sustainability teams, although and depending on the nature and scale of production, all these responsibilities could fall on a single person or be divided between two, or be shared, as often happens, with the production team, thus identifying “various implementation models” (Y. Costas, personal communication, October 26, 2023).

Experts emphasize that these professionals do not work alone, and production always maintains a very close link with the sustainability team, when it does not directly assume some of the responsibilities in this area. Production is often in charge of distributing tasks and centralizing work and information, necessarily in coordination with the department heads of each area (Y. Costas, personal communication, October 26, 2023). In addition to the collaboration and cooperation of the production team and all department heads—especially the location scouting department, which is key and closely linked to environmental management (J. Castañeda, personal communication, November 10, 2023)—the support of the controller and the accounting, finance, and

administration departments is also needed, particularly for the measurement phase (Y. Costas, personal communication, October 26, 2023; E. Muruzábal, personal communication, October 26, 2023) "because you depend heavily on invoice-level documentation" (O. Lupiañez, personal communication, November 7, 2023). Close collaboration with screenwriters and art directors is also considered crucial for achieving sustainability goals (A. Jarzyna, personal communication, November 2, 2023).

According to informants, each of the professionals in this sustainable triad would have a series of defined responsibilities.

Thus, the eco-consultant would be the person who analyzes and studies the project from the initial documents handled by the production company during development, such as the script (O. Lupiañez, personal communication, November 7, 2023; M. García Larriu, personal communication, November 16, 2023). After a series of meetings with the executive production team and department heads, the consultant assigns, distributes, or seeks sustainable commitments and objectives, always in accordance with the available economic, production, and personnel resources. Based on this, they design and draft a sustainability plan or environmental document that implements a series of actions (O. Lupiañez, personal communication, November 7, 2023) and establishes a set of measures to be carried out, often determined by the environmental body or certification sought (Y. Cáceres, personal communication, November 28, 2023). In addition, once production has begun, they continue to review and monitor the documentation, data, and evidence that the eco-manager and eco-PA have gathered and submitted, because when filming is complete, they are responsible for producing a sustainability and carbon footprint report based on the criteria established in the measurement protocol followed. Thus, in the closing phase of the project, and if there is verification, the eco-consultant, having gathered and compiled all the necessary documentation, contacts and coordinates with the verification entity chosen by the production company (although often proposed by the eco-consultant himself) providing it with the required report based on the methodology or certification adopted. In turn, if the verification is approved, the eco-advisor generates the documentation to be sent to the project's financing entity or sponsor, mainly in Spain, the ICAA (O. Lupiañez, personal communication, November 7, 2023). Thus, this role is primarily in the preliminary advisory phase, prior to pre-production, to design the overall plan, analyze and assess where action can be taken, and make major decisions (E. Muruzábal, personal communication, October 26, 2023), and in the final phase of the subsequent certification process, while always continuing to supervise the project (O. Lupiañez, personal communication, November 7, 2023). The eco-advisor is therefore attentive to the film's structure, the corporate strategy, and the added value that sustainability efforts bring to the production (to the film, the production company itself, and the director) (P. Andrés Urrutia, personal communication, December 4, 2023).

The eco-manager, for their part, is responsible for ensuring compliance with the sustainability plan within the production. This includes reviewing the implementation of the actions it incorporates, coordinating everything necessary to achieve the established objectives (Y. Cáceres, personal communication, November 28, 2023),

verifying that all agreed-upon efforts are being made to reduce impact, and monitoring the necessary steps for certification, if applicable, regarding the relevant data collection (E. Muruzábal, personal communication, October 26, 2023; O. Lupiañez, personal communication, November 7, 2023). This professional will manage and supervise the day-to-day operations of the shoot (O. Lupiañez, personal communication, November 7, 2023) and therefore must be present on set, closely involved with the project—like any team leader (J. Castañeda, personal communication, November 10, 2023). Among other tasks, the eco-manager must maintain constant communication with the heads of each department, offering them sustainable alternatives and giving them access to certified suppliers (A. Cassina, personal communication, November 2, 2023). If the eco-consultant is the sustainability director, the eco-manager holds a leadership position and is intimately familiar with "this world of suppliers, the contacts, and dedicates all their time to finding sustainable alternatives" (P. Andrés Urrutia, personal communication, December 4, 2023). The eco-manager is thus the person who focuses on ensuring that everything that happens on set unfolds according to the agreed-upon sustainable parameters, and that, beyond

collecting data on how many kilometers a truck has traveled or weighing the waste (because, although the data is necessary, it's not what will add value to the production), the focus is on interventions on the set, for example, preventing a spill or cutting a tree branch. (Y. Costas, personal communication, October 26, 2023)

Finally, the eco-runner or eco-PA is usually someone linked to the production department and is at the bottom of the sustainability team hierarchy. They are typically production assistants or location scouts (J. Castañeda, personal communication, November 10, 2023).

A jack-of-all-trades within the production team structure, the person who is on set during filming days and is responsible for gathering the information requested by the eco-consultant, collecting evidence and recording that data. (F. J. Gómez Elvira, personal communication, October 26, 2023)

This green runner or eco-assistant is also the person who is responsible for recycling, "making sure the containers are there, that people refill their water bottles" (Y. Cáceres, personal communication, November 28, 2023) and is aware of the issue of waste management, in addition to providing support in the procedures for donations of material (for example, the remains of the catering to a food bank).

#### **4.2.2. Results Related to RQ2**

Regarding the breakdown of functions, and considering that a single person often assumes all the management of eco-efficiency on set without responsibilities being divided, the following would be the tasks that sustainability managers usually have to carry out in an audiovisual production:

- 1) Script intervention: Although those consulted indicate that they rarely have the opportunity to intervene in this development phase and contribute narrative solutions aligned with environmental criteria, efforts are made to include



sustainable messages in the scripts, considering where a sustainable message could be woven in: "Don't pick up a plastic bottle, don't take a plane" (A. Jarzyna, personal communication, November 2, 2023). In any case, the role is more about advising and suggesting than intervening: "Why don't you include some aspect of sustainability in the script, for example, if a character throws a bottle in the trash on screen, have them throw it in the appropriate container; have the character walk instead of taking the car...?" (F. J. Gómez Elvira, personal communication, October 26, 2023), or "If someone has to go shopping for clothes, why not go to a secondhand store?" (O. Lupiañez, personal communication, November 7, 2023).

- 2) Identifying the greatest impacts: the first step in the work of eco-managers is a script breakdown from an environmental impact perspective (M. García Larriu, personal communication, November 16, 2023) so that the most polluting actions can be identified, which are usually "always linked to locations, transportation, whether or not local staff are hired, these kinds of decisions" (E. Muruzábal, personal communication, October 26, 2023). Thus, working according to an ambitious, initial, and theoretical plan, based on the script, they analyze all the impacts detected across the seven carbon footprint emission categories plus the environmental impact component. The production is analyzed and, according to its budget and creative approach, everything that can be done is assessed, "and a guide is agreed upon to be shared with the team" (Y. Costas, personal communication, October 26, 2023) in order to reduce such impacts (O. Lupiañez, personal communication, November 7, 2023).
- 3) Contact with team leaders to promote sustainable production practices: This work includes sharing the orders, mandate, and sustainable criteria with the rest of the team, speaking with the heads of all departments, and reminding them of the environmental objectives throughout production (Y. Costas, personal communication, October 26, 2023). These meetings with department heads, in addition to explaining the sustainable production objectives, aim to explore ways to reduce certain impacts, offer suggestions and recommendations for them to consider when making decisions related to their work area and the processes and routines of each department, and work on the most sustainable alternatives. This work with the teams is ongoing throughout production, and the goal is to "encourage them to take the most feasible and common-sense actions" (E. Muruzábal, personal communication, October 26, 2023). Ultimately, it's about "giving the 'eco badge,' telling all departments where they can make changes" (A. Jarzyna, personal communication, November 2, 2023), in a task of "being on top of everyone, trying to ensure compliance with sustainability criteria" (J. Castañeda, personal communication, November 10, 2023). It's also advisable to communicate the results of the efforts made during production to all team members at the end of the production process, "so we know everything we've done well and everything that can be improved" (A. Jarzyna, personal communication, November 2, 2023).
- 4) Coordination with the location department: the objective would be to reconcile location requirements with environmental standards, setting limits on actions. If the filming location is very fragile, it is recommended to change the location

or, if filming there is insisted on, a modification to the way the actions described in the script are carried out is proposed (Y. Cáceres, personal communication, November 28, 2023). In the search for locations, an attempt will be made to reduce set construction (J. Castañeda, personal communication, November 10, 2023) and to seek proximity to avoid unnecessary transportation (O. Lupiañez, personal communication, November 7, 2023), which will facilitate the management of hotels and other production needs by minimizing travel or optimizing the transportation plan (E. Muruzábal, personal communication, October 26, 2023). Eco-managers typically open locations, verify that they are suitable for filming, and ensure that "when the day's shooting ends, everything is left as it should be" (J. Castañeda, personal communication, November 10, 2023), taking responsibility for returning everything to its place (Y. Cáceres, personal communication, November 28, 2023). This also includes cordoning off and marking access areas to prevent spills, littering, soil erosion, etc., especially in natural areas, and controlling the movement of equipment. Ultimately, this work is linked to all aspects of on- set impact and ensuring that "everything is left clean" at the end, just as it was found initially (Y. Costas, personal communication, October 26, 2023).

- 5) Sustainable communication on screen: Efforts are made to leverage the platform offered by the cinema or television screen to launch positive sustainable communication, introducing elements that support the green message through tangible aspects that appear on screen. For example, "with artistry, we work hard trying to incorporate sustainable elements into the set design and props: lots of bikes, more sustainable transportation...all those things that can be explained through the sets" (A. Jarzyna, personal communication, November 2, 2023). O. Lupiañez corroborates this type of sustainable suggestion by proposing the introduction of "hybrid or electric cars, electric scooters and bikes; if the situation is in a kitchen, avoid plastic bottles and cups and single-use items, and install elegant recycling stations in the kitchen" (personal communication, November 7, 2023).
- 6) Supplier relations: Given the audiovisual industry's broad reach and its reliance on various auxiliary services for production, contracting certified suppliers and purchasing "green" products is a constant, key variable that affects all departments. Working with suppliers is very intensive and involves a significant education and awareness component, gradually raising awareness among these companies (F. J. Gómez Elvira, personal communication, October 26, 2023) about the need for their contribution to the industry's full green transformation by adapting their offerings to sustainable standards (A. Jarzyna, personal communication, November 2, 2023).
- 7) Seeking sustainable alternatives: Related to the above, supporting production in locating and communicating with sustainable suppliers and producers for each department is a crucial task. It is essential to continuously identify needs and offer more sustainable alternatives whenever possible (A. Jarzyna, personal communication, November 2, 2023). Managing these alternative processes for all filming problems, situations, and needs for each department, facilitating more environmentally friendly practices, is essential for achieving sustainability goals. An example would be facilitating a connection to the electrical grid and

leaving the generator as a last resort (O. Lupiañez, personal communication, November 7, 2023; M. García Larriu, personal communication, November 16, 2023) or proposing alternative processes for meetings, for example, with video calls from home, and "this way we avoid 50 people having to travel to a location" (F. J. Gómez Elvira, personal communication, October 26, 2023). Ultimately, to mitigate the various impacts, "I have to offer an alternative" (M. García Larriu, personal communication, November 16, 2023).

- 8) Sustainable use of resources: the optimized use of all resources and materials in production (water, energy, food, raw materials, etc.) should be encouraged, promoting the circular economy through actions such as renting or donating. For example, a set that has already been used "should be rented or donated; it shouldn't be discarded or stored in a warehouse if it's not going to be used for an immediate subsequent production" (O. Lupiañez, personal communication, November 7, 2023). Ultimately, the principle of recycling should be applied whenever possible (Y. Costas, personal communication, October 26, 2023). This aspect is linked to collaborative work and synergies with local organizations to raise environmental awareness and promote sustainability by reusing materials, fostering a zero-waste policy, and extending the life of already used resources.
- 9) Waste management: This task of controlling and managing this aspect with the help of production or external waste management companies—and considering that, depending on the data that needs to be collected for the carbon footprint, weighing may be necessary (O. Lupiañez, personal communication, November 7, 2023)—requires coordination with the different departments, especially those that generate the most waste, such as art or catering. Furthermore, it requires knowledge of the characteristics of the area so that, for example, "I can go to film somewhere, but if it doesn't have a recycling plant, I have to interact with the system to see if they can provide it" (M. García Larriu, personal communication, November 16, 2023).
- 10) It is crucial to raise awareness and educate the team and suppliers throughout the entire audiovisual product lifecycle to ensure their collaboration and commitment to the sustainability plan. This effort aims to motivate the team and help them understand the importance of each action. This educational work seeks to encourage professionals to actively collaborate through contributions from their departments or areas of work. This educational approach also fosters a greater awareness so that people "approach the next project differently" (J. Castañeda, personal communication, November 10, 2023). With effective work, consulting, and support, "it is highly likely that professionals will leave with habits they will internalize" (M. García Larriu, personal communication, November 16, 2023). The didactic role is fundamental because, in the words of M. García Larriu, personal communication, November 16, 2023:

People don't understand what's happening with the climate. If you don't explain to them that vital resources are disappearing, that our lives depend on it, that we have a broken biological system, you're forcing them to do something they don't even know why they should.

- 11) Recording impacts, collecting data and evidence on consumption and emissions from all departments for carbon footprint calculation and the adoption of offsetting measures: it is necessary to monitor and report on the environmental performance of production, tracking resource consumption, waste generated, and emissions produced, collecting information throughout the entire process, and gathering verification sources. This involves collecting evidence that the agreed-upon environmental actions are being implemented, taking daily photographs of these aspects, "asking the generator operator about their diesel consumption every day, collecting taxi receipts, and compiling photographs, receipts, or data" (F. J. Gómez Elvira, personal communication, October 26, 2023). The goal is to subsequently calculate the carbon footprint, a very laborious process given the large amount of documentation that must be collected and recorded (A. Cassina, personal communication, November 2, 2023). Once the footprint has been measured, the next step is to make the most appropriate decisions to offset the CO<sub>2</sub> emitted by production (A. Jarzyna, personal communication, November 2, 2023). Measuring the footprint will also be necessary to obtain the relevant certifications in each case.
- 12) Prepare an environmental impact report for the public administration or the project's funding entity, along with a cost analysis that reflects the reduction of impacts or the compensation plan. This implies that throughout the entire production process, it is necessary to monitor the sustainable measures adopted, aimed at obtaining audited sustainability certification and complying with the sustainability plan.

#### **4.2.3. Results Related to RQ3**

Finally, the last issue discussed with the interviewees was the ideal profile to assume these responsibilities and the qualities that these figures should ideally possess to carry out their work in the most effective way.

First, it is emphasized that the eco-manager must be a dedicated professional with a specific temperament (E. Muruzábal, personal communication, October 26, 2023): capable of dialogue and negotiation, fostering a harmonious work environment (A. Jarzyna, personal communication, November 2, 2023), and demonstrating empathy towards the work of all departments (M. García Larriu, personal communication, November 16, 2023). These individuals must use a very approachable and practical language, relevant to the day-to-day realities of filming, direct and adapted to the context of sustainable production, so that all stakeholders (crew and suppliers) feel involved (O. Lupiañez, personal communication, November 7, 2023) and understand the purpose of the actions to be implemented. For the development of this role, and that of eco-runner, it works very well for "people who already have experience in production; they are more useful" (P. Andrés Urrutia, personal communication, December 4, 2023), due to their organizational skills and because they understand all the dynamics and common problems of filming. Ultimately, and according to the opinion of our sample as a whole, while the *eco-PA* definitely needs to be someone with experience on set who, in any case, receives basic training, the eco-manager has to be a professional specializing in audiovisual production with training in these skills and abilities (Y. Cáceres, personal communication, November 28, 2023) or "can be

someone with training on both sides, the audiovisual side and/or the environmental side" (M. García Larriu, personal communication, November 16, 2023).

Thus, the sample agrees that eco-managers must have a high level of production knowledge and then know where and how to find information on environmental issues, but "above all, they must be professionals who understand well where to look for those improvements in the production processes of all departments" (A. Jarzyna, personal communication, November 2, 2023), so "Production people who learn about sustainability and have the ability to integrate well into the team and share their know-how work better" (P. Andrés Urrutia, personal communication, December 4, 2023) and who bring that knowledge to the shoot "to analyze it and to be able to guide it in the best possible way" (M. García Larriu, personal communication, November 16, 2023). One of the most important things is turning these sustainable efforts into concrete actions so people see them as possible and reasonable. "You can do this well if you understand each department's work" (A. Jarzyna, personal communication, November 2, 2023). In fact, as E. Muruzábal points out (personal communication, October 26, 2023), when the sustainable interlocutor "is a film professional, it's very noticeable that they've been on the front lines. The way they speak and how they understand the hierarchy, the steps involved, how it works, and what it means to develop a production".

Another important aspect is the ability to convey the sustainable message in a way that is approachable, engaging, fun, and "flexible, too: it's important to understand that there are things that can be done and things that can't" (M. García Larriu, personal communication, November 16, 2023), so that it doesn't become a tedious obligation. Therefore, the ideal eco-manager would be able to present an environmental message in an appealing way, even if it initially seems dull and imposing.

On the contrary, the interviewees overwhelmingly argue that the eco-consultant should be an environmental technician, someone with knowledge of sustainability who "can connect the context with the project and vice versa, who is aware, for example, that the European Union has just issued this new regulation to see if it applies to your project" (P. Andrés Urrutia, personal communication, December 4, 2023), and not someone from the audiovisual sector. The eco-consultant would thus be a specialist in environmental sustainability, someone who is connected to the territory, to natural resources, and to local government (Y. Cáceres, personal communication, November 28, 2023), an environmental scientist, biologist, or related professional who can assess potential damages (J. Castañeda, personal communication, November 10, 2023).

## **5. CONCLUSIONS**

In a context where the audiovisual industry is progressively making greater efforts to become less polluting and more environmentally friendly, the incorporation of sustainability teams responsible for overseeing this process and guiding the adoption of these practices has become a necessary and expanding reality. Given this situation, it is appropriate to properly frame and define the profiles, skills, and responsibilities of those in charge of sustainability within the industry.

After jointly analyzing the results derived from the two applied methodologies, we can conclude that the eco-manager is an anglicism that defines the head of the sustainability department on a film set, a department directed by an eco-consultant and supported on set by an eco-PA, as part of a structure ideally formed by these three roles.

This person is responsible for overseeing the audiovisual project according to a sustainability plan previously agreed upon by the eco-consultant with the executive production team, ensuring that all interventions are carried out in accordance with the plan, ensuring compliance with the sustainability commitments made, striving to minimize the carbon footprint of the production, and certifying that environmental protection regulations are applied in the production.

Given that sustainability in the sector is relatively new, the educational, awareness-raising, and sensitization work among filming professionals and suppliers remains the primary task undertaken by these professionals. There is still much to be done to reduce the intensity of this educational work, given the lukewarm reception these professionals still receive on set, the lack of support from upper management, and the fact that the crew often considers sustainability efforts secondary or unnecessary. This support will ensure greater commitment and better results in production, fostering audiovisual professionals who are more attuned to "green" guidelines and who, having internalized more environmentally friendly practices, can make sustainability a more organic and cross-cutting practice. Furthermore, the more procedural functions related to data collection and emissions recording remain vital for measuring and calculating the carbon footprint, obtaining grants and certifications, and evaluating offsetting measures.

Regarding the profile of these professionals, ideally, those dedicated to this task should possess organizational, negotiation, and persuasive skills, and be able to act with tact, flexibility, perseverance, empathy, and active listening. Ideally, these individuals should hold some type of professional degree or certification that qualifies them to perform this role, along with ad hoc training that provides them with knowledge of environmental regulations and environmental management. This will enable them to offer sustainable alternatives in each of the processes involved in an audiovisual shoot, in addition to knowledge of audiovisual production. These latter skills are considered the most important, so it is advisable that they have also been acquired through experience in the audiovisual department. Knowledge of how the industry and each area within an audiovisual production operate, and a deep familiarity with the unique nature and idiosyncrasies of such a specific ecosystem as an audiovisual shoot, are key for these professionals to carry out their work effectively.

In short, the eco-manager is an emerging figure in audiovisual productions, although its penetration and presence is increasing and it is destined to consolidate itself as another team leader in productions, responsible for ensuring that all actions, interventions and behaviors on set are as respectful and as harmless as possible to the environment.

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