

PAN-EUROPEAN CASE STUDY: DECARBONISING THE DIGITAL ADVERTISING SUPPLY CHAIN



Country

Belgium

About the Initiative

The Greenbids initiative, a collaboration between ING Belgium and Initiative Media, was launched to advance sustainable practices in programmatic advertising. It focuses on carbon reduction at the source by using an AI-powered algorithm, which optimises ad placements to minimise the carbon footprint associated with digital advertising campaigns. By removing unnecessary intermediaries, enhancing ad viewability, and selecting placements that favour sustainable publishers, Greenbids brings a fresh, environmentally-focused perspective to media buying. The project represents the first implementation of its kind in Belgium, setting new standards in sustainable digital advertising.

Objective

The Greenbids project set forth the following objectives to achieve a carbon-neutral approach to digital ad delivery:

- **Measure and Reduce Carbon Footprint:** By automating CO₂ tracking and using AI to optimise ad paths, Greenbids sought to measure and significantly reduce

emissions in real time, focusing on Scope 3 emissions to cover the full environmental impact.

- **Optimise Cost Efficiency:** Enhance campaign ROI for advertisers by reducing CPM, CPC, and CPA while keeping carbon emissions low, achieving impactful media performance at lower costs.
- **Enhance Campaign Quality:** Improve viewability and engagement by choosing ad placements with the highest attention metrics, such as video player size and screen time, without sacrificing media quality or campaign results.
- **Strengthen Local Media Ecosystem:** Prioritise local, sustainable publishers to promote high-quality, environmentally responsible media buying, supporting the Belgian media ecosystem.
- **Demonstrate Scalability and Industry Leadership:** Create a model that could scale to other markets, paving the way for ING Belgium and Initiative Media to lead in sustainable advertising practices industry-wide.

Relevance

The Greenbids project directly addresses the urgent need for carbon reduction in programmatic advertising, offering a new, environmentally focused approach that aligns with ING and Initiative Media's goals for sustainability in media campaigns.

Quantifiable Results

The Greenbids A/B test results provide clear, measurable outcomes:

- 64% reduction in CO2 emissions, saving 7.07 tons of CO2.
- Decreased costs: CPM dropped by 51%, CPC by 32%, and CPA by 50%.

Innovation

Greenbids introduces a unique, AI-driven algorithm that optimises programmatic ad paths, minimises unnecessary intermediaries, selects placements based on viewability and sustainability, and measures Scope 3 carbon emissions—pioneering carbon reduction in programmatic advertising in Belgium.

Scalability

Greenbids' compatibility with various programmatic platforms and its adaptable AI model allow it to be scaled beyond Belgium. Its success sets a foundation for further implementation in other markets seeking similar carbon reduction.

Stakeholder Collaboration

The initiative exemplifies collaboration between ING and Initiative Media, with support from local publishers and resellers. This cooperative approach helps align sustainability goals across all parties involved in the ad-buying process.

Sustainability Beyond Decarbonisation

Greenbids' strategy focuses on directly reducing emissions, making it inherently more sustainable than offset or compensatory models. It promotes a shift toward environmentally conscious media buying that supports the local media ecosystem and drives positive impact.

Continuous Adaptation

The results from the A/B testing and ongoing analyses allow for continuous refinement of Greenbids, ensuring its adaptability and effectiveness across various campaign types and buying models, such as Open Exchange and PMP.

Adherence to Standards

Greenbids aligns with Scope 3 carbon accounting and complies with advertiser guidelines from the UBA and WFA. Its transparent, data-driven approach supports broader industry goals for accountability in environmental impact management.

Conclusion

The Greenbids initiative exemplifies how technology and sustainability can intersect to produce both environmental and business benefits. By leveraging AI to reduce programmatic ad emissions, Greenbids has set a new industry standard for carbon-conscious digital advertising, offering a replicable model for other markets.

As **Margot Genot, Brand Management expert at ING**, noted, *"this initiative reflects ING's commitment to embedding sustainability in core business practices and showcases how environmentally driven strategies can amplify campaign quality and return on investment. Greenbids serves as a roadmap for advertisers and programmatic experts alike, illustrating that carbon reduction and enhanced media performance can go hand in hand for a better, greener future."*

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If you would like to know more about [IAB Europe's Pan-European Case Study Programme](#) or how you can participate in our work, please contact Colombe at michaud@iabeurope.eu.