The European Ecolabel

WHAT IS THE EUROPEAN ECOLABEL?

The EU Ecolabel is a voluntary scheme, established in 1992 to encourage businesses to market products and services that are kinder to the environment. Products and services awarded the Ecolabel carry the flower logo and the EU Ecolabel covers product groups such as cleaning products, appliances, paper products, textile and home and garden products, lubricants and services such as tourist accommodations.

WHO CAN JOIN?

The initiative is open to all manufactures.

WHAT PRODUCTS ARE COVERED?

Criteria are currently established for a range of non-food and non-medical product groups, including detergents, tissue paper, laptops, textiles and tourist accommodation services.

FACTS & FIGURES

- EU Ecolabe is recognized in 30 countries
- +1,300 awarded licences by 2011
- +17,000 products and services display EU Ecolabel
- 28 products categories, with further groups being continuously added

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LOCAL OFFICES IN:

Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany

DISCLAIMER: the graph was generated using the proportion of the sustainability initiative’s requirements matching the criteria used in Standards Map Database in consultation with standard organizations.

For detailed information about this and other standards check out: Standardsmap.org
What are the key features?

- Every product or service supplied for distribution, consumption or use in the European Economic Area market (European Union plus Iceland, Lichtenstein and Norway) and included in one of the established non-food and non-medical product groups is eligible for EU Ecolabel. Producers, manufacturers, importers, service providers, wholesalers and retailers can apply for the label. Retailers can apply for products placed on the market under their own brand name.

- To qualify for the EU Ecolabel, products have to comply with a tough set of criteria. These environmental criteria, set by a panel of experts from a number of stakeholders, including consumer organisations and industry, take the whole product life cycle into account from the extraction of the raw materials, to production, packaging and transport, right through to use and disposal/recycling. This life cycle approach guarantees that the products’ main environmental impacts are reduced in comparison to similar products on the market. Fitness-for-use criteria also guarantee good product performance.

- EU Ecolabel criteria are not adopted unless they receive a qualified majority vote from the Ecolabel Regulatory Committee, consisting of governmental representatives from the EU Member States. EU Member States and other Countries of the European Economic Areas designate independent competent bodies that are the national points of contact for the scheme. They receive and assess applications, conclude contracts with successful applicants, promote the scheme, handle enquiries and contribute to criteria development.

Audit information

- 1st, 2nd, 3rd party certification: Third-party audit is required.
- Frequency of audits: Every 5 years, Every 2 years, Surprise audits, Other.
- Review process:
- Validity of audit certificate:
- As long as the criteria remain valid, the contract is automatically renewed. Hence, the EU Ecolabel is valid starting from the date it is awarded until the end of the period of the validity of the criteria. Once criteria have been revised, the contract must be renewed. (Product group criteria are usually valid for a period of 3-5 years, according to the Commission Decision on the relevant product group.)

What kind of criteria are used for the assessment?

- Pass and fail: Pass/fail assessment method selected for most EU Ecolabel criteria according to the policy applied: If your product meets the requirements the CB (Competent Body) will conclude a contract with you and award you the EU Ecolabel. It is the responsibility of the contract holder that the products are in continuous compliance with the Ecolabel criteria. [Exception- Criteria under Section B of the Annex to the COMMISSION DECISION of 9 July 2009 establishing the ecological criteria for the award of the Community eco-label for tourism accommodations and campsites product group.

- Scoring: ‘Scoring’ assessment methods complements the pass/fail criteria for the ‘Tourism accommodations’ and ‘Campsites’ product groups.

Are the products traceable along the supply chain?

Traceability criteria exist in - COMMISSION DECISION of 26 November 2009 on establishing the ecological criteria for the award of the Community Ecolabel for wooden floor coverings- COMMISSION DECISION of 30 November 2009 on establishing the ecological criteria for the award of the Community ecolabel for wooden furniture- COMMISSION DECISION of 9 July 2009 establishing the ecological criteria for the award of the Community Ecolabel for bed mattresses- COMMISSION DECISION of 9 July 2009 establishing the ecological criteria for the award of the Community Eco-label for tissue paper.

Does the initiative harmonise with other standards?

The EU Ecolabel and national ecolabels are developing a policy of cooperation and coordination. Article 11 of the EU Ecolabel Regulation No 66/2010 introduces measures to encourage harmonisation between ecolabel schemes, particularly in the selection of product groups and the development and revision of the criteria. When new criteria are developed for the EU Ecolabel, it is mandatory to take into account already existing criteria for other officially recognised ecolabelling schemes in the Member States. Moreover, where EU Ecolabel criteria for a given product group have been published, other nationally or regionally officially recognised EN ISO 14024 type I ecolabelling schemes which do not cover that product group at the time of publication may be extended to that product group only where the criteria developed under those schemes are at least as strict as the EU Ecolabel criteria.

- Capacity building and outreach: No

Use of logo on the final product?

- Yes:

What kind of support is provided?

The EU Ecolabel criteria are available for free download off the Ecolabel website. The website also has answers to frequently asked questions and a link to the Ecolabel Catalogue where users can search ecolabelled products according to product category, manufacturer/service provider or retailer.

How much does it cost?

- Membership fee: Application fee is a minimum of EUR200 and a maximum of EUR1200Exceptions - Maximum of EUR 600 for SMEs and applicants from developing countries, Maximum of EUR 350 for micro-enterprises, 20% reduction for companies registered under EMAS or certified under ISO 14001.
**GEOGRAPHIC SCOPE**

- **Africa**: Egypt
- **Asia**: China, Chinese Taipei, Hong Kong China, India, Indonesia, Israel, Malaysia, Republic of Korea, Thailand, Turkey
- **Europe**: Albania, Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom
- **Central America**: 0
- **North America**: Canada, United States of America
- **South America**: 0
- **Australia & Oceania**: Australia, New Zealand

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**STEPS TO JOIN THE INITIATIVE:**

1. **Getting started**: check whether your product is eligible and if your company can apply.
2. **Getting advice**: contact your Competent Body.
3. **Starting the application**: To get your EU Ecolabel licence, it is mandatory that you apply using the online application tool, Ecat_admin. You’ll need to register at the following address: //webgate.ec.europa.eu/ecat_admin.
4. **Collecting the evidence**: In order to prove compliance to the criteria for your product group, you will have to provide a dossier made up of the declarations, documents, data sheets and test results. The User Manual for each product group explains what you need to provide.
5. **Submitting the application**: Once you’ve submitted the online application, you’ll need to submit the required paper file to your Competent Body. Within two months of receipt of an application, your Competent Body will assess your product against the criteria set for it. If documentation is missing, you will be informed and you will need to provide additional information. Your competent body may also organise a visit or audit to your manufacturing facility. To get the EU Ecolabel you will be requested to pay an application fee and you may be requested to pay an annual fee.
6. **Ecolabel awarded**: If you meet the criteria and your dossier is complete, the Competent Body will award the EU Ecolabel to your product by creating a contract with you. Once that’s complete, you can use the EU Ecolabel logo on all the products that have met the criteria and on the associated promotional material. Once you become a licence holder, it is your responsibility to stay compliant with EU Ecolabel criteria. Your Competent Body will explain how often it will need test samples of your product. From time to time, the Competent Body may carry out factory inspections and product tests. This ensures that the environmental excellence is maintained for consumers.
7. **Marketing your product with the EU Ecolabel**: Take full advantage of the EU Ecolabel through advertising and communication; there are guidelines explaining how to make best use of the logo.

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Source: http://ec.europa.eu/ecat/
OVERVIEW OF REQUIREMENTS*:

ENVIROMENTAL REQUIREMENTS

- Soil
- Forests
- Chemicals/Natural organic inputs
- Biodiversity
- Waste
- Water
- Energy

SOCIAL REQUIREMENTS

- Work and Labour Rights - Conditions of Work
- Work and Labour Rights - Conditions of Employment
- Work and Labour Rights - Empowerment of Workers

ECONOMIC REQUIREMENTS

- Administration and management: general principle

* based on criteria used in Standards Map. Access Standards Map's Analysis Module to review specific details on up to 250 sustainability requirement for each of the standards.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Standards Map is a web-based interactive tool that centralises, organises and disseminates information on over 100 voluntary sustainability standards. Standards Map is part of the International Trade Centre’s web-based Market Analysis Tools.

More detailed information on the specific requirements of the sustainability initiative can be reviewed: standardsmap.org.