

Pilot course on “Environmental labelling in circular economy”
Poland, Rzeszów 04.02.2021



EU Ecolabel

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The project is co-financed by the Governments of Czechia, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia through Visegrad Grants from International Visegrad Fund. The mission of the fund is to advance ideas for sustainable regional cooperation in Central Europe.

History and development of the program

- *Established in 1992.*
- *EU Ecolabel is a label of environmental excellence that is awarded to products and services meeting high environmental standards throughout their life cycle: from raw material extraction, to production, distribution and disposal. It also encourages producers to generate less waste and CO2 during the manufacturing process, and to develop products that are durable, easy to repair and recycle.*
- *EU Ecolabel is a benchmark for 10 -20% of environmental preferable products within a certain product group.*
- *The Regulation on the EU Ecolabel allows manufacturers, producers and retailers coming from European or non-European countries to apply for their products to be awarded the EU Ecolabel. Owners/managers of tourist accommodation or campsite services belonging to non-European countries can apply for the EU Ecolabel, but have to have their services placed on the European market.*

EU Ecolabel and customer perspective

- *From consumer's perspective this life cycle approach guarantees that the products' main environmental impacts are reduced in comparison to similar products on the market and fitness-for-use criteria also guarantee good product performance.*
- *No technical understanding is required for customers to read and understand the EU Ecolabel, so it is easy for them to make an environmentally friendly choice.*
- *For example, in case of washing-up liquids, the EU Ecolabel minimizes the use of hazardous substances, substances harmful to the aquatic environment, and supports highly biodegradable substances and reduced packaging.*

EU Ecolabel and national ecolabels

- *Other advantage of EU Ecolabel is that it goes beyond the pre-existing national ecolabels that are often only known within national borders.*
- *Alongside the progression towards a single market, the EU Ecolabel and national ecolabels, such as the Blue Angel or the Nordic Swan, coexist well and are developing a policy of cooperation and coordination.*
- *Some interconnectedness can be seen when new criteria are developed for the EU Ecolabel.*
- *In this situation other officially recognized ecolabelling schemes in the Member States should take into account existing criteria.*

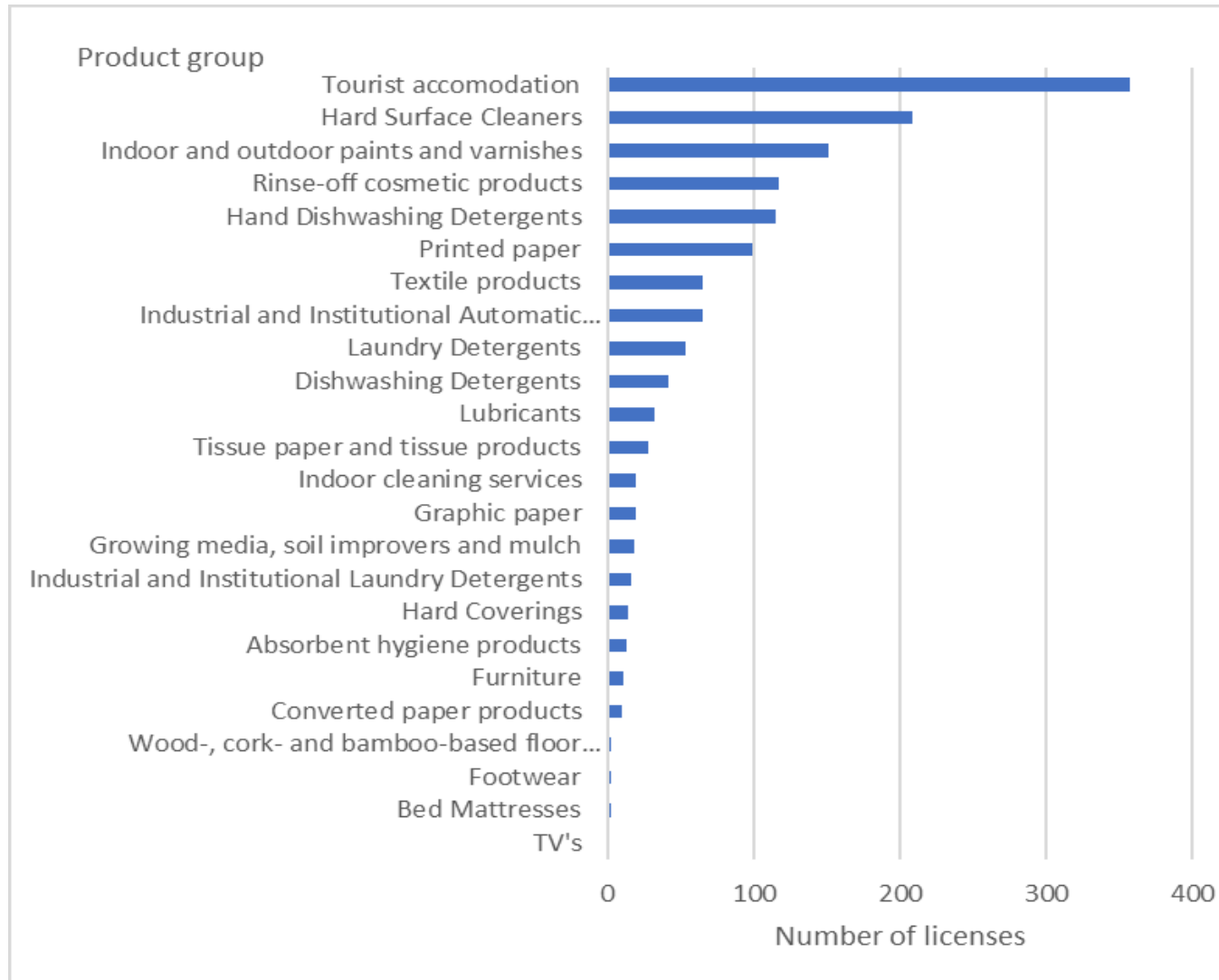
EU Ecolabel and EU policies

- *If we compare EU Ecolabel with EU Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS), it is focused on the specific products/services of the company, not on the general environmental performance of the company.*
- *In relation to other EU policies, EC recognizes great synergies between the EU Ecolabel and Green Public Procurement (GPP) and the Environmental Compliance Assistance Programme for SMEs (ECAP).*

Structure of EU Ecolabel licenses

- *As per March 2020, 1.456 licenses were awarded for 70692 products (goods and services) in 24 different EU Ecolabel product categories (Picture 1).*
- *Despite an overall 10% decrease of the total number of products, mainly due to the expiration of old licenses, some EU Ecolabel product groups have witnessed an increase in the number of products in comparison to September 2019.*
- *The fastest growing product categories over the past six months are furniture (+645 %), floor coverings (+116 %), indoor cleaning services (+111 %) and hard surface cleaning products (+77 %). On the other side evolution of Television products from 2014 to 2020 show steep decrease from above 2500 (2014) to 0 (2018 - 2020).*
- *If we look on regional distribution, Spain with its 27018 awarded products is high above other European countries. Next after Spain, but with substantially lower number of awarded products is France (7226), Germany (6053), Italy (5751) and Sweden (4597). On the end of the list are countries with less than 10 awarded products. Bulgaria has 9 awarded products, followed by Malta (6), Slovak Republic (5), Latvia (4), Luxembourg (1) and Iceland (0).*

EU Ecolabel licenses per product group



Source: own based on European Commission (2020b)

Requirements and methodology of impact assessment

- *EU Ecolabel criteria for products focus on the life cycle stages where the product has the highest environmental impact.*
- *This differs from product to product. For example, textiles have strong environmental impact when they are dyed, printed and bleached, detergents impact depends on used substances and electronic equipment impact during their use phase depend on their energy consumption.*
- *In addition, product-specific criteria ensure that any product bearing the EU Ecolabel is of good quality with high performance.*

The EU Ecolabel criteria address five main environmental hotspots:

- *the environmental impact of toxic substances (e.g. no chlorine gas is used as a bleaching agent graphic and copying paper),*
- *deforestation and degradation (e.g. wood, ... used in a furniture must be non-GMO and have a sustainable forest management label),*
- *poorly managed waste disposal and lack of recycling (e.g. tourist accommodations must establish a food waste management plan, ...),*
- *inefficient use of resources (water, energy, raw materials etc.) and products (food waste, overuse of detergents, etc.) (e.g. maximum threshold for electricity and fuel consumption during the product manufacturing of floor coverings),*
- *unnecessary carbon emissions (e.g. propellants in sprays are prohibited for industrial and institutional dishwasher).*

The development of the EU Ecolabel criteria

- *Executed in a transparent multi-stakeholder process.*
- *Scientists, industry, experts across a wide range of sectors and impartial non-governmental organizations participate in the development of rigorous environmental and fitness-for-use criteria.*
- *Every set of criteria undergoes several rounds of discussion between these stakeholders. Criteria are finally adopted through a Decision of the European Commission.*
- *Currently, three more product groups are under development. The first group is titled “Financial products” and the EC has started the development of its criteria in October 2018. The second group is titled “Food and feed products?”. The third group is titled “Office Buildings”. In addition “Detergents for professional use” and “Taps and shower heads” are other new product groups mentioned in official EU Ecolabel websites.*

Development of the criteria for each product group

- *Is led by key experts in consultation with main stakeholders.*
- *The criteria are revised every four years on average, or in other words are usually valid for a period of 3 to 5 years, depending on EC decision for each product group. It is important to reflect evolution of materials, innovation in production processes, emission limits and changes in the market. Ecological criteria are reviewed prior to their expiration and may be revised.*
- *If criteria are revised, license holders need to renew their contract, if are extended, the contract is automatically renewed. A 12-month transition period is usually given to the existing license holders to comply with the new criteria. The holders may use the EU Ecolabel starting from the date it is awarded until the end of the period of the validity of the criteria.*

Example of the Footwear product group criteria

- *In general, once the EU Ecolabel is on the Footwear product it guarantees natural origin raw materials sustainably managed, reduced pollution in production processes, minimized use of hazardous substances and tested for durability.*
- *In a manufacturing step, types of material, water consumption and emission, hazardous substances and corporate social responsibility are important criteria.*
- *In types of material criterion, requirements such as cotton that are not recycled fibers shall contain a minimum content of either organic cotton or integrated pest management cotton, all wood and cork shall be covered by chain of custody certificates, a minimum of 25.0 % of the non-recycled pulp fibers shall be manufactured from wood that has been grown according to the principles of sustainable forest management, are set.*
- *As regards water consumption and emission criterion, requirements such as limit on water consumption in the tanning process, the chemical oxygen demand (COD) value in after treatment waste water from leather tanning sites shall not exceed 200.0 mg/l, the total chromium concentration in tannery waste water after treatment shall not exceed 1.0 mg/l, are set.*
- *In case of hazardous substance, for example, the final product, homogeneous materials or articles that form part of the final product, or production recipes used, as applicable, shall not contain substances specified under the Restricted Substances List and the total use of volatile organic compounds (VOCs) in the final footwear production shall not exceed, on average, 18.0 g VOC/pair.*
- *In a use step, packaging, user information and durability are important criteria. As regards packaging, e.g. cardboard and paper used for the final packaging of footwear shall be made of 100 % recycled material.*
- *In case of user information the following information shall be supplied with the product: Cleaning and care instructions specified for each product; 'Repair your footwear rather than throw it away. This is less damaging to the environment'.*
- *In durability criterion, e.g. occupational and safety footwear shall carry the CE mark and shall meet the durability requirements specified in accordance with Directive 89/686/EEC. Full list of the criteria for Footwear products is in Table 1.*

Source: European Commission (2017)

Criteria for assessment according to the EU Ecolabel (Example of the Footwear product group)

List of criteria
Criterion 1 - Origin of hides and skins, cotton, wood and cork, and man-made cellulose fibers
1.1 - Requirements on hides and skins
1.2 - Cotton and other natural cellulosic seed fibers
1.2(a) - Organic production standard
1.2(b) - Cotton production according to IPM principles and restriction on pesticides
1.3 - Origin of wood and cork
1.4 - Man-made cellulose fibers (including viscose, modal and lyocell)
1.5 - Plastics
Criterion 2 - Reduction of water consumption and restrictions in tanning of hides and skins
2.1 - Water consumption
2.2 - Restrictions in tanning of hides and skins
Criterion 3 - Emissions to water from the production of leather, textile, and rubber
3.1 - Chemical Oxygen Demand (COD) in wastewater from leather tanning sites
3.2 - Chemical Oxygen Demand (COD) in wastewater from textile
3.3 - Chemical Oxygen Demand (COD) in wastewater from processing of natural and synthetic rubber
3.4 - Chromium in tannery waste water after treatment
Criterion 4 - Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs)
Criterion 5 - Hazardous substances in the product and shoe components
5.1 - Restriction of Substances of Very High Concern (SVHC's)
5.2 - Restriction based on CLP hazard classifications
Criterion 6 - Restricted Substances List
Criterion 7- Parameters contributing to durability
Criterion 8 - Corporate Social Responsibility with regard to labor aspects
Criterion 9 - Packaging
Criterion 10 - Information on the packaging
10.1 - User Instructions
10.2 - Information appearing on the eco-label

Source: European Commission (2016)

The application process consists of following steps:

- *Pre-application: understanding the EU Ecolabel.*
- *Contacting national Competent Body.*
- *Product and service registration on the online EU Ecolabel Catalogue.*
- *Product and service testing to build application dossier.*
- *Application submission and fees.*
- *Assessment.*
- *Application approval and license award.*
- *Communication about EU Ecolabel products and services.*
- *If some of the characteristics of EU Ecolabelled product have changed, the license holder does not need to submit a new application, if the new characteristics do not affect compliance with the criteria.*

Benefits of participation in the program

- *the purpose is to ease the customer's (business or individual) choice in favor of eco product,*
- *recognition across Europe,*
- *it enhances license holder reputation, indicates corporate social responsibility,*
- *E-Catalogue, where license holder should register the product(s), gives the opportunity to get through to the customers,*
- *the monthly EU Ecolabel News Alert and biannual Flower Newsletter often feature outstanding companies, providing a great marketing opportunity,*
- *simple (possibly online) application process,*
- *special discounts for SMEs, micro-enterprises, applicants from developing economies and companies registered under EMAS or certified under ISO 14001.*

Costs of participation in the program

The costs of running the scheme vary between Competent Bodies and from one product to another, so fees may vary accordingly. The table presents maximum fees established in the EU Ecolabel Regulation.

Type of applicants	One-off application fee (Euro) *	Annual fee (Euro) **
Micro-enterprises	200-350	Max. 18750
SMEs and firms from developing countries	200-600	Max. 18750
All other companies	200-2000	Max. 25000

* 30% reduction for companies registered under EMAS or 15% reduction for companies certified under ISO 14001 can be applied. Reductions are not cumulative and only the higher reduction applies where both systems are met.

** Annual fees can be a flat fee or a fee based on the annual value of sales within the EU for the product awarded the EU Ecolabel. Where the annual fee is calculated as a percentage of the annual sales value, it will not be more than 0,15 % of that value. In the case of SMEs, micro-enterprises or applicants from developing countries, the annual fee is reduced by at least 25 %.

Source: European Commission (2020c), (2020e)

Case study – Kavat

- *The Swedish company Kavat is one of the first footwear companies, which acquired the EU Ecolabel, and with its 50 ecolabeled models also one of the most eco-friendly manufacturers in Europe. In industry where supply chain complexity makes it difficult for company to be transparent, Kavat decided to “tell the truth” to its customers, and this transparency pushed it to improve its controls on every step of the value chain. In today world, where most leather products are treated with chrome, heavy metals and coloring dyes, which bleed into rivers and ecosystems, degrading them along the way, Kavat innovate and its “Eco Performance leather” is waterproof, chrome-free and with great breathability. The company also follows the EU Ecolabel recommendation of offering a “Repair Service” for worn-out shoes. Finally, Kavat turns to the EU Ecolabel criteria for guidance on eco-friendly best practices when developing any of its product lines, e.g. new models of rainboots and leather boots.*

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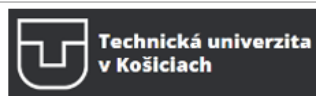
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Thank you for attention



Project website: <https://ecolabelling.prz.edu.pl/en/>

The International Visegrad Fund website: <https://www.visegradfund.org/>



ECOLABELLING project
Innovations in circular economy – environmental labels and declarations