



FACTSHEET The EU Ecolabel

What is the EU Ecolabel?

The EU Ecolabel was set up in 1992 as a Europe-wide voluntary label. It was designed to make greener and healthier choices easier for consumers.

Around 40,000 products and services in 30 different categories display the Ecolabel. They range from baby clothes and cleaning products to TVs, paints, shampoos, wooden floors, copying paper or accommodation. Products and services must meet a list of environmental and health-related criteria to be able to sport the flower logo.

Why the EU Ecolabel matters for the environment

- The label can help promote the **transition to the so-called ‘circular economy’**, where waste is virtually eliminated and resources are continuously reused and recycled.
- To use the label, manufacturers must produce **goods that last longer**, are easier to repair or recycle, optimise the use of energy, water and raw materials, reduce CO₂ emissions.
- **It reduces the environment and people’s exposure to toxic chemicals.** Manufacturers have to, wherever technically possible, substitute hazardous substances with safer alternatives.
- The Ecolabel **pushes manufacturers to go the extra mile.** Indeed, only those products that perform better than what laws require can sport the label.
- **The Ecolabel is a benchmark** for companies who want to improve their products, even if they don’t apply for it. It plays an important role within the broader EU product policy framework as an instrument to pull up the market.
- **The Ecolabel criteria are often used in tenders for green public procurement.** This type of procurement seeks to reduce the negative environmental impacts caused by the purchasing of goods, services and works with tax payer money.

Why it matters to consumers

Consumers **increasingly care for the environment** and look into ways to reduce their negative impact. According to a 2014 EU survey¹, 85% of respondents believe they can play a role in protecting the environment. A survey from the following year² found that 26% of consumers often buy green products and 54% sometimes.

The Ecolabel helps consumers easily identify those products and services that tend to be within the 10-20% of the most environmentally-friendly ones.

65% of shoppers who know the EU Ecolabel already trust it³. However, more promotional activities are needed to increase consumers’ awareness of the label.

¹ [Eurobarometer on attitudes of Europeans towards building the single market for green products](#)

² [Consumer market study on environmental claims for non-food products](#)

³ Ibid



🔍 EU Ecolabel vs. non-certified environmental logos and claims

As demand for more sustainable products has grown, so have the initiatives to label them. So much so that there are now over 500 such labels in use worldwide⁴, and 3 out of 4 products display an environmental claim in the EU⁵. As a result consumers often feel lost when having to choose between several ‘green’ options.

Unlike non-certified green labels and claims, the EU Ecolabel always takes into account the following aspects:

- **The label is reliable.** Manufacturers can use the label only after a national authority has verified that the product or service is actually green. To do so they ensure that the product fulfils the requirements, which are updated regularly according to technology progress.
- It looks at the **product’s entire life cycle** to reduce its footprint all the way from design to use, recycling and disposal.
- The criteria are developed within a **participatory and open process**. The European Commission works hand in hand with the EU Ecolabelling Board gathering Member States, industry, retailers, consumer and environmental NGOs.



To ensure consumers trust the EU Ecolabel, the European Environmental Bureau and the European Consumer Organisation BEUC participate in defining the criteria to make sure that only products of environmental excellence display the EU flower.

🔍 What should the EU Institutions and Member States do to boost the Ecolabel’s success ?

- Increase public awareness and attract retailers and frontrunner companies through enhanced marketing efforts.
- Reinforce the scheme by including more goods and services relevant for consumers and green public procurement.
- Preserve the environmental excellence of the scheme, by ensuring ambitious criteria in all areas relevant for the environment and health.
- Allocate sufficient human and financial resources to ensure the scheme works properly.

⁴ Gruère, G (2013), “A Characterisation of Environmental Labelling and Information Schemes”, OECD Environment Working Papers, No. 62, OECD Publishing, Paris.

⁵ Ibid