



FACTSHEET

THE EU ECOLABEL

Helping consumers and businesses make the right choice for the environment

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 90,000 products and services in 24 different categories display the EU Ecolabel as of March 2022. They range from baby clothes and cleaning products to electronic displays, paints, shampoos, wooden floors, copying paper or tourist 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 helps to promote the **transition to the 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. The production process must rely on less resources and generate less waste and CO₂ than conventional manufacturing.
- It **reduces the environment and people's exposure to toxic chemicals**. Wherever technically possible, manufacturers must substitute hazardous substances with safer alternatives.
- The EU Ecolabel **pushes manufacturers** to go the extra mile. Only products that perform better than what laws require can bear the label.
- The **EU 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 in EU product policy as an instrument to pull up the market. While Ecodesign legislation sets mandatory minimum sustainability requirements, the EU Ecolabel makes best-in-class products stand out.
- The **EU 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 taxpayer money. Companies can also green their procurement by referring to the EU Ecolabel.

Why it matters to consumers

Consumers **increasingly care for the environment** and look for ways to reduce their negative impact. According to a 2017 [EU survey](#), 87% of respondents believe they can play a role in protecting the environment. In 2020, 23% of consumers said they paid attention to the environmental impact of most or all their purchases; and 56% reported doing so at least once ([Key Consumer Data 2020](#)).

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



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8 out of 10 shoppers who know the EU Ecolabel already trust it ([Special Eurobarometer 468](#)). In many countries it is also the best-known ecolabel. But awareness varies widely across EU countries. While **62%** of people in Luxembourg know the label, only **16%** in Czech Republic do. More promotional activities are needed to increase consumers' awareness of the label.



EU Ecolabel vs. non-certified environmental labels 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 230 ecolabels used in Europe ([Ecolabel Index](#)), and 3 out of 4 products display an environmental claim in the EU ([DG Justice consumer market study on environmental claims for non-food products](#)). 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 considers 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 organisations 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 the EU Institutions and Member States should do to boost the EU Ecolabel's success

- Continue efforts to increase consumer awareness and reward frontrunner companies through enhanced communication, public recognition and financial incentives - such as basing green public procurement on EU Ecolabelled products and services.
- Extend the scope by including more goods and services relevant for consumers and green public and corporate procurement.
- Preserve the environmental excellence of the scheme, by ensuring ambitious criteria in all areas relevant for the environment and health.
- Use the EU Ecolabel as the benchmark for best-in-class products to put an end to greenwashing and progressively make sustainable products the norm through ambitious legislation.
- Allocate sufficient human and financial resources to reinforce the scheme.