Briefing

The EU Ecolabel celebrates its 30th birthday! What does the scheme stand for?

Contact: **sustainability@beuc.eu**

EEB -EUROPEAN ENVIRONMENTAL BUREAU
Bd. de Waterloo 34, B-1000 Brussels • Tel. +32 (0)2 289 10 90 • Fax +32 (0)2 289 10 99 • info@eeb.org • www.eeb.org
EC register for interest representatives: identification number 06798511314-27

BUREAU EUROPÉEN DES UNIONS DE CONSOMMATEURS AISBL | DER EUROPÄISCHE VERBRAUCHERVERBAND
Rue d'Arlon 80, B-1040 Brussels • Tel. +32 (0)2 743 15 90 • Fax +32 (0)2 740 28 02 • www.beuc.eu
EC register for interest representatives: identification number 9505781573-45

Ref: BEUC-X-2022-098 – 22/09/2022

Table of Content

Introduction 3
Interesting facts and figures 3
About consumers 3
What about companies? 4
Key dates, products and countries 4
What makes the EU Ecolabel unique? 5
Are EU Ecolabel products and services more expensive? 4
Three decades of the EU Ecolabel 6
Spotlight on the product groups and criteria 8
Personal and animal care products 9
Paints and varnishes 12
Paper 13
Clothing and textiles 14
Cleaning products 16
Holiday accommodation 18
Furniture and mattresses 20
Electronic equipment 22
Gardening 23
Coverings 24
Links between the EU Ecolabel and other policies 25
Key EU information and materials available for use 26

Introduction

At a time when consumers are surrounded by ever-present green or sustainable claims on products, reliable ecolabels are highly needed to show which products live up to their green credentials.

The EU Ecolabel is a signpost of environmental excellence, awarded to products that have a proven reduced impact on the environment. Besides, it also benefits human health, banning or strictly limiting harmful substances in certified products.

Created in 1992, the EU Ecolabel is turning 30 in 2022. This briefing provides you with useful information to write content about the EU Ecolabel anniversary.

Interesting facts and figures

About consumers

Interest in sustainable consumption is increasing:

- 56% of EU consumers said they considered the environmental impact of their purchase at least once in 2020, and 23% stated to do so most of or all the time. (source)

How to differentiate reliable environmental information from greenwashing?

- 42% of green claims in sectors such as cosmetics, textiles and household equipment are potentially false or deceptive. (source)
- More than half of the green trademarks analysed provide insufficient information or offer no actual evidence to support their green claim. (source)

Consumers may end up feeling confused and losing trust in environmental claims.

- 44% of consumers say they do not trust this type of information (source).
- A majority (61%) find it difficult to understand which products are truly environmentally friendly (source).

The EU Ecolabel is trusted by 80% of consumers who know it, and in many EU countries it has become the best-known ecolabel by consumers (source).

Consumer awareness of the label varies widely across countries:

- While 62% of people in Luxembourg have heard about the EU Ecolabel, only 16% in Czech Republic have (source).
- In France, 21% of people even report to actively look for products with an EU Ecolabel (source).

Incentives to buy EU Ecolabel. In Belgium, consumers can buy EU Ecolabel products and services with eco-vouchers (an employment benefit paid for by some companies).

What about companies?

Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) represent the biggest share of EU Ecolabel license holders. They benefit from reduced application fees (which can be found here). In Italy, SMEs represent 75% of all EU Ecolabel license holders. Over 90% of certified hotels and camping sites are SMEs.

The EU Ecolabel is attractive for companies. The French agency for the green transition ADEME has surveyed The results show that 70% of license holders are satisfied with the EU Ecolabel and would recommend the certification to other companies, the figure rises to 90% in the case of hotels and campsites (source).

Key dates, products and countries

1992: The EU Ecolabel starts its journey.
2009: The first stock-taking reveals that 21,300 certified products are on the EU market.
2022: The EU Ecolabel portfolio contains **24 product groups with 89,357 products and services** available across the EU.

Paints and varnishes is the product group with the **highest number of certified products.** It's followed by tissue paper/products and textiles.

Leading countries in terms of awarded products are **Spain, Italy, Germany, and France**. Regarding the high uptake in France, a study carried out by ADEME in 2017 showed that 3 out of 4 retailers in France offered products with the EU Ecolabel (source). Notably, the EU Ecolabel had become a reference for products such as detergents, toilet and tissue paper or paints which could be easily found on supermarket shelves.

Are EU Ecolabel products and services more expensive?

It is often thought that environmentally friendly products and services cost more than conventional ones. Some consumer organisations have compared EU Ecolabel items with conventional ones, and found out that the green option does not systematically cost more.

- In France, a 2011 study by consumer group CLCV found that the price of EU Ecolabel products is competitive compared to premium brands without the label; especially retailers' Ecolabelled in-house brands cost less than upper segment products. However, products from the lowest price category (without ecolabels) are usually the cheapest option (source). In 2013, another assessment of offer and prices by CLCV showed a reduction of prices of Ecolabelled in-house brand products

since their last survey, making the EU Ecolabel an even more affordable choice (source).

- Product tests by consumer organisations moreover show that EU Ecolabel products are often among the test winners, taking into account both price and performance. For example, Hungarian consumer organisation TVE came to this conclusion for several product categories, including washing detergents (source) and all-purpose cleaning products (source).

What makes the EU Ecolabel unique?

- **European scope:** It is the only EU-wide available voluntary label that rewards non-food products and services of environmental excellence since 1992. This makes it highly relevant for cross-border markets.
- **Wide choice:** From paper, cleaning products and cosmetics, to clothes, paints and even hotels, many categories of products and services can get certified. At the same time, the EU Ecolabel has kept growing, with currently more than 89,000 products and services on the EU market. (source)
- **Good for people and the environment:** The EU Flower is awarded to products and services of demonstrated environmental excellence, with a lower footprint than conventional products over their entire lifecycle. This means products that contain less hazardous chemicals, are designed to last longer and be easier to repair, and that are manufactured generating less waste and CO_2. The label is thus one of the EU's tools to achieve the transition to a circular economy and toxic free environment.
- **Independent and transparent**: The criteria are developed by the European Commission and Member States, in cooperation with industry, consumer organisations and environmental NGOs. The European Consumer organisation (BEUC) and the European Environmental Bureau (EEB) represent civil society organisations in the criteria setting phase, and have been involved in the scheme since its creation.
- **Reliable:** Unlike non-certified green claims and labels, national authorities thoroughly check producers' compliance with the EU Ecolabel requirements.

Three decades of the EU Ecolabel

Over the past three decades, the EU Ecolabel has grown considerably, with more and more product groups joining the portfolio. The timeline below gives an overview of the year of introduction of each umbrella product group.

1992 

The **EU Ecolabel is established** through the EU Council regulation on a "Community eco-label award scheme", as it was called back then.

1994 

Paper products
Kitchen rolls are the first paper product to be certified. Today, the coverage is extended to other paper products including tissue paper, copying and graphic paper, printed paper, stationary paper and paper carrier bags.

1995 

Laundry detergents
Other detergents and cleaning products (such as washing liquid and floor detergent) as well as cleaning services have followed.

1996 

Paints & varnishes

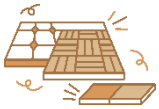
1998 

Mattresses
The scheme was extended to furniture in 2016

2000 

Textiles & footwear

Laptops (discontinued)
Today, only electronic displays (i.e. screens) can be labelled.

2002 

Hard floor coverings
Wood floor coverings were included in 2017 and more hard coverings beyond floor coverings (e.g., tiles for kitchen worktops and roofs) followed in 2021.

2003 

Tourist accommodation
Hotels were the first service to join the portfolio, followed by camping services in 2005.

2005 

Lubricants
(meaning liquid products applied to, e.g., reduce friction or corrosion on or between surfaces)

2007 

Growing media and soil improvers
(such as potting soil)

2009 

Soaps and shampoos
All cosmetics and animal care products are included since 2021

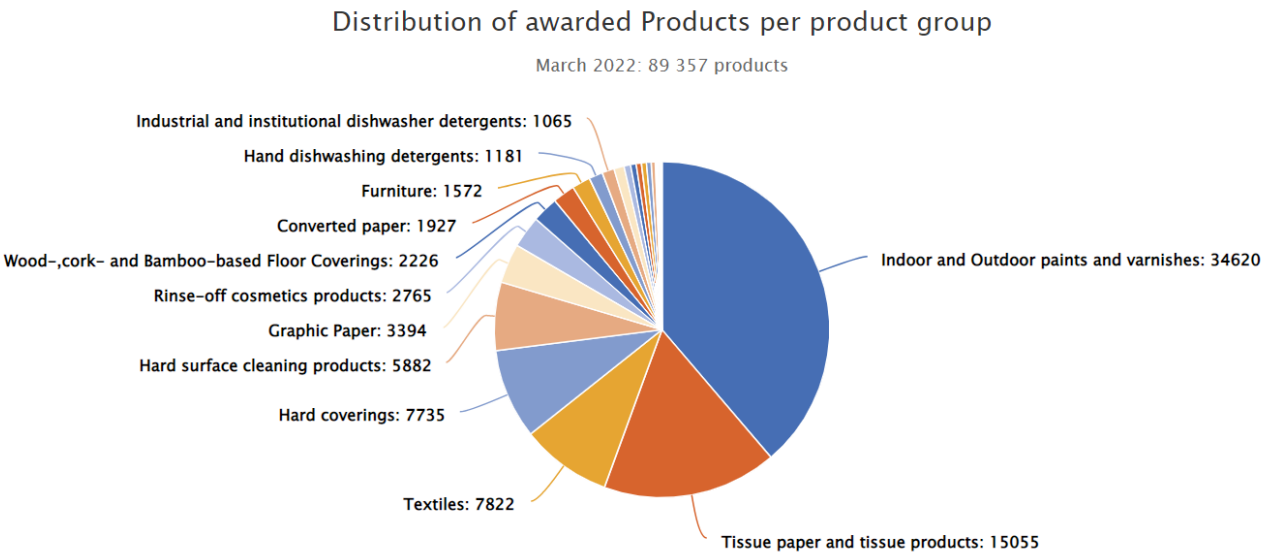
2010 

Adoption of the **new EU Ecolabel Regulation**

2022 

30th anniversary
nearly 90,000 certified products and services across 24 product groups and services

Spotlight on the product groups and criteria



Source: EC, EU Ecolabel facts and figures

More statistics are available on the dedicated European Commission's website.

The criteria for each product category are elaborated by a group of diverse stakeholders, including the European Commission, Member States, and representatives from industry, consumer organisations (including BEUC) and environmental NGOs (including the EEB). Despite being primarily an environmental certification scheme, the EU Ecolabel also sets high standards to guarantee human health and safety, as well as quality requirements.

The criteria are valid for a defined period, typically 5 to 8 years, beyond which a revision becomes necessary. This is to ensure that the label's requirements remain ambitious and reflect the latest research and industry developments.

The sections below show what the EU Ecolabel criteria stand for, grouped by categories.

	**Personal and animal care products** *Rinse-off (like soap, shampoo) and leave-on cosmetics (like creams, deodorants, make-up)* *Nappies, tampons, sanitary pads*
Cosmetics and animal care products: rinse-off (like soap, shampoo) and leave-on (like creams, deodorants, make-up) cosmetics	
Problems	Cosmetics contain toxic chemical ingredients which get into in wastewater systems, harming the environment. If chemicals cannot be completely degraded in wastewater treatment plants, they end up in rivers, seas and oceans where they can be ingested by fish and other water organisms. This also impacts our health as the chemicals 'bioaccumulate', i.e., their levels progressively increase in the fish and shellfish we eat. The sourcing of raw materials to make cosmetics' ingredients, the production process and the use of packaging also impact climate and nature.
Key benefits of the criteria (adopted in 10/2021)	The EU Ecolabel for cosmetics sets design criteria to promote those cosmetics that have the least possible impact on human health and the environment during production, use and disposal. Any cosmetics displaying the label will be free of: • **Endocrine disrupting chemicals** (EDCs). Even tiny amounts of EDCs may result in severe and irreversible effects on human health, such as infertility, cancers, genital malformations, IQ loss or obesity. • **Nanomaterials**: There are concerns on their potential hazardous properties and methodology gaps to assess them. Only those that are considered safe under specific limits by the Cosmetics Regulation are allowed. • **'Forever chemicals'**, i.e., perfluorinated and polyfluorinated substances. These chemicals are very persistent or degrade very slowly – if at all. There are linked to toxicity and adverse health effects, but knowledge about the hazards of many of the substances of this family is still limited. • **Fragrances in products designed for children or marketed as "mild/sensitive".** For the rest of cosmetics, fragrances are allowed, except those identified as allergens for humans above specific concentrations. • **Colorants and preservatives,** which can cause allergic skin reaction, allergy or asthma symptoms. They include isothiazolinones, which are sensitizing substances and are suspected of being toxic to the aquatic environment.

	• **Phthalates:** Some phthalates are endocrine disruptors, are suspected of being so, or might have other hazardous properties. • **Microplastics:** These tiny toxic plastics (below 5mm diameter) are widely used in cosmetics and end up in fish, crustaceans or plankton, and therefore in our food chains. While the EU is working on restricting microplastics in cosmetics and other products, the EU Ecolabel is already one step ahead. The criteria help to **reduce the impact of cosmetics in the environment:** • **Ingredients must be more biodegradable**; they are less toxic for aquatic life thanks to strict standards. • **Less and better packaging**: packaging is reduced to the minimum, must be refillable and recyclable.
Absorbent Hygiene Products (AHPs): nappies, tampons, women pads	
Problems	These single use products contribute to various environmental impacts, ranging from climate change and air and water pollution during manufacturing to biodiversity loss through forestry extraction. As these products are kept in close contact with the skin for a prolonged time, it is important to limit the risk of presence of hazardous substances. Reusable options can contribute to reduce environmental impacts.
Key benefits of the criteria (adopted in 10/2014)	• A minimum share of cellulose used for the manufacturing of AHPs shall come from **sustainably managed forests**. However, as the ambition level of the current criteria is lower than what is required by the FSC label, which certifies sustainable forest management, it is useful to look for products which bear the two labels. • When cotton is used in AHP such as tampons or women pads, it must be organic, to help **limit the risk for residues of pesticides such as glyphosate.** • Strict **restrictions on the use of hazardous substances** during manufacturing processes, as well as prohibition of intentional use of fragrances in products for children and tampons, harmful dyes or nanosilver among others. • **Reduced emissions of pollutants to air and water** during manufacturing, including the prohibition of using chlorine gas for bleaching processes.

Revision	Ongoing (vote expected in 03/2023): • The requirements for sustainable sourcing of cellulose fibres will be aligned with FSC and PEFC (Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification) which certify sustainable forest management standards have been kept along the supply chain. • The restrictions of problematic chemicals will be extended to more substances including endocrine-disrupting chemicals (EDCs), fragrances (excluded also for feminine care products beyond nappies) and lotions. Testing of a list of harmful substances (dioxins) in the final product will be required to limit the presence of chemicals that might occur as impurities through the manufacturing process. • The thresholds limiting the emission of pollutants to air and water will become stricter. • The EU Ecolabel will be extended to reusable menstrual cups.
Useful links	EU Commission website with further information, factsheets, and the criteria

	**Paints and varnishes**
Problems	Paints and varnishes can contain hazardous substances that contribute to indoor air pollution. For example, they can emit volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and semi-volatile organic compounds (SVOCs) causing symptoms like nausea or headaches. When breathed in over long periods, these can lead to more serious chronic health issues. Moreover, the manufacturing processes of chemicals used in paints imply high use of energy and emission of pollutants.
Key benefits of the criteria (adopted in 05/2014)	• In addition to limiting the concentration of titanium dioxide (TiO2) in paints, there are requirements for **cleaner production processes** of this pigment. TiO2 is widely used in paints and its manufacturing is responsible for significant hazardous emissions to the environment. • Chemical ingredients which are hazardous for the environment or may lead to allergies or other health problems are significantly restricted. • The **concentration of VOCs and SVOCs is highly restricted** to reduce indoor air pollution. • **Performance requirements** are in place to ensure product quality, more efficient dosage, and extended lifetime of paints (e.g., water resistance, abrasion resistance)
Revision (starting end of 2022 tbc)	Although the limitation of VOCs and SVOCs in the paints' formulation contribute to reduce indoor air pollution, integrating additional testing of total emissions would lead to even stricter guarantees for consumers with respect to indoor air quality.
Useful links	EU Commission website with further information, factsheets, and the criteria

	**Paper** *Tissue paper (toilet paper, napkins), copying and graphic paper, printed paper, stationary paper, carrier bags*
Related problems	Turning wood into paper is a polluting industrial process which releases CO2, nitrogen-oxide, sulphur-based compounds, among others, into air and water. Moreover, unnecessary harmful chemicals are often added to products, such as fragrances in tissue paper. Printing manufacturing processes can also release toxic substances and contribute to indoor air pollution, through inks, formaldehyde and volatile organic compounds (VOCs). Glues that bind stationary paper or plastic covers which cannot be easily removed can limit recyclability of paper products at the end of life.
Key benefits of the criteria (adopted in 01/2019 for graphic and tissue paper and 11/2020 for printed and stationary paper)	The EU Ecolabel criteria ensure more sustainable sourcing of raw materials and cleaner and more energy efficient manufacturing processes compared to conventional paper products. Notably: • The paper shall be either of **recycled origin or otherwise covered by certification scheme** (FSC or PEFC) ensuring that fibres originate from forests managed sustainably, and avoid controversial sources, including GMO species. • Paper mills where the paper is manufactured must respect **thresholds limits for emissions to air and water**, including carbon emissions; moreover, they must ensure an efficient use of energy and reduce waste. • Paper products shall be **recyclable** (e.g., by avoiding problematic inks and ensuring easy removal of non-paper parts) • The use of **harmful substances** in the manufacturing process, such as chlorine bleaching, hazardous pigments and dyes, is **strictly restricted**. Substances of very high concern in the REACH candidate list shall not be found in the final product. • For printed paper and stationary paper, the **emissions of volatile organic compounds (VOCs) during manufacturing are limited.** • Fragranced paper (e.g., tissue paper and tissue products) cannot display the EU Ecolabel.
Useful links	EU Commission website with further information, factsheets, and the criteria

	**Clothing and textiles** *Clothes, footwear, other textiles such as interior textiles (e.g., bathrobes, towels)*
Related problems	Textiles are the category with the fourth highest impact on the environment and climate after food, housing and mobility (source). Many chemicals are used during textile manufacturing, posing threats to the environment and to human health. It is crucial to extend the lifespan of textiles and ensure they are manufactured in respect for the environment and people.
Key benefits of the criteria (adopted in 06/2014 for textiles and 08/2016 for footwear)	Several certification schemes for textiles exist with a primary focus on organic production, labour conditions or restriction of harmful substances. The EU Ecolabel, together with the Nordic Swan and the Blue Angel, are the official ISO 14024 Type 1 ecolabels addressing the main impacts of textiles throughout their lifecycle. Here are some of the requirements that apply to clothing, footwear and textiles certified with the EU Ecolabel: • Products are **manufactured in an environmentally responsible way**, by using energy and resources more efficiently, and involving less polluting processes based on best available techniques in the EU. • Products are designed to meet **quality and durability standards** expanding their lifetime. • **Strict limitations for hazardous substances** are in place. A comprehensive list of restricted substances is applied to avoid or minimise the use of chemicals hazardous to the environment and human health during dyeing, printing, and finishing processes, or their presence in the final product. This includes substances of very high concern, endocrine disrupting chemicals such as phthalates or nonylphenols, formaldehyde, heavy metals, nano silver, triclosan and other problematic biocides. Footwear made of PVC cannot be ecolabelled, and for shoes for children under 3 years, inner leather parts must be chromium-free. • **Fibres are sourced more sustainably**: ○ For instance, cotton used in baby clothing must be organic. Other clothing or textiles are tested for hazardous pesticides in cotton, and a minimum share of organic cotton or cotton grown minimising use of pesticide is required.

	○ Moreover, at least 25% of cellulose used to produce man-made fibres such as viscose shall come from responsibly managed forests. • The final assembly plants are audited for the respect of fundamental conventions of the International Labour Organisation on **safe and fair working conditions**.
Aspects to address in the upcoming criteria revision (starting end of 2022):	• Within the EU Strategy for Sustainable Textiles, the Commission has confirmed the adoption of revised criteria for the EU Ecolabel by 2024. The revision process has been delayed in order to carry it out in synergy with the development of Ecodesign measures for textiles. As the EU will adopt mandatory minimum sustainability performance requirements for the sector, the ambition level of the EU Ecolabel will be increased to reflect best-in-class products. • The requirements will need to integrate more circularity aspects, including, among others: ○ design for repair and recyclability ○ further restrictions of hazardous chemicals, notably for recycled textiles ○ avoiding incentivising the recycling of PET bottles into textiles (considered as downcycling), and rather promoting fibre-to-fibre recycling ○ revising emissions thresholds for the manufacturing process ○ enhancing the level of ambition for sustainable sourcing (e.g., increased use of organic cotton, sustainably certified forests).
Helpful links	EU Commission website with further information, factsheets, and the criteria

	**Cleaning products** *Detergents for dishwasher and washing machines, hard surface cleaning products, washing-up detergents*
Related problems	Detergents can contain ingredients which harm the environment and human health. Problematic substances can sneak through water treatment services, pollute rivers, and even end up in our food chain. Chemicals can also come in contact with our skin, contributing to allergies or other health related problems. Detergents are a source of microplastic pollution and waste generation. They can also contribute to climate change: if the detergent does not perform well at low temperature, consumers are likely to choose a high temperature washing programme which requires more energy.
Key benefits of the criteria (adopted in 06/2017)	• EU Ecolabel detergents generally contain fewer problematic chemicals compared to standard products, **minimising overall exposure to harmful chemicals**. For instance, there is a strict ban on a list of hazardous substances which might be present in conventional detergents such as EDTA, triclosan, nano silver, formaldehyde, alkyl phenols. Very few fragrances, preservatives, colouring agents and enzymes are allowed. Substances that are hazardous for the environment or that may cause cancer, change our DNA or affect fertility are strictly prohibited in EU Ecolabel products, while they can be present in standard detergents. • EU Ecolabel detergents must not be toxic to aquatic organisms and must be **biodegradable**. Moreover, the label excludes disinfecting detergents which can make bacteria become resistant, i.e., hard to kill in the long run. • EU Ecolabel detergents **must not contain microplastics**, very tiny toxic particles of plastics which end up in fish, crustaceans or plankton. • The EU Ecolabel favours **packaging that is made of recycled material and recyclable**, and it promotes the use of less plastic and refillable containers. • EU Ecolabel detergents are proven to be **efficient at low temperatures**, allowing consumers to save energy and money. For instance, laundry detergents are tested to have the highest efficiency at 30°C. EU Ecolabel detergents are highly concentrated, i.e., a small amount does the job.

Aspects to address in the upcoming revision (starting end of 2022)	A revision of the EU Ecolabel for cleaning products will start at the end of 2022. BEUC has brought the following aspects to the European Commission's attention for the upcoming revision: • Although isothiazolinones are currently restricted by the EU Ecolabel, they are not fully banned. The future revision of the criteria may exclude these preservatives altogether, as has been done recently in the EU Ecolabel for cosmetics. • The performance requirements should be enhanced. Although, overall, the performance of ecolabelled detergents equals that of conventional products - with some consumer tests showing products with the EU Ecolabel among the best - there are some examples of products for which the performance needs to be improved. • The revision should also integrate upcoming changes to the Regulation for the Classification, Labelling and Packaging of substances and mixtures notably with respect to the creation of a new hazard class for endocrine disruptors (EDCs) that should be excluded within the EU Ecolabel (currently a list of EDCs is excluded). It should also take into account the upcoming revision on packaging or detergents legislation, so that the EU Ecolabel continues to stay one step ahead of existing laws.
Helpful links	EU Commission website with further information, factsheets and the criteria

	**Holiday accommodation** *Tourist accommodation and services (hotels, campsites, and related services such as leisure or fitness facilities and event venues)*
Related problems	It is estimated that, if tourism growth stays as usual, the sector alone will have used up the world's remaining carbon budget within 40 years (source). Besides the transportation to tourist destinations, the required infrastructure, hotels and their operations, are the second hotspot to look at. Infrastructure for tourism is consuming land and energy, using water in often already water-scarce regions, and generating waste. Water consumption per tourist can be several times higher than what residents consume, depending on the type of tourist activity or accommodation (source).
Key benefits of the criteria (adopted in 01/2017)	• Accommodations need to have an **environmental management plan** in place to identify their environmental hotspots, and set up an action plan to achieve better performance over time. • **Running on renewable energy**: depending on the region, 50% or 100% of the hotel's energy must come from renewable sources. • **Reduced water consumption** is ensured thanks to requirements regarding the water flow rate of taps and toilet flushing. Water used for laundry is managed efficiently as sheets and towels do not get replaced every day (unless guests wish so). Hotels are also encouraged to manage their swimming pool carefully, recycle rainwater or set up efficient irrigation systems. • **Lower waste generation** is ensured by limiting food waste and banning disposable toiletries and single-use plastic packaging for non-perishable food. • **Less exposure to toxic substances**: bed sheets, towels and floors can be cleaned with eco-friendly detergents. Some might even go the extra mile serving organic food and maintaining green areas pesticide-free. • Promotion of **eco-friendly transportation options** for guests, such as public transport, electric vehicles, car sharing or bikes.

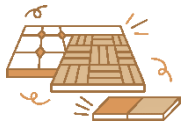
Helpful links	• EU Commission website with further information, a factsheet, and the criteria • Ongoing Commission campaign to promote certified hotels and campsites, with a dedicated website and social media materials for reuse in all EU languages • Fun Quiz on sustainable tourism & the EU Ecolabel to share on social media

	**Furniture and mattresses** *Mattresses and built-in or free-standing furniture such as tables, shelves, chairs, sofas, for indoor or outdoor use*
Related problems	Hazardous substances in furniture and mattresses can cause harmful indoor emissions. The sourcing of raw materials like wood for these products can cause deforestation or environmental degradation if not carefully managed.
Key benefits of the criteria (adopted in 07/2016 for furniture and 06/2014 for mattresses)	• Certified furniture and bed mattresses are designed to meet **quality and durability requirements**, including through extended commercial guarantee. They must be easily disassembled to facilitate refurbishment or recycling at the end of their life. Furniture shall be easily repairable, including through the availability of spare parts. • Furniture made out wood shall be certified by schemes ensuring **sustainable management of forests** (FSC or PEFC) and not originate from genetically modified trees. • **Furniture made of plastic shall be produced with a minimum of recycled plastic**. PVC is not allowed for any plastic parts, given its negative environmental impacts throughout its life cycle. • The criteria for furniture and bed mattresses **reduce indoor air pollution by strictly limiting emissions of formaldehyde**, as well as other volatile organic compounds which must be assessed through chamber tests. • The criteria include a **strict restriction of hazardous substances** used in the manufacturing of furniture and bed mattresses such as substances of very high concern, dyes, fluorinated chemicals, flame retardants, biocides, chromium and other heavy metals.
Aspects to address in the next revision (starting in 2023, tbc)	As Ecodesign performance requirements will likely apply to furniture and bed mattresses to access the EU market in future, the EU Ecolabel criteria should become more ambitious to reflect best-in-class performance in terms of sustainability.

Helpful links	EU Commission website with further information, factsheets, and the criteria

	**Electronic equipment** *Electronic displays and screens*
Related problems	The demand for electronic equipment is growing rapidly. The production of devices relies on critical raw materials, partly stemming from mining. Mining has damaging environmental impacts and often occurs in poor labour conditions. Moreover, electronic waste is the fastest growing waste stream globally, yet it is often not treated or recycled properly, which means we are unnecessarily depleting finite resources.
Key benefits of the criteria (adopted in 11/2020)	• **Energy-efficiency**: only the most energy-efficient electronic displays can be awarded with the EU Ecolabel. • **Repairability** and **recyclability**: although the Ecodesign Directive has set mandatory requirements for all electronic displays marketed in the EU, the EU Ecolabel boosts design for repair and material recovery at the end of life. For instance, it requires a wider list of spare parts that must be available for a longer period. The label is also more demanding regarding design for easy dismantling at the end of life, to help recover components for recycling. • Minimum **recycled content** (min. 10% of post-consumer recycled plastic) • **Limited amount of hazardous substances**, ensured by prohibiting the use of substances of very high concern in the REACH candidate list, as well as flame retardants, chlorinated compounds and plasticizers classified as hazardous for the environment and health, among others. • **Reduced emissions of fluorinated greenhouse gases** contributing to climate change during the manufacturing of electronic displays**.** • **Corporate social responsibility promoted** by auditing compliance of with ILO conventions and additional measures (e.g., minimum living wage) in the final assembly plant, and by requiring responsible sourcing of minerals from high-risk areas that might be affected by conflicts.
Helpful links	EU Commission website with further information, a factsheet, and the criteria

	**Gardening** *Growing media, soil improvers and mulch*
Related problems	Conventional potting soil often contains peat to a large extent. Peat is sourced from peat bogs which are exceptionally rich in biodiversity and can buffer water in case of flooding events. Moreover, peatlands are the world's second most efficient store of carbon. Degrading these landscapes means a vast release of greenhouse gas emissions, contributing to global warming. Alternatives to peat for use in soil exist, but peat is still so inexpensive that it remains an attractive source for manufacturers.
Key benefits of the criteria (adopted in July 2022)	Thanks to the EU Ecolabel, consumers can use certified gardening products that preserve soil biodiversity and prevent soil and water pollution. Among other aspects, the criteria: • **Exclude the use of peat**, contributing to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and protect biodiversity in peatlands ecosystems. • **Increase the use of recycled materials** notably of organic waste. • **Restrict substances of very high concern** and heavy metals, helping to reduce soil and water pollution. • **Require quality tests.**
Helpful links	EU Commission website with further information, a factsheet, and the criteria

	**coverings** *for floors, vertical surfaces, and roofs (like tiles, panels, laminates, and worktops made of materials like stone, ceramics, concrete, wood or cork)*
Related problems	Extraction of resources from quarries (for hard coverings) or forests (for wood-based coverings) is an environmental hotspot for this category. Moreover, the production process is energy intensive, contributing to global warming. Besides, hazardous substances in some conventional coverings can cause health problems for workers and consumers.
Key benefits of the criteria (wood-based coverings adopted in 01/2017, hard coverings in 03/2021)	• The origin of wood used is covered by a **sustainable forest management** certificate. • **The extraction of raw materials for hard coverings is regulated to reduce environmental damage**: only quarries on legally permitted land can be used, a rehabilitation plan for the area is required, minimum material efficiency during extraction is prescribed. • **Reduced energy consumption** during production, encouraging use of renewable energy. • **Less water and air emissions** by regulating dust emissions during production and restricting the presence of hazardous substances in the final product. • **The use of hazardous substances such as heavy metals is limited and there are strict limits for emissions of formaldehyde or volatile organic compounds, thus reducing indoor air pollution.** • The criteria contribute to **minimise waste generation and promote longer lasting products**. For instance, wood floor coverings must be **easy to repair, reuse and recycle** and hard covering products made of recycled materials.
Helpful links	EU Commission website with further information, factsheets and the criteria

Links between the EU Ecolabel and other policies

- **Green Public Procurement (GPP).** The EU Ecolabel should be a reference in public tenders to support green public procurement.
  Europe's public authorities are major consumers, as their combined purchases represent 16% of the EU GDP. By leading by example, public authorities can therefore play a big role in sustainable consumption and production. Although it remains largely voluntary, different countries are implementing mandatory action plans or setting objectives to green their procurement. Some examples:
    - Denmark has set a target to buy 100% from reliable schemes such as the EU Ecolabel and the Nordic Swan by 2030.
    - In Estonia, a new GPP regulation makes it mandatory to procure only products with a Type-I ecolabel (fulfilling certain criteria of the ISO 14024 standard, the EU Ecolabel is an example) in four product categories (furniture, copy and drawing paper, cleaning products and services, office IT equipment).

- **Proposal for Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation.** The current Ecodesign scheme sets minimum energy-efficiency requirements for energy-related products. The 2022 legislative proposal will expand the development of Ecodesign measures for almost all products to ensure minimum sustainability performance, beyond energy efficiency, before accessing the EU market. The new proposal reinforces the synergies between Ecodesign and the EU Ecolabel. Notably, it proposes that when member states decide to reward frontrunner products through financial incentives, these should target products with the EU Ecolabel (or the highest two classes of performance or other EU schemes). Besides, learnings from the EU Ecolabel should inform the preparation of the new Ecodesign requirements. In the future, Ecodesign and EU Ecolabel performance requirements will be developed in synergy to ensure coherence between the two policies. Mandatory targets and criteria for Green Public Procurement for different type of products will also come into force in the future at EU level.

- **Proposal on Empowering consumers for the green transition.** The EU proposal published in March 2022 sets stricter rules for green claims to address greenwashing. Notably, companies will not be able to make general green claims unless excellent environmental performance can be demonstrated, with the EU Ecolabel being among the options to support such claims. Moreover, sustainability labels will not be allowed unless they comply with minimum conditions such as third-party verification.

- **The EU's Sustainable Consumption Pledge.** This is a tool created by the European Commission to encourage companies to voluntary pledge to support more sustainable consumption with their actions. One of the options to do so is for companies to commit to certifying their products with the EU Ecolabel or to increasing the visibility of their certified product. For retailers, the pledge could include extending the offer of products certified with the EU Ecolabel.

For more information, see the Commission's website on the policy links between the EU Ecolabel and other initiatives.

Key EU information and materials available for use

- The official EU Ecolabel website
- The EU Ecolabel catalogue for products and tourist accommodations
- The EU Ecolabel logo 30th anniversary edition
- The EU Ecolabel campaign for tourist accommodation with a social media toolkit in all EU languages.
- Other ISO Type-I ecolabels in the EU exist, notably at national or regional level (listed here).

ENDS