



European
Commission



THE EU ECOLABEL HAS TURNED 30!

Discover some
EU Ecolabel milestones,
fun facts and
achievements

What's inside?

About this publication
About the EU Ecolabel
History and timeline
Links with other major initiatives
Now it's up to you!

+
Fun facts
and milestones

Manuscript completed in February 2023
This document should not be considered as
representative of the European Commis-
sion's official position.
Luxembourg: Publications Office of the
European Union, 2023
© European Union, 2023



The reuse policy of European Commission documents is implemented by Commission Decision 2011/833/EU of 12 December 2011 on the reuse of Commission documents (OJ L 330, 14.12.2011, p. 39). Unless otherwise noted, the reuse of this document is authorised under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0) licence (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>). This means that reuse is allowed provided appropriate credit is given and any changes are indicated.

For any use or reproduction of elements that are not owned by the European Union, permission may need to be sought directly from the respective rightholders.

PDF
ISBN 978-92-76-621065
doi:10.2779/389969
KH-09-23-009-EN-N

About this publication

On 23 March 2022, the EU Ecolabel officially turned 30!

To commemorate three decades of achievements, many activities have been organised across Europe including social media campaigning, a mobile showroom and showcases. This brochure has been produced as part of

these activities and provides a guided tour of the EU Ecolabel's background and history, including milestones, facts and figures, achievements and stories that have shaped the scheme along the way. Enjoy!



About the EU Ecolabel

Established in 1992 and recognised across Europe and worldwide, the EU Ecolabel is a mark of environmental excellence awarded to products (goods and services) meeting high environmental standards throughout their life cycle, from raw material extraction to production, packaging, distribution, use and through to disposal.

It is the 1990s, an era of Britpop and crop tops, clunky mobile phones, surging markets and high employment. But evidence is mounting that our planet is struggling to keep up. Decades of unsustainable consumption and production patterns are fuelling a looming environmental crisis. Consumers are beginning to understand that their choices matter. But how can they know which products are more friendly to the environment?

In a foresighted move, the European Commission took steps to create what was then called a 'Community Ecolabel for environmentally friendly products' or, as it became commonly known, the 'EU Flower'. EU lawmakers signed it into life on 23 March 1992¹.

Well-intended and clearly needed, the scheme however experienced some understandable teething problems. This prompted a series of improvements culminating in a major revision in 2010 to rebrand and reboot the scheme with a catchier name: the **EU Ecolabel**!

¹ Council Regulation (EEC) No 880/92 of 23 March 1992 on a Community eco-label award scheme.

While it has grown and evolved with the times (see the **'History and time-line'** section), the EU Ecolabel's broad mission, declared in the founding regulation², remains intact: 'To promote the design, production, marketing and use of products which have a reduced environmental impact during their entire life-cycle, and provide consumers with better information on the environmental impact of products.' Today, 'products' includes both goods and services.

In practice, the EU Ecolabel focuses on reducing products' most significant environmental impacts, in particular on climate change, nature and biodiversity, and energy and resource consumption. It also aims to reduce the generation of waste and negative impacts on water, air and soil, while making positive contributions to a clean, circular economy

and non-toxic environment. Independent experts participating in the EU Ecolabel criteria development process help to ensure that EU Ecolabel products use sustainable ingredients and avoid hazardous, toxic or otherwise harmful substances. Products bearing the EU Ecolabel also prove that they use minimal, recycled or recyclable packaging and, importantly, that the products are truly green.

Today's consumers want to be reassured that they are making sustainable choices through guarantees that they are choosing products of the highest quality. This growing awareness, backed by firm political action, is driving increasing numbers of environmentally conscious businesses into the EU Ecolabel community.



'When you choose the EU Ecolabel, you're choosing products and services that are helping address the biggest environmental challenges of our time – reaching climate neutrality by 2050, shifting to a more circular economy, and taking us closer to Europe's zero pollution ambition for a toxic-free environment.'

Virginijus Sinkevičius

European Commissioner for Environment, Oceans and Fisheries



² Regulation (EC) No 66/2010 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 November 2009 on the EU Ecolabel.



Memos!

Green credentials on display

Earning and displaying the EU Ecolabel is more than just a branding exercise, it is an environmental mindset.

The scheme provides rigorous proof of a **product's green credentials** while supporting EU consumer rights initiatives to tackle greenwashing.

Voluntary convergence and business benefits

Since the EU Ecolabel is a voluntary scheme, producers, importers and retailers can choose to apply for it. Earning the EU Ecolabel gives businesses a market advantage. By complying with the criteria, manufacturers are 'greening' their production and are also making savings.

The life cycle label

As a byword for environmental excellence, the EU Ecolabel is awarded to goods and services that meet **high environmental standards throughout their life cycle**, beginning with extraction (mining or cultivation of the raw materials), continuing with manufacturing, packaging and use through to their end-of-life stages, when products are disposed of, recycled or repurposed.

Consumer benefits

The EU Ecolabel empowers consumers to make truly sustainable choices! Shoppers are busy and have little time to study the green credentials and claims on packaging in detail. Which products are truly green? **The EU Ecolabel logo is easy to recognise** and helps consumers easily identify high-quality green products and services.

History and timeline

*In this section, we take the readers on a guided history tour of **key selected EU Ecolabel moments and achievements.***

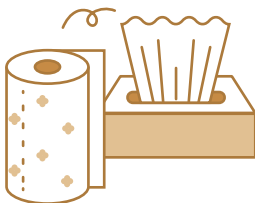


© Artik

A little-known fact about the EU Ecolabel scheme is that it was originally aimed solely at goods, excluding food, drinks and medicines. Criteria for services were only introduced in 2003, first for tourist accommodation, followed by campsites and indoor cleaning services. These services have since become a major contributor to the scheme's growth and brand identity.

New product groups have also been added throughout the EU Ecolabel's 30-year journey, while those product groups with low uptake have been dropped. From a modest beginning, as of its 30th anniversary, the total EU Ecolabel portfolio includes criteria for 24 product groups and the number of products now wearing the EU Ecolabel³ has topped almost 90 000!

³ As of March 2022.



MARCH

The **Community Ecolabel Award Scheme** is launched (Council Regulation (EEC) No 880/92), the EU Ecolabel's predecessor.

DECEMBER

The EU Ecolabel portfolio continues to grow, adding new products such as **toilet paper** and **kitchen roll**.

JANUARY AND OCTOBER

Criteria for **tissue paper** products are added to the EU Ecolabel, followed later in the year by **bed mattresses**.

1992

1993

1994

1996

1998

AUGUST

The first EU Ecolabel criteria are established for **dishwashers** and **washing machines**.



THROUGHOUT THE YEAR

A bevy of product groups join the EU Ecolabel fold as new criteria are adopted for products such as indoor paints and varnishes, bed linen and t-shirts, light bulbs, copy paper and fridges – a total of **71 new products** are labelled during the year.

71
new
products



110

new products

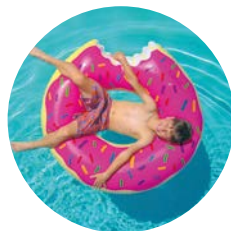


JANUARY

A new milestone for a new millennium with **110 new products** labelled throughout the year. The EU Ecolabel reports a total of 12 product groups labelled between 1993 and 2000.

JULY

A fresh round of criteria revisions is announced for the EU Ecolabel in the [revised EU Ecolabel regulation](#) (Regulation (EC) No 1980/2000), stressing the need for strategic work plans and objectives to boost market penetration and coordination with national ecolabelling schemes.



APRIL

Criteria are agreed for services for the first time, setting off a wave of applications in the **tourism accommodation sector**.

1999

2000

2001

2002

2003

THROUGHOUT THE YEAR

Another big year with criteria added for products including **textile products, footwear** and personal and portable **computers**.



THROUGHOUT 2001 AND 2002

New product groups such as **hard floor coverings** and **televisions** are added, while criteria for several other product groups are revised.

The **10th anniversary festivities**, including a Danish fashion show using ecolabelled fabrics, include a new EU Ecolabel website and the creation of the database of EU Ecolabel licence holders and products (the EU Ecolabel product catalogue).

To date, the label proves most popular in France, Italy and Sweden, with several main product groups in the forefront (paints and varnishes, textiles and footwear).

MARCH

EU lawmakers adopt new directives to bring environmental considerations into the selection and award criteria for **(green) public procurement** tenders, strengthening the EU Ecolabel's case in the procurement of goods and, ultimately, services.

APRIL

The EU Ecolabel **helpdesk** is created to support marketing and communications actions.



JUNE AND OCTOBER

A new EU Ecolabel working plan is established, and 10 EU Member States participate in the 'Flower Week' to promote sustainable consumer choices.



THROUGHOUT 2008 AND 2009

Groundwork is laid for a revamp during a period of consolidation with prolonged and revised criteria for many product groups, while criteria for **wooden furniture** is added late in 2009.

2004

2005

2006

2007

2008

FEBRUARY

The 'EU Flower' starts blooming in the **new Member States**, with the first licences awarded in Hungary followed by Czechia, Lithuania and Poland. **Campsites** are added to the EU Ecolabel family.



THROUGHOUT THE YEAR

Criteria are set for **growing media** (such as compost), followed by **soaps**, shampoos and **hair conditioners**, and **heat pumps**.





THROUGHOUT THE YEAR

Another busy year with criteria set for the likes of **notebook computers**, various **light sources**, **all-purpose cleaners** and **sanitisers**.

MAY AND JUNE

More examples of the quickening pace of growth for the scheme are noted with the addition of **indoor and outdoor paints and varnishes** in May and further work on goods such as **textile products**.

2009

2010

2011

2012

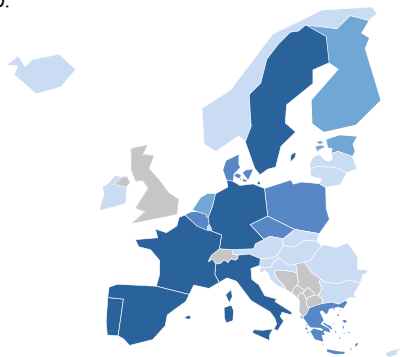
2014

FROM NOVEMBER 2009 TO FEBRUARY 2010

Revisions of Regulation (EC) No 66/2010 are under way, **harmonising the EU Ecolabel with related schemes in the wider European Economic Area** and simplifying applications and category development, and are then published in the Official Journal of the European Union on 30 January 2010.

MARCH

After two decades in existence, the EU Ecolabel reaches a grand total of **23 product groups** and offers a growing number of products to EU consumers (upwards of 13 590).



75 000

EU Ecolabel
products
across
Europe



JULY

With ecological criteria confirmed, the **broader category of furniture** becomes the latest product grouping to join the EU Ecolabel.

NOVEMBER

Work continues on new categories and products and a pioneering **webinar** is held to identify elements for a future EU Ecolabel strategy.

SEPTEMBER

A new record is announced: consumers can now access over **75 000 EU Ecolabel products** across Europe.

DECEMBER

A new **Strategic EU Ecolabel Work Plan** (2020-2024) is published, emphasising the need to mainstream the EU Ecolabel in other major EC initiatives, maintain a high-quality product categories portfolio and boost industry uptake and consumer awareness.

2016

2017

2018

2019

2020

JANUARY

New criteria for tourist accommodation introduce stricter environmental and social requirements for **hotels, campsites and bed and breakfasts** wishing to be awarded the EU Ecolabel.

JUNE

The Commission report on the review of implementation of the EU Ecolabel regulation (**fitness check**) is published, calling for a more strategic approach for the EU Ecolabel, including a communication strategy.

Celebrations for the EU Ecolabel's **25th birthday** feature a novel eco pop-up 'EU Ecolabel showroom' in the heart of Brussels.

FROM JANUARY TO MARCH

The Commission launches a consultation to identify opportunities to boost uptake, focusing on promising product and service groups, and issues a call for new members to join the EU Ecolabelling Board.

OCTOBER

The EU Ecolabel joins in the celebrations for '**World Ecolabel Day**' with an awareness campaign and promotional actions.





MARCH

The launch of the EU Ecolabel **30-year anniversary** celebrations (including events, conferences and articles) at the EU level and in the Member States.

MAY

The EU Ecolabel celebrates its anniversary during EU Green Week with the **'EU Ecolabel showroom on wheels'** touring the European continent.

OCTOBER

Closing of the summer tour of the mobile **'EU Ecolabel showroom on wheels'** in Brussels, to mark World Ecolabel Day on 13 October.

2021

2022

2023

OCTOBER

The Commission adopts revised criteria for cosmetic products and new criteria for **animal-care products**.

MARCH

The EU Ecolabel 30th anniversary celebrations draw to a close.





Fun facts!

Keeping it fresh

EU Ecolabel criteria are revised regularly to reflect **technical innovation** (new materials and processes, market shifts, etc.) and to maintain the highest **environmental performance standards**.

International acceptance

In 2003, an Australian wool specialist becomes the **first merino fabrics company to be EU Ecolabel certified in the product group for textiles**.

Green tourism

Within years of opening up to services in the early 2000s, tourism became a very early adopter and growth area with hotels and other businesses, especially in France and Austria leading the way.

Citius, Altius, fortius

More than a dozen accommodation providers in the **Turin 2006 Winter Olympics village** proudly displayed their EU Ecolabel logo.

Links with other major initiatives

*The EU Ecolabel has become the successful **green quality brand** it is today thanks to the dedication of its **stakeholder community**, which has inspired and supported it throughout its lifetime.*

For years, consumer activism has been sending clear signals to markets that people want to buy green, socially meaningful goods and services. Foresighted policymaking has been the backbone of the label's growth and development. This culminated in 2020 with the launch of the **Green Deal** and the **circular economy action plan**, which aim to make Europe the first climate-neutral continent. By being recognised as an important tool for enhancing sustainable production and consumption, the EU Ecolabel has seen its remit expanded.

The EU Ecolabel contributes to reaching climate neutrality by 2050 through its support to the shift to a circular economy and the transition towards a toxic-free environment. In this way, choosing and promoting EU Ecolabel products contributes to the biggest environmental challenges of our time. Stakeholder involvement grew from empowering market actors to consume, produce and live more sustainably to engaging them more deeply in the Green Deal and circularity questions: how can we transform the EU into a modern, resource-efficient economy with no net greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 where growth is decoupled from resource use?

Tackling waste, pollution and outdated 'take-make-and-throw-away' economic principles through the EU Ecolabel is central to achieving the EU's twin green and digital transition. This is manifest in the timely introduction of the **EU's zero pollution action plan** in 2021, which tackles all forms of harmful air, water and soil contamination. It is also inspiring innovative green solutions, many of which seek recognition through the EU Ecolabel. Several amendments to **EU directives covering consumer rights and unfair commercial practices** are being considered. These amendments go hand in hand with a pioneering **ecodesign for sustainable product regulation** proposal, the **EU strategy for sustainable and circular textiles** and the **green claims directive**.

Such ambitious objectives and commitments demand the highest standard of environmental excellence across all industrial sectors. For consumers, it means buying products and services with proven durability, recyclability and circularity. For policymakers and public authorities, it means mainstreaming circularity and carbon neutrality across all policy domains and in all procurement decisions. For businesses, it means embedding environmental impact into all their activities and being frontrunners in the green transition. For the EU Ecolabel, it means an opportunity to bridge all these needs and cement its place as the most reliable green label scheme.



'2022 is the 30th anniversary of the Maastricht Treaty, but it is also the 30th anniversary of the EU Ecolabel. The highest number of products has been reached, with more than 80 000 products available on the EU market, showing real demand for green products.'

Didier Reynders
European Commissioner for Justice





Quotes!

Instilling trust, building brand

*'In 2009, we developed our **eco-store brand**, to expand these [sustainability, health and fair trade] values to our food and non-food products. It has become a respected product line that we can see consumers trust, and part of that is due to marketing the brand in our stores together with the EU Ecolabel.'*

Italian licence holder of multiple product groups and retailer, 2014



Pushed to do better

*'We became EU Ecolabel certified ten years ago and ever since **the label has pushed us to constantly search for new [textile] materials, measures and methods of production.***

Austrian licence holder, textiles, 2018

Beyond brand!

'To us, "sustainable printing" is more than a brand claim, it is our belief (as a Printer Paper Products group) ... Sustainability is in our DNA.'

Portuguese licence holder, paper products, 2021



Inspiring innovation

*'[Our] organisation's strategy is based on searching for **alternative methods to traditional chemical products** by using the EU Ecolabel criteria, undertaking biotechnology and studying the early design phase to assess the impact of all products throughout their life-cycle.'*

Spanish licence holder, cleaning, 2015

Now it's up to you

WANT TO SHOP SUSTAINABLY WITH THE EU ECOLABEL?

The [EU Ecolabel product catalogue](#)⁴ provides detailed information about environmentally friendly high-quality products and where you can find them. More information about all product groups and criteria can be found [here](#)⁵. The database of products is fully downloadable from the [EU Open Data Portal](#)⁶.

WANT TO PROCURE WITH THE EU ECOLABEL?

The use of labels, and in particular the EU Ecolabel, can make it easier for public buyers to have a sustainable impact. In particular, the EU Ecolabel can support green public procurement, whereby public authorities seek to procure goods, services and works with a reduced environmental impact throughout their life cycle. The Buying Green! handbook is the Commission's main guidance document to help public authorities buy goods and services with a lower environmental impact. It can be found [here](#)⁷.

The Commission is developing manuals for authorities awarding public contracts, based on EU Ecolabel criteria, to help contracting authorities use the EU Ecolabel in their purchases. [Check out the product group specific manuals on the EU Ecolabel website](#)⁸.

WANT TO JOIN THE EU ECOLABEL COMMUNITY?

Whether you are a conscientious consumer, retailer, potential licence holder or national authority, we welcome your interest in the scheme and encourage you to get involved directly or simply by following and liking our social media posts, participating in events and following our EU Ecolabel communication campaign.

 EU Ecolabel [Linkedin page](#)⁹

[Subscribe for the latest news](#)¹⁰ and updates

WANT TO MAKE A PLEDGE TO THE ENVIRONMENT?

Joining and promoting the EU Ecolabel is a green pledge that you can make through relevant Commission initiatives such as the [European climate pact](#)¹¹, the [sustainable consumption pledge](#)¹² and the [transition pathway for tourism](#)¹³.

WANT TO HELP PROMOTE THE EU ECOLABEL?

If you are already involved with the EU Ecolabel, we encourage you to become a self-appointed ambassador for the brand. Share your experience, tell others how it helped you reach new markets, encourage other businesses to join the community and feel free to drop us a line and send us testimonials for use in our marketing and promotion activities. Businesses can find out more about how to communicate about the EU Ecolabel and inspire your own communications and promotional activities on EU Ecolabel-certified goods and services [here](#)¹⁴.

-
- 4 https://environment.ec.europa.eu/topics/circular-economy/eu-ecolabel-home/ecat-product-catalogue_en
 - 5 https://environment.ec.europa.eu/topics/circular-economy/eu-ecolabel-home/product-groups-and-criteria_en
 - 6 <https://data.europa.eu/data/datasets/eu-ecolabel-products?locale=en>
 - 7 <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/8c2da441-f63c-11e5-8529-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-287889172>
 - 8 https://environment.ec.europa.eu/topics/circular-economy/eu-ecolabel-home/product-groups-and-criteria_en
 - 9 <https://www.linkedin.com/company/euecolabel>
 - 10 <https://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/env/user-subscriptions/432/create>
 - 11 https://climate-pact.europa.eu/index_en
 - 12 https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/consumers/consumer-protection-policy/sustainable-consumption-pledge_en
 - 13 <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/404a8144-8892-11ec-8c40-01aa75ed71a1>
 - 14 https://environment.ec.europa.eu/topics/circular-economy/eu-ecolabel-home/eu-ecolabel-branding_en

*The **EU Ecolabel** guiding your sustainable choices for 30 years*





How to reach us?



www.ecolabel.eu



<https://www.linkedin.com/company/euecolabel>

Notes







EU ECOLABEL

Better for you, better for the environment

- Empowers sustainable choices
- Reduces environmental impact
- Showcases high-performing green products
- Encourages responsible business
- Tackles greenwashing and built-in obsolescence
- Leads to durable products that are easy to repair and recycle
- Promotes the circular economy
- Prompts less waste and lower CO₂ emissions



www.ecolabel.eu



Publications Office
of the European Union