

How to eliminate hazardous chemicals from consumer articles?

Ecolabel approach

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The Ecolabel project partners



- Bureau Européen des Unions de Consommateurs.
- Established in 1962.
- 43 members' organisations: Which?, Stiftung Warentest, Que Choisir, OCU, Test-Achats, Consumentenbond...
- 31 European countries (26 EU Member States).
- Focus on general consumer policy issues.



- European Environmental Bureau.
- Established in 1974.
- More than 140 members from 31 countries.
- Co-funded by the European Commission.
- EEB stands for sustainable development, environmental justice and global equity.



The EU Ecolabel

- ✓ Voluntary label of environmental excellence for products and services.
- ✓ In 2012 – 20th anniversary.
- ✓ BEUC and EEB involved in the criteria setting process nearly from the beginning.
- ✓ New regulation – no 66/2010.



BEUC and EEB supporting green chemistry approach

- ✓ In 2008, we proposed sustainable chemistry rules:
 - Chemicals needed for necessary function;
 - Inherently safe chemicals only;
 - Chemicals readily degrade in the environment;
 - No emissions of problematic substances;
 - Easy to be recycled;
 - List of excluded chemicals.



General principles for use of chemicals in the Ecolabel:

- ✓ Substituting hazardous chemicals by safer alternatives.
- ✓ Criteria based on best 10-20 % products.
- ✓ No chemicals classified as toxic, hazardous to the environment, carcinogenic, mutagenic or toxic for reproduction.
- ✓ Possible derogations:
 - Not technically feasible to substitute;
 - No alternative materials or designs;
 - In case of products with significantly higher overall environmental performance.
- ✓ For certain chemicals no derogations are possible.



Interpretation of chemical provisions by the EC

- ✓ Substances with certain H/R-Phrases are excluded for all product groups.
- ✓ For certain substances, concentration limits are foreseen according to 0,1% w/w.
- ✓ Compliance with chemical provisions is part of the assessment and verification procedure.
- ✓ Derogations will be granted specifically for substances and uses depending on the product group.



Controversial chemical substances:

- ✓ BEUC/EEB call for horizontal approach:
- ✓ **PVC** should be banned as it is linked with dioxin formation;
- ✓ **Chemical flame retardants** should be substituted with safer alternatives or made their use redundant due to changes in design;
- ✓ **Nanomaterials** should be excluded from Ecolabel products on basis of precautionary principle.



Problems with setting criteria for chemicals in Ecolabel:

- ✓ Lack of data (REACH, market data).
- ✓ Repetitive discussions.
- ✓ Heterogenous requirements in different product groups.
- ✓ Political consensus.



Ecolabel as a signpost

- ✓ Horizontal approach to chemicals in Ecolabel is crucial as it influences:
 - Green public procurement – the biggest European consumer;
 - Ecodesign – go beyond energy;
 - National environmental labels.



Thank you for attention!

More information on

www.eeb.org www.beuc.eu

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