



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

PRESS RELEASE

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Environment: Helping companies and consumers navigate the green maze

The European Commission is proposing EU-wide methods to measure the environmental performance of products and organisations, and encouraging Member States and the private sector to take them up.

Today, companies wanting to highlight the environmental performance of their products face numerous obstacles. They have to choose between several methods promoted by governments and private initiatives, they are often forced to pay multiple costs for providing environmental information, and they face the mistrust of consumers confused by too many labels with information that makes products difficult to compare.

According to the latest Eurobarometer on Green Products, 48 % of European consumers are confused by the stream of environmental information they receive. Calls have also come from several industrial federations for a pan-European approach built on EU-wide science-based assessments and Life Cycle Analysis. They expressed fears that multiple initiatives at Member State level would run contrary to Single Market principles, confusing consumers and increasing costs for industry.

Environment Commissioner Janez Potočnik said: *"To boost sustainable growth, we need to make sure that the most resource-efficient and environmentally-friendly products on the market are known and recognisable. By giving people reliable and comparable information about the environmental impacts and credentials of products and organisations, we enable them to choose. And by helping companies to align their methods we cut their costs and administrative burdens."*

Today's proposal, a Communication on Building the Single Market for Green Products and a Recommendation on the use of the methods, should bring comparable and reliable environmental information, building confidence for consumers, business partners, investors and other company stakeholders.

The proposal

- puts forward two methods to measure environmental performance throughout the lifecycle, the Product Environmental Footprint (PEF) and the Organisation Environmental Footprint (OEF);
- recommends the voluntary use of these methods to Member States, companies, private organisations and the financial community;
- announces a three-year testing period to develop product- and sector-specific rules through a multi-stakeholder process, including provision for organisations with other methods to have them assessed as well;
- **provides principles for communicating environmental performance**, such as transparency, reliability, completeness, comparability and clarity;
- **supports international efforts** towards more coordination in methodological development and data availability.

Next Steps

The **three-year testing period** is expected to be launched soon after the adoption of the Communication. An open call for volunteers will be published by the Commission on the web portals for the [Product Environmental Footprint](#) (PEF) and the [Organisation Environmental Footprint](#) (OEF), inviting companies, industrial and stakeholder organisations in the EU and beyond to participate in the development of product-group specific and sector-specific rules.

A **second phase** will build on an in-depth evaluation of the results of the three-year testing and additional actions carried out under the Communication and the Recommendation. Based on this evaluation, the Commission will decide on further policy applications of the PEF and OEF methods.

Background

These actions contribute to the implementation of the [Roadmap to a Resource Efficient Europe](#), in particular the section related to Sustainable Consumption and Production. The actions foreseen included the establishment of a common, life-cycle assessment based methodological approach enabling Member States and the private sector to assess, display and benchmark the environmental performance of products, services and companies ; and the provision of better information on the environmental footprints of products.

The Single Market for Green Products was announced as a key action in the Single Market Act¹ of 2011 and in the Industrial Policy update Communication of 2012².

The Product Environmental Footprint and Organisation Environmental Footprint methods have been prepared by the European Commission's Joint Research Centre. They are based on Life Cycle Assessment, thus they can cover environmental impacts (and point to improvement opportunities) from the extraction of raw materials to the disposal of a product (or a product portfolio in case of organisations).

For more information:

Link to the Communication & to the Recommendation:

<http://www.ec.europa.eu/environment/eussd/smgp/index.htm>

See also:

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/eussd/product_footprint.htm

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/eussd/corporate_footprint.htm

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¹ (COM(2011) 206 final of 13.4.11)

² (COM(2012) 582 final of 10.10.12)