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Reducing the environmental impact of envelopes

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The secure envelope market is set to undergo a recycling revolution, partly due to the public's growing awareness of environmental issues. Inspired by EU efforts to promote products made from eco-friendly materials, this initiative seeks to replace non-ecological envelopes made from highly-polluting polyethylene plastic with paper, laminated with eco-plastic. SELLOPE improves environmental performance by cutting CO2 emission, diverting waste from landfills and promoting recycling and compostability.

Public awareness about eco-friendly packaging is on the rise and European postal services are committed to supporting sustainability.

Even so, all so-called "secure" envelopes - those used for transporting valuables such as money, cheques or confidential documents - currently available on the Europe market are made from polyethylene, a high cost and environmentally-damaging plastic.

That is where the EU-funded [SELLOPE](#) [1] project comes in.

Eco-friendlier envelopes

It has produced a new-type of envelope which is made from paper certified by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC). The paper is typically composed of virgin tree fibers and is considered a great alternative not only to highly polluting plastic but also to rougher recycled paper. Only 100% pure cellulose kraft paper is used for this new product, as recycled paper can't reach the same technical performance (i.e. tear resistance).

Stamping out waste

The paper envelope has the same safety features as the plastic envelope but is made from biodegradable raw materials which makes it, unlike plastic, 100 % recyclable after use.

It has been developed by two Italian companies and a UK business who believe it will appeal to environmentally aware consumers as well as postal operators such as express couriers.

The overall objective is to comply with EU goals which encourage products made with environmentally friendly materials.

Project coordinator Stefano Aronica said, "The added value lays in bridging the gap between scientific research and commercialisation of an eco-innovative envelope."

The project has been funded through the [CIP Eco-Innovation programme](#) [2] which ran until 2013. New funding opportunities are available under [Horizon 2020's SME Instrument](#) [3] and the [LIFE programme](#) [4].

Picture: samples of Sellope envelopes. © Etaró.

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