

# EU Ecolabel paper products



The EU Ecolabel for graphic paper, tissue paper and tissue products provides consumers and manufacturers with an eco-friendly alternative to conventional paper products which helps to lower their environmental impact.



The strengths of EU Ecolabel paper products lie in the wide scope of environmental criteria they respect which contributes to facilitating the transition to a more circular economy. The EU Ecolabel aims to promote energy efficient manufacturing processes to reduce emissions to air and water that contribute to climate change. It also guarantees products with limited hazardous substances and attests to the sourcing of raw materials from sustainably managed forests or recycled materials. The product group comprises products for both private and professional use.



The scope of the product group encompasses any unprinted blank paper or board, whether plain or colored, made from pulp, and fit to be used for writing, printing or conversion purposes. It also includes tissue products dedicated to personal hygiene, absorption of liquids and cleaning of surfaces, such as: handkerchiefs, toilet tissues, facial tissues, kitchen or household towels, hand towels, table napkins, mats and industrial wipes. Absorbent hygiene products (such as baby diapers and feminine hygiene products) are covered under a separate criteria decision.

# Hotspots & Solutions

The EU Ecolabel addresses a number of environmental hotspots induced by the use of paper :

Hotspots	Issue	EU Ecolabel Solution
<b>Hotspot 1: Deforestation and degradation</b>	<i>Fibres used in paper products are often sourced from inefficiently managed forests, prone to deforestation.</i>	The EU Ecolabel criteria aim to protect forests from deforestation by requiring that at least 70 % of fibre material allocated to the product is recycled or originates from forests managed according to sustainable forestry principles set out by an independent third-party certification scheme such as the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC). If a product contains uncertified virgin material, it must be covered by a verification system which ensures that it is legally sourced and cannot originate from GMO species.
<b>Hotspot 2: Carbon emission and use of energy</b>	<i>Inefficiently managed energy consumption in paper mills contributes to excessive and uncontrolled carbon emissions, which contribute to climate change, acidification of the atmosphere, ozone depletion and the depletion of non-renewable resources.</i>	Paper mills used in the production of EU Ecolabel graphic and tissue papers must respect thresholds limiting the amount of carbon emissions and keep strict controls on the emissions to air and water generated during the production of pulp and paper, such as Sulphur (S), Phosphorous (P) and NOx. Applicants cannot exceed a maximum amount of electricity and fuel consumed (during the entire paper life cycle) and are required to calculate all energy inputs throughout the production process, including 'de-inking' activities for recycled pulp. The new criteria have set more stringent requirements both for emissions to air and water and for electricity and fuel consumption.
<b>Hotspot 3: Environmental impact of toxic substances</b>	<i>Toxic substances discharged during the production of paper have a detrimental impact on the environment, such as the eutrophication of watercourses which harms the surrounding ecosystems.</i>	Environmental and health risks related to emissions of hazardous chemicals are high during paper production, from the eutrophication of watercourses to the intoxication of workers. The EU Ecolabel graphic, tissue paper and tissue products criteria ban the most harmful substances, such as chlorine-based bleaches or metal-based dyes. Manufacturer applicants are also required to measure the emissions to air, and emissions to water at the mills' wastewater treatment plant.

**Hotspot 4:  
Environmental  
impact of paper  
waste**

*When improperly managed,  
the life cycle of paper can  
affect the environment.*

The EU Ecolabel aims to reduce the amount of waste generated by the pulp and paper industry. Paper manufacturer applicants must have a waste management system in place with specific procedures for waste separation, reuse and recycling during the paper production. Applicants must also set objectives to improve their reduction of waste generation and increase the reuse and recycling waste. Applicants already registered with the EU Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS) and/or certified according to ISO 14001 have an advantage when fulfilling this criterion.

**Hotspot 5:  
Overuse of paper**

*Lack of instructions may lead  
to overusing paper and  
creating unintentional waste.*

The EU Ecolabel aims to limit inefficient use of paper by ensuring awarded products are accompanied by appropriate instructions. Product packaging must provide advice on environmental best practices, such as “Please print double sided” and “Please collect used paper for recycling” to guide consumers.

**For more information...**

The scheme, its feature, the actors involved, the application process:

<http://ec.europa.eu/environment/ecolabel>

#CircularEconomy  
[www.ecolabel.eu](http://www.ecolabel.eu)