

## The EU Ecolabel for indoor cleaning services – an Italian success story



Ecolabels can help consumers, including public buyers, choose environmentally-friendly products. The criteria set by ecolabels act as a guideline for companies looking to lower their environmental impact. In terms of public procurement, contracting authorities can use technical specifications to require that products and services meet the high standards set by third party ecolabels (i.e. ecolabels monitored by an independent third party). By consistently asking for ecolabels, public procurers incentivise suppliers to become certified, increasing environmental performance and the availability of green products and services to a wider market.

Established in 1992 and recognised across Europe and worldwide, the [EU Ecolabel](#) is a label of environmental excellence that is awarded to products and services meeting high environmental standards throughout their life-cycle: from raw material extraction, to production, distribution and disposal.

The EU Ecolabel is awarded for 23 different product groups, including for indoor cleaning services. The EU Ecolabel certification for indoor cleaning services guarantees, among others, that less harmful cleaning substances are used during the cleaning process, both for the environment and for the health of the cleaning staff. It also certifies that staff are trained in the safe use of products and that a general environmental management system is established at the company level.

Italy has been particularly successful in leveraging the use of green public procurement to boost EU Ecolabel certifications among cleaning service providers. Out of the 19 [cleaning services that are licensed with the EU Ecolabel](#), 16 are in Italy (as of March 2020).

This is partly thanks to the country's obligatory GPP policy in public tenders, which began with the adoption of a [national action plan for GPP](#) in 2008. Following this, in 2016, Italy adopted the law on provisions to promote environmental measures of green economy and the containment of excessive use of natural resources. It brought mandatory requirements for all Italian public entities to include minimum environmental criteria (Criteri Ambientali Minimi – CAMs) in their public procurement actions (through article 18 of the law).<sup>1</sup> This was subsequently transposed into the current public contract code (through article 34, D.Lgs. 50/2016). The CAM for cleaning products is mainly based on the EU Ecolabel, and specifies the EU Ecolabel as an

acceptable means of proof that the CAM's standards are met.

With the introduction of the EU Ecolabel for cleaning services in 2018, twelve Italian companies [obtained the label in that same year](#), with four more to follow. Procurers are keen to use the Ecolabel for indoor cleaning services in support of their tenders. Many Italian municipalities frequently make use of the EU Ecolabel directly as accepted verification and as a quality standard in tenders, such as this recent tender from the [Municipality of Pollein-Aosta](#), or implicitly use the EU Ecolabel as a means of proof that the CAM's standards are met, as done in these recent tenders by the [Municipality of Genoa](#) and the [Municipality of Termoli-Campobasso](#).

The EU Ecolabel provides a simple way for producers to ensure environmental sustainability along the supply chain and to obtain evidence that products comply with environmental criteria. The underlying EU Ecolabel criteria offer procurers a solid list of references in order to specify their needs. This makes it easier for public authorities to buy green.

The Italian case shows that an ambitious policy combined with a widely accepted high quality labelling process can lead to innovation and improved environmental performance within an industry; and it can serve as an example for other European countries and the cleaning industry.

Find more information about the EU Ecolabel [here](#).

<sup>1</sup> For more information see: [www.minambiente.it/pagina/gpp-acquisti-verdi](http://www.minambiente.it/pagina/gpp-acquisti-verdi)