

Pilot course on “Environmental labelling in circular economy”
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Green Seal and FSC

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The project is co-financed by the Governments of Czechia, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia through Visegrad Grants from International Visegrad Fund. The mission of the fund is to advance ideas for sustainable regional cooperation in Central Europe.

Green Seal

- Green Seal is a non-profit ecolabeling organization, founded in 1989, with the mission to transform the economy for a healthier and greener world, through the use of science-based programs which purpose is to enable consumers, purchasers, and companies to contribute to the creation of a more sustainable world.
- This is achieved through development of standards, certification procedures, and continuing educational activities [1].
- The Green Seal is an environmental label used by product producers and providers of services [2].
- The Green Seal Certification Mark is registered with the United States Patent and Trademark Office.

- In 1990's Green Seal started providing technical assistance to Federal, State, and local governments as well as to managements of other environmental purchasing, operations, and facilities institutions [5].
- Green Seal is accredited by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) as a developer of American National Standards [11].
- Also, Green Seal fulfils the criteria for third-party certifiers of the USA Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) [4,5]:
 - Open, transparent standard development process and award criteria;
 - Criteria based on Life Cycle Analysis;
 - Clear consumer communication on nature of certification;
 - Regular updating of standards and criteria;
 - Facility inspection or audit;
 - Protocols for testing institutions or laboratories;
 - Access to certification for companies of all sizes.

- International credibility of the Green Seal is based on its functioning according to the principles for environmental labels (type I) of the International Organization for Standardization defined under the standards ISO 14020 and 14024 [2,4,12].
- Also, Green Seal is a co-founder of Global Ecolabelling Network (GEN), which consists of 27 international ecolabeling programs, where it represents United States of America (USA) [13].
- Besides the mentioned ISO standards, Green Seal procedures correspond to guidelines of the Global Ecolabelling Network's Internationally Coordinated Ecolabelling System (GENICES) [4,13].

Standards and Product Categories

- In order to achieve Green Seal certification, products and services have to meet the requirements defined by Green Seal standards. The standards are based on a life cycle approach.
- Green Seal's standards comprise requirements for reducing health, environmental, and social impacts, associated with the life cycle of organizations, services, and products.
- These reduction requirements have been continually adjusted to the level which is technologically and economically feasible.
- Green Seal standards are defined on a category-by-category basis, which gives a significant opportunity to reduce a product, service, or organization's life cycle impact [1].

Today, Green Seal program comprises of 24 standards with requirements for more than 500 product categories. Green Seal standards can be classified in two categories – standards for products and those for services [4]:

1) Product Standards:

- GS-1 Sanitary Paper Products
- GS-7 Printing and Writing Paper
- GS-8 Cleaning Products for Household Use
- GS-10 Coated Printing Paper
- GS-11 Paints, Coatings, Stains, and Finishes
- GS-18 Paper Products used in Food Preparation
- GS-20 Environmental Innovation

- GS-34 Cleaning and Degreasing Agents
- GS-35 Food Service Packaging
- GS-36 Adhesives for Commercial Use
- GS-37 Cleaning Products for Industrial/Institutional Use
- GS-40 Floor Care Products for Industrial/Institutional Use
- GS-41 Hand Cleaners for Industrial/Institutional Use
- GS-43 Recycled Content Latex Paint
- GS-44 Soaps, Cleansers, and Shower Products
- GS-48 Laundry Products for Household Use
- GS-50 Personal Care and Cosmetic Products
- GS-51 Laundry Products for Industrial/Institutional Use
- GS-52 Specialty Cleaning Products for Household Use
- GS-53 Specialty Cleaning Products for Industrial/Institutional Use

2) Service Standards:

- GS-33 Hotel and Lodgings Properties
- GS-42 Commercial and Institutional Cleaning Services
- GS-49 Residential Cleaning Services
- GS-55 Restaurants and Food Services

Standards have been developed following a science-based life cycle approach and an open, transparent stakeholder consensus-based process.

The development process comprises following steps [4]:

- Selection of the Product Category
- Conducting Feasibility Assessment (Checking if there is a need in the market for differentiation)
- Development of Criteria (Product function, performance assessments, environmental and health impacts)
- Conducting outreach to Stakeholders
- Publishing the Draft Standard and technical documents for comment
- Public Comment Period
- Revising the Standard
- Issue Standard and Public Supporting Technical Documents

Standard, also, can be retired, and this is done in following cases [4]:

- The environmentally-preferable options on the market have become mainstream;
- Other ecolabeling programs, of the confirmed quality and integrity, have covered the product categories from the standard;
- New technologies have improved the entire product category;
- The product category is no longer produced and sold on market.

- Standard development procedures of the Green Seal have been externally reviewed by third parties.
- The result of these reviews is that the Green Seal’s standard development procedures meet the guidelines of two ISO standards, which define the goals, considerations, and procedures for voluntary environmental labelling programs [4,12]:
 - ISO 14020: Environmental Labels and Declarations – General Principles and
 - ISO 14024: Environmental Labels and Declarations – Type I Environmental Labelling – Principles and Procedures.
- In addition, for about every five years, the GEN carries out an onsite audit of Green Seal programs in order of ensuring compliance with standards ISO 14020 and ISO 14024.
- The previous audit of Green Seal was conducted by GEN in September 2015 [4].

Application, Certification and Evaluation Procedures

- Application procedure for Green Seal certification starts with finding the standard that best fits the product or service that is planned for certification.
- In order of finding appropriate standard, one can consult a list of representative products to see if the product or service fits to selected standard.
- When the right standard is found, it should be explored in detail in order of getting familiar about criteria and scope.
- In next step, an online Certification Interest Form (CIF) should be filled in and submitted.
- In the CIF, applicant is requested of giving some main data about the company and product or service.
- After submitting the CIF, Green Seal's Customer Success team contacts the applicant within 1-2 business days, sending them the application and instructions for payment.
- In the next step, if the application is accepted and payment is received, Green Seal is signing the contract with the applicant company [4].

- The evaluation process starts by collecting the raw material data required for the analysis of the product.
- After a data evaluation, any identified issues have to be resolved in the cooperation with the appointed Green Seal project manager.
- All information is kept strictly confidential.
- Evaluation continues with the analysis of packaging information, performance testing results, labels, training and marketing materials.
- This is followed by a manufacturing or service location site audit, conducted by another Green Seal representative.
- A senior project manager performs a double-check evaluation and if some issues are found, appointed project manager will work with applicant company to resolve them as quickly as possible.
- The Certification is issued after all the requirements are fulfilled [4].

- Afterward a successful certification, applicant will receive complimentary promotional and marketing support related to the obtained Green Seal Certificate, which can include social media campaigns, press releases, and guest blog posts on Green Seal's webpage.
- Certified product or service is a subject of periodic compliance monitoring, which is required to maintain certification [4].

FSC

- Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) system is a global certification scheme, founded in 1993 to support and verify environmentally, socially, and economically beneficial forest management practices [1,2].
- FSC is established with the mission “to promote environmentally appropriate, socially beneficial, and economically viable management of the world’s forests” [1].

- The purpose of FSC labels is to give consumers the opportunity of supporting responsible forestry.
- These labels are used on a wide range of wood-made products and products whose raw materials are extracted from wood - from timber products and furniture, through cardboard packaging products to pencils and books.
- FSC logo guarantees that the product comes from responsible sources - environmentally appropriate, socially beneficial and economically viable [1,2].
- Although FSC system has been the subject of criticism related to results of its global impact and its orientation to large corporate systems [3], there are independent reports confirming its positive effect on economic development, improved management planning, environmental impact assessments, environmental conservation, biodiversity, poverty alleviation and social and political empowerment [2,4].

FSC Labels

FSC labels can be found on millions of products around the world – from toilet rolls and papers used for books’ printing, through toys and pencils to furniture. The label means, simply said, that by choosing products with FSC labels, one is helping to take care of the world’s forests [1].

There are three FSC labels [1]:

- FSC 100%
- FSC Recycled
- FSC Mix

- The FSC 100% label (Figure 3.6.1 a) means that the wood within the product comes entirely from FSC-certified, well-managed forests.
- The meaning of the FSC Recycled label (Figure 3.6.1 b) is that all the wood or paper in the product comes from reclaimed or re-used material.
- The FSC Mix label (Figure 3.6.1 c) indicates that the wood within the product is from FSC-certified forests, recycled material, or controlled wood.

Standards

FSC comprises two certification standards:

- 1) Forest Management Certification and
- 2) Chain of Custody Certification.

- **FSC forest management certification** confirms that the forest is being managed in a way that preserves biological diversity and benefits the lives of local people and workers, while ensuring it sustains economic viability.
- **FSC chain of custody certification (CoC)** provides credible assurance for products with environmentally and socially responsible sources to access the market. FSC CoC certification verifies that FSC-certified material has been identified and separated from non-certified and non-controlled material as it makes its way along the supply chain, from the forest to the market. To achieve CoC certification, company's business must meet the FSC-STD-40-004 Chain of Custody Certification standard [9].

FSC Certification

- Companies willing to add the FSC label to any of their products, must first receive chain of custody certification.
- The forest management and chain of custody assessments, that lead to FSC certification, are performed by independent *certification bodies*.

- FSC certification bodies evaluate forests based on 10 FSC principles organized as criteria [2]:
 - 1) Compliance with laws
 - 2) Workers' rights and employment conditions
 - 3) Indigenous peoples' rights
 - 4) Community relations
 - 5) Benefits from the forest
 - 6) Environmental values and impacts
 - 7) Management planning
 - 8) Monitoring and assessment
 - 9) High conservation values
 - 10) Implementation of management activities

Thank you for attention



Project website: <https://ecolabelling.prz.edu.pl/en/>

The International Visegrad Fund website: <https://www.visegradfund.org/>

ECOLABELLING

INNOVATIONS IN CIRCULAR ECONOMY - ENVIRONMENTAL LABELS AND DECLARATIONS (ID: 21920002)

INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH PROJECT TEAM

APPLICANT AND LEADER OF THE PROJECT
Rzeszow University of Technology

RZESZOW UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

PARTNERS OF THE PROJECT

- University of Novi Sad
- Technical University of Košice
- The Institute of Technology and Business in České Budějovice
- Széchenyi István University

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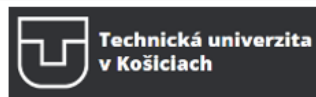
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ECOLABELLING project
Innovations in circular economy – environmental labels and declarations