

ENVIRONMENTAL TYPE I PRODUCT ECOLABELLING IN SLOVAKIA

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Abstract

In the context of indirect instruments in field of environmental product policy a particular importance is assigned to producers' voluntary action. In Slovakia, similarly to others, will these instruments play an important role, at the time of insufficient scope of legal rules in the area of economic instruments, in line with this trend. Environmentally sound product is considered

recognized and motivating product policy instruments. It is expected that also in Slovakia consumer public will receive through this brand guaranteed information about the products that is environmentally friendly. Their purchasing action implicates the feeling of contribution to the protecting the environment.

Key words

environment, labeling

INTRODUCTION

Environmental management is a set of voluntary environmental policies allowing the introduction of a systematic approach for organizations in solving environmental issues. A body of scientific analysis on policy instruments already exists - see also Sterner¹, Weitzman², Baumol and Oates³.

Eco-labeling belongs among voluntary environmental policy instruments supporting the production and consumption of products that are more environmentally friendly throughout their lifecycle, and provide consumers with accurate, non-deceptive and scientifically based information on the impact of products on the environment. Eco-labeling of products in the Slovak Republic has been implemented since 1996 through a national scheme for eco-labeling „Environmentálne vhodné produkt“- Environmentally Sound Product. The conditions and procedures for granting and using the national eco-label is regulated by Act no. 469/2002 Coll. of the environmental labeling of products, as amended.

Since the accession of Slovakia to the European Union in 2004, the applicants also have the opportunity to get the European Ecolabel „The EU Ecolabel“. Grant of European eco-label is carried out by the EP and R (EC) No. 66/2010 on the EU Ecolabel.

1. ENVIRONMENTAL TYPE I ECOLABELLING IN SLOVAKIA

Product eco-labeling is a voluntary environmental policy instruments of environmental protection aimed to reduce the negative impacts of consumption and production influences on the environment, health, climate and natural resources by supporting and prioritizing products and services with are less harmful to the environment.

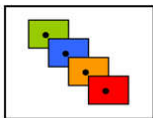
In the Slovak Republic, the eco-labeling was first implemented in 1997 through a national scheme for awarding national eco-label „Environmentálne vhodné produkt“. The conditions and procedures for granting and using the national eco-label is regulated by Act no. 469/2002 Coll. the environmental labeling of products, as amended.

Since 2004, the entry of the Slovak Republic into the European Union, applicants are able to get the European Ecolabel "EU Ecolabel" (formerly "the European Flower"). Grant of European eco-label is carried out by the EP and R (EC) No. 66/2010 on the EU Ecolabel.

¹ STERNER Thomas, *Policy instruments for environmental and natural resource management*. - Routledge, 2010, ISBN 1136522344, 9781136522345, pp. 528 - [on-line] Available on - URL: http://samples.sainsburysebooks.co.uk/9781136522352_sample_822737.pdf

² WEITZMAN, Martin L., 1974: *Prices vs. quantities*. *Review of Economic Studies* 41(4), 477–491. http://scholar.harvard.edu/files/weitzman/files/prices_vs_quantities.pdf

³ BAUMOL, William, J. - OATES, Wallace, E., 1988: *The Theory of Environmental Policy*. - Cambridge University Press, ISBN 0521311128, 9780521311120, pp. 299



Among the products that are excluded from the scope of those regulations and cannot be awarded eco-label are:

- drinks, and food products,
- human and veterinary drugs, medical devices,
- products containing chemical substances or mixtures that meet the criteria for classification as toxic, hazardous to the environment, carcinogenic, mutagenic or toxic to reproduction under the Regulation EP and C (EC) No. 1272/2008 and products containing the substance in accordance with Article 57 of EP and (EC) No. 1907/2006 (REACH)
- products that are produced by the likely significantly harmful processes to humans or the environment;
- products that do not represent a significant volume of sales and trade in the internal market.⁴

Governing body of the state administration in the field of products eco-labeling is the Ministry of Environment of SR, which is also the competent authority for the process of the European environmental labeling.

On the authority of the Ministry of Environment SR professional expertise and technical support provides delegated Slovak Environmental Agency in Bratislava whose role is to ensure:

- The process creation of national environmental criteria and cooperation in relation to the requirements of the European Commission in the development of environmental criteria issued in the form of a decision of the EU Eco-label.
- The process of assessing the conformity of products with pre-established national, respectively. European environmental criteria for the granting of the environmental eco-label brand based on obtained application.⁵

1.1 Process of national environmental criteria creation in Slovakia

The process of creating national environmental criteria is implemented in terms of:

- special conditions for the product groups, which are issued in the form of a Ministerial notices
- Cooperation in relation to the requirements of the European Commission in the development of environmental criteria issued in the form of a EU decision of the EU Eco-label.

The technical reports, special condition drafts, notices of Ministry of Environment and the European Union decisions are fundamental documents concerning the process of developing environmental criteria for selected product groups within the national and European product eco-label schemes.

1.1.1 Technical Report

Technical report forms basis for developing the proposals for the specific conditions for the relevant product groups, which results in the preparation of the final technical document "Notice of Ministry of the Environment." The notice is a set of economic, marketing and technical information obtained from the initial analysis, reviews and validation of data and knowledge. The result is a realistic, specified environmental criteria (in accordance with Act no. 469/2002 Coll., which are the specific conditions) for the relevant product group.

The technical report shall take into account the current state of science and technology (e.g. BAT technology), further indicators of the environment during the production and use of products (ECI) and data on key environmental aspects in the assessment of individual phases of the product life cycle (LCA - STN ISO series 14040) and eco-design (STN ISO 14062).^{6, 7}

1.1.2 Proposal for specific conditions

Draft for specific conditions is the basic document for preparing the Notice of Ministry of Environment SR. This proposal specifies special conditions for the granting of a national eco-label for the product group:

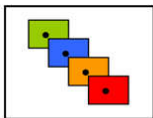
- requirements in terms of performance and use characteristics, applicable technical standards, generally binding regulations for the protection of public health, consumer protection, safety and regulation on protection of environment, compliance of which is a initial condition for the product market launch.
- environmental criteria that distinguish the products with eco-label from other products of the same purpose, compliance of which will contribute to improving the environment; shall be established taking into account the current level of science and technology so that the manufacturer or seller finds them realistically achievable.

⁴ *Environmentálne označovanie produktov.* - [on-line] Available on - URL: <http://www.sazp.sk/public/index/go.php?id=1560>

⁵ *Environmentálne označovanie produktov.* - [on-line] Available on - URL: <http://www.sazp.sk/public/index/go.php?id=1560>

⁶ *ISO 14040:2006 Environmental management -- Life cycle assessment -- Principles and framework.* - [on-line] Available on - URL: http://www.iso.org/iso/catalogue_detail?csnumber=37456

⁷ *ISO/TR 14062:2002 Environmental management -- Integrating environmental aspects into product design and development.* - [on-line] Available on - URL: http://www.iso.org/iso/catalogue_detail?csnumber=33020



The proposals of the specific conditions being currently under consideration are available to the public that have the opportunity to express their opinion through public commenting process on <http://www.sazp.sk> in section "amendment procedures".

1.1.3 Notification of MŽP SR

In connection with the Act. 217/2007 Coll., Amending and supplementing Act no. 469/2002 Coll. of the environmental labeling of products, as amended, are issued special conditions as a technical document "Notice of the product groups, sub-groups of products and the special conditions for granting a national eco-label", through which the product process of verification is performed assuring product compliance with certain specific conditions for the relevant product group.

1.1.4 Decisions of EU

Decisions of the European Union are documents issues by the European Commission to verify the conformity of products with established environmental criteria for the relevant product group in order to obtain the EU Ecolabel.

1.2 PRODUCT CONFORMITY ASSESSMENT PROCESS AGAINST APPROVED AND SET NATIONAL/EUROPEAN ENVIRONMENTAL CRITERIA USED FOR LABEL AWARDING.

The process of assessing the compliance of products with pre-established national, respectively. European environmental criteria for the granting of the brand EVP ("Environmentálne vhodný produkt"), respectively. "EU Environmental label" is executed based on received application. From applicant.⁸

The process consists of the following steps:

- preparation, ie from a list of existing product groups that are subject to national and European environmental criteria, the candidate selects a group of products which he has an interest in;
- submission of the application;
- conformity assessment.

List of current product groups to granting can be found at the following internet pages;

- national eco-label (Notices of MoE) is available at: <http://www.sazp.sk>
- the EU Ecolabel (the decisions of the European Union) on: <http://www.ec.europa.eu/environment/ecolabel>.

Interested party in obtaining a particular label becomes familiar with environmental criteria for the desired product group and the appropriate application package (in the case of European environmental criteria). The candidate thus obtains sufficient initial information on the requirements to the evidence dossier for each criterion as follows:

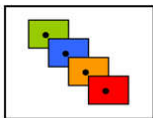
- Type of required documents (declarations, protocols, safety data sheets, etc.) and their validity
- Means to carry out the required tests according to prescribed methods (primarily are recognized exams which are accredited by ISO 17025 and verifications performed by bodies accredited under EN 45011).

Within 2 months from receipt of the application and evidentiary documentation Slovak Environmental Agency checks the application together with the submitted documentation as complete and shall notify the applicant with the result. In case of additional documentation is required this must be supplied within 6 months of the notification. Failing this deadline results in rejection of the application.

Provided that the documentation is complete and the product was demonstrated as compliant with the criteria, the application goes through the approval process by the Commission a voluntary environmental policy instruments and the competent authority. Reaching a license agreement between the competent authority and label holder entitles the holder to use the Eco-label for the approved product.

2. NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL LABEL

⁷ Environmentálne označovanie produktov. - [on-line] Available on - URL: <http://www.sazp.sk/public/index/go.php?id=1560>



National environmental label „Environmentálne vhodný produkt“ is awarded by the Ministry of Environment of SR to the products or services that are compliant to set prescribed specific conditions according to Notice of MoE SR for the relevant product group.



Pic.1 National environmental label „Environmentálne vhodný produkt“

National label EVP is owned by Ministry of Environment and has a public-law nature. It consists of two concentric circles, inside which is a stylized image of three hills with three triangles depicting the elements of the environment and the effect of government agencies, industry and trade in in the care for the environment. At the top in between the two circles is the inscription "Environmentálne vhodný produkt" in the bottom half lists the identification number of the Notice of Ministry of the Environment SR, under which the product has been assessed. Mark is used in single-color design in any color that suits the overall appearance of a product or its packaging. The outer diameter (size) of the brand must be minimum of 15 mm.

3. EU ECOLABEL

European ecolabel "EU Ecolabel" confers MoE SR to products or services which meet the environmental criteria set by European Union decisions for the group of products. Overall look of the label and its authorized uses are governed by precise rules and guidelines, which are set out in Article 9 and Annex II of the European Parliament and Council Regulation (EC) No. 66/2010 on the EU Ecolabel.



Pic. 2 "EU Ecolabel"

The EU Ecolabel seeks to minimise the various environmental impacts at each stage of a product's life. The criteria are set at levels that promote products which have a lower overall environmental impact.

Manufacturers, importers and service providers may submit applications for the award of the EU Ecolabel. Traders and retailers may also apply, but may only submit applications for products marketed under their own brand names. EU Ecolabel applications are made via a single application that covers all of the European Economic Area (EEA).

Every country has a representative, known as a Competent Body, which assesses the applications. The choice of which country you should apply to is determined by the EEA Member State in which the product originates.

All EEA Member States assess applications against the same criteria, but individual States have slightly different procedures and fee levels for handling applications.⁹

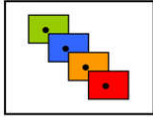
CONCLUSION

Eco-labeling is a concept applied worldwide based on the international standards of ISO 14020). It belongs among voluntary information tools.

Eco-labeling is based on the evaluation of the characteristics of products (goods or services) and their impact on the environment.

The aim of environmental labels and declarations is to encourage the demand and supply of such products that have less negative environmental pressure, through the mediation of verifiable, accurate and non-deceptive information on the

⁹ EU Ecolabel user manual. – [on-line] Available on - URL: [<http://ec.europa.eu/environment/ecolabel/documents/user_manual/en.pdf>](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/ecolabel/documents/user_manual/en.pdf) <
<http://ec.europa.eu/environment/ecolabel/how-to-apply-for-eu-ecolabel.html>



environmental aspects of products and thus stimulate potential for constant, market-controlled environmental improvement. There are three standardized (standard) types of environmental labeling and declarations.

The consumer is usually not able to comprehensively assess what is appropriate and what harmful to the environment, and ultimately to his health. To help find the right way when it comes to selecting products, eco-labels should come to hand.

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