

# **EUEB Coordination & Cooperation Management Group**

14:00 – 17:30, Wednesday 28 September 2005

Room 1/C, Centre Borschette, Rue Froissart 36, Brussels

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## **MINUTES**

### **1. Adoption of the Agenda**

The Chair opened the meeting.

Point 3 was changed with point 4.

### **2. Adoption of the Minutes of Co & Co Meeting 26 May 2005**

Mr. B.E. Lønn commented the 7<sup>th</sup> article, point 3, that criteria of Nordic Swan for textiles are still valid.

### **3. Presentation and discussion on Synergies and cooperation among voluntary tools (A. Princova)**

A full report on this discussion point will be sent later. The minutes below are based on the presentation and answers to the earlier sent questionnaire.

**How can we support obtaining Eco-label by a company, which is having a type III label or a self-declaration? What are the advantages of The Flower for such a company?**

*Use of type III labeling for European Eco-label certification*

Italy said that it is not often possible to use information coming from self-declaration Type III labelling when considering applications for the EU Eco-label. It is difficult to use EMAS criteria for example, because these relate to the management of the company and not to the product. Certain problems in relation to the trustworthiness of the verification of EMAS compared to the European Eco-label, which they do themselves, were also mentioned. Italy see the idea of “fast track” revisions of product group criteria as a good one, but do not think this would be the case for developing of new product group criteria.

*Use of type III labels for European Eco-label criteria development or revisions.*

Germany stated that in revision and development processes for Eco-label criteria we could use the information provided by Type III EPD's.

Italy answered that companies do not often provide Type III EPDs. Italy also thought that it was not possible to use Type III EPDs for fast track development of European Eco-label criteria. Type III labeling is only very rarely used on a small scale by companies.

Denmark said that they had proposed the introduction of “fast track” procedures 4 years ago and it had been quite difficult. We could find some product groups where it could be possible. “Fast track” has never been tried in reality.

*Use EMAS verification for European Eco-label certification.*

The Commission commented the possibility of using the EMAS verification process to show compliance with criteria of The Flower on. If this were the case, The Flower would have to change its status because at the moment, according to the Regulation, only the CBs can run the application procedures for Eco-label.

Spain pointed out that Eco-label and EMAS are two independent tools that lack good communication between them. If we can facilitate EMAS registered companies to get the Flower, we will have more labelled products, but they must see that the way is open for them. EMAS gives us reliable information.

Latvia agrees with cooperation and communication with EMAS.

### **Should we formulate a list of labels (and their criteria), which we will accept as sufficient proof of compliance for The Flower?**

The Commission commented that a list or database of common labels and criteria could be useful, but that it would require the devotion of considerable man-hours to do properly. It was also added that there are no internal tools to manage these extra tasks. Experts would be needed to cooperate and to work on this. But this idea should be developed and reflected in the new revised Regulation - it would need to be translated into operational action.

Germany, Denmark and United Kingdom pointed out that in many cases national labels are used or referred to in European Eco-label criteria. For example the DID-list is used by the Flower as well as the Nordic Swan detergents product groups. In the draft Printed Paper Products criteria, paper certified with other labels is accepted. Also in the Tourist Accommodation criteria points can be gained if products are used with national Type I eco-labels.

The UK commented that GEN are often talking about actions to define the similarities and differences between labels, but that they find it difficult to do in practice.

### **What are the potential product groups where we could promote EMAS and Eco-label together?**

Mr. Lønn said that he did not support the idea of joint promotion, because the EMAS had no relation and status on ‘products’. There was a discussion some time ago in the EMAS working group about placing EMAS logo on products of the registered companies, which is currently not allowed.

Italy sees EMAS and Eco-labelling as different tools, which shouldn't be promoted together.

Latvia didn't agree, because the logo is not the only thing, which should be promoted, but also the environmental statement. This could state the EMAS certification.

Spain didn't see the possibility of joint promotion either for products or for the service sector.

The discussion about cooperation with EMAS provided many good ideas, which can be fed into the revision of the Regulation. Denmark promised to forward a document about benefits and differences between these two schemes.

### **How can we persuade an EMAS registered company to ask for The Flower?**

The common answer to this question in the meeting was that marketing activities are needed to demonstrate that the European Eco-label is a tool for products and for consumers. EMAS registered companies may find this interesting.

### **Other ideas**

Mr. Lønn pointed out that the GEN website is a useful source of information about other Eco-labelling programmes.

The internet and electronic sharing of information about different tools and links among all voluntary tools in the field of sustainable production and consumption policy could be useful. A joint website for EMAS and Eco-label was not supported.

## **4. Presentation on the European Eco-label Textiles in relation to Öko-Tex (M. Fleur)**

The conclusion coming from the last meeting was that the European Eco-label needs a strategy in relation to Öko-Tex. The paper presented was a general outline of the relationship between the European Eco-label and Öko-Tex, which opened the discussion about what approach should be towards this label.

In France they collaborate with the Öko-Tex laboratories - Öko-Tex certified producers have been told how they can be awarded the European Eco-label, which is easier if they already have the Öko-Tex certification. To find collaboration with these kind of organisations takes a long time, but it helps to spread information to potential applicants about the European Eco-label and its added value. For France, the first thing they plan to concentrate on is convincing producers about the benefits of the European Eco-label and later they will move on to market it to the consumers. This is done in many countries, as consumer marketing only makes sense if they can find eco-labelled products on the shelves.

It was agreed that we need to look for a new ways to convince producers to apply for the European Eco-label, and learn from the French example on collaboration with Öko-tex laboratories.

It was pointed out that if we try to harmonise, to discuss and collaborate with Öko-Tex, we have to take care not to lower the value of European Eco-label. The awareness of the

consumer must be raised, as most people don't know the difference between the labels, their strategies and their aims. A good start could be an explanation of what each label is and then to publish this document in the Flower newsletter, or in a different way for example at a website.

All the relevant eco-labels and their meanings could be detailed either in a new leaflet or in the newsletter. A special page could be attributed to the different labels on the website. It was pointed out that we need to contact organisations before publishing information about them, unless we copy their own wording taken directly from their sites. All the information concerning relevant labels should be found in one single place per product group, so as it can become the reference for everyone, consumers and producers. It is important to find the right selection criteria on which labels should be included in such a list, and which should be excluded.

It was clear that many Member States had already prepared fact sheets, leaflets or websites outlining the function of different labels and it was agreed that any such documents should be sent to Adela Princova for her to consider, summarise and for discussion at the next meeting.

## **5. Any other business**

The Dutch Competent Body will compile a list with companies who use the Nordic Swan in the Netherlands. SMK investigates the possibility to promote the Nordic Swan in the Netherlands. This is done in close collaboration with the coordinator of the Nordic Swan.

Denmark reminded the Group that a study about the environmental impact of products will be published soon in English.

Many thanks were extended on behalf of the Cooperation and Coordination Group to the Czech Republic for having chaired this meeting and many thanks were also extended to Maaïke Fleur for her presentation.

The Chair closed the meeting thanking participants for their contributions to the discussions.