

European Solvents Industry Group (ESIG) position on the EU Ecolabel

The European Solvents Industry Group (ESIG), representing the producers of oxygenated and hydrocarbon solvents in Europe, recognises that the EU Ecolabel has significant potential to promote the most sustainable products. The European solvent industry has shown continuous commitment in improving the sustainability profile of its products. As a result, on average it now takes only half as much solvent to produce a finished object compared to 1980, while VOC emissions from solvents have been reduced by more than 40% since 1990. ESIG believes that the EU Ecolabel is a useful tool to reward industry that strives to develop products with an improved sustainability profile.

At the same time, ESIG considers that there is scope for improving the development of product criteria. To ensure that the Ecolabel is a credible tool, it is important that product criteria are 'determined on a scientific basis considering the whole life cycle of products', in line with Art.6 of the Ecolabel Regulation. For example, chemical substances are increasingly grouped together and restricted based on their functional – rather than physico-chemical – properties, an approach which is not scientifically valid. This is the case with Ecolabel criteria for paints and all-purpose cleaners that restrict aromatic solvents even though different aromatic substances have different chemical properties and toxicological profiles. Furthermore, while the Ecolabel Regulation stipulates that product criteria should be based on 'the most significant environmental impacts of the product', in most product criteria a disproportionate burden is placed on the use of chemicals, often without taking into account the net balance between environmental benefits and burdens. In this regard, we see the EU Product Environmental Footprint (PEF) as a useful tool for the Commission to use as a basis for developing Ecolabel product criteria.

ESIG is committed to working with the European Commission to ensure that the EU Ecolabel is a successful and reliable tool that promotes the most sustainable products and that product criteria are developed based on science and taking the entire product life cycle into account.

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