

EEA AND NORWAY GRANTS
FUND FOR BILATERAL RELATIONS

INITIATIVE PROPOSAL

Title of the initiative:

Best practice exchange: digitalisation of the EU Ecolabel awarding process and increasing EU Ecolabel awareness

Implementing entity (*beneficiary state entity*):

Republic of Estonia Ministry of Climate

Partner(s) (*minimum one donor state entity*):

Ecolabelling Norway

Republic of Estonia Environmental Board

Bilateral priority area identified by the JCBF beyond the programmes:

- ☐ promotion of core European values, such as respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and the respect for human rights for all people, regardless of their racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, gender, disability, age, sexual orientation or gender identity;
- ☒ E-governance (digitalization)
- ☐ eastern partnership
- ☐ equality and equal treatment
- ☒ competitive business environment, sustainable and adaptive governance (based on some "Competitiveness Plan for 2020" approved by the Government of Estonia)

Allocation (*total sum*): approximately 14 860 euro, but final budget depends on the time and the costs at the time.

Travel cost for 7 persons (including flight, accommodation, public transport, on-site expenses) – approximately 5530 euros

Hosting cost for Ecolabelling Norway (including preparation, rooms, site visit, networking etc) – approximately 9330 euros

Allocation (*total sum*): approximately 14860 euro, but final budget depends on the time and the costs at the time.

(A more detailed project budget description in the activity plan)

Short description of the initiative:

Background:

The Republic of Estonia has one official ecolabel, the EU Ecolabel. The EU Ecolabel is recognized as the official label to show environmental excellence. For example, the Green Public Procurement Criteria in 3 product groups out of four adopted by Estonia take into consideration the EU ecolabel criteria, and thus the EU Ecolabel can be used in verifying compliance.

The number of products awarded the EU Ecolabel has increased yearly and currently Estonia has awarded the EU Ecolabel to 1773 products in 7 product groups. It is anticipated that new policies like the Green Claims Directive and the Ecodesign Regulation that give regulatory relief to EU Ecolabel licence holders will increase interest in the label even further.

Nevertheless, there are two main challenges in establishing the label as a first choice for organisations and the consumer:

- Dated application process via e-mails which has many risks for the applicants and competent body.
- Recent studies have shown that the consumer recognises the logo but rarely buys EU Ecolabel products – we believe that this can be changed by an efficient communication strategy. In addition, organisations are not aware of the EU Ecolabel scheme and the benefits it provides. Estonia has kept a strong product portfolio in the cleaning product groups but very little interest has been shown in other product groups although there are producers and service providers thus a good potential to expand the portfolio.

In Norway there are two official environmental labels: the Nordic Swan and the EU Ecolabel. Their use is overseen by Ecolabelling Norway. Norway has a long experience with managing these labels and making the Nordic Swan into a Scandinavian success story. Thus, Norway would be a suitable best practice exchange partner for Estonia. We would like to learn from the success of the Nordic Swan and apply it to developing the EU Ecolabel scheme further in Estonia.

We are looking for a knowledge and best practice exchange in order to form an understanding on how to digitalize the EU Ecolabel application process to meet the growing interest and how to plan communication activities aimed at consumers and potential licence holders more efficiently.

Aim:

Estonia would like to learn from Norway by sharing their best practises and knowledge on:

1. raising consumers awareness by using innovative and attractive means but also to identify possibilities of structured collaboration with Ecolabelling Norway;
2. attracting new licence holders and increasing product and service portfolios. Estonia has licences in most cleaning product groups and paints and varnishes but three potential product groups with no licences at the moment are furniture, paper and tourist accommodation.
3. digitalizing the EU Ecolabel awarding process in order to make the process more accessible, more efficient and transparent and thus more attractive to applicants. This would also increase the competent body's administrative capacity because the awarding process would be faster.

Activity plan:

Three full day (in addition also arrival dinner) visit to the Ecolabelling Norway.

Arrival: networking dinner to get to know the partners and establishing a good basis for collaboration.

First day: raising consumer and potential licence holder awareness.

Second day: visiting EU Ecolabel and/or Nordic Swan licence holders and hearing their feedback and experiences.

Third day: digital solutions in use at the Ecolabelling Norway (sending the application, verification process and awarding the registration number).

Departing: conclusion and networking lunch.

Participants:

- From Ministry of the Climate green transition department and communication department (2-3 persons).
- From Environmental Agency environmental use department and development and planning department (4 persons).

Budget:

Travel cost for 7 persons (including flight, accommodation, public transport, on-site expenses) – approximately 5530 euros

Hosting cost for Ecolabelling Norway (preparation, rooms, site visit, networking, including dinner and lunch for all participants etc) – approximately 9330 euros

(background, aim, participants, activity plan, budget outline, communication and dissemination)

Activity plan:

Time frame planned beginning of December 2024 or January 2025.

	Activity	Time	Location	Cost	Participants
Travel	Travel (inc public transport) and accommodation		TLL-OSL-TLL	5530 euros	From Environmental Board 4 persons and Ministry of Climate 2-3 persons.
Arrival	Arrival and networking dinner	18.00-19.00	Dinner	Included in host cost	Include also 7 participants from Ecolabelling Norway
1 st day	Knowledge and best practice exchange on raising consumer and potential licence holder awareness.	9:00-12-00 14.00-17.00	Henrik Ibsens gate 20	Included in host cost	2 persons from Ecolabelling Norway will attend

2 nd day	Visiting EU Ecolabel or Nordic Swan licence holders (accommodation, furniture or paper).	10:00-12:00 14:00-16:00	Site visit	Included in host cost	2 persons from Ecolabelling Norway will attend
3 rd day	Knowledge and best practice exchange on digital solutions for application and verification process. Knowledge and best practice exchange on how to follow EU Green Deal, new legislation and environmental requirements Conclusions and networking lunch. Summarising key takeaways and mapping further collaboration	9:00-12:00 14:00-16:00	Grand Hotel	Included in host cost	2 persons from Ecolabelling Norway will attend
	Preparation			15 hours, included in host cost	

Planned results:

OUTPUT	INDICATOR	TARGET
Best practice exchange on raising consumers awareness.	Estonian EU Ecolabel communication plan will be updated accordingly. A short and long term communication plan is established.	1 Estonian EU Ecolabel communication plan updated, 1 short and 1 long term communication plan established.
Knowledge and practical tips on how to raise potential licence holder awareness.	More companies show interested in EU ecolabel followed by an increased number of licence holders and licence holders in new product groups. Maintenance of a successful criteria portfolio.	1 established strategy plan on how to approach furniture and tourism sector. This will be part of the long term communication plan.
Best practice exchange on digital ecolabel application processes.	Estonia will develop a strategy and implement steps towards the digitalization and simplification of the awarding process.	onepager with steps how to move towards digitalization as this is longterm target.

Knowledge and best practice exchange on how to follow EU Green Deal, new legislation and environmental requirements	Incentives for SME-s	onepager with EU Ecolabel incentives to increase competitiveness and decrease of administrative burden and cost. Onepager also includes the potential future insensitive as the this are also longterm target.
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