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Nordic views on Environmental Footprint methods

The Nordic Council of Ministers for the Environment (NMR-M)¹ supports the further development and implementation of Environmental Footprint (EF) methods to enhance credible market communication of environmental footprint of products

The Nordic Council of Ministers welcomes the developed common methods for life cycle based assessment of environmental impact of products and organisations. We strongly support the existing EU Ecolabel. However, the present lack of a common European methodology for calculating the environmental footprint of products is a barrier for the supply and demand for green products, especially in areas not covered by the EU Ecolabel.

We see a common methodology as a key-factor for achieving a future fair competition regarding environmental performance on the European single market. The present situation, with many often non-transparent systems for green labels and claims, is a major barrier for both consumers and professional purchaser's possibility for making informed choices. A common methodology is therefore important to establish trust in the market and thus crucial in our strive for more sustainable consumption and production patterns and the transition to a circular economy.

To have a real impact a common and harmonized method must be trusted as well as robust, cost-effective to use and dynamic to ensure continuous environmental improvements.

We especially emphasize the need for high credibility as a precondition for both consumers and professional purchaser's confidence in EF. However, we encourage the Commission to establish a balance between high credibility to cost to facilitate the uptake by SMEs.

¹ The Nordic Council of Ministers for the Environment (MR-M) consist of representatives from the Nordic countries and territories: Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, The Faroe Islands, Greenland and Åland, The environmental co-operation, amongst other things, aims to protect and improve the quality of the environment and quality of life in the Nordic countries, and influence regional and international co-operation



We support the establishment of a transparent and credible product benchmarking system as important for enabling consumers and professionals to purchase products based on their preferences concerning balance of environmental footprint, quality and cost.

Finally we would like to stress the need for harmonizing relevant existing legislations to apply the same methodological fundament for environmental assessment. But we encourage the Commission to manage this in a way, that the advantages of the existing labels and schemes, e.g. the ecolabels and EMAS, may strengthen the overall implementation of EF. For example, the EU Ecolabel (and the Nordic Ecolabel) should continue to be applied to signalize “best in class” as a voluntary attribute to a possible PEF communication vehicle.

We are aware of the shortcomings of applying the methods in their current state, as there is no full agreement in the international community regarding calculation of environmental impacts, data etc. But we are confident, that the methods can, by a multi-stakeholder dialogue, gradually be improved to meet relevant requirements and facilitate the transition to resource efficiency/circular economy. Should we await a perfect method before implementation, we would seriously delay our effort to reduce environmental impact from consumption and production.

Therefore, the Nordic countries will actively contribute to the further development and implementation of EF on the European market in cooperation with the EU Commission and other relevant stakeholders.

Best regards,

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