

Lithuanian National Consumer Federation

Motiva Oy (Finland)

Norges Naturvernforbund (Norway)

Latvian National Association for Consumer Protection - PIAA (Latvia)

Labeling of household appliances in Nordic and Baltic countries

2011



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PARTICIPATING ORGANISATIONS

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Labeling of household appliances

Conclusions from the study

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SUMMARY

With the support of **Nordic Council of Ministers** for the collaboration Project "Innovative invitation for sustainable consumption and environment protection for implementing "Top-10" mark in collaboration with Nordic countries ("Top-10").

Striving to elucidate the problems of labelling of household appliances in European states, a questionnaire survey where institutions from Latvia, Finland and Norway engaged in consumers' informing were involved was arranged in December 2010. It was tried to clear up what ways of non-compulsory labelling are being applied, what is the goal of such a labelling, whether the trademarks are known to a customer and how they affect a decision of the customer to buy a commodity. As a result of the conclusions from the study, an independent labelling of household electric and electronic appliances will be introduced in Lithuania in order to provide assistance to a consumer in choosing the most efficient and safe product, thus encouraging a responsible use.

The results of the survey showed that a certain form of commodities' labelling exists in all countries and such labelling informs potential buyers on power consumption by the household appliances, their safety and environmental impact. The answers of all three respondents show that consumers are prone to choose products marked with ecolabels and are aware of the ecolabels usable for nationwide labelling of commodities.

For increasing the notoriety of a mark, abundant measures, such as information in mass media, booklets, and internet, are used.

NORDIC ECOMARKS

Among the most effective marks, the following are notable: **Nordic Swan** usable for



labelling environment friendly commodities,

The Nordic Ecolabel is the official Ecolabel of the Nordic countries and was established in 1989 by the Nordic Council of Ministers. The purpose of the Ecolabel is to contribute to sustainable manufacturing and consumption. The logo demonstrates that a product is a good environmental choice. The green symbol is available for around 60 product groups for which it is felt that eco-labelling is needed and will be beneficial. These days, everything from washing-up liquid to furniture and hotels can carry the this label. The Swan label management checks that products fulfil certain criteria using methods such as samples from independent laboratories, certificates and control visits. The label is usually valid for three years, after which the criteria are revised and the company must reapply for a licence. The criteria are the same in participating Nordic countries. A product that has been granted the label in one of the countries are allowed to use the label in the other Nordic countries without going through the application process once more.



One more ecolabel exists in Norway (the picture above). It is established and operated by environmental NGO, where it is mostly used to indicate existing political issues, such as nuclear energy. **Bra Miljøval** (En. Good Environmental Choice) was established by the Swedish environmental NGO "Natusyddsföreningen in 1992. The establishment followed after successful campaigns against chlorine bleached paper and batteries containing mercury the environmental labelling. Here the organisation has proved that awareness and environmental preferences from the consumers could make big impact on the environmental standards in the industry. Although this is a

Swedish system, products with this label are also visible in other Nordic countries. The ecolabel is used for a number of consumer goods, but also other products like transport service, electricity and insurance. The Swedish label "Bra Miljoval" is probably the world most strict eco-label and has been an important part of Global Ecolabelling Network (GEN), a non-profit association of third-party, environmental performance recognition, certification and labelling organisations.

The Key Flag usable for labelling Finnish products and services



as well as **Finland TopTen** usable for singling out the most efficient and safe products in a certain group of products. The both Finnish ecolabels are well known to the customers and promote responsible use, i.e. choosing a local product, thus reducing the environmental pollution caused by transportation of products; in addition, they encourage consumers to pay attention to the environmental impact as well as the impact upon the human health caused by the product. **The Key Flag** is a symbol of Finnish origin. A customer who sees the Key Flag immediately knows that the product or service in question is made in Finland. The Key Flag is a valued origin mark among consumers. More than 90 percent of Finns are familiar with the Key Flag and its purpose. Products or services marked with the Key Flag convey a reliable message of Finnish origin, as well as of safety and high quality. The Key Flag also tells about the values of the product or service producer.

Finnish TopTen is a consumer-oriented online search tool, which presents the best appliances in various categories of products. The key criteria are energy efficiency, impact on the environment, health and quality. Topten information targets consumers (pictures, functions, price, no complex calculation, for products available in Finland) and large buyers. Topten is rigorous and transparent (the selection methodology and criteria is explained online), independent from producers and commercial distributors. Topten relies on neutral tests and analysis of independent institutions, labels and on standardized declarations of manufacturers (e.g. EU-directives for household appliances). Topten label itself does not give information about the product. The product must meet the requirements to be granted the label (label below).

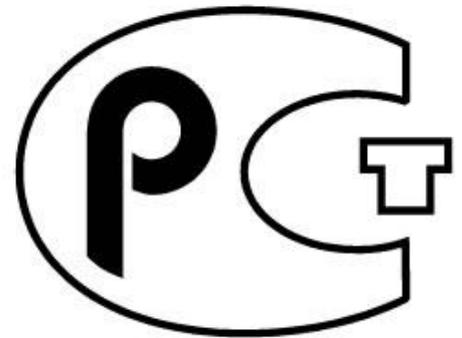


The equivalent of *Finnish TopTen* is Norwegian *Besteprodukter.no* that reflects power consumption by electric appliances.

 **besteprodukter.no**

BALTIC ECOMARKS

Latvian team presents the *ENEC* certification system. The certification with the *ENEC* mark (Picture 1) reassures the manufacturer that his product is in compliance with legal requirements of relevant EC Directives. Buyers and users of electrical products with *ENEC* mark receive safe products tested by an independent institution constantly supervising their quality. Applied for luminaries and related components, energy saving lamps, IT equipment, transformers, switches for appliances, electrical controls, certain types of capacitor and EMI suppression components.



(Picture 1) (Picture 2)

Noteworthy label - *GOST-R* (Russian: *ГОСТ*) (Picture 2) refers to a set of technical standards maintained by the Euro-Asian Council for Standardization, Metrology and Certification (EASC), it is used in Latvia. *GOST-R* mark – Is Indispensable for Electrical Product Exports to Russia.

One more third party Latvian certification mark based on the "Gerätesicherheitsgesetz" (Equipment Safety Act), generally abbreviated *GSG*. Technical equipment as for example household appliances; technical equipment within the meaning of *GSG* is a work appliance that must be handled, operated and adequated for work to be actively performed with it. It must be "ready for use", i.e. it is supplied complete, and is intended for use in its as-delivered condition.



Technischer Überwachungsverein (Technical Inspection Association) operates the TÜV mark in Latvia for products ready to use. This applies for information technology equipment, audio/video equipment, other electronics, components; telecommunications technology; medical products, in-vitrodiagnostic, active implementable medical devices, certification of quality systems etc.



(Picture 3)

In Lithuania, household appliances are also marked with a label indicating power consumption; however, the data provided by it is not sufficient for a consumer. On an initiative of private finance company *General Financing* (Picture 3) labelling of environment friendly and energy saving products was introduced that facilitates their acquisition using leasing services. Products are marked with the said label at two trading centres. However, it is not clear who should assess the products, what criteria should be followed and whether an independent attitude will be ensured and a priority of interests of the consumer will be observed.

In all countries, household electric and electronic appliances are marked with obligatory European Union mark Standard EN 61121 that indicates the power consumption class. However, in the opinion of the respondents, today a very effective appliance marked as Class A may conform to the Class B or C after a certain time because of appearance of more effective appliances. So, more dynamic labelling is required.

OTHER LABEL TOOLS

Finnish Allergy Label is granted to products and appliances that have been impartially investigated and found to be safe. Symbol indicates a product that meets the exact requirement for product-specific criteria and does not contain perfumes or other generally irritating or sensitizing substances. In household appliances the Allergy label states the properties which help to reduce the amount of indoor air pollution in both home and business premises. The label itself does not contain any product information. The criteria and information on labelled products is available on the Allergy and Asthma Federations website.¹



All providers of organic products in Norway are certified by *Debio*.



Label ensures that farms and fish farms, processing and marketing enterprises, importers and others follow the regulations for organic production, and meet the requirements for marketing organic products under label. Most of *Debio's* services deal with the inspection of organic production in accordance with the Norwegian "Regulations on the Production and Labelling of Organic Agricultural Products". The inspection services are based on an agreement with the Norwegian Food Safety Authority, and the regulation is based on the EU Council Regulation 2092/91. It covers farming, processing, import and marketing of organic agricultural products. Organic aquaculture includes the farming of various fish species in freshwater, saltwater and

¹ Finnish Allergy and Asthma Federation Federations website: www.allergia.com/in_english.

brackish water. The standards cover salmonoids (salmon, trout, rainbow trout and char), perch, pikeperch and cod.

Debio has developed standards for organic forestry and the harvesting of products from wild areas certified by *Debio* ("wild products").

The **Green Certificate** was developed and implemented by the Latvian Country Tourism association „Lauku celotajs”. An eco-label affirming environmental quality in vacation properties which save natural resources and use them rationally, offer environment friendly tourist activities, healthy, locally produced food and extensive information on the local natural, cultural and historical attractions.



Label below advocates the quality system which guarantees product quality in Latvia produced foodstuffs. Hallmark „**Zaļā karotīte**” means that the production is used of 75% Latvia farmed products, which can demonstrate their origin, does not contain genetically modified organisms and synthetic dyes, as well as quality control is provided both raw material in the production and manufacture of a product.



RECOMMENDATIONS

On labelling commodities, the experts involved in the survey recommend to take into account:

- Power (low power consumption)
- Environmental issues (does not cause environmental pollution and any environmental impact as well as impact upon human health; utilization)
- Quality (including durability of the appliance)

Selection of products for labelling should be carried out by independent experts, the products should be tested and assessed and the results of tests should be publicly accessible to consumers; the criteria of selection should be clear and constant.

The recommended term of validity of a label for a specific product should not be more than 3 years. Such item is applied to *Nordic Swan* and *The Key Flag*. However, Taking into account, quick development of innovations shorter term should be applied.

Conclusions:

1. National labelling of household appliances would be useful for Lithuanian consumers; in the meanwhile, such labelling does not exist. Comparing current situation with other participating countries, it is accurate that independent labelling is crucial to implement.
2. Labelling of household appliances should be independent; the criteria should be clear and accessible to public.
3. The usable criteria of assessment should include power consumption, environmental impact and impact upon human health as well as the quality/price ratio.
4. The recommended term of validity of a label for a specific product should not more than 3 years.