



PRESS RELEASE

European Environmental Bureau

European Ecolabel in danger of weakening

[Brussels, 23 April 2008] – The European Environmental Bureau, Europe's largest federation of environmental citizens groups, has urged Member States to ensure that European Ecolabel remains a label of environmental excellence. Ahead of crucial votes on five product groups,^[1] the EEB has sent a letter to Environment Ministers to oppose final Commission proposals including elements EEB considers unacceptable for a policy tool meant to serve as a benchmark for environmental performance in products.

John Hontelez, Secretary General EEB, said, "We are seriously concerned about the general trend in the Commission to weaken the Ecolabel's ambition, which is in direct conflict with its aim of being a label that represents 'environmental excellence'. The label is meant to be awarded only to the highest environmental performers and, as a voluntary market-based tool, should go *beyond* and not merely reflect existing legislation".

In its letter to ministers, EEB expressed concern about a number of specific product groups, including textiles, bed mattresses and furniture, and called for the following elements to be excluded from Ecolabel:

- Flame retardants in particular decaBDE^[2] and biocides in textiles and mattresses;
- PVC in wooden furniture; and
- GMOs in wooden furniture, something that Member States have already agreed to exclude but the Commission has proposed again.

Blanca Morales, EEB's Ecolabel Policy Officer, commented, "The final Commission proposals include major changes that do not reflect general discussions within the EU Ecolabelling Board or working groups where the criteria were developed. This means that the Ecolabel will be falling behind legislation as well as public expectation."

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Notes:-

[1] The European Ecolabel is a voluntary programme that awards a special Ecolabel to high environmental performance products and services. The five products proposed for vote at the Regulatory Committee on 24th of April include wooden furniture, textiles, bed mattresses and indoor paints and outdoor paints.

[2] The criterion on flame retardants proposed for the EU Ecolabels for textiles, mattresses and wooden furniture would lead to a situation where a hazardous substance is phased out in a television, through the Directive on Restriction of Hazardous Substances, while at the same time is allowed in an ecolabelled textile or mattress. This is particularly concerning considering that the exposures levels in mattresses and textiles are higher and there are safer alternatives available.

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