



ECO

LABELS



***CENTEXBEL-VKC
INFO 2020-08***



Verantwoordelijke uitgever | Éditeur responsable | Responsable editor: Jan Laperre, directeur generaal
Redactiecomité | Comité de rédaction | Redaction Committee: Jan Laperre, Stijn Devaere, Eline Robin
Tekstredactie en lay-out | Rédaction et mise en pages | Editing and graphics : Eline Robin
Fotografie | Photographie | Photography : Marc Van Hove
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What are ecolabels and what's their use?

Ecolabels are developed to support manufacturers and retailers in providing fact-based, verifiable and transparent product information to an expanding group of ethical and environmentally conscious consumers, enabling them to select and buy products and services that are less harmful to the environment. Unfortunately the positive (and thus commercially interesting) image of ecolabels and the willingness of customers to pay extra for ethical products also paves the way to greenwashing malpractices! The market is flooded with all kinds of (eco) labels, from highly reliable (verifiable and transparent) to pure scams.

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Difference between ecolabels, labels and quality marks

An ecolabel is affixed to a product or its packaging or on any other medium associated with the product (e.g. a printed or electronically available manual). The term "ecolabel" is composed of:

1. "ECO", a prefix indicating that the second part of the term has been produced/processed in an environmentally sound manner and/or is made from organic/renewable raw materials.
2. "LABEL" containing information which appears on a product or its packaging.

A label is not the same as a quality mark. A quality mark is an assessment of a product or service performed by a trustworthy body. The mark visualises that a product has been approved (quality assessment) by an independent body with the necessary competences (trustworthy body). In other words, a quality mark is a quality label.

An ecolabel focuses on the (global) environmental impact of a product or service in a certain domain, such as textiles, wood and furniture products. The largest group of existing ecolabels are based on an LCA (life cycle analysis). Unlike the "green labels" that are developed and applied by the manufacturers or service providers themselves, an ecolabel is verified by an independent and recognised organisation.

How to recognise a reliable ecolabel?

A reliable label must comply with all of the following criteria:

RELEVANCE - the problem addressed by the label makes sense for both customers and companies

CLARITY - the customer clearly understands what the label is about (no ambiguities)

ACCESSIBILITY - all information and data backing the label's claim are easily accessible to both companies and customers

FINANCIALLY VIABILITY - the related costs are affordable to both companies and customers

IMPACT/EFFECT - the label contributes positively to solving the problem

TRUSTWORTHINESS - the label inspires trust to customers, businesses and beneficiaries



TYPES & CLASSIFICATION OF ECOLABELS

Who issues the label and who checks its reliability?

Ecolabels are classified according to the category to which an organisation awarding the label belongs. An important factor here is whether the external control is carried out by an independent (accredited) organisation.

OFFICIAL LABELS are managed by governments and controlled by external, independent (usually accredited) bodies. The accreditation guarantees the reliability and quality of the label. It is a voluntary system.

Examples: European ecolabel, Der Blauwe Engel, Nordic Swan

PRIVATE COLLECTIVE LABELS are issued by an industrial sector, a professional federation or an association considered to be independent of the producer. As with official labels, checks are carried out by external, independent (usually accredited) bodies and are voluntary.

Examples are given below: EKO, Biogarantie, FSC, Oeko-Tex, fair trade Max Havelaar

INDIVIDUAL, CONTROLLED PRIVATE LABELS are developed by the producer or distributor of a product, but are controlled by external, independent (usually accredited) bodies.

Examples: "Bio" or "Origin Assured" labelled branded products from mass merchandise chains.

INDIVIDUAL, NON-CONTROLLED PRIVATE LABELS are developed by the manufacturer or distributor of a product and are under his full responsibility. No external or independent checks are carried out.

Examples: Eco Linen, Pure Wear

Classification of ecolabels: ISO Type I, II and III

The International Standardisation Organisation (ISO) classifies ecolabels into three types:

1. *ISO 14024, Environmental labels and declarations – Type I environmental labeling – Principles and procedures*, outlines the requirements for developing “Type I environmental labeling programmes”, more commonly known as ecolabeling schemes. These schemes award a mark or logo to products or services upon fulfilling a set of criteria. ISO 14024 features the principles and procedures for selecting product categories, product-environmental criteria, product-function characteristics and for assessing and demonstrating compliance. It also establishes the certification procedures for awarding the label.
2. Where there is no eco-labeling scheme to verify environmental claims, it is essential to have a means of demonstrating the reliability of selfdeclared information. This will help to avoid confusion, barriers to trade and unfair competition. *ISO 14021, Environmental labels and declarations – Self-declared environmental claims (Type II environmental labeling)*, can provide credibility for environmental claims that manufacturers, marketeers and resellers can make for products or services. ISO 14021 identifies and clarifies a number of commonly used terms used in claims, whether they be on the product or elsewhere such as in product literature, advertising or reports. It also details the evaluation methods for each term in order to help ensure they are valid and scientifically sound. In addition, ISO 14021 has a comprehensive list of general requirements for the use of other terms that are not already defined. It also describes other label-related information and guidance, such as the use, placement and size of symbols and graphics.
3. Declarations that show quantified environmental information on the life-cycle of a product enable comparisons between similar products. They also are useful when fulfilling regulatory requirements and in business-to-business communications. Commonly known as Environmental Product Data (EPD) sheets, they represent the “nutrition labels for the environment”. Such labels provide display information and data that consumers can use to assess and compare the environmental impacts of products and services. *ISO 14025, Environmental labels and declarations – Type III environmental declarations – Principles and procedures*, establishes the principles and procedures for developing the data for such declarations and the requirements for declaration programmes, including the requirement that data are independently verified.

The aim of these three types of labels is to “promote products and services with a lower environmental impact by providing verifiable and correct (non-misleading) information on the environmental aspects of these products and services”.

Footprint Communication

ISO 14026, Environmental labels and declarations – Principles, requirements and guidelines for communication of footprint information, provides guidance on how to communicate environmental footprint information in a transparent and robust way. It outlines internationally agreed terms and definitions for footprint declarations.

ISO 14026 describes the requirements for determining which environmental aspects are covered by the footprint data, ensuring that the information is transparent and clearly understood.

It also provides the requirements for establishing a communication programme for footprints.

Product category rules

Product category rules (PCRs) are necessary when implementing standards for product-related environmental claims. They enable comparability of data that is produced to support environmental claims and declarations. However, there are many in existence and their quality varies.

ISO/TS 14027, Environmental labels and declarations – Development of product category rules, is an internationally agreed set of principles, requirements and guidelines for developing quality PCR that can be widely used and understood.

Ecololabels

applied in the textile, wood and furniture sector

Ecolabel	Criteria				Sector		
	Organic	Chemical	Process	Social	Textiles	furniture	Wood
EU regulation No: 834/2007	y	x	x	x	y	x	y
The Global Organic Textile Standard	y	y	x	y	y	x	x
Organic Exchange	y	x	x	x	y	x	x
International Wool Textile Organisation	y	y	x	y	y	x	x
KRAV	y	y	x	y	y	x	x
IVN	y	x	x	y	y	x	x
Biogarantie	y	y	x	y	y	x	x
Naturland	y	y	x	x	y	x	x
EU-Ecolabel	x	y	y	x	y	y	y
Standard 100 by Oeko-Tex®	x	y	x	x	y	x	x
STeP by Oeko-Tex®	x	y	y	y	y	x	x
Nordic Ecolabel	x	y	y	x	y	y	y
The Blue Angel	x	y	y	y	y	y	y
Blue Sign	x	y	y	y	y	x	x
Certipur	x	y	x	x	(y)	(y)	x
euroLATEX ECO-standard	x	y	y	x	(y)	(y)	x
Milieukeur	x	y	y	x	x	y	x
NF Environnement	x	y	y	x	x	y	x
GUT	x	y	y	x	y	x	x
Made In Green by Oeko-Tex®	x	y	y	y	y	x	x
C2C	x	y	y	y	y	y	y
Better Cotton Initiative	x	y	(y)	(y)	y	x	x
FSC	x	y	y	y	x	y	y
PEFC	x	y	y	y	x	y	y
EPD	x	y	y	x	y	y	y
Fairtrade Labeling Organisations	x	x	x	y	y	y	y
Max Havelaar	x	x	x	y	y	x	x
Belgisch sociaal label	x	x	x	y	y	y	y
Made-By	y	x	x	y	y	x	x
Fair Wear	x	x	x	y	y	x	x
BSCI	x	x	(y)	y	y	y	y
SA8000	x	x	x	y	y	y	y

Voluntary versus mandatory labels

An ecolabel is a trustworthy symbol that manufacturers or retailers can put on products to demonstrate that they are genuinely better for the environment than comparable products. Most ecolabels are **voluntary**.

Some of the best-known voluntary ecolabels in the EU include:



EU Ecolabel

A voluntary scheme designed to encourage businesses to market products and services that are kinder to the environment and for European consumers - including public and private purchasers.



OEKO-TEX®

A voluntary scheme designed to encourage the textile value chain to produce textiles without harmful substances in eco-friendly production plants and with respect of human and labour rights



Nordic Swan Ecolabel

A voluntary scheme designed to reduce the environmental impact from production and consumption of goods - and to make it easy for consumers and professional buyers to choose the environmentally best goods and services.



Blauer Engel/Bleu Angel

The Blue Angel promotes the concerns of both environmental protection and consumer protection and is awarded to products and services which are particularly beneficial for the environment in an all-round consideration and which also fulfill high standards of occupational health and safety and fitness for use.

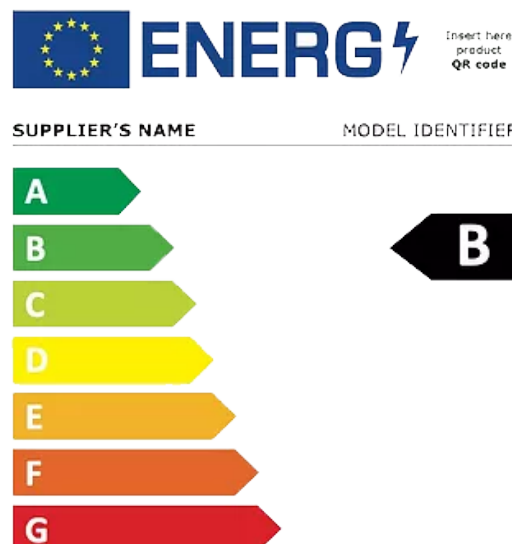
Other ecolabels are **mandatory**: for example, producers of electrical appliances have to display a label containing an A-G rating (A is good, G is bad) showing its level of energy efficiency.

New European Energy label in 2021!

It is interesting to note that this classification will be adapted to the state-of-the-art of the new household appliances which have dramatically evolved towards a better performance level over the past decades. These new labels will be visible for European consumers in physical stores and on-line as of March 1st 2021. A specific EU-wide information campaign aimed at EU citizens will be launched in 2021.

A new element in these labels is a **QR code** with which consumers will be able to get additional, official (non-commercial) information by scanning the code with a common smartphone. This data is being inserted by manufacturers into the EPREL EU database which will become available to any European citizen in the next few months. The private sector and different NGOs are also in the process of coming up with apps that will further assist in the purchase choice (e.g., by helping to calculate the return costs and compare different products).

Depending on the product, the energy labels will display not only electricity consumption, but also other energy and non-energy information, with intuitive pictograms, to compare products and perform a better informed purchase choice: information about water used per washing cycle, storing capacity, noise emitted, etc.





CIRCULARITY IN A TOXIC-FREE ENVIRONMENT

EU chemicals policy and legislation, in particular REACH, encourage a shift to 'safe-by-design chemicals' through the progressive substitution of hazardous substances to better protect citizens and the environment.

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However, the safety of secondary raw materials can still be compromised, for instance, where **banned substances persist in recycled feedstock**. To increase the confidence in using secondary raw materials, the Commission will:

- support the development of solutions for high-quality sorting and removing contaminants from waste, including those resulting from incidental contamination;
- develop methodologies to minimise the presence of substances that pose problems to health or the environment in recycled materials and articles made thereof;
- co-operate with the industry to progressively develop harmonised systems to track and manage information on substances identified as being of very high concern and other relevant substances, in particular those with chronic effects, and substances posing technical problems for recovery operations present along supply chains, and identify those substances in waste, in synergy with measures under the sustainable products policy framework and with the ECHA Database on articles containing substances of very high concern;
- propose amending the annexes to the Regulation on Persistent Organic Pollutants, in line with scientific and technical progress and the international obligations under the Stockholm Convention;
- improve the classification and management of hazardous waste so as to maintain clean recycling streams, including through further alignment with the classification of chemical substances and mixtures where necessary.

The forthcoming Chemicals Strategy for Sustainability will further address the interface between chemicals, products and waste legislation and strengthen synergies with the circular economy.

REACH Chemical Restrictions and certification by OEKO-TEX®

Certain CMR substances that are present in clothing, accessories and other textiles coming into close contact with the human skin will be further restricted on the European market as of November 1, 2020.

This may impact your business. How can Centexbel help you?

CMR substances are substances that are carcinogenic, mutagenic or toxic to reproduction (CMR). They are of specific concern due to the long term and serious effects that they may exert on human health. Under GHS, CMR substances can be classified into 3 categories depending on the severity of hazards.

- Category 1A: Known human carcinogen (H340), mutagen (H350) or reproductive toxicant (H360) based on human evidence;
- Category 1B: Presumed human carcinogen (H340), mutagen (H350) or reproductive toxicant (H360) based on animal studies;
- Category 2: Suspected carcinogen (H341), mutagen (H351) or reproductive toxicant (H361) based on limited evidence from animal studies or/and human.

The COMMISSION REGULATION (EU) 2018/1513 of 10 October 2018 amending Annex XVII to Regulation (EC) No 1907/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council concerning the Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals (REACH) as regards certain substances classified as carcinogenic, mutagenic or toxic for reproduction (CMR) will enter into force on November 1, 2020. From then on, the listed products may no longer be placed on the market in the following products

- clothing or related accessories
- textiles other than clothing which, under normal or reasonably foreseeable conditions of use, come into contact with human skin to an extent similar to clothing
- footwear

In our chemical lab, we screen your textile materials and accessories for the presence of CMR chemicals and we very accurately determine their concentration by weight.

- Extractable metals [ISO 16711-2(2015)]
- Thermal extraction GCMS
- Formaldehyde [ISO 14184-1 (2011)]
- Disperse Dyes [DIN 54231 (2005)]



Please note!

Textiles tested and certified according to Standard 100 by OEKO-TEX® comply with the criteria on the maximum concentration limits by weight!



RECYCLED
CONTENT



LABELING RECYCLED CONTENT

In 2013, Centexbel and the Belgian Quality Association set up the QA-CER Recycled Content certification scheme¹. This implies that a company desiring to be certified according to QA-CER Recycled Content must prove to independent and expert auditors that its production system is organized such as to allow traceability of its claims regarding recycled content.

Wim Grymonprez | wgm@vkc.be

QA-CER Recycled Content

The QA-CER Recycled Content label is based on ISO 9001 principles. The verification is not limited to the company's **handling of recycled content** but also includes the **sourcing of recycled materials**. Furthermore, all companies certified according to QA-CER Recycled Content are audited on a regular basis to verify whether they continue to fulfil the requirements of the QA-CER Recycled Content certification scheme.

The idea behind QA-CER Recycled content

The circular economy model is rooted in the notion that our planet provides us with a limited amount of resources. Due to increasing economic activities and demands for materials, our familiar linear economic model is no longer sustainable. Therefore, a shift towards a circular economy model - based on the continual (re)use of materials and the elimination of waste - is urgently needed. Although the circular economy represents a major challenge to companies it also offers huge business opportunities.

Repair, Reuse and **Recycling** are key elements in this circular economic model and part of the business models of circular companies.

The aim of QA-CER Recycled Content is to offer **transparency** to companies, authorities, buyers or customers in how businesses are handling recycled materials or recycled content in the products they bring to the market. Recycled content is defined as the **amount of circular material in a product**. By doing so QA-CER Recycled Content helps companies to create **trust** in the manufacturing of more sustainable products by using recycled materials, and to **communicate their efforts in a substantiated and transparent way**.

Trust

Consumers are increasingly demanding sustainable products. Also end-users, including governmental agencies through their public procurement policies, are seeking ways to help transforming the linear into a circular economy.

QA-CER Recycled Content creates trust when companies communicate on the amount and nature of recycled content in their products, for it is an **international, independent, third-party certification system, based on ISO 9001 principles including a chain of custody**. It exceeds ISO 14021 as it represents an **all-comprehensive system** by identifying all possible waste streams that can be recycled.



Polycert Europe

October 2020: Centexbel-VKC, the Belgian competence centre of textiles and plastics, and the Belgian Quality Association (BQA) established a consortium PolyCert Europe² in partnership with the industry associations ECRA, EuPC and ESWA. PolyCert Europe is an umbrella conformity assessment scheme to harmonise the existing certification schemes for converters of polymeric materials in Europe.

The objective of PolyCert Europe is to bring the existing third-party certification schemes to the same level and to harmonise the auditing methodology and the methodology for calculation of recycled content used by existing certification schemes in Europe. Such harmonisation is needed to establish a single industrial standard which brings transparency for reporting recycled content in products.

Harmonisation will reduce for companies the uncertainty in choosing a particular third-party system as all systems endorsed by PolyCert Europe will meet the same core standard. This harmonisation will also allow for uniform reporting by federations on the effort the industry deploys and the progress in becoming more circular.

The PolyCert Europe harmonisation will be based on the principles of quality certification ISO 9001 including chain of custody and include independent and impartial third-party auditing. The methodologies will need to identify all waste streams and have to provide a comprehensive and agreed way of calculating the recycled content in newly converted products.

Centexbel is convinced that this initiative will bring more uniformity and transparency across Europe in the area of recycled content and that it will contribute in a significant way to a Circular Economy.

Mirror committee to monitor international standards for a circular economy

At this very moment, Centexbel is creating a Mirror Committee to follow up all CEN and ISO standardization activities on Circular Economy relevant for textile and plastics products (including packaging). The role of this mirror committee is to reflect and express the position expressed by the Belgian stakeholders on the issues debated in the corresponding Technical Committees.

For more information and to participate in the mirror committee, contact:

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CEN and ISO standards on a circular economy

The Belgian mirror committee initiated by Centexbel for textile and plastics processing will monitor the activities of the following standardization working groups:

CEN Strategic Advisory Body on Environment (SABE) organization

This new workgroup was created in 2020 and aims to

- Identify all standards that have an influence on the Circular economy
- Identify the needs regarding standardization
- Coordinate and advice CEN and the EU Commission

ISO TC 323 "Circular economy"

The aim of this technical committee is to define the circular economy with a view to **uniformity**. The following Workgroups and tasks have been defined:

- ISO/TC 323/WG 1 - Framework, principles, terminology, and management system standard
- ISO/WD 59004 Circular economy - Framework and principles for implementation
- ISO/TC 323/WG 2 - Guidance for implementation and sectoral applications
- ISO/WD 59010 Circular economy - Guidelines on business models and value chains
- ISO/TC 323/WG 3 - Measuring circularity
- ISO/WD 59020 - Circular economy - Measuring circularity framework
- ISO/TC 323/WG 4 - Specific issues of circular economy
- ISO/CD TR 59031 - Circular economy - Performance-based approach - Analysis of cases studies

CEN and ISO standards on microplastics

CEN/TC 248/WG 37 - Microplastics from textile sources

- WI (work item) 00248719 Textiles and textile products - Microplastics from textile sources. Part 1: Determination of fibre loss from fabrics during washing
- WI 00248720 Textiles - Microplastics from textile sources — Part 2: Qualitative and Quantitative evaluation of microplastics

ISO/TC 38/WG 34 - Microplastics from textile sources

- ISO/WD 5228: 2020(E) Textiles - Determination of mass of fibre debris released from textile products using domestic washing machine
- The aim is to develop calibrated test methods to identify textiles releasing microplastics during washing.

CEN standards on carpets in view of recycling and circular economy

CEN TC134 WG8 - Textile floorcoverings : work items

- WI 00134286 Definition and Declaration of Recyclability and Recycling Potential of textile floor coverings.
- WI 00134287 Definition and Declaration of Recycled Content (organic and inorganic) in textile floor coverings.

CEN TC134 WG10 - Resilient and Textile floorcoverings - Harmonization : work items

- Terms & definitions for a Circular economy
- Identification of the product (product passport)
- Design for recycling

Context

EU policy on the transition to a circular economy for textiles and plastics

Textiles are the fourth highest-pressure category for the use of primary raw materials and water, after food, housing and transport, and fifth for Greenhouse gases (GHG) emissions. It is estimated that less than 1% of all textiles worldwide are recycled into new textiles. The EU textile sector, predominantly composed of SMEs, has started to recover after a long period of restructuring, while 60% by value of clothing in the EU is produced elsewhere.

In the light of the complexity of the textile value chain, to respond to these challenges the Commission will propose a comprehensive EU Strategy for Textiles, based on input from industry and other stakeholders. The strategy will aim at strengthening industrial competitiveness and innovation in the sector, boosting the EU market for sustainable and circular textiles, including the market for textile reuse, addressing fast fashion and driving new business models.

To increase uptake of recycled plastics and contribute to the more sustainable use of plastics, the Commission will propose mandatory requirements for recycled content and waste reduction measures for key products such as packaging, construction materials and vehicles.

In addition to measures to reduce plastic litter, the Commission will address the presence of microplastics in the environment by:

- restricting intentionally added microplastics and tackling pellets taking into account the opinion of the European Chemicals Agency;
- developing labelling, standardisation, certification and regulatory measures on unintentional release of microplastics, including measures to increase the capture of microplastics at all relevant stages of products' lifecycle;
- further developing and harmonising methods for measuring unintentionally released microplastics, especially from tyres and textiles, and delivering harmonised data on microplastics concentrations in seawater;
- closing the gaps on scientific knowledge related to the risk and occurrence of microplastics in the environment, drinking water and foods.

Furthermore, the Commission will address emerging sustainability challenges by developing a policy framework on:

- sourcing, labelling and use of bio-based plastics, based on assessing where the use of bio-based feedstock results in genuine environmental benefits, going beyond reduction in using fossil resources;
- use of biodegradable or compostable plastics, based on an assessment of the applications where such use can be beneficial to the environment, and of the criteria for such applications. It will aim to ensure that labelling a product as 'biodegradable' or 'compostable' does not mislead consumers to dispose of it in a way that causes plastic littering or pollution due to unsuitable environmental conditions or insufficient time for degradation.



DUTCH MATTRESS LABEL FOR TRANSPARENT DISPLAY OF MATERIALS IN MATTRESSES

Availability of information about the composition of materials in mattresses is important for the recycling, reuse and circularity of mattresses. The Dutch Technical Agreement (NTA) 8190 describes how the composition and structure of the mattress should be shown on a label and how this label should be applied to the mattress.

The uniform application of the mattress label by producers and suppliers makes information available to the recycling industry and the consumer. The initiative aims at obtaining a more sustainable waste stream of mattresses sustainably.

The label must display the actual composition and structure of the mattress. In addition, NTA 8190 sets requirements for the design and placement of the label on the mattress. There are no requirements for the composition and construction of mattresses.

Following this initiative, discussions have started in the Netherlands to create a mattress label that would reflect the degree of circularity and durability of the mattress - comparable with, for example, energy labels on electrical appliances. This label could in turn be used in the introduction of an eco-modulation of the environmental contribution. After all, the Netherlands is also working on the introduction of an extended producer responsibility (UPV) for mattresses and will therefore introduce an environmental contribution. The timing of the entry into force of the Dutch UPV is not yet known; it is likely to be launched sometime in mid-2021.

The Netherlands now intends to introduce its standard for the Dutch mattress label to the European standards organisation CEN, in the hope of having it adopted. If a label is developed at European level, it is important to involve mattress manufacturers, preferably coordinated by EBIA.

In July, the Flemish Government agreed in principle to a number of amendments to the Materials Decree. In doing so, Flanders is complying with new European regulations.

Less litter

Europe wants producers to bear the cost of litter from a number of disposable plastic products. The Materials Decree generalises this to all products having a significant impact on the production of litter. OVAM is now carrying out studies into the composition of litter and the cost of disposal. On the basis of these studies, from 2023 onwards, the costs can be divided proportionally among the producers.

Producers pay for collection and recycling

Producers must bear at least 80% of the costs of the separate collection and recycling of waste resulting from the products they place on the market. At least if those products are covered by a regime of extended producer responsibility.

This is the case, for example, for packaging, waste oil and will be the case for mattresses.



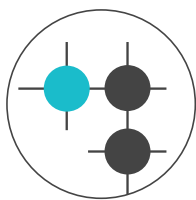
FLEMISH MATERIALS DECREE PLACES MORE RESPONSIBILITY ON PRODUCERS

Better sorting

Waste collectors should encourage their customers to sort through appropriate collection formulas and tariffs. VLAREMA, the Flemish regulation on the sustainable management of material cycles and waste materials, can lay down more specific agreements for this purpose. Ships mooring in our ports must be able to offer their waste free of charge. In this way, we prevent waste from ending up uncontrolled at sea. There will be new agreements on the financing of the collection of ship-generated waste.



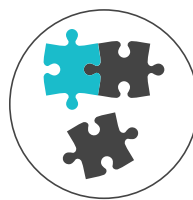
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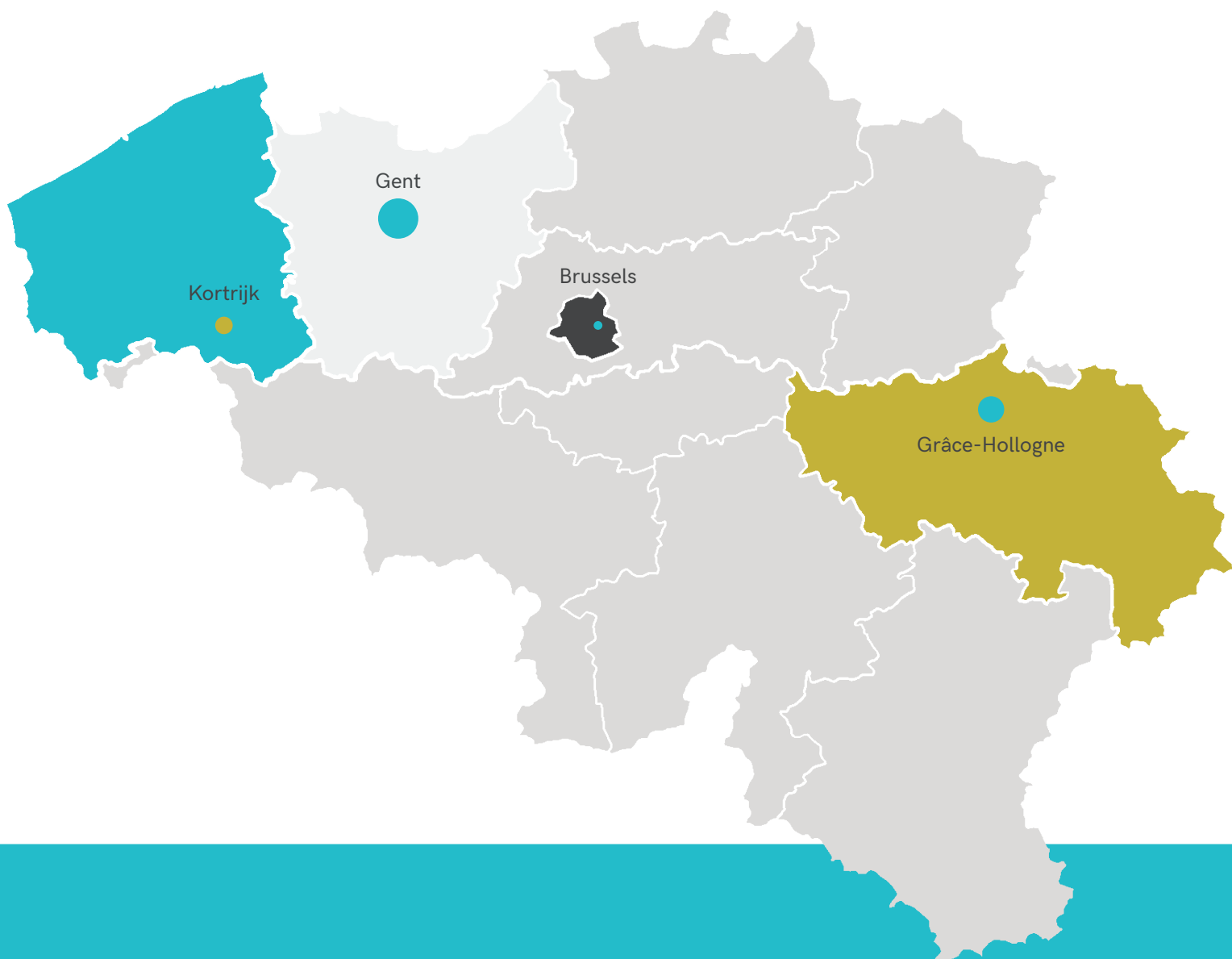
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