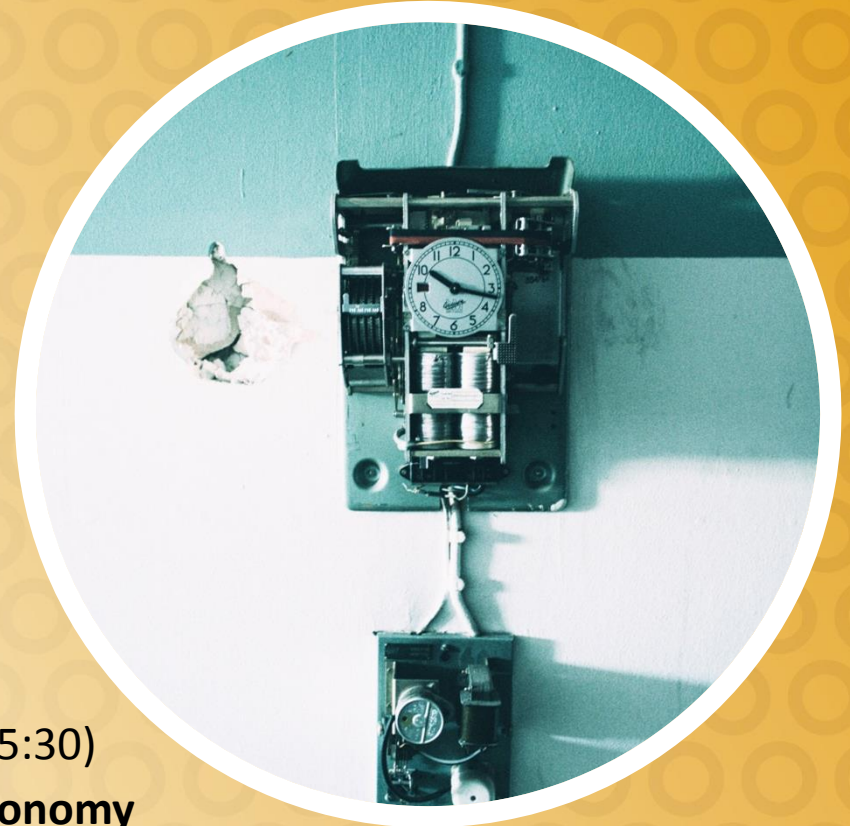


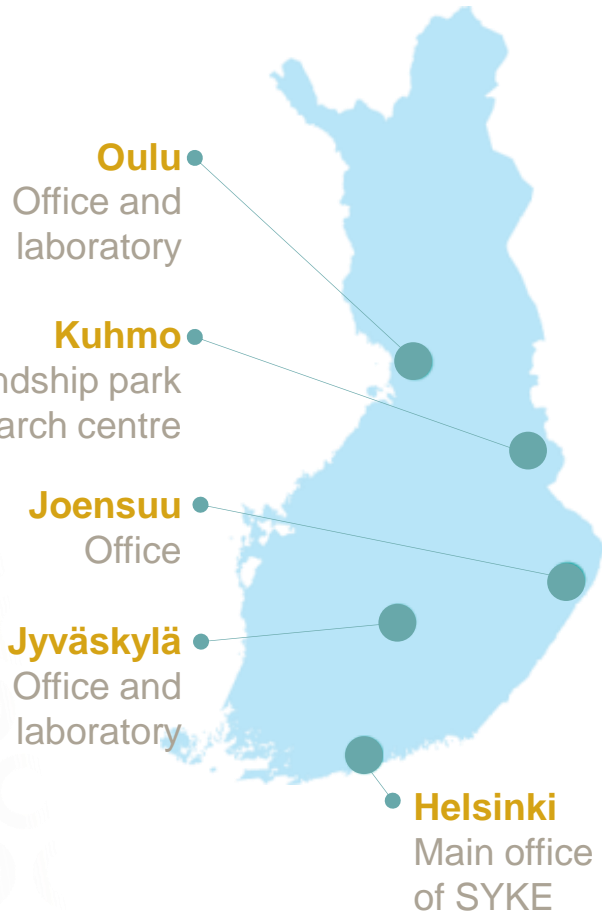
How do the Revisions of the Nordic and EU Ecolabel Criteria Reflect Circular Economy?

Johanna Suikkanen & Ari Nissinen
Finnish Environment Institute (SYKE)
PLATE 2019, Berlin, 20.9.2019 (13:30-15:30)
Session E.6: Policies for the Circular Economy



Finnish Environment Institute (SYKE)

SYKE is a state research institute.



Environmental information

Consumption and production

Water

Ecosystem services

Climate change

Sea

Built environment

Urbanisation

Circular economy

Project Introduction

Circular Economy, the Nordic Swan Ecolabel and Product Environmental Footprint (SCEPEF) <http://www.syke.fi/projects/scepef>

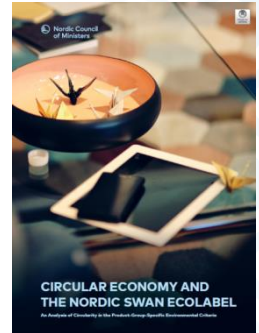
Funded by the Nordic Council of Ministers (NCM) as part of the Finnish Presidency Projects (2016)

Objectives:

How the product-group-specific award criteria of the Nordic Swan promote circular economy; Swan and PEF/OEF methodologies

Outputs:

Reports on the Nordic Swan & Circular Economy; PEF & OEF



Aim of the Analysis:

To assess the extent to which "new" criteria from 2017-2019 reflect Circular Economy and whether there is an increase in the stringency compared to older criteria in terms of factors that extend product service time.



Source of photo: Saul Flores, Unsplash

Relevance of Type I Ecolabels in the Context of Circular Economy Regulatory Instruments

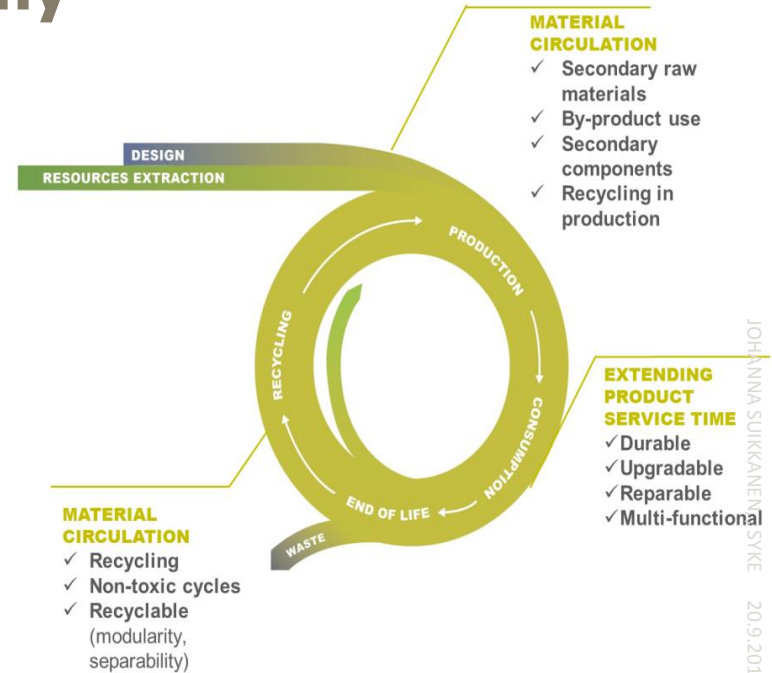
- Both are ISO14024 –type 1 ecolabels:
 - Multi-criteria; Scientific evidence; Life cycle approach; Third party certified; **Periodic revisions**
- Existing product policy instruments have a role in pursuing the objectives of circular economy (EC, 2019)
- Ecolabels are part of the instruments that contribute to the Circular Economy (COM 2017, 355 final, p.7):
 - "Voluntary instrument that facilitates the transition for businesses"



Theoretical Framework: Aspects in a Circular Economy

The conceptual starting point:

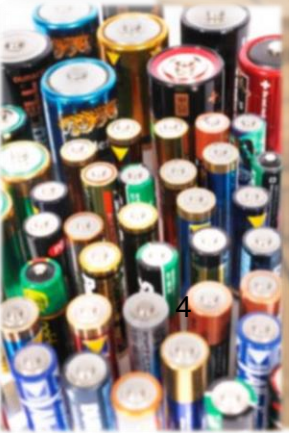
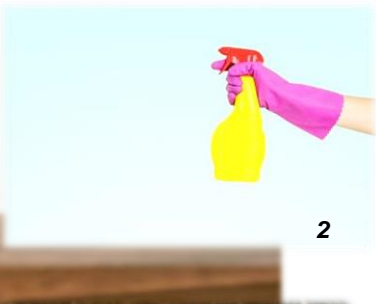
- Circular Economy aims to minimise residues from economic activity (Pearce and Turner 1990).
- Value is created by increasing the amount of time during which a resource provides value (Franklin-Johnson et al. 2016:592).



Materials and Methods

- Focus on the factors that have the potential to extend product service: durability, reparability, upgradability, and multi-functionality
- Screening regarding material circulation
- All product groups included, but services excluded
- All 44 Nordic Swan product groups and 25 EU Ecolabel groups were screened for updates, but focus was on those that had undergone a revision (New generation criteria).
- Comparison to 2017 study

Which product groups have updated criteria?



EU Ecolabel:

Cleaning products and detergents; Lubricants
Wood-, cork and bamboo based floor coverings

Nordic Ecolabel:

Cleaning Products
Primary batteries
Rechargeable and portable batteries
Disposables for food
Babyproducts with Textile



Which updated product groups have PSTE criteria?

Aspect	Product Group Nordic Swan	Product Group EU Ecolabel
Durability	Furniture and Fitments, Windows and Doors, Durable/Resistant Wood for Outdoor Use Floor Covering, Construction and Façade Panels, Closed Toilet Systems, Suppliers for Microfibre based cleaning, Toys, Outdoor Furniture, Boilers for Solid Biofuels, Stoves, Textiles, Hides, Skins and Leather, Rechargeable Batteries, White Goods, Compost Bins, Imaging Equipment, TVs and Projectors, Office and Hobby Supplies. Baby products with textiles, primary batteries (minimum average duration)	Flushing Toilets and Urinals; Sanitary Tapware; Water Based heaters, Imaging Equipment, Computers , Televisions, Furniture, Mattresses, Textiles and Footwear. Wood-, cork-, and bamboo-based floor coverings → Discontinued product groups → Computers revised ... to be discontinued?
Reparability	White Goods, Furniture and Fittings, Compost Bins, Closed Toilet Systems, Boilers for Solid Biofuels, Imaging Equipment, TVs and Projectors and Computers. Rechargeable batteries and portable chargers. Office and hobby supplies (Refill option for ballpoint pens)	Flushing Toilets and Urinals; Sanitary Tapware; Heat Pumps ; Water-based heaters; Imaging equipment; Computers; Televisions; Furniture and Mattresses. Wood-, cork-, and bamboo-based floor coverings
Upgradability	Computers	Computers; Televisions; Mattresses
Multi-functionality	Rechargeable Batteries	

EU Ecolabel



Revision rationale

- **Lubricants:** “...in line with the Plastics in Circular Economy the criteria should seek to facilitate the transition to a more circular economy by improved design and by further incentivizing the demand for recycled materials” (background)
- **Wood-, Cork- and Bamboo-based floor coverings** “promote durable and high quality product” (in the rationale for the revision, background)



“Wood-, cork-, and bamboo-based floor coverings”

Criterion 9: Reparability and extended guarantee :

- **Information:** “information shall be included in the consumer instructions or manufacturer’s website”
- **Design for repair and disassembly and consumer information on maintenance and repair:** “for floor coverings that are not glued down, the flooring shall be designed for disassembly with a view to facilitating repair, reuse and recycling”
- **Extended guarantee:** “the applicant shall provide at no additional cost a minimum of a five year guarantee effective from the date of delivery of the product”



Circular Economy in rationale/product scope



- **Disposables for food background document:**
 - "Seeing what waste requirements can be set with regard to the circular economy and better use of resources" (reason for revision)
- **Cleaning Products:**
 - "Packaging requirements contribute to circular economy by addressing packaging design and material choices" (scope)
- **Rechargeable batteries and portable chargers:**
 - "Portable chargers are designed in such a way that dismantling is possible" (scope)

“Baby Products with Textile”

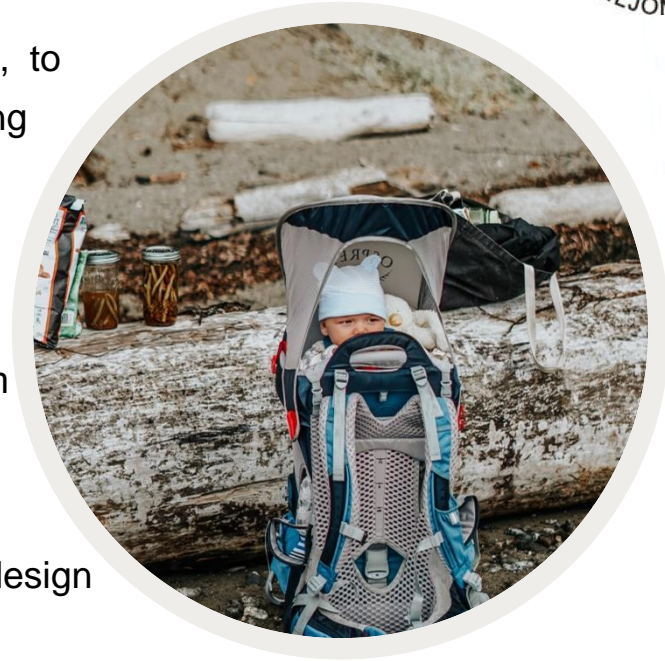
Quality and function requirements:

- Colour fastness to light (O69), to washing (O70), to rubbing (wet) (O71), to rubbing (dry) (O72), pilling (O73), wearing strength (O75)
- No warranty/guarantee requirements

Separability:

- “It must be possible to separate metal parts from materials (does not include surface coating) without using special tools” (O62)”

Next generation (2023): to “assess how product design can support the circular economy”.





Nordic Swan

Durability:

Operation times on both battery groups.

- Primary batteries - a new requirement for shelf life
- Rechargeable batteries- revised requirement for endurance.

Separability:

- Office and Hobby supplies (adjusted criteria) – new requirement O5 on design for single use packaging:
 - “When using single packaging , the packaging must be designed in such a way that dismantling is possible for all individual parts for waste sorting without using any tools”

Conclusion

Product Service Time Extension:

- Durability criteria continue to be significantly present in ecolabel criteria.
- Reparability requirements continue to be “as before”. It was also included in one of the new product group criteria (EC Ecolabel/Flooring) but mainly ease of dismantling was noted to be related to design for end-of-life.

Material circulation:

- Enhanced circular economy requirements were mainly reflected in packaging requirements in practice.
- Strengthened requirements regarding recyclability were noted

Future outlook:

- Many evaluations of the criteria will assess the recycled content and the recyclability of the materials.





Thank you!

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Photo source: Opera infinita, Unsplash



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