

# GOVERNANCE AND ACTION PLAN

ECOLABNET'S Model for long-term sustainability

ECOLABNET



## **ECOLABNET**

### **Network of service providers for eco-innovations in manufacturing SMEs**

Project number #R077

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# TABLE OF CONTENT

<b>TABLE OF CONTENT</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>MESSAGE FROM PARTNERS</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>GOVERNANCE CYCLE: KEY ELEMENTS AND PROCEDURES</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>ELEMENT 1: SHARED COOPERATION VALUES</b> .....	<b>4</b>
Why we should support Eco-Innovation? .....	4
ECOLABNET approach .....	5
Key element for sustainable ECOLABNET governance .....	6
<b>ELEMENT 2: NETWORK MANAGEMENT &amp; COMMUNICATION PROCEDURES</b> .....	<b>7</b>
Requirements for Internal Communication .....	8
Requirements for External communication .....	8
<b>ELEMENT 3: STRUCTURE OF THE NETWORK</b> .....	<b>11</b>
Needed membership & infrastructure to support the network.....	11
General requirements for potential members.....	12
Expertise requirements for potential members.....	13
<b>ELEMENT 4: MEMBERSHIP APPROVAL PROCESS</b> .....	<b>16</b>
<b>ELEMENT 5: NETWORK MONITORING PROCEDURES</b> .....	<b>18</b>
Membership termination and removal procedure.....	20
<b>ANNEX I: LEAFLET FOR POTENTIAL MEMBERS</b> .....	<b>21</b>

## MESSAGE FROM PARTNERS

ECOLABNET's governance model and action plan works as a main guide for the long-term sustainability of the network. Ecolabnet project partners from six Baltic Sea Region (BSR) countries aims to create a network of service providers to support development of eco-innovations among manufacturing small and medium sized enterprises (SME).

Therefore, the main objective of this document is to describe internal communication and management procedures to promote collaborative eco minded expert community. ECOLABNET partners and future community members will use this model to plan, prepare and manage joint collaboration initiatives and projects between Research, Development and Innovation (RDI) service providers, SMEs or intermediary organisations.

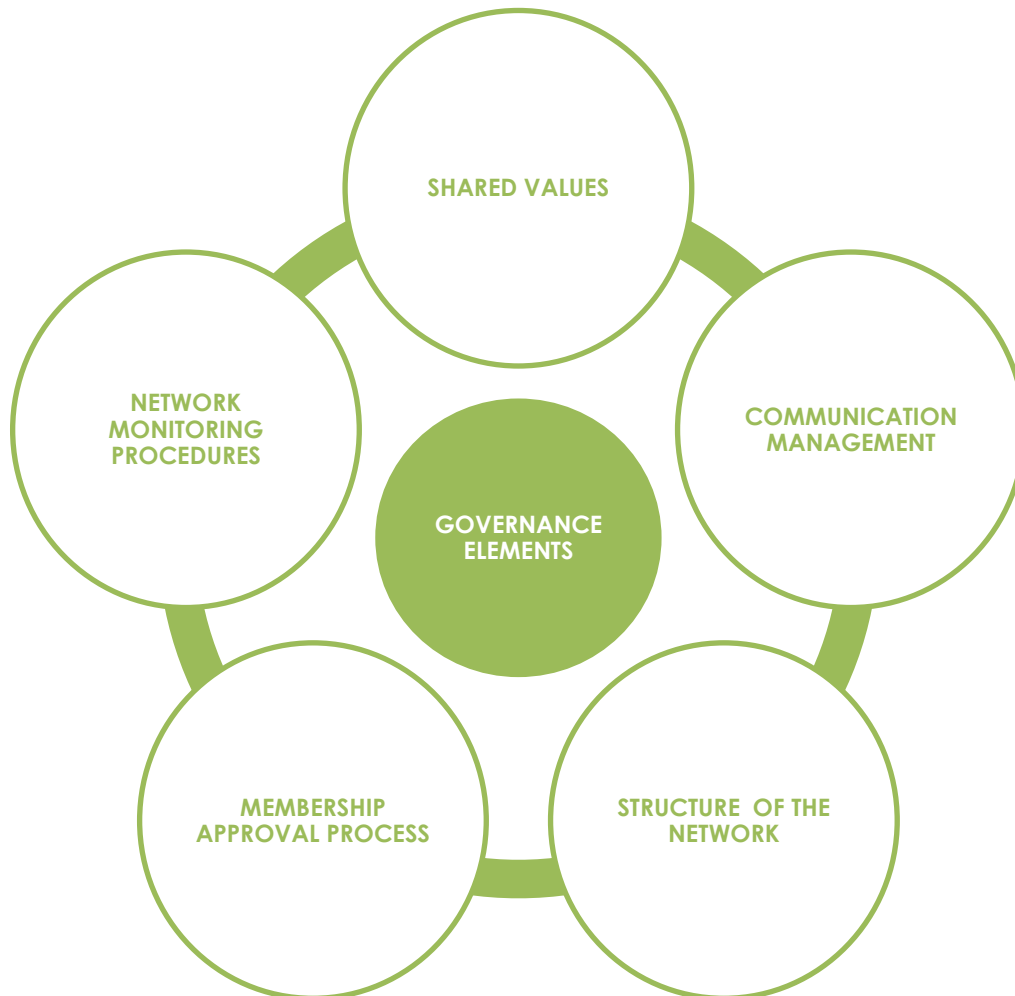
The governance model will be evaluated and updated regularly to ensure that networks activities and resources are aligned with the needs of its members. The success of ECOLABNET will depend on the active participation and collaboration of its members or relevant partners that will result in effective transfer of experience and knowledge.

# GOVERNANCE CYCLE: KEY ELEMENTS AND PROCEDURES

The circle of five inter-related ECOLABNET governance elements will be aimed to guide network towards successful practices. It will also help network to stay operational for upcoming five-year period, which starts after project ends.

Therefore, following cycle will assists the network to achieve such governance standards that will support long-term sustainability for ECOLABNET partnerships in Interreg Baltic Sea Region.

Moreover, these governance elements seek to describe a) possibilities to use opportunities provided by the ECOLABNET partnership and cooperation, b) as well as general procedures and documents required for successful membership management in different projects or services.



## ELEMENT 1: SHARED COOPERATION VALUES

### Why we should support Eco-Innovation?

The main vision of the "ECOLABNET" initiative is to create a network of service providers for supporting eco-innovations in manufacturing SMEs of Baltic Sea Region. In order to achieve the vision & mission of the "ECOLABNET" initiative we aim to:

- ✓ **Address** the problem of lack of a professional network to provide consulting services in eco-product development for SMEs in Baltic Sea Region. It will develop a network of professionals who will sell their expertise in eco-friendly manufacturing processes to the SMEs. RDI experts in the Baltic Sea Region provide the solutions in the network.
- ✓ **Increase** access to the knowledge of new product applications to the local SMEs in Baltic Sea Region. The aim is to change the delivery time for eco-innovations by providing access to knowledge network locally. At the same time, it aims to provide access to RDIs to local markets by offering a network for commercializing their expertise.
- ✓ **Apply** knowledge available in RDIs of Baltic Sea Region to the manufacturing SMEs to support their competitiveness. The current areas of expertise offered by RDIs in the network include additive manufacturing using bio-based materials, material testing for bio composites, product prototyping, product design, service design, life cycle analysis, eco-branding, business model development and scaling up support.

It is evident that the scale of expertise and infrastructures required in developing and commercializing eco-innovations is very broad, and SMEs need to complement their scarce resources. RDI actors, on the other hand, constantly study and develop new solutions, and possess high-level expertise and infrastructures. An active dialogue and cooperation between SMEs and RDI actors are needed for commercializing eco-innovations ideated by SMEs as well as transferring research findings into business. In addition, RDI actors need to find research areas significant in the future. In order to tackle the challenges and opportunities related to sustainability, companies and RDI actors need better collaboration practices and skills.

Therefore, Ecolabnet network will work to enable the development of a well-managed, multidisciplinary network, established and institutionalized practices and tools for collaborating between RDI actors, SMEs as the users of RDI infrastructures and their stakeholders such as business support associations. Here are the key strategic objectives that Ecolabnet seeks to address:

- ✓ Improve the capacity of SMEs in exploiting transnational competences and infrastructures in developing sustainable eco-innovations and launching them into market.
- ✓ Increase awareness about eco-innovations among SMEs and intermediary organizations in the Baltic Sea Region.
- ✓ Improve capabilities and practices of RDI experts to support SMEs in eco-innovation

## ECOLABNET approach

It is evident that the scale of expertise and infrastructures required in developing and commercializing eco-innovations is very broad, and SMEs need to complement their scarce resources. RDI actors, on the other hand, constantly study and develop new issues, and possess high-level expertise and infrastructures. An active dialogue and cooperation between SMEs and RDI actors are needed for commercializing eco-innovations ideated by SMEs as well as transferring research findings into business. In addition, RDI actors need to find research areas significant in the future and disseminate their findings and solutions efficiently to SMEs. In order to tackle the challenges and opportunities related to sustainability, companies and RDI actors need better collaboration practices and skills.

Therefore, Ecolabnet network will work to enable the development of a well-managed, multidisciplinary network, established and institutionalized practices and tools for collaborating between RDI actors, SMEs as the users of RDI infrastructures and their stakeholders such as business support associations. Here are the key goals that Ecolabnet seeks to address:

- ✓ **New partnerships** between Ecolabnet members will become more than just collaboration to develop sustainable eco-innovations. It is about promotion of equal responsibilities to reach the highest results that could not be accomplished independently. To reach this goal, the network will involve multidisciplinary actors from public and private sectors, which operate at regional, national, and international levels: universities, enterprises, and intermediary organisations in order to support cross-sectoral and multilevel approach. Established network will aim at efficient and engaging progress.
- ✓ **Improved cooperation capabilities:** ECOLABNET will strengthen collaboration between RDI facilities, intermediary organisations, and SMEs across the countries of BSR by creating understanding about the needs of both private and public actors. The project will increase knowledge about transnational collaboration, the special competences and facilities required in sustainable innovation as well as creating practices for developing sustainable innovations with RDI facilities, intermediary organisations, and SMEs
- ✓ **Improved capabilities for sustainable eco-innovation** development and commercialisation among manufacturing SMEs. Cross-sectoral and multilevel approach will boost close collaboration opportunities between intermediary actors, SMEs and RDIs that will end up in development of several practical solutions to foster innovation uptake by SMEs. In addition, network will encourage experimentation with new sustainable approaches, which will be tested in practice through pilot cases supported by RDI members.

## Key element for sustainable ECOLABNET governance

In order to meet Ecolabnet's vision, governance arrangements and structural rules must be aligned. This cooperation framework is designed to define accountability of all members in a practical way throughout common business and cooperation practices. It is intended that this framework will assist partners to understand and apply the principles of good cooperation and assess the strengths of existing collaboration practices in various activities.

Considering the principles that guide good governance, this framework is influenced by the following principles, as outlined by the Ecolabnet partners:

- ✓ **Transparency:** being clear and unambiguous about the organisation's structure, operations, and performance, both externally and internally, and maintaining a genuine dialogue with, and providing insight to, legitimate stakeholders and the market generally.
- ✓ **Accountability:** ensuring that there is clarity of decision-making within the partnership, with processes in place to ensure that the right people have the right authority for the partner to make effective and efficient decisions, with appropriate consequences for failures to follow those processes.
- ✓ **Integrity:** developing and maintaining a culture committed to professional relationship and compliance with the national law.
- ✓ **Member-Driven Decisions:** Incorporating network members' needs into decisions for network services along with articulating network value as seen specifically through marketing efforts.
- ✓ **Effective Communication:** Intentional communication with members, partners, and stakeholders.
- ✓ **Continuous Improvement:** Consistent use of process improvement tools and techniques, systematize review of procedures to ensure effective process, and valued network services.

Transparent and constantly growing international cooperation will create unquestioned value for supporting SMEs in their sustainable innovations. SMEs in the Baltic Sea region lack RDI resources and special expertise, which the RDI infrastructures possess. The network, the ways of collaboration and collaboration concepts will create access to the resources from different countries to execute above mentioned principles. Therefore, all network members will work to boost sustainable innovation at a concrete level in well-managed and well-functioning chain.



## ELEMENT 2: NETWORK MANAGEMENT & COMMUNICATION PROCEDURES

**Change oriented and sustainable management** of international Ecolabnet community will be a collective activity. Therefore, current project team have decided to ensure that Ecolabnet network (as a member-based network) will be managed by it's own members. This way network will be lean, simple, and straightforward. Moreover, each member will have an opportunity to contribute to Ecolabnet development.

All established activities and procedures will be managed by two Ecolabnet member called *The President of the network* that will be selected every 12 months by the initiating project team.

Vice president of the network will be selected if needed to support the president and help to reach common project goals.

Selection of each new Presidency will be based on:

- a) voluntary choice expressed by the member (the experience and motivation should be presented to all members).
- b) delegation principle by the former Presidency (former Presidency must ensure the continuity of network governance and expansion).
- c) majority voting procedure (during a yearly international event).

This step should be implemented before the new year – period. Every new *Presidency* will manage the network with support of the project team for at least one year period.

Rotation will be based on potential and capability of the member. This mechanism will provide network with new perspectives and tools to improve network performance. Diverse management team will benefit the network by:

- ✓ Supporting internal collaboration & attracting new members.
- ✓ Promoting new communication opportunities and channels.
- ✓ Providing fast and direct feedback from members.
- ✓ Changing the community based on new needs.

List of potential *Presidency* (for first 5 years) will be made in advance until the end of the project. After 5 years period, the next 5 years will be planned based on gained knowledge and lessons learned in order to refine offered services and increase networks value. *List of potential Presidency is provided in Annex I.*

### **Specific tasks for each Presidency:**

1. Organize & host one yearly international network meeting / conference (online) or experience exchange sessions (lasting at least 3 hours) based on Ecolabnet guidelines for meeting places and key requirements specified in this document.
2. Support Ecolabnet project team in various network expansion activities and help to involve at least 2 new members into DCT tool (RDI service providers, intermediary actors) yearly.
3. Provide expertise and support for Ecolabnet's editorial board by participating in their yearly events and encouraging network members to provide relevant communication content.
4. Conduct project monitoring and evaluation survey based on "ELEMENT 5: NETWORK MONITORING PROCEDURES" of this document (recommended).

**Successful internal collaboration** of members will also be supported by constant promotion of their services and achievements in eco-innovation development. Therefore, acting *Presidents of the network together with* Ecolabnet team will continually remind it's members about the benefits that network offers.

It will be achieved via yearly meetings (online conference or network meetups), where all members will have an opportunity to tell their stories within eco-innovation. Such meetings are also important because members need to have an opportunity to network with each other and access specialized and/or current information within their field of interests. It will be up to each *Presidency* to use Ecolabnet guidelines for meeting places and organise as well as host such events.

### **Requirements for Internal Communication**

Both internal and external communication procedures are very important for Ecolabnet's long-term sustainability and successful share of knowledge between network members. Therefore, all communication activities will be aimed to raise awareness about eco-innovations and this transnational network. The objectives for Ecolabnet's communication procedures are the following:

- ✓ Increase awareness among SMEs in Baltic regions about eco-innovation in manufacturing.
- ✓ Create an image of a helpful and professional group of experts in Baltic region.
- ✓ Promote possibilities to sell eco-innovation services.
- ✓ Reach out for new members who would be willing to join the network and share their expertise.

The internal communication procedures will be intended to promote smooth and efficient communication between network team. Therefore, all assigned team members will have to ensure successful share of knowledge to the network in their own countries. *It will be up to project team and the Presidency to promote all communication activities (both internal and external).*

All internal communication between network will be conducted through written (e-mails) or physical procedures and meetings when needed. Microsoft Teams will be used to archive all document for internal use, access to MS Teams is granted by MUOVA.

Network team will meet once in a year through Microsoft Meetings to follow up network's status.

## **Requirements for External communication**

External communication procedures cover communication with network service providers and potential target groups. Three key components will be used to promote successful communication and cooperation activities between network members: 1) Web & LinkedIn platform, 2) Digital Collaboration Tool 3) representative events and thematic meetings.

### **1. Internet platforms: Website and LinkedIn**

Internet platforms (<https://ecolabnet.org/>, <https://www.linkedin.com/groups/8773874/>) will be used to share information regarding activities and innovative services provided by the members. It will promote a dialog with users via specific communication material such as:

- ✓ News, blog posts & success stories related to network activities.
- ✓ Descriptions of services that the network offers to SMEs.
- ✓ Details about existing partners and possibilities to join the network.

The external communication procedures intend to promote smooth and efficient communication with Ecolabnet members. Therefore, all project team members will assign their representative to editorial board. All editorial board members will select one leading member that will be responsible for hosting yearly online meeting in order to set the goals on communication activities and ensure successful share of knowledge (research & development information, success & interesting stories) to the network community.

- It will be up to each editorial board member to provide relevant content to the project team.
- It will be up to leading editorial board member to remind partners about the deadlines (it can be done via digitalized solutions and virtual calendars).

## **EDITORIAL BOARD:**

### Targets:

- ✓ Increase knowledge exchange concerning sustainable innovations in BSR.
- ✓ Ensure the quality on publications and decentralises Ecolabnet communication scheme.

### Scope:

- ✓ Ecolabnet webpages (blog, articles, events, etc.).
- ✓ Ecolabnet LinkedIn pages.

### Role & tasks:

- ✓ Review blogs and articles and accept publishing.
- ✓ Advice and support authors regarding Ecolabnet operations, and content.
- ✓ Identify publication topics and attract writers.
- ✓ Market/promote Ecolabnet.

An up-to-date online archive of resources (E.g., eco-initiatives, tools, and technical solutions) will be open for all new and potential Ecolabnet members. Therefore, editorial board members will provide needed communication material based on information gathered from members in every country.

## 2. Sustainable digital collaboration tool

An open-nature WEB 4.0 application consists out of two layers of functions: Layer 1 – Communication and Layer 2 – Ecolabnet knowledge repository. The communication layer will provide users with a possibility to use real-time multimedia communication tools online and offline. Platform for Digital Exchange will provide partners with an opportunity to know more information about specific Ecolabnet member: *RDI facilities -> Services -> Target markets -> Activity profiles -> Potential customers -> Eco-innovative technologies.*

## 3. Public events and thematic meetings

Yearly public international events or roundtables as well as other thematic meetings on several topics with SMEs, intermediary organisations and RDI actors should be held once a year to boost Ecolabnet expertise. Thematic meetings should be based on specific needs of the members. Ideas for such events should be gathered based on short surveys or discussions within the network. Physical and virtual events are used to implement the strategic aims of the network.

## ELEMENT 3: STRUCTURE OF THE NETWORK

### Needed membership & infrastructure to support the network

Ecolabnet aims to create a network of service providers that can support and guide eco-innovation development in manufacturing SMEs.

This vision will always have few barriers and challenges faced by the members such as *lack of capital, specific knowledge & external experience or even uncertainty about the market needs*. This conclusion was made based on internal and external reports carried out by the project team.

However, these challenges could be solved with the right expertise and infrastructure. Therefore, it is important to ensure a diversity of highly motivated companies as well as business support organisations within the network during upcoming five-year period. It is also important to ensure that all potential members will share a common interest to exchange knowledge, resource or best practices and promote sustainable eco-innovation development within the network.

To support sustainability and long-lasting collaboration opportunities for the network various type of members (Non-profit & for-profit) should be attracted by all participating countries. We classify potential members and eligible organizations as follows:

- ✓ **Small & Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) & other companies**, which seeks to promote development and commercialization of sustainable eco-innovation and services.
- ✓ **Start-ups, start-up accelerators, business angels, hubs** that seek transnational cooperation opportunities between actors in various industries, to support sustainable innovation (both financially and practically). This type of partnership could encourage closer cooperation between RDI actors and SMEs, spin-offs etc.
- ✓ **Intermediary organisations (IO's), trade unions, business associations, public & private sector business support agencies**, which have a key role in creating a strong and long-lasting connection with SMES and disseminating the results in BSR countries. Intermediate stakeholders could support direct funding opportunities and provide non-monetary contributions (technical or financial support, promotion of existing or future grant opportunities, knowledge sharing and services, human resource, etc.).
- ✓ **Cluster networks & Consortium organizations** formed to achieve specific, common one-time goals and projects (it may be formed in order to access grants in BRS region as well). These are also groups of organizations formed to achieve a common network goals in eco-innovation development. Their purpose is often to improve advocacy, mutual learning, and information exchange among member organizations in BSR region.
- ✓ **Research, Development and Innovation Institutions (RDI's): independent and academic (such as universities)**, which have an aim to support SMEs in commercialization of eco-innovations and promote knowledge transfer of various research findings into business. Universities, RDI actors and science parks should be encouraged to join the network because they can also

promote development of eco minded spin-offs and projects for current members. They will also provide better linkages with industry (main revenue stream).

Ecolabnet partners may reach formal agreements with the aim of achieving common objectives through different forms of contribution (financial, technical, knowledge sharing and services, human resources, etc.).

Ecolabnet network members may also build partnerships with any of the aforementioned types of organizations, and these partnerships may be categorized as follows:

- ✓ **Strategic Partnerships**, which seeks to establish a formal collaboration agreement with the aim of achieving Ecolabnet strategic objectives in the medium to long term. The relationship is formalized through a multi-annual Memorandum of Understanding or Agreement (written in a free form and approved by Ecolabnet network partners) and may involve diverse forms of contribution (financial, technical, knowledge sharing or services, human resources, etc.).
- ✓ **Project/Program/Activity/Initiative Partnerships** which seeks to establish a formal (more often short-term) agreements, with the aim of achieving specific Ecolabnet objectives through different forms of contribution (financial, technical, knowledge sharing or services, human resources, etc.).

## **General requirements for potential members**

There are different requirements that every potential member in Ecolabnet network should be asked to meet. Here are the main aspects that should be introduced to every potential member:

- a) Ensure visibility & correct contact info in DCT, Ecolabnet web & LinkedIn platforms. Each member should be visible and approachable. Therefore, clear contact information is a must.
- b) Nominate dedicated person in the organisation. As a part of a network each member should nominate a contact person that will handle Ecolabnet work. Especially when specific services are offered via Ecolabnet tools.
- c) Define approach to SMEs and eco-innovation development. Every member must have a clear and practical approach to SMEs problem solving (via services) or willingness to seek change in eco-innovation via product development. This will ensure a strong position of the network.
- d) Promotion of expertise. Each member should have a clear capacity and competences within specific area. Only then promotion of professional knowledge, services(via newsletters, blogs, events, projects) will be ensured and Ecolabnet goals met.

Key requirements for potential members can also be found in Ecolabnet's "Statement of commitment" form and DCT tool.

## Expertise requirements for potential members

Based on the needs of SMEs, intermediary organisations and other relevant organisations main expertise requirements for ECOLABNET network to provide services were identified. These requirements crystallize the main competences that potential members in the network should have. Therefore, specific expertise should be evaluated before any new memberships should be approved. The requirements also act as a framework to search and approach new members to join the Ecolabnet as well as inform them about the level of expertise needed in specific areas.

This way a high-quality of RDI infrastructures and services required by the members will be ensured. Overview of expertise and set-up (for RDI's and IO's) that is required to be part of the network can be found **here: <https://padlet.com/trni1/rc5wpysy16wsdxsk>**

## Requirements for expertise in specific areas of services provided below:

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### Eco-innovation management

- General understanding in eco-innovations in product, production, or other business operations.
- Economic and technical feasibility of eco-innovation implementation.
- Project planning and implementation.
- Knowledge of financial sources for eco-innovation management.
- Technology transfer methodology Patent search.

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### Product and service design and prototyping

- Experience in applying product service system design in manufacturing industry.
- Product service system methodology.
- Methodology on product design for recycling.
- Product conceptualisation.
- Aesthetic, functional, and structural design of products.
- Consumer analysis.
- Design of products to be 3D printed.



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## Sustainable business development

- Circular business models and their use in industry.
- Circular value chain creation Environmentally sustainable supply chain development and management.
- Corporate responsibility strategies and their implementation.
- Market analysis expertise.
- Branding expertise Knowledge of business legislation.
- Customer reviews and relation building.
- Networks to provide services supporting eco-innovation implementation.
- Environmental accounting.
- Experience in stakeholder analysis development and risk assessment.
- Trend analysis.
- Marketing channels and marketing strategy.

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## Environmental Assessment of eco-innovation

- Experience in performing Life Cycle Assessment of defined functional unit.
- Experience in evaluation of life cycle costs.
- Evaluation of life cycle strategies for circular business, e.g. material recyclability.
- Materials efficiency audits.
- Energy efficiency audits.
- Renewable energy audits.
- Composability of plastics.
- Knowledge of environmental legislation and requirements for industry

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### Development of biobased materials

- Knowledge about bio-based polymers, biodegradable polymers, and bio-composites from renewable resources.
- Biobased chemicals and their use in polymer synthesis.
- Biobased material markets and new developments.
- Modification of polymer material properties for required applications.
- Infrastructure or well-functioning network with other laboratories to analyse biobased polymer materials and composites.
- Biobased composite manufacturing methods.

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### Additive manufacturing related services

- Infrastructure for thermal 3D printing research and services.
- Infrastructure for optical 3D printing research and services.
- 3D printing instrument development, coding, robotics.
- Knowledge of material and light interaction.
- Photosensitivity analysis capacity.

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### Other eco-innovations for industry

- Renewable energy solutions.
- Waste energy recycling solutions.
- Material recycling solutions.

## ELEMENT 4: MEMBERSHIP APPROVAL PROCESS

The approval process for new members to join Ecolabnet may be carried out by both in centralized and decentralized procedures done by current network members. However, it is necessary to ensure that all new memberships will be confirmed with official agreement (signed "Statement of commitment" form) between Ecolabnet network and companies that seek to provide specific eco minded services. Therefore, all new members should commit to the rules of membership specified in "SoC" form. Procedure for new Ecolabnet network membership approval process goes as follows:

### 1. Potential members approached by Ecolabnet team

New members can be approached by current members with the interest to promote organisations services. In this case specific member is responsible for a) guiding new potential members through networks joining procedures in DCT, b) sharing and gathering signed "Statement of commitment" form, and c) conforming membership status for new members.

- ✓ If no objections will occur until the "Statement of commitment" form is signed, the new members will be accepted to networks online tool and all needed information (specified in "Statement of commitment") will be provided to MUOVA in order to update members list on the website.

### 2. Ecolabnet can be approached by potential members via social media and web page (optional membership approval procedure)

New members can approach Ecolabnet network via its web page or national contact points that consist out of primary network members in each country. In this case specific contact points will evaluate if candidate has needed expertise, infrastructure, and competences. If candidate and provided services is eligible these national contact points will direct the candidate to DCT for further registration.

A national contact point will ensure successful entry into the network for all potential members. Therefore, each country will name two contact points, which will represent the network for upcoming year.

It is important to engage into constructive dialogue with every potential member (through joint meetings and project-site visits). Each member must address potential members with a key question which should be answered in above mentioned discussions

Recommended questions go as follows:

- ✓ Do we share a common vision for achieving Ecolabnet goals?
- ✓ Are our values, principles, work methodologies and infrastructures are compatible?
- ✓ Will this partnership give added value to our network?
- ✓ Will this partnership create a positive opportunity for future development of the network?
- ✓ Can our mutual expectations for new partnership be realistically met?

### 3. Potential members can register via Digital Collaboration Tool (DCT)

Self-test of conformity with the scope and the expertise of the Ecolabnet network can be executed by filling Ecolabnet's DCT registration and relevant eligibility forms. Potential members will:

- ✓ Fill initial registration form for verification (Step 1). Initial registration will be done through a simple form (Form includes - name and surname/name of organisation; email address; password; CAPTCHA).
- ✓ Fill user account registration form (Step 2). Aimed to categorise the expertise. After the verification phase and activation of the account the registration process is continued, which consists in filling in the user profile card. It will contain a series of fields that determine the status of the user, user classifier regarding eco-innovations, address details, contact details, activity profiling, offered services. Completed registration allows users to access all system features.
- ✓ Receive approval by the Ecolabnet network or relevant contact points.
- ✓ Be included in Ecolabnet's DCT tool and web page list of members.

Ecolabnet will offer free tools and knowledge for every member to commercialize and boost their services. However, it will be up to each member to decide which information about their services will be promoted through ECOLABNET. It will also be up to each member to decide how services can be promoted and valued (e.g., price of product, development of individual agreements or NDA between partners). It will be a matter of specific service provider that will be approached by the SME.

Therefore, Ecolabnet aim to automate as much of the network activities as possible to avoid maintenance costs. In addition, Ecolabnet seek to link network activities to existing structures and processes to decrease extra work. At the same time Ecolabnet aim to provide enough benefits for members to invest their efforts in networking activities.

### 4. Signed "Statement of commitment" form

Signed "Statement of commitment" form (hereafter Statement of commitment referred to as "SoC"). The form of commitment is designed to be a statement of a new member's intent to participation in the Ecolabnet Network and to acknowledge the objectives that the members of the Ecolabnet aspire to meet. By signing SoC all members will assure to promote network goals. Benefits of the network and form for "Statement of commitment" is provided in Annex II.

## ELEMENT 5: NETWORK MONITORING PROCEDURES

Following recommendations and network monitoring procedures are consistent with its commitment to create sustainable network of service providers that could support eco-innovations development in Baltic Sea Region countries.

All following recommendations are practically designed to support and enhance Ecolabnet objectives. They are associated with the development of high-quality services that will be promoted and via Ecolabnet channels. Network monitoring procedures will be aimed to:

- ✓ Retain all members in the best possible way by evaluating their needs in advance (by talking or surveying all current members).
- ✓ Measure network effectiveness and gather feedback.
- ✓ Achieve independent and sustainable structure of international stakeholders.
- ✓ Reinforce the interests of public & private companies to seek professional support for eco-innovation development in their countries.
- ✓ Foster the development of high-quality services that respond to Ecolabnet community need.

### Why monitoring and evaluation of members (performance and services) is important?

**Monitoring** process in the Ecolabnet is the collection and analysis of information about the network members, network team performance and member needs.

**Evaluation** process should be understood as periodic (yearly), retrospective assessment of Ecolabnet cooperation activities. It can be done via already available online tools (e.g. Google Forms, SurveyMonkey etc.)

**Monitoring** and **evaluation** of members performance will ensure continuous development of the network. It will be done with the aim to inform all the network (specific members, project team and main stakeholders) about the progress achieved over the period or in specific tasks.

Constant monitoring and evaluation procedures will also provide an overview about Ecolabnet results (outputs, outcomes, and objectives within partnerships) and general benefits of the network. Gathered data and pre-determined indicators of members performance will be systematically collected and analysed by each partner country (selected from the project team) to track situation in the network. Results will be discussed in planned partners meetings.

Service quality indicators (developed in Digital Collaboration Tool) will provide Ecolabnet community with an opportunity to track the quality of services provided in the network. This kind of monitoring will involve simple gathering of data (during surveys) and day-to-day input provided by all members.

There are five key elements that should be taken into consideration during the monitoring and evaluation procedures: a) relevance, b) effectiveness, c) efficiency, d) impact done, e) sustainability.

Following table presents these elements as well as their definitions and a sample of questions that should be answered in relation to each.

Element and definition	Sample of questions that should be considered
<b>Relevance:</b> The extent to which the membership / services are consistent with Ecolabnet mission, members needs and priorities, expertise requirements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is/was the membership / services beneficial?</li> <li>• Do the membership / services address real problems and the roots/causes?</li> <li>• Does/did it help/ed to support SME's?</li> </ul>
<b>Effectiveness:</b> Level of cooperation in the network were achieved or are expected to be achieved (considering the importance of member / services).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To what extent are/were Ecolabnet mission and vision and general collaboration achieved?</li> </ul>
<b>Efficiency:</b> A measure of how membership / services are converted to results.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are/were membership / services used in the best possible way?</li> <li>• What can/could be done differently to improve the membership / services at an acceptable/lower cost?</li> </ul>
<b>Impact:</b> Positive and negative, primary, and secondary long-term effects produced by a member / services (directly or indirectly).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To what extent has the membership / services contributed towards the overall (long- term) objectives of the network?</li> </ul>
<b>Sustainability:</b> continuation of member / services towards sustainable eco-innovation development / support or assistance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Did the membership / services provide expertise to promote support for SMEs in sustainable eco-innovation development?</li> </ul>

### What should be monitored and evaluates during the process?

In order to track the status of the network and the needs of the members Ecolabnet team will track information and assess:

- ✓ What/if something has changed (both intended and unintended) in each member organisation or services by using ECOLABNET services.
- ✓ Main reasons for these changes - i.e. what factors/organisations/services have facilitated/constrained change (including Ecolabnet contribution or requirements);
- ✓ information to Interpret the changes i.e. members perceptions and experiences of change.

Information collected by Ecolabnet team might either be:

- ✓ Quantitative information expressed in numerical terms as numbers and ratios for example (collected during short progress and experience surveys). This information will allow network to answer 'what', 'how many' and 'when' questions.
- ✓ Qualitative information expressed through discussions (input from members collected during the events or 1to1 meetings). It can address questions about 'why' and 'how', as well as perceptions, attitudes and needs of members.
- ✓ General status of member needs (services & support) to promote the change in the future.

## Membership termination and removal procedure

Generally, membership can be terminated by the member affirmatively asking to be removed (e.g. Ecolabnet members may find that they are no longer willing to follow Ecolabnet requirements, promote their services or to be actively involved in network activities) a) due to the failure to follow Ecolabnet requirements, b) some quality standard of the network/ services, c) after series of negative results from monitoring, evaluation procedures or negative reviews in DCT, d) member have been convicted of misconduct and illegality or if the company has gone bankrupt whereby the project team takes an action to remove the member or services offered in the network.

In order to remove Ecolabnet member or services offered each country representative should contact project coordinator to review this decision and main reasons for it. Each membership termination decision should be supported & justified by project coordinator and project team.

Please contact the membership team at [ecolabnet@mailman.vamk.fi](mailto:ecolabnet@mailman.vamk.fi) if you have questions regarding the Ecolabnet network its governance model, tools, or action plan procedures.

**ANNEX I: LEAFLET FOR POTENTIAL MEMBERS**