

The Nordic Swan Ecolabel promotes circular economy

The Nordic Swan Ecolabel is an obvious tool for promoting circular economy - thus strengthening corporate competitiveness, enhancing corporate resource efficiency and contributing to the creation of new business models and innovative solutions.

The objective of the Nordic Swan Ecolabel is to reduce the overall environmental impact of consumption. This is why the whole product life cycle – from raw materials to production, use, disposal and recycling – is included in the assessment when the requirements for Nordic Swan Ecolabelled products are established. This is primarily done on the basis of the following six parameters:

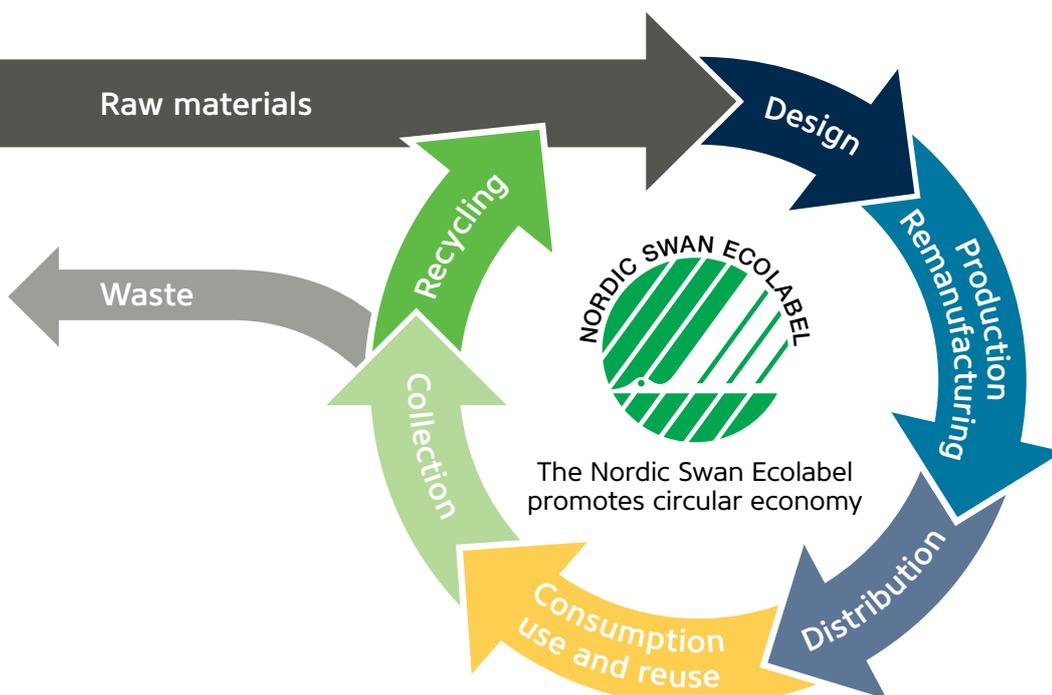
- 🔄 Requirements for renewable, recycled and sustainable raw materials
- 🔄 Strict chemical requirements
- 🔄 Reduced use of resources and energy
- 🔄 Quality requirements and lifetime
- 🔄 Requirements for product design, dismantling and reparability
- 🔄 Requirements for optimum waste handling

The Nordic Swan Ecolabel has a circular approach to the life cycle and this particular approach is a premise for circular economy. Because this means that focus is on how actions taken in one stage have a positive effect on several stages of the life cycle. And this means that you avoid moving a negative environmental impact to another stage of the life cycle.

Circular economy does not only mean focus on closed resource loops for the individual product system. Joint circular resource systems may also be the solution. The Nordic Swan Ecolabel shares this approach; for some products, joint circular resource systems will be more effective and will as such be preferable.

There are several ways to stimulate circular economy in the life cycle of the product or service. In general, it is important to focus on an efficient and sustainable use of resources and on safe materials without problematic chemicals, so they can be recycled.

The Nordic Swan Ecolabel makes the best possible use of society's current framework of circular economy. This means, among other things, that the starting point is the existing resource loops in the form of the approach to raw materials and waste management systems in the Nordic region. In this way, the Nordic Swan Ecolabel makes it easy and feasible for enterprises to help promote circular economy.



This is how the Nordic Swan Ecolabel stimulates circular economy



Requirements for renewable, recycled and sustainable raw materials

Positive effect on circular economy: The Nordic Swan Ecolabel places requirements on the use of renewable, recycled and sustainable raw materials where an environmental benefit can be obtained. Most often, the requirements are placed in relation to the choice of raw materials, but they may also be relevant for the use of resources in the production and use stages.

Examples from Nordic Swan Ecolabel requirements: For building panels and construction it is a requirement that at least 70% of the wood is certified sustainable wood. For single-use articles in contact with food products and for floors, it is a requirement that the share of renewable resources is high. For toner cartridges, remanufacturing is required. And for paper products, either recycled or certified wood fibres are required.



Strict chemical requirements

Positive effect on circular economy: The chemical requirements of the Nordic Swan Ecolabel are placed on chemicals used in materials and in finished products. This, among other things, reduces the environmental impact during production and the chemical exposure in the use stage. At the same time, the requirements support the possibility of reuse and recycling later in the life cycle.

Examples from Nordic Swan Ecolabel requirements: For construction, there are chemical requirements so that the choice of raw materials ensures clean materials that can be reused. There is a ban on phthalates in floors and in furniture, and there is a ban on halogenated flame retardants in textiles. In the case of toys, there are, among other things, strict requirements concerning additives in plastic materials.



Reduced use of resources and energy

Positive effect on circular economy: The resource and energy requirements of the Nordic Swan Ecolabel are typically made in the production and use stages where there is a potential for reducing consumption compared to normal.

Examples from Nordic Swan Ecolabel requirements: For the production of paper and building panels, there are requirements concerning a limited consumption of energy, for car wash installations, there are requirements concerning a limited water consumption, whereas for construction, there are requirements concerning low energy consumption in the use stage.



Quality requirements and lifetime

Positive effect on circular economy: The quality requirements of the Nordic Swan Ecolabel are to ensure that the product has the desired function and will have a long life. The requirements concern the design and production stages and will have an effect on how long the product remains in the use stage. Not only because the product will last longer before it becomes waste, but also because products of good quality more often are suitable for reuse.

Examples from Nordic Swan Ecolabel requirements: For furniture there are requirements concerning strength and durability, for textiles there are requirements concerning colour fastness and shrinkage – and for detergents there are requirements concerning washing efficiency.



Requirements for design, dismantling and repairability

Positive effect on circular economy: For relevant products the Nordic Swan Ecolabel places design requirements on dismantling and repairability. The requirements concern the design and production stages and enable a long life in the use stage as well as increased collection of materials for reuse in the waste stage.

Examples from Nordic Swan Ecolabel requirements: There are requirements that it has to be possible to upgrade a PC with more RAM and a new battery in the lifetime of the PC; whereas for office machines, spare parts have to be available during a period of five years after the time of purchase. For furniture there are requirements for metal and plastics to be easily dismantable and thus reusable.



Requirements for optimum waste handling

Positive effect on circular economy: Where there is controllability, the Nordic Swan Ecolabel requires that waste is limited and sorted. Where relevant, there are requirements for the design and production stages to ensure that the product is made from materials that are suitable for inclusion in a closed resource loop once the product is at the end of its useful life. At the same time, the material requirements will have an effect on the chemical exposure in the use stage. In the case of a service, requirements are made concerning waste sorting and limitation of residual waste.

Examples from Nordic Swan Ecolabel requirements: For shops, restaurants and canteens, a low level of unsorted waste is required. For cleaning services, there is a requirement for limited use of plastic bags per square metre. And for ecolabelled houses and flats, there is a requirement that waste can be sorted in a minimum of four fractions.