



Footwear environmental footprint category rules implementation and innovative green shoes eco-design and recycling.

LIFE GreenShoes4All project supports EU footwear companies in their green transition

Climate change and environmental degradation are existential global threats. These unprecedented years confirmed that the transition to a green economy is no longer optional. In the medium-term, all business activity will need to become sustainable, and the disruption of many traditional practices caused by COVID-19 will reshuffle consumption habits and will accelerate the green transition.

More and more companies are transforming their business models and shifting towards sustainable production, but they are facing a wide range of rules and labels which are not only slowing the process but are also confusing consumers which show more interest than ever before in purchasing green products and demand extensive information about where the products are made and about their environmental and social impact.

As part of the green transition and empowering consumers to make informed choices based on clear, transparent and harmonised information, the European Commission proposes the use of Product Environmental Category Rules (PEFCRs) on consumer products, which we presented in detail in our first project newsletter.

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Apparel and footwear are among the sectors selected by the European Commission for granting support and developing the PEFCRs, which shortly, could become a benchmark for measuring environmental performance for footwear products sold in the EU market and reducing the expansion of “green labels”.

In 2021, the consortium of the LIFE GreenShoes4All project co-funded by the European Commission “Footwear environmental footprint category rules implementation and innovative green shoes eco-design and recycling” continued working on the development of the PEF benchmark as well as promoting its great added value among footwear companies.

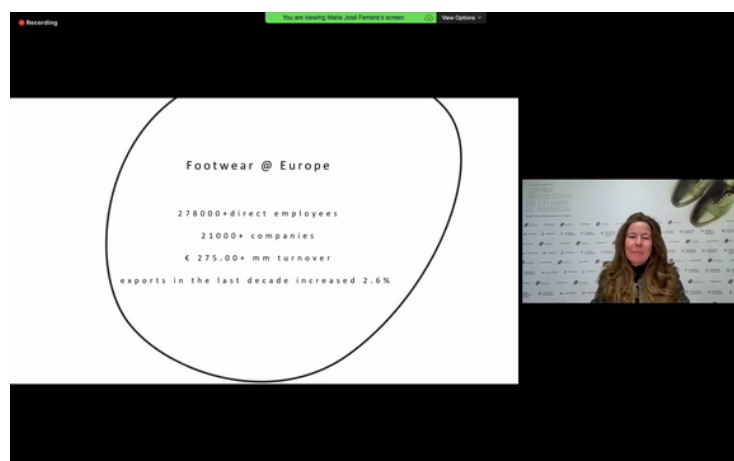
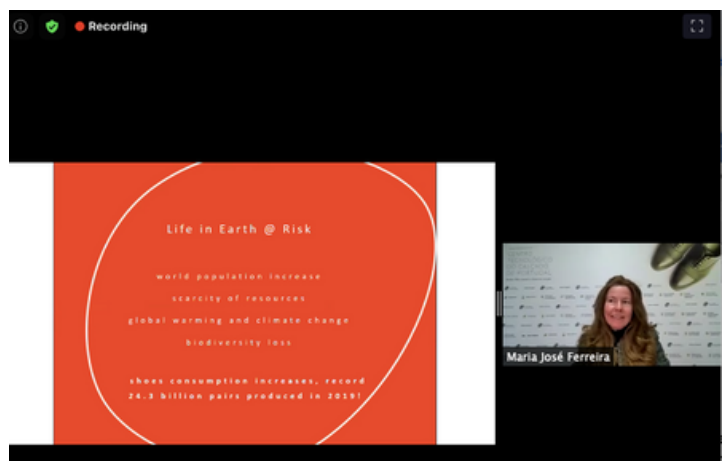
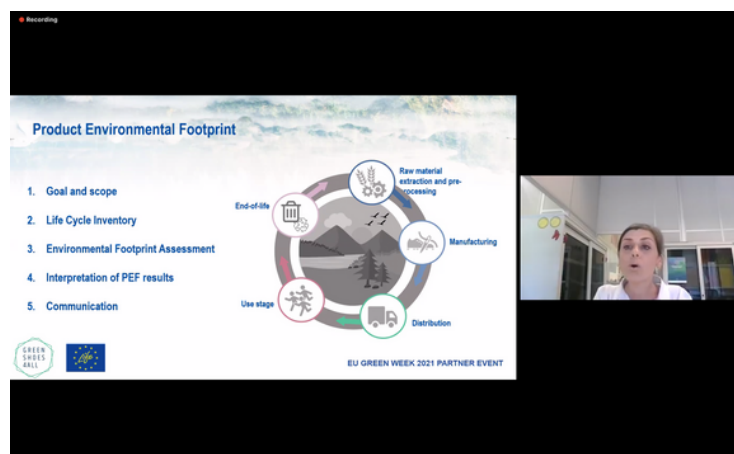
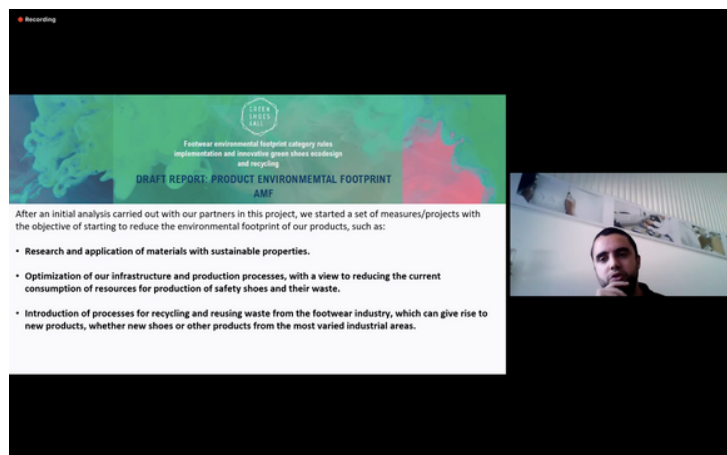
Ultimately, the project will support the European footwear industry in reducing the environmental impact of footwear products, the CO2 and other greenhouse gases emissions within the footwear sector, through the development of innovative eco-design concepts and eco-processes in view of obtaining performing shoes.

Helping footwear companies move towards a greener production

Project partners took the opportunity of the **EU Green Week 2021** to engage with the relevant stakeholders in the common goal of achieving "Zero Pollution for healthier people and planet". Intending to introduce the LIFE GreenShoes4All project and its outcomes, the consortium organised a successful webinar targeting EU footwear companies where relevant topics were addressed by experts in the field. The speakers explained the pathway to a greener production, what ways to achieve a lower PEF, the PEF estimation of certain footwear categories as well as the need to provide clarity for business and consumers. Representatives of footwear companies such as Atlanta and Evathink and Ecoalf shared their best sustainability practices and presented examples of polymers recycling, and high-quality products deployed by LIFE GreenShoes4All.

As a result of this event, over **150 attendees** learned:

- 1) How to implement a PEF methodology for footwear to make the environmental performance of their shoes easily measurable and communicable to consumers.
- 2) How to develop efficient eco-design, recycling and manufacturing solutions to obtain performing shoes with a lower PEF.





Product environmental footprint: latest news

The Product Environmental Footprint (PEF) methodology was implemented through the adoption of the European Commission **Recommendation on the use of common methods to measure and communicate the life cycle environmental performance of products and organisations** and the Communication **Building the Single Market for Green Products**. It aims to make the environmental impact of a finished product easy to understand, enabling consumers to make informed decisions when purchasing a new product. The PEF method uses life cycle assessment (LCA) data to evaluate the environmental impact of products.

A PEF is a measure of the environmental performance throughout a product's life-cycle that takes into account supply-chain activities (from the extraction of raw materials, through production and use, to final waste management). Moreover, the PEF is also about communicating about a product's environmental performance and making it possible for consumers to compare green claims made by manufacturers.

LIFE GreenShoes4All contributes to the roll-out of the PEF by being involved in the conduction of case studies. Project partners will be calculating the PEF of 30 representative European shoe styles. The calculations will contribute to creating a benchmark and will help formulate a set of recommendations and lessons learned that will be made available to footwear manufacturing companies. In this context, GreenShoes complements the work carried out by a Technical Secretariat (TS) comprised of European brands and industry associations and in charge of developing and implementing Product Environmental Footprint Category Rules (PEFCRs) for certain categories of apparel and footwear products.

How is the PEF initiative unfolding so far?

- In September 2021, the European Commission's consultation on the product environmental footprint for apparel and footwear ended. This public consultation phase, which opened in July 2021, was intended to provide an opportunity to TCLF stakeholders to comment on the methodology and to propose changes based on technical and scientific studies.
- The current step is the conduction of case studies from October 2021 to February 2022. More than 50 studies selected by the PEF Technical Secretariat will be conducted to test the PEFCR standard.



A comprehensive and updated Ecodesign guide for the footwear industry

Anticipating companies' needs and consumer expectations, the project partners have defined an ecodesign methodology and created a public Ecodesign Guide, available in several languages here. The document looks into 10 different Eco-design strategies and associated practical applications that provide guidance for every production stage starting from design strategies, material and components selection, production techniques to distribution, sale and recycling.

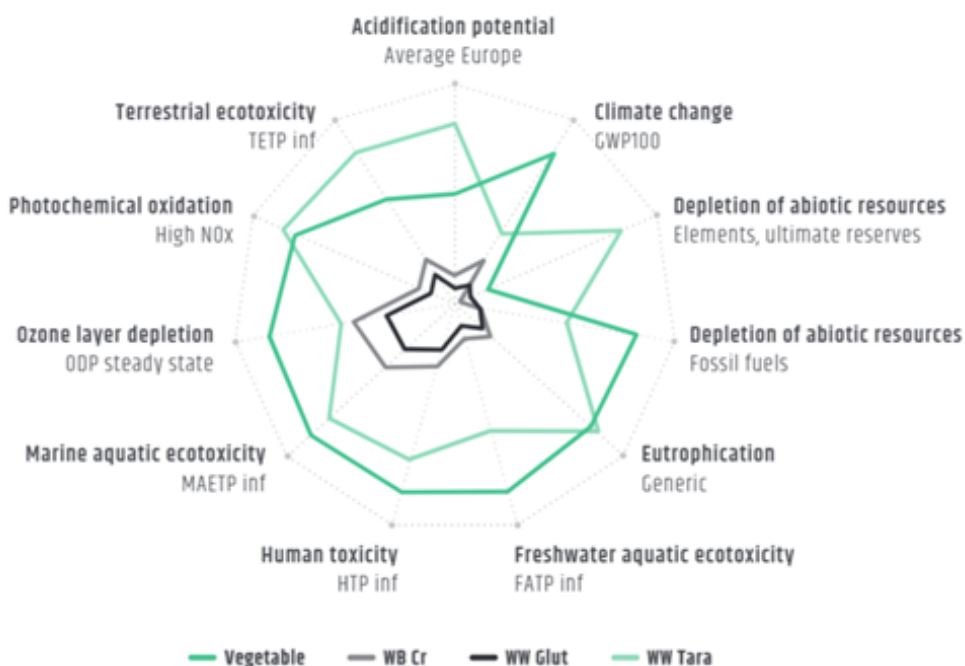
With this guide, the LIFE GreenShoes4All intends to help footwear companies to incorporate the environmental factor in their production process and create new avenues for economic growth while responding to consumers' demands.

Currently, several methods and tools of different complexity could support the implementation of ecodesign. However, the guide explains that it is essential to select the most suitable method/tool according to the type of product, the stage of the development process, the company's objectives, and the development team and resources allowed.

More precisely, the document will provide guidelines on developing new sustainable products, minimizing the environmental impact throughout the product's life cycle, without compromising performance, functionality, quality, safety, ergonomics and cost.

Leather

Leather can be a good choice of circular material, because it is natural, produced from a basic raw material derived from animal sources, a by-product of the meat industry, where all the skins used in the production of leather come from animals raised for food. Avoiding landfill deposition, in addition to being biodegradable and disintegrable, versatile, timeless, durable and repairable.



Reference: LIFE GreenShoes4All. 2021. *Ecodesign Guide for the Footwear Industry* - p.17

Impact of COVID-19 on consumption

The EU's immediate opportunity to support the EU industry in its recovery efforts. The EU Budget and *NextGenerationEU*, and notably the Recovery and Resilience Facility, are the most relevant tools to reinforce the commitment to the green and digital transition in times of crisis. The Commission carefully assessed the national recovery plans submitted by the EU Member States and will monitor their implementation to ensure in particular that at least 37% of funding is dedicated to green investments.

To best tailor the financial support, the Commission identified 14 industrial ecosystems mapping their different needs and challenges, footwear being included in the Textile ecosystem. While the green transformation represents a considerable opportunity for the footwear sector, the Commission recognises that the ecosystem mainly consists of SMEs, which require support to comply with sustainability requirements. The ecosystem has been hard hit by the shutdown of retail outlets. In 2020, textile, clothing, footwear and leather goods retail sales decreased by 24%. Digital and green business models and technologies placed companies that had already embraced this transition at an advantage compared to those that had not for different reasons. The rising levels of consumer awareness and demand for sustainable products show once more that the opportunity that needs to be leveraged.

This is confirmed by the 2020 Environmental and Sustainable Governance report which states that conscious product sales on a certain e-commerce platform grew 3.4 times faster than the marketplace average and represented over 5% of its total value of merchandise sold in 2020.

Forward-looking, the Commission underlines that the priority should be for sustainable investments for sustainable product design, production processes, investments to develop recycled materials, business models focused on resource efficiency and circularity.

Furthermore, COP26 has placed building resilience and adaptation to climate risks at the same level of importance with emissions reduction as a cornerstone of tackling climate change.

The European Central Bank predicts a worst-case scenario of a 10% drop in the EU GDP and a 30% rise in corporate defaults as a result of climate change. As the State of Fashion 2022 report underlines, the faster fashion companies build resilience, the better for employees, consumers and suppliers, and the greater competitive advantage established. The same report foresees that Increasingly, investors will scrutinise companies' climate resilience as they scrutinise decarbonisation efforts today and will expect companies to disclose their climate risk exposure.



Partners



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Footwear environmental footprint category rules
implementation and innovative green shoes ecodesign
and recycling

<https://www.greenshoes4all.eu/>

Contacts

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<https://www.ctcp.pt/>

Communication: European Footwear Confederation
www.cec-footwearindustry.eu



The LIFE programme is the EU's funding instrument for the environment and climate action created in 1992. The current funding period 2014-2020 has a budget of €3.4 billion.