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Harmonization of environmental performance criteria for electrical and electronic products – Feasibility study

INTERNATIONAL
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INTERNATIONAL ELECTROTECHNICAL COMMISSION

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HARMONIZATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE CRITERIA FOR ELECTRICAL AND ELECTRONIC PRODUCTS – FEASIBILITY STUDY

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IEC TR 63212, which is a Technical Report, has been prepared by IEC technical committee TC 111: Environmental standardization for electrical and electronic products and systems.

The text of this Technical Report is based on the following documents:

Draft TR	Report on voting
111/537/DTR	111/571/RVDTR

Full information on the voting for the approval of this Technical Report can be found in the report on voting indicated in the above table.

This document has been drafted in accordance with the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2.

The committee has decided that the contents of this document will remain unchanged until the stability date indicated on the IEC website under "http://webstore.iec.ch" in the data related to the specific document. At this date, the document will be

- reconfirmed,
- withdrawn,
- replaced by a revised edition, or
- amended.

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INTRODUCTION

Environmental issues have become more and more important globally, especially regarding the impact on ecosystems, climate change, energy and natural resource depletion and impact on human health. In the electrotechnical industry specifically, the exponential growth in the use of electronic devices is another key factor in the need to address the environmental issues with these devices.

The users of electrical and electronic equipment (EEE) products are becoming more aware of these emerging issues and the purchasing of products is no longer based only on preference or technical quality. There is a significant growth for governments, institutions and consumers to also base their decision on the environmental performance of such products.

In response to these trends, we are seeing exponential growth of policies and initiatives aiming to provide information to users about one or more aspects of the environmental performance of a product or service. This is often done through the creation of ecolabels that are bound to a certification procedure by the ecolabel operator. The exact meaning of such ecolabels and their criteria are not well understood by the users. Furthermore, the differences in definitions and certification requirements may hinder trans-regional trade.

Ecolabel programmes that cover a broad range of products operate in countries and regions around the world. Today over 80 ecolabels applying to EEE exist, all focusing on similar types of criteria, but often with slight differences in definitions, levels of ambitions associated with the criteria, and ways to show compliance.

This document assesses the feasibility to harmonize the criteria associated with environmental performance of EEE and provides recommendations. It also includes potential hurdles and challenges of such a harmonization.

This document contains the learnings and outcomes (geographical and eco-benefits) from the review of several prominent ecolabel standards. The conclusions and recommendations are also based on perspectives and opinions provided by outreach discussions with internal and external stakeholders, including ecolabel operators, government bodies, national standards development organizations.

It is important to note that a potential future standard on environmental performance criteria is not intended as an ecolabel standard but is intended to harmonize the criteria that are used for creating such an ecolabel standard. As such, the content of the harmonized criteria should be supportive to ecolabel operators (public or private) and product technical committees wishing to develop or revise an environmental performance standard for a specific product or product group, and is not intended to compete with or replace them.

HARMONIZATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE CRITERIA FOR ELECTRICAL AND ELECTRONIC PRODUCTS – FEASIBILITY STUDY

1 Scope

This document provides a feasibility assessment to determine if harmonization of environmental performance criteria is possible and would benefit the electrotechnical industry.

This document is intended as a feasibility study report rather than a standard. It reports the possibility/opportunity to harmonize environmental performance criteria and, with it, the feasibility for future development of an international standard on environmental performance criteria. The learnings and recommendations of this document are based on the review of a number of prominent ecolabel standards available worldwide as well as outreach discussions with internal and external stakeholders.

To enable users of this document to visualize and better evaluate what such a future standard could look like, a concept for an international standard on harmonized criteria for environmental performance assessment of electrotechnical products has been proposed in Clause 8. It is not intended as a final proposal but rather a vision of how such a standard would be structured and how it could be implemented to meet the specific requirements that were identified in the study.

Once again, it is important to emphasize that the potential IEC standard on environmental performance criteria is not intended as an ecolabel standard, but it is intended to be a means for harmonization of the criteria (including the verification requirements of them) that are needed for creating such an ecolabel standard.

2 Normative references

There are no normative references in this document.