

# Guiding principles behind the “Blue Angel” environmental label



As the first environmental label in the world, the Blue Angel started its ambitious path towards more sustainable purchasing in 1978 and has since been used to label products and services with proven environmental benefits. Its goal is to provide private customers, large institutional consumers and public sector purchasers with reliable guidance for environmentally-conscious purchasing. The Blue Angel is an impartial and voluntary product label that is independent of business interests. It allows companies to highlight their pioneering role in this area and also provides innovative and important impetus for developments in environmental policy. The Blue Angel has convinced many people since its introduction and is today a familiar label for 90 % of private consumers.

The environmental label identifies environmentally friendly products and services that also fulfil stringent requirements in the areas of health, occupational and consumer protection. The Blue Angel signals that products and services adhere to challenging environmental standards. It is a TYPE I environmental label, based on the DIN ISO 14024 international standard, and differs from TYPE II and TYPE III environmental labels due to its independent product testing and transparent processes for the development and award of the label.

Products marked with the environmental label are consumer-friendly, market relevant and ecologically innovative. They stand out from other products offered by competitors in each market segment thanks to their significant benefits for the environment.

90%

BRAND AWARENESS \*

Services are awarded the label when they have a significant impact on reducing the burden placed on the environment. Food is not covered by environmental labels. Other labelling systems such as organic certification (e.g. the Biosiegel) have been established for this purpose. Products and services that are highly contentious in society such as those with racist, violent or pornographic content are also excluded from using the label.

The [Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety \(BMU\)](#) is the owner of the Blue Angel environmental label. The [Federal Environmental Agency \(UBA\)](#) develops requirements (so-called Basic Award Criteria) for each specific product group based on economic studies, its own investigations and market research which act as the prerequisite for certification with the environmental label.

In the evaluation process, the Blue Angel takes a holistic view of the life cycle of the product and identifies all important areas relevant to the environment in which environmental pollution could be significantly reduced or even avoided. The Blue Angel focuses on the following key areas here:

- resource-conserving production (water, energy)
- preferential consideration of recycled materials e.g. for paper and plastic
- sustainable products made out of raw materials
- the avoidance of pollutants in products
- reduced emissions of harmful substances into the soil, air, water and indoor spaces
- reduction in noise and electromagnetic radiation
- efficient use and products that use a low level of energy or water
- durability, reparability and recyclability
- good fitness for use
- return systems and services that enable the common use of products such as car sharing

Newer Basic Award Criteria for the environmental label also include social aspects related to the manufacturing conditions, e.g. observance of the ILO fundamental labour standards.

The Blue Angel incorporates national and international labelling systems into the development of the criteria. It actively exchanges information with environmental label programmes in other countries in the [Global Ecolabelling Network \(GEN\)](#).

The experts at the UBA are also responsible for any updates that are required due to changes in technological standards and for periodic reviews of the criteria, sometimes in cooperation with other independent scientific institutions and experts, as well as in consultation with interested stakeholders. The latest Basic Award Criteria are freely available on the Internet in German and English.

All decisions concerning the Blue Angel environmental label are taken by an [independent jury](#) that is appointed by the Federal Environment Minister. The jury is comprised of representatives from all of the social groups that are relevant for the labelling of a product such as manufacturer and trade associations, environmental and consumer protection associations, academia, the media, churches and unions, as well representatives from two German federal states. The Environmental Label Jury is a voluntary body that acts autonomously. It takes decisions about new proposals, the Basic Award Criteria and their compliance verifications, the term of validity of the Basic Award Criteria and the benefits for the environment and health that are stated in the so-called explanatory box for the logo. In addition, the jury also participates in the public relations and marketing work for the environmental label.

The Blue Angel can be used by companies that verify their compliance with the defined requirements. [RAL gGmbH](#) is responsible for examining the applications submitted for products and services. If the application is approved, RAL gGmbH concludes contracts on the use of the Blue Angel with the companies.

Further information: [www.blauer-engel.de/en/](http://www.blauer-engel.de/en/)

