

ENVIRONMENTAL PRODUCT DECLARATIONS – EPDs

An important tool for the documentation of environmental properties

What is an Environmental Product Declaration or EPD?

An EPD, which is an abbreviation for Environmental Product Declaration, is a brief document whose objective is to sum up the environmental profile of a component, a finished product or a service in an objective standardised manner. The acronym EPD is an internationally recognised abbreviation used in both national as well as international contexts.

An EPD shall provide information about the environmental properties of a product and provide its users with the environmental information that they demand and desire. Standardised methods serve to ensure that environmental information provided for products within the same product category can be compared irrespective of region or country.

The contents of an Environmental Product Declaration is specified through Product Category Rules – PCR- (see below) that are based on Life Cycle Assessments (LCA) of environmental data from raw materials production, manufacture, use and disposal.

The demand for detailed environmental information from both consumers and the authorities is steadily increasing. Examples include the requirement for documentation of the characteristics of construction products laid down in §5-11 of the Technical Regulations under the Norwegian Planning and Building Act. Both nationally as well as internationally, there is a significant shift towards a more product-oriented environmental policy. This serves to lay down documentation requirements for a product's environmental impact throughout its entire lifecycle – requirements that are being met through the use of EPDs. An EPD is lifecycle-based, providing detailed overviews of the environmental aspects linked to specific products or services - from raw materials production, manufacture, use and disposal.

An Environmental Product Declaration is not an environmental label. It provides objective information about the environmental aspects of a product, but does not specify whether or not the relevant product complies with certain environmental requirements. This type of requirements must be stipulated by the users. The importance attached to the environmental by buyers and the level for these aspects could vary. The emphasis level attached to the various environmental aspects will depend on the purpose of the products, and an EPD is therefore particularly useful for products with multiple uses and products that are used for further processing.

Product Category Rules – PCR

In order for enterprises to be able to develop an EDP, Product Category Rules must be available for the relevant product category or service. Through a Lifecycle Assessment (LCA), the PCRs shall determine which substances and processes among others the relevant EPD shall include. This

ensures that the manufacturers will have to provide information on raw materials consumption, critical processes and emissions that has a significant environmental impact in relation to the relevant product. At the same time, it will become easier for consumers to compare the environmental properties of one or more products within the same product category.

In cases where an EPD has yet to be formulated either nationally or internationally, one needs to be developed by the manufacturer in collaboration with other manufacturers of products within the same product category. Currently, there is an on-going international effort relating to the development of a standard for PCR. Once this has been adopted (probably in 2010) the development of PCR are likely to become easier.

Information about the Norwegian EPD Foundation

The Norwegian EPD Foundation was established in 2002 by the Confederation of Norwegian Enterprise (NHO) and the Federation of Norwegian Building Industries (BNL). The reason for its establishment was an expressed desire from the Norwegian corporate sector relating to the development of credible, standardized and internationally valid Environmental Product Declarations for products and services.

The Norwegian EPD Foundation's task is to verify EPDs in accordance with the international standard ISO 14025 – Environmental Declarations Type III. In order for an EPD to be valid pursuant to the ISO 14025 Standard it must be verified by a neutral third party.

It is important to the corporate sector that all environmental information be provided in an objective, standardised fashion, and that the competitive conditions are equal for both Norwegian and foreign enterprises. The goal of the Norwegian EPD Foundation is for Environmental Product Declarations to be the preferred communications tool when exchanging environmental information about products and services across all sectors both nationally and internationally.

The Norwegian EPD Foundation collaborates with the leading international research institute SINTEF Building and Infrastructure, Ostfold Research Co. and the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) among others on the development of Product Category Rules (PCR). To the extent that the Foundation has financial means available, it also supports the development of Product Category Rules (PCR)

The Norwegian EPD Foundation is responsible for ensuring that Norwegian Product Category Rules (PCR) complies with the ISO 14025 Standard as well as ensuring that EPDs are developed in accordance with Product Category Rules – PCR.

Verification

The Norwegian EPD Foundation has a verification committee whose task is to ensure that the Foundation's guidelines relation to verifications of Environmental Declarations Type III is in compliance with ISO 14025 and that these guidelines are being adhered to when developing Environmental Product Declarations. The verification committee also approves Norwegian Product Category Rules- PCR. Corresponding verification committees are also found in other countries. All

EPDs that have been verified in accordance with the standard by another country are also valid in Norway (and vice versa).

Why choose ISO Environmental Declarations Type III?

If you:

- *Need transparent and quantitative environmental information for new markets and target groups*
- *Need an internationally recognised and common method*
- *Need a uniform format for presentation of environmental data*
- *Need a well-defined method to evaluate and document the environmental effects of your company's product development*

Financial information

The Norwegian EPD Foundation is a non-profit foundation whose revenues come from an annual fee for enterprises with EPDs that have been verified by the Norwegian EPD Foundation as well as a registration fee for each EPD with a period of validity of 3 years.

Current prices per 2010:

- Annual administration fee for each company NOK 8.000
- Registration fee for each EPD (for 5 years) NOK 10.000

Quantity discount:

- Producers pay NOK 10.000 registration fee for each EPD. If the same producer develop more than 10 EPD's, the price is NOK 1.000 for each EPD as from no. 11 and onwards. The registration fee is valid for 5 years. As mentioned above, the annual administration fee is NOK 8.000 for each company.

Further information and contact details:

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Or contact your regional/sectoral federation in the NHO.