



WORK PROGRAMME 2023

JANUARY 2023



CONTENTS

ABOUT ECOS 3

INTRODUCTION 4

HOW DO WE WORK? 5

MAKING STANDARDISATION WORK
FOR THE ENVIRONMENT 7

OUR ENVIRONMENTAL PRIORITIES 8



Clean energy

Smart & flexible systems to integrate
renewables 9



Sustainable products

Boosting reuse 12



Sustainable buildings

Starting with construction materials 15



Environmental transparency

Getting green claims right 17

OUR ENVIRONMENTAL WORK
AREAS & PROJECTS 20

ABOUT ECOS

ECOS, Environmental Coalition on Standards, is an international NGO with a network of members and experts advocating for environmentally friendly technical standards, policies and laws.

We ensure the environmental voice is heard when they are developed and drive change by providing expertise to policymakers and industry players, leading to the implementation of strong environmental principles.



INTRODUCTION

The UN's Emissions Gap Report 2022 could not be clearer: there is “no credible pathway to 1.5°C in place”. The time to make bold decisions for humanity and the planet is now, and we must waste no time in putting into place an ambitious pathway to transform how our societies and economies operate.

The climate emergency we live in, exacerbated by global political instability as well as the economic and inflationary crisis, highlights more than ever the insanity of continuing to use fossil fuels.

2023 will see momentum for ambitious political decisions, providing a window of opportunity to avoid a triple planetary crisis: climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss. We need fundamental, systemic changes to the way we consume and produce if we are to reduce the massive pressure we are placing on our planetary boundaries.

Solutions exist and are attainable – but we have no time to lose. Moving away from fossil fuels, greening industrial processes, making sustainable products the norm, and efficiently guiding consumers towards them – all of the above will set us on the path to climate neutrality, but also contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

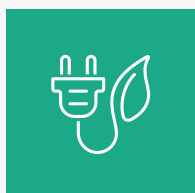
In 2023, ECOS will work towards these priorities, and our activities will be guided by two key principles: sufficiency and impact.

Sufficiency, because we need to drastically reduce the environmental footprint of our societies and start restoring nature.

Impact, because we strongly believe that environmental organisations such as ECOS must continue to strengthen their influence, including at national and international level, to bring us closer to real change.

As the only environmental NGO at the table where standards are developed, ECOS is perfectly placed to drive, define and assess how to drastically improve the environmental sustainability of key sectors and products. We will rely on our unique position and expertise to deliver on the green transition – one where environmentally ambitious policies are supported by robust standards, serving the environment, and protecting our planet.

In 2023, we will focus on the following environmental priority areas:



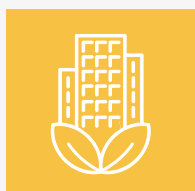
Clean energy

Smart & flexible systems to integrate renewables



Sustainable products

Boosting reuse



Sustainable buildings

Starting with construction materials



Environmental transparency

Getting green claims right

HOW DO WE WORK?

For over 20 years now, ECOS has worked towards a healthy and clean environment, protected by robust rules that respect nature and its resources. Representing a network of more than 50 members, we bring our environmental expertise and vision to European and international discussions.



Standardisation

We are the environmental voice in the standardisation system.



Policy & advocacy

We advocate for a high level of environmental ambition for major legislative developments.



Campaigns

We push for change to happen through numerous campaigns with members and partners.



In standardisation

- We represent the environmental voice in the standardisation system.
- We push for robustness and environmental ambition in the development of key standards.
- We advocate for the standardisation system to be as open and inclusive as possible, at all levels.
- At the regional level in Europe, we are recognised as an official partner. ECOS is one of the so-called 'Annex III organisations' recognised by the Standardisation Regulation.
- We advocate for the development of certain missing standards that can help the implementation of crucial environmental policies or innovations.
- We make sure standards and policy objectives are compatible, as well as that policy ambition is not undermined by decisions made at standardisation level.
- We raise awareness and interest in the standardisation work, fostering greater involvement of environmental NGOs in standards-making.

Did you know?

Standards can provide important definitions, determining, for example, how much biobased content a product should have to be called 'biobased', or what criteria are needed for packaging to be termed 'reusable'. They can also provide measurement methods that will facilitate the enforcement of policies, for instance on how to assess product reparability.



At policy level

- We bring our expert eye to push for a high level of environmental ambition for major legislative developments. We are there even before the legislative process starts, to help prepare the ground for discussion, and we closely follow the process all the way through to final decisions. Finally, we remain present for the implementation phase.
- Internationally, we cooperate with the United Nations, as a member of the One Planet Network and the UN-led Cool Coalition, and we actively collaborate with the Global Electronics Council's EPEAT ecolabel.
- We work with the EU institutions, particularly as a member of the European Commission's Ecodesign and Energy Labelling Consultation Forum, the High-Level Expert Group on Energy Intensive Industries, the CBAM expert group, the newly created High-Level Forum on European Standardisation and its Sherpa sub-group, as well as as an observer on the Committee on Standards.
- We are also part of key projects which help us meet our policy goals, such as the 3CO project or Sustcert, which looks at sustainability certification for biobased products.



Through campaigns

- With the support of our extensive network of members and partners, we push for change to happen.
- We run advocacy campaigns to call for certain measures or reorient others, be it on heating, sustainable products, plastic packaging or refrigeration standards. Nothing is too complex, or too technical – we translate difficult issues into engaging calls to action, motivating our audiences to support our work.
- We know that by joining forces with like-minded partners, we are maximising our impact, ensuring a cleaner environment for all.
- ECOS is active in a number of impactful alliances and campaigns, operating at international and regional level, such as the [Rethink Plastic alliance](#), [Break Free From Plastic](#), [Coolproducts](#), [Right to Repair](#), the [Cool Coalition](#), [Platform for Electromobility](#), [Coalition for Energy Savings](#), [Wardrobe Change](#), [Better Without Boilers](#), and the [One Planet Network](#), where we cooperate with other NGOs, progressive companies, and researchers.

“As an impact-driven international NGO, we push for change to happen, be it in standardisation, policy work or through campaigns.”



MAKING STANDARDISATION WORK FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

For over 20 years, ECOS has been working to ensure effective representation of the environment in standardisation. Beyond our efforts to improve the environmental ambition of standards, we have worked towards an inclusive and effective system, reinforcing the participation and rights of societal stakeholders.

Since 2001, strengthening the environmental voice in national, European and international standardisation has been a clear priority for our organisation.

Significant progress has been made at European level, notably with the release of a first-ever European Commission Strategy on Standardisation in February 2022. The Strategy brings focus and prioritisation for further standardisation work to enable a green and digital economy, while simultaneously seeking to strengthen aspects of the standardisation system for it to serve the public interest and promote sustainability. It also exposes necessary changes to the system in terms of ensuring a balanced representation of stakeholders in European, national and international standardisation.

In 2023, ECOS will continue to target inclusiveness of the standardisation processes as a fundamental overarching principle. We will:

- Develop increasing awareness and engagement among eNGOs in standardisation at national level, pursuing strategic environmental priorities.
- Increase our presence in key international standardisation organisations, engage leaders in these institutions to promote understanding of ECOS and the importance of facilitating access to environmental stakeholders, develop our influence on technical work related to the environment, and be an active contributor to the ISO London Declaration.

- Seek to build partnerships in regions, including with regional and sub-regional standards organisations, identifying opportunities to coordinate and drive standards and technical work programmes at national, regional or international level.
- Seek collaboration at national level on common environmental challenges, and as a pathway to reaching potential new members, experts, and partners.
- Pursue stronger relationships with international organisations, agencies and programmes related to the environment, deepening our understanding of their standards activities, and being open to opportunities for ECOS.
- Influence the implementation of the EU Strategy on Standardisation to ensure standards work for the environment by delivering an inclusive and strategic European Standardisation System in support of high environmental ambition.

“**Strengthening the environmental voice in standardisation is a clear priority for ECOS.**”

OUR ENVIRONMENTAL PRIORITIES

In 2023, we will focus on four priority areas, including:



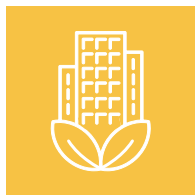
Clean energy

Smart & flexible systems to integrate renewables



Sustainable products

Boosting reuse



Sustainable buildings

Starting with construction materials



Environmental transparency

Getting green claims right

Our 2023 priorities will contribute to the attainment of the following Sustainable Development Goals:

3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION



7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY



11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES



12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION



13 CLIMATE ACTION



14 LIFE BELOW WATER



15 LIFE ON LAND



In this section, we will explore the crucial importance of these priorities for our environment, our objectives, and how we intend to deliver our work in these areas. A full list of our activities can be found in the comprehensive '[Our Work Areas](#)' section.



OUR ENVIRONMENTAL PRIORITIES

Clean energy



Smart & flexible systems to integrate renewables

Direct electrification for direct savings

The energy sector is undergoing rapid transformation, and its decarbonisation should be a top priority if we are to mitigate the climate emergency and end our dependency on fossil fuels, even more so in view of today's energy crisis. It is now apparent that direct electrification is much more efficient than fossil gas or indirect electricity use, for instance through hydrogen. Crucially, contrary to fossil gas, electricity can actually be produced from renewables.

Rolling out F-gas free heat pumps and electric vehicles is the most efficient way to decarbonise two extremely polluting sectors: heating and transport. However, it needs to be done smartly, to ensure electrification truly becomes a solution, and not part of the problem.

By 2030 we are expecting [145 million EVs](#) on the roads globally, of which more than half will be in Europe ([83 million](#)). At the same time, some 30 million new heat pumps will be installed in the [EU alone](#).

Towards a smarter future

For years now, ECOS has been highlighting the need for a truly renewable and efficient power grid to decarbonise the transport and heating sectors. This can be done by ensuring flexible energy use through smart heat pumps and smart charging of electric vehicles.

Thanks to such smart behaviour, EVs and heat pumps adapt to both user preferences and the conditions of the power system, secure the stability of the grid, and reduce renewable energy curtailment, at the same time allowing higher shares of renewable energy. This means EVs are charged and houses are heated when a large amount of renewable electricity is available, and electricity can be returned to the grid or building when needed.

Finally, storage systems for renewable electricity, such as sustainable batteries, need to support flexibility by providing energy when wind or solar power are not available. Given their central role in renewable electrification, it is important that batteries are circular by design, responsibly sourced and have the lowest carbon footprint possible.



145M EVs
expected on the roads
by **2030**



30M new heat pumps
expected in the EU by
2030



SF₆ has GHG potential
over **25 000** times
higher than CO₂



A clean grid for a clean planet

It is also of paramount importance to ensure that electricity grids are clean. At present, grid switchgear is commonly insulated by a gas called SF_6 , which prevents electrical discharges. Unfortunately, the use of SF_6 comes at a great environmental cost. It is the world's most potent greenhouse gas with a global warming potential 25,200 times higher than CO_2 . We emit some 8,000 tonnes of SF_6 every year, roughly equivalent to the CO_2 emissions of 100 million cars. All this while climate friendly alternatives exist – there is absolutely no reason to delay the SF_6 phase-out.

Hydrogen is not a silver bullet

Hydrogen, seen by many as the answer to our fossil fuel dependency, can indeed contribute to the integration of renewable energy – but only to a limited extent, and on a number of conditions. Namely, it must be produced from renewable electricity through electrolysis, and the production must be additional, or, in other words, it should not divert existing renewables away from other sectors. Hydrogen is a good solution for sectors where direct electrification is not possible, such as energy-intensive industries, aviation and shipping – but it is not a silver bullet, to be used in applications where alternatives readily exist.



“It is now apparent that direct electrification is much more efficient than fossil gas or indirect electricity use, for instance through hydrogen.





Our activities in 2023

- Work towards standardised communication protocols which foster smart charging of electric vehicles and smart energy management.
- Ensure a wide uptake of smart charging, notably through the implementation of the Battery Regulation and the European Commission Action Plan on digitalising the energy sector.
- Help boost the uptake of F-gas free heat pumps and phase out gas boilers thanks to the implementation of ambitious ecodesign and energy labelling regulations on heating products.
- Contribute to the revision of EN 16147 and EN 14825 – two pivotal standards aiming at aligning heat pump testing with real operation conditions and coherence between ecodesign regulations and EPBD, respectively.
- Influence political debates around the implementation of the Montreal Protocol, including the revision of the F-Gas Regulation in order to phase out SF₆, by providing knowledge on this relatively unknown issue in order to influence the legislation.
- Influence the implementation of the EU's Renewable Energy Directive and the Hydrogen and Gas Decarbonisation Package so that policy and standards ensure hydrogen is produced from renewable energy sources and that its renewable production is certified in a transparent and clear manner.

Alliances & campaigns





OUR ENVIRONMENTAL PRIORITIES

Sustainable products

Boosting reuse

Why the best products are reusable

It is clear that we need to redefine the way we design our products. Legislation, underpinned by environmentally ambitious standards, can and should stimulate design for durability, reusability, repairability and ultimately recyclability, in order to make circular and sustainable products the norm.

The situation is serious: the Earth Overshoot Day when 'humanity's demand for ecological resources and services in a given year exceeds what Earth can regenerate' falls earlier each year, with the demand for materials in the EU expected to double between 2010 and 2030.

While the 3R's – reduce, reuse, recycle – are common knowledge, few realise the importance of adding a fourth, and possibly the most important one: refuse. Limiting our consumption, and changing the established patterns will be crucial to achieving a climate neutral world. At the same time, it is vital to nuance that not all Rs are equally powerful. Closed-loop, high-quality [recycling does have](#)



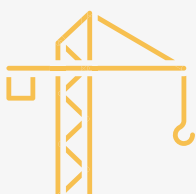
[a place in a circular economy](#), but reuse has significantly more potential to help keep us within planetary boundaries. By its very nature, reuse prevents waste generation, and drives down both emissions and resource use.

We need to dramatically limit the use of short-lived and disposable items, and choose reuse – now.

[Reuse is, in fact, at the very core of the circular economy](#) and needs to be mainstreamed. This is already happening for some single-use plastic items, which are increasingly

Did you know?

Today, the volume of reusable packaging is at its lowest level in history. Even in sectors where reuse once thrived, such as beverage bottles, it has been in gradual decline for the last decades. Most of the packaging produced is single-use, entailing a continuous growth in material use, including 40% of all plastics used for packaging only.



1/3 of EU waste comes from construction & demolition



Cement & steel account for **15%** of global emissions



2015 global plastics production for packaging amounted to
146 M TONNES

substituted with reusable alternatives – including thanks to the EU Single-Use Plastics Directive. We now – urgently – need to take things to the next level: reuse must become a reality in all sectors, be it packaging or construction products.

ECOS decides to choose reuse

In some sectors, such as packaging, systems which favour reuse already exist – deposit return schemes are established in many countries and can foster refill. They do not, however, operate at their full potential and so do not compete economically with single-use alternatives.

In other sectors, such as construction, reuse is non-existent due to a substantial lack of trust in the performance of used products, coupled with legal uncertainty linked to the responsibility of economic operators when it comes to reused construction products.

Proper regulatory requirements and incentives, such as reuse targets, a clear legal framework and ambitious standards could all give reusability the much-needed push to become mainstream, even in the less obvious sectors.

This is why in 2023 we will focus on ensuring that a robust policy and standardisation framework is developed to unlock the enormous potential and environmental benefits of reuse. It is time to develop and upscale toxic-free reuse systems, delivering a net reduction in primary raw material and product use.

“Limiting our consumption, and changing the established patterns will be crucial to achieving a climate neutral world.”



Our activities in 2023

For packaging

- Push for standards and policy solutions to ensure coherence and interoperability of reuse systems so as to maximise their environmental benefits.
- With the Rethink Plastic alliance, work towards mainstreaming and upscaling packaging reuse systems, through proper incentives in EU legislation and standards.
- Enhance our participation within CEN TC 261/SC4/WG7 on packaging reuse to ensure the standards developed within European Standards bodies support the objectives and targets of the new Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation.

For construction products

- Measure, communicate and streamline climate and environmental benefits of reuse, by proving its feasibility for key construction products value streams.
- Ensure the right interplay between standards under the Construction Products Regulation and regulatory requirements on reused construction products prompted by the alignment with the Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation.
- Ensure the Waste Framework Directive establishes ambitious targets for preparation for reuse of key waste streams, supported by the mandatory phase-in of pre-demolition audits and separate collection obligations.
- Work towards creating a level playing field between reused and primary construction products when it comes to their placing on the market.

Alliances & campaigns



One planet
handle with care



FAIR &
SUSTAINABLE
TEXTILES

EUROPEAN CIVIL SOCIETY STRATEGY



OUR ENVIRONMENTAL PRIORITIES

Sustainable buildings



Starting with construction materials

Buildings are responsible for just under 40% of all energy-related CO₂ emissions globally. To keep on track with our commitments to limit global warming to 2 degrees under the Paris Agreement, we need to decrease the whole life carbon emissions of buildings by 50% by 2030.

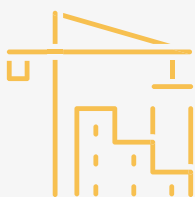
Whole life carbon emissions are not easy to tackle, but they are the only way to paint a true picture of a building's environmental impact. This means taking into account carbon emissions resulting from materials (including cement and steel), construction, and the use of a building over its entire life, as well as demolition and disposal.

It is evident that all these environmental impacts need to be urgently curbed, and yet legislation tends to focus on the use phase, such as the energy needed to heat, cool and power buildings, while completely neglecting their embodied carbon, that is to say emissions linked to materials and construction.

Addressing carbon emissions of buildings holistically is possible, and the answer is right in front of us: circularity. It can deliver a dramatic reduction in carbon emissions and

other environmental impacts. This can be done through minimising the use of primary raw materials and avoiding mining and sourcing, as well as reducing the demand for construction products from energy-intensive industries. In the case of cement and concrete for example, substituting clinker with alternative secondary raw materials can deliver 30-40% CO₂ reduction immediately.

“Addressing carbon emissions of buildings holistically is possible, and the answer is right in front of us: circularity. It can deliver a dramatic reduction in carbon and other environmental impacts.”



40% of energy-related CO₂ emissions globally come from **buildings**



We need to decrease whole life carbon emissions of buildings by **50%** by **2030**



Cement & concrete cause **8%** of global CO₂ emissions



Greening industrial production

A considerable share in building sustainability is linked to the emissions associated with the production of construction materials, and in particular those coming from energy-intensive industry sectors, such as cement and steel.

It is essential to urgently transform these sectors if we are to decarbonise our economy. Such transformation needs to include the development of clean renewable energy systems to power industrial production processes, as well as the mainstreaming of circular solutions to reduce the embodied carbon of materials.

ECOS works to facilitate the uptake of low carbon materials thanks to a favourable policy and standards framework. We also focus on ensuring the robustness of methodologies which underpin global decarbonisation efforts, both from the public and private sector.



Our activities in 2023

- Drive the development of Paris-aligned regulatory requirements and technical criteria to reduce whole life carbon emissions of buildings, including high impact intermediate products (cement, steel).
- Work to remove standardisation barriers to the wide uptake of low carbon alternatives, and advocate for an ambitious policy framework that improves the environmental sustainability of intermediate products, such as cement and steel, to gradually drive worst performers off the market.
- Engage with the private sector through our work on the global Science Based Targets Initiative (SBTi), where we seek to support a robust industry standard for Paris-aligned decarbonisation target-setting.
- Help establish regulatory requirements and standards for circularity at both building and construction product level to eliminate environmental impacts embodied in materials used and wasted by the sector.



OUR ENVIRONMENTAL PRIORITIES

Environmental transparency



Getting green claims right

I am green - but what does it mean?

Claims on the environmental performance of products and activities are proliferating. Sustainable products and processes, sustainable investments, green bonds, carbon neutral packaging... showcasing the environmental footprint has become a marketing strategy, regardless of how reliable or relevant the information actually is.

There is a great need to regulate these practices: legislation needs to be clear as to what can or cannot be claimed. Today, environmental information available to consumers ranges from robust claims backed up by legislation, to a variety of unsubstantiated, vague, irrelevant, misleading, or even factually wrong claims, self-awarded to products by manufacturers themselves.

Environmental transparency and the fight against greenwashing need to become a global policy priority – only this way will it actually serve its noble purpose of allowing sustainable choices.

The tide is turning

One region has already started looking into this. The EU is coming forward with a series of initiatives aiming at providing consumers, investors, and all actors across the value chain with reliable information to guide their decisions.

These initiatives will be finalised throughout 2023, all with significant potential to guide consumers and investors towards greener products and activities. Substantiating green claims, preventing greenwashing, guiding investors towards greener activities, requiring environmental disclosure from corporations, introducing products passports to centralise all relevant product information – these are all on the menu, and could ensure environmental transparency in the EU. However, the much-needed change is not yet a given: these initiatives can also simply maintain status quo if not sufficiently ambitious or enforced.



80% of webshops & ads contain green claims



ECOS study shows that **50%** of claims on plastic products could be misleading



56.8% of EU consumers shop with environment in mind



From barrier to enabler

Green claims will be on our radar throughout 2023: ranging from voluntary certificates to the Energy Label and the possible repair index, to the new digital product passport.

We will keep a close eye on carbon neutrality claims in particular, which are becoming a new trend. 'Zero-carbon' and 'climate neutral' certificates and labels can be particularly dangerous because they give the impression that consumers contribute to a low-carbon economy by purchasing new products, delaying effective climate action and allowing companies to perpetuate unsustainable business models.

This is especially problematic when businesses make future claims on long-term plans to reach neutrality. For example, Carrefour set a carbon neutrality objective by 2040, [but it actually covers only 2% of its total emissions](#).

While the role of consumers in the green transition should not be neglected, companies should not be allowed to mislead them with unverified green claims. Beyond consumer choice, strong regulations on claims, coupled with information requirements, will prevent

companies from employing marketing strategies to hide the true impact of their products, and will incentivise the development of a more sustainable offer to consumers.

Finally, in 2023, we expect a breakthrough in how corporations will be required to report their circularity performance, thanks to the adoption of European-wide sustainability reporting standards. ECOS will help draft these standards.

Environmental transparency and the fight against greenwashing need to become a global policy priority – only this way will it actually serve its noble purpose of allowing sustainable choices.





Our activities in 2023

- Push policy makers to adopt strong rules to effectively ban greenwashing and ensure all green claims are duly substantiated.
- Push to strictly regulate climate neutrality claims and contribute to the establishment of solid rules through our participation in ISO discussions.
- Support the adoption of corporate reporting standards, which require companies to report their progress towards a circular economy.
- Support an ambitious implementation of the Digital Passport across all sectors.
- Advocate for the improvement of frameworks tracking 'green' investments.
- Provide guidance to voluntary sustainability certification schemes on how to measure their environmental impact.

Alliances & campaigns



Projects



OUR ENVIRONMENTAL WORK AREAS & PROJECTS

In addition to our carefully selected priorities, in 2023 we will work on a broad range of necessary environmental areas. You will find an overview of these below.



In 2023, we will also contribute to a number of projects, whose objectives support our environmental work, including:



ENVIRONMENTAL COALITION ON STANDARDS

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