

A close-up photograph of a hand holding a piece of green fabric. A white label is attached to the fabric, featuring the text 'GRÜNER KNOPF' in large, bold, black letters. The letter 'O' in 'KNOPF' is replaced by a green button icon. Below this, in smaller black text, it reads 'SOZIAL. ÖKOLOGISCH. STAATLICH. UNABHÄNGIG ZERTIFIZIERT.' The background is a soft-focus green fabric.

**GRÜNER
KNOPF**

SOZIAL. ÖKOLOGISCH. STAATLICH.
UNABHÄNGIG ZERTIFIZIERT.

The Green Button and how to obtain it

Information package for interested companies

www.gruener-knopf.de

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Dear readers,

The German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) launched the Grüner Knopf (hereafter: Green Button) initiative in September 2019. As the first government-run certification label for socially and environmentally sustainable textiles, the Green Button makes it easier for consumers to pay attention to sustainability when purchasing textiles. Some 27 companies offered certified Green Button products at the outset, ranging from small pioneers of sustainability and more familiar medium-sized companies, through to large international corporations. Since then, a growing number of companies have been undergoing the certification process and getting their products certified. Today, the Green Button can be seen regularly on catwalks and in wardrobes, in football stadiums, hospitals and hotels. It is already possible to clothe yourself from head to toe in Green Button apparel. Now we need to win over even more people to the cause and to enhance the visibility of sustainable textiles still further. We would be very happy if you join us on this journey.

In this document, we have gathered some important information about the Green Button and what you have to do to obtain certification. Please contact us if you have any questions.

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General information about the Green Button

What is the Green Button?

The Green Button is a government-run certification label. It certifies socially and environmentally manufactured textiles sold by responsible companies.

Who is behind the Green Button certification scheme?

The German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) owns the Green Button certification scheme. It stipulates the criteria and requirements for Green Button certification.

The Green Button office is the central contact point for all involved. It coordinates and supports the activities of the certification label owner, the issuing body, the expert advisory council and the certification offices.

The issuing body, represented by RAL gGmbH, assists companies interested in applying for a Green Button licence and supports them through the subsequent certification process. It also conducts an initial eligibility assessment and is responsible for managing the Green Button logo and licences.

Which companies can apply for Green Button certification?

The Green Button label is open to all companies producing and/or selling textiles. This includes manufacturing companies and those that sell third-party products under their own brand name. The scheme is not open to companies that merely act as agents for third-party products. For any questions concerning eligibility, please feel free to contact the issuing body.

What standards does the Green Button certification require of companies and products?

As the first government-run certification label, the Green Button imposes requirements both on the product (e.g. a pair of jeans or a bed sheet) and on the company. All products must fulfil 26 social and environmental criteria. Recognised and reliable certification labels that already exist are used to establish whether product requirements have been fulfilled. The company as a whole also needs to provide evidence that it practises due diligence, according to 20 criteria. These due diligence requirements are based on the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and on the sector-specific recommendations of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

Who checks whether or not the requirements are met?

Independent auditors monitor the extent to which the requirements are fulfilled. During the introductory phase the certification procedures are carried out by selected certification bodies that are accredited in other sectors. This is done in close coordination with, and under the supervision of the Deutsche Akkreditierungsstelle (DAkkS), the national accreditation body for the Federal Republic of Germany.

Which parts of the supply chain does the Green Button scheme cover?

During the introductory phase, the Green Button scheme applies to two manufacturing stages, 'cutting and sewing' (production) and 'bleaching and dyeing' (wet processes). At present, with the assistance of an independent expert advisory council, the Green Button is being developed further to encompass additional production steps. In the coming years it will also include 'spinning and weaving' as well as 'fibre production'. Because our aim is to protect people and the environment all along the supply chain.



The requirements for Green Button certification

The Green Button clearly identifies textile products that meet the social and environmental criteria specified by the owner of the certification label, and that fulfil specific requirements with respect to corporate due diligence on the part of the applicant companies. Certain indicators are allocated to the due diligence and product requirements. These indicators are relevant to the audits, in the course of which they are evaluated. For a company to obtain Green Button certification, it must satisfy all the criteria, either during an audit or within a set deadline. Auditing takes place at the company's headquarters, preceded by an evaluation of documents by the certification body.

In general, the evidence consists of written documents taken together with an assessment of the practical implementation steps within the company. At their own discretion, certification bodies are all entitled to conduct additional discussions with employees of the company to validate specific details, or to visit relevant production sites and company branch offices.

An essential element of participation in the Green Button scheme is a company's commitment to and conduct of corporate due diligence with respect to people and the environment, both in its own operations and along its supply chains.



'The responsibility to respect human rights is a global standard of expected conduct for all business enterprises wherever they operate.'
UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights

Due diligence requirements

The Green Button, the first government-run certification label, combines ambitious requirements for textile (product) certification with demands made of each company as a whole, including an obligation to demonstrate how it ensures due diligence along its supply chains.

The due diligence requirements of the Green Button refer to management systems that guide the practice of corporate due diligence with respect for human rights and the environment. Corporate due diligence describes the processes implemented by a company to identify, prevent and reduce any risks or actual occurrence of adverse impacts on human rights and the environment within its own operations and along its supply chains. This approach goes beyond a one-sided focus on individual production locations to consider entire supply chains and the procurement practices of the companies applying for certification.

The approach is particularly significant whenever production takes place in countries considered to be at risk, where the principles of human rights and the rule of law are not paid sufficient attention or not considered at all. In such places it is all the more important that enterprises fulfil their responsibilities towards people and the environment. In all cases the entire company will be assessed, even if production takes place exclusively inside the EU. Every company that produces goods within the EU must, at the product level, prove compliance with environmental standards. Moreover, at the company level, it must understand and analyse the risks that affect the EU countries of production and must take effective counter-measures. The Green Button will only be awarded to companies that meet these requirements.

The due diligence requirements for Green Button certification include five core elements, each of which is allocated criteria and indicators for auditing purposes.

The five core elements underpinning the Green Button:

1. **Align corporate policy** (declaration of principles regarding respect for human rights and environmental protection)

The requirement related to corporate policy refers to commitments made publicly by the company that it will take responsibility for its commercial activities where they have a direct or indirect impact on human rights and the environment along its supply chains. This public commitment serves to inform not only the employees but also the business partners and suppliers about the company's expectations. In addition, the company commits itself to improving sustainability in its own operations and in the supply chains.

2. **Identify and prioritise risks** (procedures for identifying actual and potential adverse impacts of commercial activities on human rights and the environment)

The first step in practising due diligence – and a precondition for it – is to know about the risks and adverse impacts that a company's commercial operations might entail for human rights and the environment along its supply chains. For this reason, companies should systematically identify, analyse and prioritise the risks and adverse impacts of their operations.

3. Take effective measures (measures to prevent potential adverse impacts and assess the effectiveness of these measures)

The findings of the risk analysis should be integrated into all relevant corporate processes so as to enable a company to address potential and actual adverse impacts on people and the environment effectively, along the supply chains. This includes, for example, clearly defining responsibilities, monitoring its own procurement practices and taking social and environmental aspects into consideration during product development. It also means training its own employees on social and environmental risks or providing support to suppliers for the implementation of measures. The measures taken should be pursued on the basis of on the basis of the identified risks, regularly reassessed and adapted as necessary. Effective monitoring helps companies to achieve their social and environmental objectives along the supply chain.

4. Ensure transparent reporting

Companies should report regularly and in public on the integration of due diligence processes within their own organisation and about how they deal with the most important risks facing their supply chains. Likewise, they should disclose how they deal with complaints or incidents occurring in supply chains. By communicating their sense of responsibility to the outside world, companies also strengthen and deepen their relationship with relevant stakeholders and with end consumers.

5. Take complaints into consideration (grievance mechanism)

Effective human rights grievance mechanisms contribute significantly to strengthening the rights of workers in textiles supply chains. Therefore, companies should take steps to develop, establish and support grievance mechanisms and remedial measures, at least at the garment manufacturing level.

After submitting your application, you will receive a detailed listing of the five core elements with their respective criteria and indicators. You will also receive a handout containing additional explanations and requirements, as well as practical examples for their implementation. The Green Button office will also be happy to help you with advice, and the Partnership for Sustainable Textiles can assist you in your efforts to meet the due diligence requirements.



Partnership for Sustainable Textiles

The social and environmental conditions prevailing in the textiles sector are most likely to improve if the various actors from the private sector, civil society, trade unions and politics combine their strengths and their expertise. For this reason, German Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development Dr Gerd Müller founded the Partnership for Sustainable Textiles in October 2014. More than 100 enterprises, civil society organisations, trade unions and standards organisations have joined the Partnership in order to, collectively and gradually, improve the environmental and social standards across the entire textiles production chain. Today, the Partnership covers around half of the German retail market for textiles.

The Textiles Partnership also maintains a corporate due diligence approach, and the Partnership Secretariat offers wide-ranging support in this respect. Furthermore, the Partnership provides opportunities to share ideas and pursue collective learning with a large number of stakeholders. The joint implementation of activities along the supply chain is also possible. For this reason, besides Green Button certification, we suggest you become a member of the Partnership for Sustainable Textiles.

You can find more information about corporate due diligence on the website of the Textiles Partnership, where you can also download the membership application form: www.textilbuendnis.com/



Product requirements

Please note that products can only obtain Green Button certification if they:

- are already entitled to carry a recognised certification label;
- fall within the scope of application of the Green Button

Keeping documentary evidence: The principle of the 'meta-label'

The certification body checks compliance with the product requirements, based on the submission by the company of its recognised, credible certification label. To be entitled to receive the Green Button, a product must meet all the necessary social and environmental criteria for the manufacturing and textile finishing stages of its production.

During the introductory phase, the only possible evidence of this is through the presentation of a previously achieved product certification that verifies fulfilment of the required social and environmental criteria.

Previously obtained certification that does not meet the comprehensive requirements or the criteria for recognition of certification labels may not be used. Moreover, the company being assessed must fulfil the conditions of application (producer or company brand).



What is the basis for the product requirements?

With respect to social standards, the criteria are based on the conventions and recommendations of the International Labour Organization (ILO), and on the building safety and fire protection requirements, which came into the spotlight following the Rana Plaza factory disaster.

The criteria for environmental standards are derived from the EU-wide legal requirements (REACH regulation), the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals (GHS), and guidelines developed across the sector (ZDHC guidelines on wastewater, OECD testing methods for biological degradability). Requirements related to the fibres used are also applicable (e.g. EU organic production and labelling of organic products; measurement of pollutants according to the Stockholm and Rotterdam Conventions; production of organic cellulose fibres according to FAO's guidelines on sustainable forest management).

Overview of recognised certification labels

By recognising these labels, we appreciate the value of the work companies have already done as well as the value of particularly credible certification labels. The Green Button does not replace any existing labels. Membership of the Partnership for Sustainable Textiles is also an important basis for the Green Button, with respect to corporate due diligence.

	 Social criteria met	 Environmental criteria met
	✓	✓
	✓	✓
	✓	✓
	✓	✓
	✓	✓
	✓	✓*
 **	✓	In combination with a certification mark for environmental sustainability standards.
	✓	In combination with a certification mark for environmental sustainability standards.
	In combination with a certification mark for social sustainability standards.***	✓
	In combination with a certification mark for social sustainability standards.***	✓

* The Global Recycled Standard meets the criteria of environmental sustainability only in combination with a simultaneous certification of the end product according to the standard 100 by Oeko-Tex.

**Based on a supply chain approach, the importance of human rights due diligence and the requirement of a coherent monitoring and remediation system, Fair Wear assesses the performance of all member brands related to the implementation of the Fair Wear Code of Labour Practices. Fair Wear has no product criteria and does not certify products. Fair Wear Members that have achieved Leader Status have shown that almost all of their tier-1 suppliers are under Fair Wear-Monitoring (>90%). The Green Button recognizes the FWF-Monitoring as one of the most effective and credible monitoring systems for social and labour standards worldwide.

*** If a company produces only within the EU, a recognised label must be produced as evidence of compliance with environmental standards. Evidence of compliance with social standards can be provided by means of a company audit. In this case, the company must demonstrate in which EU member states and by which suppliers the production takes place. It must also demonstrate that any remaining risks regarding compliance with the product-related social criteria are appropriately addressed even within the EU. There is then no further need to produce any social standards label.

Certifiable goods

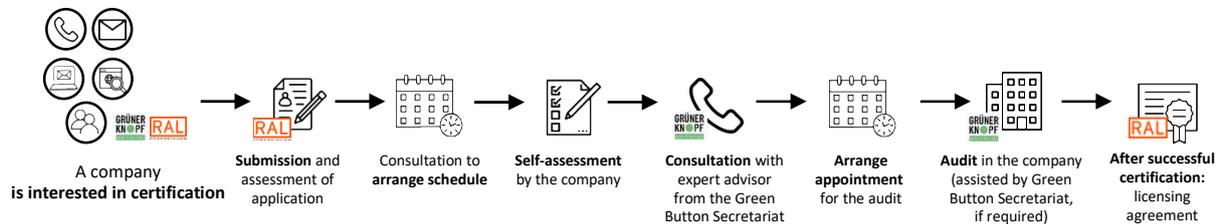
In principle, all textiles or textile products that have been awarded the necessary recognised certification labels may be awarded the Green Button. Exceptions include products consisting (partly) of leather, and toys and fabrics.

Examples of recognised goods:

- **Garments:** Women's clothing; men's and boys' clothing; children's and baby clothing; underwear; socks and stockings; sports and outdoor clothing; bathing costumes; working clothes
- **Domestic textiles:** Bedroom textiles (sheets, mattresses, pillows); bathroom textiles (bath mats); kitchen textiles; table linen; curtains; furniture material; carpets; textile wallpapers; lace and embroidery
- **Technical textiles:** Textiles for medicine and hygiene (dressings and bandages); automotive technology (airbags, safety belts); shipping, transport and storage technology (textile packaging); occupational safety (PSA); sports and leisure (outdoor products, tents); construction (textile insulation materials); industry (text filter systems)
- **Textile shoes and accessories:** Textile shoes; bags and rucksacks; headwear and facial covering (caps, face masks); scarves and shawls; gloves; cloth belts; wallets; carrying cases; cloth covers (for hot water bottles, toasters)



Certification: preparation and process¹



The following stipulations apply to the audit:

- The audit is carried out by an independent certification body usually at the headquarters of the company applying.
- Depending on the size of the company and complexity of the supply chain, the audit can take one or two days. Any questions that remain should be cleared up as soon as possible thereafter.

Steps to take before and after the audit

The issuing body will assist you with your application. The Green Button Secretariat is there to help you during your preparations for the audit to ensure that you are as well prepared as possible.

- After your application has passed its initial (positive) assessment you will receive all the relevant information from the issuing body, including the list of criteria and indicators and detailed guidelines on preparing for the audit.
- At the same time you will receive a self-assessment template which will help you gauge the degree to which your company fulfils the due diligence requirements. You should fill in this form and upload it to the website of the issuing body so that the expert advisor from the Green Button Secretariat (and the certification body) can prepare themselves as well as possible for the following consultation.
- The non-binding consultation with the Green Button Secretariat – by Skype or conference call – is intended to help you gain a better understanding of the requirements and provides an opportunity to clarify questions, for example about the indicators, evidence and product audits. This helps to identify any possible need for action in advance. The results of the consultation and the recommendations made will be sent to you by e-mail to help you prepare.

¹ Deviations from the certification process (including preparations and follow-up) are possible under certain circumstances.

- After the consultation you make an appointment for the audit with one of the certification bodies. The issuing body will send you information on the different certification bodies from which you can choose.
- The certification body signs a contract with your company in advance concerning the completion of the audit. This contract also covers confidentiality on the part of the certification body.
- Please send the completed self-assessment form and all available evidence for the indicators to the certification body prior to the audit. This will enable them to prepare thoroughly and will speed up the completion of the audit on the ground.
- The certification body will send you an audit plan for the day of the audit, which outlines the process.
- Should you have any questions following the audit, or should you still need to submit any documents, details can usually be clarified by telephone or the documents can be sent by e-mail.
- After completion of the audit the certification body will issue an audit report as well as the certificate – assuming the audit was successful. Possible deviations from the indicators will be noted in the audit report, along with a deadline for the elimination of the discrepancies vis-à-vis the certification body.
- As soon as the certification body has sent the certificate and audit report to the issuing body, you can apply to the issuing body for your licensing agreement. The signed licensing agreement entitles your company to label the audited products with the Green Button certification label.

The costs of the Green Button

During the introductory phase, up until 30 June 2021, the certification label owner will provide funds to cover the costs related to the pilot certification.

The assumption of costs applies only to the following items:

- advisory services offered by the Green Button office and the issuing body;
- the first audit;
- planned monitoring audits implemented before 30 June 2021.

The assumption of costs is included in the contracts signed between the companies and the certification bodies.

The companies will cover any costs incurred over and above the items mentioned above. The following items may entail costs:

- Subsequent notification of products (extension of certificate), i.e. if you inform the certification body at a later date of additional products for which you would like the Green Button certification label. This process is optional and does not necessitate traditional on-site audits.
- Planned monitoring audits implemented after 30 June 2021. According to the statutes, monitoring audits must be carried out every 12 months.
- Re-certification audits, which must be carried out when a certificate expires after three years.

You can get more information about the costs involved from your certification body.

**The assumption of costs by the Green Button Secretariat during the introductory phase depends on the willingness of the participating company to grant the scheme owner and the certification body access to documentation, and to allow it to participate in the initial and monitoring audits. The scrutiny of information, documents and audit processes during the introductory phase are for the sole purpose of enabling the scheme owner and the Green Button Secretariat to verify and further optimise the assessment schedules and processes involved in certification. Scrutiny is strictly limited to this purpose. The confidentiality of the information made available is subject to a special confidentiality agreement between the company, the scheme owner and the Green Button Secretariat. The funds made available by the scheme owner during the introductory phase are limited. Approval of the cost assumption during the introductory phase is also subject to the certification body having sufficient capacity available. Companies are not legally entitled to free initial certification or to the cost of a monitoring audit being assumed in the introductory phase.*

Collective communication

As part of a communications campaign, BMZ and the Green Button Secretariat are running a large number of press and public relations measures to raise the public profile of sustainable textiles and the Green Button. The Green Button Secretariat regularly includes the companies in various measures.

- The Secretariat will exchange ideas with you in order to support you in your communications about the Green Button. It provides diverse **communication materials** about the Green Button, including online banners, share-pics, hangtags and much more besides.
- Wherever possible, companies will be invited to make a **public appearance**, at trade fairs, panel discussions and many other events.
- In the context of the communications campaign there will also be opportunities to get involved in **cooperation arrangements with the media**.
- An online **platform** has been set up to support exchanges between all the companies that are allowed to use the Green Button.
- Moreover, regular **face-to-face meetings** and **webinars** will be organised to keep you informed about the communications activities. We will also use these to present specific options for getting involved.
- The companies with certification are also kept updated with a regular **newsletter**.



NEONYT, January 2020



Berlin International Green Week, January 2020



Hangtag



Sharepic



Campaign motif



Campaign motif

Disclaimer: We make no claims or guarantees about the accuracy and completeness of the contents of this document. We reserve the right to make changes.

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