



## **Uniting forces towards lowering greenhouse gases emissions: the role of every actor in achieving a lower environmental footprint for footwear**

Every step counts for reaching the ambitious goals set at the EU and international levels to reduce net greenhouse emissions. Every country, every industry and every person have the responsibility to react to climate change and to make a difference in improving the sustainability of our planet and maximising the use of natural resources.

The **COP26 summit** held last week in Glasgow has reminded the urgency for climate measures. Described as “the moment of truth” by the President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen in the State of the Union 2021 speech, the COP26 summit brought promises to phase out coal, slash emissions of the potent greenhouse gas methane and cut deforestation, and we count now on countries to urgently define concrete actions to target climate neutrality ambitions.

**The EU Green Deal** aims at carbon neutrality by 2050. Almost two years after its publication, consumers show more interest than ever in the conditions and place in which their goods are manufactured, especially as a reflection of satisfactory environmental and social standards. Measures stipulated in the Green Deal include i.e., setting minimum requirements to prevent environmentally harmful products from being placed on the EU market; introducing an electronic product passport with information on composition, origin, repair and dismantling possibilities; and an EU model for separate waste collection. **The request for information on environmental and social standards linked to the production of goods, accelerated by the COVID-19 outbreak, is unstoppable.**

In this respect, the [LIFE GreenShoes4All project](#) represents an essential tool to support footwear companies in reducing their products’ environmental impact, the CO<sub>2</sub>, and other greenhouse gases emissions, making its contribution to reaching carbon neutrality. The project is implemented in relevant main Member States, which together represent a high percentage of footwear production in the EU: Portugal, Spain and Romania.

### **Producing performing shoes with a lower Product Environmental Footprint (PEF): what are the benefits?**

As part of the objective to move towards a greener EU economy, the European Commission launched in 2013 the Product Environmental Footprint (PEF) methodology. The objective is to produce a harmonised method for assessing the PEF and to put an end to the various methods and “green labels” which are confusing for consumers. The advantage of a PEF benchmark would be two-fold: it will reduce costs that companies are facing, and it will offer consumers a clear and unique understanding of the labels used. Every sustainable purchase made by informed consumers will make a difference.

Footwear companies are determined to make efficient use of resources, CO<sub>2</sub> and greenhouse gases emissions, aiming at a low carbon economy. The implementation of a PEF methodology as a common reference to measure environmental performance will therefore support them in reaching their sustainable production while responding to consumers’ requests for reliable information. Furthermore, the PEF together with the application of eco-design will further contribute to successfully produce green shoes and reduce the environmental footprint.

### **Ecodesign guidelines: everything designers and companies need to know to develop performing shoes with a lower environmental footprint**



Although many EU footwear companies have already embarked on their sustainable journey towards carbon neutrality, a high percentage of them lack the right tools to pursue their objective of developing and producing eco and user-friendly shoes. They often face different obstacles and their progress is slowed down by the proliferation of eco/green labels/schemes and misleading green claims, which as previously mentioned, is also highly confusing for consumers. Other relevant instruments such as the EU footwear ecolabel miss the environmental performance differentiation.

Anticipating companies' needs and consumer expectations, the project partners have defined an eco-design methodology and developed a public [Ecodesign Guide](#), available in several languages.

The guide looks into 10 different Eco-design strategies and associated practical applications that provide advice for every production stage starting from design strategies, material and components selection, production techniques to distribution, sale and recycling.

By making use and promoting the added value of the PEF methodology, the project consortium, consisting of research centres, manufacturers and national footwear associations, contribute to a Single Market for Green Products. Such an approach is supported by the EU Recovery Plan, under which a minimum of 37% of the Recovery and Resilience Facility will be dedicated to climate investments and reforms. Only by uniting all forces, we can build a resilient EU footwear industry that contributes to the green transition, reduces waste, places sustainable products on the market, and generates economic growth.