



Frank Baier

Green Labels for Paper

More and more print service providers are focusing on a high level of sustainability in print production. Certificates are intended to provide evidence of resource conservation and environmental compatibility. Before validation, however, the question arises as to what they actually want to achieve.

Today, there are various predicates, documents and certificates in the environmental field – with these, almost everything is supposed to become visibly more ecologically compatible. Green labels, eco-labels of various origins, „Blue Angel“ – these very different certificates pursue very specific goals.

The best-known certificates are probably the environmental management standard ISO 14001 and the environmental audit of the EMAS regulation. Other certificates are relevant for proving the manufacture of ecological print products and compliance with sustainability criteria in print production. This is the clear focus of Titus Tauro, Environmental Protection and Energy Management Officer at the [Saxon Institute for the Printing Industry](#) in Leipzig.

Numerous „green“ certificates

In his opinion, these include the „Blue Angel RAL DE-UZ-195“ certificates, „EU Ecolabel“ product group 053 for printed products, paper stationery and paper carrier bags, as well as FSC (Forest Stewardship Council) and PEFC (Programs for the Endorsement of Forest Certification Schemes). „Green“ building blocks in this relation are „climate calculators“ and clima-

te initiatives of the printing and media associations in Germany, Austria and Switzerland. In addition, the process standard offset printing according to ISO 12647 provides clear evidence in the course of resource conservation with suitably set up print production.

For years, SID Leipzig has been providing consulting services in preparation for certification in accordance with environmental, quality and hygiene management systems. However, according to Titus Tauro, demand for this service is currently very low. „Priority is probably given to other areas at the moment. In view of the tense market situation, this is understandable in the first instance. On the other hand, the environment should not be neglected even in this situation.“ But there is interest, he says, in consultations on preparing for FSC certifications if print shops want to produce for clients who attach great importance to this.

High ecological utility value

Currently, the [„Blue Angel DE-UZ 195“ labels](#) for recycled paper products and [Cradle to Cradle](#) for virgin fiber paper products dominate the media. The [Umdex-Print / Umwelt-Index-Druck](#) initiative and the [Fachverband Medienproduktion](#) recently produced a white paper on this subject to provide technical information for print stores and their customers seeking certification.

Cradle to Cradle certifications are only possible for products. „I consider the ecological benefit of such certification to be high,“ explains Titus Tauro. „After all, with five categories evaluated within its framework, a comprehensive assessment of the sustainability of the product under examination is carried out.“ The material compatibility of the ingredients used, the recyclability of the product in the technical or biological cycle, the use of renewable energies, responsible water management and compliance with social (equity) standards must all be examined.

The Cradle to Cradle principle

Individual printing service providers have already achieved Cradle to Cradle certification. Reportedly, Gugler DruckSinn (<https://www.gugler.at>) in Melk (Austria) was able to offer the first such certified products in 2011 – and today holds a Cradle to Cradle Gold certificate. Within the last ten years, according to Gugler, more than 40 materials have been certified according to the principle – for example, a gray board made from 100 percent recycled paper.

Meanwhile, [printmedia solutions](#) in Mannheim and Frankfurt a.M. (Germany) can offer such certified products. The company sees the Cradle to Cradle principle as „the pinnacle of sustainability“ and has dedicated a separate [website](#) to certification. [Vögeli](#) from Langnau in Emmental (Switzerland) says it uses only substances in the printing process that can be returned to the biological cycle. The printing company from the canton of Bern also has a Cradle to Cradle Gold certificate and explains the principle in a very comprehensible [video animation](#) clearly.

Differences between the eco-labels

Environmental expert Guido Rochus Schmidt from the [Umdex-Print / Umwelt-Index-Druck](#) initiative explains the interrelationships between the environmental seals. „Both the ‚Blue Angel DE-UZ 195‘ and the ‚EU Ecolabel 053‘ are Type I eco-labels awarded by independent experts; they state that products are qualitatively better than comparable products in terms of the environmental properties considered.“ Products with the „Blue Angel DE-UZ 195“ certificate are manufactured under the strictest sustainability criteria and are free of ecologically harmful ingredients.

„And unlike the private Cradle to Cradle label, which does not have Type I certification under ISO 14024, the ‚Blue Angel‘ does not compromise. Unlike Cradle to Cradle, the ‚Blue Angel‘

label does not award certification levels such as bronze, silver, gold or platinum in order to certify paying licensees according to their real operational environmental performance. Against this background, the ‚Blue Angel‘ currently represents the most transparent and therefore most recommendable eco-label for ecological print products.“

Guido Rochus Schmidt makes another point clear: „If you compare the Cradle to Cradle certification criteria with those of ‚Blue Angel DE-UZ 195‘ or ‚EU Ecolabel 053‘, a Cradle to Cradle product has no significant ecological advantages over a ‚Blue Angel‘ or ‚EU Ecolabel 053‘ product in terms of material properties, production process, product recyclability, climate relevance, and social responsibility.“

Yours

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