

## STUDY ABOUT THE PERCEPTION OF PRODUCERS FROM ROMANIA REGARDING THE ECOLABEL

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### ABSTRACT

*The purpose of this paper is to obtain information about the Romanian producers' perspective on some key elements regarding the environmental aspects of their company, data on the certification SR EN ISO 14001: 2015 and the ecolabel in Romania. A questionnaire of 25 questions was developed and used for data collection, which was sent between February - April 2017 by email to approximately 531 companies representing the five active sectors in Romania. We received 189 responses that will help us to identify the main issues related to the certification SR EN ISO 14001: 2015, the ecolabel and the environmental aspects of different industries. There is a relatively low interest of companies in assessing environmental performance using independent tools. However, the low percentage of participating companies responding to the questions is relatively small, which shows that companies that really wanted to make a comprehensive environmental management assessment have been looking to answer as many as possible of questions.*

KEYWORDS: ecolabel, certification, environmental aspects, producers

### 1. Introduction

Eco labeling is fundamentally different from any other type of certification, primarily because it intends to award environmental performance [1]. Eco-labels are based on determining the life cycle of a product, informing the consumer about the impact a product has on the environment in its various stages of production, distribution, use and disposal [2].

Ecolabels are granted on request by different public and private organizations, being recognized at local, national, regional or international level. Often there are several types of eco-labels that coexist at the same time [3]. Accepting a certain type of eco-labeling is optional, and is usually based on reputation, trust and awareness [4].

An economic operator wishing to obtain a European Ecolabel for one or more of its products must request this from the competent authority. If the product meets the requirements, then it is awarded a European Ecolabel [5].

Environmental management systems are some of the most important strategic tools by which firms can turn environmental protection into an

organizational objective, translated into responsible policies and operationalization actions [3]. Worldwide there are two standards that companies, but others, such as public authorities or NGOs, can adopt for the effective design and implementation of an environmental management system: ISO 14001 developed by the International Standard Organization and EMAS (Eco-Management and Audit Scheme - European Eco-Management and Audit Scheme) [6]. The EMAS Regulation, which is more ambitious than ISO 14001, is less well known in Romania, as our country is actually one of the most European EMAS records [7].

### 2. Research methodology

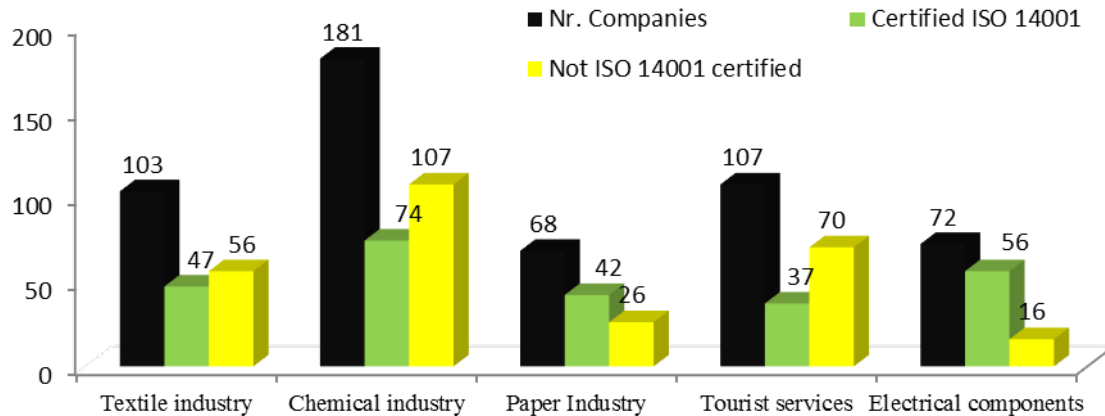
Within the research, a number of 21 organizations that have obtained the Eco-label and 10 EMAS-certified organizations were identified in Romania. As for organizations and firms that have ISO 14001 certification, their number is quite high (at the level of 2009 there were 5,853 companies reaching the level of 2016 at 10581) [8]. According to the Ecolabel scheme, five product groups were

selected as follows: textile products, chemical industry, paper industry, tourism services, electrical components, which are of interest in the research [9].

It was first identified in the national database, which is the production sector of each of the SR EN ISO 14001: 2015 certified companies, and the

subgroups of certified companies SR EN ISO 14001: 2015 whose production sector is part of those for which EU Ecolabel criteria have been established.

Fig. 1 shows the number of companies identified in Romania that hold ISO 14001 certification as well as the number of non-certified ones.



**Fig. 1.** Presentation of number of Romanian companies holding / not holding ISO 14001 certification

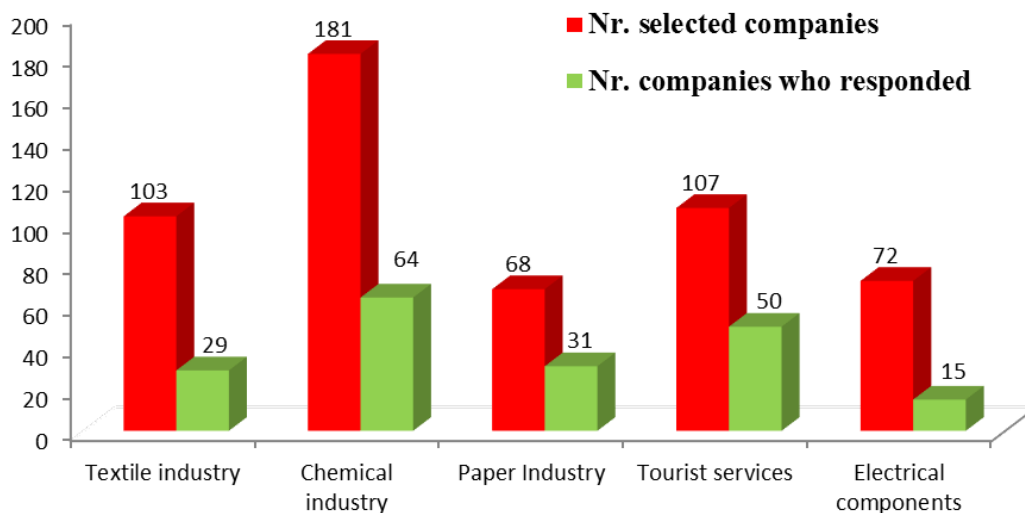
Sample size. Questionnaires were sent to all businesses where we could find contact information. We got answers from 189 companies but the response rate is not 50 %.

Managing questionnaires. The questionnaires were applied online. The average duration of a questionnaire is about 20 minutes. In order to increase the response rate and, implicitly, the quality of the sample, respondents who did not respond to the first

e-mail were sent another email after a period of up to 2 weeks.

### 3. Results and discussion

Out of a total of 531 companies selected to participate in the survey, 189 companies responded affirmatively (Fig. 2), and 15 companies responded to email and did not want to fill in the questionnaire for various reasons.



**Fig. 2.** Number of companies selected for study

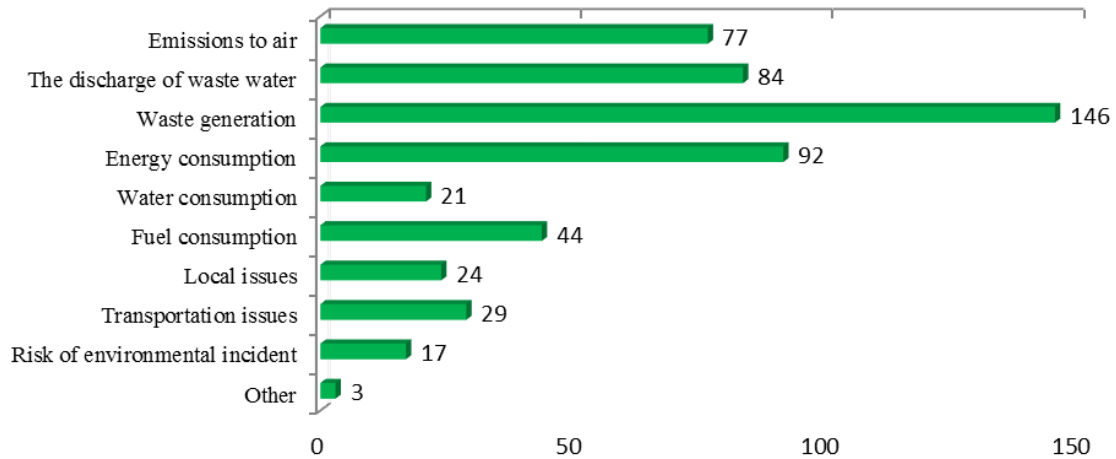
As regards the number of certified companies according to SR EN ISO 14001: 2015, 118 companies (62.4 %) have certification and 71 companies (37.6

%) not certified ISO 14001: 2015. They completed the questionnaire and 3 companies that have an ecolabel.

There is, however, a relatively low interest of companies in assessing environmental performance using independent tools. However, the low percentage of responding companies responding to the questions is relatively small, which shows that

those companies that really wanted to make a comprehensive assessment of their environmental management efficiency were looking to answer as many as possible questions.

**A.1. Which of the following environmental aspects related to the company's activities / products are considered significant?**

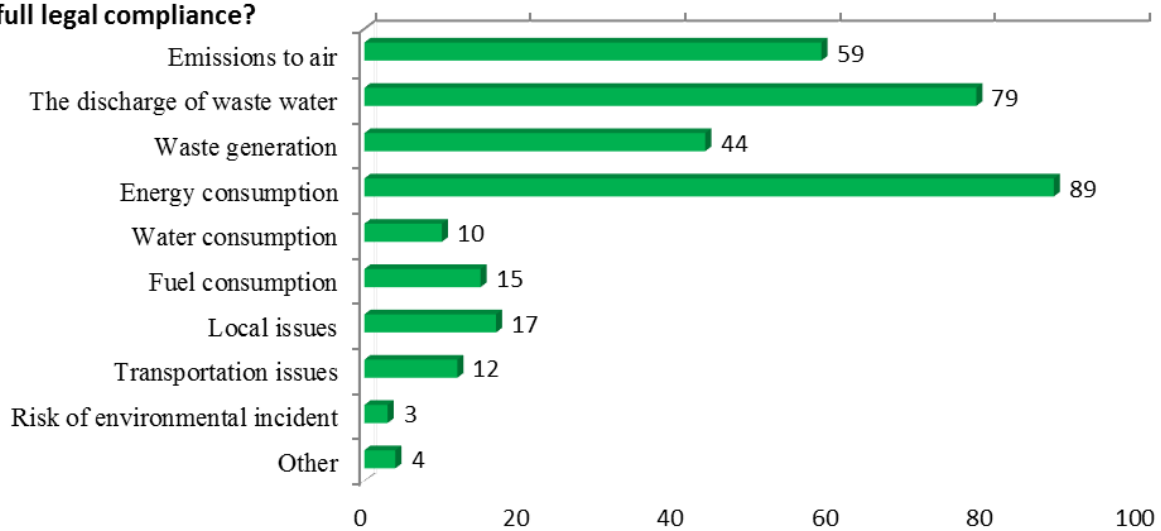


*Fig. 3. List of significant environmental aspects in companies*

Regarding the significant environmental aspects, they can be seen in Fig. 3, with 83.9 % of waste generation being among the most important environmental considerations, after which the energy

consumption reaches 52.9 % and waste water discharge 48.3 %. On the opposite side there is the risk of environmental incidents of 9.8 %.

**A.2. Which of these environmental aspects of your company you have invested resources in the last three years to improve the environmental performance related and / or to maintain full legal compliance?**

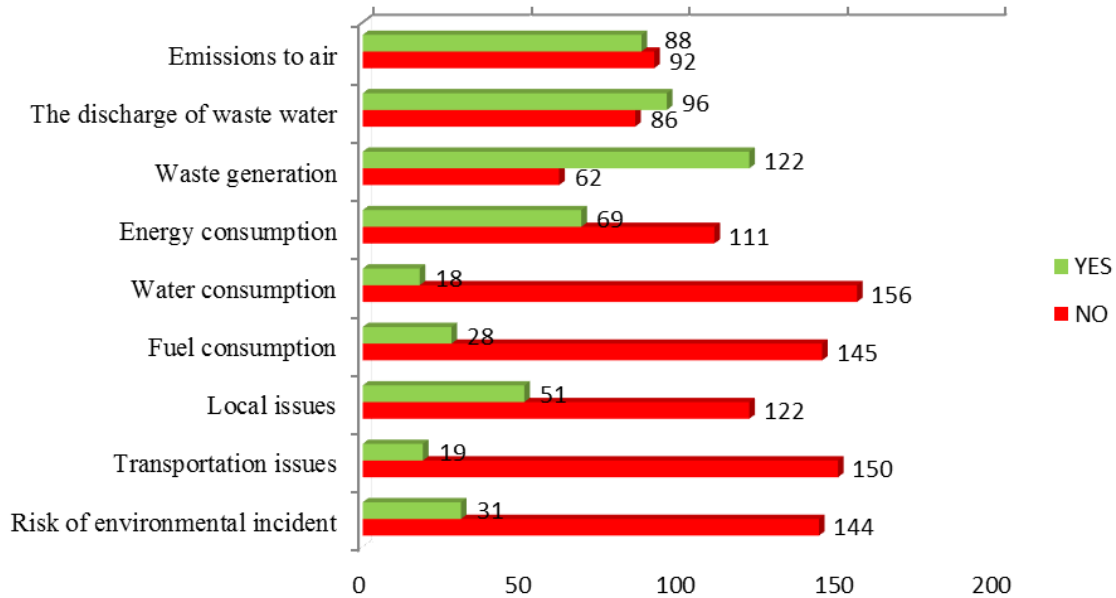


*Fig. 4. List of environmental aspects for which resources have been invested in the past 3 years*

More and more types of organizations are increasingly concerned about achieving and demonstrating clear environmental performance by controlling the impact of their own activities, products or services on the environment and taking into account their environmental policy and

objectives. A percentage of 50.6 % showed that the reduction in energy consumption was the most invested in in the last 3 years and at least 1.7 % (Fig. 4) was used to prevent the risk of environmental incidents.

**A.3. Which of the following environmental aspects are being monitored?**

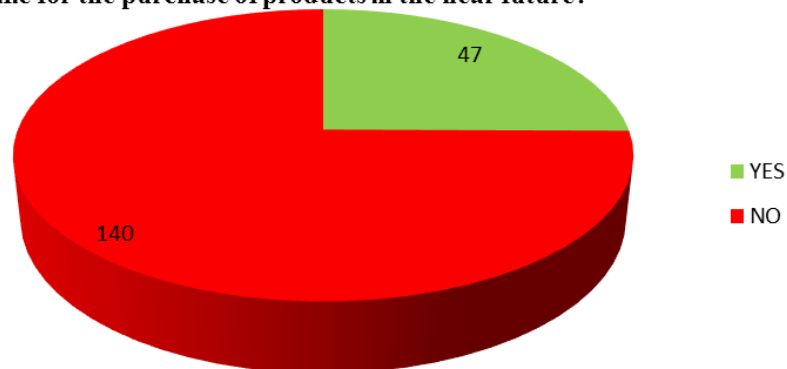


**Fig. 5. Environmental aspects monitored**

Monitoring environmental issues is very important in a company that wants to protect the environment. The most monitored environmental aspect is waste generation (122 companies monitor),

followed by waste water discharge (96) and air emissions (88). On the opposite side are energy consumption (156) and transport problems (150).

**B.4. Your company plans to introduce environmental requirements specific for the purchase of products in the near future?**

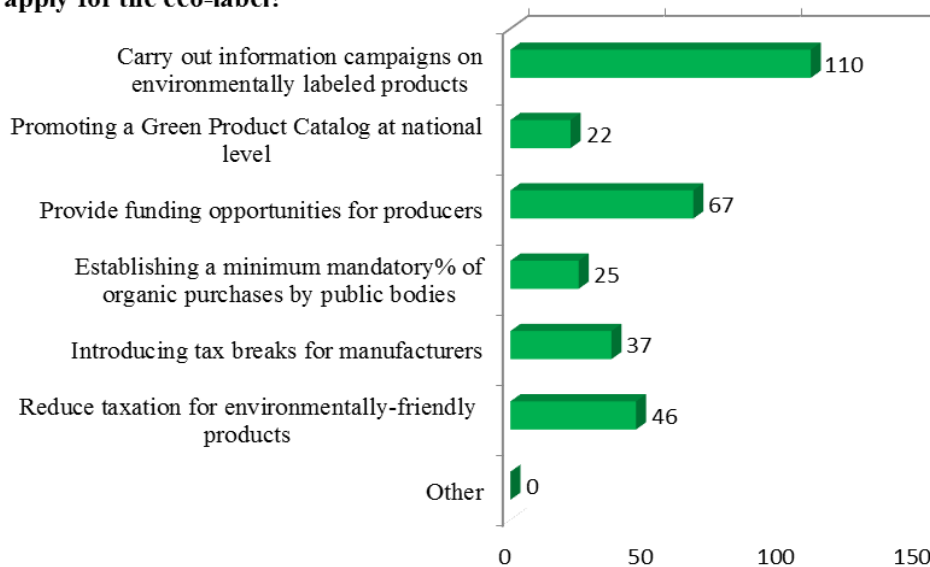


**Fig. 6. Company opinion about the environmental requirements in the future**

Regarding the environmental requirements, there is an increasing interest of companies to

introduce them in the future for the purchase of products, 47 companies have said this (Fig. 6).

**C.8. What could be the initiatives that the EU Competent for Labeling should take them to provide more benefits companies who want to apply for the eco-label?**



**Fig. 7. Initiatives that the National Organic Labeling Competent Body should take to provide more benefits to companies wishing to apply for the eco-label**

Producers are of the opinion that the EU Organic Competent Organizing Committee should undertake a series of initiatives including: information campaigns on eco-labeled products (78 %), provision of financing opportunities for producers (47.5 %) and the reduction of annual eco-label fees (32.6 %).

In this paper, only a part of the questionnaire results is included and also a small part of the implemented graphics.

#### 4. Conclusions

The objective of the questionnaire was to obtain an objective point of view of the producers regarding the SR EN ISO 14001: 2015 certification, the ecological label and the environmental aspects of the company.

In view of the above and the fact that Romania is still making timely progress in enhancing environmental performance, we believe that sustained progress on environmental protection should become a priority for all Romanian organizations. Leaving aside the obligation to comply with EU requirements, which should not be neglected, businesses must perceive the benefits that can be achieved through the implementation of EMS, such as SR EN ISO 14001: 2015, EMAS or the eco-label.

The current market context no longer allows the organization to make decisions without prior investigation into the environment in which it operates, as consumers' requirements are evolving in

an accelerated way, competition is becoming more and more fierce, and macroeconomic and legislative elements can have a decisive influence on success or failure of the company on the market. Any decision on the organization's activity should be based on concrete data on the dimensions and components of the marketing environment of the organization in question, so that the products and / or services offered it offers are in line with market requirements.

A general conclusion is that due to the competitive advantages for the producers of goods and service providers and the increasing interest of consumers in these products, it is expected that the number of eco-labeled products will increase significantly in the near future. Since the first eco-labeled product in 2005, the average eco-labeling of products in Romania is one per year, the theory of practice is not very appropriate in this case.

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