

High quality climate protection projects audited by TÜV Rheinland

- EcoPLUS/ÖkoPLUS catalogue of criteria 1.3 -

The catalogue of criteria for the German ÖkoPLUS and the international EcoPLUS standard
(hereinafter referred as EcoPLUS/ÖkoPLUS)



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Background

Global warming and its potential consequences due to climate change are becoming increasingly important. For the many central questions within the framework of climate protection, fair and efficient solutions must be developed at the international level.

In addition, there is growing interest among the population in sustainable initiatives that in many ways lead to an improvement in the living conditions of people in the Global South.”

The aim of EcoPLUS/ÖkoPLUS is to support sustainable action, focusing on effective climate protection projects in countries with a need to catch up in terms of socio-ecological development.

Projects are therefore evaluated regarding their impact on selected sustainability criteria. The selection of these sustainability criteria is based on the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). However, it is not limited to them; it also includes other socio-ecological aspects (e.g., children or culture/sports) that are intended to sustainably improve people's living conditions.

In addition, all EcoPLUS/ÖkoPLUS projects must make a demonstrable contribution to the reduction of CO₂ emissions in the project country.

Certification by TÜV Rheinland Energy & Environment GmbH (hereinafter referred to as TÜV Rheinland) is intended to guarantee consumers credibility and transparency. This is to be ensured on the basis of verifiable and consumer-relevant criteria, which are clearly communicated. Compliance with the criteria is regularly reviewed by TÜV Rheinland, and the result of the reviews are communicated.

The following certification criteria define the criteria for awarding the EcoPLUS/ÖkoPLUS label – certified by TÜV Rheinland. The criteria describe the minimum requirements and minimum conditions that the EcoPLUS/ÖkoPLUS standard places on qualified climate protection projects.

Simply offsetting CO₂ emissions through measures limited to this factor alone has become less acceptable in recent years and, for Bischoff & Ditze as the initiator of the EcoPLUS/ÖkoPLUS standard, does not represent a sufficient contribution to sustainable business practices. Legislators have also set higher hurdles for measures. For this reason, the EcoPLUS/ÖkoPLUS standard focuses on socio-ecological projects that primarily aim to achieve a sustainable improvement in the situation in the project countries (see sections 3.1 and 3.2) and whose common denominator is their contribution to CO₂ savings.

Documentation obligations

1. Sustainable climate protection projects

The certified EcoPLUS/ÖkoPLUS label offers users the opportunity to contribute to climate protection by purchasing high-quality climate protection certificates. The aim is to benefit both for socio-ecological development and the climate.

- To this end, certificates (VERs- Verified Emission Reductions) are to be used that meet the highest requirements and are verified by a recognised quality standard.

VERs are initiated worldwide in a wide variety of projects aimed at reducing CO₂. Depending on the project, VERs can have different standards, such as the Gold Standard (GS) or the Verified Carbon Standard (VCS). Project monitoring is ensured by established validation and verification processes conducted by independent third parties (auditing organisations).

- Climate protection projects applied within EcoPLUS/ÖkoPLUS must demonstrate not only a proven reduction of CO₂ emissions in the project country but also provide an additional added value. This added value must be verified and recorded using defined sustainability indicators (EcoPLUS/ÖkoPLUS criteria).

2. Area of application

- Climate change poses major challenges for all of us. The primary goal must be to comprehensively avoid or at least reduce CO₂ emissions within our own value chain. Despite all efforts, not all emissions can be avoided. With an additional climate contribution, companies can commit to sustainable climate protection beyond their existing measures. This is exactly where EcoPLUS/ÖkoPLUS projects come in.
- Climate protection certificates from high-quality EcoPLUS/ÖkoPLUS projects should therefore provide an opportunity to document the credibility, transparency and traceability of a voluntary climate contribution.
- A climate contribution should by no means replace a company's own climate protection measures but rather complement them in a meaningful way as part of a holistic approach. The contribution should always be calculated in accordance with recognized standards.

3. Evaluation criteria

- For the assessment, climate protection projects must be evaluated in terms of their sustainable measures, their location and their CO₂ savings potential. Only if the individual points are sufficiently fulfilled can a climate protection project qualify as an EcoPLUS/ÖkoPLUS project. At least one point must be achieved in each category.
- Points are awarded for the individual indicators described below according to the following index:

Assessment index				
	SM	HDI	EPI	%CO₂
5 P.			< 46,3	
4 P.	6 - 8	< 0,520	>= 46,3	> 500 Tt
3 P.	5	>= 0,520	>= 50,3	> 100 Tt
2 P.	3 - 4	>= 0,698	>= 63,5	> 50 Tt
1 P.	1 - 2	>= 0,790	>= 68,2	<= 50 Tt
0 P.	<i>n.v.</i>	<i>n.v.</i>	<i>n.v.</i>	<i>n.v.</i>
<i>SM – (number of) Sustainable Measures, see chap. 3.1</i> <i>HDI - Human Development Index, see chap. 3.2</i> <i>EPI - Environmental Performance Index, see chap. 3.2</i> <i>%CO₂ – potential for preventing carbon emission, see chap. 3.3</i>				

3.1 Sustainable measures

EcoPLUS/ÖkoPLUS projects must guarantee the promotion of sustainable and social structures. To this end, emission reduction projects must be evaluated with regard to measures implemented or to be implemented in the following areas:

- a. **Zero Hunger/Food Security:** Ending hunger and malnutrition by implementing measures to combat regional food shortages, promoting sustainable agriculture, and supporting a healthy, balanced diet.
- b. **No poverty:** Combating poverty in all its forms, with a particular supporting underprivileged and poor people in adapting to climate change and promoting equal access to natural and economic resources.
- c. **Employment and economic growth:** Creation of decent jobs for the local population, fostering training opportunities, and enabling the transfer of knowledge and technology. Supporting lasting and sustainable economic growth.
- d. **Infrastructure/supply routes:** Promoting sustainable expansion of regional infrastructure, e.g. through improvements to existing roads and drainage ditches as well as the construction of new roads and improvements in communications infrastructure. Forced resettlements are strictly excluded.
- e. **Environment:** Protecting the environment and preserving biodiversity, while ensuring that the climate protection project has no significant negative environmental impacts during its implementation.
- f. **Medicine:** Improving medical care - for both humans and animals – supporting clinics, promoting public health and raising awareness of dangerous diseases.
- g. **Health and well-being:** Supporting measures to maintain human health, regeneration and prevention of premature deaths; reduction of environmental pollution that has a

negative impact on human health, such as hazardous chemicals or water, soil and air pollution.

- h. **Sanitation/access to clean drinking water:** Improving sanitation facilities and access to them; promoting the long-term availability of safe and affordable drinking water and efficient water use by protecting water resources from pollution and overuse. Construction of decentralized drinking water sources, construction and improvement of sanitation/hygiene facilities.
- i. **Education:** Establishing and expanding educational opportunities and creating non-discriminatory access to these opportunities, e.g. through investment in (inclusive and safe) schools, adult education, financial support for students, etc.; promoting free basic education for general literacy and numeracy.
- j. **Equality:** Promoting gender equality in all areas- in particular, strengthening the self-determination of women and girls; supporting the equal participation of women in economic, political and social decision-making processes.
- k. **Children:** Improving the living conditions of children, e.g. by expanding educational opportunities, leisure activities for children and young people, and providing special support for girls.
- l. **Culture/sport:** Promotion of culture, e.g. through the promotion of arts and crafts workshops, organization of music events, expansion of sport facilities, etc.
- m. **Sustainable Investment:** Sustainable investments in the region by the project promoter, e.g. setting up a fund for further sustainable measures, granting microcredits on fair terms, e.g. for financing cooking stoves.
- n. **Energy infrastructure:** Reduction of fossil fuels and promotion of energy efficiency; expansion of energy infrastructure in the electricity, heating and transport sectors and further development of energy technologies; access to affordable reliable, sustainable and renewable energy.

When evaluating sustainable measures, a maximum of the point may be awarded for each listed measure a) – n). The sum of these points can be used to derive the EcoPLUS/ÖkoPLUS points (see evaluation index matrix under 3).

3.2 Country- specific selection

- EcoPLUS/ÖkoPLUS requires the use of globally recognized indices to identify emission reduction projects whose location allows for a truly sustainable impact. The greatest possible impact is determined on the basis of ecodynamic development opportunities in the area of environment and health (EPI-Environmental Performance Index) and the development situation (HDI- Human Development Index) of the country of implementation.
- The EPI attempts to compare the ecological performance of countries in various fields and use this to derive an assessment of current environmental quality. The index was developed by the Environmental Sustainable Index department at Yale University in collaboration with the World Economic Forum, the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission and Columbia University.
- The United Nations HDI is a prosperity indicator for countries and has been published annually since 1990 in the Human Development Report by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).
- EcoPLUS points are awarded depending on the respective EPI or HDI of the country in which the climate protection project is located.

3.3 High effectiveness

- EcoPLUS/ÖkoPLUS projects must have high CO₂ savings potential and thus contribute effectively to global climate protection. For comparison purposes, a baseline scenario describing the state of a region without a climate protection project must be used.

3.4 Assessment of Project Quality

- The ranking of the projects is based on the total number of EcoPLUS/ÖkoPLUS points accumulated for each project. Only climate protection projects with high project quality, i.e. many EcoPLUS/ÖkoPLUS points, qualify as EcoPLUS/ÖkoPLUS projects.

$$\text{Project Quality} = \Sigma (\text{NM}) + \Sigma (\text{HDI}) + \Sigma (\text{EPI}) + \Sigma (\% \text{CO}_2)$$

- The ranking of EcoPLUS/ÖkoPLUS projects is based on the following classifications:

Project Quality		
standard	grade	points
EcoPLUS	A	15-17
EcoPLUS	B	12-14
-	C	9-11
-	D	6-8
-	E	<6

- Every EcoPLUS/ÖkoPLUS project must undergo an annual audit to ensure that the climate protection project continues to meet the EcoPLUS/ÖkoPLUS standard in the long term.

4. Communication

- In external communications EcoPLUS/ÖkoPLUS must include all statements made during the certification process. Misleading communication is not permitted when publicly announcing the certification.
- The use of EcoPLUS/ÖkoPLUS brand (including Logo) as well as the TÜV Rheinland certification logo in external communications requires the acquisition of a significant volume of climate protection certificates from eligible EcoPLUS/ÖkoPLUS projects.
- The requirements of the TÜV Rheinland Testing and Regulations must be observed, particularly with regard to advertising claims connected to the certification or the TÜV Logo.
- It is the customer's sole responsibility to ensure compliance with applicable advertising laws - particularly the German Act Against Unfair Competition (Gesetz gegen den unlauteren Wettbewerb - UWG) and the relevant case law.

5. Transparency and credibility

- As an independent auditor, TÜV Rheinland certifies the EcoPLUS/ÖkoPLUS label on an annual basis.
- To assess the fundamental eligibility of the label for certification, the evaluation of the product characteristics and the accounting methodology applied by the provider is reviewed in advance.
- The audit includes comprehensive documentation. The procedures introduced for evaluating climate protection projects are examined and all evidence required to ensure compliance with the EcoPLUS/ÖkoPLUS criteria is reviewed.
- Approval by the TÜV Rheinland certification body is granted by issuing a certificate.

6. Other

- Certification and monitoring are carried out in accordance with the established regulations of TÜV Rheinland. The responsible certification body is obliged to treat all information made available to it about the client's company as confidential and to evaluate it only for the agreed purpose. Documents made available will not be passed on to third parties.
- The requirements of criteria version 1.3 will enter into force on 16th September 2025. Accordingly, Version 1.2 of the catalogue of criteria will remain valid until 15th September 2025. The EcoPLUS/ÖkoPLUS TÜV Rheinland certificate in accordance with criteria version 1.2 will likewise remain valid until 15th September 2025. Subsequent certification by TÜV Rheinland from 16th September 2025 onward will be based on Criteria Version 1.3. Contracts already concluded in accordance with Criteria Version 1.1 and 1.2 are compatible with Criteria Version 1.3 and may be promoted under the TÜV Rheinland certificate according to Criteria Version 1.3.
- The certification of the EcoPLUS/ÖkoPLUS product and its quality criteria is carried out in cooperation between TÜV Rheinland and Bischoff & Ditze Energy GmbH & Co. KG (label provider). The reproduction and publication of this standard and its criteria as well as the certification of these criteria by TÜV Rheinland by other parties, requires the prior written permission of the label provider.