

BLUE ANGEL

The German Ecolabel



Last mile delivery services

DE-UZ 226

Basic Award Criteria

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Version 3

The Environmental Label is supported by the following four institutions:



Federal Ministry
for the Environment, Nature Conservation,
Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection

The Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection is the owner of the label. It regularly provides information on the decisions taken by the Environmental Label Jury.



The German Environmental Agency with its specialist department for "Ecodesign, Eco-Labeling and Environmentally friendly Procurement" acts as office of the Environmental Label Jury and develops the technical criteria of the Basic Criteria for Award of the Blue Angel.



The Environmental Label Jury is the independent, decision-making body for the Blue Angel and includes representatives from environmental and consumer associations, trade unions, industry, the trade, crafts, local authorities, academia, the media, churches, young people and the German federal states.



The RAL gGmbH is the awarding body for the Environmental Label. It organises the process for developing the relevant award criteria in independent expert hearings – which involve all relevant interest groups.

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This document is a translation of a German original. In case of dispute, the original document should be taken as authoritative.

1 Introduction

1.1 Preface

In cooperation with the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection, the German Environmental Agency and considering the results of the expert hearings conducted by RAL gGmbH, the Environmental Label Jury has set up these Basic Criteria for the Award of the Environmental Label. RAL gGmbH has been tasked with awarding the Environmental Label.

Upon application to RAL gGmbH and on the basis of a Contract on the Use of the Environmental Label to be concluded with RAL gGmbH, the permission to use the Environmental Label may be granted to all products, provided that they comply with the requirements as specified hereinafter.

The product must comply with all the legal requirements in the country in which it is to be marketed. The applicant shall declare that the product meets this requirement.

1.2 Background

The number of parcels delivered by courier, express and parcel (CEP) services each year is growing continuously and more than 4 billion parcels were delivered in 2020. The main driver of this growth is online trade, which has increased considerably once again during the coronavirus pandemic.

The transport processes that are required due to this growth in deliveries generate greenhouse gas, particulate and NO_x emissions, as well as causing noise and other environmental impacts. A relevant portion of these negative impacts on the environment are caused during the so-called "last mile" – i.e. the last section of the journey – when transporting the parcel e.g. from a parcel centre to the recipient in a 3.5 tonne delivery van.

The growing number of delivery vehicles in urban areas is also viewed negatively by many citizens. These vehicles also have a negative impact on the environment in this sense and this has been identified as an important issue by local authorities in particular.

The precise nature of the environmental impact is dependent on the delivery concept, the vehicles used and how the logistical processes are planned and can thus be influenced by the design of the delivery service. The various impacts on the environment can be reduced considerably by using alternative drive systems, such as electric cargo bikes and electric delivery vehicles, and also by delivering combined orders to alternative delivery sites or by using distribution systems such as micro-hubs.

1.3 Objectives of the Environmental Label

The ecolabel will be awarded to those delivery services that clearly stand out with respect to environmental aspects and their use of public space during this last mile of the delivery process in comparison to other delivery services.

In terms of environmental aspects, the main focus is placed on avoiding/reducing the release of greenhouse gas emissions and other harmful emissions that are damaging to health such as particulate matter or NO_x.

In addition, the ecolabel prohibits delivery services from operating using unfavourable or dubious working conditions from a socio-political perspective.

By giving customers the option to explicitly select certified delivery services during the checkout process for online orders, it will ensure that the Blue Angel is made more visible and also raise awareness amongst end customers for the environmental impact of last miles delivery services.

Therefore, following benefits for the environment and health are stated in the explanatory box:



1.4 Definitions

The terms used in the Basic Award Criteria are defined as follows:

Last mile delivery services: Delivery services for the last leg of the journey on which no further transshipment processes takes place between warehouses or (micro) depots and transport vehicles.

Micro-hub: Micro-hubs or depots are decentralised distribution centres, mobile or stationary collection points or intermediate warehouses for parcels in inner city locations or densely populated residential areas.

Delivery area: Delivery areas in the sense of these Basic Award Criteria are clearly defined using postal codes.

Densely populated urban delivery areas: Densely populated urban delivery areas have a population density of ≥ 2000 residents/square kilometre.

Rural delivery areas: Rural delivery areas have a population density of < 2000 residents/square kilometre.

Transport vehicles: Transport vehicles in the sense of these Basic Award Criteria are all forms of vehicle (from HGVs to hand trucks) that are used to transport the goods being delivered.

Compact transportation aids: Compact transportation aids are manually guided transportation aids with or without electric support that provide assistance when delivering goods by foot, such as hand trucks or carts, cargo trailers, etc.

Green electricity: Electricity that is sourced 100% from renewable energies as defined in Directive 2018/2001/EU on the promotion of the use of energy from renewable sources. This electricity must also be labelled accordingly. The origin of this electricity must be verified in the form of a guarantee of origin in the register of guarantees of origin.

Senders: Senders in the sense of these Basic Award Criteria are commercially operating companies and organisations who offer their (end) customers the option – usually via a corresponding platform on the internet (e.g. an online shop) – of having their goods or products delivered and utilise the services offered by a delivery company for this purpose.

Recipients: Recipients are the private or commercial (end) customers that choose to have goods or products ordered from a sender delivered to a specified address by a delivery company.

2 Scope

These Basic Award Criteria apply exclusively to last mile delivery services.

Delivery services designed and advertised as express deliveries (e.g. instant or same-day deliveries) are excluded from the scope of these Basic Award Criteria because the capacity of the delivery vehicles is usually utilised to a lesser extent than with standard deliveries.

This also applies if these deliveries are part of (exclusive) contracts between customers and delivery companies that go beyond the specific delivery in question. This includes, for example, subscription services for which a monthly payment is made for the express delivery of all orders to the respective customer as standard, without the customer having to select this form of delivery in each individual case.

Deliveries of prepared foods for direct consumption are also excluded from the scope of these Basic Award Criteria.

Deliveries of parcels with a weight > 31.5 kg are also excluded.

The environmental label is awarded in each case to a specific delivery service, which is carried out in accordance with the requirements described below.

3 Requirements

This environmental label may be awarded to specific delivery services covered by the scope described in Paragraph 2 if the licence holder and, where relevant, any subcontractors involved in this service comply with the requirements described in the sections below.

3.1 Use of low-emission transport vehicles

In order to reduce the environmental impact of the deliveries, there are requirements on the use of low-emission transport vehicles.

In the case of delivery services for **deliveries to densely populated urban delivery areas**, only the following delivery vehicles may be used:

- ♦ Cycles (cargo bikes with or without electric support) with 2 or more wheels and cycle trailers;
- ♦ Fully electric lightweight motor vehicles in category L with a maximum width of 1.50 m including wing mirrors;
- ♦ Other compact transportation aids (e.g. cargo trailers, hand trucks and comparable transportation aids with and without electric support).

Exceptions apply to the following forms of delivery:

- ♦ Deliveries directly to collection points (which comply with the requirements in Paragraph 3.4).
- ♦ The use of alternative delivery concepts.
- ♦ Alternative delivery concepts include, in particular, the use of designated delivery zones or other areas available to the delivery companies for parking the delivery vehicle away from the road and subsequent delivery of the parcel to the delivery address from this parking space. The subsequent delivery can take place by foot with or without the use of compact transportation aids.

In these cases, fully electric delivery vehicles (≤ 7.5 t) either exclusively charged with green electricity or exclusively powered by "green" hydrogen can also be used.

In the case of **deliveries to rural delivery areas**, the following delivery vehicles may be used:

- ♦ Cycles (cargo bikes) with or without electric support with 2 or more wheels and cycle trailers;
- ♦ Other compact transportation aids (e.g. cargo trailers, hand trucks and comparable transportation aids with and without electric support);
- ♦ Fully electric lightweight motor vehicles in category L;
- ♦ Motor vehicles authorised to hold an "E" licence plate (vehicles with an electric motor) with a minimum range in purely electric mode of ≥ 60 km and which are exclusively charged with green electricity;
- ♦ Fuel cell vehicles powered by "green" hydrogen.

Compliance verification

When submitting an application, the licence holder undertakes to only use those vehicles permitted in the requirements described above for the delivery services certified with the environmental label and shall confirm this in Annex 1. The applicant shall also provide the following verification documents:

- *Up-to-date records on the availability and use of transport vehicles that meet these requirements (copies of the vehicle registrations for those vehicles requiring registration, proofs of purchase or comparable documents for cargo bikes, etc.).*
- *If the exception for the use of larger delivery vehicles is utilised in the case of deliveries to densely populated urban delivery areas, the applicant must provide a list of these delivery vehicles and the following information:*
 - ♦ *the method and frequency of the deliveries to collection points and/or*
 - ♦ *the alternative delivery concepts used. The description of these alternative delivery concepts must include*
 - *the designated delivery zones or other parking spaces for parking the vehicles operated by the delivery company,*
 - *the delivery radius typically served from these parking spaces and*
 - *the compact transportation aids used for the subsequent delivery.*
- *If requested by RAL gGmbH: Detailed documentation on the deliveries certified with the environmental label in the defined delivery areas. Alongside the shipment number and the delivery address, the detailed documentation must include at least the:*
 - ♦ *time of the delivery;*
 - ♦ *type of last mile delivery, incl. the transport vehicles used;*

- ♦ *any collection stations used, where relevant.*

In the case of multiple deliveries, these details must also be provided for each of the multiple deliveries.

3.2 Use of renewable energy sources to charge/refuel the transport vehicles

In order to reduce emissions as much as possible and avoid negative displacement effects, there are requirements both for the use of low-emission transport vehicles (according to Paragraph 3.1) and their energy sources:

- ♦ Electrically operated/supported transport vehicles must be exclusively charged with green electricity.
- ♦ Hydrogen for vehicles with fuel cell technology may only be generated using green electricity (so-called "green" hydrogen).

Compliance verification

To verify the implementation of this requirement, the applicant shall submit the following documentation with the application and declare compliance in Annex 1:

- ♦ *A description of the charging/fuelling infrastructure for the vehicles used to carry out the deliveries in the different delivery areas.*
- ♦ *Contracts with the suppliers of the renewable energy sources verifying that the relevant tank/charging/filling stations provide energy from renewable sources. Example invoices including the electricity labelling data must also be submitted.*

3.3 Options to select low-emission delivery methods

In order to reduce the negative impact on the environment and traffic of multiple unsuccessful attempted deliveries and enable the use of logistically optimised delivery methods that further reduce the impact, customers must be offered appropriate delivery options.

Delivery services certified with the environmental label should only make one attempted delivery to the delivery address where possible. For this reason, the recipient should be informed about the time and date of the planned delivery before the delivery is carried out.

In order to avoid the need for multiple deliveries, the recipients must be offered at least two of the following options:

- delivery to a different delivery address (e.g. a workplace),
- delivery at a different time (e.g. on a different day),
- delivery directly to an alternative collection point selected by the customer that complies with the requirements in Paragraph 3.4. Collection points that can be used by different delivery companies – so-called "white label" stations or shops – should be the preferred option.

During the selection process, recipients should also be informed about the disadvantages for the environment and urban traffic of multiple deliveries and especially the disadvantages of using a passenger car just for the purpose of collecting the parcel (also see Paragraph 3.8).

Compliance verification

When submitting an application, the licence holder undertakes to comply with the stated requirements and shall confirm this in Annex 1.

In addition, the licence holder shall provide verification of compliance in the form of examples from the ordering and checkout processes of its cooperating senders and corresponding excerpts from their own tracking system that confirm how the requirements have been implemented in practice.

3.4 Requirements for alternative collection points

If alternative collection points are offered, the delivery company must ensure that collection of the parcels by customers does not lead to the additional use of motor vehicles.

In **densely populated urban delivery areas**, the delivery company must ensure that the collection points:

- ♦ are no further apart than 750 m in the delivery area and
 - ♦ are easily accessible by cycle or foot
- or
- ♦ that they are located at interchange points on the public transport network.

In **rural delivery areas**, the delivery company must ensure that the collection points:

- ♦ are located no further than a maximum of 750 m from the delivery address and
 - ♦ are easily accessible by cycle or foot
- or alternatively
- ♦ that they are located at central interchange points on the public transport network or
 - ♦ in the direct vicinity (< 150 m) of a local shopping centre (such as e.g. a supermarket car park).

Compliance verification

The applicant shall confirm compliance with the requirement in Annex 1. A description of the location and type of alternative collection point must be provided for every delivery area. Directly adjacent delivery areas (postal codes) can be considered jointly when complying with the requirements described above.

3.5 Exclusion of additional disposable transport packaging, packaging materials and load securing equipment

To ensure that the delivery generates the lowest amount of waste, the following requirements apply to disposable transport packaging, disposable packaging materials and disposable load securing equipment.

- In the provision of the delivery service, the delivery company may not use any **additional** disposable transport packaging, disposable packaging materials or disposable load securing equipment.
- If the use of **additional** transport packaging, packaging materials or load securing equipment is necessary to safeguard the goods or ensure the safety of the load during transport, the delivery company may only use reusable products (e.g. transport boxes, packaging straps, etc.) for this purpose.

Compliance verification

Alongside a declaration confirming that no disposable transport packaging, disposable packaging materials and disposable load securing equipment are used, the applicant must describe in Annex 1 which reusable products are used and how the company ensures in each case that they are utilised multiple times.

3.6 Working conditions

The licence holder must ensure that the following requirements with respect to working conditions are complied with for all employees involved in the provision of the certified delivery services (including any employees of subcontractors who may be involved in the process):

- Employees must have permanent contracts.
- No employment contracts with unfounded fixed terms are permitted.
- Employees are permitted to work a maximum of 40 hours per week as standard or a maximum of 45 hours including overtime.
- A normal working day may not exceed eight hours, except in emergency situations and then only if the work cannot be postponed and it is not possible for the work to be carried out by another employee.
- Employees are only permitted to work a maximum of six days per week. Employees should receive four days off over a period of two weeks and must receive at least two days off.
- The employer must inform employees of their work schedule at least four days in advance.
- Working hours start when the employee enters the workplace and end after the employee has delivered the last consignment, returned to the depot and concluded any other necessary work.
- Employees must be paid at least the statutory minimum wage. Bonuses and expenses must be paid separately and may not be included in the calculation for the minimum wage.
- The employer must provide employees with any equipment necessary to perform the assigned tasks (transportation aids, work clothing, communication devices, etc.) free of charge.
- The privacy of the employee's personal data must be guaranteed.
- The use of IT technology to monitor the performance and behaviour of employees is prohibited.
- The employer must support and not hinder the establishment of a works council.

Compliance verification

The licence holder shall make a binding declaration in Annex 1 that he/she complies with the requirements with respect to working conditions.

Membership of an employers' association that has concluded a relevant collective wage agreement can be provided in support of the application. Alternatively, the licence holder can submit a standard employment contract as verification. If available, the licence holder must also submit the results of a prequalification process according to the Parcel Courier Protection Act (Paket-Boten-Schutzgesetz, in the form of a test seal from the certification body ZertBau) for the companies involved.

The verifications described above must also be submitted by subcontractors or other commissioned companies who are involved in the provision of the certified delivery services.

3.7 Code of conduct

Competition for space and the negative impact on traffic are particularly important issues for deliveries in densely populated urban areas. Considerate and precautionary behaviour by drivers of all types of delivery vehicles can make a contribution to reducing the impact on citizens.

Against this background, the following requirements apply:

- The licence holder undertakes on behalf of the individual drivers to comply with the following code of conduct:
 - ♦ Drivers must drive in a defensive and precautionary manner and give special consideration to more vulnerable road users in all traffic situations.
 - ♦ Drivers must stop and park, wherever possible, in designated delivery zones, parking bays or at the side of the road and not block the road or park on cycle paths or pavements.
 - ♦ If drivers utilise their right to park cycles on the pavement, priority must be given to anyone who is travelling by foot or using a wheelchair, walking frame or pushchair and to children on bicycles and scooters.
- The licence holder must ensure that all drivers attend an annual training course lasting at least 1.5 hours on how to correctly carry out their delivery tasks. This training course must cover, amongst other things:
 - ♦ How to properly implement the delivery requirements for this environmental label.
 - ♦ An explanation of the code of conduct described above using practical examples.

Compliance verification

The licence holder shall declare compliance with the requirement in Annex 1 that all drivers are provided with these instructions as part of a corresponding training course and new drivers are provided with them before starting their delivery work. This also applies to any subcontractors who are used. They must also undertake to comply with the requirements and submit a binding declaration as verification.

The licence holder shall submit the concept for the implementation of the training course (contents, sequence and length of each individual theme) with the application.

3.8 Integration of the delivery services into customer interfaces provided by cooperating senders and parcel tracking systems

A delivery service can only be advertised to end customers as a “Blue Angel – last mile delivery service” if it is integrated into the ordering and checkout processes of cooperating senders and explicitly identified as an (optional) service for suitable deliveries and delivery regions.

For this purpose, the certified provider of the delivery service (“licence holder”) must transfer the usage rights to the “Blue Angel for last mile delivery services” to the cooperating senders and obligate them to also comply with the following requirements.

When integrating the delivery service into the ordering and checkout processes of cooperating senders and/or the online tracking system operated by the certified provider of the delivery service, it must be ensured that end customers can:

- a) Find the option for a delivery with the Blue Angel for last mile delivery services and are clearly informed that this environmental label (“only”) certifies the last mile delivery service and not the entire delivery process and/or the dispatched goods.
- b) Select the options for low-emission delivery methods (according to Paragraph 3.3) that are available for “their” delivery areas.
- c) Find information on the environmental impacts of selecting the various delivery options (according to Paragraph 3.3).

The information on a) must be directly provided as part of the sender’s ordering or checkout process.

The options described in b) can also be additionally or alternatively integrated into the online system (or parcel tracking system) operated by the provider of the delivery service.

A clearly marked reference and/or link to information on the difference between last mile delivery services and other upstream logistical processes and further information on the environmental impacts of the various delivery options (according to point c)) must be provided in the same locations.

Compliance verification

The licence holder shall submit a list of cooperating senders to RAL gGmbH with the application in Annex 3 and provide example screenshots to document how the requirements have been implemented in the sender’s ordering and checkout processes and in the parcel tracking system operated by the provider of the delivery service.

The list of cooperating senders must be continuously updated by the licence holder and resubmitted immediately to RAL gGmbH in the event of any changes.

3.9 Permitted advertising claims

The licence holder and label holder must comply with the following requirements for all customer information and/or advertising claims offering a delivery service in accordance with the requirements of this environmental label.

- the offer of a delivery service certified with the Blue Angel environmental label only applies to specifically selected deliveries in pre-defined delivery areas;
- this Blue Angel environmental label only places requirements on how last mile deliveries are carried out and thus:
 - ♦ it does not take into account any environmental issues in other logistical processes;
 - ♦ the Blue Angel environmental label does not apply to the environmental performance of the relevant delivery company,
 - ♦ nor does it apply to the delivered goods themselves.

Compliance verification

The licence holder shall make a binding declaration in Annex 1 that he/she complies with this requirement. This includes an undertaking to ensure when transferring usage rights to the environmental label to the cooperating senders that the sender is explicitly informed about and obligated to comply with this requirement.

3.10 Definition of suitable delivery areas

The licence holder must inform RAL gGmbH about all the delivery areas in which he/she is able to and wants to comply with all requirements for this environmental label. The data from the Excel table *plz_einwohner*¹ are decisive for the classification into **rural** or **densely populated urban delivery areas**.

Only last mile deliveries with a delivery address in one of the delivery areas that have been pre-defined by the licence holder can be advertised and certified with this environmental label.

When transferring usage rights to the "Blue Angel for last mile delivery services" to the cooperating senders, the licence holder must obligate the cooperating sender to only use the environmental label to advertise these types of delivery (also see Paragraph 3.9).

Compliance verification

When submitting an application, the licence holder must submit a list of suitable delivery areas in Annex 2 and provide the following information:

- *Whether the delivery area is a "densely populated urban delivery area" or a "rural delivery area";*
- *The applicable verifications according to Paragraphs 3.1, 3.2 and 3.4 for every delivery area (or for groups of adjacent delivery areas);*
- *If the licence holder intends to make changes to this list (especially when adding new delivery areas or removing existing ones), he/she shall submit an updated list to RAL gGmbH for examination/approval.*

3.11 Overview of possible future requirements

In the event of a future revision of the Basic Award Criteria, the following requirements will be examined in particular:

- The rules for the permitted transport vehicles in each case.
- The population density (residents/km², see Paragraph 1.4) used for differentiating between densely populated urban delivery areas and rural delivery areas.
- Possible requirements for the direct acceptance/return of returned goods.
- A review of the requirements for alternative collection points and alternative delivery concepts, both in densely populated urban areas and also rural areas. This also relates to the question of whether stricter requirements for the use of "white label" concepts should be introduced.
- Expanding the scope of the environmental label to include upstream transport, warehouse and transshipment processes (e.g. in depots, micro-hubs, etc.). Additional requirements must then be formulated for this purpose.
- Requirements for the available options and information for end customers in the ordering and checkout processes and parcel tracking systems.

¹ The data basis for the table is the data of the statistical office of the federal and state governments. The Excel file was provided by the site <https://www.suche-postleitzahl.org/>. For easier orientation, the column inhabitants/km² was added and the values were colour-coded according to the type of delivery area.

- Expanding the obligation to use green electricity to include the additional generation of electricity from renewable energies (installation of additional capacity).
- Examining the possible introduction of an on-site audit/inspection to verify compliance with the working conditions (Paragraph 3.6).

4 Applicants and Parties Involved

Providers of last mile delivery services according to Paragraph 2 shall be eligible for application.

Parties involved in the award process are:

- RAL gGmbH to award the Blue Angel Environmental Label,
- the federal state being home to the applicant's production site,
- Umweltbundesamt (German Environmental Agency) which after the signing of the contract receives all data and documents submitted in applications for the Blue Angel in order to be able to further develop the Basic Award Criteria.

5 Use of the Environmental Label

The use of the Environmental Label by the applicant is governed by a contract on the use of the Environmental Label concluded with RAL gGmbH.

Within the scope of such contract, the applicant undertakes to comply with the requirements under Paragraph 3 while using the Environmental Label.

Contracts on the Use of the Environmental Label are concluded to fix the terms for the certification of products under Paragraph 2. Such contracts shall run until December 31, 2026.

They shall be extended by periods of one year each, unless terminated in writing by March 31, 2026 or March 31 of the respective year of extension.

After the expiry of the contract, the Environmental Label may neither be used for labelling nor for advertising purposes. This regulation shall not affect products being still in the market.

The applicant (manufacturer) shall be entitled to apply to RAL gGmbH for an extension of the right to use the ecolabel on the product entitled to the label if it is to be marketed under another brand/trade name and/or other marketing organisations.

The Contract on the Use of the Environmental Label shall specify:

- Applicant (service provider)
- Brand/trade name, product description
- Distributor (label user), i.e. the above-mentioned marketing organisations.