

EUROPEAN BATHROOM FORUM
OPEN MEETING

MINUTES
FROM THE MEETING HELD 18 FEBRUARY 2020
RUE BELLIARD BRUSSELS

28. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

Chair, Carlos Velazquez welcomed all to the meeting and invited all attendees to provide a brief introduction to the Forum. Mr Velazquez thanked FECS for hosting the meeting.

The presentation of the day will be made available via the website and forms part of these minutes.

29. LEGAL STATEMENT

Mr Velazquez referred delegates to the Competition Statement that provides guidance on discussion boundaries. This is attached to the sign in sheet.

30. AGENDA

Mr Velazquez highlighted the format for the days Agenda and invited additional Agenda items from delegates in attendance. There were no further agenda items.

31. UPDATE

Mrs Orgill reported on activity since the previous Forum meeting which included participation in the Eco-Design Consultation, meeting with EU-nited and a meeting held with DG Env the day before. In addition Mrs Orgill provided an update on company and product registrations as all other aspects would be discussed under agenda headings.

Eco-Design Consultation Forum

It was reported that a delegation of representatives from the EBF; Chair, MD, Technical and Marketing Chairs plus CEIR representatives attended the Eco-Design Consultation Forum (CF) on 18 December and provided a full presentation on the UWL, its technical criteria, environmental benefits and the role it can take highlighting and raising awareness of the need to use water and energy wisely within the bathroom environment.

The CF was held to discuss and debate a potential VA being awarded to the European Tap and Shower Industry in place of a mandatory energy label.

It was reported that Industry sat in the middle of the EU Commission and Member States who had opposing opinions on process and procedures of a VA, which Member States are not supporters of.

Several issues were highlighted by Member States; not sufficiently close enough to 80% market representation, the Unified Water Label mimicked the energy label, however, it was agreed that the Unified Water Label had merit, even though it did not fit within the Energy Label platform and could be an interim step while CEN/EU Commission developed a functionality standard that would be required as a base standard for a mandatory label.

The CF concluded with a call to action by representatives in providing answers to 3 questions raised by the Commission; Does the Forum agree with the conclusions of the Preparatory Study, does the Forum have a preference on VA, Mandatory and no policy intervention and the third questions relates to the commencement of a functionality standard for taps and showers.

Comments received on these three points will be published in due course

Meeting with EU-nited/WELL Label

Mr Velazquez and Mrs Orgill provided an update on the meeting held early February between EU-Nited/WELL and UWL. The meeting had been called to understand their view following the Eco-Design Consultation Forum, possible next steps and future joint activity.

It was made perfectly clear that WELL members do not envisage WELL and UWL merging in the near future as it is believed the technical criteria are too different. However, it was reported that the two schemes do have a common platform; no mandatory label and common messages to all sectors of the market.

Mr Burchard from WELL/EU-Nited called for a joint 'Statement' to be issued, it was expected to be tabled at the EBF meeting, this was not the case. EBF members in attendance did not support a joint statement, or working together and expressed their support for the UWL to continue on the course agreed but keeping the 'door' open if WELL/EU-Nited wished to join in the near future.

DG ENV Meeting

Mrs Orgill and Mr Conti (CEIR) provided an overview from a meeting held the previous day with representatives from DG Env.

DG Env stated they had received many comments following the Eco-Design Consultation Forum and they are prepared to share those comments that will aid the Unified Water Label to modify its scheme to become more acceptable to Member States and NGO's. Highlighted areas include, mimicking the Energy Label (the UWL colouring is too close), lack of understanding on the UWL technical criteria and achieving closer to the 80% market representative that has been independently audited.

DG Env informed those present that a mandatory scheme introduced, once a functionality standard has been developed under the CEN structure may also include manufacturing process and materials as the Commission is seeking to include these considerations under future reviews of existing legislation. They also advised that Energy Performance for Buildings will in the future include water

DG Env asked the UWL to continue to evolve the Scheme as they had identified the UWL could be a useful tool within their 'Green Deal' strategy.

Scheme Update

It was reported that the UWL is currently supported by 157 brands with a database across the differing criteria in excess of 12,000 products. In addition, the Scheme has 45 supporters; media, NGOs, National and European Associations, 7 Agents working at National level and 10 Test Houses across the European market. Mrs Orgill reported that 35% of registrations related to the tap market, 16% showers (excluding electrics), 35% WCs and associated components and the remaining across the other categories.

Mrs Orgill reported that much interest has been received from Italian, Chinese, French and Spanish companies who are interested in the Scheme and seeking registration.

Mrs Orgill reminded members that the 2019 audit of products is drawing to a close (end of April 2020) and companies should be seeking to submit their test results to the Secretariat.

32. 2020 FOCUS

Mr Kopka, chair of the EBF Marketing Committee provided a presentation on the 2020 focus which will have a marketing/PR focus with the prime objectives to raise awareness, drive registrations and address some of the challenges.

Mr Kopka informed that the website will be refreshed, having easier navigation, advertising opportunities, having the capabilities to be updated by the Secretariat and be truly reflective of the 'Best of All' initiative. Mr Kopka informed that, if agreed there would be flexibility in the label design allowing registered companies to adapt for certain markets. This flexibility will be underpinned with strict criteria that cannot be amended, colouring, web address and water grades will be static. Members present supported this direction. Mr Kopka tabled a 'mocked' up label image to help with visualisation – this can be found in the full presentation on the UWL website. It was agreed that the 'How to Use' booklet will be updated and provide all necessary graphics and messaging that can be used.

Mr Kopka referred to mandatory use of the label that will help to raise awareness and visibility, this will see mandatory visibility of the label on company websites and product literature, voluntary visibility on packaging and customisation with the Scheme recommending to the brands that they include the label on PoS material, on packaging if supplying retail markets and at trade fairs. Members agreed this and identified commercial opportunities.

Mrs Orgill reported that during the website refresh the 'Water Calculator' will also be refreshed as it continues to be used by architects and specifiers primarily in the UK but increasing across Member States.

Members agreed to the advertising on the website, costs, period of time etc with Mrs Orgill reporting that a 'rate card' will be published in due time.

Mr Kopka reported that in addition to raising awareness across the sectors it is equally important to keep manufacturers abreast of UWL activity and as such a 'Briefing' will be issued on a regular basis and electronically circulated.

Mr Kopka referenced back to the lack of 80% market representation of the UWL and the independently audited verification required by the EU Commission. Mr Kopka stated that confidentiality is key and therefore RSM Global have agreed for data to be submitted in pdf, password and where necessary to provide an NDA. This additional action will provide companies with the required security. Mrs Orgill and Mr Velazquez stated that the consolidated data will only be provided direct to the Commission and no other third party.

Mrs Orgill reported that a series of workshops will be held, with Germany and Italy being the first ones and will be held during May or June. A workshop brief is being developed and will focus on improving knowledge on the Scheme and addressing local challenges. Speakers will be sourced from the Country where the workshop will be held with DG Env in attendance.

Challenges

Mr Kopka concluded his presentation with a slide that highlighted the challenges to be addressed during 2020. This included; improving visibility and increased registrations, highlighting commercial opportunities and encouraging greater involvement from merchants, retailers and reluctant manufacturers. Mr Kopka stated that over the coming months the UWL Secretariat will seek to address the issues raised during the Consultation Forum and offer proposals to members on possible amends to the label (colours etc).

Mr Velazquez commented that all must play a part as the consequences will be a mandatory energy label and called on National Associations to play their part.

33. TECHNICAL

Mrs Orgill reported that she had received a request for the technical criteria and the scheme rules to be realigned in a more Standards style and become 'European'. Members supported this request as it would enable some technical criteria already included to be more prominent, which may address some of the challenges surrounding which Standards are used as the base criteria. It was also proposed that the 'style' of the document may be hindering some manufacturers from joining the scheme.

Mr Kopka and Mr Kempf volunteered to undertake this task with the proposed document to be circulated to members for approval before Summer 2020.

Mrs Orgill raised some concern over the French ECAU Scheme which included water. The consensus from those present is the two schemes are different, one building and one water/energy and although some cross over, this should not be a concern for the direction of the UWL.

34. PR CAMPAIGN

Mrs Orgill reported that over the coming months she will be developing a full PR campaign with targeted messages for each sector. The campaign will partner with National and European trade bodies and embrace relevant social media platforms, thus enabling the UWL to capitalise on 'world days'.

Mrs Orgill also reported that she is compiling a directory of relevant media contacts and Industry exhibitions across Europe to help with raising profile and presence. Mrs Orgill asked members to aid the UWL in developing this directory and send her any relevant information. Members were also reminded to follow the UWL on Twitter.

35. UWLA ARTICLES OF ASSOCIATION

Mrs Orgill referred to the tabled copy of the proposed Articles of Association, which had been re-drafted in view of comments received. A copy is attached to these minutes. Mr Velazquez stated that there is no urgency to introduce these Articles until such time the UWL is given recognition and the requirement to formalise the EBF into the UWLA is necessary.

Mrs Orgill stated any further comments from members on the Articles please advise.

36. SUMMARY

Mr Velazquez summarised the meeting outcomes urged members to submit their data to RSM and aid the Secretariat to improve awareness and visibility wherever possible.

37. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was proposed to hold the next meeting late June or July in Northern Italy, working with one of the National Trade bodies to identify a date and venue. Members will be notified in due course.

Mr Velazquez brought the meeting to a close.