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Seventeen Model Environmental Product Declarations are currently being developed by FEICA, the Association of the European Adhesive & Sealant Industry, specifically for adhesives and sealants. By Jana Cohrs-Rahmoun.

A MODEL PROJECT

Environmental Product Declarations (EPDs) are registered documents providing relevant, verified and comparable information about the environmental impact of goods and services.

In precise terms, an EPD is a comprehensive report, created according to internationally agreed standards, which documents the ways in which a product affects the environment throughout its life cycle. An EPD will typically include information about a product's impact on global warming, ozone depletion in the stratosphere, acidification of water and land, ozone creation in the troposphere and depletion of fossil resources.

FEICA's European Core Model EPDs (EU Model EPDs) for the adhesive and sealant industry are EPDs that will cover most of the products within our construction sector

In the construction sector, EPDs help architects, designers, and other purchasers to better understand a product's sustainable credentials and environmental impact. As a result, they allow to make more informed purchasing decisions. In fact, sustainable construction projects and green building practices are ahead of the game, as it is expected that environmental standards and regulations in the sector will increasingly place obligations on industry players.

The adhesive and sealant industry has always taken its responsibilities when it comes to sustainability, not only by continually minimising the environmental impact of its operations and reducing or eliminating

substances that can pollute the environment, but also by developing products that enable customers to reduce their environmental impact. While the environmental impact of an adhesive or a sealant to a building is comparatively low (<1%), a rather broad variety of different adhesives and sealant types are used in the building industry. This, together with the great effort required to actually create an EPD, has slowed down their development by the adhesive and sealant industry. By increasing the range of EPDs, FEICA aims to remedy this situation by expanding the choice of adhesive and sealant products available to architects and green procurement bodies.

EPD standards are already well established in the EU (EN 15804), but they are interpreted nationally, leading to different requirements in different member states. In other words, manufacturers currently need a different EPD for each market, which often translates into an administrative burden for companies.

The German adhesives association, Industrieverband Klebstoffe e.V. (IVK), together with construction chemicals and paints sectors, developed model EPDs especially for the German market. FEICA, keen to find a European solution, based its project on these German model EPDs.

EU MODEL EPDS: A EUROPEAN SOLUTION

With the support of thinkstep AG (www.thinkstep.com), FEICA developed several EU Model EPDs covering most of the construction products in the adhesive and sealant sector.



FIRST EUROPEAN CORE MODEL EPDs PUBLISHED

IBU (Institut Bauen und Umwelt e.V.) has published the first sets of European Core Model EPDs – PU-based, epoxy-based and silane-based – which can be downloaded via the FEICA website:

<http://www.feica.eu/ehs-sustainability/epd/european-core-model-epds-released>.

Model EPDs covering dispersion-based products and modified mineral mortars will follow soon.

“The EU Model EPDs will lead to significant cost and time savings for companies.”

Jana Cohrs-Rahmoun, FEICA

EU Model EPDs are the most suitable type of EPDs for adhesives and sealants. Rather than covering only a single product or application, they are structured according to chemical composition and cover all products within a certain range of formulations and applications. In other words, they are structured by grouping the products according to chemical similarities and comparable environmental impact. Taking into account the low environmental impact adhesives and sealants have on a building, any differentiation between products beyond one of the seventeen Model EPDs would not provide meaningful information. Furthermore, these EPDs each represent the ‘worst’ product within their group of representative products. The EU Model EPDs can therefore be considered “worst-case EPDs”.

HARD WORK IS PAYING OFF

The hard work put into the development phase to achieve accepted and verified EU Model EPDs is paying off as they may now be used by all eligible members of FEICA to easily and conveniently accommodate new products.

Even if there is a European Standard followed by the various EU member states, there is still a lack of harmonisation regarding the details of the implementation of EN 15804, with some member states asking for additional indicators. Therefore, the EN 15804 can be seen as the core that is necessary for an EPD in Europe.

FEICA provides this core for the EU Model EPDs. Additional informa-

tion might be needed in certain member states but efforts are made to align the different European EPD systems within a European Platform called ECO (www.eco-platform.org).

The European Core Model EPDs exclusively apply for products produced in Europe and for a period of five years from the date of issue. They may be used by FEICA members (and their members) within all the different European countries, provided it has been proven that the respective product can be represented by one of the EPDs. The association’s members can then declare that one, or several, of their products are covered by one of these EPDs.

EU Model EPDs are publicly available on the IBU (www.bau-umwelt.de) and FEICA (www.feica.eu) websites. Guidelines on how to calculate whether a product is covered by a specific core model EPD are available for Feica members and their members.

FEICA is convinced that the EU Model EPDs for the adhesive and sealant industry are not only important for sustainable development, but will also lead to significant cost and time savings for companies. ◀



Jana Cohrs-Rahmoun

Regulatory Affairs Manager – FEICA
info@feica.eu