



European  
Commission

# CIRCULAR ECONOMY

## Closing the loop

CIRCULAR ECONOMY

## SUCCESS STORY

### A SPOTLIGHT ON THE FIRST SANITARY TAPWARE LICENCE HOLDER: THE FERRO GROUP

In December 2013, the Polish-headquartered FERRO Group became the first EU Ecolabel licence holder for sanitary tapware. FERRO Group is one of the largest manufacturers of sanitary tapware in the Central and Eastern European region. The company has only been manufacturing tapware for 25 years, but is already one of the top two leading manufacturers on the Polish market. Although they have a presence throughout the EU, their main markets outside of Poland lie within the Czech Republic and Slovakia, where they are the number one and two sanitary tapware manufacturer respectively. They also have a promising future in Romania, where they are rapidly expanding their market share.

The EU Ecolabel helps you identify products and services that have a reduced environmental impact throughout their life cycle, from the extraction of raw material through to production, use and disposal. Recognised throughout Europe, EU Ecolabel is a voluntary label promoting environmental excellence which can be trusted.

For more information about EU Ecolabel, visit <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/ecolabel/>

#### HOW HAS BEING THE SOLE EU ECOLABEL SANITARY TAPWARE MANUFACTURER GIVEN YOU AN EDGE OVER COMPETITORS?

Although it is too early to have quantifiable market share data, we can see that the sales of our nine EU Ecolabel awarded kitchen/bathroom faucet products have increased, that's for sure. Every year we try to set up savings plans for our biggest customers since they want to buy products that reduce water and energy consumption.

#### HOW DID YOU DECIDE TO APPLY FOR THE EU ECOLABEL?

For the two years leading up to the publication of the sanitary tapware product group criteria, we at the FERRO Group worked with the Joint Research Centre on the technical and environmental issues concerning the product group. After the criteria were finalised, we called Mrs. Joanna Tkaczyk (at the Polish Competent Body) to begin the application process; thanks to her help it only took a few months to go through product testing, and get all the documents ready.

The final reward was when we received the first EU Ecolabel licence for this product group, an event that was commemorated at an award ceremony located in the National Stadium in

Warsaw Conference Room on 16 January 2014, hosted by the Polish Competent Body. On this occasion, we held a press conference with about 40 journalists and VIPs. Our EU Ecolabel Ferro products were also presented.

#### WHAT ASPECTS OF THE SANITARY TAPWARE CRITERIA WERE THE MOST CHALLENGING TO MEET?

The most challenging part was not directly connected with the criteria's specifications on technical features, as we already had experience in water saving technology within our products. The biggest issues were ensuring better product lifespan and the proper management of spare parts. Our products used to have a shorter guarantee, but after small, yet strategic improvements, we doubled their lifespan (judging from the performed tests). In particular, for the parts that are most vulnerable to users and water, we have doubled the lifespan from 2-3 years to 5-6 years. Whole faucets can last more than 20 years, with the easy replacement of small parts. The longevity of our products also shows that to be awarded the EU Ecolabel is a mark of quality too.

## **HAS YOUR EU ECOLABEL AWARD ALTERED OR IMPROVED THE EFFECTIVENESS OF YOUR MARKETING TO THE INDUSTRY OR DO-IT-YOURSELF CONSUMERS?**

There has been an increasing demand on our company to provide eco-friendly faucets, mainly thanks to the water and energy-saving characteristics of our products. We held a series of information sessions to gather insight on what our two main consumer target groups (average users and plumbers) thought that the EU Ecolabel for sanitary tapware stood for. Although most people thought of energy and water savings (which is not false), it was not initially so evident to them that EU Ecolabel sanitary tapware also prides itself on sustainable manufacturing and an extended lifespan of the product. One of our future projects is to continue collaborating with the Polish Competent Body to see how we can better present the EU Ecolabel to highlight these aspects.

The most important thing is to inform the consumer that water saving in Ecolabel products does not mean that you will feel any less comfortable during everyday use. Comfort and quality are usually on what most people are afraid to compromise. However, with our EU Ecolabel products consumers can comfortably wash their hands at faucet flows as low as 4.9 litres per minute (whereas conventional faucets are usually around 12-15 litres per minute, and common water saving faucets are 7-9 litres per minute).

Currently we are working closely with more than 300 shops and wholesalers in Poland, which has opened up the possibility of face-to-face interaction with plumbers and consumers to complement our commercials and ads on the web. We mainly use in-store marketing tactics to reach out to consumers.

## **ANY FUTURE PLANS WITHIN YOUR COMPANY'S SUSTAINABILITY MISSION?**

Our company is currently working on completing more EU Ecolabel applications for sanitary tapware showerhead products in order to complete and complement our existing kitchen/bathroom faucet range. Since 2003 we have been working according to the ISO 9001 rules as shown by our certificate.

## **WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE OTHER SANITARY TAPWARE COMPANIES THAT ARE CONSIDERING APPLYING FOR THE EU ECOLABEL?**

The environmental differences in the design of EU Ecolabel sanitary tapware are impactful; with the current level of technology it is no longer impossible for manufacturers to make changes to a product's composition to increase its sustainability. Sanitary tapware companies should consider applying for the EU Ecolabel so that our industry can collectively work together in a promising and sustainable direction.

To find more about Ferro and their company's mission, visit [www.ferrocompany.com](http://www.ferrocompany.com)