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**Ecodesign Criteria for Sustainability in Footwear and
Testing Methods for Evaluation of Performance**

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Background and Project Description

The footwear industry is facing unprecedented environmental and regulatory challenges. Billions of pairs of shoes are produced globally every year, generating significant impacts in terms of greenhouse gas emissions, resource consumption, waste generation and chemical use. At the same time, the European policy landscape is evolving rapidly, requiring companies to rethink how products are designed, manufactured and communicated to consumers.

The Horizon Europe Project ECOSTEP will develop the first comprehensive ecodesign framework specifically tailored to the footwear sector. Combining scientific rigour with practical applicability, the project will define clear criteria and testing methodologies for key sustainability parameters, including durability, repairability, recyclability, chemical safety and circularity.

Furthermore, the project will establish dedicated Working Groups involving footwear companies, material suppliers, consumer organisations, standardisation experts, policy actors, behavioural scientists and sustainability specialists. Their role will be to validate the project's findings and help translate scientific knowledge into tools that businesses and consumers can use.

Objectives

- To facilitate manufacturers' access to innovative tools that improve the sustainability of their processes and products, accelerating the transition towards circular production models and enabling compliance with the ESPR.
- To equip national and EU public authorities, market surveillance authorities and notified bodies with harmonised and widely accepted testing protocols and methodologies for assessing footwear products.
- To enable consumers to make informed decisions and drive the demand for sustainable products.
- To strengthen the competitiveness and resilience of the European footwear sector by equipping businesses with the knowledge, methodologies and tools needed to thrive in a circular economy.

Expected Outcomes

- A footwear-specific ecodesign framework defining sustainability criteria and associated testing methods.
- Standardised verification approaches to assess footwear performance against ecodesign requirements.
- An integrated digital platform supporting sustainability assessment, traceability and Digital Product Passports.
- Practical guidelines and business models promoting circular design, repair, reuse and recycling.
- Training and capacity-building programmes to support companies, particularly SMEs, in implementing ecodesign principles and preparing for future market requirements.

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