

Press Release research project “Ecologistics”:

“Use Cases for Electronic Product Code Introduction”

Luxembourg/Mons (B)/Saarbrücken (D)

In a modern economy, the individual actors in a supply chains are faced with a number of new challenges that can only be overcome with an increased transparency of the material and the flow of goods in the supply chain. In particular, traceability and automatic real-time identification of objects with the help of universal product codes are strong instruments to achieve full transparency in a supply chain.

The innovation project “Ecologistics” investigates the use of the Electronic Product Code (EPC) and the related EPC Global Network for better transparency and thus for a more efficient and environmental friendly supply chain. The EPC is the next generation of product identification. It is a simple, global industry standard, a compact “license plate” that uniquely identifies objects (items, cases, pallets, locations, etc.) in the supply chain.

In several use case studies performed in different companies across Europe, current supply chain flows are investigated for benefits and opportunities created by the introduction of Electronic Product Codes. The study reveals possible benefits especially for small and medium sized companies (SME):

A small company in Germany has specialized in the distribution of high quality, individually tailored polymers and additives as well as in optimized customer service for the use of these raw materials. The service includes advice on the choice of materials, but also on laboratory analysis of materials or technical support and tool design. As part of the "Ecologistics" study, logistics processes, ordering, distribution and information flow were examined in the company. The use of EPC codes could bring additional security in the supply chain and the market through the unique identification and the possibility of batch tracking of finished goods.

Another medium-sized manufacturer in Germany produces high-quality machines in different sizes for optimal weld preparation or edge rounding before the subsequent coating or painting of metal. The manufacturer provides its high-quality machines through an international dealer network together with the necessary technical application expertise to customers in steel construction, shipbuilding, automotive, machine construction, pipeline construction, aerospace and general engineering. Together with its major customers worldwide, the manufacturer develops the technology constantly. The use of the EPC could help this company internally in warehouse operations to have a more efficient storage and handling of raw and semi-finished materials, because real-time data about every part would be available. There are currently considerations to improve the traceability of the products sold worldwide through a new numbering system. With the EPC code on every sold device, a unique global identification would be guaranteed. The advantage of full traceability is not only a better quality management for the producer himself, but also a better organization of spare part and maintenance management for customers.

The project "Ecologistics" is a cooperation of 12 institutions and companies from Belgium, Germany, France, Great Britain, Luxembourg and the Netherlands to demonstrate the benefits of increased transparency in supply chains for the companies involved by consistent use of existing international and cross-industry standards. Co-funded by the EU (InterregIVb) the research project specifically aims at providing concepts, methods and solutions for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Lead partner is the University of Mons (Belgium), from Germany the Institute for production and logistics systems - Prof. Schmidt is involved as project partner.

Save the Date

On October 14th, 2014 in the afternoon, the partners of Ecologistics project are organizing a conference about traceability in Brussels. The conference will be held in the same venue as The European Forum of Logistics Clusters (Brussels44Center). The subject of the conference will be: the added value of IT tools and GS1 standards for implementing traceability in logistics.

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