



# Green & Safe LIFE-styles

*for the sustainable and safe use of  
household chemicals*



# Consumers' dilemmas

*"I'm standing in DM in front of the shelf. I came here to get shampoo. I have five minutes to make my choice. I am a conscious consumer, I am preoccupied by the state of the environment, and I hate being scammed. I want clean hair, but I also want that dragonflies don't die in our waters. I scan the shelves like a hunting dog and I know roughly what I'm looking for: EU-Ecolabel, recycled plastic, no silicone. But I just don't see any shampoo with all these three! What I see instead is everything else – after a few minutes, I get lost, drowning in the sea of green claims, until I end up picking something off the shelf pretty much at random. My time is up."*

*"The natural stuff, for example vinegar, is cheap. An environmentally friendly product is expensive. I feel cheated."*

*"Green detergents' cleaning performance is poor and they cost more than the commercial ones. And they are expensive too."*

*"The one [safety warning sign] with the fish always makes me think, but I still buy the product."*

*"People agree that it is very important to use less household chemical for the sake of children (91%), people's health (91%) and the environment (91%). Also, 91% agree that reducing the use of chemicals is good for both health and the environment."*

*"The absolute majority (85%) consider the amount of cleaning products that they now use to be sufficient and 81% do not plan to change the amount of detergent."*

Quotations from focus groups, 2019

Results of the Green & Safe LIFE-style state-of-the-art opinion survey, 2019

# The theory of change

Sadly, the impact of certain chemical substances on the environment and health is obvious. This brings up the question:

***How is it possible to achieve changes in product design and household chemical use in order to reduce exposure of consumers and the environment to harmful chemicals?***

The Green & Safe LIFE-styles project chose to raise consumer awareness and change consumer behaviour to achieve changes. Consumer demand and markets are means of governance. Markets as governing structures can only function if consumers are aware of the public good and willing to act for it. If consumers change their preferences for safer and sustainable products, it will trigger changes in corporate attitudes and product design, i.e. on the supply side of household chemical products.

To leverage market dynamics for public good, **we need to address dilemmas consumers face every day.**

# Scope of the Green & Safe LIFE-styles

The Green & Safe LIFE-styles project for the safe and sustainable use of household chemicals was coordinated by the Association of Conscious Consumers (Tudatos Vásárlók Egyesülete) in Hungary, between 2018 and 2023. The Association of Conscious Consumers was the single beneficiary of the EU LIFE programme funding. Our **aim** was to facilitate behaviour change and raise awareness about the sustainable and safe use of chemical products, mainly but not exclusively goods bearing any safety warning labels or ecolabels.

## Make your chemical use Green & Safe!

- » ***Use less household chemicals***
- » ***Switch to sustainable alternatives, preferably to thirdparty certified ecological products.***

# Objectives

# Achievements

To reach 12.2 million consumers with sustainable chemical use messages\*



27.4 million people reached\*\*

To increase public awareness by 15% about sustainable and safe use of household chemicals



Awareness of the EU Ecolabel on cleaning products increased from 17% to 32% between 2019 and 2023.\*\*\*

To achieve changes in consumer behaviour and make the consumer use of chemicals sustainable and safer at least in 15.000 households



31.000 people changed their behaviour: they seek actively for sustainability related product information or changed to greener and safer product alternatives.

To achieve a 2-3% increase in the consumer demand for certified sustainable products



The demand for the EU Ecolabelled cleaning products increased by 20% between 2019 and 2022.\*\*\*

\* Equals with ca. 3 million individuals, \*\* equals with ca. 6.7 million individuals, \*\*\* impact measurement opinion surveys and market research were delivered by the Nielsen research company in 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023

## Annual turnover of cleaning products (million HUF)

year	2018	2022	change
ECO	2 017	2 414	+20 %
“ECO”	487	5 933	+1118 %

## Market share of certified eco and “eco” cleaning products

year	2019	2020	2021	2022
ECO	1.4 %	1.7 %	1.9 %	1.9 %
“ECO”	2.8 %	3.2 %	4.4 %	4.8 %

ECO: EU or Member State type I eco-label product certificate.

“ECO”: does not have EU or member state type I eco-label product certificate (none or other), but in its visual world, use of name, slogan, etc. tries to appeal to consumers who are receptive to sustainability and/or has another certificate for an ingredient, communicates a corporate sustainability program on the product.

Categories covered: laundry detergent, dishwasher detergent, all purpose cleaner, kitchen cleaner, bathroom cleaner, window cleaner, toilet cleaner, floor cleaner

The market research was delivered by the Nielsen research company.



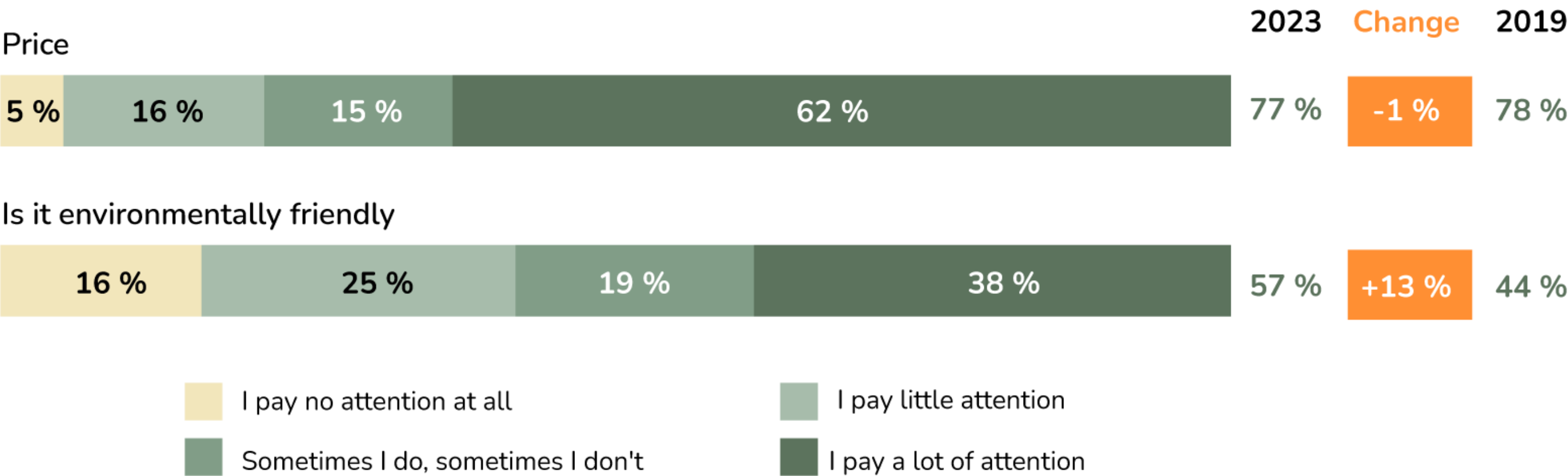
# Information taken into account

Have you ever seen this label on cleaning products?



	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
2023	32 %	43%	24%
2019	17 %	63 %	20%
Change	+15 %	-20 %	+4 %

When you buy a household chemical, how much attention do you pay to the following information on the packaging of the cleaning product?



# The Conscious Consumer App



In 2020, we introduced the Conscious Consumer mobile application that helps consumers to identify safe and sustainable household chemical products.

The complex product database behind the app collects, structures and analyses information from the packaging and the safety data

sheet of products. The evaluation of the products is based on the risk characteristics of the substances, on the safety warnings and ecolabels displayed on the product. The database uses data from the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA) public database of substances.

More than **24.000** downloads.

News about launching the app were

featured **87 times** in the

Hungarian media in 2021, reaching

nearly **800.000** people





The main features of the app: barcode scanning, browsing among products, saving favourites for the next shopping, recommendations and sharing through social media, sharing the most popular green products: the ones that are frequently saved as favourites by users, challenges to make users' household greener. Downloadable for Android or for iOS.





# Product tests –

Ecolabelled products are efficient and not expensive!

Our study concluded that the supposed weaker efficiency, perception about the higher price, and the common belief that these products are hardly available are among the main barriers of not choosing ecolabelled products.

We launched a series of comparative laboratory product tests to confute these misbeliefs. The tests focused on the functional efficiency of products, e.g. if they have proper cleaning effects, in some cases, we also tested for harmful substances. The tests covered commercial, EU Ecolabelled and non-certified ecological products: white wall paints, dishwashers, washing powder, laundry gel, all-purpose cleaners, toilet cleaners and washing machine detergents. **Our test results proved that third party certified, ecolabelled products are just as efficient as their mainstream counterparts are. They are usually among the top runners and not necessarily more expensive than other products.**

[www.teszték.tudatosvasarlo.hu](http://www.teszték.tudatosvasarlo.hu)

10 comparative product tests,  
710.000 (individual) readers,  
more than 12 million  
people were informed about  
the test results through  
the media and social media.







# EcoTeams – the power of peer support in behaviour change

Behaviour change in **920** households!

EcoTeams (ÖkoKörök) is a community based behaviour change program originally developed by the Global Action Plan International. The EcoTeams are groups of 5-10 people led by a volunteer coach. Group members meet regularly to support each other on their way towards a sustainable lifestyle. Within the framework of the Green & Safe LIFE-styles project, we elaborated the Clean Home EcoTeams program to achieve changes in household chemical use. The participants of the Clean Home EcoTeams used fewer but more environmentally friendly cleaning products after the 5 weeks of EcoTeams, and they maintained their sustainable routines six and twelve months later.

Instead of the commercial detergents, EcoTeam members started to use third party certified ecolabelled products and alternative cleaning products (washing soda, baking soda, vinegar, citric acid).

Six months after EcoTeams, compared to the beginning of the programme there were 60% more ecolabelled products and 25% more alternative cleaning products in these households – This all happened during the COVID pandemic.

1 methodology, 1 workbook,  
6 volunteer trainings, 155 trained volunteer  
coaches, 920 EcoTeams participants,  
564 EcoTeams group meetings. EcoTeams news  
reached 1.2 million people through  
the media and social media.



Change in the number of  
cleaning products used  
in EcoTeams participating  
households over the  
5 weeks of the program

+50%

Ecolabelled  
products

+64%

Natural products,  
e.g. vinegar,  
washing soda

-25%

Non-ecolabelled  
product

-45%

Single-used  
wet wipes

**Overall change in the number  
of cleaning products used in  
EcoTeams participating  
households 12 months after  
starting the program**

**+14%**

Ecolabelled  
products

**+43%**

Natural products,  
e.g. vinegar,  
washing soda

**-61%**

Single-used  
wet wipes

**-63%**

Non-ecolabelled  
product



# Proposed agenda for Clean Home EcoTeams

## LAST MEETING

ROUND-UP: Living Room

CHECK: Measurements,  
EcoMirror

TO DO:

- celebration
- What's next?

## 3rd THEMATIC MEETING: LIVING ROOM

ROUND-UP: Kitchen

TO DO:

- intro to the topic  
Living Room
- brainstorming and debate
- pledges

CHECK: Measurements

## 2nd THEMATIC MEETING: KITCHEN

ROUND-UP: Bathroom & Toilet

TO DO:

- intro to the topic Kitchen
- brainstorming and debate
- pledges

## FIRST - INTRODUCTORY - MEETING

- getting know each other, introduction
- presentation of EcoTeams
- discussing agenda & topics
- appointment of topic leaders
- TO DO: discussing the EcoMirror and the Measurements

## 1st THEMATIC MEETING: BATHROOM & TOILET

CHECK: Measurements

TO DO:

- intro to the topics Bathroom & Toilet
- brainstorming and debate
- pledges

*“The aim of our EcoTeam was that members take a small step towards a more sustainable life, according to their own priorities and possibilities. It is important to find joy in making a change instead of experiencing it as a pressure. The EcoTeam helps us to reflect on this and gives us the opportunity to develop habits that make us feel good, in a community and with the support of each other.”*

*Lili, volunteer coach*







# Campaigns – Less is more!

The Association of Conscious Consumers ran three integrated campaigns between 2018 and 2023. The main message of the first social media campaign was “Use less, but sustainable stuff”. The second was a thematic “Eco Cleaning Month” that included among others pledges and email campaigns to drug stores to boost eco-products’ visibility. The third campaign joined forces with social media influencers to debate the issue of “greenwashing” dominating the market of cleaning products. The promotion of the EU Eco-label was an integral part of all the three campaign waves. The campaigns were supported by 160 content items in our consumer magazine [www.tudatosvasarlo.hu](http://www.tudatosvasarlo.hu), which reached more than 900.000 individuals.

1000 social media posts,  
160 pieces of content, 91 media pins,  
6.7 million individuals reached  
through the media, 7.7 million through  
the social media, 0.9 million  
through our own consumer media,  
1700 people engaged in actions,  
7200 people changed their behaviour:  
use less chemicals or more sustainable chemicals,  
pays attention to the safety  
warning signs.

42%

Thanks, I will reduce chemicals use!

48%

Thanks, I'll use more sustainable products from now on!

10%

I will then pay attention to the safety warning signs

7%

I'll stick to my good old chemicals

Read our  
anti-greenwashing  
manifesto



*Results of the impact measurement poll  
linked to the online magazine content*



# Future use of results, spin-off projects

Parts of the newly developed **EcoTeams methodology** is being applied in new geographical, social and thematic contexts. Conclusions were incorporated into the Hungarian EcoTeams with a special focus on sustainable food and being integrated into household chemicals related and climate change focused behaviour change programs in Germany and in the Netherlands.

**Test results and methodologies** are integrated into the **ToxFree LIFE for All** project that starts in 2023, embracing consumer organisations from Austria, Czechia, Slovenia and Hungary, also funded by the European Union LIFE programme.

The **mobile app** was extended with new features already during the lifetime of the Green & Safe LIFE-styles project. New funding was attracted to promote ethical and sustainable food products, and to create an ecolabel inventory for the promotion of all kinds of third party certified ecolabelled products and to educate about the ecolabels. From 2024, the Conscious Consumer app will be further

developed in the frame of the Horizon Europe funded project “Consumers’ understanding of eating sustainably” (CUES) aiming at the promotion of credible ecolabels, especially among the elderly.

## Spreading the word

We shared the results of the Green & Safe LIFE-styles project on almost 30 high impact international and local conferences, workshops and network events. For example, on the Consumer PRO

capacity building workshops and meetings of BEUC (European Consumer Organisation), on the LIFE Platform Meeting on Chemicals, on the meeting of the European Union Ecolabelling Board, on the European Union Consumer Dialogue – The New Consumer Agenda, on the joint webinar of the Eurocommerce and of BEUC, on the Hungarian Ecolabel Roundtable and on industrial conferences.



# Targeting framework conditions

Our ambition was to contribute to the improvement of the framework conditions regulating the sustainable and safe use of household chemicals. To this end, we submitted opinions and comments to public and private policy consultations, among others to the revision of the Hungarian Ecolabel regulation, the Hungarian Ecolabel framework conditions for fabric softeners, the revision of the Hungarian advertisement codes of ethics, green claims policies on the European and local level and the European detergent regulation; we communicated our Ecolabel related results to the Directorate-General for Environment of the European Commission. We also shared our experience and data about misleading green claims (greenwashing) with the BEUC, Directorate-General for Environment, the Hungarian Competition Authority and with the competent ministries in Hungary.





# About the Association of Conscious Consumers

The Association of Conscious Consumers or in Hungarian, the 'Tudatos Vásárlók Egyesülete' has been promoting sustainable, circular, ethical, fair and just consumption and lifestyle choices since 2001.

Our team is convinced that solving environmental and social issues starts with the personal decision made by the consumer. Besides raising awareness and informing consumers, since 2009 we put an increasing emphasis on facilitating behaviour change in order to decrease the ecological footprint of consumers and maximize their social impact.

## Flagship activities:

- providing science-based information to consumers to make more sustainable choices (free and subscription-based product and service tests; [tesztek.tudatosvasarlo.hu](https://tesztek.tudatosvasarlo.hu));
- creating our own consumer media content and calls for action related to sustainable consumption, consumer engagement and behaviour change ([tudatosvasarlo.hu](https://tudatosvasarlo.hu));
- behaviour change programs;
- promoting local, sustainable and fair food supply chains, especially community supported agriculture and other local solidarity based food systems, and the expansion of markets for real green and fair products;
- digital innovations for sustainable and fair consumer choices: Conscious Consumer phone app.

Our activities are backed by trend hunting and research.



## Project data

**Project title:** Green & Safe LIFE-styles

**Project ID:** ENV GIE HU000622

**Total budget:** 1.160.223 €

**EU LIFE program contribution:** 696.133 €, the EU LIFE contribution is 60% of the eligible costs.

**Project duration:** September 2018 - November 2023.

The Green & Safe LIFE-styles was supported by the European Union LIFE program and co-funded by the Hungarian Ministry of Agriculture.

Access to project results:

<https://tudatosvasarlo.hu/green-and-safe-lifestyles-English>

## Project leader and contact

Emese Gulyás PhD

tve@tve.hu

Tudatos Vásárlók Egyesülete

Association of Conscious Consumers

[tudatosvasarlo.hu](https://tudatosvasarlo.hu), [tesztek.tudatosvasarlo.hu](https://tesztek.tudatosvasarlo.hu)

[facebook.com/tudatosvasarlokegyesulete](https://facebook.com/tudatosvasarlokegyesulete)

[instagram.com/tudatos.vasarlok](https://instagram.com/tudatos.vasarlok)



Co-funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the Tudatos Vásárlók Egyesülete (Association of Conscious Consumers) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or CINEA. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.