

## **Sustainable Innovation 2025**

***Sustainable Innovation in Products, Services and Business Models***

***Past, Present and Future***

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### **Ensuring Trust in Sustainability Claims: Standards, Compliance, and Industry Impacts under the European Green Deal**

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The EU Commission's proposal for the European Green Deal is to provide trust in market forces, including citizen's willingness to make sustainable choices in their private lives and business decisions. The driving force behind the verifiability of sustainability claims is the necessity to provide consumers and professional decision-makers—whether motivated by personal commitment or professional obligation to make decisions promoting sustainable development—with factual sustainability-related information. At the same time, there is a fear that due to the complexity and amount of sustainability information, it becomes an overwhelming burden for companies to acquire the data needed, form the information needed by different stakeholders, and formulate such statements and claims that are both compliant with regulatory requirements and with scientific scrutiny while at the same time be understood by their customers. The consequences for the industry from these new requirements are still difficult to foresee.

This research aims to analyze different requirements for the verifiability of sustainability-related claims and statements made or proposed by the European Commission, International and European standards and Business agreements developed to guide organizations, local actors, national and international trade and markets, as well as examples of certification schemes relevant to challenges handled by the process industries. To ensure relevance and practical guidance, real cases of sustainability statements and claims were studied in process industry companies, regarding how to interpret, express, and set requirements for verifiability and substantiation of sustainability claims. Though the Green Claims directive focuses on claims targeted to consumers, this research considers the implications from this directive for business-to-business sustainability information sharing.

Since a 'verifiable sustainability claim' refers both to how to verify that a sustainability claim is correct and how to form and formulate such a claim, this research includes both perspectives on the subject by presenting and discussing questionably verifiable claims together with guidance on how to better form and formulate them. The study also includes practical methods and checklist tools to evaluate whether a claim is verifiable and would comply with the current proposal of the EU Commission's Green Claims Directive. This article also includes an extensive literature study presenting directives, standards, and other literature relevant to the subject of sustainability claims and green claims.