



WPCF members underline the importance of reducing the environmental footprint in the graphic industry

In their recent meeting, members of the World Print & Communication Forum (WPCF) recognised the efforts of the graphic industry to promote a circular economy and mitigate climate change. Demonstrating environmental action is becoming an important prerequisite for many printing companies. This is being driven by legislation and customer requirements. One important area of action is climate protection through reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Calculating the carbon footprint of printing activities and its products is a crucial first step to helping clients, consumers, and other stakeholders understand the environmental impact of their activities. WPCF sees the need for a common understanding and internationally recognised assessment criteria so that there can be transparency and consistency in reporting emissions.

Introduction

For environmental reasons, national, state, local, and provincial governments are focused on the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and increasing the use of renewable energy sources. Industry, including the printing industry, has been increasingly incentivized to reduce their carbon emissions and many sectors are working on reduction schemes.

Demands to reduce the environmental impact of print are coming from customers, institutions, and governments. Because of the increased awareness of climate change and its link to greenhouse gas emissions, the general public is an important target group for information about the carbon emissions of different sectors. It should be clear to customers and consumers what the principles are behind calculating carbon emissions. Transparency is an essential element of any credible reporting program.

Objective

The landscape of the print market is progressively globalizing, with large actors operating across borders. Suppliers to the printing industry are often selling their products internationally. Print buyers are increasingly global, distributing their information material and publications to diverse interest groups across numerous countries. Printers are part of the same trend, and ongoing consolidation in the sector is creating more international players.

Nevertheless, most of the printing sector, however, consists of small or micro enterprises, in need of a simple model which is easily applicable to their activities. Models for calculating carbon footprints need to adopt an international approach, tailored to the printing sector and easy to use for both large and small companies.

The objective of members of WPCF is to recommend best practices for calculating greenhouse gas emissions from printing activities.



Calculation scope

The defined scope is based on the existing knowledge of the production of printed matter in a life cycle approach. This relates to emissions of greenhouse gases in the life cycle of printed material excluding emissions related to capital assets, customer distribution and end-of-life of printed material.

The calculation should cover all six greenhouse gases (GHG) defined in the Kyoto Protocol¹, expressed as carbon equivalents, provided relevant data are available. These gases are carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, sulphur hexafluoride, and two groups of gases (hydrofluorocarbons and perfluorocarbons). Direct emissions from combustion cover exclusively fossil fuels.

The Greenhouse Gas Protocol (GHG Protocol)² defines three scopes when looking at the carbon footprint of any industrial activity. Scope 1 corresponds to direct emissions from sources owned or controlled by the organization. For a printing company, this relates mainly to the use of energy in the production facility and the offices. Scope 2 refers to indirect emissions from the generation of purchased electricity and heat. This refers to the emissions related to the production of the energy purchased by the printing company. Scope 3 relates to other indirect emissions, including the production of raw materials, consumables, and their transport. According to the GHG Protocol Corporate Accounting and Reporting Standard, the inclusion of scope 3 in the calculation of carbon emissions is not mandatory.

Considering the importance of indirect emissions (scope 3) in the overall emissions of a printing facility and lifecycle emissions of a product, WPCF members agree that when calculating the carbon footprint of a print product or printing company the three scopes need to be considered.

Scope 1	Scope 2	Scope 3
Direct emissions from energy used on site	Indirect emissions from the production of the consumed energy	All other indirect emissions, such as the production of purchased materials (substrates and consumables), transport-related activities in vehicles not owned or controlled by the company, electricity-related activities not covered in Scope 2, outsourced activities, waste disposal, etc

Conclusion

With pressure on printers to display their environmental credentials, WPCF members recognize the need for a common approach in the field of carbon footprint for the printing industry. Only a common understanding of the main parameters and the boundaries for the calculation will enable companies to make their customers understand the carbon footprint of the company or the final print product. This is increasingly important to combat greenwashing and avoid unreliable comparisons. WPCF members will work together with the aim at further detailing their common approach to carbon footprint in the printing industry. Printing associations are the key resource to help printers in their respective countries improve their environmental performance.

¹ <https://unfccc.int/resource/docs/convkp/kpeng.pdf>

² <https://ghgprotocol.org/sites/default/files/standards/ghg-protocol-revised.pdf>



The World Print & Communication Forum (WPCF) is a collaborative platform for the world's major transnational and national printing associations to work together to promote the development and prosperity of the global printing industry. WPCF also facilitates and encourages communication with other parts of the print value chain to further develop the print and communication market through international and cross-industry collaboration and knowledge-sharing.

Contact **Beatrice Klose**, Secretary General of WPCF for more information: bklose@intergraf.eu.