

STeP ***by OEKO-TEX®***

What is STeP by OEKO-TEX®?

STeP stands for “Sustainable Textile & Leather Production” and is a modular certification system for production facilities in the textile and leather industry.

The goal of STeP is to implement environmentally friendly production processes in the long term, to improve health and safety and to promote socially responsible working conditions at production sites.



What does the STeP by OEKO-TEX® certificate include?

STeP is structured into 6 modules. Each module contains defined performance criteria, which are assessed in the form of basic questions (including approx. 60 exclusion criteria) and advanced questions, using a transparent scoring system.

- Chemical management
- Environmental performance
- Environmental management
- Social responsibility
- Quality management
- Occupational health and safety

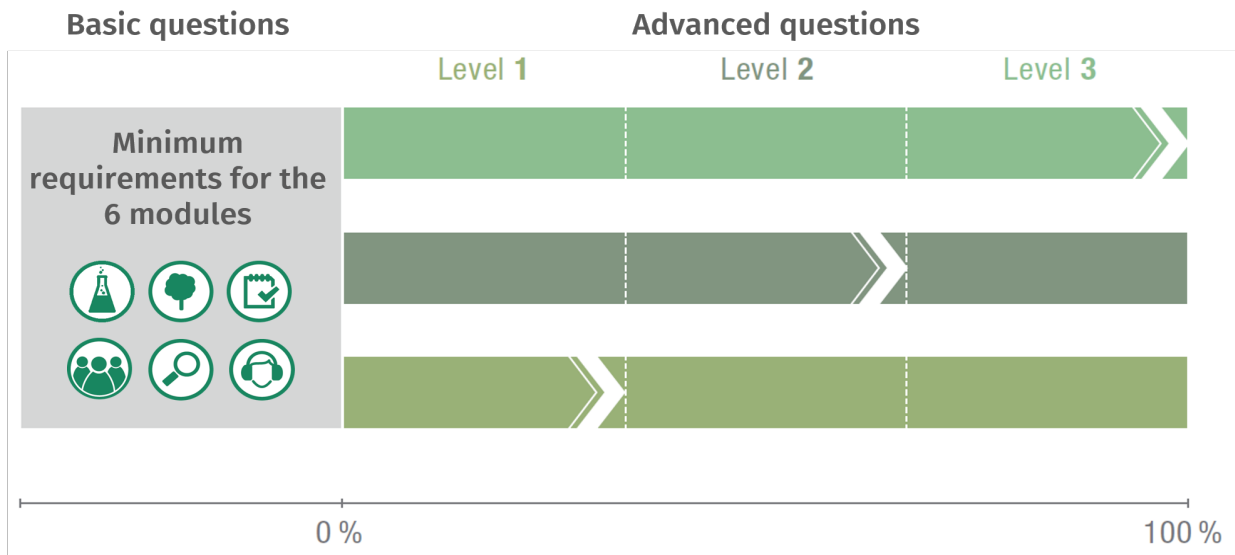
The following is indicated on the STeP certificate:

- The total evaluation
- The evaluation of the 6 individual modules
- Scope of certification



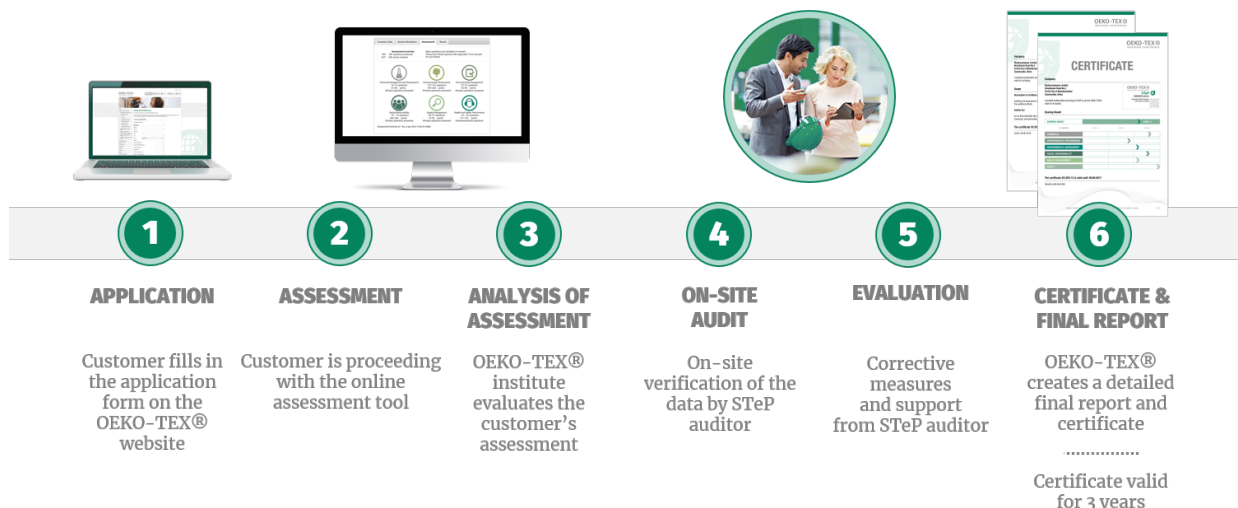
How is the evaluation done?

If the minimum requirements of the 6 modules are met, the classification will be at three different levels, describing the extent to which the company has achieved sustainable production and working conditions:



- **Level 1** = Entry level: All basic questions (approx. 2/3 of all questions) must be answered to meet the minimum requirements. If 70% of the maximum amount of points from the basic questions are achieved, and all exclusion criteria are fulfilled, then the company obtains the entry level and has 1% of the total performance in level 1. If up to 1/3 of points from the advanced questions (including the remaining basic points) are achieved, level 1 classification is awarded for a total performance of up to 33%.
- **Level 2** = Good implementation with further optimization potential: If up to 2/3 of points from the advanced questions (including the remaining basic points) are achieved, level 2 classification is awarded for a total performance of 34%–66%.
- **Level 3** = Exemplary implementation in the sense of a best practice example: If up to 3/3 of points from the advanced questions (including the remaining basic points) are achieved, level 3 classification is awarded for a total performance of 67% – 100%.
- **Failure:** If one of the exclusion criteria is not fulfilled and/or the minimum score is not reached, then the company does not obtain a STeP certification at this point.

How does the STeP by OEKO-TEX® certification process work?



What are the STeP exclusion criteria and minimum requirements for the 6 modules?

Immediate exclusion criteria are for example:

- No available chemical register
- No wastewater analysis
- No available environmental management system
- Child labour
- Obstructed escape routes and emergency exit



Minimum requirements in module 1: Chemical management

- Compliance with the guidelines of a manufacturing restricted substances list (MRSL)
- Introduction of a suitable harmful substances management
- Periodical training and further education regarding the handling of the used chemicals
- Obligation for appropriate communication regarding the used chemicals and their risks
- Monitoring the use of chemicals



Minimum requirements in module 2: Environmental performance

- Compliance with the stipulated limit values
- Optimization of production processes
- Efficient use of resources
- Responsible handling of waste, wastewater, emissions etc.



Minimum requirements in module 3: Environmental management

- Proof of a suitable environmental management system for the targeted coordination and the systematic implementation of all environmental protection measures
- Commitment to environmental targets, continuous improvement to the environmental system
- Periodic training regarding the implementation of environmental targets and measures



Minimum requirements in module 4: Social responsibility

- Ensuring socially acceptable working conditions in line with UN and ILO conventions
- Implementation of existing social standards (e.g. SA 8000)
- Guaranteed training for employees regarding the social issues of a business



Minimum requirements in module 5: Quality management

- Implementation of a suitable QM system, e.g. in line with ISO 9001 or operational approaches
- Guaranteed traceability, responsibility, and appropriate documentation regarding the flow of goods and manufactured products, and the recording of production processes



Minimum requirements in module 6: Occupational health and safety

- Proof of suitable measures to ensure the required health and safety in the workplaces (e.g. filter systems, ear protection etc.)
- Guaranteed safety of buildings and production plants (e.g. through constructive measures, escape plans, separation of production areas etc.)
- Accident prevention
- Implementation of existing safety standards (e.g. ISO 45001)

How much are the certification costs?

The costs for a STeP certification depend on the size of the company, the specific test criteria for each production stage, as well as the extent of already implemented measures regarding environmental protection and social responsibility. The expense includes support from the OEKO-TEX® institutes during the whole certification process, and the license fee.

The costs are approximately € 6,000 for small, and up to €15,000 for very large, complex operations.

How long does a certificate last for and how is it monitored?

A STeP certificate is valid for three years and can subsequently be extended any number of times.

Within the three-year certificate term, a conformity audit takes place in addition to the certification audit. In addition, unannounced verification audits can be carried out.

How long does the auditing and certification take?

A period of 3 months is normally required, from the time of application, data collection and data assessment to the audit and the issuing of the certificate. However, the duration of the actual certification process depends on the individual circumstances in each production facility. This includes, for example, whether certifications for individual business areas already exist, or how fast the required data can be determined for the assessment and provided in the assessment-tool.

Depending on the size and complexity of the company, the supervising OEKO-TEX® institute normally takes between 2 and 10 days to complete the testing in the form of an audit of the production facility.

What investments are required to implement STeP?

If the company already complies with the current legal minimum requirements in the respective production country, no large investments need to be made to meet the entry criteria for STeP.

Even low-budget investments, such as a process documentation and staff training, lead to an improved scoring. In the course of the continuous improvement process, investment measures have a short payback period due to sustainable improvements in efficiency.

What are the advantages of the link to MyOEKO-TEX®?

MyOEKO-TEX® is an online-tool to manage your OEKO-TEX certificates and the Buying Guide Profile. The platform enables to display supplier relationships (from the raw material supplier to manufacturer to brand or retailer). It simplifies the evaluation and reporting on your sustainability performance and that of your suppliers, makes it easier to develop partnerships, and promotes positive change through the strategic and sustainable management of supply chains.

Where to apply for STeP by OEKO-TEX®?

Quotations require some baseline production data, such as the number of employees, the company's production processes, or existing pre-certifications. The application for a non-binding offer is [here](#).