

**OEKO-TEX®**

CONFIDENCE IN LEATHER

**LEATHER STANDARD**



# QUESTIONS & ANSWERS





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## LEATHER STANDARD by OEKO-TEX®

With new innovations in technology and production practices, the leather industry is evolving. Likewise, consumers are playing a decisive role in making positive changes all along the leather supply chain. As a support to this evolution, the OEKO-TEX® Association developed the LEATHER STANDARD by OEKO-TEX®, a certification for leather and leather articles at all levels of production. Products certified in line with LEATHER STANDARD offer manufacturers, buyers, brands, retailers, and consumers a high and effective product safety with regard to harmful chemical substances. We are delighted to introduce the LEATHER STANDARD by OEKO-TEX®.

Within this brochure you will find answers to some of the most frequently asked LEATHER STANDARD questions. As always, our independent institutes are available to answer questions and help you begin the process of certifying your leather products.



**Georg Dieners**

Secretary General | OEKO-TEX® Association

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## » What is the LEATHER STANDARD by OEKO-TEX®? «

The LEATHER STANDARD is a worldwide consistent, independent testing and certification system for leather and leather articles of all levels of production, as well as leather accessory materials used.

The aims of the product certification in accordance with LEATHER STANDARD are:

1. To provide the end consumer with a reliable, 3<sup>rd</sup> party, independent product label for non-hazardous products that are tested in accordance with the LEATHER STANDARD criteria catalogue and thereby contribute to effective consumer protection.
2. To support the companies along the supply chain on the basis of a scientific criteria catalogue and neutral laboratory tests in a targeted manner with the implementation of their intended human-ecological product safety.

The tests for harmful substances in accordance with LEATHER STANDARD by OEKO-TEX® take into account important legal regulations, such as banned Azo colourants, chromium (VI), formaldehyde, pentachlorophenol, cadmium, nickel release, PFOS, etc., requirements from the US Consumer Product Safety Improvement Act (CPSIA) regarding lead, numerous harmful chemicals, even if they are not yet legally regulated, as well as diverse parameters for healthcare.

In its criteria catalogue, the LEATHER STANDARD also considers numerous environmentally relevant substance classes.

Authorised member institutes of the OEKO-TEX® Association, each with proven expertise, exclusively carry out the tests and laboratory tests.

The concept of the OEKO-TEX® tests for harmful substances is based on a modular system: certifications are possible at every stage of leather production; certificates from preliminary stages are recognized. A successful test allows for the labeling of respective leather products with the LEATHER STANDARD mark after the certificate was issued.

Examples of articles that can be certified are semi-finished leather products (e.g. Wet-blue, Wet-white, Crust etc.), finished leather, leather fiber material, ready-made articles (garments of all types, leather shoes, leather gloves, leather handbags, leather covers accessories and much more).



## » What advantages does a certification in accordance with LEATHER STANDARD by OEKO-TEX® additionally offer for marketing? «

As a 3<sup>rd</sup> party, independent label, the LEATHER STANDARD is a helpful marketing tool enabling companies to transparently document their responsibility with respect to the human-ecological product safety of their articles and for their customers along the supply chain, all the way through to brands, retailers and the consumer.

All companies that have their leather articles certified in accordance with the LEATHER STANDARD have the opportunity to present their companies and product portfolio free of charge in our online directory ('Buying Guide') under [www.oeko-tex.com/products](http://www.oeko-tex.com/products). With an average of roughly 5,000 website visits per day and visitors from more than 200 countries around the world, the OEKO-TEX® website is an ideal advertising platform that attracts international attention.

You can enter the data for your company presentation in our Buying Guide at any time in our self-service portal at [www.oeko-tex.com/customers](http://www.oeko-tex.com/customers). Your responsible OEKO-TEX® Institute will be pleased to send you the access details upon request.

## » According to which criteria does OEKO-TEX® test leather and leather articles for harmful substances? «

To contribute to a high and effective product safety for the leather articles from a consumer's point of view, the OEKO-TEX® Association works with an extensive criteria catalogue during its certification process. The catalogue contains numerous test parameters and is binding for all authorised OEKO-TEX® testing institutes. Our central focus is the development of test criteria, limit values and test methods using a scientific basis. Test criteria and limit values in many cases go far beyond applicable national and international standards.



## » Which test methodology is used as a basis for the OEKO-TEX® tests for harmful substances? «

The OEKO-TEX® test methodology is mainly based on the release of harmful substances from the materials to be tested. According to the opinion of the OEKO-TEX® Association, this is the most important concern for garments (possible contact with skin and risk of absorption through the skin). Strict methods are selected for the release of harmful substances.

Materials for babies and toddlers are additionally tested for colour fastness using a simulation of 'sucking/nibbling' with a synthetic saliva solution. Colourants must have a very high colour fastness level at this test.

Large-scale materials, which are encountered particularly in the area of furnishing materials, are tested additionally for the emission of specific harmful substances into the air.

Odours that are atypical for the materials automatically lead to the exclusion of a certification for all articles.

## » Which parameters are part of the LEATHER STANDARD by OEKO-TEX® criteria catalogue? «

The full criteria catalogue with the current limit values for the tests for harmful substances in accordance with LEATHER STANDARD can be viewed at any time on the Internet at [www.oeko-tex.com/limitvalues-leatherstandard](http://www.oeko-tex.com/limitvalues-leatherstandard).

On the basis of its comprehensive and strict catalogue of measures for harmful substances, with several hundred regulated individual substances, the LEATHER STANDARD by OEKO-TEX® takes into account:

- › Important legal regulations, such as banned azo colourants, chromium (VI), formaldehyde, pentachlorophenol, short-chain chlorinated paraffins, PFOS, etc.
- › Numerous harmful chemicals, even if they are not yet legally regulated.
- › Requirements of Annexes XVII and XIV of the European Chemicals Regulation REACH as well as of the ECHA SVHC Candidate List insofar as they are assessed by expert groups of the OEKO-TEX® Association to be relevant for leather materials and leather articles/products. Discussions and developments that are considered to be relevant are taken into account as quickly and effectively as possible through updates to the LEATHER STANDARD by OEKO-TEX® requirements.
- › Requirements from the US Consumer Product Safety Improvement Act (CPSIA) regarding lead.
- › Numerous environmentally relevant substance classes.

## » What is the meaning of the four product classes of LEATHER STANDARD by OEKO-TEX®? «

The tests for harmful substances in accordance with LEATHER STANDARD by OEKO-TEX® are fundamentally based on the respective purpose of the leather materials and leather articles. That is why the principle applies: the more intensive the skin contact of a leather product (and the more sensitive the skin), the stricter the human-ecological requirements that need to be fulfilled.

Babies require special protection. Accordingly, in OEKO-TEX® product class I, all baby articles are held to the strictest criteria, in line with sensitive baby skin. Finishes containing formaldehyde are excluded here. The requirement for saliva-resistance means that colourings and prints should not bleed or stain when babies suck on them.

Many companies voluntarily subject their products to the particularly strict requirements of product classes I and II when having their articles tested for harmful substances in accordance with LEATHER STANDARD.

## » Which product classes exist? «

**PRODUCT CLASS I:** PRODUCTS FOR BABIES AND TODDLERS UP TO 3 YEARS AGE (LEATHER CLOTHING, LEATHER GLOVES, CRAWLING SHEEPSKIN, FUR ETC.)

**PRODUCT CLASS II:** PRODUCTS THAT ARE WORN CLOSE TO THE SKIN (LEATHER TROUSERS/-JACKETS, LEATHER GLOVES, LEATHER UNDERWEAR ETC.)

**PRODUCT CLASS III:** PRODUCTS USED AWAY FROM THE SKIN (LINED LEATHER JACKETS/OVERCOATS, LEATHER HANDBAGS, LEATHER BELTS ETC.)

**PRODUCT CLASS IV:** DECORATION/FURNISHING MATERIALS (UPHOLSTERY LEATHER COVERS ETC.)

A list of all companies that have their products certified in accordance with LEATHER STANDARD by OEKO-TEX® can be found at [www.oeko-tex.com/products](http://www.oeko-tex.com/products).



## » Which costs are incurred for a certification? «

The financial cost for product certification in accordance with LEATHER STANDARD is comprised of the costs for the licence, the compulsory company audit and the laboratory and administrative tests together.

The precise costs for harmful substance testing are based on the testing efforts for the respective leather article and can be obtained within the context of a cost estimate with the appointed OEKO-TEX® Institute.

Through the use of already certified source materials, the financial costs for the laboratory tests can be reduced significantly, so that duplicated tests are not necessary. At the individual stages of production, only new additions are tested.

Due to the modular system used in LEATHER STANDARD certification, the testing costs are distributed across the companies along supply chain including retailers.

The OEKO-TEX® test criteria are applicable at every processing level. High testing density along the supply chain minimizes the testing effort for individual companies.

## 9 Time required for certification

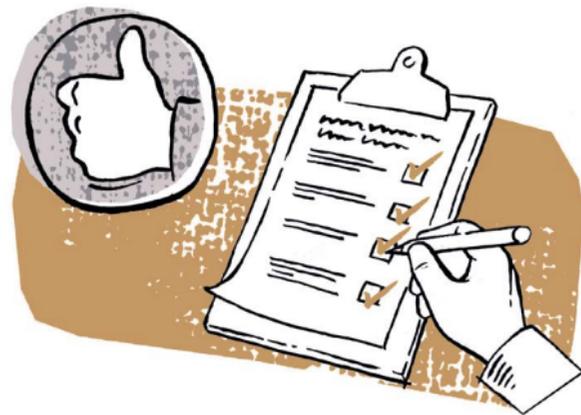
### » How much time is required for a certification? «

How long a certification takes from application until the certificate is issued depends on individual factors. You can influence these favourably through good preparation - e.g. with preferably gap-free information and documentation within the context of your application for certification. The testing institute will then be pleased to discuss the concrete testing effort with you and the resulting time requirement. Just give us a call.

## 10 Application and application documents

### » With whom do I submit my application? «

If you would like to have your products certified in accordance with LEATHER STANDARD by OEKO-TEX®, you must submit a written application to one of the authorised OEKO-TEX® testing institutes in Europe or one of its worldwide representative offices. You can find an overview of all OEKO-TEX® member institutes and offices at [www.oeko-tex.com/institutes-leatherstandard](http://www.oeko-tex.com/institutes-leatherstandard).



## » Where do I obtain application documents? «

You can download the current application forms very conveniently at [www.oeko-tex.com/downloads](http://www.oeko-tex.com/downloads). Or contact one of the OEKO-TEX® Institutes and representative offices authorized for the LEATHER STANDARD.

## » Which components does the application contain? «

- › Description of the products to be tested
- › Description of the operational quality assurance
- › Details of the processing steps carried out for producing the leather article
- › List of all chemicals used (colourants, auxiliary agents, etc.) including safety data sheets
- › Names of the suppliers of all components of the product, from the raw materials right up to the accessories
- › Certificate copies of already certified source materials
- › Free inclusion in the international OEKO-TEX® reference list/Buying Guide

## 11 Certification in 6 steps

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### » Which steps is the certification comprised of? «

1. Application and provision of a test sample
2. Testing on the basis of the OEKO-TEX® criteria catalogue
3. Preparation of the test report
4. Submission of the conformity declaration
5. Company audit before or shortly after the issuance of the certificate
6. Issuance of the certificate upon successful testing

## 12 Selection and packaging of the test samples

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### » What needs to be noted with the selection of the test samples? «

The test samples must be selected such that they cover the entire article group to be certified in accordance with the LEATHER STANDARD. Such a representative selection forms the basis for the article description on the certificate. An incomplete sample selection may lead to a restriction of the certified article group.

## » Are there specific requirements for packaging the test samples? «

The packaging of the test samples must fulfil specific quality requirements in order to protect the samples and guarantee correct, reproducible and relevant test results. This includes, for example, packaging the test samples individually in tear-resistant polyethylene films.

## » What happens during the testing by the testing institute? «

The OEKO-TEX® member institute systematically records the product and production data. Then an individual test plan is prepared for the articles (article groups) to be tested.

Next, the representative articles provided from the running production are checked for relevant parameters of the OEKO-TEX® criteria catalogue. Using a 'worst-case' methodology, testing normally will take place on articles with the darkest dyeing or the highest quantity of finishing agents.

## 14 Test report

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### » How and when are the test results received? «

After the completion of the laboratory tests, you will receive written test results in the form of an expert report. If the laboratory tests are successfully completed and the contractual documents are consistent, the preconditions for a certification are created. However, this result does not yet provide entitlement to labelling of your products with the LEATHER STANDARD label.

## 15 Declaration of conformity

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### » How and when is the certificate received? «

The basis for issuing the LEATHER STANDARD certificate is a so-called declaration of conformity in accordance with ISO 17050-1. In this, you guarantee that the products that are manufactured/sold by you correspond to the tested samples during the complete term of the certificate, i.e. in terms of type, material composition and production.

With this submission of the declaration of conformity, you also consent that the OEKO-TEX® Association is entitled to conduct control tests and company audits during the term of the certificate.





## » What is the meaning of the OEKO-TEX® certificate? «

The OEKO-TEX® certificate documents that the articles listed have been successfully tested in accordance with the LEATHER STANDARD by OEKO-TEX® and comply with the requirements of a common product class. In this sense, it serves as a legally binding verification of a successful product certification in accordance with the LEATHER STANDARD in all business processes.

The tested articles may only be advertised with the LEATHER STANDARD label after receipt of the certificate and only in conjunction with a license number and name of the testing institute. The expert report provides proof of the most recently conducted review.

Upon request, you can also obtain electronic templates of the label from your responsible OEKO-TEX® Institute in various file formats and language versions with the certificate.



## » How do I apply for a certificate extension? «

You may extend existing OEKO-TEX® certificates at any time upon application to the responsible testing institute. New articles are tested on the basis of representative samples, as usual. You will again receive a test report from the commissioned institute and confirm with a declaration of conformity that the quality of the additional products corresponds to that of the test samples. The original term of the certificate remains unchanged with the extension. The additional products are also listed in the article description of the certificate.

## » How much does a certificate extension cost? «

For a certificate extension, an administration fee and new testing costs are incurred. These are based on the testing effort for the newly added products.

## » What is an order certificate and when do I need one? «

For special order processing, the International OEKO-TEX® Association has additionally created a dedicated certificate version, the so-called excerpt certificate/order certificate.

It is based on the general original certificate of the company, but also describes the relevant order articles in a distinctive manner. The timely assurance of the OEKO-TEX® parameters is particularly significant for companies that only work together with their supplier pool on an order-related basis.

On the basis of the certificate number and the additional code on the order certificate, the retail sector is able to trace the validity of the certificate and the correspondence with the delivered articles on the Internet.



## » For how long is the LEATHER STANDARD certificate valid? What happens after expiry of the validity? «

A LEATHER STANDARD certificate is valid for twelve months and can be renewed for a further year upon request after this period expires. This procedure is recommended to ensure continuous product safety and a smooth-running process along the entire supply chain.

## » How much does a certificate renewal cost? «

As with the initial certification in line with LEATHER STANDARD, for a certificate renewal the license fee is incurred again as well as the (different depending on testing effort) laboratory testing costs. Your testing institute will be pleased to inform you about expected individual cost. As a rule, this is normally lower for a certificate renewal than for the initial testing.

## 17 Quality assurance and assurance of product conformity

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### » As an applicant, do I need a company quality assurance system? «

Yes. The precondition for product certification in accordance with the LEATHER STANDARD is the establishment of an appropriate quality assurance system in the company to guarantee the product conformity. The QM system must be recognised by the commissioned OEKO-TEX® Institute.

## 17 Quality assurance and assurance of product conformity

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### » Why is a company audit required for a product certification in accordance with LEATHER STANDARD? «

The company audit, which is usually conducted shortly prior to or after issuing the LEATHER STANDARD certificate by the commissioned OEKO-TEX® Institute at your premises, is an additional, required component of the certification process.

The aim of the company audit is to support your company quality assurance in a targeted manner with respect to compliance with the required LEATHER STANDARD criteria. For example, by means of our experts conducting the representative sample extraction from the current production processes with you, we can coordinate the article group descriptions on the certificate jointly with your quality assurance officer. After the initial audit, the operational monitoring takes place at least every three years.

## » How is the product conformity guaranteed after the LEATHER STANDARD certificate has been issued? «

The product conformity must be assured by the certificate holder. This takes place on the one hand each day by means of the internal quality controls of the companies that are arranged in the declaration of conformity.

On the other hand, the OEKO-TEX® testing institutes conduct control tests each year with at least 25% of all issued certificates. For this, products from preliminary stages are tested on the basis of samples from current certification processes. Furthermore, the institutes purchase OEKO-TEX® certified products on a random sample basis from retailers and test these again in the laboratory. Last but not least, independent auditors, who are commissioned by OEKO-TEX®, additionally conduct unannounced site inspections in order to examine the quality assurance in the operations on site.

The prosecution of label misuse, right up to the withdrawal of an existing certificate, is also an important component of these safeguarding measures.



## 18 Withdrawal of existing certificates

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### » What happens if a LEATHER STANDARD certificate is withdrawn by OEKO-TEX®? «

It is rare but should it occur that a LEATHER STANDARD certificate is withdrawn, we recommend to the affected companies that they immediately contact the responsible OEKO-TEX® Institute in order to discuss any/all course of action in detail. Depending on the respective reason for the withdrawal of the certificate, it may, for example, be necessary to conduct the laboratory test again, submit additional documents or conduct a new company audit.

## 19 Certification of leather products in line with STANDARD 100 by OEKO-TEX®

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### » Can leather products further on be certified in line with the STANDARD 100 by OEKO-TEX®? «

No. Leather can only be certified in line with the LEATHER STANDARD by OEKO-TEX®.

» **Why do the limit values for LEATHER STANDARD partly differ from the ones stipulated for the testing of textiles in line with STANDARD 100 by OEKO-TEX®? «**

Due to the specific properties of leather and the resulting different production process and used chemicals, it is necessary to have partly different limit values as compared to textiles. With regard to Chromium (III), for example, higher limit values for leather products in product classes II – IV are valid, because according to the state of the art leather is mainly tanned with Chromium.

» **Can contracting processes such as the finishing of leather articles also be certified in line with the LEATHER STANDARD? «**

Contracting process within the framework of leather production can also be certified in line with LEATHER STANDARD by OEKO-TEX®. Raw goods, however, here are not part of the certification.

21 Products/processes that can be certified in line with LEATHER STANDARD

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» **From which stage of production on is it possible to have leather products certified in line with the LEATHER STANDARD? «**

A certification according to LEATHER STANDARD by OEKO-TEX® is possible on every stage of production, from semi-finished products (Wet-blue, Wet-white etc.) to the manufacturing of ready-made articles.

21 Products/processes that can be certified in line with LEATHER STANDARD

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» **Is it possible to test and certify leather with hairs (e.g. furs) in line with the requirements of the LEATHER STANDARD? «**

A certification in line with LEATHER STANDARD by OEKO-TEX® is possible for leather with hair (e.g. fur). However, the aspects mentioned in point 22 have to be considered strictly.



## » Does the LEATHER STANDARD take animal and species protection into account? «

By signing the application, the applicant is solely responsible to comply with the animal and species protection, which are relevant for him. Regarding to this the OEKO-TEX® Association excludes any liability. However, it is in the sole judgement of the OEKO-TEX® Institute and OEKO-TEX® not to conduct a testing and certification of specific leather with hairs (e.g. fur) when indicated.

## » LEATHER STANDARD and REACH «

The OEKO-TEX® Association also keeps an eye on the developments of the European Chemicals Regulation REACH and the ECHA SVHC-Candidate list (substances of very high concern). On the basis of its comprehensive and strict catalogue of measures, with several hundred regulated individual substances, the LEATHER STANDARD by OEKO-TEX® takes into account requirements of Annexes XVII and XIV as well as of the SVHC Candidate List insofar as they are assessed by expert groups of the OEKO-TEX® Association to be relevant for leather. Discussions and developments that are considered to be relevant are taken into account as quickly and effectively as possible through updates to the LEATHER STANDARD by OEKO-TEX® requirements. However, each company itself is always obliged and responsible to assure that their produced articles, as well as used chemicals and auxiliaries, are in agreement with REACH.

## » When are ready-made leather products permitted to be labelled with the LEATHER STANDARD label? «

The precondition for the certification of ready-made leather articles/products and product labelling with the LEATHER STANDARD by OEKO-TEX® label is that all components of the finished article meet the required test criteria, i.e. not only the leather, but also possibly included fabrics, sewing yarns, inlays, prints, labels etc. as well as non-textile accessories such as metal buttons, zippers or rivets. As defined in the LEATHER STANDARD by OEKO-TEX® document, for leather materials the conditions and criteria of the currently valid LEATHER STANDARD will be taken into account, for included non-leather components (textile materials, metal accessories etc.) the conditions and criteria of the currently valid STANDARD 100 by OEKO-TEX® will apply. Additionally, it is not sufficient to present OEKO-TEX® certificates for the source materials and components. For each ready-made article a certificate in its own right has to be issued.



## » Where can print templates be obtained for the LEATHER STANDARD label? «

Digital print documents in various languages and file formats (for printing and online use) can be requested free of charge from your responsible OEKO-TEX® Institute. For certificate holders, label templates with an individual test number are also available for downloading at any time on our website in the OEKO-TEX® Self-Service Portal. The access details for this interactive customer area are also available from your commissioned institute.

Additional information about using the LEATHER STANDARD labels can be found at [www.oeko-tex.com/labelling-guide](http://www.oeko-tex.com/labelling-guide).

## » What must be generally noted with the advertising use of the LEATHER STANDARD by OEKO-TEX® label? «

The LEATHER STANDARD label is a protected trademark. This means that all companies intending to use the label for their certified leather products must comply with the valid specifications for use of the label.

Forgery and misuse of the trademark will be prosecuted under criminal and civil law. If OEKO-TEX® becomes aware of this, it may furthermore lead to the withdrawal of the underlying LEATHER STANDARD certificate.

A LEATHER STANDARD label is only valid if the issued test number and responsible testing institute are shown on it. These details must correspond to the company's own certificate.

Detailed information about advertising use of the LEATHER STANDARD label can be found at the following locations:

- In the 'General and Special Conditions for the Authorisation to use the LEATHER STANDARD by OEKO-TEX® Mark'.
- On our website at the address [www.oeko-tex.com/labelling-guide](http://www.oeko-tex.com/labelling-guide)

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Print templates for the LEATHER STANDARD label

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**» What do retailers specifically need to note with the use of the LEATHER STANDARD label? «**

A LEATHER STANDARD label applied to a product alone is not sufficient as proof of a successful test for harmful substances. Therefore, when purchasing your product range/components, always insist that your supplier presents the valid OEKO-TEX® certificate. The details on the LEATHER STANDARD test label (test number and test institute) must correspond to those of the supplied certificate. Products that are not listed on the certificate may not be labelled with the LEATHER STANDARD label.

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Use of the label after expiry of the certificate

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**» How long is a LEATHER STANDARD label permitted to be used for the product marking and other advertising purposes, if the certificate has expired? «**

Basically, we recommend that all companies using the LEATHER STANDARD by OEKO-TEX® label for product marking and other advertising purposes extend the existing certificate in good time prior to expiration, so that no gaps occur.

According to the OEKO-TEX® statutes, inventories of LEATHER STANDARD labels for product marking (e.g. hang tags) and marketing materials in which the label is shown have to be removed from the market no later than two months after the expiry of the relevant certificate.

## » What guidelines exist for labelling of products that consist of both textile materials and leather components? «

If an article consists of both leather and textile components it will either be tested and certified according to LEATHER STANDARD by OEKO-TEX® or STANDARD 100 by OEKO-TEX®. In fact dependent on, if the majority (visible surface, mass) of the article consists of leather or textile material. The applicant will receive only one certificate and label for the article. The final decision on this has the mandated and certifying institute.



## About OEKO-TEX®

The International Association for Research and Testing in the Field of Textile and Leather Ecology (OEKO-TEX®) is a grouping of 18 independent textile research, leather research and test institutes in Europe and Japan and their representative offices in more than 60 countries around the world.

Based on their wide-ranging activities and core competencies the OEKO-TEX® member institutes provide important impulses for innovations within the textile, leather and clothing industry. Through close cooperation with the manufacturers their accredited test systems also makes a substantial contribution to the development of high-quality textile and leather products and the implementation of sustainability along the textile value chain.

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