

European Pallet Association e.V. (EPAL)

PRESS RELEASE

EPAL digitalises the open EPAL pallet pool

The new EPAL Euro pallet QR – in circulation since 1 January 2024

Düsseldorf, 16 January 2024

The European Pallet Association e.V. (EPAL) introduced the EPAL Euro pallet QR on 1 January 2024 as a new open EPAL pallet pool product. The new EPAL Euro pallet QR is marked on the right-hand corner blocks with a unique QR code and thus allows it to be easily integrated into digital processes in goods and pallet logistics. Following the market launch on 1 January 2024, the new EPAL Euro pallet QR is now available to order from selected EPAL Euro pallet producers and can be used and exchanged in the open EPAL Euro pallet pool.

On 21 November 2023, the EPAL Board decided the market launch of the new EPAL Euro pallet QR would be on 1 January 2024. With this, EPAL has successfully completed the first step in the digitalisation of the EPAL Euro pallet pool.

From load carrier to information carrier

Each individual EPAL Euro pallet QR is marked with an individual and unique QR code on the two right-hand corner blocks and thus has a unique identity. Users can link the QR code to the goods on the pallet through their own IT systems or through software developed by EPAL and retain complete transparency of the location of the goods and pallet using Track&Trace.

Dirk Hoferer, President of EPAL:

“A unique QR code is generated for each new EPAL Euro pallet QR and printed on the right-hand corner blocks as part of the production process. We decided on this sophisticated solution for marking using unique QR codes so that users can link the EPAL Euro pallet QR to their own data. This means the EPAL Euro pallet will, in future, be not just a load carrier, but also an information carrier.”

The new EPAL Euro pallet QR revolutionises pallet logistics

It is essential that EPAL Euro pallets are always available in sufficient quantity and at the correct location so that users' supply chains function flawlessly. The new EPAL Euro pallet QR facilitates easy, quick and location-specific capture of the pallets in stock and evaluation of data on quantity and quality. This means it is possible to ensure that EPAL Euro pallets are always available in operational pallet logistics in the correct quantity and necessary quality, irrespective of where the pallets are required in goods and transport logistics.





THE OPEN PALLET POOL.

Davide Dellavalle, Vice-President of EPAL:

"There are many benefits to using EPAL pallets with a QR code in pallet logistics. This can be seen in the labels which are still frequently used to mark pallets today and which entail a great deal of cost, time and waste. In the future, users will be able to monitor and control pallet logistics using a new EPAL web app or their own warehouse management or ERP systems. Having access to real-time data optimises both goods logistics and pallet logistics."

The EPAL Euro pallet QR can be exchanged without limitation

The new EPAL Euro pallet QR can be freely exchanged within the open EPAL Euro pallet exchange pool. This ensures the EPAL Euro pallet QR can be used immediately in all logistics and exchange processes. Used EPAL Euro pallets with a QR code will be available in future in exactly the same way as EPAL Euro pallets without a QR code and will be part of the established processes for sorting used EPAL Euro pallets in order to make used EPAL Euro pallets available to users in the quality they require.

Pascal Holliger, member of the EPAL Board:

"The new EPAL Euro pallet QR also offers new opportunities for suppliers of used EPAL pallets. Licensed EPAL repair operations and service providers can add sorting and provision of EPAL Euro pallets with QR code to their existing repair and service portfolio. This means users of used EPAL Euro pallets can also take advantage of the benefits digital EPAL Euro pallets QR have to offer."

The EPAL QR code as a digital product passport

In addition to using the QR code on EPAL Euro pallets to retrieve information on the pallet's location and loading as well as the goods, it can also be used to supply information on the pallet. As well as data on pallet production, which improves security against counterfeiting, this specifically includes data on the material and recycling, exchange and reuse. The QR code has been developed by EPAL as a digital product passport so that the new EPAL Euro pallet QR already complies with future legal requirements for a digital product passport.

Bernd Dörre, EPAL CEO:

"EPAL Euro pallets and the open EPAL pallet pool are an exemplar of the circular economy and sustainable use of resources. It is therefore obvious that the QR code should contain all the important information on reuse, exchange, repair and recycling. We therefore wanted to do more than just comply with future legal requirements for a digital product passport: we also wanted to improve the sustainability of the EPAL pallet pool and to support users of EPAL pallets in achieving their own sustainability targets."

Innovation for the wooden packaging industry

Printing a QR code on wood-chip pallet blocks throws up many technical challenges. This starts with inkjet printing as part of pallet production, including generating the QR code in real time, and continues with the demands on the



legibility and durability of the QR code. Originally a research project in cooperation with the Fraunhofer IML in 2018, the EPAL Innovation Lab has tried out many printing and production processes as part of its own product development and has made a decisive contribution to the development of expertise and new technical solutions, providing benefits to the entire wooden packaging industry. Many European companies and associations in the wooden packaging industry have already registered their interest in the results of EPAL's developments.

Michael Brandt, Head of EPAL Innovation Lab:

“The development of printing QR codes on wooden pallets and wood-chip pallet blocks was only possible with the support of companies from many different sectors. We would like to thank the many companies who have contributed to the development of the EPAL Euro pallet QR through their inexhaustible application, many ideas, and the will to innovate. We would particularly like to thank the pilot projects, including the producers of EPAL Euro pallets, suppliers of inkjet printing systems, hardware and software developers, and the producers of wood-chip EPAL pallet blocks.

About EPAL:

The European Pallet Association e.V. (EPAL) is an international, non-profit association and organises the open EPAL Euro pallet pool. There are currently more than 650 million EPAL Euro pallets and approximately 20 million EPAL Box pallets in circulation, making the EPAL Euro pallet exchange pool the biggest open pallet exchange pool in the world. EPAL Euro pallets are the backbone of European industrial, retail and logistics supply chains.

The open EPAL Euro pallet pool, with its principles of pallet reuse, exchange, repair and recycling, has been an exemplar for a sustainable circular economy for over six decades. Wooden EPAL Euro pallets make an essential contribution to protecting the climate. They store CO₂, reduce waste and the demand for wood, and thus improve the carbon footprint of industrial, retail and logistics users.

EPAL was created in 1991 by the pallet associations which had been active since the 1960s and currently has representation in more than 35 countries. More than 1,600 EPAL licensees produce and repair EPAL Euro pallets and other EPAL load carriers. More than 100 million new EPAL Euro pallets were produced in both 2021 and 2022. More than 1.55 billion EPAL Euro pallets have been produced since 2000.

Strictly enforced standardisation and the high quality of EPAL pallets have been the foundation of this success and the functional circular economy that is the open EPAL Euro pallet pool. EPAL's comprehensive and independent quality assurance ensures effective and safe use and exchange of EPAL pallets in every industrial, retail and logistics supply chain. The EPAL trademark stands for quality, safety and sustainability in logistics.

For further press information:

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