RESULT 5 · ACTIVITIES FOR SENIOR & INTERGENERATIONAL GROUPS

Green Claims Court



Court is in session. Real-looking products stand accused of greenwashing. Prosecutors, defenders, witnesses and a jury decide, under the new EU rules, whether each green claim is allowed, banned or needs proof.

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ACTIVITY 08 · ROLE PLAY · MOCK TRIAL

08

Green Claims Court



Court is in session. Real-looking products stand accused of greenwashing. Prosecutors, defenders, witnesses and a jury decide, under the new EU rules, whether each green claim is allowed, banned or needs proof.

FORMAT	TIME	GROUP
Role play · mock trial	60–75 min	8–24 · four roles, rotating
LETTERS	**YOU NEED**	
R	Green Claims case files and verdict sheet (Printable G), role badges, a gavel (a wooden spoon will do), real packaging from home (optional)	

THE ACTIVITY IN PLAIN WORDS

The room becomes a courtroom. Each case file is a product with a green claim on its packaging: "eco-friendly" washing-up liquid, "carbon neutral" coffee pods, a T-shirt "made with organic cotton", a supermarket's own "Green Choice" seal. For each case, a prosecution team (the consumer group) argues that the claim misleads shoppers. A defence team (the company) argues that it is fair. A witness can be called. The jury, guided by a one-page summary of the new EU rules, gives its verdict: **Allowed**, **Banned** or **Needs proof**. The judge (the facilitator, then a participant) keeps order with a wooden spoon. People argue, laugh, act, and leave able to read a label like a lawyer.

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You will need

- Green Claims case files and verdict sheet (Printable G): one case file per case, one verdict sheet per jury member, one "EU rules in brief" sheet per table
- Role badges: Judge, Prosecution, Defence, Witness, Jury (sticky labels are fine)
- A gavel: a wooden spoon and a chopping board make a fine one
- Optional: real packaging that participants bring from home, with green words, leaves or logos
- Optional: a judge's robe (a black scarf or a graduation gown)
- A flip chart with three columns: Allowed, Banned, Needs proof

Before the session

- Print the case files and the "EU rules in brief" sheet. Choose four to six cases for your time.
- Ask participants to bring one product from home with a green claim on it, for the bonus case.
- Arrange the room as a courtroom: a judge's table at the front, prosecution on one side, defence on the other, jury in a semicircle, and a witness chair.
- Read the handbook chapter on shopping, food and spotting greenwashing, especially "Spotting greenwashing".

OPENING LINES · READ ALOUD

"All rise! The Green Claims Court is now in session. Since the 27th of September 2026, new EU rules decide which green words a company may print on a product. Today, several products stand accused of greenwashing: of looking greener than they really are. Our prosecutors speak for shoppers. Our defenders speak for the companies. Our jury will decide. And remember: in this court, a leaf on a label is not evidence."

How to run it

1 **Swearing in** 5 min

Hand out roles. Divide the group into a prosecution team, a defence team and a jury; one person is the witness for each case. Read the "EU rules in brief" sheet aloud together. Jurors keep it on their laps.

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2 Case preparation 10 min

Give the first case file to both teams. The prosecution looks for vague words, missing proof, invented logos, half-truths and offsetting claims. The defence looks for anything specific and provable in the company's favour. Each team chooses a speaker. The witness reads their witness card (for example "the shopper who bought it" or "the company's packaging designer") and prepares to answer in character.

3 The trial 8 min per case

The judge strikes the gavel. Prosecution opens (1 minute). Defence replies (1 minute). Either side may call the witness and ask two questions each (3 minutes). Closing statements (30 seconds each). The judge may ask one question.

4 The verdict 2 min per case

The jury discusses briefly and votes with cards: **Allowed**, **Banned** or **Needs proof**. Each juror must name the rule they used. The judge reads the verdict and the facilitator reveals the "official ruling" from the case file. The team whose argument matched the ruling scores 2 points; jurors who named the correct rule score 1 point each.

5 Rotate (as you go)

After each case, roles swap: prosecutors become jurors, jurors become defenders, and so on. Everyone tries every role. Invite a participant to be judge from the second case onwards.

6 The bonus case 5 min

The judge picks a real product brought from home. With no case file, the whole room acts as jury and applies the checklist. This is often the most interesting case of the day.

7 Name it and debrief 10 min

Read the key idea, then run the debrief.

EXAMPLE

In Tallinn, the court hears Case 2: "BeanGood coffee pods, carbon neutral, we plant a tree for every pack". Prosecutor Ülle (69) holds up the pack: "Planting trees somewhere else does not change what this pod does here." Defender Rasmus, a student, argues that the trees are real and the company publishes its tree-planting reports. The witness, "the company's sustainability manager", played by Peeter (72), admits under questioning that the pods themselves are not recyclable in Estonia. The jury votes "Banned". The official ruling agrees: a claim that a product is carbon neutral because of offsetting is now treated as misleading in the EU. The company can still talk about its tree projects, as long as it does so honestly. Ülle's team scores 2 points, and Rasmus gets a round of applause for a brave defence.

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KEY IDEA

Since 27 September 2026, EU consumer law bans several common greenwashing practices: generic claims such as "eco-friendly", "green" or "natural" without proof of excellent environmental performance; sustainability labels that are not based on a certification scheme or set up by a public authority; claims that a product has a neutral, reduced or positive climate impact because of offsetting; claims about the whole product when only one part is better; presenting what the law already requires as a special feature; and durability claims that cannot be proved. Specific, provable claims ("bottle made from 50% recycled plastic") and genuine labels such as the EU Ecolabel remain allowed. Enforcement varies by country, so your own critical eye still matters. Source: European Commission, Directive (EU) 2024/825 on empowering consumers for the green transition.

Debrief

1

What happened?

Which case was hardest to decide? Which arguments convinced the jury? How did it feel to defend a claim you did not believe?

2

So what?

Why do companies use green words and leaves on packaging? Which tricks had you seen in your own shop? How do the new EU rules change what you will see on shelves?

3

Now what?

What will you look for the next time a product says "eco"? Which question from the checklist will you ask in the shop?

Make it work for your group

- **Limited mobility, sight or hearing:** Everyone stays seated; the "courtroom" can be one large table. Print case files in large type. Use a microphone for speakers if the room is large, and ask speakers to stand or raise a hand so lip-readers can find them.
- **Intergenerational version:** Make each legal team mixed. Younger participants are "legal assistants": they read out the case file, keep notes and look up the rules sheet. Older participants are lead counsel and judges. Seniors often bring powerful real-life evidence ("In my day, soap came in paper").
- **No-device version:** This activity needs no device. As an extra, a group with a device can ask an AI: "Is the claim '[claim]' allowed under EU Directive 2024/825?" and then put the AI's answer on trial too.
- **Online or hybrid version:** Hold the trial in a video call. The judge uses the mute button as a gavel. The jury votes with a poll.
- **Short version (20 min):** One case only, with the whole group as jury and the facilitator playing both prosecution and defence. Finish with the bonus case.

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WATCH OUT

The case files use invented brands. Do not put a real company "on trial" by name with an official-sounding verdict, and avoid naming real brands in photos or posts after the session. Keep debates good-humoured: if an argument becomes personal, the judge calls a 30-second recess. Some participants may feel guilty about past purchases; remind them that greenwashing is designed to fool careful shoppers, and the point is to spot it from now on.

OWN IT

"Next time I see 'eco-friendly' on a product, I will look for an official label such as the EU Ecolabel before I buy." Or: "This month I will check the three cleaning products under my sink and replace any vague 'green' one, when it runs out, with a certified one or a simple alternative."

Related: Shopping, food and spotting greenwashing · G-PRO cards: KS-14 Green Labels: Which Ones Mean Something?, AI-19 Checking a Green Claim, KR-14 Packaging That Looks Recyclable, KE-18 Is Your Green Electricity Real?, W-06 The Debate

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