

Implementation of the Ecodesign Directive (2009/125/EC)

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The Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety adopted the own-initiative report by Frédérique RIES (ALDE, BE) on the implementation of the Ecodesign Directive (2009/125/EC).

The report stated that the Ecodesign Directive has been a successful instrument for the improvement of energy efficiency. It has resulted in a significant reduction in greenhouse gas emissions and has led to economic benefits for consumers. Members recommended that the Commission continue to include more product groups selected on the basis of their ecodesign potential, including both energy efficiency and material efficiency potential as well as other environmental aspects.

Stressing that coordination with initiatives connected to the circular economy would further enhance the effectiveness of the directive, Members called for an ambitious plan on ecodesign and the circular economy, providing both environmental benefits and opportunities for sustainable growth and jobs, including in the SME sector, as well as advantages for consumers.

Strengthening the decision-making process: Members noted that the implementation delays are due in part to the limited resources available within the Commission. In this regard, the Commission is called on to:

- deploy sufficient resources for the ecodesign process given the significant EU added value of the legislation;
- avoid delays in the adoption and publication of implementing measures;
- define clear deadlines and milestones for finalisation of the implementation measures and revise existing regulations;
- give priority to the implementation and review of measures relating to products that have the greatest potential in terms of both primary energy savings and the circular economy;
- include assessments on release of microplastics into the aquatic environment in the ecodesign measures where appropriate;
- introduce mandatory requirements for microplastic filters in the review of the ecodesign measures for household washing machines and washer dryers.

From energy savings to resource efficiency: reiterating their call for a new impetus on the circular economy aspects of products, Members considered that the implementation of the Ecodesign Directive must now systematically address the full lifecycle of each product group within its scope by the setting up of minimum resource efficiency criteria covering, inter alia, durability, robustness, reparability and upgradability, reuse, recyclability, possibility of remanufacturing, content of recycled or secondary raw materials, and the use of critical raw materials.

Members also stressed the importance of providing information on the availability of spare parts and product lifetimes, where possible. Transparency for consumers should also be enhanced.

Members noted that the Commission has postponed action on information and communication technologies (ICT) such as mobiles and smartphones, pending further assessments and given the rapid technological changes in this product group. They considered, however, that these products, which are sold in large numbers and replaced frequently, have a clear potential for improvements, in particular in terms of resource efficiency, and that ecodesign criteria should therefore be applied to them and that efforts should be made to streamline the regulatory progress.

Improving market surveillance: Members insisted on the need to strengthen the surveillance of products placed on the internal market through better cooperation and coordination between Member States and between the Commission and national authorities and through the provision of adequate financial resources to the market surveillance authorities.

They called on the Commission to examine the potential of establishing a digital product fact sheet (product passport), as a tool to disclose materials and substances used in products, which would also facilitate market surveillance.

Members put forward a number of proposals to tighten up coordination between national market surveillance authorities:

- that the general product registration database for energy labelled products be extended to all products covered by Ecodesign regulations;
- that national authorities be required to draw up specific plans for their market surveillance activities in the area of ecodesign, to be notified to other Member States and to the Commission; Member States should include random inspections in these plans;
- that the Commission consider defining a minimum percentage of products on the market to be tested, as well as develop a mandate for carrying out its own independent market surveillance and make proposals, as appropriate;
- that deterrent measures be adopted, including: sanctions for non-compliant manufacturers proportional to the impact of non-compliance on the entire European market and compensation for consumers who have purchased non-compliant products, even beyond the legal warranty period, including through collective redress;
- that particular attention be paid to non-EU imports and products sold online.

Lastly, the Commission and the Member States are encouraged to communicate proactively on the benefits of ecodesign measures as an integral part of the process of adopting these measures, and to engage more actively with stakeholders to improve peoples understanding of the legislation. Special attention should be paid to low-income households at risk of energy poverty when presenting programmes to encourage the uptake of the most resource-efficient products.