Ecodesign and Energy Labelling

for a circular economy

Europe's 'take-make-use-throw' economy is costing consumers money and depleting the world of finite resources.

Every day we buy products that don't last.

Cracked smartphone screens, weak laptop batteries, faulty toasters. We'd like to fix them, but instead end up replacing them.

Why?

Because repair costs are too high and spare parts are not made available by manufacturers.

The current situation is putting pressure on governments and businesses that are highly dependent on raw materials imported from far-away countries, despite solutions already available in Europe to improve, repair and reuse.

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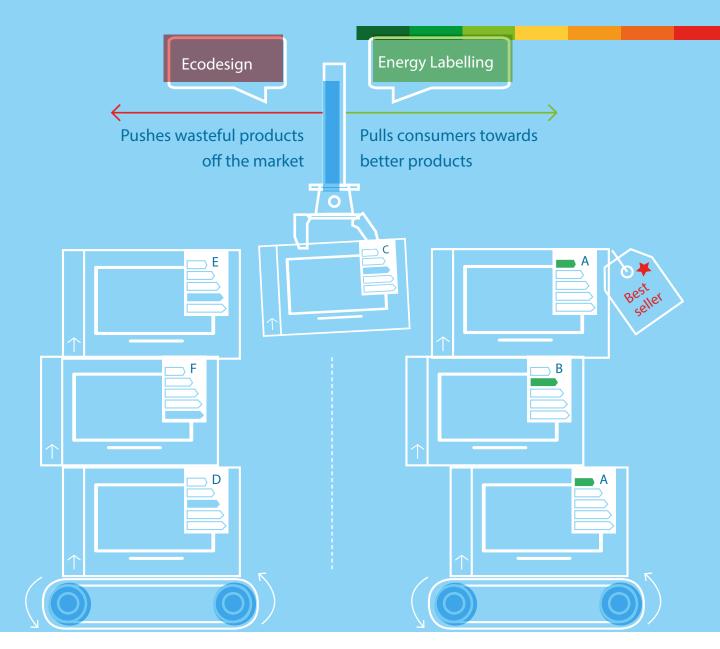
The good news

We have the means to reverse this trend through better product policy.

Ecodesign

Energy Labelling

Through these laws, the EU has already succeeded in cutting carbon emissions and energy bills. We want to expand this success and make products more resource efficient too.

We are already benefiting from mammoth energy savings thanks to these two legislations. The European Commission estimates that by 2020 every home in Europe will see their energy bills reduced by nearly €500 per year. Greenhouse gas emissions will also be cut by 319 megatonnes per year, that's equal to taking about seven million cars off the road.

Ecodesign

Energy Labelling

Pushes wasteful products off the market

Pulls consumers towards better products

Through Ecodesign, the EU can…

Make products more durable by introducing minimum durability requirements on key components, such as making smartphone screens shock resistant

Ban the use of hazardous chemicals in order to facilitate material recovery and recycling of the product while also protecting human health and the safety of workers

Ensure that essential parts of the product are easily replaceable, repairable and upgradable.
(e.g. smartphone batteries)
Components are often impossible to disassemble due to glueing and welding

Make products easier to recycle by not combining different materials not compatible for recycling, i.e. plastics

Share necessary repair information, tools, and spare parts in order to fix specific problems
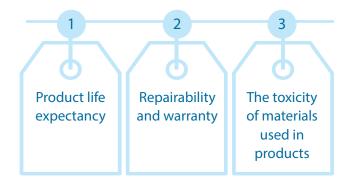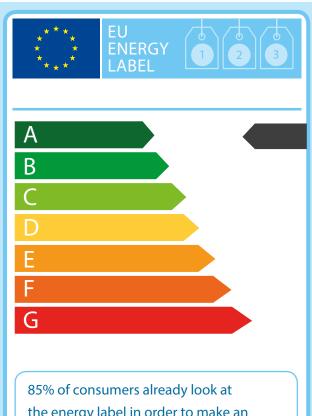
Ensure that recyclers have access to key information on the content and location of precious materials

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The Energy Label...

...already tells consumers how much energy appliances use and should be expanded to include information on:

1 Product life expectancy

2 Repairability and warranty

3 The toxicity of materials used in products

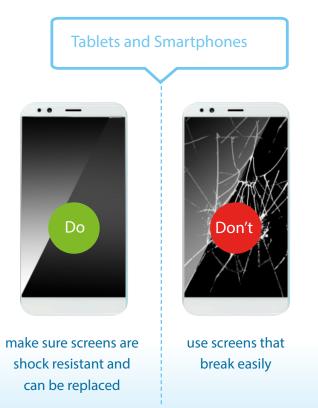85% of consumers already look at the energy label in order to make an informed decision about the product they want to purchase.

How to make products resource efficient

A cheat sheet

Tablets and Smartphones

Washing machines

Do — make sure screens are shock resistant and can be replaced

Don't — use screens that break easily

Do — guide consumers with information on free warranty and repairability ratings on the label

Don't — make it difficult to access components (or parts) that often fail difficult (pumps, electronics, valves)

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How to make products resource efficient

A cheat sheet

Displays

Do

Don't

facilitate recycling by providing information all along the reverse supply chain

use hazardous substances such as flame retardants or mercury

Dishwashers

Do

Don't

give access to repair information and tools to everyone

use proprietary means (error diagnosis software or specific tools) for the purpose of repair

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By increasing recycling rates and the amount of reusable materials and products policy makers can:

trigger more than
800,000
new green jobs

in the remanufacturing, repair and recycling sectors. This would translate into 1/6 of the unemployed youth in the EU coming back into work.

Help save more than
€70 billion a year

and increase the annual turnover of the EU waste management and recycling sector by €42 billion.

Avoid over
420 million tonnes of CO_2 equivalent

which equates to taking 4 out of 10 cars off of European roads.

Reduce EU dependency

on foreign suppliers and manufacturers outside of Europe.

Save huge amounts of energy

compared to extracting virgin resources.

Promote innovation

in material use, product design and business models.

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Don't take our word for it

77% of EU citizens

would rather repair their goods than buy new ones.

Municipalities and waste management enterprises

have stressed the need for better product design in order to prevent waste and improve recycling.

All three European institutions

the Commission, Parliament and Council have called for the implementation of Ecodesign rules for resource efficiency.

Consumer groups and green NGOs

agree that Ecodesign and the Energy Label are the perfect tools to make products last longer and minimise their environmental impact.

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The European Union must

Systematically consider resource efficiency potential for Ecodesign implementing measures, and set requirements to increase reparability and durability of products as well as recyclability of materials

Provide consumers with information relating to product life expectancy as well as repairability and warranty options

Design a service repair index to be displayed on the label in order to reward manufacturers enabling lifetime extension and repair

Consider a consistent approach for all EU instruments for products covered by Ecodesign, producer responsibility, Green Public Procurement and Ecolabel, based on a common set of criteria and a scale of performance

Explore how Ecodesign can be adapted to non-energy related products

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The Coolproducts campaign, led by the European Environmental Bureau and ECOS, is a group of European non-governmental organisations working to ensure the EU Ecodesign Directive and Energy Labelling policies are as ambitious as possible for the good of the environment and consumers.

Published January 2018

Endnotes

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European Commission 2017 [link]

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European Commission 2017, consumer survey [link]

Page 9:

European Environmental Bureau 2014 [link]

Page 10:

 Eurobarometer Survey 2014 [link]; European Commission 2015 [link]; European Parliament 2017 [link]; Council of the European Union 2016 [link]; BEUC 2017 [link]; Municipal Waste Europe 2014 [link]

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