

Mr. Andrä Rupprechter
Federal Minister for Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management
Federal Ministry for Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management
Stubenring 1
1010 Vienna
Austria

Brussels, 20 October 2016

European Commission needs to unleash future Ecodesign Policies to drive energy efficiency and circular economy in Europe

Dear Minister Rupprechter,

On 20 June 2016, you adopted Council Conclusions on the EU action plan for the Circular Economy (10518/16). In these Conclusions, the Council noted “with concern that the European Commission had failed to meet the timetable indicated in the annex to this action plan regarding the Ecodesign of energy-related products and requested to follow-up on these measures without further delay”.¹ In the original plan, the Commission identified those actions as first priorities to be released already in December 2015. Since then no final decision has been taken in this regard. Instead the College of Commissioners will hold another orientation debate on 25 October 2016 on how to proceed with EU Ecodesign policy in the future.

Ecodesign measures are a proven cost-effective way of reducing carbon emissions through the energy savings they deliver. It has a huge untapped potential to perform also on material savings. At a time when the EU urgently needs to cut back on its carbon emissions to meet its obligations under the Paris Agreement, it is almost incomprehensible as we approach the end of 2016 that an Ecodesign Working Plan intended to cover the period 2015-2017 has still not come out. **For this reason, we urge all EU Member States to approach the Commission for an immediate release of the Ecodesign Working Plan and the planned regulation on electronic displays, at the latest with the so called winter package on energy in December 2016.**

Environmental and consumer organisations as well as different business groups have already expressed their deep concern towards the President of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, about this unacceptable delay. We would like to ask that national governments also reiterate their demand for action from the Commission to quickly restore certainty about future Ecodesign policies and make it clear that Europe cannot afford a further delay with regard to the implementation of EU-wide measures on product design.

¹ See paragraph No. 8 of the Council Conclusions: <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/de/press/press-releases/2016/06/20-envi-conclusions-circular-economy/>

The latest report from the International Energy Agency (IEA) highlights that the development of standards for a broad range of appliances under the EU Ecodesign Directive has had a particularly large impact on energy efficiency achievements. Together with the legal framework for the EU Energy label, it delivers around half of the effort to meet the EU energy efficiency target by 2020. If the EU wants to be on track towards the reduction of Europe's energy consumption and the 2030 climate and energy targets, it is critical to ensure a swift publication of the Ecodesign Working Plan and final drafts for product-specific regulations. This situation creates an unmanageable situation for industry, which needs certainty to re-design products in line with new requirements.

Moreover, the Council in June urged the Commission “to include appropriate measures to improve the durability, reparability, reusability, possibilities to use recycled materials, upgradability and recyclability of products in the EU Ecodesign regulations, and other legislation as appropriate, before 2020”.²

Without any indication of the timeline for upcoming reviews and the foreseen investigations of new product groups under the new Working Plan, the EU misses an indispensable driver for progressing towards the circular economy and tackling the resource challenges related to increasing use of electronic devices in a digital economy.

Finally, we see a political need to follow up with the Commission “to evaluate before the end of 2018 for which product groups, other than energy related, it would be possible to take better into account resource efficiency and impact on the environment and human health, building on experiences from the Ecodesign directive”.²

We would appreciate your engagement on this matter and are happy to support the future development and implementation of EU Ecodesign policies that are essential to complement ambitious targets for a circular economy in Europe.

Yours sincerely,



Jeremy Wates
Secretary General

² See paragraph No. 8 of the Council Conclusions: <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/de/press/press-releases/2016/06/20-envi-conclusions-circular-economy/>