

New criteria are required to realise the sustainable consumption and production ambitions of the Community Ecolabel

Brussels, 18 February, 2009. RREUSE, the European Reuse and Recycling Social Enterprises network, would like to raise the following issues as Parliament's ENVI Committee just adopted its report on a revised Community Ecolabel Scheme on 17th February 2009.

1. Focus on durability / reusability of products

The Ecolabel Revision, as well as other Sustainable Consumption and Production Action Plan proposals, are meant to promote innovation in production technologies to improve the environmental performance of products and increase the demand for more sustainable goods.

While recent innovations have resulted in a wider choice of multifunctional products, often the overall lifespan and quality of products has decreased as a result of built-in obsolescence, resulting in a throw-away market with steadily increasing resource consumption and waste production.

To break this vicious circle, products should be made and designed to last and, if broken, be easily repaired. A sustainable product should be a low energy, resource-efficient product all along its life-cycle, starting with quality design and materials allowing for reuse, repair and recycling.

- Durability should be included in the Ecolabel criteria which determine the "environmental performance of products" so as to promote technologies and foster innovation focusing on durable, repairable, re-usable and recyclable products, rather than on the sole energy-efficiency aspects.

2. Consumer information on durability

How can we know which products are expected to be long lasting, easily repaired, to prevent waste production and save resources and energy ?

Only a label could provide consumers with information on the origin of a product, its production methods, its environmental impacts throughout the life-cycle, as well as the extent to which it is durable, repairable and recyclable. Such a label would also help spur innovation to counter the tendency of decreasing durability and quality.

- We call for the introduction of a durability criterion in the framework of the European Ecolabel Scheme which is an international label of environmental excellence
- We are working at the national level to develop specific labelling with standardization bodies

3. Increasing resource efficiency by using more recyclates

Whereas resource efficiency is already increased by products durability, it can be further enhanced by making better use of recycled materials. To make recycling more effective, there is an urgent need to promote markets for recyclates.

- The Ecolabel should include a criterion on the environmentally sound use of materials, encouraging the use of less materials and more recycled materials

Europe is becoming a recycling and energy-efficient society, but should not overlook the potential of another sustainable option, namely a reuse-society.

WE SUPPORTED THE FOLLOWING AMENDMENT ON 17th FEBRUARY:

Amendment 58, with oral amendment on durability and reusability:

Article 6 – paragraph 2

The criteria shall be determined taking into account the environmental impacts of the products available on the Community market. To this end, the environmental impacts during the full life cycle of products, in particular the impact on climate change, impact on nature and biodiversity, energy and resource consumption, generation of waste, emissions to all environmental media, pollution through physical effects and use and release of hazardous substances, **as well as the potential to reduce such impacts due to durability and reusability of the products**, shall be considered. The existing Ecolabel criteria for the different product groups shall be reviewed within 18 months of the adoption of this Regulation to ensure their full compliance with the lifecycle approach set out in this Article.

Who are we ?

The members of RREUSE are social economy federations and enterprises combining both social and environmental objectives in their activities. By repairing and reusing products, we avoid them becoming waste, diverting them at least for some time from recycling or disposal, and contribute to save resources and energy. By creating jobs for people at risk in reuse shops and repair centers, we foster social inclusion and offer essential household items for people with low income.

For more information, please contact RREUSE Secretariat:

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