



FACTSHEET

Better car labelling to choose the cleanest models

Why car labelling?

CO₂ emissions of cars must be curbed to combat the climate crisis. Having [alternatives to car use](#) is one way. Yet not everyone will be able to take the bus or cycle.

Having the most efficient cars on our roads can help. But to be able to choose these, we must have clear, comparable and credible information about the car we are about to buy. This includes information on CO₂ emissions, what we are likely to spend on fuel and whether our cars might be affected by local driving bans that combat air pollution.

A label already exists but has proven unhelpful in practice. And with the market moving towards electric cars, a new type of information is needed to help people make their purchase. This is why consumer groups urge the EU to create a better car label.

The current EU label is misleading...

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Often the label cannot be used to compare different car models, between car dealers or countries. The problem is that the label is an EU 'Directive'. As such its design, and what parameters it should include, is not decided by the EU but left open to implementation by Member States. This makes it a tool of little value for today's would-be car buyers, because:

No standardised label format exists. In the Czech Republic and Poland, for example, every car dealer can use a different format.

Labelling designs are misleading: Germany applies a so-called 'relative label' scheme by which a car's emissions are compared only to cars of the same weight. This can lead to situations where a small car like the Citroën C1 receives the exact same grading as a heavy and powerful Porsche Cayenne.

...and not adapted to today's market

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As it was created in 1999, the label also fails to reflect today's car market.

It only applies to new cars, omitting second-hand cars, leased cars and other forms of motorised transport such as motorcycles or scooters.

Websites and social networks have overtaken printed guides and posters as the main source of information for buyers of cars. And yet the label is **only required to be displayed in printed media**.

Not all cars on the road are or will be petrol cars. Electric cars are a trend that is only expected to rise over the next years. Labelling must also help prospective buyers of these cars in their decision.

The current label does not provide meaningful information about electric cars as it is based on emissions (electric cars therefore automatically rank as 'A').



Reform the label to give people trustworthy information about cars

To reform the car label, consumer groups recommend to:

- A Give the same type of information to all consumers across Europe.** The CO₂ emissions of a car must be stated in 'grams per km' and classified on an A to G scale. Its design should therefore be similar to the EU's energy label for household appliances which is structured the same way. Such a system is easy to understand, well-known and appreciated among consumers.
- Make the label mandatory for all advertisement, online and offline.** This includes online vehicle configurators.
- Allow comparison:** Set the label's design and criteria at the EU level by transforming the current car labelling 'directive' into a 'regulation', which gives less leeway to make changes at national level. It should still be adapted to national circumstances (for units of measurement and information on applicable tax policy).
- Adapt the label for electric cars.** As these cars do not emit CO₂, the label must give other types of information. This includes a car's real driving range, maximum charging speed and average charging time.

Towards a 'total environmental footprint' label in the long term

As future cars are no longer expected to emit CO₂ emissions from their tailpipe, this will not remain a useful value for labelling.

Given that the EU wants to move towards carbon neutrality and a circular economy, it ought to assess a car's overall environmental footprint. A 'cradle to grave' – and back to 'cradle' – methodology can consider extraction and re-use of raw materials, water consumption and recyclability. For electric cars, emissions linked to producing batteries or electricity need to be factored in.

Such an environmental footprint methodology should, once available, be used for the A-G car label. Car makers can in the meantime be allowed to provide certified information to consumers that an electric vehicle's battery was produced with renewable energy and/or can be reused or recycled.

Read our full recommendations at <http://bit.ly/eu-car-label-reform>