



# FACTSHEET

## Getting rid of greenwashing: Restoring consumer confidence in green claims

### What's the problem?

Climate change is a fact. Dealing with it means changing the way we live, produce, consume, heat our buildings and move around. Consumers will be central to this green transition and can make a real difference if they opt for sustainable products or services. The question is: how can we help them do that?

Many consumers are already making an effort to live more sustainably and buy more environmentally friendly products. This is not easy, though. Too many green claims are being used on the market, with many of them unsubstantiated, misleading or dishonest. This creates confusion, making it hard for consumers to identify sustainable products and services.

The main EU tool that is supposed to protect consumers from misleading green claims<sup>1</sup> is not fit for purpose. It can only be used to challenge a claim already in use (often for a long time) after the harm is already done and consumer trust undermined, perhaps irreversibly.

**61%** of EU consumers find it hard to know which products are really green.

### Why now?

As part of the European Green Deal and its new Circular Economy Action Plan, the EU plans to tackle the problem of misleading and unsubstantiated environmental claims. The aim of its upcoming legislation is to empower consumers. BEUC supports these initiatives. The EU should be ambitious in its measures to clean up the market and rid it of misleading green claims and labels once and for all.

### So, what needs to change?

#### FOR CLAIMS

- All green claims should be **pre-approved** before being allowed to be used on the market, as already happens for health claims for food
- An EU authority should be in charge of **verifying the scientific basis** of claims
- There should be a **public registry** where all decisions to approve (or not) green claims are published, together with the clear conditions for their use. There also needs to be a blacklist of claims that are impossible to substantiate
- Market surveillance authorities should conduct systematic **compliance checks**

#### FOR LABELS

- Set up a **centralised accreditation scheme** for green labels
- Draw up a **limited list of reputable and well-recognised ecolabels** to reduce confusion

<sup>1</sup> Unfair Commercial Practices Directive



## Next steps

Sustainable consumption is key to mitigating the climate crisis. If we really want to make a change and enable the green transition, we cannot afford ill-informed consumer choices any longer. We need new rules to ensure all green claims and labels are pre-approved before they reach the market. The urgency of the climate crisis requires nothing less.

### BEFORE

Frank and Svetlana are shopping for a green washing up liquid.



But with so many products on the market claiming to be green, it's hard to know what's actually true!

### AFTER

With a proper pre-approval process for green claims, they know which claims they can really trust.



No products should be able to claim that they are green if they cannot prove it first!