



COMMUNIQUE DE PRESSE
PRESS RELEASE

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Commission giving up the lead on Ecodesign targets to industry?

An estimated 80% of the environmental impacts of products are determined during their design phase. This is why the Ecodesign law aims to improve the environmental performance of energy-related products (such as fridges, dishwashers and washing machines) throughout their life-cycles by integrating environmental criteria at a very early stage in the product design.

Complex Set-top Boxes, often called TV decoders, are an increasingly common feature of European households, providing TV recording and internet access. They are also in the 'worst offender' category for energy consumption and that is why BEUC called on the Commission to regulate their performance.

ANEC and BEUC are concerned by reports that the European Commission is on the brink of accepting the voluntary agreement of a group of manufacturers of complex set-top boxes which refrains from setting binding Ecodesign targets for these products. This would be the first time that Ecodesign requirements would not be set by EU legislation and could set a precedent for self-regulation. We are even more alarmed that the Commission accepts this voluntary agreement while, at the same time, identifying its many shortcomings, and most notably, its lack of energy saving ambition.

Monique Goyens, Director General of BEUC, commented:

"I am sceptical that green targets provided unilaterally by the manufacturers will achieve similar results to binding legislation. Experience proves that voluntary agreements in the field of environmental issues do not work; the car industry for instance did not deliver its promises to reduce CO₂ emissions for many years¹.

"On top of that, preliminary discussions between manufacturers of TV decoders already show a lamentable lack of ambition as they are considering excluding even the possibility for consumers to switch off these devices."

Stephen Russell, ANEC Secretary General, added:

"For these set-top boxes, our concerns are twofold: not all set-top boxes offered to consumers will be Ecodesigned and the environmental requirements won't be enforced by public authorities.

With ambitious mandatory Ecodesign requirements, we could achieve huge reductions in energy consumption and so it is a pity the European Commission is ready to surrender the lead to industry."

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¹ In their 1998 agreement, European car manufacturers committed themselves to reach a target of 140g/km of CO₂ by 2008 and 120g/km by 2012. These targets were undoubtedly achievable by means of vehicle technologies.