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Promising EU plans to tackle greenwashing and promote repair

The [Consumer Package published today by the European Commission](#) will seek to better protect consumers from rampant greenwashing and give them new rights to use their products longer.¹ The European Consumer Organisation BEUC welcomes this long-awaited package as an important step towards greener and more sustainable consumption in the EU.

On **misleading green claims**, the Commission's proposal is setting rules about how companies communicate to ensure misleading green claims and labels do not make it to the market in the first place. When it comes to enforcement, it proposes to oblige authorities to regularly control green claims, publicly disclose their findings, and fine companies who mislead consumers. On carbon-neutral claims - such as 'CO2 neutral' - the Commission wants companies to distinct between their own emission reduction efforts and use of carbon-offsetting schemes, such as planting trees. BEUC calls for an outright ban of these misleading claims.

On **the right to repair**, the proposal rightly introduces measures to promote repair and thus more sustainable consumption. As such, it sets an obligation for producers to repair products' defects beyond the legal guarantee. It also aims to improve information to incentivise consumers to repair their products. On the downside, the proposal would limit consumers' choice, imposing repair of a defective product over replacement whenever repair costs less or the same price. What is crucially missing are longer legal guarantee periods for certain goods where the two-year coverage remains insufficient.

BEUC Director General Monique Goyens commented on green claims:

"In a jungle of unregulated green claims, how can consumers possibly know which products are truly sustainable? The Commission is raising their game to fight greenwashing, putting an end to the wild west of unsubstantiated green claims. Preventing the problem instead of correcting it once the harm is done is an innovative move which will benefit consumers, who want to act sustainably and need reliable information to do so.

"Yet a future EU green claims law will only be as good as its enforcement. It is great that the Commission has heard the message. Authorities will have to heavily fine companies to clean up the market from misleading green claims and labels once and for all. It is also great news that consumer organisations will be able to bring collective complaints to court."

¹ The package includes two Directive proposals: 'Substantiating green claims' and 'Common rules promoting the repair of goods'.

On the right to repair:

“Longer lasting and more repairable products are a no brainer to save consumers’ money and the planet’s resources. Today’s proposal is the long-awaited instruction manual for a consumer right to repair, yet several pages are missing.

“Consumers reasonably expect a fridge to last longer than a toy or an electric toothbrush. So for products with a long life expectancy, like household appliances, the best measure is to extend the legal guarantee period beyond the current two years. It is regrettable that the Commission gives no attention to this point.

“The Commission’s intention to force consumers to have a defective product repaired instead of replaced is hampering their choice. Repair should be encouraged but may not always be the best option if consumers are to enjoy their right to well-functioning products. We count on the Parliament and Member States to fix this flaw, so consumers have products that truly last longer.”

More information:

[European Commission press release](#) on green claims

[European Commission press release](#) on the right to repair

[BEUC factsheet](#) on greenwashing and green claims

[BEUC report](#) on carbon-neutral claims on food

[BEUC position paper](#) on the right to repair

[BEUC press release](#) on sustainable consumption and the circular economy package

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