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New EU law to make sustainable products the norm a major step for consumers

Last night, the European legislators [struck a deal](#) which aims to make sustainable products the norm in the EU market. The new rules under the Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation (ESPR) will make products more repairable and durable by design and will restrict unsustainable practices, such as the destruction of unsold textile and footwear items.

The new law will apply to almost all consumer products, except food, feed, medicines and vehicles, and will introduce new measures to tackle premature obsolescence and to inform consumers about the durability and repairability of products. The new digital product passport will support market surveillance activities and provide useful information to consumers on critical sustainability aspects.

However, the adopted text did not go far enough on major consumer expectations:

- Weak responsibilities for online marketplaces to comply with EU sustainability rules for the products they sell. This would open the door to non-compliant products reaching consumers online.
- Weak market surveillance measures that risk hindering the effectiveness of the new measures.
- Social aspects of sustainability are momentarily missing, although the European Commission can evaluate their inclusion in future revisions.

Monique Goyens, BEUC's Director General, commented:

“These new rules will finally make longer lasting and resource-efficient products the new normal. This is great news as consumer organisations have been flagging over the years countless complaints of short-lived phones, TV screens and many other products most of us own.

“There is no time to lose to switch to more sustainable lifestyles, so we call on the European Commission to roll out the measures right away. When it comes to the destruction of unsold textiles, it is great news the EU institutions agreed to ban this absurd practice.

“For this new law to turn into reality, it is essential the political ambition is matched with adequate financial and human resources for its implementation and enforcement. The European Commission and market surveillance authorities in Member States need to allocate sufficient means to both make the measures apply soon and ensure that producers abide by them.”

Background

- Ecodesign measures not only improve the energy efficiency and durability of common household appliances, [they also significantly cut consumers' energy bills](#). The new rules will now make the products more sustainable by design.
- Consumer complaints from across Europe (e.g. see [Testachats platform](#) in Belgium) show that numerous products break too fast and are often not repairable. The new rules will make it easier for them to repair products and keep them for longer.
- The practice of destroying unsold and returned products has major negative environmental and social consequences. Our Danish member Forbrugerradet [estimates](#) that in Denmark alone 677 tonnes of new clothes are destroyed every year instead of giving them a new life (this equates about 3 million t-shirts a year).
- There will be more alignment between Ecodesign measures and the EU Ecolabel. Products with an EU Ecolabel will be deemed compliant with Ecodesign requirements, and the EU Ecolabel will be used as a reference for Member States when setting incentives for sustainable products.

ENDS

