



Raising standards for consumers



The Consumer Voice in Europe

Empower EU consumers through visible and clear labelling information on CO2 emissions from new passenger cars

ANEC & BEUC call for a review of the
car labelling Directive 1999/94/EC

Short version

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The EU strategy to reduce CO₂ emissions from passenger cars in part relies on the requirement that information on fuel consumption and CO₂ emission values of new cars is easily accessible for consumers. The EU Directive 1999/94/EC requires that this information must be displayed on a label attached to the windscreen of all new passenger cars at the point of sale, on posters and other promotional material, and in specific printed guides which have to be published to provide consumers with relevant information on all car brands and models.

Due to a lack of specific requirements, the Directive has been implemented very differently by EU Member States. Recent market surveys revealed that consumer awareness of the label – while still low – appears to be growing steadily, particularly in those EU countries that make use of a colour-coded rating scale.

Unfortunately however, in many EU Member States the CO₂ and fuel consumption label has not reached a high level of recognition and/or the requirements by the Directive have not been implemented in a way that maximizes their impact.



For instance, in several countries, including the Czech Republic and Poland, no standardised label format exists. This makes it much more challenging for consumers to compare at one glance the fuel consumption and related CO₂ emissions of a particular car with other models available on the market.

Nevertheless, many Member States already present CO₂ or fuel consumption information in the EU Energy Labelling-style format. Due to the lack of clear rules set by the Directive, some Member States, however, have adopted controversial labelling designs such as the “weight-based relative scheme” applied in Germany which bears a high risk for confusion when large and heavy cars with absolute high emissions receive a better rating than small cars with lower emissions.

We therefore support a revision of the car labelling Directive by standardising and optimising the format of the label across the European Union in order to make sure that all EU consumers are provided with information that is given in an intuitive and user-friendly way allowing simple and accurate comparisons between cars.

More precisely, we support harmonisation of the key elements of the Directive. However, some flexibility should be included in order to enable countries to adapt the Directive to national circumstances.

We support the introduction of a harmonised format of the CO₂ label where the **key elements** of the format of the label should be standardised:

- Use of a colour-coded comparative rating scale ranging from class A to class G as the main focus of the label;
- Classification of cars along the A-G rating scale according to their absolute emission levels ("absolute labelling scheme");
- The long-term objective should be that the classification of the rating scale should be based on well-to-wheel CO₂ emissions as the measure of comparison in order to make all vehicle types comparable;
- Set CO₂ thresholds of the labelling classes at EU level;
- Periodically tighten the criteria for achieving the rating classes to keep up with technological changes.

In addition, we recommend that Member States should provide the following information on the label **in a standardised way**, but adapt the label to **national circumstances**:

- Information on fuel consumption to be expressed in the metric used in the Member State;
- Mandatory information on fuel costs based on national fuel prices;
- Mandatory information on tax related information adapted to national circumstances;
- Additional information provided in the country-specific language (s).

Moreover, the Directive should be extended to cars rented or leased by companies and to second-hand cars sold by professional dealers, and to two and three-wheelers.

We also strongly call on the European Commission to ensure that the newly developed test to measure fuel consumption of cars, the Worldwide harmonized Light vehicles Test Procedure (WLTP) will be swiftly introduced into EU law to enable consumers to get a more realistic picture on fuel consumption. If the introduction of the new test into EU law takes more time than anticipated, or does not sufficiently mimic real-life conditions, a scaling factor should be applied to convert fuel consumption values measured under test conditions into values that the average driver experiences in real life.

We also see a strong need for clearer and more visible information provided via all kinds of advertisements (including radio, the Internet, TV and cinema) as an additional measure to more effectively encourage consumers to buy cars that use less fuel and thereby steer the market towards more sustainable vehicles. All kinds of advertisements (except radio) should display the full A-G rating scale information.

Furthermore, the EU car labelling scheme must be accompanied by a more effective market surveillance system in all Member States.

Finally, we urge the European Commission to conduct further consumer testing and come forward with a proposal for a revision of the Directive in **2015 at the latest**.¹

END

¹ Our UK member Which? has contributed extensively to this paper and supports its direction and ambition but taking into account the specificities of the UK context, for example UK tax legislation, does not share certain key elements regarding the harmonization of the A to G band ratings or advertising requirements.