

APPLiA Position Paper on ED/EL Working Plan 2020-2024 after stakeholder meeting 26 March

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Introduction

Following up on the stakeholder meeting of the preparatory study of the Ecodesign and energy Labelling Working Plan 2020 - 2024 organised by Viegand & Maagøe on March 26th, APPLiA Home Appliance Europe would like to express their views on the different product-specific dossiers and horizontal initiatives that have been prioritised by Task 4 of the preparatory study. This Position Paper summarises APPLiA position in each of those topics and provides recommendations to the European Commission in the event that policy initiatives on this basis are brought forward.

1. General statement

Ecodesign requirements must continue to be considered on a product group-specific basis. Even within individual categories of equipment in our sector, the products and their environmental impact differs significantly. Policies set at horizontal level pose the risk of setting double regulation at product level. Such double legislation impedes the ability of industry players to innovate while increasing the cost of products without creating additional environmental benefit. It also makes measurement, verification and enforcement more complex which can lead to an unlevel playing field.

Additionally, when components are regulated, bespoke components designed to be part of products already covered by product specific regulations should also be exempted. Any double or cascade regulations would hinder the possibility for manufacturers to choose the components that best fit the containing appliance to meet its own product requirements.

New product requirements to further address the circularity issues within Ecodesign and Energy Labelling should always be preceded by detailed impact assessments to ensure that they achieve the desired environmental objectives, taking account of costs and benefits. The scope of the impact assessment should be as broad as possible and evaluate all possible impacts. Proposals for product sustainability requirements must be evaluated through the whole lifecycle to ensure they will ultimately lead to more sustainable products.



The complexity of the market must be correctly evaluated using a science-based approach, where the functionality of the product in a system is factored in the total efficiency. In addition, related existing legislation and standards should be assessed in view of setting any new requirements to ensure consistency. The EN 4555X series of standards on material efficiency containing generic principles to consider when addressing the material efficiency of energy-related products should be considered at this regard but need to be translated into vertical product standards.

Some circularity requirements, such as reparability and durability, are time-related requirements that go beyond what can be verified on the product itself, at the time of placing on the market. Even if other requirements such as recyclability and recycled content are not time-related requirements, at the material level, it is impossible to distinguish recycled material content from virgin material content. This means that any claim on the recycled content cannot be physically and reliably verified or enforced.

Finally, manufacturers should remain in a position to choose which route towards greater sustainability/reduced environmental impact would suit them best, while ensuring innovation, competition, and customer satisfaction. There are a variety of ways to drive resource efficiency and manufacture sustainable products that advance the circular economy: targeting at-source material efficiency, (i.e. reducing the quantity of material used in the creation of products), increasing the efficiency of products during use phase, using more sustainable materials, designing for durability and repair as well as for recovery.

Material efficiency aspects cannot be viewed and regulated in isolation but require a holistic examination. Manufacturers should have sufficient leeway in prioritizing different material efficiency aspects.

2. Lightweight design

All design choices involve inevitable trade-offs. Manufacturers should be given sufficient freedom to choose among the different design options to improve sustainability while matching consumers' needs. There are multiple ways to increase resource efficiency and sustainability of products and building lightweight appliances is one of the possible options.

Manufacturers have an intrinsic interest in keeping material cost low. Material sourcing and selection is one of the most important business decisions closely relating to hazardous substance screening, quality assessments, supply security and consumer preference considerations. The constant drive to reduce costs for both producers and consumers as well as to innovate and increase product quality are the most important factors increasing material efficiency. Reducing the amount of material to the functionally necessary limit is in the own interest of a manufacturer due to the fact that the production cost is related to the material used.

Lightweight design is indeed one effective way to reduce the environmental impact of products in line with the waste hierarchy set by the Waste Framework Directive as long as product durability and



robustness is not affected. Before Ecodesign and Energy Label requirements can be constituted for lightweight design, all influences on other regulated parameters have to be considered.

For some products, there is a trade-off between waste prevention through reduced use of materials and energy efficiency. Examples: Heat pump dryers are heavier than normal dryers but more energy efficient; A Dishwasher containing a Zeolith-System or a heat pump will have a higher weight but are more energy efficient than a dishwasher without additional technology; an air conditioner with a bigger heat exchanger will have a higher efficiency.

3. Recycled content

Home appliance manufacturers already use recycled materials in the production of new large and small appliances. This use has increased steadily as the quality and quantity of recycled materials available has increased. However, the recent technological progress is not yet sufficient for recycled materials to match virgin plastics in quality. Increasing use of recycled plastic beyond what is technically available can reduce the quality of the final product.

1:1 replacement of virgin by recycled plastics works only in a limited number of cases. The idea that recycled material saves 100% of the resources disregards the circumstance that it takes approx. 2 tons of post-consumer plastic to make one of recycled plastics. This limits the availability and impacts the LCA of recycling. Therefore, a choice should be made by the product manufacturer according to its needs and the market reality.

The adoption of ecodesign and/or labelling requirements on recycled content is challenging: regulations of chemicals hamper the free use of recovered materials and the use of recycled materials cannot be properly measured and therefore adequately enforced by market surveillance.

At the material level, recycled plastics cannot be distinguished from virgin plastics. Primary and secondary materials are often physically or chemically indistinguishable and there are currently no analytical methods available for directly measuring the recycled material content in a product. The verification of recycled content therefore relies on documental proof provided by the relevant operator in the chain of custody. This means that any claim on the recycled content cannot be physically and reliably verified nor enforced.

A market for secondary raw materials is being created and upscaled in the EU. End of life legislation should remain the main driver for innovation in recycling technologies. While recyclers are constantly innovating and improving recycling processes to ensure high quality of recycled materials that would feed material loops, investments in the recycling industry are necessary for disseminating state-of-the-art WEEE recycling technologies across Europe, to scale-up plastics recycling from WEEE and deflect plastics from incineration.

Recycled material quality, especially from WEEE, often remains challenging for manufacturers. Regulation also restricts use of recycled plastics in some applications e.g. for food contact materials.



Increased collaboration with recyclers may allow manufacturers to further optimise recycling processes for plastics in order to enable their use in EEE.

4. Ecological profile

There are a variety of ways to drive resource efficiency and manufacture sustainable products that advance the circular economy: targeting at-source material efficiency, (i.e. reducing the quantity of material used in the creation of products), increasing the efficiency of products during use phase, using more sustainable materials, designing for durability and repair as well as for recovery.

However, targeting resource efficiency goals via environmental profile is not an ideal approach for the case of home appliances, as the environmental impact of certain sustainability variables is either low (e.g. in the case of recycled content) or difficult to determine (e.g. in the case of repairability). For this reason it would be better to address these aspects with separate measures or indicators.

Additionally, manufacturers should remain in a position to choose which route towards greater sustainability/reduced environmental impact would suit them best, while ensuring innovation, competition, and customer satisfaction. Future legislation should also appreciate both the traditional sales models and also new models aimed at sustainable goods, services and business that could contribute to more sustainable consumption patterns. A whole new range of sustainable services, product-as service models and digital solutions can contribute to a better quality of life, innovative jobs and upgraded knowledge and skills.

5. Durability

The lifetime of a product does not only depend on the design of the product but also on consumer usage patterns, product installation, product environment, product maintenance, possible misuse and the available repair options. Durability is to be considered as the combination of reliability, maintenance, repair and re-use. Each of the different elements allow for intervention which may contribute to the increase of the overall product's lifetime or usage time.

Additionally, it is difficult to define the durability (or number of services) of a product in a reliable way. Currently there is no methodology in place which would allow a reliable assessment of the durability of products while being economically feasible and not overly time consuming. Creating products for easy repair, as foreseen by other draft reports on horizontal initiatives, may require trade-offs with regards to robust and durable product design (e.g. fused vs. plugged parts).

Durability of a complete appliance cannot be evaluated only through its components. The components and their durability always need to be considered in the whole system, which is the appliance, and not separately.



6. Firmware & software

As stated in Point 1 of this Position Paper, a fragmented approach across different policy dossiers and DGs within the European Commission on the matter of software used in products entails a high risk of double regulation, in particular with the Sales of Goods Directive.

The starting point for requirement on minimum years of availability of software updates, if it is to be brought forward, should be clarified. Should it be counted as from the product is physically placed on the market (in shops), from the moment in which the consumer buys it or as from when the last unit of the model is produced?

Giving the end-user the choice to install or not install a software update during the use phase of a product should not be a generic statement. If part of the software has a safety function, e.g. for a home appliance, then the product should be exempted, in order to avoid potentially rendering a product unsafe.

7. Environmentally critical raw materials

The detailed information requirements on how to dismantle CRM-Containing parts of products (usually PCBs, pumps, motors) as well as for tools for disassembly would impose an unjustified and disproportionate information burden on home appliance manufacturers. It is premature to envisage minimum quotas of recycled materials in products. The technologies in some cases are not yet there or in their infancy.

APPLiA - Home Appliance Europe represents home appliance manufacturers from across Europe. By promoting innovative, sustainable policies and solutions for EU homes, APPLiA has helped build the sector into an economic powerhouse, with an annual turnover of EUR 53 billion, investing over EUR 1.6 billion in R&D activities and creating nearly 1 million jobs.

