WHAT ENERGY LABEL FOR EUROPE?

Environmental NGOs’ Contribution to the Public Hearing of the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy of the European Parliament - 30 September 2009

1. The Energy Label is an important tool for shifting the European market towards more energy-efficient purchase patterns.

Purchases of more expensive yet energy-efficient fridges rose from 5% in 1995 to over 35% by 2000, following introduction of the A to G label¹.

2. Greater dynamism is needed within the labelling scheme. Environmental NGOS continue to share the view of consumer organizations that a closed A to G scale with more frequent upgrading is the simplest and most logical solution.

Previous research² has clearly supported this view. Evidence also suggests that the closed A to G scale is the strongest layout for highlighting "bad" products, as well as inspiring purchase of more energy-efficient ones³. This is an important role of the energy label, as meeting our environmental objectives will require widespread, rapid innovation and market uptake of more energy-efficient products.

Those who continue to oppose the A to G label on claims of damaged profits and job losses⁴ have a responsibility to provide economic evidence to this effect.

3. The political deadlock with the labelling question is now standing in the way of progress on the Eco-Design measures.

¹ ORG-Gfk Retail Audit, 2002
² For example, Heinzle and Wustenhagen: Consumer Survey on the new format of the European Energy Label for televisions – Comparison of “A-G closed” versus “beyond A” scale format, University of St Gallen, August 2009
³ p. 15, idem
⁴ “Rescaling existing appliances just one notch downwards could result in a 1.5 billion euro loss to the bottom-line across our industry and put thousands of jobs at risk” – CECED press release 10 February 2009, http://www.ceced.eu/ICECED/easnet.dll/GetDoc?APPL=1&DAT_IM=20CB47
All parties have an urgent responsibility to find a solution to this impasse – and to continue to engage constructively in the Eco-Design process, whatever the outcome of the labelling discussion.

Following the European Parliament’s adoption of the Podimata report, and rejection of the A-20%, A-40%.... Label for TVs in April 2009, the European Commission has decided to postpone all further votes on Eco-Design implementing measures until agreement has been reached on the label.

This means that the partially-prepared implementing measures on boilers, water heaters and air conditioners cannot be voted by the Comitology Committee until at least March 2010 - even assuming agreement is found on the labelling question by December, as per the Swedish Presidency’s timetable. These product categories together consume more than 1500TWh\(^5\) of energy per year and are responsible for over 800Mt of CO2 emissions – figures which could be reduced by more than a quarter by effective eco-design standards.

The environmental NGOS are ready to continue working with all parties – that is, Commission, Member States, MEPs and industry - to find solutions to any outstanding problems, such as the transition period between two labels.

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\(^5\) 2005 stock, final electricity consumption equivalent