



31.1.2019

NOTICE TO MEMBERS

Subject: Petition No 0666/2018 by Kai Herlemann (German) on the introduction of standardised plugs for portable computers

1. Summary of petition

The petitioner supports standardised plugs for portable computers, such as introduced for smartphones by Directive 2014/53/EU. Differing laptop plugs generate a lot of electrical waste. Standardised plugs would, among other things, reduce costs.

2. Admissibility

Declared admissible on 19 November 2018. Information requested from Commission under Rule 216(6).

3. Commission reply, received on 31 January 2019

The petitioner refers to the possibility conferred by Article 3(3)(a) of the Radio Equipment Directive (RED)¹, aiming at guaranteeing charging interoperability between radio equipment and their accessories. Article 3(3)(a) of RED states that “[...] Radio equipment within certain categories or classes shall be so constructed that it complies with the following essential requirements: (a) radio equipment interworks with accessories, in particular with common chargers [...]”, which empowers the Commission to define the classes or categories of radio equipment concerned by that provision. This could provide a legal basis for taking a regulatory action in relation to ‘common’ chargers, that is, would cover the socket side interface on the electronic equipment. As most portable computers are actually provided with Wi-Fi/Bluetooth capabilities, and therefore placed on the EU market under the RED, a regulatory action under Article 3(3)(a) would in theory be possible. However, whereas mobile

¹ Directive 2014/53/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 April 2014 on the harmonisation of the laws of the Member States relating to the making available on the market of radio equipment and repealing Directive 1999/5/EC Text with EEA relevance, *OJ L 153*, 22.5.2014, p. 62–106.

phones nowadays have similar electrical and charging requirements, major differences still exist concerning laptops.

The Commission has been very active in proposing actions in this field, aiming at both user convenience and reduction of e-waste. Already in June 2009, following a request from the Commission, major producers of mobile telephones agreed to sign a voluntary Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to harmonise chargers for data-enabled mobile telephones sold in the EU. That first MoU was a success, as assessed by the ‘Study on the impact of the MoU on harmonisation of chargers for mobile telephones and to assess possible future options’ (RPA Risk & Policy Analysts - 22 August 2014)².

Following the initial MoU expiration, the Commission fostered the adoption of a new voluntary agreement. However, the resulting new voluntary approach proposed by industry was considered unsatisfactory by the Commission. Therefore, in December 2018 the Commission commissioned a study intended to provide input for a new initiative aiming to limit fragmentation of the charging solutions for mobile phones and similar devices.

The study shall provide an analysis of the possible impacts on the EU market of a regulatory option aimed at ensuring that electronic and electrical equipment interwork with common chargers. The scope of the study goes beyond data-enabled telephones and also covers other small portable electronic devices requiring similar charging capacity, and therefore comprising laptops.

Conclusions

The Commission is not against the possibility of extending interoperability of chargers and standardisation of plugs to other electrical devices. However, technical evidence of the feasibility of such measures is prerequisite, aside other cost-benefit assessments.

² Executive summary <http://ec.europa.eu/DocsRoom/documents/7431/attachments/1/translations> - Final report <http://ec.europa.eu/DocsRoom/documents/7432/attachments/1/translations>