

# New technologies and new digital solutions for improved safety of products on the internal market

## Tackling planned obsolescence practices, barriers to trade for recycled products and enhancing consumer information

The [original full study](#)<sup>1</sup> examines how new technologies and digital solutions can help improve consumers' awareness, while also guaranteeing a better safety of products placed on the Single Market. The study formulates recommendations that provide a framework for a better alignment of existing legislation on product safety and digital services, as well as the European Community sustainability objectives.

### Background

In the European Union (EU), the General Product Safety Directive (GPSD) provides the main safety requirements for consumer products that are being placed on the European Market. The GPSD is confronted with an increasing variety of challenges and runs the risk of becoming obsolete, in particular due to the uptake of new technologies and digital solutions. As such, the GPSD needs to adapt, considering both new technological aspects of product safety and the existing regulation concerning environmental protection and the EU's global target for the next decades.

### Key findings



The emergence of new technologies and digital solutions is affecting how product safety is embedded within products and affects consumers' choice and use of products. When it comes to their potential influence on safety, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats can be identified.

Firstly, **strengths** of new technologies and digital solutions in relation to product safety are that they allow for increased product traceability and transparency; improved accessibility of product information for consumers and enhanced ability to improve the quality and utility of that information, efficient provision of tailored responses to individual issues and remote product updates to address defects.

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**Weaknesses** centre around the gaps in digital literacy and network access; the fragmented landscape of policies, regulation and (often ambiguous) definitions of technologies and digital solutions across EU Member States; the impact of technologies and digital solutions on product ownership, which can dilute or distort responsibility across the value chain; gaps in continuity of services related to product safety over time; increased complexity resulting from interconnectedness between technologies; and inadequate information sharing among stakeholders along the value chain.

**Opportunities** identified are the facilitated access to information that can improve product recalls and the efficiency and effectiveness of market surveillance; paving the way for international standard-setting and ensuring awareness of European values in global standard setting activities; potential use of traceability functions to improve product sustainability and circularity; the potential to further empower consumers; and the ability to analyse complex amounts of data.

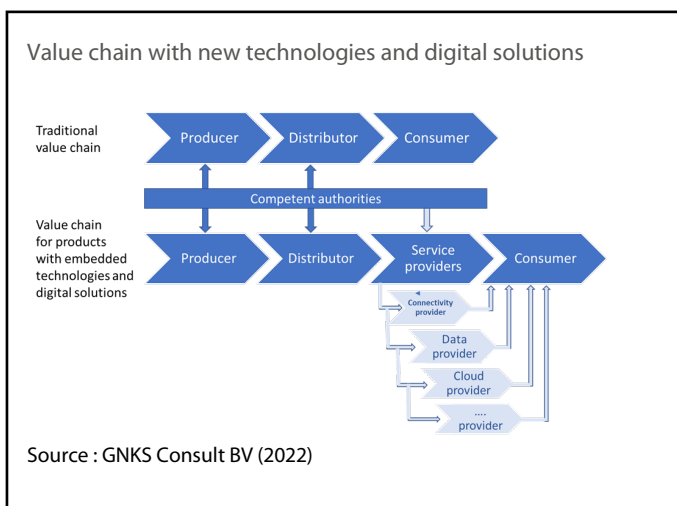
Finally, **threats** foreseen include the need for flexibility due to constant evolution of the digital ecosystem and emergence of new technologies and digital solutions; a lack of long-lasting operability between various technologies; positive negative impacts of algorithms; increasing complexity and articulation with other policy initiatives; and global costs may outweigh global benefits due to potentially high negative environmental impacts.

## Recommendations

The overall aim of the research was to investigate the role of new technologies and digital solutions in better guaranteeing the safety of products and providing more information to consumers and stakeholders, while the reducing the administrative burden for economic operators. In order to support this, clear relationship should be established between the GPSD and other regulations affecting aspects of digital product safety.

The revised GPSD can take advantage of new technologies and digital solutions to improve transparency, data control and data management, mitigating the risks to consumers through relevant and up-to-date information. The new legislation should include clear and relevant definitions of transparency, information control, information management in line with the latest technological developments and define minimum level and type of communication to users that are mandatory for businesses.

This can be achieved by developing definitions for new technologies and digital solutions under the revised GPSD, allowing the EU to play a leading role in global standard development. The establishment of coherent EU-wide technology-neutral and future-proof legislative definitions would enable cross-border cooperation between countries. Furthermore, actions should be taken to monitor ongoing activities in EU Member States related to new technologies, digital solutions and product safety to support scale-up and best practices.



<sup>1</sup> Gaëtan COATANROCH, et al., 2022, *New technologies and new digital solutions for improved safety of products on the internal market*, Publication for the committee on Internal Market and Consumer Protection, Policy Department for Economic, Scientific and Quality of Life Policies, European Parliament, Luxembourg. Available at : [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2022/703348/IPOL\\_STU\(2022\)703348\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2022/703348/IPOL_STU(2022)703348_EN.pdf).

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Administrator responsible: Barbara MARTINELLO; Editorial assistant: Irene VERNACOTOLA  
Contact: [Poldep-Economy-Science@ep.europa.eu](mailto:Poldep-Economy-Science@ep.europa.eu)  
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