Stopping greenwashing: how the EU regulates green claims

The EU aims to put an end to greenwashing, when companies claim to be greener than they are, and provide more information to consumers on the durability of products they buy.

New EU rules to prevent greenwashing decrypted

In order to better protect consumers’ rights, promote environmentally-friendly decisions and create a circular economy that reuses and recycles materials, the European Parliament is working on an update of existing rules regarding commercial practices and consumer protection.

Banning greenwashing

Natural, eco, environmentally-friendly... Many products have these labels, but very often those claims are not proven. The EU wants to make sure that all information on a product's impact on the environment, longevity, reparability, composition, production and usage is backed up by verifiable sources.
What is greenwashing?

- The practice of giving a false impression of the environmental impact or benefits of a product, which can mislead consumers.

To achieve that, the EU will ban:

- generic environmental claims on products without proof
- claims that a product has a neutral, reduced or positive impact on the environment because the producer is offsetting emissions
- sustainability labels that are not based on approved certification schemes or established by public authorities

Promoting products’ durability

Parliament wants to make sure that consumers are fully aware of the guarantee period during which consumers can request a repair of faulty products at the expense of the seller. Under EU law, products have a guarantee of minimum two years. Updated consumer protection rules introduce a new label for products with an extended guarantee period.

The EU will also ban:

- advertising goods that have design features that could reduce a product’s lifespan
- making unproven durability claims in terms of usage time or intensity under normal conditions
- presenting goods as repairable when they are not

86%

of EU consumers want better information on the durability of products

Background and next steps
In March 2022, the European Commission proposed to update EU consumer rules to support the green transition. In September 2023, Parliament and Council reached a provisional agreement on the updated rules.

MEPs approved the agreement in January 2024, followed by the Council the following month. EU countries have 24 months to incorporate the update into their national law.

What else is the EU doing to promote sustainable consumption?

The EU is working on other files with the aim to protect consumers and promote sustainable consumption:

- **Green claims**: this directive complements the EU’s ban on greenwashing and introduces a verification system for companies that want to make environmental-related claims. Before using such claims for their products, companies would need to submit evidence for them and get preapproval from verifiers assigned by EU countries. MEPs adopted their position on this file in March 2024 and the new Parliament will continue to work on it after the European elections in June 2024.
- **Ecodesign**: the EU wants to introduce minimum standards in product development to make nearly all products on its market sustainable, durable and eco-friendly
- **Right to repair**: the EU wants to guarantee the right of consumers to have products repaired and promote repairing over throwing away and buying new products.

Find out how the EU is working to build a circular economy

- How to promote sustainable consumption
- Circular economy: definition, importance and benefits

Empowering consumers for the green transition

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