



2016/2272(INI)

11.4.2017

OPINION

of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety

for the Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection

on a longer lifetime for products: benefits for consumers and companies
(2016/2272(INI))

Rapporteur: Christel Schaldemose

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SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety calls on the Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions into its motion for a resolution:

- A. whereas, in view of the Union's dependence on imports of raw materials and the rapid depletion of a significant amount of natural resources over the short term, it is a key challenge to reclaim as many resources as possible within the Union and to enhance the transition to a circular economy;
- B. whereas the extension of product lifetimes should be seen in the context of the need for a holistic change in how we produce and consume, and as part of the transition to a circular economy; whereas using resources more efficiently would also bring substantial net savings to businesses, public authorities and consumers in the Union, while reducing total annual greenhouse gas emissions and the environmental impacts of products;
- C. whereas Regulation (EU) 2015/2120 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 November 2015 laying down measures concerning open internet access and amending Directive 2002/22/EC on universal service and users' rights relating to electronic communications networks and services and Regulation (EU) No 531/2012 on roaming on public mobile communications networks within the Union and the respective implementing guidelines of the Office of the Body of European Regulators for Electronic Communications (BEREC) have to be taken in account;
- D. whereas the Seventh Environmental Action Programme calls for specific measures to improve durability, repairability and reusability and to extend the lifetime of products;
- E. whereas Extended Producer Responsibility has an important role to play in this regard;
- F. whereas the report 'Growth Within: a circular economy vision for a competitive Europe' by the Ellen MacArthur Foundation clearly demonstrates the opportunities involved in shifting to new business models, such as selling services instead of products;
- G. whereas the achievement of a circular economy model requires the involvement of political decision-makers, citizens and businesses, and implies changes not only to the design and sale of products and services, but also to the mentality and expectations of consumers and in business activity, through the creation of new markets that respond to changes in consumption patterns, evolving towards the use, reuse and sharing of products, thereby helping to extend their useful life and to create competitive, lasting and sustainable products;
- H. whereas in many lamps the bulbs cannot be replaced, which can lead to problems if a bulb stops working, if newer, more efficient bulbs appear on the market or if the customer's preference, for example as regards the colour of the light emitted, changes, because the whole lamp has to be replaced;
- I. whereas, as the circular economy develops, further steps must be taken to encourage the repairability, adaptability, upgradeability, durability and recyclability of products, in order to extend the lifetimes and the useful life of products and/or product components;

- J. whereas the first links in the waste management hierarchy, reduction and preparation for reuse, are the most important with a view to launching a zero waste strategy;
 - K. whereas Europe's consumption of natural resources has increased by some 50 % over the last 30 years and we consume 43 kg of resources per person per day;
 - L. whereas it is both economically and environmentally necessary to preserve raw materials and limit the production of waste;
 - M. whereas ever greater product diversity, ever shorter innovation cycles and constantly changing fashions are increasing the frequency with which new products are purchased, thus shortening the useful life of products;
 - N. whereas great potential is offered by the repair, second-hand and exchange sector, i.e. the sector working with the aim of extending product lifetimes;
 - O. whereas LED bulbs should ideally be replaceable, not irremovable, elements;
 - P. whereas a balance should be struck between the aim of extending product lifetimes and safeguarding an environment which still offers incentives for innovation and further development;
 - Q. whereas reports are emerging that smartphones are deliberately being designed to stop working properly after one or two years;
1. Stresses that a balance must be struck between the extension of product lifetimes, the conversion of waste into resources (secondary raw materials), industrial symbiosis, innovation, consumer demand, environmental protection and growth policy in all the phases of the product cycle, and considers that the development of increasingly resource-efficient products must not encourage short lifetimes or the premature disposal of products;
 2. Underlines that a longer lifetime for products presupposes the adoption of measures against programmed obsolescence; calls on the Commission and the Member States to take appropriate measures to combat planned obsolescence and to increase consumer empowerment through improved product information; calls, moreover, on the Commission to look into reports that products such as smartphones are deliberately being designed to have a very short useful life and, if necessary, to propose measures to counter this phenomenon; calls, furthermore, on the Member States to discourage the placing on the market of products with planned obsolescence;
 3. Stresses that a longer lifetime for products requires the availability of standardised and modular components which are easier to replace, together with functional design which, inter alia, takes disassembly into account;
 4. Highlights that the shift towards business models such as 'products as services' has the potential to improve the sustainability of production and consumption patterns, provided that product-service systems do not result in shortened product lifetimes, and stresses that such business models should not provide opportunities for tax avoidance;

5. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to encourage the development, production and marketing of products that are suitable for multiple use, that are technically durable and easily repairable and that are, after having become waste and being prepared for reuse or recycled, suitable to be made available on the market or placed on the market in order to facilitate proper implementation of the waste hierarchy; insists that the measures take into account the impact of products throughout their life cycle as well as the waste hierarchy;
6. Emphasises that the development of new business models, such as internet-based services, new forms of marketing, department stores selling only used goods and the more widespread availability of informal repair facilities (repair cafes, workshops in which people can do their own repairs) can help to extend product lifetimes and, at the same time, increase consumers' awareness of and trust in products with a long lifetime;
7. Highlights that the promotion and support of sustainable production and consumption models, the use of products that are resource-efficient, durable, easy to share, reusable, repairable and recyclable, as well as the discouragement of placing products with planned obsolescence on the market, are key aspects of waste prevention;
8. Notes the role of commercial strategies, such as product leasing, in the design of durable products, whereby leasing firms retain ownership of the leased units and have an incentive to remarket products and to invest in designing more durable products, resulting in a lower volume of new production and disposal products;
9. Emphasises that the qualities that make a product repairable, reusable and recyclable and durable should be incorporated into its design, since the amount of resources that a product uses is largely determined at the design phase; points out that product design is an important factor in the transition to a circular economy, because it has implications for the life cycle of the product in question;
10. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to step up their efforts to substitute substances of very high concern and to restrict substances that pose unacceptable risks to human health or the environment in order to ensure the development of non-toxic material cycles;
11. Emphasises that Member States should incentivise the extension of the lifespan of products, where environmentally beneficial, and support the setting-up of systems promoting repair, reuse, remanufacturing and reconditioning activities in relation to products;
12. Notes that a better design for repairability is needed, given that it is crucial that spare parts be made available primarily for those products where a lifespan extension can be achieved in a cost-effective manner;
13. Supports the establishment at EU level of a definition of planned obsolescence and the introduction of measures to penalise the practices concerned;
14. Stresses that the list of new products based on eco-design should be more ambitious and include more products;

15. Refers to the pioneering role of some Member States in this regard, such as the initiative of the Benelux countries to combat planned obsolescence and to extend the lifespan of (electrical) household appliances; stresses the importance of sharing best practices in this regard;
16. Regards it as essential that consumers be better informed about the way the statutory guarantee of conformity works; calls for a reference to the guarantee to appear written out in full on the invoice for the purchase of the product;
17. Recalls that the availability of standardised and modular components, disassembly planning, long-duration product design and efficient production processes have an important role to play in implementing the circular economy successfully;
18. Calls on the Member States to foster institutional campaigns to promote activities involving repairing, second-hand buying and selling, renting and exchanging, thus avoiding the purchase of new products;
19. Calls on the Commission to assess the possibility of establishing rules on minimum recycled material content in new products;
20. Notes the Commission's Ecodesign Work Plan 2016-2019; welcomes especially the inclusion of product durability as a possible environmental standard in relation to material efficiency aspects, including extending the lifespan of products, the ability to reuse components or recycle materials from end-of-life products, and the use of reused components and/or recycled materials in products;
21. Reiterates its call on the Commission to propose a review of ecodesign legislation in order to extend its scope to all the main product groups, not only to those which use energy, and to include gradually all characteristics relating to the efficiency of resource use as part of product design requirements;
22. Calls on the Commission to propose appropriate measures that would oblige manufacturers to ensure the availability of spare parts, and, in relation to consumers' rights, to provide information on the period of time during which the spare parts would be available, and to ensure that this would apply to online sales sites as well as physical points of sale;
23. Repeats its call on the Commission to assess, on the basis of a cost-benefit analysis, the possibility of setting minimum values for recyclable materials in new products in ecodesign legislation;
24. Recognises the importance of collaborative economy and sharing economy platforms as new sustainable business models promoting more efficient use of products and their longer lifespan;
25. Calls on the Commission to ensure that the requirements for the removal of batteries and accumulators of the Batteries Directive (2006/66/EC)¹ are fully applied and enforced by

¹ Directive 2006/66/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 6 September 2006 on batteries and accumulators and waste batteries and repealing Directive 91/157/EEC, OJ L 266, 29.9.2006, p. 1.

Member States, and to encourage business models developing the reuse of batteries;

26. Notes with concern the amount of electronic waste generated by modems, routers, and TV decoders/set-top boxes when consumers switch to a new telecom provider; reminds consumers and telecom providers that, according to Regulation EU/2015/2120, consumers already have the right to use the terminal equipment of their choice when switching to a new telecom provider;
27. Calls on the Commission to consider how the replaceability of LED bulbs can be encouraged and facilitated and to consider, in addition to ecodesign measures, a less stringent approach involving, for example, labelling, incentive schemes, public procurement or an extended warranty if the bulbs cannot be removed;
28. Points out that responsible product use hinges on consumers being able to assess accurately the environmental impact of products on the basis of their life cycle, their environmental footprint and their quality;
29. Emphasises the difficulty of introducing compulsory labelling to provide information on the expected lifetimes of products; proposes that a labelling system of this kind should initially be the subject of a voluntary trial at EU level, on the basis of a common format and methodology;
30. Points out that a large amount of electronic waste is due to the fact that producers are no longer able to provide software updates compatible with hardware; believes that producers should be required to provide compatible software updates;
31. Points out that an incentive for more sustainable product design can be provided by strengthening the principle of extended manufacturer liability and laying down minimum requirements to be met;
32. Calls on the Commission to make better use of the EU Ecolabel to improve information on product lifetimes and consumers' understanding of product durability; stresses that informed consumer choice when selecting a product/brand may indirectly provide economic incentives to manufacturers; stresses that ecolabelling should include information about the minimum product lifetime or use, so as to increase consumer awareness of a product's expected lifetime;
33. Calls on the Commission to draw up measures on the provision to consumers, if appropriate only on a voluntary basis, of information on the expected lifetime of a product, the number of use cycles it is designed to withstand and the scope for having it repaired, so that consumers can make better-informed purchasing decisions;
34. Calls on the Commission to ask manufacturers to make diagnostic and service manuals publicly available, as well as to make spare parts and accessories of products available on the market for a minimum number of years in line with the product's expected lifetime, which should be indicated in the EU Ecolabel;
35. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to devote resources to education and information campaigns, to promote sustainable consumption and production models, and highlights the benefits of moving to a resource-efficient circular economy;

36. Calls on the Commission to carry out an economic and environmental impact assessment to determine the scope for extending, in a harmonised manner, the duration of the statutory guarantee of conformity for products;
37. Calls on the Member States, where necessary, to coordinate with local and regional authorities, companies and associations conducting consumer awareness campaigns on extending the lifespans of products;
38. Points out that the Commission should not use the upcoming Regulatory Fitness Check to either withdraw or limit the scope of the EU Ecolabel;
39. Believes it is important to create incentives for manufacturers to produce longer-lasting products; calls on the Commission to propose that manufacturers should cover the cost of recycling if their goods have an expected lifetime of less than five years;
40. Urges the Commission to promote the use of resource-efficiency indicators through international conventions in order to allow comparability between industries and economies and to ensure a level playing field;
41. Urges the Member States to carry out effective market surveillance to ensure that both European and imported products comply with the requirements as regards product policy and ecodesign;
42. Calls on the Member States to adopt economic incentives for product repair services to facilitate the extension of product lifetimes, bearing in mind that tax reductions on product repairs may provide an incentive to reuse products and stimulate the repair industry, with the potential environmental and social benefits that this may entail, including reduced VAT on repair activities;
43. Calls on the Commission to take measures to ensure that products which are still usable can be fed back into the circular economy more easily and more effectively;
44. Encourages the Member States to implement green public procurement as a policy tool in order to accelerate the shift towards the circular economy;
45. Calls for a total ban on products with built-in defects designed to end the product's life;
46. Notes that upgradeability of products can slow product obsolescence and reduce the environmental impacts and costs for users;
47. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to involve local and regional authorities and to respect their competences;
48. Calls on the Commission to encourage regular and structured exchanges of information and sharing of best practices throughout the Union, between the Commission and the Member States, and including regional and municipal authorities;
49. Calls on the Commission to actively support local repair initiatives, as they also create local green jobs and provide a useful service to consumers.

INFORMATION ON ADOPTION IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

Date adopted	11.4.2017
Result of final vote	+: 62 -: 0 0: 0
Members present for the final vote	Marco Affronte, Zoltán Balczó, Catherine Bearder, Ivo Belet, Simona Bonafè, Biljana Borzan, Paul Brannen, Nessa Childers, Alberto Cirio, Birgit Collin-Langen, Mireille D'Ornano, Miriam Dalli, Seb Dance, Angélique Delahaye, Mark Demesmaeker, Stefan Eck, Bas Eickhout, José Inácio Faria, Elisabetta Gardini, Gerben-Jan Gerbrandy, Arne Gericke, Jens Gieseke, Julie Girling, Sylvie Goddyn, Françoise Grossetête, Andrzej Grzyb, György Hölvényi, Anneli Jäätteenmäki, Jean-François Jalkh, Benedek Jávor, Kateřina Konečná, Urszula Krupa, Peter Liese, Norbert Lins, Susanne Melior, Miroslav Mikolášik, Massimo Paolucci, Gilles Pargneaux, Piernicola Pedicini, Annie Schreijer-Pierik, Davor Škrlec, Claudiu Ciprian Tănăsescu, Ivica Tolić, Estefanía Torres Martínez, Nils Torvalds, Adina-Ioana Vălean, Jadwiga Wiśniewska, Damiano Zoffoli
Substitutes present for the final vote	Clara Eugenia Aguilera García, Nicola Caputo, Eleonora Evi, Martin Häusling, Elisabeth Köstinger, Merja Kyllönen, Stefano Maullu, Ulrike Müller, James Nicholson, Marijana Petir, Christel Schaldemose, Bart Staes, Tiemo Wölken

FINAL VOTE BY ROLL CALL IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

62	+
ALDE	Catherine Bearder, Gerben-Jan Gerbrandy, Anneli Jäätteenmäki, Ulrike Müller, Nils Torvalds
ECR	Mark Demesmaecker, Arne Gericke, Julie Girling, Urszula Krupa, James Nicholson, Jadwiga Wiśniewska
EFDD	Eleonora Evi, Piernicola Pedicini
ENF	Mireille D'Ornano, Sylvie Goddyn, Jean-François Jalkh
GUE/NGL	Stefan Eck, Kateřina Konečná, Merja Kyllönen, Estefanía Torres Martínez
NI	Zoltán Balczó
PPE	Ivo Belet, Alberto Cirio, Birgit Collin-Langen, Angélique Delahaye, José Inácio Faria, Elisabetta Gardini, Jens Gieseke, Françoise Grossetête, Andrzej Grzyb, György Hölvényi, Elisabeth Köstinger, Peter Liese, Norbert Lins, Stefano Maullu, Miroslav Mikolášik, Marijana Petir, Annie Schreijer-Pierik, Ivica Tolić, Adina-Ioana Vălean
S&D	Clara Eugenia Aguilera García, Simona Bonafè, Biljana Borzan, Paul Brannen, Nicola Caputo, Nessa Childers, Miriam Dalli, Seb Dance, Susanne Melior, Massimo Paolucci, Gilles Pargneaux, Inmaculada Rodríguez-Piñero Fernández, Christel Schaldemose, Claudiu Ciprian Tănăsescu, Tiemo Wölken, Damiano Zoffoli
Verts/ALE	Marco Affronte, Bas Eickhout, Martin Häusling, Benedek Jávor, Davor Škrlec, Bart Staes

0	-

0	0

Key to symbols:

+ : in favour

- : against

0 : abstention