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SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION

Sustainable growth is one of the main objectives of the European Union (EU). In a period of rapid climate change and growing demand for energy and resources, the EU has introduced a range of policies and initiatives aimed at sustainable consumption and production. Under the European Green Deal and, in particular, the circular economy action plan, a sustainable product policy legislative initiative was announced to make products fit for a climate-neutral, resource-efficient and circular economy.

LEGAL BASIS

Articles 191 to 193 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU).

OBJECTIVES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

A. Sustainable consumption and production (SCP) action plan

In July 2008, the Commission proposed a [package of actions and proposals on SCP and sustainable industrial policy \(SIP\)](#), which aimed to improve the environmental performance of products throughout their life cycle, to increase consumer awareness and demand for sustainable goods and production technologies, to promote innovation in EU industry and to address international aspects, such as trade and standards. The SCP action plan led to initiatives in the following areas: extension of the Eco-design Directive, revision of the Ecolabel Regulation, revision of the Eco-management and Audit Regulation, legislation on green public procurement, the Resource Efficiency Roadmap, and the eco-innovation action plan. These instruments are an integral part of the EU's sustainable development strategy (EU SDS), reinforcing the commitment to meet the challenges of sustainable development, as well as to strengthen cooperation with partners outside the EU, for instance through the UN's Marrakech Process.

B. Roadmap to a Resource Efficient Europe

Following on from the Europe 2020 flagship initiative on resource efficiency, which calls for a strategy to define medium- and long-term objectives for resource efficiency and the means of achieving them, the Roadmap to a Resource Efficient Europe was launched in 2011. It proposes ways to increase resource productivity and decouple economic growth from resource use and its environmental impact ([2.5.6](#)).

C. Ecolabelling and energy labelling

Labelling provides crucial information that enables consumers to make informed choices. The European Ecolabel is a voluntary scheme established in 1992



to encourage businesses to market products and services that meet certain environmental criteria. Products and services awarded the Ecolabel carry the flower logo, allowing consumers – including public and private purchasers – to identify them easily. The label has so far been awarded to cleaning products, appliances, paper products, clothing, home and garden products, lubricants, personal and animal care products, and services such as tourist accommodation. Ecolabel criteria are not based on one single factor, but on studies which analyse the impact of a product or service on the environment throughout its life cycle. The 2008 revision of the [Ecolabel Regulation \(\(EC\) No 66/2010\)](#) aimed to promote the use of the voluntary Ecolabel scheme by reducing the costs and bureaucracy associated with its application. On 30 June 2017, the Commission presented the conclusions of its evaluation (fitness check) of the Ecolabel Regulation. It found that the regulation is relevant, broadly coherent and delivers EU added value. However it also concluded that the regulation is partly effective (as it enables enhanced environmental performance for products carrying the label, but criteria may not be adequate and uptake remains low for some product types) and partly efficient (as costs for compliance may act as a barrier to participation in some cases).

Directive 92/75/EEC introduced an EU-wide energy labelling scheme for household appliances (white goods), under which labels and information in product brochures provide potential consumers with energy consumption rates for all models available. Since its introduction in 1995, the EU Energy Label has become a widely recognised and respected guide for manufacturers and consumers. In June 2010, the Energy Labelling Directive 2010/30/EU was revised in order to extend its scope to a wider range of energy-related products. On 15 July 2015, the Commission proposed a return to a single 'A to G' labelling scale. New energy labelling requirements for individual product groups have been created under the [Regulation \(EU\) 2017/1369 of 4 July 2017](#) setting a framework for energy labelling and repealing Directive 2010/30/EU. Concretely, from 2021 onwards, five product groups (fridges, dishwashers, washing machines, TVs and lamps) have been 'rescaled': a product showing an A+++ energy efficiency class for example became a B class after rescaling, without any change in its energy consumption. The A class will initially be empty to leave room for more energy efficient models. This will enable consumers to distinguish more clearly between the most energy efficient products.

D. Eco-design

The Eco-design Directive ensures the technical improvement of products. The 2009 revision ([Directive 2009/125/EC](#)) of Directive 2005/32/EC extended its scope to energy-related products other than energy-using products; these are products that do not consume energy during use but which have an indirect impact on energy consumption, such as water-using devices, windows and insulation material. On 30 March 2022, the Commission published a [proposal for a regulation](#) establishing a framework for setting eco-design requirements for sustainable products, repealing Directive 2009/125/EC.

E. Eco-management and Audit Scheme (EMAS)

EMAS is a management tool enabling companies and other organisations to evaluate, report and improve their environmental performance. The scheme has been available



to companies since 1995, but was originally restricted to those in industrial sectors. Since 2001, however, EMAS has been open to all economic sectors, including public and private services. In 2009, EMAS underwent a significant change with the adoption of the new EMAS [Regulation \(\(EC\) No 1221/2009\)](#), aimed at encouraging organisations to register with EMAS. This revision of the EMAS Regulation has improved the scheme's applicability and credibility and strengthened its visibility and outreach. In 2017, Annexes I, II and III to the EMAS Regulation were amended to include the changes associated with the revision of the ISO 14001:2015 standard. [Regulation \(EU\) 2017/1505](#) amending these annexes entered into force on 18 September 2017.

F. Green public procurement (GPP)

GPP is a voluntary policy within the strategic public procurement framework supporting public authorities in the purchase of goods, services and works with a reduced environmental impact. The concept of GPP has been widely recognised in recent years as a useful tool for driving the market for greener products and services and reducing the environmental impacts of public authorities' activities. National action plans (NAPs) are the means by which Member States implement GPP. Two public procurement directives adopted in 2004 (Directives 2004/18/EC and 2004/17/EC) were the first to contain specific references to the possibility of incorporating environmental considerations into the contract award process, for instance through the inclusion of environmental requirements in technical specifications, the use of ecolabels or the application of award criteria based on environmental characteristics. The three directives adopted in February 2014 as part of the reform of public procurement under the Single Market Act – [Directives 2014/24/EU](#) (the Classic Directive), [2014/25/EU](#) (the Utilities Directive) and [2014/23/EU](#) (the Concessions Directive) – simplify the relevant procedures by improving the conditions for business to innovate and encouraging wider use of green public procurement, thus supporting the shift towards a resource-efficient and low-carbon economy.

In 2008, the Commission published [a communication entitled 'Public procurement for a better environment'](#), which set out a number of measures to be taken to support the implementation of GPP by Member States and individual contracting authorities. As a result, EU GPP criteria have been developed as part of the voluntary approach to GPP. To date, 21 sets of GPP criteria have been published for selected sectors such as transport, office IT equipment, cleaning products and services, construction, thermal insulation, and gardening products and services.

G. Eco-innovation action plan (EcoAP)

The [EcoAP launched by the Commission in December 2011](#) is the successor to the [environmental technologies action plan \(ETAP\)](#), aimed at boosting the development and use of environmental technologies and improving European competitiveness in this area.

The EcoAP is mainly linked to the Innovation Union flagship initiative of the Europe 2020 strategy. It is intended to expand the focus of innovation policies towards green technologies and eco-innovation and to highlight the role of environmental policy as a factor for economic growth. It also targets specific eco-innovation barriers and opportunities – especially those not covered by more general innovation policies. The



EcoAP promotes eco-innovation through environmental policy, financial support for small and medium-sized enterprises, international collaboration, new standards, and skill development.

The EcoAP is a broad policy framework that is financed from different sources. From 2014 to 2020, the main source of support was Horizon 2020. Other sources include European Structural and Investment Funds such as the European Regional Development Fund, the LIFE programme for the environment and climate action, COSME and the common agricultural policy. More recently, another major source of support was introduced: the [NextGenerationEU recovery plan](#). In recent years, many of the EcoAP goals have come together in the concept of the circular economy – an economy that learns from nature in that it wastes nothing. Eco-innovation is key to delivering many aspects of the circular economy: industrial symbiosis or ecologies, cradle-to-cradle design and new, innovative business models, etc. ([2.5.6](#)).

The Eco-Innovation Index evaluates the eco-innovation achievements of Member States, using a measurement framework consisting of 12 indicators.

H. Sustainable product policy

Under the European Green Deal, the Commission presented [a new circular economy action plan](#) (CEAP) in March 2020, in which it announced a sustainable products initiative to make products fit for a climate-neutral, resource-efficient and circular economy, as well as reduce waste. The sustainable products initiative builds on the Eco-design Directive and also addresses the presence of harmful chemicals in products such as electronics and ICT equipment, textiles, furniture, steel, cement and chemicals.

On 22 March 2023, the Commission adopted a [proposal for a directive on new rules on substantiating green claims](#), which tackles false environmental claims, and the wide expansion of public and private environmental labels. Moreover, the Commission adopted a [proposal for a directive on common rules promoting the repair of goods](#). The ‘right to repair’ initiative encourages sustainable consumption, making it easier and cheaper for consumers to repair defective goods as opposed to replacing them. Together with the proposal for a [directive on empowering consumers for the green transition](#), the new rules establish a regime for environmental claims and labels with the aim of addressing greenwashing.

ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

Parliament has expressed its support for the SCP Action Plan and its components on many occasions. During the 2009 revision of the Eco-design Directive, Parliament successfully strengthened the concept of life-cycle analysis, and in particular the notion of resource and material efficiency.

In its [resolution of 10 February 2021 on the new Circular Economy Action Plan](#), Parliament underlined, among other things, that sustainable, circular, safe and non-toxic products and materials should become the norm in the EU market and not the exception, and should be seen as the default choice, which is attractive, affordable and accessible for all consumers.



Parliament has played a significant role in the successive introduction of greener provisions in the public procurement directives. In the last revision of these directives, adopted in 2014, Parliament supported, inter alia, the introduction of the new 'most economically advantageous tender' (MEAT) criterion in the award procedure. This enables public authorities to put more emphasis on quality, environmental considerations, social aspects and innovation, while still taking into account the price and life-cycle cost of what is procured.

On 19 April 2004, Parliament decided to establish an environmental management system (EMS), in accordance with EMAS. On 24 January 2006, Parliament signed an EMAS Statement, pledging to ensure that its activities are consistent with current best practices in environmental management. In 2007, it obtained ISO 14001:2004 certification and received EMAS registration. Under EMAS, on 16 December 2019 Parliament decided to reduce its greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions per person by at least 40% by 2024 in comparison to 2006, as well as a number of other climate performance indicators, including GHG emissions from the transport of persons, renewable energy use, gas, fuel oil and electricity consumption, etc. According to EMAS data, Parliament's GHG emissions per person had already reduced by 37.7% from 2006 to 2019.

Parliament also applies a GPP policy. In June 2017, [Parliament published a study on GPP](#), which examines the current use and opportunities of GPP in the EU, in the context of and as a follow-up to the Commission's EU action plan for the circular economy. The study identified environmental benefits for citizens, as well as gains for employment and the overall economy at European level.

The EcoAP was welcomed by Parliament in its resolution of 17 October 2013. Parliament emphasised the potential synergy effects of eco-innovation for sustainable job creation, environmental protection and the reduction of economic dependency. Furthermore, the resolution emphasised the cross-cutting policy character of eco-innovation and the need to mainstream eco-innovation in all policy areas. Parliament also adopted its [position of 13 June 2017 on simplifying energy labelling](#) for home appliances to a scale from A to G, enabling customers to choose products that reduce energy consumption and their energy bills.

In its [resolution of 4 July 2017 entitled 'A longer lifetime for products: benefits for consumers and companies'](#), Parliament called on the Commission to improve product durability information by considering launching a voluntary European label covering, in particular, the product's durability, eco-design features, upgradeability in line with technical progress and reparability.

In its [resolution of 31 May 2018](#) on the implementation of the Eco-design Directive (2009/125/EC), Parliament called on the Commission to deploy sufficient resources for the eco-design process given the significant EU added value of the legislation. It also asked the Commission to assess whether the current eco-design methodology could be used for other product categories in addition to energy-related products and to come forward with proposals for new legislation.

Although Parliament, under EMAS, has already claimed carbon neutrality since 2016 as a result of the 100% offsetting of its irreducible emissions, in its [resolution of](#)



[14 May 2020](#) Parliament stated that it would lead by example and instructed its Bureau to develop a strategy for becoming carbon-neutral by 2030 through domestic measures (without offsetting). [Parliament's study](#) on carbon neutrality, published in September 2020, describes short-, medium- and long-term GHG emission reduction measures that would enable Parliament to drastically decrease its carbon footprint with a view to carbon neutrality by 2030.

For more information on this topic, please see the website of the [Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety \(ENVI\)](#).

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10/2023

