

## A common charger: better for consumers and the environment



One charger to rule them all ©AdobeStock/WESTOCK

**The EU plans to make life easier for consumers and reduce waste by making USB-C the common charger for smartphones and other mobile devices.**

Having to use different USB cables to charge our smartphones, tablets or cameras can be frustrating. The EU wants to make this a thing of the past, making life easier and reducing [e-waste](#). To find out what the common charger proposal is about, we talked to Anna Cavazzini, the chair of Parliament's [consumer protection committee](#). Read the summary of our [Facebook live interview](#) below.

## The common charger proposal

“The European Parliament has been pushing for 10 years for one standard, so that we no longer need lots of cables, just one,” said Cavazzini. The European Commission tried to bring companies on board via voluntary agreements, which partially worked. However, not all companies have agreed, and that is why the Commission has finally proposed legislation for one common standard for chargers.

### What does this mean for consumers?

The proposal consists of two parts: one is a common standard for cables and devices, meaning they would be interchangeable in the future. This is good for consumers, as they will be able to charge their devices with any cable.

The second part is about unbundling. “If I buy a new phone, often I automatically get a new cable,” Cavazzini said. “In future, phones and devices will no longer be automatically sold with cables and this will reduce electronic waste.” That would mean consumers would need to buy the cable separately. But as most people already have cables, this should not involve large costs.

### When can we expect the common charger in the EU?

At the earliest the rules could already enter into force in 2024. Cavazzini hopes Parliament will finish work on the proposal and reach an agreement with the Council of ministers, which co-legislates with the Parliament by the end of 2022. Countries would then have two years to implement the law.

### Parliament’s ideas

Although work on the proposal has not officially started in the Parliament, some MEPs have already called for all devices to be included. “The Commission’s proposal includes a lot of devices, but for example not e-readers,” Cavazzini said. Other MEPs say that the legislation needs to be future-proof, for example taking wireless charging into account.

### Will this stifle innovation?

According to the MEP, the industry often brings up the argument that legislation could hamper innovation. “I don’t see it,” she said. “The proposal states that if a new standard emerges that is better than USB-C, we can adapt the rules.”

### How much will e-waste be reduced?

There are different estimates, but one number that is often mentioned is roughly 1000 tonnes per year. “Electronic waste is the fastest growing waste stream in the EU. If we really want to implement the Green Deal and curb our use of resources, we need to pull out all the stops,” said

Cavazzini.

## Background

After a decade of pushing by the Parliament, the Commission [presented a proposal on the common charger](#) in September 2021. It would make USB-C the standard port for all smartphones, tablets, cameras, headphones, portable speakers and handheld videogame consoles.

### Find out more

[Common charger: a long-awaited proposal requested by Parliament](#)

[MEPs call for a common electronic charger](#)

[Multimedia centre: common charger](#)

[European Commission: one common charging solution for all](#)