



Incandescent light bulbs: Environment Committee backs phase-out plan

Plans gradually to replace incandescent light bulbs with energy-saving or halogen ones by 2012 were backed by the Environment Committee on Tuesday morning, when it rejected a move to block them.

The replacement plan was proposed by the European Commission in December 2008, and then approved by Member State experts in the Eco-design Regulatory Committee. Parliament has until 15 March to oppose it, if it so wishes.

In today's vote, MEPs rejected a resolution opposing the plan with 14 votes in favour, but 44 against. So in effect, the EP Environment Committee has approved the plan, under which incandescent bulbs are to be gradually phased out from September 2009 to 2012. The rejected resolution, drawn up by Holger Krahmer (ALDE, DE) and Anja Weisgerber (EPP-ED, DE), said that a product such as light bulbs should not be banned via a regulatory committee procedure.

Sizing up the savings

The Commission estimates that switching to energy-saving bulbs will save EU citizens close to 40 terawatt-hours (roughly equivalent to the annual electricity consumption of Romania, or 11 million European households, or to the yearly output of ten 500-megawatt power stations) and will cut about 15 million tonnes of CO₂ emissions per year.

An average household switching from incandescent bulbs to compact fluorescent ones could make net savings (taking into account higher cost of replacement bulbs) of between € 25 and € 50 a year on its electricity bill. These savings would release an extra €5 to 10 billion into the EU economy each year.

The replacement bulb regulation is just one of the "Eco-design" measures to be adopted by the Commission in the coming months, targeting many more products such as consumer electronics, white goods or heating appliances.

"Regulatory procedure with scrutiny" and entry into force

Under the current eco-design directive, adopted by Parliament and Council in 2005, the Commission may set minimum energy-efficiency and functionality requirements for products such as consumer electronics, household and heating appliances. Parliament and Council may block such implementing measures under a "regulatory procedure with scrutiny".

The regulation would enter into force 20 days after its publication in the Official Journal

Press release

of the European Communities. Products already on the market may continue to be sold.

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