Longer lifetime for products: benefits for consumers and companies

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The European Parliament adopted by 662 votes to 32, with 2 abstentions, a resolution on a longer lifetime for products: benefits for consumers and companies.

A study carried out in July 2016 at the request of its Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection showed that **broad-based policy measures are needed to promote a longer lifetime for products**, in particular by tackling programmed obsolescence. In a Eurobarometer survey conducted in June 2014, 77 % of EU consumers said that they would prefer to try to repair broken goods than to buy new ones.

Designing robust, durable and high-quality products: the Commission shall encourage the establishment of **minimum resistance criteria** covering, *inter alia*, **robustness, repairability and upgradeability** for each product category from the design stage onwards, facilitated by standards developed by all three European Standardisation Organisations (ESOs) (CEN, CENELEC and ETSI).

The manufacturer's commercial offer shall include:

- product durability,
- extended warranties,
- the availability of spare parts,
- ease of repair and the interchangeability of component.

Members highlighted the role of commercial strategies, such as **product leasing**, in the design of sustainable products. They called to support producers of modular designs which are easy to dismantle and interchange.

The pursuit of product durability and repairability should go alongside the objective of sustainability by means of, for instance, the use of environmentally friendly materials.

Promoting repairability and longevity: Members called on the Commission to carry out a series of actions in this regard, such as:

- facilitating measures that make the option to repair goods attractive to the consumer and encourage the use of construction techniques and materials that render repair of the item or the replacement of its components easier;
- including the **product's repairability** among its essential features when beneficial, and by discouraging, unless justified for safety reasons, the fixing-in of essential components such as batteries and LEDs into products;
- providing **maintenance guides** and repair indications at the time of purchase;
- ensuring the possibility of using **substitutes** of equal quality and performance for original parts;
- encouraging manufacturers to develop battery technology to ensure that the lifespan of the batteries and accumulators better matches the expected lifespan of the product ;
- encouraging the accessibility of **spare parts and** safeguarding the option of going to an independent repairer;
- stimulating repairs and **second-hand sales**, and to develop repairs training;

- discouraging technical, safety or software solutions which prevent repairs from being performed by an independent repairer.

Operating a usage-oriented economic model and supporting SMEs and employment in the EU: Member States are invited to:

- consult with all stakeholders concerned in order to encourage the development of a usage-based sales model which benefits everyone;

- adopt measures to promote the development of the functional economy, and to encourage the rental, exchange and borrowing of goods;
- encourage local and regional authorities actively promoting the development of economic models, such as the collaborative economy and the circular economy;
- maintain electrical and electronic appliances at their utmost usefulness and value and not to consider them as waste;
- effectively monitor the market to ensure that both European or imported products comply with ecodesign requirements.

The Commission should consider how **the replaceability of LED bulbs can be encouraged** and facilitated and consider, in addition to ecodesign measures, a less stringent approach involving, for example, an extended warranty if the bulbs cannot be removed.

Measures on planned obsolescence: the Commission shall:

- propose an **EU-level definition** of planned obsolescence for tangible goods and software;
- examine the possibility of establishing an **independent system** that could test and detect the built-in obsolescence in products. Members called, in this connection, for better legal protection for 'whistle-blowers' and appropriate dissuasive measures for producers.

Parliament encouraged transparency from suppliers and manufacturers by stipulations in **product contracts** of the minimum period for which security updates on operating systems are available. They proposed that a definition of a **reasonable period of use be established**.

Ensuring better information for consumers: the Commission is called on to improve product durability information via the consideration of a **voluntary European label**, covering, in particular the product's durability via the creation of a **usage meter** for the most relevant consumer products, in particular large electrical appliances.

Members called for measures to promote consumer awareness about early failing and non-repairable products, where appropriate through the development of notification platforms for consumers.

Lastly, Parliament suggested **strengthening the right to the legal guarantee of conformity**, a reference to the guarantee to appear written out in full on the invoice for the purchase of the product. It called for the implementation of a complaints mechanism at EU level for cases in which the right to a guarantee is not implemented.