

Ecodesign requirements for energy-using products

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PURPOSE : to establish a framework Directive for addressing eco-design requirements. **CONTENT** : it is generally acknowledged that the production, distribution, use and end of life management of energy-using products ("EuP") is associated with a considerable number of important impacts on the environment such as climate change linked to energy consumption, consumption of other materials and natural resources such as water, waste generation and release of hazardous substances to the environment. It is estimated that over 80% of all product-related environmental impacts are determined during the product design phase. Integrating environmental considerations as early as possible into the product development process is therefore the most effective way of introducing changes and improvements to products. It is expected that with the wide dissemination and considerable environmental impacts of energy-using products, growing public awareness of environmental issues will result in the environmental aspects and performance of such products being increasingly targeted. It is important to avoid market fragmentation through diverging national requirements as regards the environmental aspects of these products. It consequently appears necessary to create a coherent harmonised Community framework in which to address these "eco-design" requirements. The present proposal aims to: - ensure the free movement of energy-using products within the EU; - improve the overall environmental performance of these products and thereby protect the environment; - contribute to the security of energy supply and enhance the competitiveness of the EU economy; - preserve the interests of both industry and consumers. The proposed framework Directive is in principle applicable to any product using energy to perform the function for which it was designed, manufactured and put on the market. All energy sources are covered, although it is likely that only those using electricity, solid, liquid and gaseous fuels will be the subject of implementing measures. The proposed scope is very large. However in practice, the framework Directive defines the criteria for selecting products that can be covered by implementing measures. For example, a product will be selected only if it represents an important volume of sales in the EU market and an important environmental impact at European level. Another criterion is the potential for improvement, which should not entail excessive costs and could take into account both existing legislation and proactive initiatives from industry. Additional aspects (product performance, health and safety, impact on consumers, manufacturers' competitiveness) are integrated in the analysis. The scope also covers parts, which are placed on the market as individual parts for end-users and whose environmental performance can be assessed in an independent manner. Both conditions must be fulfilled. The proposal makes clear that, unless implementing measures are adopted, no legal obligations flow from the framework Directive for manufacturers. It is proposed to exclude vehicles from the scope.