



BRITISH RETAIL CONSORTIUM
for successful and responsible retailing



Well-known A-G layout of Energy Label should be maintained

Joint statement from ANEC¹, BEUC², BRC³ and FCD⁴

In view of the ongoing discussions on a revision of the EU Energy Labelling Framework Directive, and of a proposed new Energy Label layout for refrigerating appliances, European consumer and retail organisations have united in support of the retention of the A-G energy labelling scheme.

The EU Energy Label, which has been in place for over fifteen years, is a success story for both consumers and the environment. The familiar layout of the EU Energy Label, which contains A to G coloured bar ratings, has achieved a high level of recognition among consumers⁵. The message “Buy A” is easy to understand and has contributed considerably to an uptake of more energy-efficient household appliances and thereby to a reduction in overall household energy consumption.

The label is designed to inform consumers at the point of purchase. It is therefore imperative that the Energy Label meets consumers’ needs and is simple enough for retailers to explain to consumers.

The success of the scheme will be maintained only if the A-G scale is kept for all products. Conversely, recognition levels will be undermined if the A-G scale is replaced by the open-ended scale proposed for refrigerating appliances which changes over time and differs for different products⁶. Consumers and retailers will be confused and the label will prove less effective in meeting its objectives.

With a view to the above, we welcome the recent votes by the European Parliament on 5 and 6 May on the Energy Labelling Framework Directive and on a Motion for a Resolution to reject a proposed new Energy Label for televisions. These two votes send a clear signal that the aim of the Energy Label is first and foremost a tool to inform consumers, and that its well-known A-G layout should therefore be maintained.

¹ ANEC, the European Consumer Voice in Standardisation, www.anec.eu

² BEUC, the European Consumers’ Organisation, www.beuc.eu

³ The British Retail Consortium, www.brc.org.uk

⁴ La Fédération des entreprises du Commerce et de la Distribution, www.fcd.asso.fr

⁵ MORI research carried out for ANEC, BEUC, UK National Consumer Council (NCC), the UK Energy Savings Trust and the UK Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs in May 2008, <http://www.anec.eu/attachments/ANEC-ENV-2008-G-040b.pdf>. This research shows that 90% of consumers in Europe are aware of the label.

⁶ MORI research carried out for the UK Government, Sweden and The Netherlands in December 2008, <http://www.mtprog.com/cms/library-publications/>, clearly shows that A-G is easier to understand and a scale combining letters and numbers was strongly rejected by respondents.

Consumers and retailers do recognise that the EU Energy Labelling scheme has failed to keep pace with technological advances and believe that the energy labelling scheme should be made more dynamic by including a validity period on the label and regularly updating the thresholds within the A-G scale, as voted for by the Parliament. This would also ensure that any possible confusion to consumers and retailers during transition periods is minimised. Research demonstrates that consumers expect the A-G class thresholds to be updated regularly. Such updates would not be perceived as confusing as long as a period of validity is shown on the label⁷.

Unfortunately the Parliament did not reject the proposed new Energy Label for refrigerating appliances⁸. This decision contradicts the result of the earlier votes and means that the Commission can proceed in introducing a confusing Energy Label, comprising one or several A-X% classes, for refrigerating appliances. We believe having two different Energy Labels on the market would be disastrous, causing confusion for retailers and market enforcement authorities as well as consumers.

With a view to the Parliament's votes, ANEC, BEUC, BRC and FCD urge the Council to reject moves towards an open-ended scale which would raise costs, make it difficult for retailers to inform consumers, and potentially undermine the past experience of positive consumer choice for more energy efficient products.

In order to ensure consistency on the market, we urge the Council to reject the proposed A-X% Energy Label for refrigerating appliances.



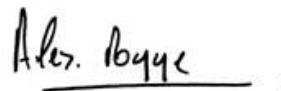
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Stephen Robertson
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⁷ MORI research carried out for the UK Government, Sweden and The Netherlands in December 2008. The study analyses EU consumers' understanding of the A-G energy label and, in particular, how consumers react to the transition between an old and new label during revalorisations, <http://www.mtprog.com/cms/library-publications/>.

⁸ The Motion to reject the Energy Label for refrigerating appliances received 389 votes out of the 393 needed to adopt the Motion. However, two more MEPs have since cast their vote and supported the Motion to reject the new label, see <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//NONSGML+PV+20090506+RES-RCV+DOC+PDF+V0//EN&language=EN>