

Bld. Brand Whitlock 114 / B-1200 Brussels
T: +32 2 738 78 10

The New Energy Label

The context

The new Energy Labelling Framework Regulation will bring substantial changes to the layout of the energy label.

The first updated energy labels will start to appear towards the end of 2020 for the product groups of household appliances with "rescaled" labels: dishwashers; washing machines and washer-dryers; refrigerators, freezers, and fridge-freezers, including wine coolers.

These new labels will be visible to European consumers in physical stores and on-line as of 1 March 2021. The new energy label will continue to be implemented in several stages:

From 2025 it will appear on: ovens, air conditioners, tumble dryers and specialist cooling appliances;

From 2030: on water heaters and heating appliances.

The '+' classes that were added as technology advanced are disappearing. For future labels, only classes A (the most efficient) to G (the least efficient) will remain.

In addition, the new regulation provides for the implementation of a European database of household electrical appliances – or EPREL - EU for short. This will have a public area which will become available to European citizens in the next few months. Anyone placing appliances with energy labels on the market has to enter the details in [EPREL](#).

Questions & Answers (Q&A)

Q1. What does APPLiA think of the new energy labelling framework?

A1: The energy label has been mirroring the great strides that the industry has made in manufacturing more sustainable products. The European Commission needed to find a way to leave more room for innovation and this is how the idea of the rescaling of the label was born. The new energy label will start appearing already in 2020 due to a 4-month transition period during which consumers will find both the old and the new labels in the box of their new appliance. The new labels will be on the shop floors as from March 2021 and as you can imagine, communication about the revised energy label to consumers and retailers is, in fact, the key challenge now.

Q2. Could you elaborate what those communication challenges are?

A2: Each rescaling risks creating the potential for confusion among consumers and market surveillance authorities. On one hand, the European consumers might find themselves in a difficult situation when buying a new appliance as due to the revision, many resource efficient products that were on top of the scale will be in the lower classes. What is key to clarify, however, is that yellow, orange and red classes will contain all the cutting-edge technology from today. To make sure that such misunderstandings are minimised as much as possible, communication campaigns run by the EU and the Member States must make clear that it is the label that has been rescaled and not that the product has become less efficient.

One of the greatest challenges that needs to be overcome is the mix of old and new labels as in this first phase of change, the new labels will only be applied to dishwashers, washing machines, washer dryers, fridges and freezers. This means that while these products will have a new label, other appliances, such as ovens, air conditioners, tumble dryers, water heaters and heating appliances will remain labelled as they currently are until 2025 and 2030. The communication campaign being prepared by the European Commission, EU governments and all stakeholders, including ourselves, would need to clarify the reason of this mixed labelling so that retailers can provide a detailed and informative explanation to customers.

Last but not least, another key challenge would be that for a few months consumers will find themselves with two labels in the box - the existing and the rescaled label. Having two labels at the same time adds significant burden to the manufacturers where double testing may be needed. It requires disproportionate efforts in retail shops to relabel and, it risks creating confusion for market surveillance authorities and shop-owners.

Producers today are taking all possible measures to minimise the confusion during this transition period.

Q3. What is the home appliance industry doing to smoothen the transition?

A3: APPLiA's members are already collaborating with the European Commission and national governments on a number of initiatives in order to inform all citizens across and beyond the EU borders. These initiatives include Horizon 2020 projects, such as Label 2020 and BELT. The association is also already in preparation of digital and more traditional tools that will help dealers, the media and interested parties to better understand the change - a dedicated website, brochures and messages that would explain the transition in a simple and memorable way.

The New Energy Label

We also remain available to cooperate with market surveillance authorities whose role remains crucial.

Q4. What do you think about the design of the new label?

A4:A new element of the new label is the introduction of a QR code which will allow consumers to get additional, non-commercial information about the product they are interested in by simply scanning it with their smartphones. This information will be obtained from product information sheets in electronic format via the new product registration database, EPREL.

The label will also continue providing information about non-energy related characteristics, such as performance, water consumption, noise emission or storage capacity. The uniqueness of each type of product, of course, creates different criteria and after substantial research, the European Commission opted for expressing the consumption in kWh per cycle, per year or per hour, as appropriate for each product.

In addition to that, icons have been redesigned to be clearer to consumers.

Q5. Will the consumer understand the new energy label and adopt new buying habits?

A5: This is the main wish of the home appliance industry - to see an energy label that continues to promote energy efficiency progress, that helps consumers make the right choice and that fosters cost-efficient innovations.

What will be decisive for the success of the new label are the targeted campaigns where the message should be that it is a label that has been rescaled and not that the product has become less efficient.

Q6. Will the new energy label further improve the energy efficiency of products as it did in the last years?

A6: The energy label was designed to continue promoting the progress achieved in energy efficiency and to foster cost-efficient innovations. Home appliance producers in Europe are annually investing EUR 1.4 billion in research and development at the service of sustainability, as well as to build energy and resource-efficient products.

Q7. What do home appliance manufacturers think about the introduction of the product database?

A7: APPLiA members have invested a lot of effort in providing content for the product registration database, EPREL. The database will make the label and key product information more readily available to consumers and dealers, facilitating the digitalisation of the process.

Our call to the European Commission and to market surveillance authorities is to ensure that all products have been entered in the database in order to avoid unfair competition and free riding. Our industry and the EU pays extreme attention to data protection and we would like to highlight that this technical documentation and know-how must remain well-protected.

Q8. Will the new label foster more energy savings for consumers?

A8: It has the potential to do so. If we look at the progress the industry has made since the creation of the label, we have some good examples - a fridge today for instance consumes only a quarter of the electricity than a 20 year old model, using a dishwasher consumes about a third less energy than if we were doing the dishes by hand.

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Q9. What is the potential for energy savings?

A9: Energy savings have a good potential, especially when it comes to products that have not yet received the popularity they deserve. For instance, dishwashers today consume a third less energy and a tenth less water in comparison to hand dishwashing.

Energy efficiency is also only one aspect of all characteristics. The future also belongs to connected, smart appliances where fridges help us to prevent food waste and air conditioners for instance adjust the right temperature, ensuring that we consume as much energy as we need.

Q10. What would be the benefits for consumers?

A10: Manufacturers strive to provide excellent products to consumers and Europeans will keep on being able to benefit from sustainable appliances.

The scale has been redesigned with the intention to be clearer to consumers and we hope that the introduction of the QR code and the EPREL database, which will become operational after a lot of effort, will bring better lifestyles to consumers and help to achieve the goals of the Paris Agreement.

Q11. How expensive is for the industry to introduce the changes?

A11: Changing the labels, running more standard tests than usual, building an EPREL database and communicating all this transformation comes at a high cost.

APPLiA strongly hopes that this major change will be productive and would bring our idea of a Circular Culture further.

Q12. Will "A" classes be populated?

A12: The legislators revised the energy label with the intention not to have A classes populated at the very start. As a result, we will see today's top products further down the scale and this is why communication about the fact that the product is as efficient as before is key.

Q13. Do you expect a roll out of many new models due to rescaling?

A13: Designing new and better products is the core business of the industry and we believe this will continue regardless of the new measures.

Q14. How do you think the relabelling (double labelling) will work at the point of sales?

A14: The home appliance industry has every confidence that retailers will have the knowledge and will to ensure that their customers are fully informed. There are two European Horizon 2020 projects, Label 2020 and BELT, as well as the steps being taken by industry to help retailers to cope with the changes.

Q15. What is EPREL and is it a useful tool for consumers?

A15: The European Product Database for Energy Labelling is an online product registration database managed by the European Commission. The database contains data on the energy performance of those products that are covered by energy labelling regulations, such as lamps, heating appliances, displays, ovens, washing machines, etc. Examples of the data that are included in the database are the energy efficiency class of a product and technical information sheets. The database consists of three parts; one for manufacturers to register their products, one for public authorities in support of their market surveillance activities and one public part in which consumers can access a selection of the included data.

All products need to be registered in EPREL before they can be sold on the European market. EPREL has been built to help market surveillance activities to identify products that do not meet the requirements. This allows market surveillance authorities to target those companies that are ignoring the rules. EPREL will also provide consumers with the opportunity to search the product database for energy labels and product information sheets later, allowing them to compare one model with another.

Q16. Is the new label easier to understand than the old label with plusses?

A16: One of the main design goals of the new energy label was to be clearer to consumers. Another one was to allow scope for improvements.

Q17. Do you think consumers' trust in the label will be kept?

A17: Trust in the label is crucial to achieving the EU's energy efficiency targets. Our industry relies very much on market surveillance authorities and on the potential of the EPREL database to provide detailed information to consumers. The new label creates an opportunity to promote the importance of energy efficiency and continues to set a Europe-wide standard.

Undoubtedly, any transformation and confusion put at risk the existing trust in a very valuable tool for measuring energy efficiency and making sustainable choices. For this reason, any further revision needs to be led very carefully and based on scientific data.

Q18. What about incentives to buy more efficient appliances?

A18: APPLiA's past experience shows that monetary incentives can shape consumer purchasing behaviour, and we have seen recent positive results in countries, such as Romania and Hungary, where citizens drastically reduced their energy use.