

Brussels, 22th of March 2022

Empowering consumers in a digital and green transition: mandatory environmental impact assessments and labels for digital products

Dear Vice-President Timmermans,
Dear Vice-President Vestager,
Dear Vice-President Jourova,
Dear Commissioner Reynders,
Dear Commissioner Breton,
Dear Commissioner Sinkevičius,

Two of the European Commission's key priorities are Europe fit for the Digital Age and the Green Deal. To reach both of these priorities, **we must ensure the digital transition promotes and does not hamper the green transition**. We can no longer ignore the environmental footprint of the ICT-sector, which according to the Commission in its Communication COM(2020)67 is "significant, estimated at 5-9% of the world's total electricity use and more than 2% of all emissions." And the digital sector is only expected to grow. The European Union must only accelerate innovation and digitalisation in a way compatible with our CO2 reduction goals, climate neutrality aims and high environmental standards. This means digital technologies and electronics need to become sustainable and circular over their entire lifecycle, including products, production processes, necessary infrastructures and waste management

On the 30th of March the Commission will present the Sustainable products policy initiative, including a revision of the Ecodesign Directive and Empowering Consumers for the Green Transition. Information for consumers to make sustainable choices is currently lacking, fragmented or incomparable due to different methodologies. This system facilitates greenwashing towards European consumers, hampers companies in the digital sector that are working hard to become sustainable and above all poses a danger to our planet.

This is why we call for **mandatory environmental impact assessments of ICT products**, using a standardized life-cycle assessment methodology and **a mandatory environmental label** informing consumers of this impact in a clear and easy way. Moreover, we call for **environmental standards for digital devices, e-electronics and software**. The EU must use these environmental assessments, labels and minimum standards as a driver for sustainable innovation in the digital sector.

With clear, harmonised, quantifiable and comparable mandatory reporting of environmental impact of products we benefit consumers, businesses and, ultimately, our planet. Consumers and businesses can only make sustainable choices with the relevant knowledge and data. Mandatory environmental impact assessments and labels will empower consumers to make sustainable choices, voluntary labels will clearly not.

A mandatory environmental impact assessment and label will incentivise, inform and reward companies becoming more sustainable. Only with mandatory labels, sustainable companies will have a level playing field, unlike if such labels are voluntary. Mandatory environmental impact assessments will also show all businesses where they can make production processes more environmentally friendly, less wasteful and save costs. It will also contribute to our circular economy, including recycling of raw materials, strengthening the EU's strategic autonomy. Lastly, a mandatory environmental impact assessment and label is

perfectly feasible, desirable and necessary as more than 20 sustainable digital businesses, including SME's stressed in their call through the 'One Green Label' Digital Coalition.¹

This is why we urgently call for standardised methods and prescriptive formats **reporting environmental impact over the entire life cycle** and **labels informing consumers** to be determined together with industry, academics and civil society. These should be complemented by **environmental minimum standards** for **digital devices, e-electronics and software**. Ultimately, this will incentivise sustainable choices by consumers, drive and reward innovation in sustainable ICT by businesses and establish accountability towards society. Only then we can achieve our twin transitions: a Europe Fit for the Digital Age that promotes and does not hamper the Green Deal.

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¹ <https://onegreenlabeldigital.eu/>.