Position on the Commission's proposals to revise the Ecodesign & Energy Labelling measures on domestic refrigeration

January 2018

Scope

We consider that it makes no sense to take out appliances with glass doors from the scope and cover them in a regulation for commercial products. Wine coolers are already covered by the Energy Label for household products, and should follow the Ecodesign rules for the same type of products. The opposite would create unnecessary confusion. **We support maintaining all wine coolers and minibars in the scope of the domestic refrigeration regulations**.

Moreover, the inclusion of wine coolers sold for non-domestic use should be explicit in both the Ecodesign and Energy Labelling regulations. Today, the formulation is not sufficiently clear, and most wine coolers sold for non-domestic use (i.e. the vast majority) do not carry a label.

Consumers should be able to understand the impact glass-door appliances/compartments have on energy efficiency. For this, **these products should remain covered by the same Energy Label as non-transparent products, without any artificial factor**. There are technological solutions to increase the efficiency of transparent appliances/compartments. Topten EU has identified an A++ rated minibar with a glass door[1].

Ambition level

We see the proposed Ecodesign tiers and Energy Labelling classes as a minimum in terms of ambition:

- The least life-cycle cost (LLCC) calculations that are used to set the 2023 tier level are based on flat cost data from 2015 or earlier, not considering learning effects. Between now and 2023, there will be cost reductions on efficient technologies because of mass production and learning effects, as has always been the case in the past. This means that the 'genuine' LLCC in 2023 will be below what is proposed here (about 8% below according to our estimation).
- In addition, we understand that the new standard calculation for the volume of the appliance may be on average slightly more favourable than in the past – and quite significantly for some categories of design of compartments. Internal fitting should indeed be removed, thus increasing the calculated volume compared to the real volume available for storage.

[1] http://www.topten.eu/english/professional-refrigerators/minibars.html

- Topten data shows that best available technology (BAT) models can reach the proposed new A class with efficiency improvements of 21% (refrigerators without freezer), 35% (freezers, 2-door fridge-freezers) or 41% (1-door fridge-freezers). The combination of the proposed compensation factors alone can allow models to reach up to 25% higher efficiency levels (see below).
- MEPS for wine storage appliances should also be tightened (Tier 2).

Additionally, the **timing should be kept as tight as possible**, as there have been substantial delays with this product group and no serious regulatory tier since 2012. This represents years of lost savings, which need to be swiftly recovered. A+ models have been allowed on the market for more than a decade now, although they should have been phased out already, as they are now way above the LLLC point.

Compensation factors

We are generally opposed to compensation factors, especially for the Energy Label where they create bias in the comparison of the energy impact of products. **The proposal to reduce the levels of some of the current compensation factors is thus welcome,** although the proposed formula remains **highly complicated with many factors and bonuses.** The factors alone can still help a model jump one class up and look much more efficient, despite consuming 25% more electricity. We think further efforts should be made to simplify and streamline the equations.

We **oppose the introduction of a new compensation factor for models with multiple doors**. The intention to promote appliances that have different independent temperature compartments for different type of food, improving food preservation and food quality is a fair objective. However, we lack evidence with regards to the actual impact on food preservation (and notably whether consumers will use the appliance as expected). Moreover, this kind of appliance is currently very rare on the European market. Thus, the multi-door factor will just end up as a bonus for American-style fridges or unusual door combination designs that should not be promoted.

Should the factor be maintained, the definitions should be reworked to clarify the relationship between 'doors' and 'compartments', as it currently presents a risk of loopholes. This should only be awarded to additional doors which correspond to compartments with differentiated temperatures.

We **firmly oppose introducing a compensation factor for glass doors**. This factor would seriously undermine the respect of the LLCC target enshrined in the Ecodesign Directive. Glass doors are not a functionality but a pure design feature. Therefore, they cannot be used as an excuse to deviate from the LLCC principle.

We are also **surprised by the proposed increases in the value of the combi-factor**. Why has it been increased by up to 60% for some products, compared to what was suggested in the preparatory study for this review? A 50% higher energy allowance for '*controlling the cooling of multiple compartment types*' seems excessive.

Resource efficiency

Measures to work towards a Circular Economy are a high priority on the EU policy agenda, and as such, appropriate consideration of material efficiency during the development of Ecodesign policy is

essential. The current Working Document, relying on assumptions made in the review study we do not support, proposes too few policy options in our view.

We welcome the provision on the **availability of spare door gaskets**, although the duration of 10 years appears insufficient. New gaskets should be available for at least 15 years, considering that the baseline lifetime of domestic fridge-freezers is 12.5 years and users can keep old fridges in operation for a much longer time. New gaskets for older models are of utmost relevance, as those are the ones which will most likely wear and need replacement, affecting the energy performance of the appliance in the long run.

Additionally, we **call for the integration of the following requirements to facilitate repair and recycling:**

- Specify that door gaskets should be replaceable without proprietary tool, in situ, without the need to change the doors and without having to interfere with any other part of the appliance, risking deteriorating them and the overall performance.
- Manufacturers to ensure unrestricted and standardised access to appliance repair and maintenance information to independent operators, free of charge or for a reasonable fee in order to not hinder small independent operators in their activity.
- Availability of spare parts for at least the priority parts for repair, i.e. thermistors, electronic processors, door seals and interior elements for a minimum of 15 years (at least beyond the baseline lifetime of the appliances).
- A minimum warranty duration of eight years. This will help prevent reverting product lifetimes, especially newer models with increasingly sophisticated and fragile electronic components.
  As suggested by RREUSE members, the following technical requirements could help extend the lifetime of products:
  - Putting valves on the cooling circuit to ease the recharge of the cooling fluid following a leak;
  - Minimum insulation and protection for the internal motor;
  - Protections for electronics from power surges;
  - Input and output tubes to/from the compressor do not trap oil and hinder it from returning to the engine.
- Requirements for the product design that support and simplify the work of recyclers, such as ensuring that parts that require selective removal treatment or that can be reused, can be individually dismantled/separated.
- Restrictions on the use of plastics/polymers that impede adequate recycling, such as non-compatible for recycling polymer blends, incompatible coatings, very dark plastics that have no recycling routes, etc.

Tighter verification tolerances

Verification tolerances remain unchanged from the 2009 Regulations. The decision to not tighten them is based on a conclusion of the preparatory study suggesting that as a new measurement standard will be applied, laboratories and market surveillance authorities need to gain some experience first. This might be true in the first years, but it should not be forever. The preparatory study also highlights that most of the changes in the new standard *'aim to increase or maintain the accuracy, reliability and reproducibility of the test results*', hence suggesting that verification tolerances can be further reduced with the application of this new standard.

We propose to maintain the current tolerances for the first tier, but then reduce them when the second tier enters into force in 2023, from 10% to 7% for the declared energy consumption and freezing capacity. Five years should be fully sufficient to gain experience with the standard.

Circumvention clause

We support the introduction of an anti-circumvention clause in Annex II.3 of the Ecodesign proposal, since this has been explicitly mentioned in the 2017 Energy Labelling Regulation and is not present in the 2009 Ecodesign Directive.

Banning HFOs

We call on the European Commission to consider banning halogenated hydrocarbons (HFOs) as refrigerants and foam blowing agents in household refrigerators, considering their known environmental disadvantages and unknown risks, as well as the existence of natural alternatives.

Display of the range of available efficiency classes: interpretation issue

The new Energy Labelling Regulation stipulates that on commercial and ad material, the energy class shall be shown together with '*the range of the efficiency classes available on the label*.' The purpose of this provision is for consumers to better understand how the energy class displayed compares to the state of the market (and understand if this class currently corresponds to best or worst performers).

We believe this provision should be interpreted as showing the range of efficiency classes that are populated by products, and not just that are written on the label. This means the range should not always be A to G (which provides little added-value to the consumer) but the range of classes that are not greyed on the label. Therefore, the range displayed for standard refrigerating appliances should be:

- A to F at tier 1 (i.e. from 2020 to 2023)
- A to E at tier 2. (i.e. from 2023 onwards).

QR Code: more clarity needed

If the QR code links to the supplier/manufacturer's website, consumers may very well believe that the label is a private self-declaration and fail to understand that it is an official EU policy instrument. It could undermine the trust in the label. We recommend restricting the link to neutral model information **on the EU product database**.

Contact:
ECOS – European Environmental Citizens' Organisation for Standardisation
Chloé Fayole, chloe.fayole@ecostandard.org