



Consumer protection: enabling sustainable choices and ending greenwashing

Brussels, 22 March 2023

Today, the Commission is proposing [common criteria against greenwashing and misleading environmental claims](#). Under today's proposal, **consumers** will have **more clarity, stronger reassurance** that when something is sold as green, it actually is green, and better quality information to choose environment-friendly products and services. **Businesses** will also benefit, as those that make a genuine effort to improve the environmental sustainability of their products will be more easily **recognised and rewarded by consumers** and able to **boost their sales** – rather than face unfair competition. This way, the proposal will help **establish a level playing field** when it comes to information about environmental performance of products.

A [Commission study*](#) from 2020 highlighted that 53.3% of examined environmental claims in the EU were found to be vague, misleading or unfounded and 40% were unsubstantiated. The absence of common rules for companies making voluntary green claims leads to 'greenwashing' and creates an uneven playing field in the EU's market, to the disadvantage of genuinely sustainable companies.

Reliable, comparable and verifiable information for consumers

According to the proposal, when companies choose to make a 'green claim' about their products or services, they will have to respect minimum norms on how they **substantiate** these claims and how they **communicate** them.

The proposal **targets explicit claims**, such as for example: 'T-shirt made of recycled plastic bottles', 'CO2 compensated delivery', 'packaging made of 30% recycled plastic' or 'ocean friendly sunscreen'. It also aims to tackle the proliferation of labels as well as new public and private **environmental labels**. It covers all voluntary claims about the environmental impacts, aspects or performance of a product, service or the trader itself. However, it **excludes claims that are covered by existing EU rules**, such as the EU Ecolabel or the organic food logo, because the current laws already ensure that these regulated claims are reliable. Claims which will be covered by **upcoming** EU regulatory rules, will be excluded for the same reason.

Before companies communicate any of the covered types of 'green claims' to consumers, such claims will need to be **independently verified** and **proven with scientific evidence**. As part of the scientific analysis, companies will identify the environmental impacts that are actually **relevant** to their product, as well as **identifying any possible trade-offs**, to give a full and accurate picture.

Clear and harmonised rules and labels

Several rules will make sure that claims are **communicated clearly**. For example, claims or labels that use **aggregate scoring** of the product's overall environmental impact, will no longer be permitted, unless set in EU rules. If products or organisations are compared with others, such **comparisons should be based on equivalent information and data**.

The proposal will also regulate **environmental labels**. There are currently at least 230 different labels and there is evidence that this leads to **consumer confusion and distrust**. To control the proliferation of such labels, new public labelling schemes will not be allowed, unless developed at EU level, and any new private schemes will need to show higher environmental ambition than existing ones and get a pre-approval to be allowed. There are detailed rules about environmental labels in general: they must also be reliable, transparent, independently verified, and regularly reviewed.

Next steps

Following the ordinary legislative procedure, the Green Claims Directive proposal will now be subject to the approval of the European Parliament and the Council.

Background

Today's proposal complements the [March 2022 proposal on 'empowering consumers for the green](#)

[transition](#)' by providing more specific rules on environmental claims, in addition to a general prohibition of misleading advertising. Today's proposal is also presented together with a proposal on common rules promoting the repair of goods, which will also contribute to sustainable consumption and enhance the circular economy.

Today's proposal makes good on an important Commission commitment as part of the European Green Deal. It is the third package of proposals on circular economy, together with the proposal on common rules promoting the repair of goods. The first and second circular economy packages were adopted in March and November 2022. The [first package](#) included the new proposed Regulation on Ecodesign for Sustainable Products, the EU Strategy for Sustainable and Circular Textiles, and the proposed Consumer law directive on empowering consumers in the green transition. The [second package](#) included the proposals for the Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation, the communication on biodegradable, biobased and compostable plastics and the proposed EU Certification for Carbon Removals Regulation.

For More Information

[Proposal for a Directive on New rules on substantiating green claims](#)

[Questions and Answers](#): New criteria on substantiating green claims

[Factsheet](#)

[Webpage on green claims](#)

[Proposal for a Directive on common rules promoting the repair of goods](#)

[Press release](#) - Promoting Repair and Reuse

[Questions and Answers](#) - Promoting Repair and Reuse

Promoting Repair and Reuse – [Website](#)

*: [Annex VII](#), [Annex VIII](#)

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Quotes:

Green claims are everywhere: ocean-friendly t-shirts, carbon-neutral bananas, bee-friendly juices, 100% CO2-compensated deliveries and so on. Unfortunately, way too often these claims are made with no evidence and justification whatsoever. This opens the door to greenwashing and puts companies making genuinely sustainable products at a disadvantage. Many Europeans want to contribute to a more sustainable world through their purchases. They need to be able to trust the claims made. With this proposal, we give consumers the reassurance that when something is sold as green, it actually is green.
Frans Timmermans, Executive Vice-President for the European Green Deal - 22/03/2023

All of us want to do our best to limit the impacts of our consumption choices on the environment, but it's not easy being green. We are bombarded with information. There are 230 different ecolabels on the EU market. Being able to trust green claims and labels on products is important. The proposals tabled by the Commission today will protect businesses and consumers from harmful greenwashing practices and tackle the proliferation of labels. We want to help consumers become more confident about their choices and ensure that those companies that make genuine efforts to reduce their impacts on nature, resource use, climate emissions or pollution are rewarded. We should also advance on using common trustworthy labels like the EU Ecolabel, which is a mark of environmental excellence on our single market.
Virginijus Sinkevičius, Commissioner for Environment, Oceans and Fisheries - 22/03/2023

Press contacts:

[Adalbert JAHNZ](#) (+ 32 2 295 31 56)

[Daniela STOYCHEVA](#) (+32 2 295 36 64)

General public inquiries: [Europe Direct](#) by phone [00 800 67 89 10 11](#) or by [email](#)