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in the European Parliament**

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S&D Position Paper

Towards a more sustainable single market for consumers and businesses

Urgent action is needed to fight against the disruption of our climate and degradation of the environment. To achieve this aim, we need to put our production and consumption patterns on a fully sustainable path as soon as possible.

Economic and social crises, such as COVID-19, should not be used as an incentive to either postpone, weaken or abolish this necessary mission. They should be seen as an opportunity to reform the Single Market in a way that it promotes sustainable production and consumption and workers' rights, improves the Union's strategic resilience and autonomy and enhances technological leadership, through more cooperative and sustainable new business models and fundamental changes to existing ones.

Policies need to organise this shift in a way that it benefits the society as a whole to guarantee a "just transition" where the people themselves are the actors and beneficiaries of the transformation, rather than victims or targets. This is crucial to achieving the objectives of the European Green Deal, as outlined during the presentation of the Commission President von der Leyen, the necessity and urgency of which remains unchanged by the pandemic. The Recovery Plan needs to serve this aim.

A more sustainable single market must also be affordable for consumers. Going green cannot be beholden to the wealthy and privileged, who have the means to find themselves on the bright side of life. Therefore, consumer protection legislation has to be strengthened and better implemented and enforced. Postponements of compliance with existing obligations or of legislative proposals to improve sustainability (such as *Empowering consumers for the green transition*, originally set for November 2020, now postponed to Q2-2021) are great cause for concern and should be prevented.

It is essential that the narrative in our industries changes from "cradle to grave" to "cradle to cradle", and that sustainability is strengthened in all steps of the supply chains, ensuring environmental and social sustainability in the end-product as well as in the manufacturing of all its components and the extraction of raw materials. We need to progress towards a reinforced integration between the Circular Economy, the industrial strategy and consumer protection to help achieving an accelerated zero greenhouse gas emission industry, notably by setting specific energy and resource efficiency targets, implementing best available technologies and defining minimum performance requirements for materials and products.

Consumer habits and choices play a significant role in tackling climate change and environmental issues. To move towards a more sustainable consumption and production, product lifespans, legal and commercial guarantees, the ease of repairs, phenomena such as “fast fashion” as well as the destruction of unsold products should be put into the focus. The hyper-materialistic lifestyle of the wealthy is culturally overwhelming. In an effort to imitate this lifestyle, middle class consumption becomes conspicuous.

Therefore we call on the Commission to come forward with meaningful legislative proposals on the sustainable single market, which

-) include the promotion of the reuse sector, the ban of planned obsolescence, mandatory labelling and a more social and sustainable public procurement,
-) guarantee that “going green” will not be beholden to the wealthy and privileged,
-) ensure a just transition, which prevents low- and middle-income groups - already suffering from the current crisis - of having to bear the highest burdens and see costs of living rise,
-) support research and innovation for sustainable products and services,
-) ensure that goods, including the ones imported to the Union, respect the highest possible standards of environmental, human health and human rights protection, throughout the entire value chain, building on the approach of due diligence for market actors.

1. Banning premature/built in obsolescence of products

Practices that aim at reducing the lifetime of products through planned or built-in obsolescence, should be banned and consumers clearly protected from such practices. Digital devices must be regularly updated in order to preserve their functionality and fitness as well as adapting them to new cybersecurity risks. Companies should make their production chain more sustainable and increase the durability of products.

2. Introduce mandatory labelling on durability and reparability, standardisation

In order to enable consumers to take informed purchase decisions, mandatory labelling on durability and reparability of a product, including information on the availability and price of spare parts, should be introduced. Standardised criteria for the measurement of a products’ expected lifespan should be developed, to define minimum market requirements in products’ design. We support the development of product standards, such as a standard for a common charger for portable devices, in order to promote interoperability and the reduction of waste as well as to empower consumers to makes sustainable choices.

3. Ecodesign requirements and legal guarantees

The scope of application of the Ecodesign Directive should be broadened to a wide range of products, beyond energy-related ones. Ecodesign requirements and legal guarantees should be aligned to the estimated lifespan of goods. The burden of proof should be reversed throughout the whole guarantee period.

4. Boosting the reuse sector

The reuse sector should be promoted. Reuse and recycling targets should be separated. Social entrepreneurs should have priority access to waste yards. Spare parts should be priced the same way for independent and authorised repairers as well as for consumers. New business models based on leasing, sharing or repair of products should be encouraged, as they can help extend product lifetimes, create new employment opportunities, and, at the same time, increase consumers’ awareness of and

trust in products with a long lifetime. VAT rules need to be adapted to make reused or refurbished goods as well as repair services more affordable. A right to repair for consumers should be introduced and sellers should always inform their customers in a clear and unambiguous way of the option of repair as well as of the associated right of guarantee. For the consumer to be able to make use of its right, spare parts need to be available at a reasonable price and information for repair needs to be accessible. A minimum guarantee for second hand products and - where possible - usage meters should be developed in order to boost consumers' trust. While innovation is needed and should not be hampered, the use of rare resources should be limited. Therefore, the upgrade of existing tools should be considered before replacing a product by a new one. It is important to significantly increase the prioritising and funding of research in these areas.

5. Incentives and obligations for companies

We need a stronger accountability of companies to ensure the respect of labour rights, human rights as well as social and environmental standards along the supply chain. Practices of destruction of unsold products in working order should be banned. The Commission should make ambitious proposals to significantly increase the use of Green and Sustainable Public Procurement. More social and sustainable public procurement rules should be introduced, and the existing ones should be better implemented, such as the use of social and sustainability criteria rather than simply the lowest price criterion. .

6. People and public awareness

All consumers should have the right to safe and sustainable products, which do not harm the environment, human health or human rights - neither in the Union nor elsewhere. The development of a sustainable single market must be based on creating a non-toxic circular economy whereby harmful substances are not used or recycled. The transition to a sustainable single market and circular economy needs to be inclusive and collaborative in all its aspects.