



Joint Mission Statement

Sustainable consumption and production: improving product durability and reparability

"We live in a disposable society. It's easier to throw things out than to fix them."

– Neil LaBute

The problem

If the rest of the world consumed the way Europeans do, we would need the equivalent of two-and-a-half planets to meet the demand for resources¹. Usable products and device components are scrapped at an alarming rate instead of being salvaged, fixed, and reused. By 2050, our level of consumption of minerals, fossil fuels and biomass will reach 140 billion tonnes, over double the current amount.²



Products must be durable, easy and affordable to repair, and information on these aspects clearly available to consumers. Half the respondents to a recent EU survey said they decided against repairing a faulty product in the past 12 months because repair costs were too high. 92% agreed that the lifespan of products available on the market should be indicated³.

As one of the fastest growing sectors, electric and electronic products are the first candidates for increased repair and longevity — but the principles could equally be applied to textiles, furniture and other products. Legal changes and economic incentives are needed to promote product durability and repair, requiring a coordinated approach with all stakeholders — including policy makers, manufacturers, consumers, reuse organisations, recyclers and environmental NGOs.

¹ Global Footprint Network: Living Planet Report available online

² <http://www.unep.org/resourcepanel/publications/decoupling/tabid/56048/default.aspx>

³ Flash Eurobarometer, number 388 available online

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The benefits of improved durability and reparability

- **For the environment:** prolonging the lifespan of products avoids their early replacement by new products. To reduce the depletion of natural resources, it is crucial to maximise the utilization of the precious materials already contained in everyday products. Environmentally, it is optimal to give appliances a second life – either by repairing them, reselling them, refurbishing them or at least remanufacturing and recycling the most vital components.
- **For the economy:** finished products have more economic value than the raw materials inside them. By breaking products apart for recycling, this added value is lost. Repair, reuse and remanufacturing maintain, rather than destroy that economic value.⁴ Manufacturers should embrace a more service-oriented approach to their business strategy and enhance their brand reputation as makers of durable products. Moreover, maintenance and repair services would provide a significant potential for job creation if labour is taxed less and resource consumption more. Owing to the labour intensive nature of re-use and repair activities the potential for job creation in this area is many times higher than recycling⁵.
- **For society:** consumers would have a better choice of after sales service providers at more competitive prices, driving down the cost of repair. Easily repairable goods could also be sold on the second hand market at low prices, especially to low-income groups. Easily repairable products and modular design may also have a marked impact on the EU's consumption patterns while boosting innovation in a rejuvenated market for repair, reuse and repurposing.

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Our objectives

- ✓ Create awareness and advocate for the importance of reparability and durability of electronics and other products for society, economy, and environment
- ✓ Facilitate a constructive debate amongst relevant stakeholders on designing Electronic and Electrical Equipment (EEE) and other products for reparability and durability, as well as discuss potential new business models related to repairable products
- ✓ Promote a regulatory environment that enhances reparability and durability, and to challenge EU and national policy makers to enforce appropriate and supporting legislation

⁴ "Reuse is where the money is" Based on the "Resource resilient UK" report from the Circular Economy Task Force of the Green Alliance, published in July 2013, page 18 and 19: http://www.green-alliance.org.uk/page_816.php

⁵ E.g. O'Connell, Hickey and Fitzpatrick (2013) Evaluating the sustainability potential of a white goods refurbishment program in Sustainability Science, Vol 8, Issue 4

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Suggestions on where start

- Oblige manufacturers to provide independent re-use and repair organizations with all means to ensure the full functioning and serviceability of their products over their entire lifetime including free-of-charge access to repair and service documentation together with any troubleshooting and diagnostic tools, circuit diagrams, machine codes, software and hardware
- Work with manufacturers and EU regulatory parties to ensure that consumables in EEE—like batteries—are adhesive free and easily replaceable with common, non-proprietary tools.
- Set design requirements for products to guarantee a minimum life time and ensure non-destructive disassembly of products into individual parts and components for reuse
- Provide consumers with more information about product lifetimes through provision of information on the average expected product lifetime for a specific model.
- Spare parts must be widely available and affordable for a minimum number of years following the last product batch depending on the product's average expected lifetime. They must be available at non-discriminatory pricing to third parties. Re-use of used and remanufactured product components must also be allowed.
- Develop a system to rate the durability and reparability of products and establish standards to measure these aspects for products placed on the European market.
- Explore the effects, impacts and options of extending minimum legal product warranties, differentiating between product categories, while obliging manufacturers EU-wide to bear full responsibility for early failure as a minimum during the first two years after purchase
- Lower taxes on repair service activities and increase them on resource-intensive and single use products instead.

Which are the relevant EU policy tools to build on?

A move towards a truly circular economy requires a horizontal approach across different policy areas. Designing products for ease of repair, together with any relevant information requirements for re-use operators can be tackled through the Ecodesign, WEEE and Batteries Directives. For other products, such as textiles and furniture, design requirements could be addressed within the framework of the EU circular economy package and related waste policies. Whilst information for consumers on product longevity and warranties could also be tackled in the aforementioned Directives, the Consumer Rights and Energy Labelling Directives could also have a major role to play. Regulations in the automotive sector such as the Massachusetts Right to Repair Law and the EU Regulation of motor vehicles and engines provide a source of inspiration which have addressed a number of these issues already. Finally, making repair cheaper could be tackled through innovative use of the VAT Directive through reduced VAT on repair activities.

Making repair cheaper could be tackled by reducing VAT on repair activities

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Who we are



The European Environmental Citizens' Organisation for Standardisation defends environmental interests in the development of standards and product ecological regulations



The European Environmental Bureau is the environmental voice of 140+ European citizens' organisations, standing for environmental justice, sustainable development and participatory democracy.



Friends of the Earth Europe campaigns for sustainable and just societies and for the protection of the environment, unites more than 30 national organisations with thousands of local groups and is part of the world's largest grassroots environmental network, Friends of the Earth International



IFIXIT is a global repair community of people helping people repair things. The organization represents hundreds of thousands of technicians and volunteers working together to make the world better by teaching people how to fix products



The European RREUSE platform representing social enterprises active in re-use, repair and recycling, representing over 130,000 workers, volunteers and trainees from 16 countries



The Repair Café Foundation is the driving force behind the Repair Café concept: free repair meetings for and by civilians on a voluntary basis. The organisation represents hundreds of local organisers in 18 countries



Zero Waste Europe is a pan-European organization bringing together local groups and municipalities and specializing in waste issues from prevention to disposal and from local to European levels. We advocate for zero waste strategies in Europe and beyond, and support local groups who have the potential to drive change in their region

Together we aim to make a real difference in building a true Circular Economy around durable and easily repairable products, which will generate green growth and a more resource efficient Europe.

How to join

Interested in supporting this statement and vision? For more information contact Carsten Wachholz (carsten.wachholz@eeb.org) or Michal Len (michal.len@rreuse.org)