



BEUC The European
Consumer
Organisation

The Consumer Voice in Europe

EESC European Consumer Day - Digital transition and green transition: Complimentarities and/or contradictions?

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E-COMMERCE – HOW TO MAKE IT GREENER?

Reduce the impact of product returns:

- awareness raising among consumers about the environmental impact of the returns
- Better information about the sizing and the composition of products
- Ban on the destruction of unsold goods



E-COMMERCE – IMPACT OF PRODUCT DELIVERY?

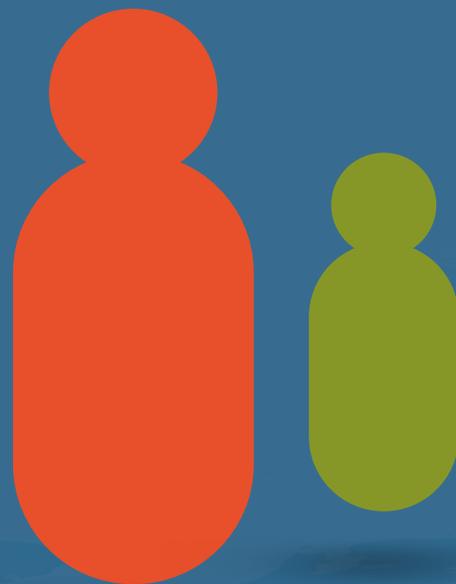
- Avoid any additional packaging
- Use electric vehicles or cargo bikes for
- Introduce a new pre-contractual information obligation on the available delivery methods
- Better information for consumers about the exact timing of the delivery with enabling the possibility for consumers to change it, if needed
- Encourage automated parcel lockers and near-by pick-up points and make them more available to consumers
 - Right of Withdrawal is not the problem as such



Consumers want to make more sustainable choices...

Europeans consider climate change to be the most serious problem facing the world

They see changing the way we consume, produce and trade as the most effective solution to tackle environmental problems



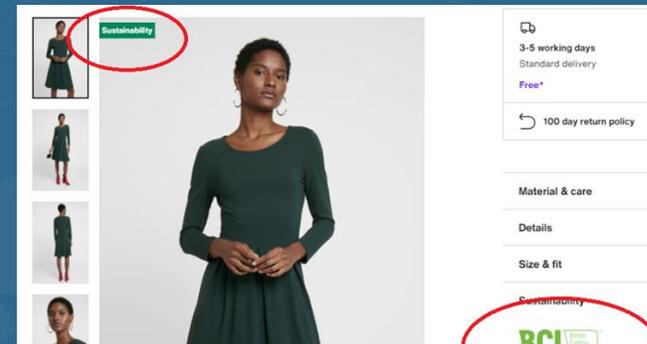
61% find it difficult to understand which products are truly environmentally friendly

44% consumers do not trust environmental information

57% of EU consumers are receptive to environmental claims when making purchase decisions

E-COMMERCE – HOW TO MAKE IT GREENER?

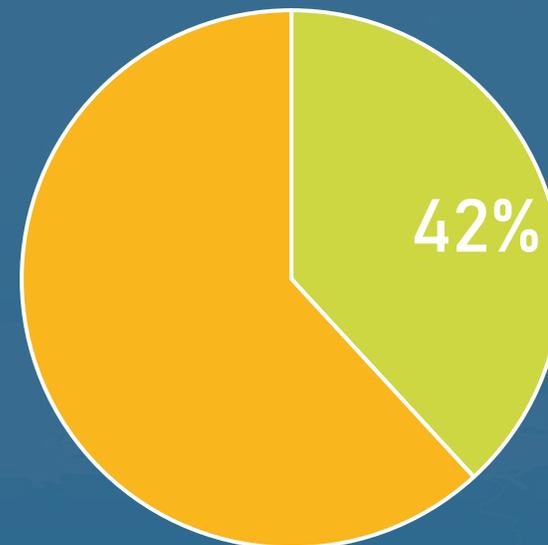
- Encourage consumers to buy more sustainable products:
 - New pre-contractual information obligations on the durability and reparability of products
 - New mandatory labels:
 - ‘guaranteed lifespan label’
 - ‘repair index’
- Get rid of the misleading greenwashing practices:
 - Unsubstantiated and unverified green filters should not be allowed on the
 - e-commerce websites



... but are lost in the jungle of green claims ! Also online!



Danish Consumer Council has brought to the Ombudsman greenwashing practices by 5 online retailers of apparel (05/2021)



42% of online claims are exaggerated, false or deceptive and could qualify as unfair commercial practices under EU rules

([EC and national consumer authorities screening of websites](#))

CONNECTED PRODUCTS AND AI

Connected goods (IoT)

- Widespread early failure (premature obsolescence) linked to embedded software; see BEUC members' (TA, DECO, OCU, AC) action on Apple iPhones operating systems
- BEUC members' research (Which?) shows: Early stop of providing vital software updates (cybersecurity, vital functions) renders products obsolete
- Lack of product repairability
=> increased electronic waste and increased costs for consumers

AI

- can help the green transition, for example AI systems used by cities to deliver services such as lighting, waste, public transport and traffic management more efficiently (BEUC members/EC survey)...BUT

 **BUT: Digital technology = « fire accelerant » in energy consumption and carbon emissions**

- massive use of IT systems requires infrastructures which are very energy/carbon intensive; GAFAs build huge data centers across EU (see FT 7 December)
- We need adequate safeguards to reduce carbon footprint of data centers and electronic devices

 **'Demand-Response' services and prosumers**

- Digital tools (smart meter/app) to help us manage electricity consumption, for example avoid peak hours

Examples how digitalisation can help make transport sustainable:

 **Car sharing:** digitalisation and access to data can play a big role in moving away from car ownership, facilitating car sharing

 **Journey planner, Ticketing:** services could benefit from access to transport operators' data, allowing consumer then to purchase of multimodal tickets (for example bus ride combined with bike ride), compare CO2 emissions to choose the most sustainable option etc.

CONCLUSIONS

- The digital and the green transformation must go **hand in hand**;
- Digitalization is not an end in itself – it must **serve** the green transition : the European Green Deal identifies digital technologies as a critical **enabler** for attaining the sustainability goals and at the same time insists that Europe needs a digital sector that puts sustainability at its heart;
- **BUT:** The respective EU policies are still not sufficiently interlinked – too much “silo” approach; a challenge for EU institutions;
- The **price of digitalisation** is not sufficiently identified/discussed;
- Both transformations cannot work without consumers; the **wellbeing of all people** must be the guiding objective;



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Thank you for your attention

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