

„ECOMISE it’: New efficiency classes for the energy labelling of domestic refrigerators and freezers

Transition period lasting until 30 November 2011

Laura Spengler, Ökopol GmbH, April 2011

Refrigerators consume a significant proportion of the electricity used by EU households. In 2005, this was around 122 TWh, which roughly equates to the amount of electricity used by Norway. Since the end of 2010, a regulation has set out new specifications for labelling domestic refrigerators and freezers according to their energy consumption that should make it easier for consumers to compare the energy efficiency of appliances.

Energy labelling is an important way of informing consumers of the energy efficiency of appliances. The green-to-red scale and the corresponding letters ‘A’ to ‘G’ provide pre-purchase information about the energy consumption of refrigerators and other products. In June 2010, a new directive was passed for energy consumption labelling that has since been serving as the legal framework for composing product group-specific specifications and has replaced the original directive from 1992. In light of the new framework conditions, several regulations for the labelling of various energy-using products were published at the end of November 2010, including EU Regulation 1060/2010 regarding the

‘energy labelling of household refrigerating appliances’. Following a transition period lasting until November 2011, its specifications will replace those set out in Directive 94/2/EC, which previously regulated the energy labelling of refrigerators.

The new regulation aims to provide consumers with meaningful information on the energy efficiency of the appliances available. The previous labelling system had lost some of its informative value over the past few years as increasing efficiency has meant that barely any appliances were assigned to the lower efficiency classes. For this reason, classes ‘A+’ and ‘A++’ were introduced for refrigerators back in 2003. To make the distinction more precise, the new regulation introduces a further class, ‘A+++’. However, consumer and environmental associations have demanded that the classes be completely reorganised instead, as the increasing number of ‘plus’ symbols could leave users somewhat confused.

The regulation applies to a variety of refrigerators with volumetric capacities of 10 to 1,500 litres. Its scope of validity encompasses both refrigerators and freezers and combinations of the two as well as wine cabinets, which were previously exempt from labelling. By covering compression and absorption refrigerators, the regulation also encompasses different technologies that vary greatly with regard to energy efficiency. The process of dividing appliances into efficiency classes does not distinguish between these technologies, which is why refrigerators that employ a much less efficient absorption system appear mainly in the lower classes. Appliances of this kind were previously exempt from labelling.

Depending on the efficiency class of a refrigerator, the regulation sets out various scales that must be displayed on the label when the appliance is purchased. The labelling system for refrigerators in classes ‘A+++’ to ‘C’ goes to class ‘D’, while that for less efficient appliances ranges down to class ‘G’. This means that the scale to be used for compression refrigerators ranges down to class ‘D’, although the stipula-



tions of another, closely related regulation for refrigerators regarding the implementation of the Ecodesign Directive means that products with an energy efficiency class lower than 'A' are no longer permitted on the EU market. Therefore, the scale includes classes that should not contain any products. These rules could compromise the clarity and transparency of the labelling system.

Regulation	(EU) 1060/2010
Date of publication	30 November 2010
Entry into force	20 December 2010
Effective	30 November 2011 (exceptions: 30 March 2012)
Scope	Domestic refrigerators and freezers
Area of applicability	Product information, e.g. energy consumption, sound emissions

Schedule, scope and area of applicability of regulation (EU) no. 1060/2010

The content of the regulation has been harmonised as far as possible with the mentioned Ecodesign refrigerator regulation already mentioned with regard to the scope of validity, definitions applied, measurement procedure and other parameters. The method used to calculate the energy efficiency of every model, and thus to allocate them to energy efficiency classes, is applied to both regulations and takes into account not only the annual electricity consumption, but also the volume of the compartments and the available functions.

Aside from energy efficiency, the label must also show the appliance's absolute annual energy consumption, the useable volume and the level of airborne noise emitted. Not only does the energy efficiency class of a refrigerator now have to be clearly visible while the item is on sale, but it must also be specified in advertisements and technical advertising material. The stipulations of Regulation 1060/2010 are to be

bindingly implemented by suppliers and dealers following a transition period lasting until 30 November 2011.

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Laura Spengler works for Ökopool - Institut für Ökologie und Politik GmbH in Hamburg. In addition to basic background texts, Ökopool offers an up-to-date overview of the implementation status of the energy consumption labelling and Ecodesign Directives in the various product groups in a generally accessible Internet information offering (www.eup-netzwerk.de). Ökopool supplies the contents for EBV Elektronik's information campaign about the Ecodesign Directive.

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