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EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

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12 March 1979

DOCUMENT 671/78

Report

drawn up on behalf of the Committee on Energy and Research

on the proposals from the Commission of the European Communities to the  
Council (Doc. 274/78) for

- I. a Directive on the indication by labelling on the energy consumption of  
domestic appliances
- II. a Directive applying to electric ovens the Council Directive on the indication  
by labelling of the energy consumption of domestic appliances

Rapporteur: Mr J. LAMBERTS

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By letter of 24 August 1978 the President of the Council of the European Communities requested the European Parliament, pursuant to the EEC Treaty, to deliver an opinion on the proposals from the Commission of the European Communities to the Council for

- I. a directive on the indication by labelling of the energy consumption of domestic appliances
- II. a directive applying to electric ovens the Council Directive on the indication by labelling of the energy consumption of domestic appliances.

The President of the European Parliament referred these proposals to the Committee on Energy and Research as the committee responsible and to the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs and the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection for their opinions.

On 20 December 1978 the Committee on Energy and Research appointed Mr LAMBERTS rapporteur.

It considered these proposals at its meetings of 2 November 1978, 25 January and 1 March 1979.

At its meeting of 1 March 1979 the committee unanimously adopted the motion for a resolution and the explanatory statement.

Present: Mrs WALZ, chairman; Mr FLÄMIG, Mr NORMANTON and Mr VERONESI, vice-chairmen; Mr LAMBERTS, rapporteur; Mr EDWARDS, Mr LEONARDI, Mr OSBORN and Mr RIPAMONTI.

By letters dated 27 September and 20 October 1978 respectively, the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs and the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection declined to deliver opinions to the committee responsible.

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The Committee on Energy and Research hereby submits to the European Parliament the following motion for a resolution, together with explanatory statement:

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

embodying the opinion of the European Parliament on the proposals from the Commission of the European Communities to the Council for

I. a directive on the indication by labelling of the energy consumption of domestic appliances and

II. a directive applying to electric ovens the Council Directive on the indication by labelling of the energy consumption of domestic appliances

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the proposals from the Commission of the European Communities to the Council,<sup>1</sup>
  - having been consulted by the Council (Doc. 274/78),
  - having regard to its previous resolutions concerning energy policy, in particular that on the rational utilization of energy,<sup>2</sup>
  - having regard to the report of the Committee on Energy and Research (Doc. 671/78),
1. Recognizes, in the context of the Community's policy on the rational utilization of energy, that the directives proposed by the Commission may help to encourage the use of more efficient domestic appliances;
  2. Fears, however, that the labelling proposed is inadequate, and that an indication of consumption in kWh will probably be insufficiently comprehensible to the ordinary consumer;
  3. Calls on the Commission therefore to consider some other, ampler and clearer form of consumer information for future implementing directives concerning other domestic appliances;
  4. Expresses its disappointment that the Commission did not choose to deal first with domestic appliances that consume much larger amounts of power;
  5. Approves nevertheless the Commission's proposals, but urges that surveys be carried out to determine the effectiveness of the form of labelling proposed here, and the comprehensibility to the ordinary consumer of the information shown.
  6. Approves the Commission's proposals, provided that the Commission incorporates the following amendments in its text, pursuant to Article 149, second paragraph, of the EEC Treaty.

<sup>1</sup> OJ No. C 212, 6.9.1978, p. 2

<sup>2</sup> OJ No. C 259, 4.11.1976, p.45

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Preamble and Article 1 unchanged

Article 2

The information on the energy consumption of household appliances shall be prepared in accordance with standards and methods laid down by directives relating to each type of appliance referred to in Article 1 adopted in implementation of this directive. This information shall be supplied by the manufacturers, who shall be responsible for its accuracy.

Article 3

1. The Member States may oblige all manufacturers marketing in their territory the household appliances specified in the implementing directives to attach a label in accordance with this directive.

Article 2

The information on the energy consumption of household appliances shall be prepared in accordance with standards and methods laid down by directives relating to each type of appliance referred to in Article 1 adopted in implementation of this directive. This information shall be supplied by the manufacturers, who shall be responsible for its accuracy.

All Member States shall introduce the standards and methods described in the above directives within a period of two years.

Article 3

1. The Member States shall oblige all manufacturers marketing in their territory the household appliances specified in the implementing directives to attach a label in accordance with this directive.

Article 3(2), and Articles 4-11 unchanged.

<sup>1</sup> For full text, see OJ No. C 212, 6.9.1978, p. 2

EXPLANATORY STATEMENTI. INTRODUCTION

1. Any measures designed to reduce energy consumption will always have the fundamental support of the European Parliament. Wastage of this expensive and scarce commodity is irresponsible and must be prevented, especially when the same performance can be achieved for less power consumed.

2. It is well known that many common domestic appliances, electric ovens among them, waste energy.

The labelling of domestic appliances proposed by the Commission as an element in the Community programme for the rational utilization of energy must therefore be endorsed, if it leads to reduced energy consumption by informing customers and consumers of the desirability of choosing one domestic appliance rather than another with a higher energy consumption.

3. The consumer is the crucial element in this problem, as the primary objective is to change buying habits, thereby forcing manufacturers to produce more efficient domestic appliances. The consumer must therefore be given clear, unambiguous information which he does not already possess, and which is so fundamental that it will influence the purchase and use of domestic appliances.

II. CONTENT OF THE COMMISSION PROPOSALS

4. Two Council directives have been proposed: the first, on 'the indication by labelling of the energy consumption of domestic appliances', is an outline directive while the second is an implementing directive specially concerning electric ovens and is issued pursuant to the outline directive. The outline directive covers all domestic appliances in general use apart from space heating and water heating appliances, which are already covered by a Council directive<sup>1</sup>.

5. It is clear from the Commission's explanatory memorandum that the proposed directives are intended not simply to achieve energy savings in respect of domestic appliances, which, it is estimated, might represent up to 1% of the total energy consumption of the Community in 1990. The directives, which in fact represent a harmonization of the nine Member States' legislation on the labelling of domestic appliances (consumer information), are also intended to eliminate barriers to trade resulting from different forms of labelling and consumer information.

<sup>1</sup> OJ No. L 52, 23.02.1978, p. 32



### III. REMARKS

6. If there is to be any point in the proposed labelling of electric ovens, in the form suggested, one vital question needs to be answered in the affirmative.

Will the consumer understand a reference to consumption in kWh?

7. The difficulty of finding another method that would be clear, comparable and therefore internationally applicable, has to be admitted. The information is given differently in the USA, in the form of the monthly cost for various patterns of consumption and at differing electricity prices. If the normal consumption for a specific appliance is known, the consumer himself can calculate what it will cost him personally. The rapporteur is of course aware that cost of the energy consumed varies. However, a standard price for the country concerned could be shown, an average, which would not differ greatly from actual prices. This standard price could be shown as a fixed price for the last year for which figures were available. Average annual consumption should also be shown.

Your rapporteur would venture to suggest that information given in this form would have far greater impact, and could be added to data on consumption in kWh. The modern consumer is used to reading informative labels and could be supplied with other advice, e.g. on the economical use of the appliance concerned.

Simplicity and clarity are usually a good thing, but the rapporteur feels that in this case the desire for simplicity has led to the omission of items of information necessary to produce changes in consumer habits that will lead to the saving of energy.

8. It should not be forgotten either that factors totally unrelated to power-rating have a strong influence on the customer's choice - for example, design, dimensions and above all price.

9. The Commission seems to have put a great deal of energy into the rules on the format of labels, which are regulated down to the last millimetre. There is perhaps some point in setting standards with an eye to international trade, but it seems unnecessary, if not ludicrous, to lay down such precise rules on the dimensions of the labels, the latter to be sub-divided into boxes separated by black lines, not to mention the matter of their colour.

10. The rapporteur thus doubts whether adequate information will be provided, and whether it will be understandable to the user. Has the Commission conducted an enquiry to discover whether consumers do understand the information in the form they propose, and have they tested the effectiveness of alternative labels? After all, the utility of a label depends entirely on how well it is understood by the consumer.

11. The Commission's choice of domestic appliance to be the subject of the first implementing directive is rather surprising. The point is made that the European standard for measuring energy consumption is in the final stage of preparation, but would this not apply equally to other appliances?

It is worth pointing out here that electric ovens actually account for only a small proportion of total power consumed, (varying slightly from Member State to Member State), compared with such 'power guzzlers' as refrigerators and freezers, washing machines and lighting.

12. What progress has the Commission made in these areas and does it envisage the same form of labelling? Particularly for the other domestic appliances mentioned in point 11, the actual use made of them is the decisive factor where consumption is concerned. In these cases, simply stating the consumption in kWh, while necessary, seems far from enough.

13. Finally, it should be observed that the Commission is dealing only with electrically powered ovens. In some countries, gas is equally common. One cannot but wonder why other energy sources have not been covered, even though the information on the labels would then of course have to be expressed in different units.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

14. As we have already said, we can support the Commission's proposals. However, there is some doubt as to the adequacy of the form of labelling proposed, in other words whether the data to be supplied are comprehensible or sufficient. The customer must be given far more information if patterns of consumption are to be changed.

15. For the time being, the Commission has proposed only one implementing directive, on electric ovens, which account for only a fraction of domestic energy consumption. We must therefore express our disappointment that the Commission did not in the first place concentrate on bigger energy consumers in its proposals.