

2019-08

# ENVIRONMENTAL COMMUNICATION, FACILITATING THE TRANSITION TOWARDS A MORE CIRCULAR ECONOMY

Environmental communication involves providing consumers, via a range of media (product labels or apps for example), with understandable and reliable information about the different environmental impacts of the products and services they buy, with account taken of the whole of these products' and services' "life cycle".

They are aimed at encouraging more sustainable behaviour in terms of both consumption and production, and at providing reliable information that goes beyond existing eco-marking.

France has been at the forefront of this approach for a decade already, and the trials it has conducted extensively informed the European Union's pilot phase for the Product Environmental Footprint (PEF) between 2013 and 2018.

France's Environment & Energy Management Agency (ADEME) has defined an acclaimed meta-repository of "good practices" and an assessment process. Five pilot sectors engaged in a voluntary environmental communication trial, and the first feedback reports have been encouraging.

At European level, the so-called pilot phase ended in April 2018. The European Commission devised a harmonised method, based upon the life cycle assessment (LCA) - similar to the French method - for calculating the environmental footprint of products or organisations. 27 sectors took part in the trial and 13 sector-level repositories have been approved. An online consultation process on how the PEF should be followed up on - which was open to all stakeholders - came to an end in December 2018. Political decisions must now be taken, in France and Europe, particularly with a view to gradually aligning French and European efforts and to eventually rolling out a single environmental footprint assessment system.

The ESEC now urges the government to build fresh momentum on this subject and to take proactive decisions from 2019 alongside the implementation of the roadmap for the circular economy. The recommendations it makes are aimed at a harmonisation of national and European schemes and a broad-scale roll-out of environmental communication.



**Philippe Dutruc**

is Chairman of the Board at SEOLIS and President of Deux-Sèvres Chamber of Commerce and Industry. At the ESEC, he is a member of the Section for the Environment, where he represents the Enterprise Group

## Contact:

philippe.dutruc@lecese.fr  
01 44 43 64 20

It also recommends defining a single, statutory system including eco-marking for all businesses that practise environmental communication so as to clarify the situation for consumers - for they are the ones who hold the keys to bringing other actors on board through the choices they make.

## THE ESEC'S RECOMMENDATIONS

### ➤ Recommendation no.1

Set up two-tier environmental communication so as to reach the whole of the population: aggregate information at a glance, such as in the form of a score with access to detailed information explaining the attribution of this score.

### ➤ Recommendation no.2

Better position environmental communication as a tool for rolling out the circular economy, in the context of the legislation transposing the circular economy package in 2019.

### ➤ Recommendation no.3

Set up an evolutionary LCA approach as the basis for the scoring leading to environmental communication and open up its governance.

**Recommendation no.4**

Establish an indicator for acknowledging impacts on biodiversity - not least as part of life cycle assessments.

**Recommendation no.5**

Use an ad hoc logo and indicator to acknowledge certain environmental criteria or impacts that are difficult to assess as part of LCAs.

**Recommendation no.6**

Provide national and European information about the assessment of the first environmental communication pilot phase.

**Recommendation no.7**

Coordinate and align French and European efforts over time.

**Recommendation no.8**

Initiate a standardisation procedure for the ADEME repository "BP X30-323-0".

**Recommendation no.9**

Continue to add to and harmonise databases.

**Recommendation no.10**

Harmonise French and European schemes with the ultimate aim of obtaining a single database and look into the prospect of setting up purchasable access to this database so as to fund its deployment.

**Recommendation no.11**

Systematically check consistency for any product or service displaying environmental communication and the setup of unscheduled accuracy inspections on a given percentage of such products.

**Recommendation no.12**

Involve the General Directorate for Competition Policy, Consumer Affairs and Fraud Control (DGCCRF) in the scheduled 2019 assessment of the environmental communication trial and ask that it conduct a survey on the quality of the information provided to consumers as well as a survey on the trial's implementation across the five pilot sectors.

**Recommendation no.13**

During the assessment of the environmental communication pilot phase, mid 2019, clarify the human, material and financial resources required to promote it.

**Recommendation no.14**

Consider updating the regulations on public procurement to enable recognition of environmental communication in the sectors having implemented it and of specific indicators (e.g. reparability criterion).

**Recommendation no.15**

Strive for overall consistency in the roll-out of environmental communication policies within businesses with CSR policies - especially in their environmental aspects.

**Recommendation no.16**

Task the Ministry for the Ecological and Inclusive Transition with the political and technical coordination of public and private French stakeholders during this transitional phase pending compulsory environmental communication at European level.

Its implementation will begin with a new five-year voluntary application phase extended to other sectors and following which the conditions for broadscale roll-out will be endorsed.

**Recommendation no.17**

Organise an event in 2019 on the assessment and promotion of the environmental communication measures conducted by the five pilot sectors in France so as to bring other willing businesses on board.

**Recommendation no.18**

Set ambitious targets for rolling out voluntary environmental communication in the hospitality sector during the 2024 Olympics in France.

**Recommendation no.19**

From 2019 identify and propose the new sectors capable of deploying voluntary environmental communication on products and services.

**Recommendation no.20**

Define a single, statutory system in France via regulations or even legislation which includes eco-marking for all businesses that practise environmental communication.