

First step of the EUP Directive is made on tiptoes

Just before the Christmas break, on December 17th last year, the European Commission announced it had adopted an eco-design regulation to reduce standby energy consumption of all household and office products.

This is the first practical implementing phase of the Energy Using Products Directive that was adopted by the EU in 2005 and became enforced by UK law in 2007.

This new regulation entered into force on January 7th 2009 and is immediately "binding and directly in all member states." So you would imagine this fact would be reported on the Commission's website page devoted to EUP or on the relevant UK Government BERR department website page, but you would be wrong.

So what does it mean for product designers?

By next year, on January 7th 2010, affected product types must not consume more than one watt of power (1W) when fully off, or inactive, but in standby mode. If the standby mode retains some active functionality, such as a status display or clock, then the permitted figure is 2W. These figures are halved to 0.5W and 1W respectively by January 2014. All affected products must provide an off mode or standby mode unless inappropriate, for example, the item concerned is intended for 24-7 active service.

So what products are affected?

Though the Regulation specifically identifies household and office equipment, its scope contains four product groupings: large and

small domestic appliances; domestic IT equipment; consumer audio-visual equipment; and toys, leisure or sport equipment.

These are all very similar to groupings used in the WEEE and RoHS Directive, which was deliberately vague and intended to be indicative only, such that it encompassed professional low-volume manufactured products, as well as mass-produced electronic equipment. The concern is that the same might apply to this first EUP Regulation given such a precedent and BERR responded to an enquiry on this matter with "...it was not the intention of this measure to capture professional equipment (although it does not specifically say this in the measure). So the key issue will be for you to decide whether your products are intended to be used in a domestic environment or whether they are intended to be installed and used by professionals."

So how much energy is being saved?

The EC says that the member states combined annual losses due to this will rise from the original EUP Directive estimate of 45 TeraWattHours (45×10^{12} WattHours) in 2005 to 49TWh in 2020. They claim that implementing this regulation alone will save about 125 TWh by 2020, " - an amount comparable to the annual electricity consumption of Sweden." If they are right,



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then this is a fairly impressive measure and you would have thought that the announcement should have had more of a fanfare given the impact on the manufacturing industry and the EU's total energy usage.

And the next tentative steps are?

Last month the Commission also announced the demise of the bog-standard light bulb used in domestic lighting starting this year and to be phased out completely by the end of 2012. Savings here are described as roughly the annual electricity consumption of Romania.

The next measure as far as the EUP Directive is concerned would appear to pertain to external power supplies and battery chargers. The proposed text is in the final stages of scrutiny and predicted savings here are more modestly described as equal to Lithuania's yearly electricity consumption. Other EUP measures in progress that are expected to move forward to implementation in 2009 concern office and public street lighting, and simple set-top boxes for digital TV.

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SMART Group Steering Committee and Technical Committee Vice-Chair

SMART Group Ireland Update:

As from the end of March 2009, the SMART Group Secretariat will move from Tyndall National Institute in Cork to Dublin. Tyndall staff will continue to have close links with the SMART Group and will remain on the committee. Philip J. O'Rourke, Life Vice President and past Chairman will look after the Secretariat for the SMART Group from Dublin. It is anticipated that a smooth transition will take place. All group activities will continue as before and the calendar of events for 2009 looks promising. Address, phone and email changes will be forwarded to all members in due course. SMART Group Ireland will be set up as a company limited by guarantee and charitable status has been sought.