Manual of European Environmental Policy

The following pages are a section from the Manual of European Environmental Policy written by the Institute for European Environmental Policy.

The Manual was published by Earthscan/Routledge from 2010 to 2012. It was designed as an on on-line interactive reference work and annual printed versions were also produced.

This section is the text of the Manual as published in 2012. It is therefore important to note the following:

- The contents have not been updated since 2012 and no guarantee is given of the accuracy of the contents given potential subsequent developments.
- The sections include links to external websites (e.g. to legal texts). These links continue to work as long as those links are not broken by those websites.
- The sections also include the original links that enabled interactivity within the published on-line version of the Manual. These links no longer work.

The Manual should be cited as follows:

Farmer, A.M. (2012) (Editor). Manual of European Environmental Policy. 1043pp. Routledge, London.

Related legislation – resource use

The legislation and policies set out in this chapter of the Manual are not the only elements of the EU acquis to help reduce resource use and green Europe's patterns of consumption. The Directive 2008/98/EC on waste importantly sets out the basis for definitions related to the reuse and recycling of materials, it also sets targets for waste preparation for reuse, recycling and recovery. This links closely and informs the interpretation of the Directives on packaging, batteries and accumulators, end-of-life vehicles, and electrical and electronic equipment.

There are two categories of action related to resource use that identified running through the environmental acquis, measures: to reduce the environmental impact of products; and to improve communication on environmental performance.

Product standards in the EU – greening consumption

The development of product standards represents an important legislative tool at EU level. The EU's status as a single market means product standards can act as a strong incentive to shift the market globally, as well as in Europe, towards more environmentally responsible practices. Product standards are used to reduce the content of hazardous materials in products. As a consequence this can reduce emissions to the environment and ensure options at the end of a products useful life are greater, with recycling and recovery more easily achieved.

The Directives on packaging, batteries and accumulators, end-of-life vehicles, and electrical and electronic equipment set out standards restricting the use of certain hazardous substances and the management of resulting waste products. While these form a core of EU product standards there are other key measures that should be considered. Most closely related is the Directive on Energy Using Products. This measure links particularly with efforts to reduce the hazardousness of electrical and electronic equipment under both the Restriction of Hazardous Substances and Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment Directives. The Energy Using Products Directive represents a framework Directive under which specific standards for the energy using products and energy related products are set.

Liquid fuels (petrol and diesel) are the products subject to the greatest number of product related standards aimed at addressing both environmental and health and safety concerns, including Directive 98/70/EC on the quality of petrol and diesel and Directive 93/12/EEC on the sulphur content of certain liquid fuels. These include the following list of measures. More recently, requirements were adopted under the Directive on electricity from renewable sources requiring biofuel products to meet certain criteria in order to be considered to count towards EU targets on renewable energy. These are accompanied requirements under the fuel quality Directive 2009/28/EC setting out limits on the life-cycle greenhouse gas emissions associated with fuel production.

Other environmentally relevant product standards exist determining: the nature of detergents, aimed at reducing water pollution; and the quality of drinking water.

While the latter has an interaction with the quality of water bodies, this is essentially a safety standard.

Communicating environmental performance

Eco-labelling is an important mechanism for greening consumption patterns intended to inform consumers enabling them to make environmentally responsible decisions. In turn, the intention is that greener products are produced as demand increases, while producers are faced with the reputational risk associated with producing lower performing products. In order to support approaches such as eco-labelling the EU has adopted supporting initiatives such as guidance on the greening of public procurement.[1] To complement the Eco-label Directive, there is a Directive explicitly devoted to the labelling of the energy performance of products. Other labelling systems are also mandated by EU law aimed an improving consumer information, for example for GMOs and the labelling of chemical substances and mixtures entering the EU market place.

Environmental management systems also are an important tool for monitoring and comparing the performance of companies and organizations rather than just products. EMAS helps provide a label that be applied to companies that have signed up to environmental management practices, informing the public regarding the environmentally responsible aspirations of certified activities.

Reference

1. CEC, *Green Public Procurement*, European Commission webpage, http://ec.europa.eu/environment/gpp/index_en.htm

Each section of each chapter of The Manual also contains a related legislation section specific to that section.