European Energy Network

A voluntary network of European energy agencies

Energy & Water Labelling for the taps and showers market

Contribution for increased adoption of efficient water-related products, fixtures, and appliances

February 2023

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About the Study

This publication is an EnR study produced under the 2022 Presidency by ADENE, the Portuguese Energy Agency, within the EnR Water-Energy Nexus Task Force work plan. It aims at providing the best available knowledge based on policy implementation across EnR member countries. The expressed conclusions do not imply the policy positions of individual countries. The European Energy Network (EnR) or any person acting on behalf of EnR is not responsible for the use that might be made of this publication.

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EIHP, Energy Institute Hrvoje Požar, Croatia

ENEA, Italian National Agency for New Technologies, Energy and Sustainable Economic Development

EWA, The Energy and Water Agency, Malta

EST, Energy Saving Trust, United Kingdom

RVO, Netherlands Enterprise Agency

SIEA, Slovak Innovation and Energy Agency

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Water saving fixtures, alone, can result in up to **50% water savings in buildings**, with energy and CO_2 emissions reduction by end users and urban water systems. Water and energy labelling help consumers make efficient choices, but this requires labels to be in place and that consumers understand and trust their information.

To understand consumers' needs, motivations, and willingness to choose labelled water use products, fixtures, and appliances towards water and energy savings, a Task Force from the European Energy Network (EnR), integrating ADENE (PT), ADEME (FR), CRES (GR), dena (DE), EWA (MT) and RVO (NL), developed a **European consumer survey**. The results of this survey aim to provide input to the European discussion on water-energy labelling, involving the European Commission (EC) and other relevant stakeholders, about a mandatory option, through the EU energy label, or a voluntary option, through an agreement between industry and EC. Results can also provide useful insights into the Revision of the Construction Products Regulation (REFIT) and the Ecodesign for Sustainable Products new Regulation.

The European Consumer Survey "European population's perception of products and fixtures labeling schemes" was available in 15 languages, and its preliminary results were discussed in the Webinar "Valuing water & energy savings in consumer choices", hosted by EnR on September 27th, 2022, where a set of experts on labelling, from Europe, United States and Australia, also shared their experience and discussed the advantages and drawbacks of the possible options in the EU: the voluntary Unified Water Label or a mandatory energy label.

From the consumer survey results, we were able to conclude that:

- ✓ **64% of consumers are aware of water or energy labels**, with the European Energy label being the most familiar to consumers.
- ✓ **Consumers value water labels** for fixtures (such as taps, showers and flushing systems), water information for appliances, and energy labels and information for these products.
- ✓ Consumers value both water and energy labels for water-related products and they **prefer water and energy information together** (73,5% look for both water and energy).
- ✓ **Consumers want labels for products/fixtures to help them make more efficient choices**, as they would likely make their choices based on the European Energy Label or the Unified Water Label if they would find it applied to fixtures.
- ✓ The existence of **financial support mechanisms would positively impact** consumers' willingness to choose labeled products.
- ✓ It's important to **involve the consumers in discussions about labeling schemes**, to prevent labels from becoming too dense and incomprehensive to consumers.

- ✓ There is a need to **properly display labels in stores**, provide guides for interpretation, and **train sales professionals** to recommend products based on their efficiency.
- ✓ There is the need to introduce, transversally, the themes of sustainability in the continuous **training of professionals**, including procurement professionals within organizations.

The Webinar on this topic also provided useful inputs to the discussion. The opportunity, brought by the 2022 Circular Economy Package, to have, when needed, new dedicated labels adopted by EC (besides the energy label and ecolabel) and common rules for easier product standardization (such as the recent ISO 31600:2022), were found to ease the way to a water-energy efficiency combined, which would contribute to swiftly moving the market towards more efficient products and fixtures. It was also concluded that, with a **combination of strategies taking advantage of voluntary or mandatory schemes** (each with successful examples in the United States and Australia) already in place, labelling can be a key tool to help reduce water use and optimise energy efficiency in water use, through technological advances in the different industries and changes to consumers' behavior.

In light of these results, it is recommended to:

1) **Engage consumers more often in labeling options**, ensuring they are more effective.
2) **Speed up the process for a commonly adopted label at a European level** for all types of fixtures, as it would facilitate wider dissemination and recognition, including water and energy information together, as widely preferred by consumers.
3) Endorse a potential combination of strategies (labeling and/or communication), that might **take advantage of voluntary and mandatory schemes already in place**.
4) **Leverage the labels through financial support mechanisms** (both for fixtures and appliances), while promoting procuring of efficient fixtures.
5) Regarding the **Unified Water Label, adding a letter scale would ease choices** and facilitate its inclusion in financing support mechanisms criteria.
6) **Disseminate information of existent labels for fixtures**, guiding interpretation and savings.
7) **Properly display labels in stores**, to facilitate more efficient choices.
8) **Raise awareness among professionals** about sustainability topics, particularly procurement managers and sales professionals from fixtures and appliance stores.

With a growing wave of ambition for more efficient and **sustainable building design and retrofit**, leveraged by **European policies and financial support**, this is **the time to ensure the right match** between European targets and incentives, and between policies and much needed **decision support tools** targeted at consumers for water efficiency in buildings. **European Energy Agencies can play a key role** in most of the recommended actions for faster common adoption and scaling up of a combined water and energy efficiency label for fixtures and water-related products in the European market, **towards water and energy savings**.

2 MOTIVATION AND OBJECTIVES

Implementation of water saving fixtures, alone, can produce up to 50% water savings in buildings, with energy savings and CO_2 emissions reduction by end users and urban water systems, relevant to freshwater conservation, energy resilience and CO2 mitigation goals.

To guarantee that water labelling schemes have a similar impact to the European energy label, driving the market to develop more efficient products, and to nudge consumers to select products based on water efficiency, it is important to engage both industry and consumers. As the Unified Water Label (UWL) – a voluntary European water efficiency labelling scheme for bathroom products – was promoted by the European Bathroom Forum alongside industry stakeholders, the industry accepts it and is well regarded. To ensure consumer responsiveness to water labelling schemes for products and fixtures, it is crucial to understand users' needs regarding water-energy efficient products/services and to address bottlenecks, barriers and solutions.

Aiming to provide inputs for the ongoing discussion within the European Commission (EC) and industry stakeholders about a mandatory option (through the EU energy label based on the ecodesign working plan 2012-2014) and a voluntary option (through an agreement between industry and EC), the EnR undertook a European citizen open survey on water & energy EU labelling, to understand consumers' needs, motivations and willingness to choose labelled water use products, fixtures and appliances, towards water and energy savings.

Information from this survey might also provide useful insights into the new rules for EU construction products announced in March 2022, under the Circular Economy Package.

These discussions and decisions are happening at a critical time to secure the transition towards water efficient (and energy efficient) installed water-related products in buildings. To aim for this goal, the right tools must be in place to seize the growing wave of ambition for more efficient and sustainable building design and retrofit, leveraged by European policies and financial support under the EU Green Deal, RePowerEU, EU Renovation Wave, the new Energy Performance of Buildings Directive – EPBD and the 2021-2027 long-term EU budget & NextGenerationEU. Labels and linked incentives may act as relevant tools for this purpose.

3 METHODOLOGY

The European Consumer Survey "European population's perception of products and fixtures labeling schemes" was developed within the Water-Energy Nexus Task Force, coordinated by ADENE – Agência para a Energia, from Portugal and including 5 other EnR member agencies: ADEME from France, CRES from Greece, dena from Germany, EWA from Malta and RVO, from the Netherlands.

To overcome the language barrier and ensure the comprehension of the survey, reaching a larger number of Europeans from different countries and backgrounds, the survey was translated into 15 languages (the native language of the countries with EnR agencies) and disseminated nationally by the energy agencies and other relevant entities, such as utilities and consumer associations.

To achieve the survey objective, it was necessary to evaluate the user opinion in the following areas:

1. Characterization: **"How familiar are you with efficiency labels?"** to assess if consumers are aware of labels on products and that some can help get financial incentives;
2. Willingness to choose labeled products: **"Do you choose products based on labels?"** to understand if consumers use labels to make decisions when buying a product;
3. Awareness about **"Energy labels for products/ fixtures"**, particularly the European energy label for washing machines and dishwashers and consumer receptiveness to an energy label for products/fixtures such as taps, showers and flushing systems;
4. **"Understanding of the Unified Water Label"**: how well do users interpret the Unified Water Label, the European water and energy labels for fixtures and products such as flushing devices, cisterns, taps and showers.

The preliminary results of the consumer survey were presented in an online event "*Valuing water & energy savings in consumer choices: Preliminary findings of a European wide consumer survey on the impact of labelling on consumer choices in the taps & showers market*", on September 27th, 2022. The webinar gathered a global group of experts, who presented their countries' experience with labelling schemes and the event concluded with a roundtable in which experts discussed the possibility of a mandatory label, using the EU energy label, and how that compared with the existing voluntary, industry-driven Unified Water Label.

The complete results of the consumer survey, and the recommendations that arise from it and from the stakeholder discussions that followed, are presented in this report.

4 WEBINAR "VALUING WATER & ENERGY SAVINGS IN CONSUMER CHOICES"

The EnR Task Force on Water-Energy Nexus organized an open webinar on the value of water & energy labelling to promote smarter consumer choices, on September 27th, 2022, with more than 140 participants. The event was a Sustainable Energy Day, part of the partner programme of EU Sustainable Energy Week 2022. A summary of the interventions, speaker presentations, and the full event video are available in EnR's LinkedIn article.

The webinar brought together experts and policymakers from the European Energy Network, the European Commission, the US Environmental Protection Agency, Australia's Department of Climate Change, the UK's Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, The European Consumer Organization (BEUC), and the industry initiative Unified Water Label Association (UWLA) and was attended by over 250 participants.

The discussion focused on how labelling schemes can improve water-energy performance in the taps & showers market, as the combined savings of both resources becomes ever more critical in the current climate emergency and unstable energy security contexts.

After an opening session, where the critical nature of savings in the context of water scarcity and the energy crisis was highlighted by the Portuguese Secretary of State for Environment and Energy, and by the President of ADENE and EnR, the webinar kicked off with the presentation of preliminary results of the European consumer survey. The preliminary results highlighted consumers' need to have more information on water and energy use in products through labelling to make more efficient choices.

Three keynote speeches provided insights from different geographies: 1) new developments in European Union policy for sustainable products, including the newly released Circular Economy Package, entailing a new eco-design working plan for 2022-2024 with a wider product scope, opening the door to all non-energy products; as well as lessons learned from well-established examples in 2) the United States – WaterSense® – and 3) Australia – Water Efficiency Labelling and Standards (WELS).

WELS, which went from a regional voluntary application to a national mandatory system today, is recognized by 70% of Australians and covers more than 22.000 products. The savings achieved in Australia amount to 70.000 Olympic swimming pools (158 G Liters) and 2,3 Mt CO_2 avoided emissions each year. On the other hand, the experience from the WaterSense® Program in the United States shows that wide adoption and acceptance can be achieved with a voluntary scheme since more than 40.000 products are covered in the USA. Estimated savings in water and energy bills reach 135 billion dollars, and the water savings are

equivalent to 8 months of water use by all US households with the corresponding 317 Mt of avoided emissions of Green House Gases (GHG).

The Circular Economy Package launched on March 30th, 2022, introduces new product requirements and information targeted at consumers (including Digital Product Passport and Labels), making it possible to have, when needed, other dedicated labels rather than just the energy label.

The event concluded with a roundtable with representatives of the UK Government (DEFRA), UWLA, EWA and BEUC to discuss several options for labeling that are currently on the table in Europe. This roundtable highlighted the point that labelling can be an important ally for a fundamental market transition towards more efficient products. It was concluded that, with a combination of strategies, and taking advantage of voluntary or mandatory schemes, labelling can be a key tool to help water and energy demand side management through technological advances in the different industries and changes to consumers' behavior.

Common rules, such as the recent ISO 31600:2022, will allow for easier product standardization between different markets. This can facilitate adoption and make labelling more attractive for large market players, even voluntarily, since consumers are prone to nudging behavior when clear information is presented on labels.

Labelling of water-energy efficiency combined, as the new European approach opens the door to, will certainly contribute to swiftly moving the market towards more efficient products and fixtures, reducing water use, and optimizing energy efficiency in water use. This approach can provide both immediate financial benefits to consumers, as well as critical environmental benefits by saving scarce resources.

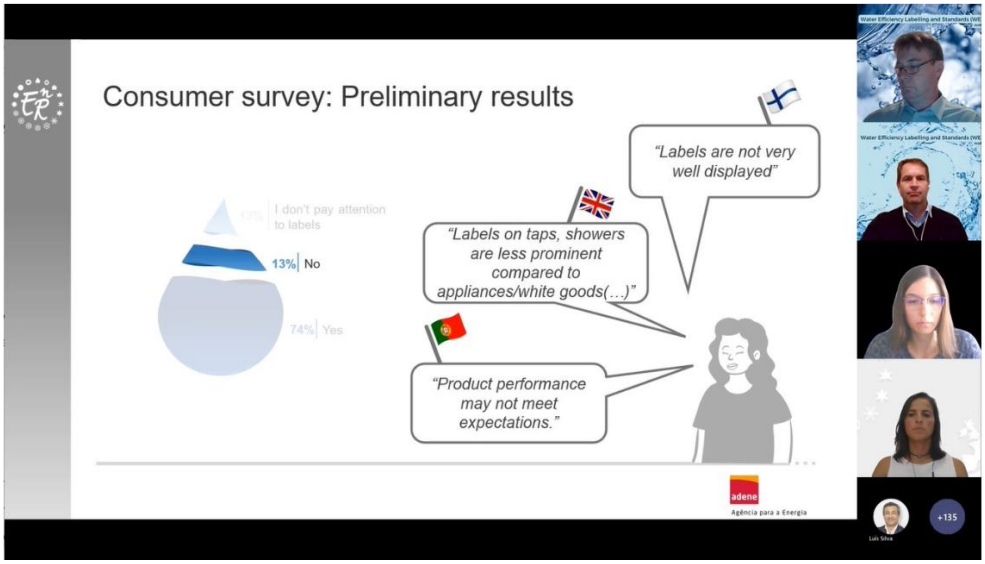


Figure 1 – Webinar "Valuing water & energy savings in consumer choices", September 27th, 2022

5 SURVEY RESULTS

The survey, which was disseminated through Europe in 15 different languages, received **487 answers from 22 different countries**: Australia, Austria, Bulgaria, Cape Verde, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Portugal, Romania, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, The Netherlands, and the United Kingdom.

It's important to keep in mind some definitions to be able to interpret the results of the consumer survey:

- **Fixtures** refer to taps, showers and toilet flushing systems
- **Financial support** refers to any financial mechanisms created to support purchases such as grants, subsidies, etc.
- **Workers from the sustainability sector** can be engineers, construction workers, auditors, researchers, home improvement retailers, etc.

5.1 How familiar are you with efficiency labels?

Of the respondents, 49% work in the water or sustainability sector and, out of those, 25% are responsible for the choice or the suggestion of fixtures to consumers.

The results show that **64% of the respondents are aware of water or energy labels** for products and fixtures. Although some workers from the sustainability sector claim that they don't know water and energy labels (*c.a.* 54%), the workers that are responsible for choosing or suggesting fixtures are the ones with better knowledge about labels (only 37% don't know water and energy labels), followed by the other professionals from the sustainability sector that are not responsible for the choice or suggestion of fixtures (59% don't know labels). The group that shows the lowest awareness are the consumers that don't work in the sustainability sector, 74% of which are unaware of the existence of labels. When asked about the awareness of financial support to buy efficient products and/or fixtures, the same tendency was verified, even though it was less pronounced.

Consumers were asked to rate a group of labels according to their level of familiarity, on a scale from 1 (I've never seen this label) to 5 (I look for this label to choose products). The labels included the European energy label[1], the Energy Star label[2], the Unified Water Label[3],

[1] Information about the European Energy Label available in: www.label2020.eu
[2] Information about the Energy Star available in: www.energystar.gov
[3] Information about the Unified Water label available in: www.uwla.eu

the Portuguese water efficiency label from ANQIP[4], the Swedish energy label for taps[5], the Swiss energy label for sanitary products[6] and the Blue Angel - The German Ecolabel[7].

As expected, as it's widely disseminated through Europe, **the European Energy label is the most familiar label** of the ones shown, with an average score of 4,3/5. The second higher score label, but still far behind, is the Energy Star with an average score of 2,8/5.

Despite its application at a European level, consumers are not very familiar with the Unified Water Label (average score of 1,9/5). This is probably because it is the most recent.

As expected, the Portuguese water efficiency label, the Swedish energy label for taps, the Swiss energy label for sanitary products and the Blue Angel are not very familiar to consumers, since they are applied and/or disseminated at a national level. These labels exhibit an average score of 1,7/5, for the Portuguese label, and 1,4/5 for the other ones.

These values increase when we only evaluate the answers from the labels' origin country: for Portugal, with the highest number of respondents (and a significant result therefore), the Portuguese label increases to 2,7/5. It is important to note that the results in some countries may not be representative as a result of the low number of answers to the survey obtained in these countries. This is the case for Sweden, Switzerland and Germany, which together only account for about 2% of all answers. But, in those countries, the tendency appears to be the same, even though no definite conclusions can be drawn from the few responses obtained (the Swedish label increases to 5/5 in Sweden, the Swedish one increases to 4,5/5 in Switzerland and the Blue Angel increases to 3,8/5 in Germany).

Figure 2 - Average scores on familiarity with labels

[4] Information about the ANQIP label available in: www.anqip.pt/index.php/en
[5] Information about the Swedish label available in: www.kiwa.com/en/service2/certification/energy-efficiency-classification-of-sanitary-tapware
[6] Information about the Swiss label available in: https://en.etiquetteenergie-sanitaire.ch/
[7] Information about the Blue Angel available in: www.blauer-engel.de/en

5.2 Do you choose products based on labels?

The survey results show that **most consumers choose labeled products** when buying new ones (*c.a.* 74%) and only a small percentage don't make choices based on labels (*c.a.* 13%) or don't even pay attention to labels (*c.a.* 14%).

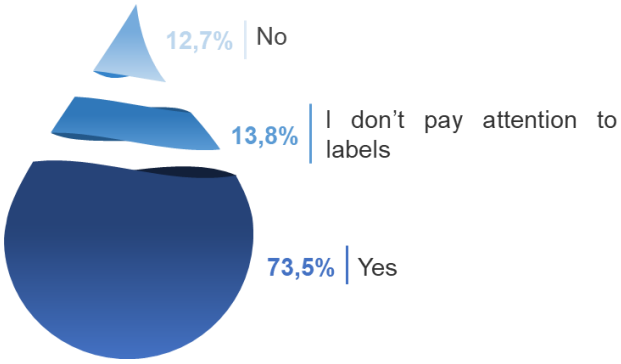


Figure 3 - Results of the question "Do you choose products based on labels?"

From the respondents that work in the water or sustainability sector and are responsible for the choice or suggestion of fixtures, 17% don't choose fixtures based on labels or don't pay attention to them. This reveals the **need to raise awareness among professionals**, as they are not only consumers themselves, but can influence other consumers.

Consumers rated the reasons that lead them not to choose labeled fixtures or not to pay attention to them when buying new ones on a scale from 1 – least important to 5 – most important.

The main reasons for not buying based on labels are lack of knowledge of efficiency labels and the difficulty to find labeled fixtures on the market, both with an average score of 3,5/5, followed by the product design, with an average of 2,6/5. Some comments mentioned as other factors were:

"In the UK labels on taps, and showers are less prominent compared to appliances/white goods however will gain more focus in periods of heatwaves and drought."

"Product performance may not meet expectations. Example: faucet with very little flow."

"Labels are not very well displayed."

Consumers don't even pay attention to labels because they: i) don't know efficiency labels, which is the main reason (with an average score of 3,5/5); ii) can't find labeled products on the market (average of 3,1/5); and iii) there is no financial support to buy efficient products (2,8/5). Amongst other factors consumers also say *"I take recommendations from the seller or installer"* which shows, once again, the importance of raising awareness among professionals.

These results reveal **there is a lack of dissemination of the labels** and that they **need to be displayed properly in stores**.

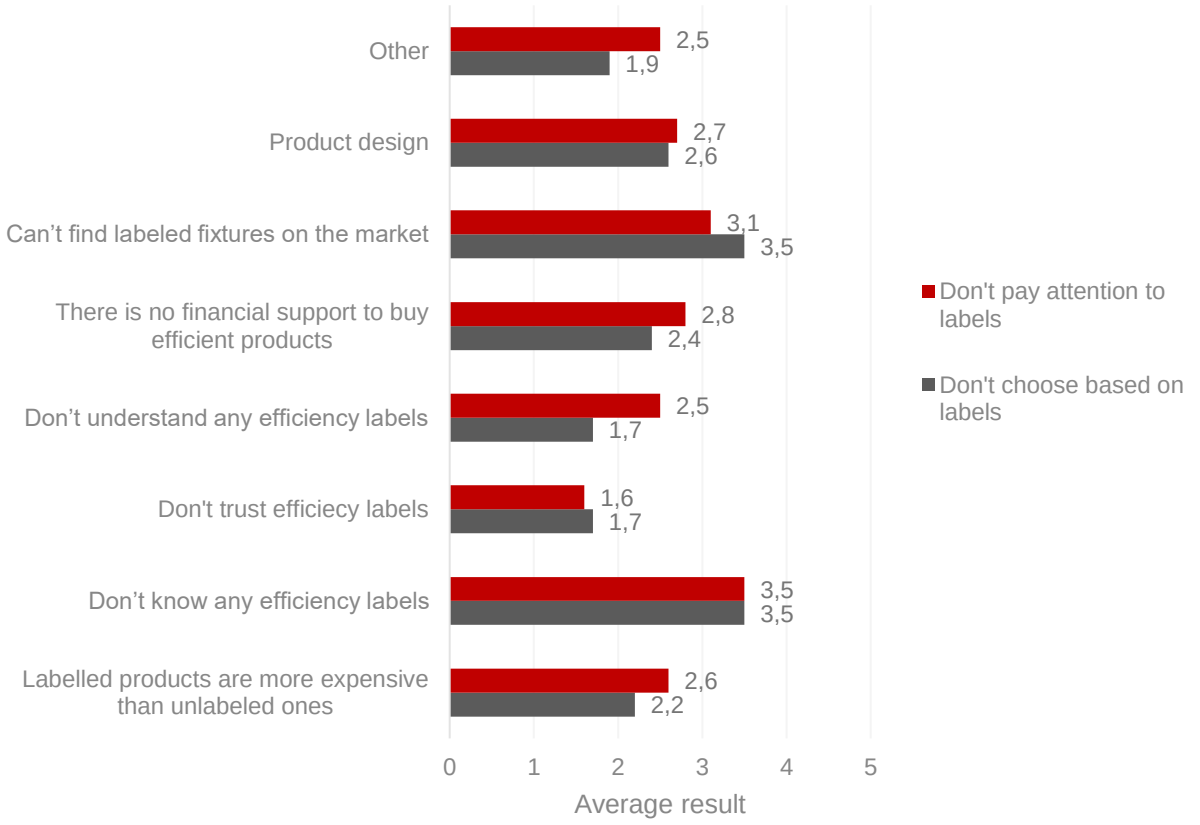


Figure 4 - Reasons why consumers don't choose fixtures based on labels when buying new ones

The main drivers that would lead these consumers to choose labeled fixtures are the water and energy savings, followed by the environmental benefits (as shown in Figure 5). Amongst other reasons are:

"More visibility of labels and products with these labels"
"Information available that allows comparison. But for this, it is necessary that all products have a label as happens in home appliances"
"The most important is the mechanical/technical performance of the product: reliability, response as needed, and design from a secondary point of view. A shower head that saves water but does not deliver enough water to wash is useless."
"If you knew what the markings mean in practice, they could influence the purchase decision."

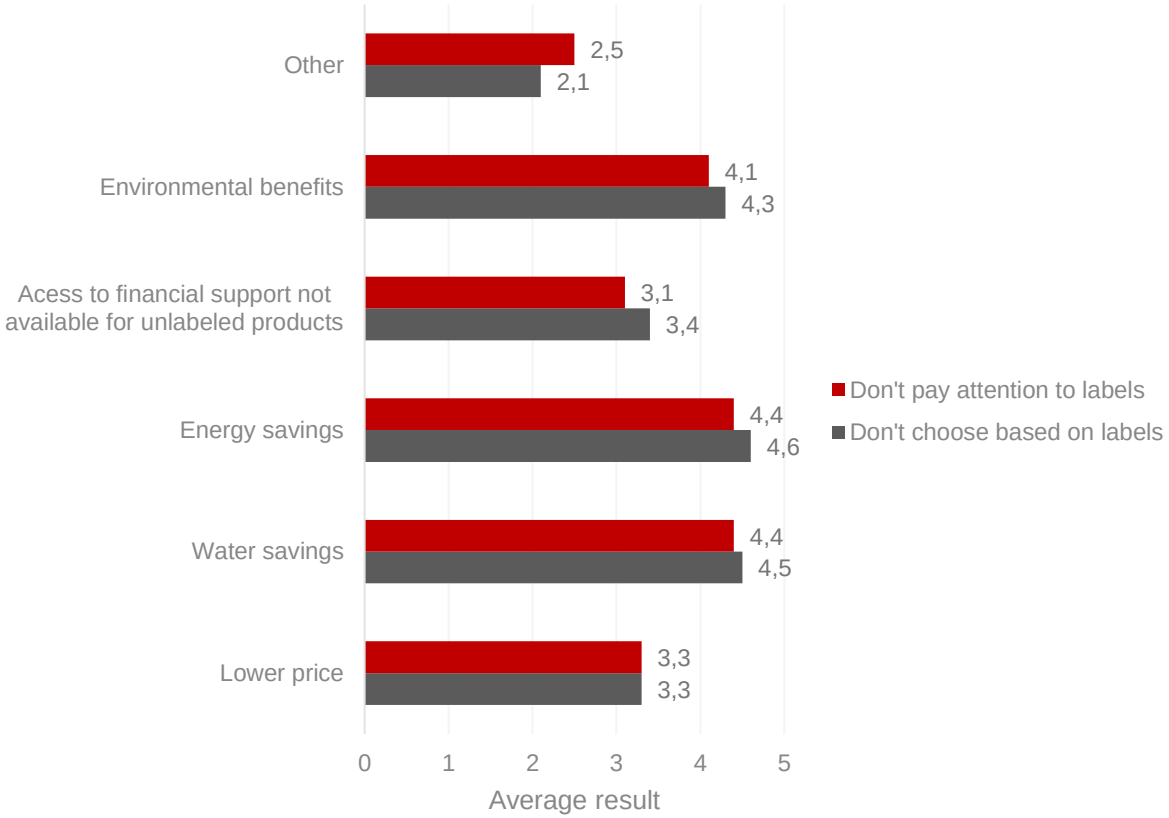


Figure 5 - Reasons that would lead consumers to choose fixtures based on labels when buying new ones

The consumers that already make purchasing choices based on labels **mostly look for both water and energy efficiency labels** (46%), and 41% look exclusively for energy efficiency labels, and they do so mainly because of energy savings (score of 4,7 in a scale from 1 to 5) and also because water savings and environmental benefits (both with a score of 4,4/5). Some other reasons mentioned by respondents are the *"price"*, *"to promote these values among family, friends and collaborators"* and *"save money in the medium/long term"*.

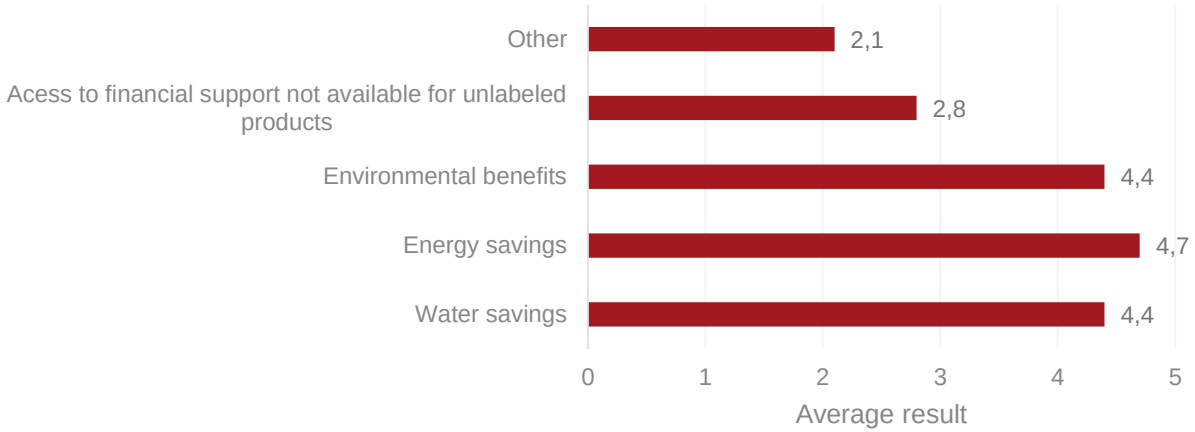


Figure 6 - Main reasons why consumers already choose labeled fixtures

The results show that the existence of **financial support would have a relatively positive impact on consumers' willingness to choose labeled products**.

5.3 Energy labels for products/fixtures

When buying a dishwasher and/or washing machine, **98% of consumers look for its energy efficiency label** and seek information mainly on energy efficiency class (looked for 93% of respondents), energy consumption (looked for 77%), and water consumption (looked for 72%).

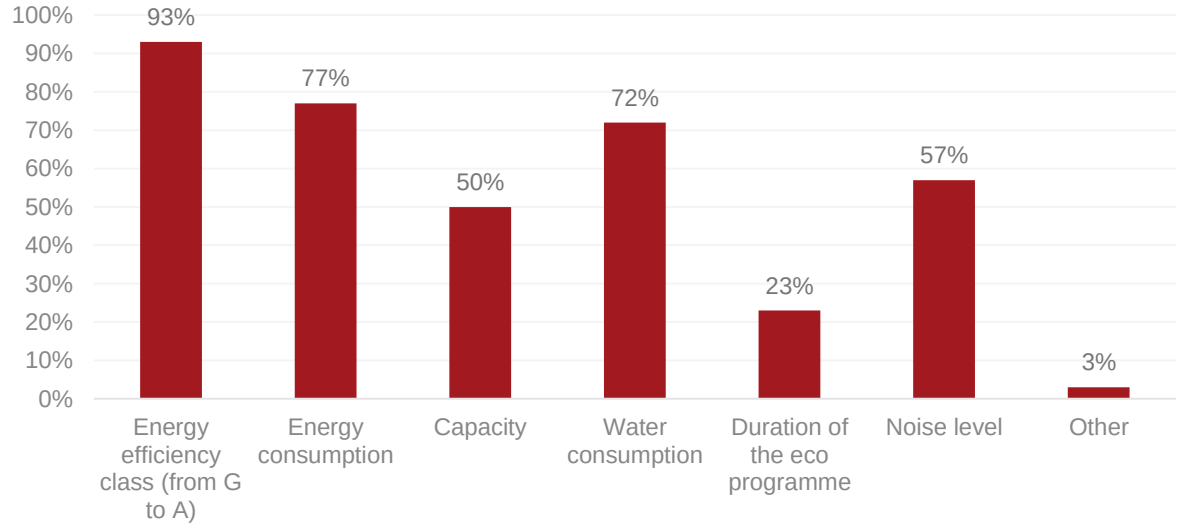


Figure 7 - Information consumers seek on the energy efficiency label

83% of consumers choose washing machines and dishwashers with low water consumption and those who don't look for washing machines and dishwashers with low water consumption do so because they don't know where to look for that information (25%) and other reasons (29%) such as:

"I don't know if the value they indicate is too much or too little."

"Difficulty to compare between machines, unlike an energy rating."

"I choose a machine that adjusts the water consumption according to the amount to be washed."

When asked to provide answers regarding an energy label example (Figure 8), despite 98% and 94% of respondents having correctly identified, respectively, the water and energy consumption of the corresponding washing machine, only 70% identified, from 2 different energy labels, the one with higher water efficiency.

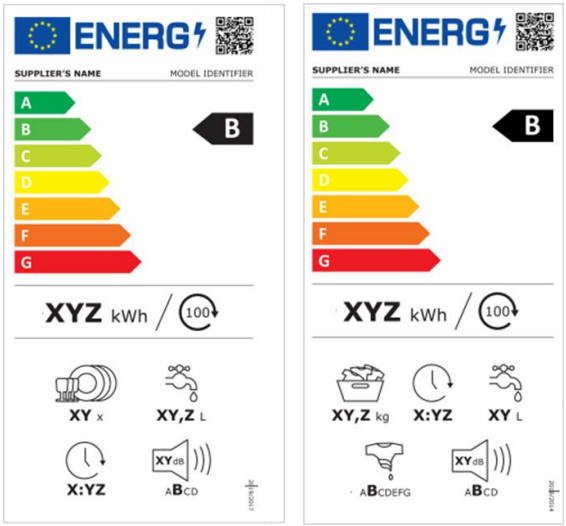
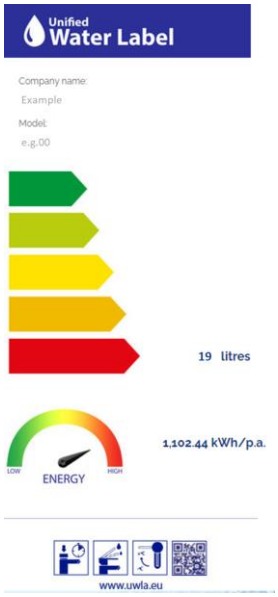


Figure 8 – Energy labels, example provided in the survey to understand consumers interpretation

5.4 Understanding of the Unified Water Label



When asked to read an example (Figure 9) of the Unified Water Label (UWL), 98% of respondents correctly identified the fixture's water consumption and 72% correctly identified its energy consumption. Only 66% and 51% correctly identified, respectively, that the fixture has high water and energy consumption and the meaning of the kWh/p.a. unit. 93% of respondents identified that the label is for a tap and 64% identified that it refers to a self-closing tap.

Figure 10 – Unified Water Label example provided in the survey to understand consumers interpretation

92% of respondents think the Unified Water Label provides relevant information and have identified the following main advantages and disadvantages of the label:

Advantages of the UWL	Disadvantages of the UWL
Allows comparison between fixtures: **76%** Simplifies the choice of efficient fixtures: **78%** The efficiency information is more reliable: **45%** Stimulates the industry to create more efficient products: **65%** Other(s): **4%** • *"All the criteria for making your choice are visible at a glance."* • *"Stimulates the user to save water."*	The scales are hard to read: **24%** There are too many labels with similar information: **21%** I don't understand the two scales of efficiency: one for water and another for energy: **13%** I don't trust efficiency labels: **1%** Other(s): **9%** • *"I do not understand the unit to calculate the energy."* • *"Knowledge about the meaning of the icons is required."* • *"Not suitable for color blind people."*

Table 1 - Identified advantages and disadvantages of the UWL (from a dropdown list)

Only 3% of consumers don't see advantages in the UWL and **47% don't see disadvantages**. Respondents would like to see a scale with letters from E to A (41%) and water and energy savings compared to a typical product (41% and 37%, respectively) on the label. The majority also think there is no unnecessary information on the label (64%).

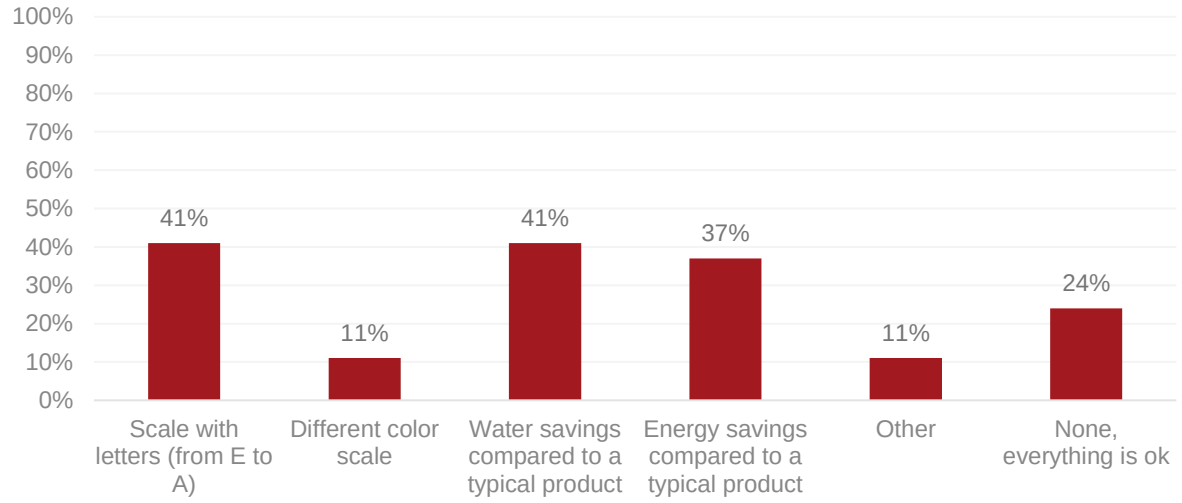


Figure 11 - Information that consumers would like to see on the UWL

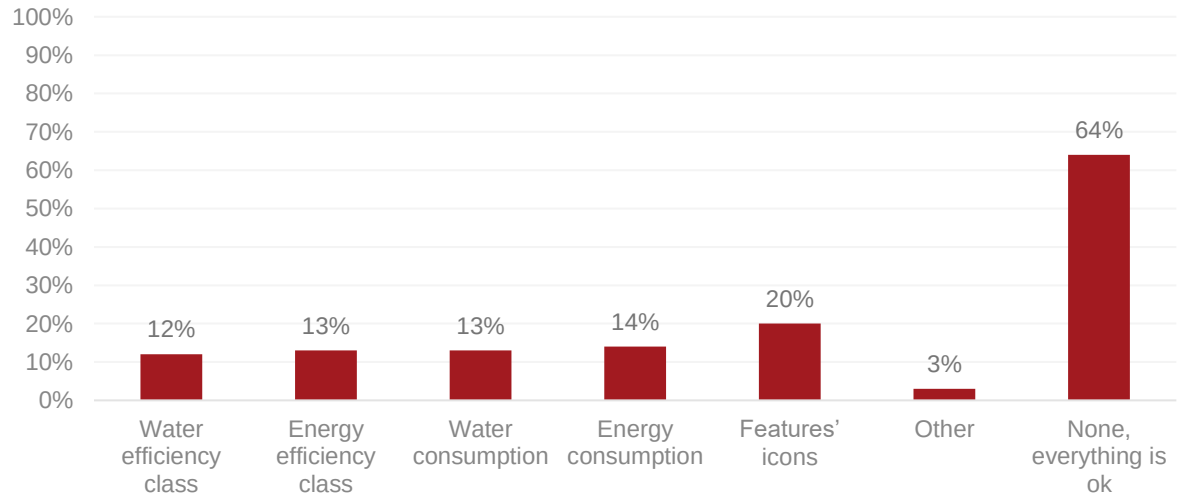


Figure 12 - Information that consumers think it's unnecessary

If consumers would find a European Energy Label or the Unified Water Label applied on fixtures, **they would likely make their choice based on the label information**.

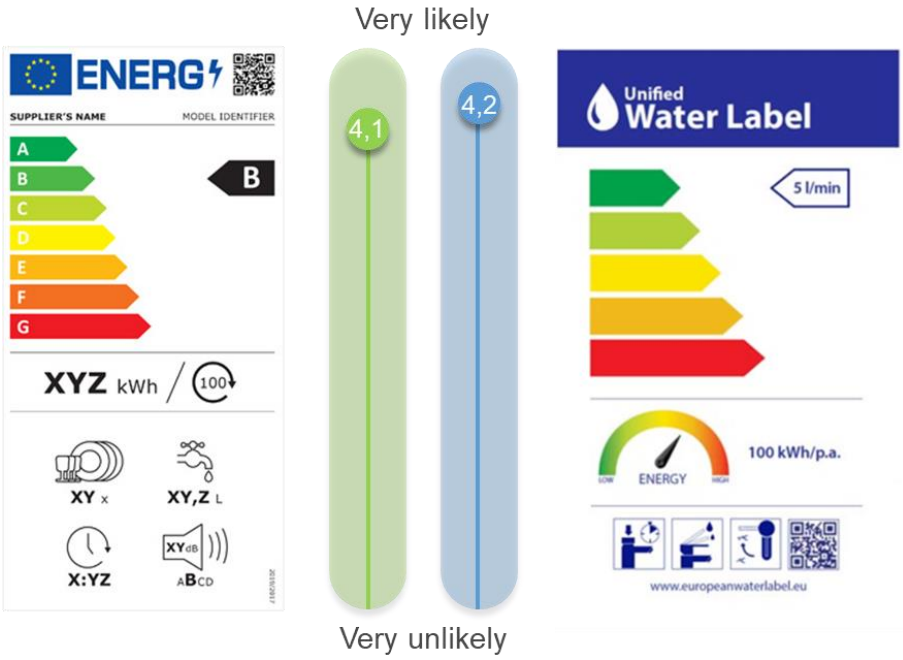


Figure 13 - Probability consumers base their fixtures purchase on the European Energy label or the Unified Water Label information

Some consumers left the following comments:

"I would do a combined label with energy class and water consumption. Otherwise, it is too much information, and you can also 'lose' consumers who want to do something but find it too complicated."

"(…) The label is an informative means that, similar to home appliances, should be mandatory on all products that consume environmental resources or produce waste."

"I support mandatory water labelling linked with licensing of installers. If unskilled installers have access to water efficient products the much needed water efficiency is unlikely to be fully effective."

6 CONCLUSIONS

The survey had 487 answers from 22 different countries and revealed that around 64% of consumers are aware of water or energy labels. Consumers want labels for products/fixtures to help them make more efficient choices, as they would likely make their choice based on the European Energy Label or the Unified Water Label if they would find it applied to fixtures.

Although with a limited number of respondents, the results show that consumers value water labels for fixtures (such as taps, showers and flushing systems), water information for appliances and also energy labels and energy information for all of these products. Water and energy information together are preferred, as 73,5% of respondents choose labeled products and look for both water and energy efficiency labels.

Although results show consumers can correctly read the information for both the European Energy label and the Unified Water Label, a lack of dissemination of the labels was noticed. There is a need to properly display labels in stores, provide guides so that consumers know how to interpret the labels and thus make more efficient choices, and train sales professionals so they can recommend products/fixtures based on their efficiency. It's also important to clear up misconceptions about labels, clarifying the label attribution process and savings potential.

It can also be concluded that the existence of financial support mechanisms would have a relatively positive impact on consumers' willingness to choose labeled products. Moreover, labels have the potential to facilitate eligibility assessment for financial support as they simplify the verification process, due to greater ease of performance comparison between products/fixtures. An example of that is the Portuguese "Programa de Apoio a Edifícios +Sustentáveis" (Support Program for more Sustainable Buildings, in English), financed by the national public Environmental Fund (Fundo Ambiental), which provided financial support to consumers renovating their property for energy and water efficiency, namely supporting the acquisition of efficient fixtures with a higher water efficiency rating based on the ANQIP national label. Some insights about financial support mechanisms can be found in the EnR report on "Smart finance on water & energy nexus", soon to be published on the EnR website.

Although workers from the sustainability sector, particularly the ones responsible for choosing or suggesting fixtures, have a deeper knowledge about labels and greater awareness of financial support schemes to buy efficient products and/or fixtures, 54% of them still claim that they don't know water and energy labels. These results reveal the need to introduce, transversally, the themes of sustainability in the lifelong learning strategies for professionals, contributing towards more sustainable choices, which they express concern about. Some insights on this topic can be found in the EnR Report on "Green Jobs & Skills" (2022).

Finally, to ensure that labels have the intended effect and help consumers make more efficient choices, it's important to involve consumers in discussions about labeling schemes. This will prevent labels from becoming too dense and incomprehensive to consumers.

The Webinar "Valuing water & energy savings in consumer choices", hosted by EnR on September 27th, 2022, with several European and international experts on labelling, also provided useful inputs to the discussion.

The opportunity, brought by the 2022 Circular Economy Package, to have, when needed, new dedicated labels adopted by EC (besides the energy label and ecolabel) and common rules for easier product standardization (such as the recent ISO 31600:2022), were found to ease the way to a water-energy efficiency combined label, which would contribute to swiftly moving the market towards more efficient products and fixtures.

It was also concluded that, with a combination of strategies, and taking advantage of voluntary or mandatory schemes (each with successful examples in the United States and Australia, respectively) already in place, labelling can be a key tool to help reduce water use and optimizing energy efficiency in water use, through technological advances in the different industries and changes to consumers' behaviour.

With a growing wave of ambition for more efficient and sustainable building design and retrofit, leveraged by European policies and financial support (under the EU Green Deal, RePowerEU, EU Renovation Wave, the new Energy Performance of Buildings Directive – EPBD and the 2021-2027 long-term EU budget & NextGenerationEU), this is the time to ensure the right match between European targets and incentives, and between policies and much needed decision support tools targeted at consumers for water efficiency in buildings. Labels and linked incentives may act as relevant tools for this purpose.

7 RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

In light of the study, encompassing both the consumer survey and also inputs provided by the discussion webinar, the following actions are recommended:

1. Engage consumers more often, as they can help make labels simpler and easier to understand, ensuring they are more effective.
2. Speed up the process of a commonly adopted label at a European level for all types of fixtures (whichever option between voluntary or mandatory, or even considering an evolutionary process from voluntary to mandatory), as it is needed and would facilitate wider dissemination and recognition, including water and energy information together, as widely preferred by consumers.
3. Endorse a potential combination of strategies (labeling and or communication), that might take advantage of voluntary and mandatory schemes already in process.
4. Leverage the labels through financial support mechanisms (both for fixtures and appliances), while promoting procuring of efficient fixtures.
5. Regarding the Unified Water Label, adding a letter scale would simplify the comparison between fixtures, make it suitable for colorblind people and facilitate its inclusion in financing support mechanisms criteria.
6. Disseminate information about existent labels for fixtures, through:
   i. Guides on how to interpret the labels and savings potential
   ii. Informative notes on myths and misconceptions
   iii. Notes about the label attribution process to make the process more transparent
7. Properly display the labels in stores so that consumers can easily access information about each product's performance and compare different products, fostering efficient choices.
8. Raise awareness among professionals about sustainability topics (this proposal is related to action 1.1 from EnR Green Jobs & Skills report):
   i. Train workers from the sustainability sector to foster suitable choices in organizations' procurement procedures and guide consumers.
   ii. Train sales professionals from fixtures and appliance stores to provide information to consumers, related to product efficiency, at the moment of purchase.

8 EUROPEAN ENERGY AGENCIES ROLE

This is the time to ensure the right match between European targets and incentives and between policies and much needed decision support tools targeted at consumers for water efficiency in buildings. Energy agencies are undoubtedly actors in this process, as they can be key players in most of the recommended actions (RA) towards faster adoption and scaling-up of water and energy efficiency labels for fixtures and water-related products.

All energy agencies can raise consumers' awareness and willingness to choose labelled water-related products, disseminating information concerning water (and energy) efficiency labels (RA 6). Agencies can prepare, through EnR, common guidance notes and booklets on existent labels in the European market, providing miss information on how to interpret the labels and on potential savings of more efficient products/fixtures.

They can also have an important role in training professionals (RA 8) as energy agencies providing training can support green upskilling, raising professionals' awareness of the importance of choosing efficient products/fixtures and how to use labels for this purpose.

Several Agencies have the proximity and opportunity to engage consumers regularly (RA 1), allowing them to understand and share information on how to continuously improve labels' effectiveness towards water and energy savings.

Energy Agencies assisting or monitoring public and private financial support mechanisms might advocate and help design eligibility criteria based on water efficiency labels for fixtures/products, appliances, and other water-related products (RA 4).

Finally, European Energy Agencies are key stakeholders in EC Forums and consultations on the EU eco-design working plan, the Ecodesign for Sustainable Products new Regulation[8] (under consultation until 25th April 2023)[9], the Revision of the Construction Products Regulation (REFIT), and other relevant EU initiatives. At these forums, agencies can raise awareness of the need and benefits of a swifter adoption of a common label at a European level for all water-related products that provide water and energy information together (RA 2). Within these EC forums but also at a national level, one way of speeding up the process of providing European consumers with tools for more efficient choices, in time for the European building renovation wave, is to have agencies supporting labeling and implementing communication strategies that take advantage of label schemes already in place (RA 3), including both voluntary labels (Unified Water Label for bathroom products) and mandatory labels (Energy label for water-use appliances).

[8] https://commission.europa.eu/energy-climate-change-environment/standards-tools-and-labels/products-labelling-rules-and-requirements/sustainable-products/ecodesign-sustainable-products_en

[9] https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/13682-New-product-priorities-for-Ecodesign-for-Sustainable-Products_en