



BRITISH RETAIL CONSORTIUM  
for successful and responsible retailing



## **When is an A not an A?**

**Joint statement from ANEC<sup>1</sup>, BEUC<sup>2</sup>, BRC<sup>3</sup>, EEB<sup>4</sup>, FCD<sup>5</sup>, WWF<sup>6</sup>**

Triilogue discussions among the Council, the European Parliament and the Commission on the revision of the EU Energy Labelling Framework Directive are falling short of the strong message to maintain a closed A-G Energy Label, delivered by the Parliament in its first reading vote in May, and supported by consumer, retail and environmental organisations.

A proposal from the Swedish Presidency, backed by only a minority of Member States, would see the familiar A-G Energy Label severely undermined by the opening of the Label to several classes 'above A', up to a top class of 'A++++'. Moreover, the proposal does not foresee a mandatory rescaling of the classes to be required in the Framework Directive. Without such rescaling, the message to consumers would be neither clear nor simple as most products would eventually be classified as an 'A' product or above (e.g. A+, A++). As a result, an 'A' class product would no longer necessarily be the best in class; indeed in certain cases it may even be the *worst*<sup>7</sup>. The clear and simple message conveyed by the current Label – A is the best - would be lost.

Consumer, retail and environmental organisations therefore maintain their united support for the retention of a simple, closed A-G Energy Label, together with a mandatory rescaling of classes. The message 'Buy A' has been key in encouraging and helping consumers buy more energy-efficient household appliances. By contrast, experience with products where classes above 'A' have already been used (e.g. 'A+' and 'A++' for refrigerators and freezers) shows that consumers are little influenced in their purchasing decisions by the A+ and A++ classes. Consumers are also more willing to pay a higher premium for the highest classes of the closed 'A-G' scale than for the highest classes of a 'beyond A' scale<sup>8</sup>. A scheme based on so many pluses above 'A' will not enable consumers to compare products and will therefore not have the ability to continue to transform the market.

**We urge the Council to withdraw the proposal for an Energy Label based on numerous pluses, and, instead, support a dynamic A-G label based on mandatory rescaling. We also call on the European Parliament to ensure that, by retaining the simple and successful A-G label, the Energy Label will continue to serve the best interests of consumers and the environment.**

<sup>1</sup> ANEC, the European Consumer Voice in Standardisation, [www.anec.eu](http://www.anec.eu)

<sup>2</sup> BEUC, the European Consumers' Organisation, [www.beuc.eu](http://www.beuc.eu)

<sup>3</sup> The British Retail Consortium, [www.brc.org.uk](http://www.brc.org.uk)

<sup>4</sup> European Environmental Bureau, [www.eeb.org](http://www.eeb.org)

<sup>5</sup> La Fédération des entreprises du Commerce et de la Distribution, [www.fcd.asso.fr](http://www.fcd.asso.fr)

<sup>6</sup> WWF European Policy Office, <http://www.panda.org/>

<sup>7</sup> According to Regulation 643/2009 on eco-design requirements for refrigerating appliances, only appliances performing to an A+ standard or higher will be allowed on the market after July 2013.

<sup>8</sup> See e.g. Consumer survey on the new format of the European Energy Label for televisions -

Comparison of a "A-G closed" versus a "beyond A" scale format, University of St. Gallen, August 2009