(English version)

Question for written answer E-000160/25
to the Commission
Herbert Dorfmann (PPE)
(15 January 2025)

Subject: Sustainable solutions for the end of Microsoft Windows 10 support

With support for Microsoft Windows 10 scheduled to end on 14 October 2025, a major disruption is anticipated that will affect many users. In particular, the increased hardware requirements of Microsoft Windows 11 mean that numerous functional computers will no longer be supported and will thus in many cases have to be disposed of unnecessarily. This problem has potentially serious environmental and social consequences, as it will result in a massive increase in e-waste and particularly affects economically disadvantaged users.

1. How does the Commission intend to ensure that Microsoft's planned changes are compatible with the objectives of the EU Circular Economy Action Plan and what measures will be taken to prevent the risk of increased e-waste?

2. What policies or support programmes are in place at EU level to facilitate the switch to open-source operating systems, thereby reducing both the environmental impact and the costs for consumers?

Submitted: 15.1.2025

Answer given by Ms Roswall on behalf of the European Commission
(13 March 2025)

The Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation ([1]) (ESPR) aims to significantly better the sustainability of products placed on the EU market by improving their circularity, energy performance, recyclability and durability.

For selected product groups, the ESPR could implement product design rules requiring manufacturers to provide software updates for an extended period, ensuring that devices remain functional and secure for a longer time, preventing some unnecessary waste generation.

In this, the Commission will examine also issues like the one in this question. Meanwhile, the Commission is supporting industry towards more circular and sustainable consumer electronics through dedicated research and innovation funding under Horizon Europe ([2]).

Other EU policies encouraging adoption of open-source operating systems and better consumer information, may contribute to longevity of some computers affected.

Next Generation Internet initiative ([3]), for instance, funded open-source digital commons developments, including Linux distributions to support older equipment, as well as initiatives enabling platform-independent open-source applications at browser/executable level.

Also, a new Open Internet Stack initiative to support easily deployable sovereign Open Source solutions is proposed as part of Horizon Europe ([4]) Work Programmes 2025.

Four Member States ([5]) notified their intent to set up a European Digital Infrastructure Consortium aiming to support digital commons, including for open desk productivity.

Furthermore, a new Consumer Directive ([6]) will also result in better consumer information, as of September 2026, on aspects such as durability, reparability and periods of software updates.

([1]) Regulation (EU) 2024/1781 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 June 2024 establishing a framework for the setting of ecodesign requirements for sustainable products, amending Directive (EU) 2020/1828 and Regulation (EU) 2023/1542 and repealing Directive 2009/125/EC, OJ L, 2024/1781, 28.6.2024.
([2]) Most recently through https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/opportunities/topic-details/HORIZON-CL6-2024-CircBio-02-3-two-stage?isExactMatch=true&status=31094501,31094502,31094503&callIdentifier=HORIZON-CL6-2024-CIRCBIO-02&order=DESC&pageNumber=1&pageSize=50&sortBy=startDate
([3]) https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/next-generation-Internet-initiative
([4]) https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/funding/funding-opportunities/funding-programmes-and-open-calls/horizon-europe_en
([5]) Germany, Estonia, France and the Netherlands.
([6]) https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2024/825/oj