

Summary report of meeting between DG Calleja and Apple, 18 June 2019, Beaulieu

Present:

Apple

Rob Guzzo, Senior Manager, International Environmental Initiatives
Government Affairs Europe
EMEIA

Commission

DG Calleja Crespo (DCC)
(B1)
(B3)
(B.1)

Report

DCC welcomed the guests and gave a brief overview of the state of play. In this transition period, the Commission is considering how to proceed on the wide issue of circular economy. Possible future topics in this field could include widening the Ecodesign approach, stepping up efforts on e-waste and batteries, fighting premature obsolescence of (electrical) products, implementing the revised and new rules on waste and plastics, enhancing uptake of EU Ecolabel and EMAS, addressing products' environmental footprint and countering false green claims. Also the links between circular economy and other issues, such as climate change and digitalization, are expected to be better elaborated in future.

Guzzo set out the approach to sustainability that Apple is 'seeding around the world', and which is starting to bear fruit. The approach consists of three main elements:

- 1- Climate change. The Apple offices are running on 100% renewable energy, and they aim to achieve the same for the supply chain, which is currently running for around one third on renewables.
- 2- Smarter chemistry, which encompasses reduction or phasing out of use of hazardous substances such as flame retardants and PVC. Apple has a toxicology team with its own laboratory. Their main aim is customer safety, the focus being on avoiding chemicals that are not safe for skin contact.
- 3- Resource use and circular economy. Apple aims to achieve 100% recycled and renewable material uses, through closed loop recycling. Apple computers already consist of 100% recycled aluminum. All paper in packaging is FSC. Materials such as cobalt and rare earths need to be better recycled. The dismantling robots Liam and its successor Daisy help in this. There is also a plastics program, aimed at eliminating plastics from packaging.

DCC pointed to the [Italian court case](#) where Apple (together with Samsung) was sentenced to a fine for not informing consumers that software updates would increase the burden on phone batteries, reducing the phone performance. Apple rejected the suggestion that this was a case of planned obsolescence, claiming that Apple's strategy is instead to produce premium products, built to last. In terms of durability, reliability and software support, Apple claims to be outperforming its competitors. In reply to the claim that Apple glues the battery to the phone to discourage battery replacement, Guzzo demonstrated that the glue used is 'stretch glue' precisely to enable easy replacement (at a higher cost).

Apple acknowledged more needs to be done to collect used phones: the current 8 million phones collected annually only represent 4% of the sales. The possible role of EPR, at regional, national or even global level was briefly discussed.

In closing, the intention to stay in touch in future was expressed without setting a specific time frame.