

WATER RESILIENCE STRATEGY FOR EUROPE

Unified Water Label Association position to the Water Resilience Strategy – AIDING GOVERNMENT IN ACHIEVING THEIR GOALS

INTRODUCTION

The Unified Water Label Association is the recognised body that hosts and operates the industry voluntary labelling scheme for water using bathroom products, which also includes product components and kitchen taps.

Industry welcomes the water resilience strategy and recognises the journey the European Union is undertaking. Water is at the heart of economic, societal and environmentally sustainable goals, with strategies seeking to balance the supply, demand and environmental consequences associated with population growth and climate change. A robust, fair and effective platform is necessary to drive the sustainable goals, across all member states, taking all facets and partners on the same journey.

The goals cannot be fully achieved, unless all partners play their part, from politicians, environmentalists, manufacturers to installers and the end user. Behaviour change is crucial to success. Infrastructure improvements, a driver that will demonstrate commitment.

A sustainable economy benefits all, however, it must be endorsed and implemented by all Member States which includes a robust market surveillance.

It must be recognised that existing legislation, regulation and product standards are key components to driving this change, and therefore must be reviewed, thus ensuring little or no unintended consequences arise from double or conflicting regulation comes into play. The manufacturing sector must have a clear direction, safeguarding future investment within the manufacturing process and efficient products.

UNIFIED WATER LABEL

A simple effective solution that identifies the water use per flush, flow or volume of the product based on technical criteria developed by experts reflecting existing or recognised harmonised standards. The label assists the end user at point of selection with greater knowledge to make an informed choice.

The industry scheme dovetails with Europe's vision for a robust and forward thinking water resilience strategy, as Europe grapples with the supply, demand of water to consumers balancing with environmental consequences of climate change.

Industry recognises their role, to bring to market technologically advanced innovative products that deliver the performance customers have come to expect, using less finite resource, water and associated energy.

RECOGNISING THE UNIFIED WATER LABEL

The European bathroom industry has developed a robust labelling scheme that is growing in market representation and stature that reflects market transformation. Industry recognised that identifying how much water products use by educating the end user with a simple, effective labelling scheme across the complexity of markets, new build, commercial buildings and retrofitting. The Unified Water Label is an effective label that works across many markets and geographical borders, thus maintaining a cost effective harmonised scheme. The unified water label influences product innovation and behaviour change to become water efficient.

Supported by 160+ partners consisting of manufacturers, distributors, retail, test houses, together with members of the media, environmentalists, and consumer initiatives the Unified Water Label easy to navigate database of products exceeding 20,000 individually registered products that can be identified by flow rate, flush or volume.

The Unified Water Label facilitated by an independent body, influenced by many, can embrace market transformation, quickly realign technical criteria, encouraging greater efficiency in the market and embracing new criteria.

The Unified Water Label dovetails with European goals, EU taxonomy, Energy Performance Directive, seeks recognition under Ecodesign Sustainable Products self-regulatory measure. Is recognised within the ISO 31600 standard on global water efficient labelling schemes.

The Unified Water Label is currently developing the self-regulatory measure proposal, which if recognised by the European Commission will drive greater recognition of the scheme in the marketplace with professionals and consumers alike.

BEHAVIOUR CHANGE

A crucial aspect of the water resilience strategy will be the need to influence behaviour change. All aspects are governed by the intervention of the user. A product or building is only efficient if used correctly and the user does not become wasteful. Product standards must be reviewed to reflect greater efficiency and maintain the balance of health and safety. The population of Europe enjoys good health and sanitation, this must be maintained and improved accordingly. Equally important, regulation must not become a barrier and stifle innovation and economic recovery.

The construction sector must seek to ensure that the water systems are designed as a whole and recognise that each element must work together if efficiency is key. Good market surveillance is critical, creating a level playing field, otherwise innovation will be stifled, driven by price alone with the building stock becoming less fit for purpose.

Greater understanding through robust research is required on behaviours, use factors, leakage and poor infrastructure, as the water resilience must be across all sectors and not fall on one sector to carry the burden of change.

Education, education, education is vital across all sectors. The process must start with the young with every age thereafter seeing greater reference to the relevance and importance of using water wisely and reducing unnecessary waste.

CONCLUSION

The European bathroom sector is focussed and continues to develop the Unified Water Label to reflect not only existing and new regulation but market transformation. It continues to develop new criteria that reflects the market movement towards greater efficient products.

The European Commission should be encouraged to implement various incentive programmes from research initiatives to R&D to consumer replacement programmes as products without sales will not drive water reduction on the already stretched potable water supply.

The Unified Water Label Scheme has driven innovation, raised awareness of the importance of using water wisely, to reducing waste. The scheme has played a role in the development of over 1.8 million projects from 1 house build to new housing complexes to major commercial building. Over 10,000 architects and specifiers use the database to identify water use as its one of the few databases that identifies this measurement. He

The Unified Water Label Association urges the European Commission to recognise the Unified Water Label as a robust methodology when determining water flow, flush or volume metrics.

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