

ISFE Key points on the added value of the Games Consoles Voluntary Agreement to the Ecodesign framework

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1. ISFE represents the video games industry in Europe and is based in Brussels, Belgium. Our membership comprises national trade associations in 15 countries across Europe which represent in turn thousands of developers and publishers in the member states. ISFE also has as direct members the leading console manufacturers and European and international video game companies, many of which have studios with a strong European footprint. The video games sector represents one of Europe's most compelling economic success stories, reaching a market size of €23.3 billion in 2020 and employing over 85,000 people across the continent. Today 51% of Europe's population plays videogames, which is approximately 250 million people, and 54 % of the players regularly play on consoles.
2. ISFE welcomes the impetus from the European Commission, the European Council and the European Parliament to review the Ecodesign Directive as part of the upcoming "Sustainable Products Initiative". ISFE, jointly with EGDF, [contributed](#) to the European Commission public consultation last year, and is looking forward to participating in the public debate in the future.
3. Following the adoption of the Ecodesign Directive, console manufacturers¹ agreed with the European Commission to further improve the energy efficiency of games consoles. Their engagement is codified under the [Games Consoles Voluntary Agreement](#), (Games Consoles VA, GCVA) which is applicable for both current and future generations of games consoles². The Games Console VA is a successful example of EU co-regulation which serves as a template for similar harmonised rules across the world³, and has achieved significant results in energy savings and resource efficiency, further contributing to Europe's green transition.

The Games Consoles Voluntary Agreement contributes effectively to the EU transition towards a circular economy

4. In 2019, the Commission tasked an independent research consortium led by the [CSES](#), [Ökopol](#) and [Vienna University of Technology](#) to perform a review study of the Games Consoles VA. Their conclusions indicate that the proposed regulatory measures within the GCVA generated 54.42 TWh of energy saving over the lifetime of former generation consoles (PS4 and Xbox One)⁴, which is comparable to the electricity consumption of Greece in 2019 (51.74 TWh⁵) and significantly higher than the European Commission's original expectations of 1TWh/year by 2020⁶. For the new generation of 8K definition consoles, released in 2020⁷, Signatories of the VA expect lifetime energy savings to reach 46 TWh (when comparing new energy efficient technology introduced since UHD

¹ Microsoft, Nintendo and Sony Interactive Entertainment

² More information on the Games Consoles Voluntary Agreement can be found at <https://efficientgaming.eu/>

³ In 2021, a UK Games Consoles VA was adopted based on the model of the EU Games Consoles VA. More information [here](#).

⁴ Zimmermann, T. et al., Review Study of the Ecodesign Voluntary Agreement for the Product Group "Videogames Consoles", 2019, pp. 154-155. Available [here](#).

⁵ Source: Eurostat, *Supply, transformation and consumption of electricity*

⁶ European Commission (2015). Impact Assessment: Accompanying the document Report from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council on the voluntary codesign scheme for games consoles. Link: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52015SC0089>

⁷ PlayStation 5, Xbox Series X

capable consoles)⁸. The manufacturers have made great efforts to ensure that this new generation of consoles keep within power caps levels for previous generations in spite of significantly increased performance and functionality compared to the previous generation.

5. The European Commission supported the launch of the Games Consoles VA with an inception impact assessment report which concluded that the GCVA “provides the most advantages, has the best cost-benefit ratio, and provides the best energy efficiency improvement [compared to other regulatory options]”. The European Commission originally estimated the Games Consoles VA to generate cumulative energy savings of 1 TWh per year by 2020. It is now estimated that over 6.1 TWh of energy use was avoided in 2020 for UHD capable consoles through the use of energy efficiency technologies and power management driven by the Games Consoles VA
6. Whilst most of the Ecodesign implementing measures for specific products groups are limited to energy efficiency requirements, the GCVA includes additional resource efficiency and information requirements related to topics such as reparability and recyclability, thus being in line with the objectives of the Circular Economy Action Plan. This includes for instance, the commitment that as of 1 January 2022, all Signatories of the GCVA make certain spare parts available to professional repairers and end-users for a period of two years after placing the last unit of the game console on the market, as well as ensuring that certain key components can be non-destructively disassembled from games consoles for their repair by authorised repair or refurbishment centres⁹.

The Games Console Voluntary Agreement is robust enough to ensure compliance of market participants to codesign requirements

7. The GCVA includes safeguards to ensure that console manufacturers operating in Europe take the necessary measures to improve the energy efficiency of their devices, in compliance with the objectives of the EcoDesign Directive:
 - Sections 4, 5 and 6 of the GCVA outline a detailed monitoring and reporting system that Signatories must follow to be compliant. This includes the submission, by each Signatory, of a Product Compliance Report for each games console model that falls within the scope of the GCVA to an Independent Inspector. The Inspector then publishes an Annual Compliance Report (ACR) to support the European Commission in assessing whether the objectives of the voluntary agreement have been met. The latest iteration of the ACR, published in May 2021, demonstrates compliance by all Signatories with the requirements of the GCVA¹⁰.
 - Any failure to comply 12 months after publication of the ACR results in the automatic withdrawal of the non-compliant Signatory from the Games Console VA¹¹. However, considering the limited number of console manufacturers operating in Europe, any expulsion of any of the Signatories would most likely result in the GCVA not meeting the threshold of 80% of market coverage necessary to fulfil the Representativeness criterion, of Annex VIII of the Ecodesign Directive, and further detailed in the EC guidelines for self-regulation measures

⁸ Microsoft, Nintendo, Sony Interactive Entertainment, Games Consoles Self-Regulatory Initiative 10th Steering Committee Meeting, 28 July 2020, p. 25. Available [here](#)

⁹ See section 3.2.1 of the [Games Consoles Voluntary Agreement v4.0](#)

¹⁰ Intertek, “Independent Inspector Annual Compliance Report – Final Reporting Period 2020”, page 5. Available [here](#).

¹¹ [EU Games Console Voluntary Agreement v4.0](#), section 5.4 : Non-Compliance, page 25. “A Signatory who remains non-compliant twelve months after the publication of the Independent Inspector’s Annual Compliance Report or relevant investigation report shall forfeit its status as a Signatory of the SRI. [...] Within 30 days of the exclusion of a non-compliant Signatory, remaining Signatories must commission a report proving coverage of at least 80% of products placed on the market.”

[\(\(EU\) 2016/2125\)](#). It is, therefore, in the interest of console manufacturers to maintain compliance with GCVA requirements to ensure that the GCVA continues to meet the requirements for self-regulation measures under the Ecodesign Directive.

- Console manufacturers deploy reasonable efforts to address any case of non-compliance. In 2019, after being notified by the Independent Inspector of its non-compliance with some aspects of the Auto-Power Down requirements included in the GCVA, Microsoft immediately took the corrective actions required for its devices to be compliant¹². This example illustrates the willingness of consoles manufacturers to ensure timely and full conformance with the objectives of the Ecodesign Directive, as well as the effectiveness of the GCVA to address non-compliance cases.

8. Transparency and stakeholder involvement: Representatives of NGOs, Member States and the European Commission are directly involved in the discussions shaping the form of the VA. They are invited to attend all Steering Committees of the VA¹³. Content of the meetings and of the GCVA are also made publicly available online at <https://www.efficientgaming.info/eu.html>. This ensures an involvement and oversight on the GCVA's content by civil society and EU institutions, thus allowing the GCVA to reflect considerations expressed by these stakeholders.

The nature of the Games Consoles Voluntary Agreement makes it easier to review and adapt to new technological innovations.

9. With regular reviews, the Games Console VA is flexible enough to adapt to new technologies in a timely manner. It enables the games console industry to proactively develop energy efficient solutions that allow for the evolution of gaming technology without degrading the level of play. For instance, as part of the requirements included in the last version of the GCVA, Signatories introduced a 70W cap for navigation and a 100W cap (compared to 110W previously) for 4K/UHD media playback for 8K capable devices (which marks the first time the industry has been able to achieve power consumption levels which require no increase in caps when introducing a new generation of consoles). These changes further echo the ability from Signatories to take on feedback from stakeholders who are encouraging for lower caps at each review.

10. Since its adoption in 2015, the Games Console Voluntary Agreement has been reviewed at least every two years, for a total amount of 3 times. Changes included new requirements related to energy savings, but also additional information requirements to consumers to support product life extension. Considering the average length of the EU legislative process, ISFE believes adopting an Implementing Regulation instead of a Voluntary Agreement would not necessarily lead to faster adaptations and reviews. As a point of comparison, the [Implementing Regulation 617/2013](#) concerning ecodesign requirements for computers and computer servers has not been reviewed once since its adoption in 2013, despite efforts to do so.

Considering the above, the Games Consoles Voluntary Agreement, is a successful example of European co-regulation, setting a precedent for other regions and sectors as it has proven that substantial results can be achieved. Therefore, ISFE strongly encourages the European Commission, the Council of the European Union, and the European Parliament to reiterate their support to Voluntary Agreements in the context of the upcoming review of the Ecodesign Directive (so-called "Sustainable Products Initiative").

¹² Intertek, "Independent Inspector Annual Compliance Report – Final Reporting Period 2019", page 13-14. Available [here](#).

¹³ See latest available minutes [here](#)