European Parliament
2024-2029

Committee on Petitions

22.11.2024

NOTICE TO MEMBERS

Subject: Petition No 0886/2023 by David Catalin (Romanian) on standardizing batteries and chargers for tools to reduce electronic waste

1. Summary of petition

The petitioner welcomes the adoption of the new Batteries Regulation which entered into force in August 2023, requiring all smartphones to have replaceable batteries by 2027, as well as of the October 2022 Directive (the revision of the Radio Equipment Directive), introducing the obligation of a common charger (USB Type C charging port) for all mobile devices. He therefore calls for further similar rules as regards the standardization of batteries and chargers for cordless tools, in the effort to reduce the electronic waste and implicitly the negative impact on the environment.

2. Admissibility

Declared admissible on 8 December 2023. Information requested from Commission under Rule 233(5), former Rule 227(5).

3. **Commission reply**, received on 22 November 2024

The Commission shares the Petitioner's satisfaction on the common charger for radio equipment. However, the need to legislate further such as on battery powered tools still needs to be analysed.

During the negotiations leading to the adoption of the Batteries Regulation EU 2023/1542, the co-legislators considered the question of interoperability further and requested the Commission "to assess, by 01.01.2025, how best to introduce harmonised standards for a common charger for, respectively, rechargeable batteries designed for light means of transport, as well as for rechargeable batteries incorporated into specific categories of electrical and electronic equipment covered by Directive 2012/19/EU", while excluding charging devices for radio

equipment from the scope of this assessment.

In response to this request, in September 2023 the Commission launched a study to research the question of interoperability and common chargers for rechargeable batteries in specific applications, which concluded in June 2024 and is publicly available[1]. The outcome of the study informs the Commission's assessment to require the elaboration of additional harmonised standards to facilitate the interoperability amongst batteries and battery chargers for small electric devices.

In the meantime, as part of the revision of the existing eco-design implementing regulation on external power supplies[2], the Commission has explored whether the chargers of integrated or portable batteries, in particular for power and gardening tools, can be required to be USB-C powered. Given that the chargers of battery packs (so called portable batteries) are often used on construction sites and in harsh conditions, the USB-C connector is however not considered robust enough as it would be exposed to dust, dirt and significant mechanical stress[3].

In addition, it appears that a USB-C power supply would require additional voltage conversion inside the battery charger which would impact its efficiency. At the same time, certain power tools with integrated batteries may be suitable to be charged by USB-C power supplies, an option under investigation as part of the on-going revision of the regulation.

Additionally, the market is also reacting to the need for more interoperability in battery chargers. Amongst other initiatives, the industry-led Power for all Alliance ([4]) is bringing together nine tool manufacturers to allow across-brand interoperability of 18V rechargeable batteries for more than 100 applications.

Conclusion

The ability to have a USB-C connector to facilitate charging is gaining ground for numerous electronic devices incorporating rechargeable batteries through a combination of regulatory interventions and market forces. For the chargers of battery packs for power and gardening tools, a USB-C connector is not considered a feasible solution because of the harsh conditions under which these devices normally operate.

The Commission nevertheless expects soon to publish a draft proposal revising the ecodesign regulation for external power supplies to further streamline the adoption of USB-C for more applications. In addition, the Commission is expected to submit a report by 01.01.2025 assessing the need to introduce harmonised standards for the interoperability of rechargeable batteries designed for light means of transport, as well as incorporated into specific categories of electrical and electronical equipment.

[1] https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/0f8e257e-8526-11ef-a67d-01aa75ed71a1/language-en
[2] Commission Regulation (EU) 2019/1782 of 1 October 2019 laying down ecodesign requirements for external power supplies pursuant to Directive 2009/125/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council and repealing Commission Regulation (EC) No 278/2009 (Text with EEA relevance)
[3] https://circabc.europa.eu/ui/group/418195ae-4919-45fa-a959-3b695c9aab28/library/10884559-fe43-4685-9cb5-4de0141585df/details
[4] https://www.powerforall-alliance.com/en/