Zagreb battery safety

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Batteries are central to both the green and the digital transitions.

By storing more energy in batteries when the wind is blowing and the sun is shining, we could ensure that supply meets the energy demand without relying on non-renewable energy sources such as gas or oil.

Our phones and laptops, just as many other mobile digital devices, rely on batteries, making them vital for the digital transition.

European consumers expect all batteries sold in the EU to be safe, sustainable, and perform according to the product specification. You do not want your car"s battery to catch fire, or to run out of electricity after 100 km if its range should be 500.

The European Commission"s proposal for a new Batteries Regulation aims to ensure that batteries are long-lasting and safe. This Regulation will apply to all batteries, except those connected with the essential security interests of EU countries or batteries used in equipment designed to be sent into space.

It specifies that necessary raw materials need to be sourced in full respect of human rights and that batteries shall be produced with the lowest possible environmental impact. At the end of their consumer-life, batteries need to be collected to be either repurposed, remanufactured or recycled, feeding valuable components and materials back into the economy.

The Regulation also proposes a "battery passport", which would apply to all industrial and electric vehicles with a capacity higher than 2 kWh. Accessible online, the passport will be an electronic record for each battery, containing information about the basic characteristics of the battery type and model. It will store information related to performance and durability parameters, and note any changes to the status of the battery.

The proposed Regulation is closely linked with the Commission"s wider efforts for a Sustainable Product Framework, in particular with the Eco-design for Sustainable Products Regulation. This aims to introduce rules on performance and information requirements for greener products, waste prevention and reduction, destruction of unsold goods, green public procurement and the digital product passport.

Scientists at the European Commission"s Joint Research Centre (JRC) support this policy with research to ensure the monitoring and reduction of the environmental footprint of batteries, make them safer, better-performing and more durable, as well as replaceable and widely recycled. Let"s take a look at each of these aspects.

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The expected massive use of batteries should reduce carbon emissions, but to maximise this potential their overall life cycle must have a low carbon footprint.

The battery life cycle is currently energy- and material-intensive and therefore associated with significant environmental impacts, mainly due to the greenhouse gas emissions from raw materials sourcing and refining.

To address this, the Batteries Regulation proposal foresees, among other measures, the mandatory declaration of the carbon footprint of batteries put into the EU market; the creation of carbon footprint classes (similarly to the scheme used for energy labelling of appliances); and later on the setting of maximum carbon footprint thresholds for batteries entering the EU market.

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