

Environmental Law and the Challenges of the Decades Ahead: Promoting Transformative and Recovery Responses to the Planetary Emergency

VI Tarragona International Environmental Law Colloquium (TIEC)

14, 15, 16 June 2021

www.tiecolloquium.com



PANEL 2. Actions, measures and immediate responses to cope with the current critical times

ECO-DESIGN FOR A CIRCULAR ECONOMY

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Traditionally, our economic system has been based on a linear model that starts with the extraction of natural resources from which products are manufactured, then distributed, consumed, and finally discarded as waste. However, natural resources are not unlimited, so there is a need for a more efficient use of resources based on the circular economy model. Products must be designed in such a way as to promote the longest possible lifetime, which means eradicating planned obsolescence, guaranteeing the right to repair products, and encouraging their reuse. In order to achieve these objectives, it is essential to review product eco-design legislation and its interconnection with other regulatory sectors, such as consumer protection and waste legislation. This has been set out by the European Union, which has proposed to revise eco-design legislation to foster product design that promotes durability, repairability and reusability. However, the ambitious environmental protection measures proposed are sometimes limited by the economic interests at stake and the reluctance of industry. In this paper we analyse the proposals of the European circular economy strategy on eco-design, the elements of the Eco-design Directive that should be modified, the eco-design regulations that have been adopted in recent years and other recent legislative developments to give an accurate picture of what the main existing constraints are and what steps should be taken in the field of eco-design to implement a circular economy model.