

*euro***Topten***max*



SELECTING THE MOST ENERGY EFFICIENT PRODUCTS

2012



Promoting energy efficiency and environmentally friendly solutions is now a fashionable marketing activity in many countries over a wide range of product types.

Many organisations, such as manufacturers, retailers, energy utility companies, and the media, organise programmes, selecting and highlighting specific products, which are supposed to be better, e.g. more energy efficient, than the average products on the market.

But how do consumers know that the products selected are really the most energy efficient or environmentally friendly – i.e. the best the market has to offer?

Often, the most common way of declaring such claims, is by using the energy class of the product, stated on its energy label. But how many consumers know, for example, that class A refrigerators cannot be brought to the EU market since July 2012, or that B, C and D classes are no longer allowed for new washing machines and dishwashers? Class A is simply not the best class on the market any more, on the contrary, they are often the worst, or just average – depending on the product group.

In addition, many of the existing programmes do not even publish the selection criteria, which they use to select individual products. Some programmes also offer a discount or a subsidy scheme for products on their lists.

In order to gain consumer confidence for programmes highlighting the best products, several conditions have to be fulfilled.

This document has been prepared by the Euro-Topten MAX project, which has a long-lasting and international tradition of selecting and highlighting the most energy efficient products on the market in an independent and transparent manner, based on specific expertise.

■ Topten in brief

Topten is a market-transformation tool used to bring more energy efficient products and equipment on to the market. Topten:

- Provides a selection of the most efficient products available on the market. These items are displayed on user-friendly websites managed at national level, aligned to consumers' markets,
- Supports consumers and large-scale buyers, via communication and guidance for professional procurers,
- Encourages improved performance from manufacturers and retailers via regular contacts, information and promotion of their most efficient products,
- Contributes to market transformation and policy design thanks to its analyses of product energy efficiency,
- Consists of 19 national websites around Europe, one in China and another in the USA, covering a total of over 85 product categories.

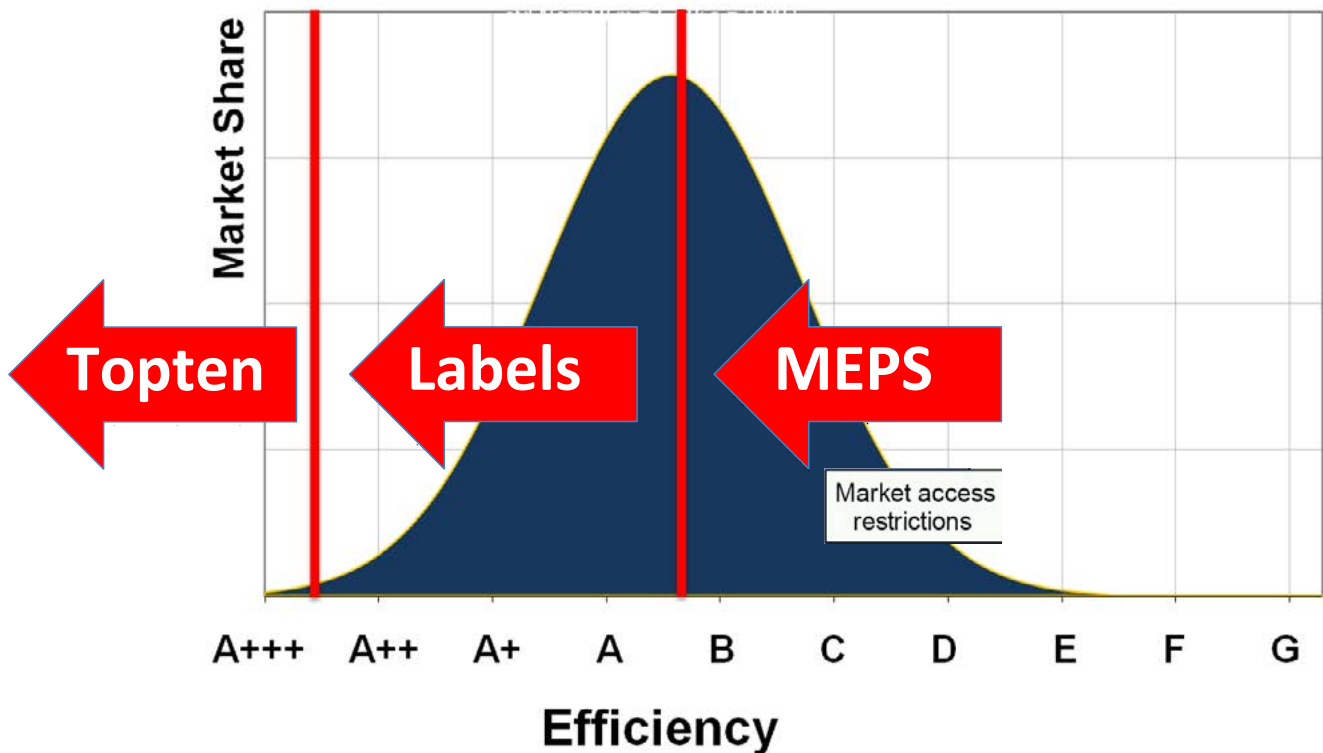
■ Topten's basic rules

- **Transparency:** The whole Topten approach is published online: manufacturers and consumers know, for each product category, the criteria for selecting the "best appliances". The methodology is available online, with a simple additional click.
- **Flexibility:** The Topten product lists are updated frequently, at least twice a year. The criteria are easy to revise and are strengthened according to the markets' progress.
- **Simplicity:** Priority is given to existing classifications and criteria. Where an energy label exists, it is used to determine the best appliances (in Europe, A+++ class for wet and cold appliances, A class for tumble driers, etc.). Where it does not exist, other labels are used (such as Energy Star, the Blue Angel label, or ATE¹). When there is a lack of harmonised norms to measure energy efficiency, Topten may carry out tests and develop its own methodology.
- **Neutrality:** Topten is fully independent from appliance manufacturers, importers, retailers and commercial trends. It provides impartial information on energy efficient brands and therefore enables consumers to choose environment-friendly products in a reliable way, and provides an incentive for manufacturers and retailers to favour them as well.

1 Switzerland-based association in charge of evaluating car's environmental impacts, www.ate.ch

The graph below shows the general distribution of products on the market, ranked by their energy efficiency, where the least efficient ones are prohibited from sales by a specific legislation, such as Minimum energy performance standards (MEPS). The products available on the market (i.e. energy efficiency class D and better), are ranked in shops by the energy labels. Only the best of these products (e.g. class A and better), can also be listed on the Topten site, highlighting the most energy efficient products on the market.

Market transformation: push and pull



Main impacts of Topten

■ Increasing market transparency

Topten uses only official and comparable product characteristics, such as the ones measured according to international protocols and measurements in the system of energy labels. In this way, and by specifying selection criteria for the most efficient products from the market, the programme contributes to highlighting the genuinely most effective products on the market – both in individual participating countries and internationally. This is a service which neither the energy labels alone (comparing the whole range of the product), nor the principle of ecodesign (restricting only the least efficient products) can achieve. In addition, it is a flexible tool which is easy to update.

■ Providing a market situation overview

By specifying selection criteria for individual product groups, and by revising these criteria on a regular and long-term basis, the programme helps to make explicit the current *status quo* of the most energy-efficient products on the market.

■ Creating a market pull effect by stimulating demand

By specifically identifying the most energy efficient products, consumers are provided with a list of good examples from which to choose. This can help save time and when energy use is considered, can also save significant amounts of money.

■ Creating a market push effect by stimulating supply

By means of neutral and impartial publicity and promotion, Topten highlights the most efficient products through various communication activities. It does not promote brand names as a whole, but instead the specific products that meet stringent selection criteria.

■ Providing stringent criteria for public/private procurement and incentive programmes

Topten provide strict but transparent selection criteria for individual consumers as well as larger institutions, such as municipalities and authorities. These institutions purchase vast quantities of energy-consuming products and should therefore have a strong interest in selecting their products according to energy efficiency criteria as well.

■ Supporting ambitious government standards by providing real-time data and feedback

Energy labelling and ecodesign measures, as examples of legal requirements for all producers of specific product types, are sometimes criticised for being too slow to react to market development. Gaining a clear indication of the overall situation is often not easy for many decision-makers. The programme helps by providing a clear overview of the supply of products from the standpoint of energy efficiency. In doing so, it contributes to moving product standards towards higher energy-efficiency requirements or, in some cases, making the process faster.

Main organisational issues that must be ensured within a programme that selects and promotes energy efficient products:

Communicating via a website

Crucial aspects for the programme website:

- The user only needs to click once to get to the products list
 - The selection criteria are always published on-line (with one more click)
 - It contains a recommendation page (with one more click) for each product category
 - The website has an attractive graphic design to attract everyday consumers
 - It has to look professional: a website with sufficient information, well written, well presented, and updated.
 - Pictures and price information for all the displayed products are key.
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- **Updating of content** – regularly and thoroughly! – mainly products available on the market, news about programme activities
 - **Maximising website traffic** – to increase the number of visitors, promotion activities and media partnerships are fundamental.

Which product categories to focus on?

One of the main conditions for the success of the programme is that it should have several categories running from the start-up of the campaign, to attract visitors and ensure that many of them will find the products of interest. Visitors should also feel the need to visit the website again, when they buy a product from a different category or a new product. They should also want to recommend it to other internet users.

- **How to decide which categories to work on:**
 - The product is considered important or relevant for consumers
 - It has a significant share on the average consumer end-use energy consumption and significant potential savings
 - **KEY:** it is possible to define fully transparent, open and accessible selection criteria

How to define product selection criteria?

Accurate selection criteria are fundamental for the overall success of the programme. Among the most important characteristics are the following: public, transparent, up-to-date, parameter-specific, technically correct.

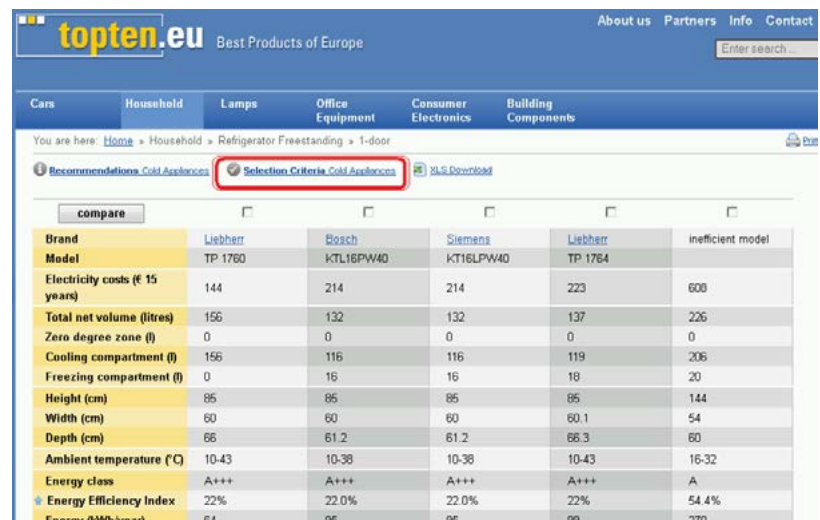
■ Availability of data sources

In order to be able to select the individual models, it is important that the manufacturers have equal opportunities to submit their data, and the data has to be based on equal technical characteristics and testing procedures.

■ Product selection criteria:

□ Transparent and open (public) selection criteria

The model selection criteria have to be transparent and public. In practice, every specific product table published on the web advertises a “selection criteria page” with a direct link from the same page



	Liebherr	Bosch	Siemens	Liebherr	inefficient model
Brand	Liebherr	Bosch	Siemens	Liebherr	inefficient model
Model	TP 1760	KTLE6PW40	KT16LPW40	TP 1764	
Electricity costs (€ 15 years)	144	214	214	223	608
Total net volume (litres)	156	132	132	137	226
Zero degree zone (l)	0	0	0	0	0
Cooling compartment (l)	156	116	116	119	206
Freezing compartment (l)	0	16	16	18	20
Height (cm)	85	85	85	85	144
Width (cm)	60	60	60	60.1	54
Depth (cm)	66	61.2	61.2	66.3	60
Ambient temperature (°C)	10-43	10-38	10-38	10-43	16-32
Energy class	A+++	A+++	A+++	A+++	A
Energy Efficiency Index	22%	22.0%	22.0%	22%	54.4%
Energy (kWh/year)	64	95	95	99	270

The criteria have to be very specific, and enable direct comparison of the individual products. Criteria should relate mainly to energy consumption features, in individual relevant cases as well to water consumption, noise, and other environment-, or performance - related product features, if they make sense to consumers and allow for transparent product selection.

■ Criteria definition:

□ By energy labels / ecodesign legislation

The easiest and most practical option for selecting a category to be covered is to have those categories that are covered by energy labelling – mainly household appliances and more recently, TVs. The other possible categories are office equipment on the basis of the Energy Star, as well as cars and the ATE database.

Selecting the product by its energy class is the most straightforward approach.

Selecting products which are for example energy class A+++ (e.g. cooling appliances) or A class (dryers) is straightforward, easy to understand, easy to obtain information from, and easy to present. It is necessary to make sure, however, that the class selected represents the real top level of the market, not only the average.

Partners and target groups

It is very important that the programme organisers team-up with representatives of all relevant stakeholders, so that they help increasing the awareness about the programme and its potential impacts:

- **Consumers**, as the final target group, need:
 - A user-friendly interface to identify the most efficient products
 - Information on total life-cycle cost (purchase price plus energy bill minus incentives) based on realistic use of the products
 - To understand the benefits of efficient products for the family budget and for climate protection

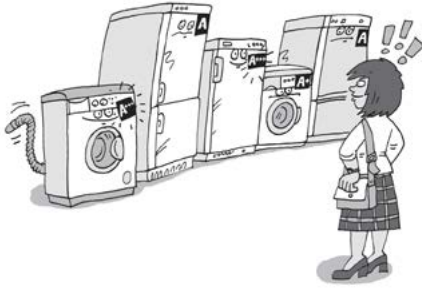
Cooperation with the partners and target groups:

- **Manufacturers**
 - Support market transformation by introducing new products
 - Provide independent, objective marketing of products
 - Effectively communicate incentives in order to increase demand for innovative products
- **Retailers**
 - Visibly promote energy efficient products
 - Build trust in the importance of mitigating climate change
- **Large Buyers and Procurement Officers**
 - Support formulation of procurement specifications and award criteria
 - Ensure that very efficient products are able to be selected from brands that provide all associated services
 - Calculate reduced operating costs to enhance value-for-money
- **Policy-makers**
 - Access real-time market data on the “best” products, with energy efficiency as a key criterion
 - Pave the way for new and more stringent standard & label specifications
- **Utilities**
 - Continuously identify the highest-efficiency products
 - Serve as a basis for rebate programmes
 - Serve as a source of advisory information for their clients
- **Media**
 - Serve as credible, independent source of information
 - Issue regular updates and news on energy efficient products

- Provide information about the one-stop shop for broad range of product categories

■ NGOs & Institutions

- Organise specific actions within their campaigns on sustainable consumption and climate change
- Develop and distribute materials and information on energy efficient products as part of their campaigns



Promotion

After the programme's website has been prepared and products are online, wide-scale dissemination is important for making as many consumers as possible select more (the most!) energy efficient appliances. There are numerous ways of undertaking this efficiently:

■ Continuous PR activities!

- **Use web links everywhere** (documents, partner websites...)

Mention the Topten programme's website address on every possible occasion, in every contact with media etc.

- **Press conference**

Organise a press conference when launching the programme and other major events.

- **Press releases** (e.g. new categories, updates)

Publish and circulate press releases describing changes of selection criteria, additions to categories, or any other major changes as widely as possible. Prepare a list of relevant journalists.

- **Articles** (upon request / initiated)

Initiate articles focused primarily on product efficiency. Lifestyle magazines and magazines focusing on design, lifestyle and household equipment are ideal target groups, as their readers are actively interested and are probably searching for new products for their households.

A special article for selected media may be written on the occasion of publishing a press release.

- **Media partners**

Media and publishing houses involving a network of media channels may be selected for more regular cooperation. Such cooperation can help form partnerships to organise a consumer competition, a regular series of articles, the inclusion of printed leaflets into magazines, etc.

- **Competitions**

Organising a consumer competition may result in a substantial increase in the website traffic, with the investment of only limited resources.



Communicate the programme's benefits to consumers

Within the communication activities, the following main messages may be stressed:

Purchasing advice and consumer orientation

The programme provides concrete advice: which products to select according to specific product criteria, and which products actually fulfil such criteria at any given moment

It also offers simple guidance on selecting the most efficient products and has prepared the list of concrete products, which makes consumer-orientation much easier.

An easy and practical guide to save money

By selecting specific criteria and listing products fulfilling such criteria, consumers do not have to look anywhere else to search for the most efficient products!

Overview of the price / performance ratio

By purchasing the most efficient products, consumers will save money throughout the lifetime of the product. The product lists with associated energy use costs will enable them to access this information easily.

Convenience and good service

The service is up-to-date, independent, comprehensive, expert-based, and easy to understand and follow.

Contribution to saving the climate / environment

By selecting the most energy-efficient products, consumers directly contribute towards reduce environmental pollution through lowering the amount of electricity that power plants need to produce.

Monitoring

Brief suggestions for the monitoring of the programme activities and achievements:

- **Web access** – analytics of the number of visitors, etc.
- **Articles** – number of readers/ad value of the space of articles
- **Publications** – number of print outs, sizes, pages, distribution
- **Press releases** – dates, topics, impacts
- **Web links and media partnerships**
- **Competitions and other promotional activities** – numbers, feedback

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Best products in your country



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 Global Topten network

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