



Telecoms industry must unite

with energy efficiency labelling to facilitate a greener future

By Matjaž Pogačnik, Strategy Consultant, Iskratel

Slovenia covers 20,000 square kilometres and has two million inhabitants. A lesser known fact is that it is a paradise for the caving community with more than 16,000 registered caves. We all like to show the beautiful side of our countries and companies, but what is hidden below the surface? In 1991, once Slovenia secured its independence, only 20% of households had a municipal rubbish disposal system. This meant 80% of households would routinely drive to the nearest dump or simply throw their rubbish into the caves. The unfortunate result is that some caves are still full of rubbish, all these years later. This is not a widely recognised issue and will not solve itself if we ignore it.

Why bring up caving? In my opinion, there are many parallels between this and global warming caused by the telecommunications sector. Neither are going to go away by themselves. In the case of telecommunications, who is the best placed to undertake steps to achieving greater sustainability? It is not something that can be achieved by just one individual or even one company. It is the responsibility of the entire industry.

Explosion of data traffic

Whether we are working, learning or communicating with friends and family, internet traffic has continued to climb exponentially, only compounded by the global pandemic and the transition to hybrid working. Day-to-day activities include downloading and streaming videos, accessing emails, or

attending virtual meetings. Each of these tasks omit a small amount of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, required to process the data. This is not limited solely to the devices that end-users use, but the energy required to run our networks and the servers that support internet access. With the further explosion of data traffic expected thanks to next-generation technologies, operators must remain resolute in their resolve to reach net zero emission targets.

With the energy consumption of data transmissions increasing, the telecoms industry's carbon footprint is a cause for concern. The call for greener telecoms networks is nothing new. It has been called for by global organisations for a number of years, with the intention that the industry must become more aware of the adverse effect its energy consumption is having on the environment. Drastic action needs to be taken. And global leaders have already outlined their intentions at the G20 and COP26 conferences as they seek to work collaboratively with other countries to reduce the overall greenhouse gases omitted into the atmosphere.

European Union Code of Conduct

In 2021, the European Commission's Joint Research Centre published its 'EU Code of Conduct on Energy Consumption of Broadband Equipment: Version 8.0', which outlines the limits of power consumption of broadband equipment and specifies the test methodology. The Code of Conduct is the framework

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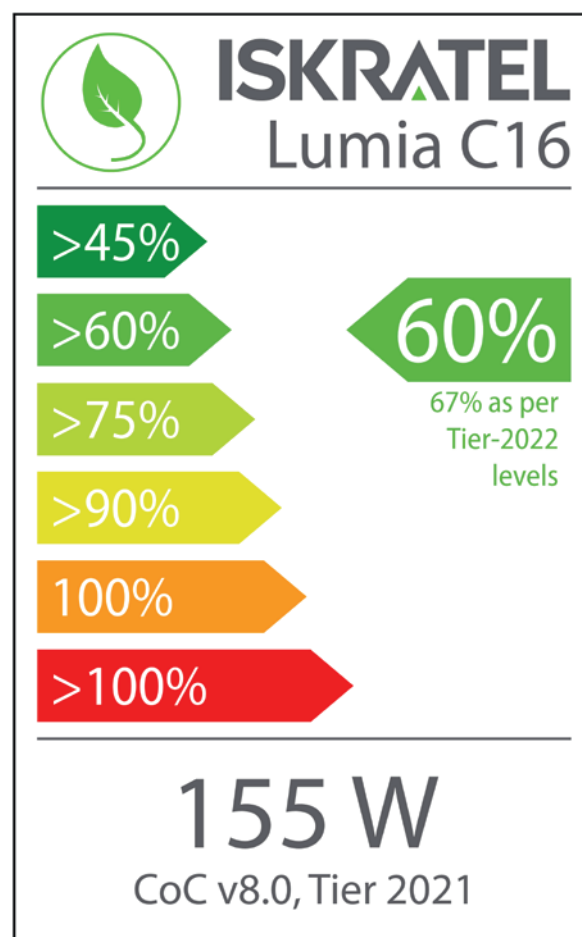
for credible and comparable power consumption figures. It also outlines the basic principles that need to be followed by all parties involved in broadband equipment operating in Europe. The Code of Conduct helps all parties address the issue of energy efficiency while avoiding competitive pressures to raise energy consumption of their equipment. Of course, it is not obligatory to sign it, but those that do commit themselves to achieving their power consumption goals.

Attention has rightly shifted to utilising solutions that are more energy efficient, reducing any unnecessary emissions within the supply chain and during the production process, and harnessing more eco-friendly materials. Even reusing materials can make the supply chain greener. Another stance being taken by a select amount of equipment vendors is to make their solutions smaller and lighter to not only consume less energy but reduce the amount of storage space and transportation required.

Iskratel's stance on energy consumption

Now that we have a framework, we have the power to do something beyond just taking care of our own networks. Companies can impose their own goals for reducing their energy consumption. The main contributors to this can be switching off legacy equipment, migrating customers from copper to fibre networks, or raising the temperature levels within safe parameters in Central Offices. Companies may put 'green' as part of their tenders, but there are no tools to compare broadband products. Operators can receive data from equipment vendors, but there is nothing to help them compare these figures. Greater levels of transparency are needed.

As a signatory of the Code of Conduct, Iskratel is committed to ensuring that our broadband-access equipment complies with the strict limits on power consumption imposed by the code, and clearly informs customers and users about their usage. That is why we are focused on providing energy efficiency labelling on all of our new broadband products. In our opinion, labelling will not only improve credibility and comparability, but allow network operators to make more informed decisions when selecting products to put into their network and reduce their overall environmental impact. It is



paramount that operators can safely monitor and measure their energy consumption.

Energy efficiency labels that advise of a product's overall power consumption and the level of compliance with the EU Code of Conduct will be a true gamechanger for the industry. These labels can highlight the energy consumption as a percentage of the limit set by the Code of Conduct. This is similar in design to those used for energy classes of domestic appliances and the labels should be easy to read and understand for operators and end-users alike.

Calling for industry-wide adoption

The relationship between caving and global warming is that those companies that are competent enough, should take one step forward. We have the power to contribute our opinions

within our companies and influence decision-makers. As end-users of these broadband products, we can also contribute to a complete value chain and take advantage of this power to help achieve greater sustainability.

The broadband industry – and equipment vendors in particular – must embrace transparent communications and full disclosure with customers about the impact of their equipment on the environment. This will not only enhance their reputations in the eyes of the general public, but this stance should help convince others to follow suit. To make environmentally responsible decisions, operators need credible and comparable figures about power consumption for the equipment they procure and use.

In helping fulfil operator needs, equipment vendors also need to be aware of their responsibility to reduce the overall carbon footprint across the product lifecycle. There is a clear interest from network operators and the introduction of labels

will provide the missing piece of the jigsaw in helping them correctly estimate the carbon footprint that results from the specific mix of resources needed to generate electricity. We call on the whole industry to join this initiative and take a positive step towards a greener Europe with industry-wide adoption of Code of Conduct compliancy labelling.



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