

NO 4

Repair bonus

Feedback from consumers and
repairers on the repair fund for
electrical and electronic equipment
(EEE)

The authors



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HOP Preface

The repair bonus is remarkable and is a pioneering initiative in France, a colossal effort to financially support every household in repairing their goods. It's been pushed by the French Government and political actors to promote Circular Economy and reduce waste production.

HOP (*Halte à l'Obsolescence Programmée*) association, which advocated in the past for this measure, commends the efforts of Producer Responsibility Organisations (PRO) and everyone involved in conceiving and applying it. In spite of great improvements, the association is questioning the results in favour of the public and repairers, especially small independent ones.

In this report, HOP tries to estimate with a scientific and independent approach, in collaboration with researchers, the benefits of the repairs bonus, one year after its implementation, and in regard to its objectives: make repairs more attractive thanks to simple and easy way to obtain financial incentives and a trustworthy label, in order to increase demands in repairs and boost the offer, to tend toward a more circular economy and job creations in these economic sectors.

This bonus is a tool in a larger and coherent commitment of the "Anti-Gaspillage et Économie Circulaire (AGEC—Anti-Waste and Circular Economy)" law.

Alongside the repairs funds, the Repairability Index (which will become in 2024 the Sustainability Index on some products) enlightens the consumers' choice thanks to a grading system (from 1 to 10), thus quantifying the durability of new products to encourage more sustainable consumption and production habits. From these, other interesting initiatives have been born, like an eco-modulation and eco-contribution project (funding the end-of-life management of products according to the Polluter pays principle), according to the repairability of new products.

The European Union is taking inspiration from France. It's committed to making durability the new norm in order to give more power to the consumer, notably by making sure unfounded or misleading environmental claims can't be used as a sales argument. Furthermore, a European index on Durability for smartphones and tablets, for example, should gradually appear on products starting in 2025. In spite of the potentially positive impact of this measure on the durability of products on the European market, they can only reach their goal if they are met with quality requirements at least as high as the French indexes.

Despite the fact that the benefits of repairs are undeniably positive for the environment, their proportion still needs to be increased. According to the ADEME, only 10% of electrical products and electronics are repaired once they're past their warranty. Even if repairers are available, and consumers want to repair their products, most of them don't. Almost 70% of them give up the idea because of the cost, and a lot of them invoke planned obsolescence.

Unfortunately, repairing is still to this day a greater effort and heavier mental load than buying a new product. That's why the HOP association advocates for the repairs bonus to be simple and affordable for consumers. They see no interest (except moral) in changing their habits when it is so much more comfortable, fast and cheaper to buy a new product. As for repairers, they could find an economic incentive in proposing a repair bonus to their clients, betting on an increased visibility, revenue, attractiveness or customer loyalty, as a few examples.

This being said, the certifying process needs to be accessible to all, indiscriminately to small and independent repairers, allowing access for the customers to a territorial network, larger expertise, and in the end more attractive costs. The report shines light on administrative and financial obstacles for independent repairers and small companies, which need to be overcome for a stronger adhesion to the initiative.

Funded by PRO and eco-contributions, the strength of the repairs fund is that they can be applied to a lot of products and sectors. Almost a year after its application on electrical products and electronics, the textile industry is now involved with a bonus initiative under the impulsion of Refashion. And toys, sports articles and repair tools should soon benefit from the same kind of initiative. However, the weakness in this EPR configuration lies in the lack of cohesion between those initiatives. The HOP association hopes the teachings of this report might benefit to all sectors, and that good practices be shared in order to maximize their efficiency and readability to all actors, from consumers to affiliated repairers. According to HOP, pioneering bonuses on electrical products and electronics act as virtuous habits that we should erect as general principles for all sectors, like not requiring proof of purchase, not restricting themselves to repairing one brand, or applying proximity criteria into the repairer's choice.

Above all, what we learn from this study is that bonuses amounts, proximity to repairers (especially independent repairers) and communication are key points in the success of this initiative.

This report shows the difficulty of independent repairers to obtain the label allowing them to offer the repair bonus, and proposes some measures to remedy to this situation. It would be unsettling and concerning that the main beneficiaries of this initiative (among affiliated actors) should be the original producers, in view of their own influence in the PRO's governance.

To increase the chances of success and raise efficiency, it would be best to focus financial incentives for a lot of French repairers on fewer products, prioritized according to their repairability, their level of household equipment or their environmental footprint, instead of spreading them on a large spectrum of products—sometimes less repairable or not at all—and only to a restricted number of affiliated repairers.

In order to continue those reflections with all actors and estimate the feasibility of the recommendations of this report, HOP asks the Government to regularly convoke the "Conseil National de la Réparation" (CNR—Nation Council on Repairs), and rethink the functioning of EPR systems.

Let's go beyond economic incentives. They are essential for consumers, through the repairs fund, and are a good thing. However, to fully respond to the goal of extending the lifespan of products, HOP asks political decision-makers to make their efforts part of an integrated plan toward the development of Circular Economy. They have to assume the responsibility for other critical issues like repairers training, raising awareness to repairs starting in school, or putting safeguards against obsolescence marketing.

Laetitia Vasseur

Co-founder and General Delegate for HOP



**Key points
and numbers**

A repair fund generating positive impacts on consumers despite its recent launch

Eighty-eight-point four percent of respondents who were unaware of this initiative before answering our questions, acknowledged that knowing about it will motivate them to find out about the repairability of their defective products.

The repair bonus is starting to be known by the public, mainly on large household appliances, including non-refrigeration equipment (dishwashers, washing machines) and computer and IT equipment (cell phones).

An initiative only benefiting a few consumers and repairs

According to *Ecologic* and ecosystem, nearly 165,000 operations benefited from the Repair Bonus in 2023, amounting to a total of 4 million euros for the PRO¹.

That being said, in proportion to the national level of breakdowns and repairs, the Repair Bonus was mobilized in 2023 for only 0.2% of out-of-warranty defective products, and 1.7% of out-of-warranty repairs.

Seven out of 10 repairers replied that their customers are generally unaware of the initiative.

Eighty-six percent of surveyed customers consider the communication on the subject insufficient.

Less than 1% of surveyed customers acknowledged they were informed on the Repair Bonus by a manufacturer or a distributor.



See recommendation 1: Massively increase communication on the Repair Bonus on a national scale

A process to improve for the consumers

According to the respondent consumers, the most important aspects of the Repairs Bonus are the proximity to repairers (for 85% of them) and the bonus amount (for 74% of them).

Sixty-eight percent of respondent consumers consider the process to access the bonus too “complex” and “uncertain”, because of the perceived malfunction of the [QualiRépar directory](#) (38%), the absence of repairers close to their home (28.6%), and lack of information on the initiative (24%).

Only 4 out of 10 respondent consumers consider a certified repairer is available at a reasonable distance from home (41.2% of the respondents). At the time of this study, less than 8% of the 22,336 repairers for electronics listed by the ADEME in 2022 in France were certified (1,776 establishments according to the QualiRépar network). At the end of 2023, this network of certified repairers was more than doubled in size, amounting now to almost 4,700 establishments listed by QualiRépar, and more than 5,000 technicians on the territory².

A lot of consumers ask for more independent small repairers close to their home to access this initiative, next to famous brands which are over-represented among the certified establishments. In April of 2023, only 22% of certified repairers were independent, while according to a 2017 study by the ADEME and the GIFAM, consumers tend to favor close independent repairers for their products past their warranty, up to 80% in case of small appliances, and 84% for major appliances.



See recommendation 2: Motivate repairers to obtain certification and increase their visibility

Among the respondents

88.4%

of them affirm that knowing about the initiative will encourage them to get their product repaired

165,000

operations benefited from the Repairs Bonus in 2023



7 out of 10 repairers affirm their customers usually don't know about the initiative

86%

of consumers consider the communication on the matter insufficient



85% of consumers consider the proximity to repairers to be a priority

4,700

repairers are listed by QualiRépar in 2023

5,000

certified technicians are present on the territory

Among the respondents



40% of certified repairers affirm they saw their sales increase

23.4 %

of repairers think it will allow for more products to be repaired in the future



8 out of 10 not-certified repairers don't intend to join the initiative



74% of not-certified repairers consider the certification cost too high



63% of not-certified repairers consider the certification process too complex



52% of not-certified repairers consider the delay of reimbursement too long

A bonus generating positive impacts and expectations on repairers

Almost 40% of repairers affirm that adhering to this initiative generated an increase in their sales. In most cases, this increase is estimated between 1% and 5%.

Twenty-three-point four of respondent repairers think this bonus will “greatly” increase the decision to repair, 51.1% think the impact will be “on the fringe”, and 19.1% that it will have no impact at all.

An initiative that needs to evolve to meet repairers' expectations and incite massive certification

At the time of this survey, almost 8 out of 10 not-certified repairers don't intend to join (78.8%). This lack of appeal is particularly present among small independent repairers, already among the least certified, and most wanted to see how the initiative will evolve.

In addition to their doubts about the potentially beneficial effects of the bonus, the three main reasons they point to not wanting to obtain the certification are, in order:

- the cost of certification, too high (for 74% of them);
- the complex process of certification (for 63% of them);
- the long time to be reimbursed for the advances to consumers (for 52% of them).



See recommendation 3: Give every repairer the possibility to join the initiative

A scope that needs to be redefined

As many repairers as consumers want to see the scope of the bonus enlarged to more products, types of products and components.

Some of them also noted the scope of repair operations should be widened, particularly for screen replacements on smartphones (84%), repairs and defects deriving from software obsolescence (81%), and repairs of accessories and components vital to the good functioning of products (95%).

Repairers point out that fixing a threshold under which repairs would not be eligible for the bonus would incentivize some actors to arbitrarily increase their prices.

Twenty-one percent of free-form comments on possible improvements to the Repairs Bonus were related to the ineligibility for associations helping consumers in their operations in “repair cafés” (coffee shops dedicated to DIY), and private consumers trying to acquire spare parts to repair their products themselves or with independent repairers.



See recommendation 4: Enlarge the scope of covered products and operations

Generally insufficient bonus amounts

Among eligible products, 28 of the 31 categories are still too scarcely repaired.

According to repairers, bonus amounts are in general less than the displayed ambition of covering 20% of the repair bills.

This amount is considered insufficient by consumers for major appliances, 76% for Refrigeration Equipment and 75% for others, followed by IT and Computer Equipment (61%), Urban Mobility Equipment (56%), cameras (53%) and TV sets (52%). The offer for small appliances is also considered insufficient by a lot of repairers, who insist on the fact that bonuses should be adapted to the type of defects.

Those bonuses don't seem to be able to limit the cost of repairs to less than 33% of the renewing cost for a lot of products and categories of product.



See recommendation 5: Increase the bonuses amounts to make repairs more competitive

An initiative needing more transparency, control and governance

Some consumers fear the absence of transparency and control on the Repairs Bonus will lead to an increase in repairs costs, especially among repairer networks and after-sales services from distributors.

The lack of up-to-date public economic data is detrimental to understanding the obstacles to repairs, and to the governance of those bonuses.



See recommendation 6: Build national and public statistics on repairs in order to improve the bonus governance

An initiative insufficient by itself to incentivize repairs

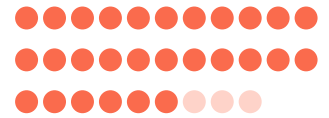
Most consumers and repairers advocate for a more general promotion of repairs, including the following measures:

- eco-conception: ban from market the products below a determined repairability index;
- efficient rules against software obsolescence;
- an obligation to propose spare parts at a reasonable cost and in a reasonable time;
- forbid producers from imposing their own network for repairing their products or accessing spare parts;
- a reduced VAT on repair operations;
- make producers and distributors responsible, upstream from defects and the products end-of-life, for the promotion of maintenance;
- an extension of the legal warranty on new and repaired products;
- build national and public statistics on product durability from repairer data (defects, product lifespan, etc.).



See recommendation 7: Support the Repair Bonus with other measures to incentivize repairs

Among the respondents



28 of the 31 categories of products eligible to the bonus are still too scarcely repaired



Bonus amounts are in general less than the displayed ambition of covering 20% of the repair bills

21%

of free-form comments on possible improvements to the bonus were related to the ineligibility for associations helping consumers in their operations in “repair cafés” or the support into obtaining spare parts

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The absence of public data appears detrimental to the comprehension of obstacles to repairs



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