PEOPLE BEFORE PROFIT

FIGHTING FOR WORKERS & ECO-SOCIALISM

Right To Repair Policy

Jan 2022 Revision

PEOPLE BEFORE PROFIT
SOCIALISM FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

Right To Repair Policy

Background

Owners of equipment with digital electronics are unable to keep their equipment operational. We need to make our products last longer. Electronics manufacturing strains the limits of our natural resources while usable products and device components are thrown into landfills or scrapped, instead of salvaged, fixed, and reused. Through the pandemic, electronics manufacturing has all but halted due to workers illness and the failure of the 'just-in-time' system to meet consumer demand. We need to support people's ability to repair their products or to have others repair them.

This can also be said of all manufactured goods- from household appliances to cars, where obsolescence is being built in as part of the manufacturing procedure.

What if the dealer held the only codes to access the diagnostic system? What if you lived hundreds of miles from the nearest dealer and all the local mechanics were not allowed to repair your car? This is happening in the field of electronics service today.

Manufacturers are creating intellectual property laws to guarantee a monopoly on service. They use their monopoly to set extremely high repair prices. If a product cannot be economically repaired, it cannot be resold, which pushes people to replace their products more and more frequently.

Philosophy

People have the right to repair their own products or have them serviced at independent repair facilities.

1. People and product owners should have the right to decide who repairs their products
2. Extending the lifespan of manufactured goods will benefit the environment, easing the demand on natural resources and keeping electronics out of landfills
3. Preserve critical metals: Rare Earth metals are essential for our domestic electronics and renewable energy. Recycling cannot (yet) recover critical metals and rare earths from waste electronics, so repair is the only way to keep these critical metals in use
4. Creating an economy around extending the lifespan of manufactured goods will create local jobs
5. Repairing and maintaining electronics requires information, parts, and tools from the product designers. As manufacturers add electronics to more and more products, it is shutting out independent repair organizations
6. The knowledge and tools to repair and refurbish products should be distributed as widely and freely as the products themselves are. In contrast to centralized manufacturing, reuse must be broadly distributed to achieve economies of scale

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Policy Objectives

Allow owners and independent repair facilities to have access to the same diagnostic, repair information, and parts made available to the manufacturers' dealers and authorized repair facilities.

1. **Manuals:** Make publicly accessible, standardized service manuals in an electronic format
2. **Parts:** Make service parts available at non-discriminatory pricing to third parties. Make patent licenses required to produce repair parts available under FRAND (fair, reasonable, and non- discriminatory) licensing
3. **Diagnostics:** Make troubleshooting and diagnostic tools, codes and service software available
4. **Software Updates:** Allow service providers access to machine code and firmware updates.
5. **Licenses:** Do not allow companies to create contract language (EULA) that removes these rights.
6. **Recycle Plans:** Manufacturers should provide all end users with details of all components in a product, outlining the manufacturing material and the means in which it may be recycled or upcycled.
7. **3D Printing Designs:** Manufacturers should make available 3D printing designs to allow for replacement parts to be printed locally.

Expert Guidance

Guidelines on electronics re-use released by respected engineering association VDI found that it was "absolutely necessary" to adopt policies to support the reuse of electronics. The study found that cannibalisation of new product sales would not occur because "the markets of new products and reused products can be well differentiated from one another."

VDI also identified social opportunities for reuse: "An increasing number of companies offer work to disabled people by refurbishing electronic data processing technology." For this reason, it is important that service information be made available in a blind/screen-reader friendly, standardized electronic format accessible to people with disabilities.

Repairing and refurbishing electronics has tremendous potential to impact carbon emissions. A recent report by McKinsey & Company and the Ellen MacArthur Foundation found that increasing reuse and refurbishment could reduce the production of emissions of mobile phones by 3 million tons of CO_2.

Currently, market experts estimate that only 15% of smartphones are recycled—the rest are either put in storage or thrown away.

An Illinois Economic Activity survey recently showed that repairing electronics creates 13 times as many jobs as recycling it. The problem that repair centres are facing now is that they cannot negotiate directly with each manufacturer for access to critical information - there are too many products and too many manufacturers. So many products end up getting shredded instead of repaired.

It is prohibitive to expect recyclers to pay each manufacturer for information, translate the documentation, and convert it into a standardized format for use in their content management systems. Recyclers, people and re-use centres alike need access to standardized service documentation at no charge for the complex electronic equipment they own.

What People Before Profit will do

- Support a right to repair bill in the Dáil.
- Work with other parties to get this bill passed
- Campaign for every council, to allow people to take items from recycling centres for the purpose of repairing them or using them to repair other products.