



**Halte à
l'Obsolescence
Programmée**

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March 4, 2025

OPEN LETTER TO GOOGLE REGARDING THE PIXEL 4a SOFTWARE UPDATE

As of January 8, 2025, an automatic software update to all Pixel 4a devices was released by Google, forcing the firmware on these smartphones to switch to its Android v13 operating system.

In your press release of January 6, 2025, you explain this update implementation by the alleged “requirement” “to improve the stability of their battery performance,” yet anticipating that “for some devices,” “the software update reduces available battery capacity and impacts charging performance.”

The negative consequences of this update imposed on Pixel 4a users surpass what your press release suggested.

Many users have noticed a significant declining use of their Pixel 4a since the implementation of the disputed update, with a very noticeable deterioration in battery performance. Affected users report major malfunctions such as drastically reduced battery capacity, discharging more frequently, difficulty in charging, and a global slow down of the smartphone.

The number of reports received and the scale of these malfunctions have raised many concerns at French NGO HOP (Stop Planned Obsolescence), which is astonished that Google does not allow the affected Pixels 4a to downgrade to a previous Android version, prior to the January 8, 2025 update, nor does it offer a satisfactory solution to restore these devices to full functionality. As the NGO pointed out earlier, the compensations you are offering to French users are unacceptable to date:

Free battery replacement for Pixel 4a (presumably the part with the Android 13 compatibility problem) is not offered in France. However, you are repairing other Pixels used in France (even out of warranty) by mail. In any case, you make this option subject to reservations, including the availability of replacement batteries and the invoicing of additional services, for a smartphone yet still difficult to dismantle.

As for alternatives to repair, the offer to receive the equivalent of USD 50 in Euros requires to open an account with the US online bank Payoneer, subject to their conditions and potential charges. We also regret that the USD 100 voucher can only be spent on the Google Store,

which does not offer any reconditioned smartphones, and that affected users will have to pay an additional cost of at least 350 Euros to buy the most affordable Pixel smartphone.

At a time when nearly 80% of the digital terminal carbon footprint is concentrated in their production,

When, on the contrary, it seems necessary to work towards extending their lifespan and fighting against early obsolescence,

Whereas French law prohibits and punishes the practice of programmed obsolescence, which it defines as the use of techniques, including software, by which a company deliberately reduces the lifespan of a product, as well as similar practices described in articles L.441-2 to L.441-6 of the French Consumer Code,

Stop Planned Obsolescence calls on Google to take urgent action to control the negative consequences for users and the environment of the forced upgrade of Pixel 4a to Android 13.

Stop Planned Obsolescence calls on Google to:

- be more transparent about the origin and extent of the problem making it “required” to “improve the stability of [battery] performance” on Pixel 4a through the imposed upgrade to Android 13
- allow Pixel 4a users affected by the Jan 8, 2025 update to regain as soon as possible operation of their device at full capacity, under identical conditions to those prior to this update.

Yours sincerely,

Q. Ghesquière

Président of the NGO Halte à l’obsolescence programmée – Stop Planned Obsolescence