

# Environment and health: waste electrical and electronic equipment WEEE

2000/0158(COD) - 20/11/2009

This report aims to inform the other Community institutions, the Member States and the public about the **implementation of the EU legislation on waste over the period 2004-2006**. It covers [Directives 2006/12/EC on waste](#), 91/689/EC on hazardous waste, 75/439/EEC on waste oils, 86/278/EEC on sewage sludge, [94/62/EC on packaging and packaging waste](#), [1999/31/EC on the landfill of waste](#), 2002/96/EC on waste electrical and electronic equipment, and [2000/53/EC on end-of-life vehicles](#).

As regards the implementation of this Directive, the report recalls that the amount of waste from electrical and electronic equipment (WEEE) in the EU is presently estimated at 8.3-9.1 million tonnes annually, increasing to about 12.3 million tonnes by 2020 according to recent estimates. WEEE needs to be managed in a controlled way due to its quantities and often hazardous nature, but also because it contains valuable resources. The WEEE Directive aims to lower the environmental impacts of the disposal of this waste stream and optimise its collection, reuse, recycling and recovery at high environmental and health standards. The EU's major trading partners have followed the European example and brought into force similar legislation (e.g. China, Korea, Japan, some US states).

**Implementation:** despite the existence of the Directive, only one third of electrical and electronic waste in the Community is reported as appropriately treated. The other two thirds are going to landfills and potentially to sub-standard treatment sites in or outside the EU. Illegal trade of electrical and electronic waste to non-EU countries continues to be widespread. Inadequately treated products pose major environmental and health risks. The collection target of 4 kg per person per year does not properly reflect the situation in individual Member States and has not been met by five Member States in 2006 (two other did not report). All the ten applicable recycling targets were met by only five Member States and the nine recovery targets merely by four.

**In 2009, infringement cases for non-conformity with the WEEE Directive were pending against 14 Member States** and for failure to report against one. There were also eight pending infringement cases for non-conformity with the related restrictions on hazardous substances (RoHS) Directive.

In December 2008 the European Commission proposed to [recast the WEEE Directive](#) in order to address some of the observed implementation deficiencies, tackle the fast increasing waste stream of such products, and strengthen the enforceability of this legislation.

**General conclusions:** whilst Community legislation is reasonably well transposed into national legislation, although sometimes with significant delays, the lack of adequate enforcement causes widespread failure in achieving the agreed environmental protection objectives in practice. The implementation and "real-world" application of waste legislation in the reporting period 2004-2006 remained unsatisfactory in many areas. As demonstrated by a large number of infringement cases, the state of practical implementation remains critical in respect of the Waste Framework Directive, the Landfill Directive, and the Waste Shipment Regulation where coordinated efforts are required to bring the situation in line with the legislation.

In particular, it is advisable that, together with the Commission, Member States and The European Union Network for the Implementation and Enforcement of Environmental Law (IMPEL) increase their actions

to bridge the implementation gap of the Landfill Directive. Also in various Member States the results of the WEEE, Packaging and ELV directives remained below the agreed binding targets and numerous infringement cases continued to be open.

Even though progress was made in some Member States, huge implementation efforts need to be undertaken in many countries. **Some reported problems are particularly common in countries which joined the Community in 2004 where over 90% of waste continues to be landfilled.**

Efforts need to be stepped up in order to bring the waste management infrastructure in line with the requirements of the Community legislation, including:

- creating separate collection systems for different waste streams,
- education of citizens,
- investments in pre-treatment of waste before its final disposal.

These efforts are crucial to make the letter of law effectively protect the environment and human health.