

Environment and health: waste electrical and electronic equipment WEEE

2000/0158(COD) - 27/06/2002 - Commission opinion on Parliament's position at 2nd reading

Of the 46 amendments adopted by the European Parliament, 17 are accepted by the commission in full, 1 in part and 17 in principle. The remaining 11 amendments were not accepted. Those amendments accepted include advancing the date by which re-use, recycling and recovery targets have to be achieved to 31 December 2005. The Commission also supports the higher targets for automatic dispensers, and the obligation for Member States to encourage the development of new technologies. It is in favour of extending information requirements for users on the obligation no longer to dispose of WEEE together with unsorted urban waste. Distributors may refuse contaminated WEEE. It supports the provision of information and manuals for treatment facilities, including re-use centres and recycling plants. The Commission accepts in principle that Member States shall ensure that producers can set up and operate individual and/or collective take back systems. This also applies for the option for producers to set up take-back systems from private households. The date of 31 December 2007 for the adoption of new targets for the years beyond 2008 is acceptable without prejudice to the Commission's right of initiative. The Commission will not accept the option for Member States to depart from the principle of free take-back for consumers as this may undermine the motivation for consumers and the integration of waste management costs into the product price. The obligation for Member States to ensure that exported used electrical and electronic equipment is suitable and intended for re-use is rejected because Member States cannot control what is done with the equipment outside their borders. The Commission feels that the new binding target of six kilograms from private households is very ambitious but is prepared to accept such a target. As data collection and transmission take time, the Commission considers the target date of 31 December 2005 as unrealistic and rejects this part of the amendment. The Commission agrees to permit the maintenance of existing financing agreements for 10 years. It also agrees with sharing the financing of historical waste amongst producers according to their market share. It agrees in principle with allowing producers to show the costs for historical waste in the product price and that these costs should represent the actual costs. With regard to collective financing schemes, Member States may use these if they can demonstrate that the introduction of individual financing schemes would involve disproportionately high costs. Member States must notify such systems to the Commission with an appropriate justification. The principle of internalisation of waste management costs in the product price is supported, though the Commission feels this is a matter for a recital, rather than a legally binding provision. It may be difficult to determine these costs and control their internalisation in every instance. The extension of the obligation to mark electrical equipment with the crossed out dustbin to all equipment is acceptable in principle though it seems unnecessary for large, bulky equipment. Similarly, the obligation to apply a mark to identify equipment put on the market after a specific date can be supported although modalities might still need to be defined. The Commission opposes the amendments on increasing recovery targets for three groups of product categories without simultaneous increase of the re-use and recycling rates. The increase margin between recovery and re-use/recycling may create an incentive for incineration of waste fractions, which are not necessarily suited for environmentally sound incineration. It should be noted that for most fractions of WEEE, re-use and/or recycling are preferable to incineration with energy recovery.