

Environment and health: waste electrical and electronic equipment WEEE

2000/0158(COD) - 21/03/2002

The committee unanimously adopted the report by Karl-Heinz FLORENZ (EPP-ED, D) amending the Council's common position under the codecision procedure (2nd reading). It reinstated, sometimes in reworked form, a large number of amendments adopted by Parliament at 1st reading concerning the key areas of separate collection, treatment, recovery, financing and information for users. On collection, the committee reiterated Parliament's call for a general ban on the disposal of WEEE with unsorted urban waste, backed up with inspection and monitoring facilities and the possibility of penalties for flouting the rules, and for all WEEE to be collected separately. Another amendment was designed to circumvent the risk of WEEE being dumped in non-EU countries under the guise of re-use. The committee also set a mandatory collection target of 6kg of electro-scrap per head, per year, for each household, to be achieved by 31 December 2005, rather than the voluntary target of 4kg which the Council proposed should be met within the vaguer "36 months" of entry into force of the directive. On treatment, the committee reintroduced a 1st reading amendment stipulating that WEEE should be treated using state-of-the-art recovery and recycling technology and that such treatment systems could be set up by producers collectively and/or individually. On recovery, the report amended the deadline proposed by the Council for the achievement of the recovery targets (within 46 months of the Directive's entry into force) and reinstated the date originally proposed by the Commission (31 December 2005). The committee also reinstated Parliament's 1st reading amendments raising the targets for recovery and for re-use and recycling by 10% from the Council's rates for most types of equipment. In addition, it adopted a new amendment stipulating that producers should endeavour to sell products designed and manufactured in such a way as not to prevent whole appliances or parts from being re-used or recycled. The amendment was aimed at stopping the practice, begun after Parliament's 1st reading, of installing "clever chip" devices designed to prevent recycling, for example, by preventing ink jet cartridges from being re-used in printers. On the difficult issue of financing, one of the retabled 1st reading amendments called for mandatory individual producer responsibility for the management of WEEE, rather than giving producers the choice of collective or individual schemes as the Council was proposing. A Member State could use collective financing schemes only where it could demonstrate that individual financing schemes would involve disproportionately high costs. The committee also stipulated that the costs of collection, treatment and environmentally-sound disposal should be internalised within the product price and proposed that Member States where other financing agreements were already in place before the directive entered into force should be able to maintain those agreements for a maximum of 10 years. On the vexed question of "historical waste", the committee wanted the costs of waste from products put on the market before the new legislation entered into force, including products whose producers were untraceable, to be shared amongst producers according to market share, rather than the proportional contribution under "one or more systems" proposed by the Council. The committee proposed a transitional period - lasting a maximum of 10 years - allowing producers to display the costs of collecting, treating and disposing of historical waste at the point of sale of new products. Lastly, the committee reintroduced a number of 1st reading amendments tightening up the provisions on information for users about the new rules and requiring products to be marked to show that they must not be binned.