

Batteries and accumulators and waste batteries and accumulators

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The committee adopted the report by Hans BLOKLAND (EDD, NL) amending the proposal under the 1st reading of the codecision procedure: - Article 1 should specify that the purpose of the directive "is, as a first priority, the prevention of the use of heavy metals" in batteries and accumulators. The amendment further stated that one of the aims of the directive was also "to improve the environmental performance of batteries and accumulators as well as of the activities of all operators involved in the life cycle of electrical and electronic equipment, i.e. producers, distributors and consumers..."; - the committee tabled a number of amendments seeking to ensure consistency with the directive on waste electrical and electronic equipment (the WEEE directive), particularly as regards producer responsibility. One amendment sought to ensure that producers of electrical and electronic equipment who set up or take part in waste collection schemes under the WEEE directive do not have to operate a second scheme for their batteries. Another amendment established the principle of individual producer responsibility for new products (i.e. those put on the market after the directive's entry into force), in the hope that this would create an incentive for eco-design; - producers of batteries should also be made financially responsible for the costs of consumer information; - MEPs said that Member States should achieve a minimum average collection rate of 50%, rising to 60% at a later date, of the national annual sales of two years previously for all portable batteries instead of a figure of 160 grams per inhabitant per year as proposed by the Commission. They argued that the collection targets should be amended to percentage targets in order to better reflect the level of consumption, which varies throughout the EU. They added that the Commission should propose higher collection targets in a few years time; - in order to achieve as high a collection rate as possible, Member States should ensure that consumers are obliged to return their spent industrial and automotive batteries and accumulators to collection systems; - the use of cadmium, lead and mercury in batteries should be limited wherever possible. Governments should therefore prohibit sales of all batteries or accumulators containing more than 5 parts per million (ppm) of mercury by weight, 40 ppm of lead, and/or 20 ppm of cadmium. The list of exemptions proposed by the Commission for applications where the use of these heavy metals is unavoidable should be reviewed to ensure that it keeps up with latest technological developments, for example if the use of these metals becomes avoidable through the emergence of alternatives; - Member States should be allowed to prohibit the marketing of accumulators containing heavy metals where heavy metal-free fuel cells are available (e.g. for use in laptop computers, mobile phones, etc.); - the committee deleted the article on monitoring of the waste stream, on the grounds that it was an expensive and impractical process.