



"The voice of crafts and SMEs in Europe"

Electronic waste: Parliament vote far from being ideal, warn SMEs

Brussels, 19 January 2012 – The compromise on the revision of the Waste Electric and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) Directive approved by the European Parliament's plenary today (Thursday) is far from being ideal despite the attempts made to respond to the concerns of small retailers, according to UEAPME, the European craft and SME employers' organisation. Further to today's vote, retailers will unfortunately be obliged to collect small waste electric and electronic goods from consumers at no cost and without any requirement on the latter to buy a new product of the same kind in the shop. However, this clause will only apply to retailers with more than 400 square meters of sales area, for small WEEE items and unless an assessment shows that alternative existing collection schemes are likely to be at least as effective. While this is likely to exclude many micro and small retailers from collection obligations, other SMEs will nonetheless be clearly affected, warned UEAPME. The organisation would have rather favoured the continuation of the "one-to-one" system, according to which WEEE can be brought back to the distributor free of charge as long as a new comparable product is bought at the same time.

Sustainable Development Director **Guido Lena** offered the following comments:

"The compromise approved today by the European Parliament on WEEE collection obligations is a clear step back compared to the current 'one-to-one' system, which ties the collection of e-waste with the purchase of a similar product on the spot. This is a simpler, proportionate and far more logical solution that has given good results so far and that should have been kept in place. Unfortunately, today's vote went in the opposite direction. Despite the safeguards introduced by the compromise, the general principle approved today is that is fine and fair to transform private companies into dumping grounds without their consent. This places the burden squarely on private enterprises and is simply not acceptable."

"On the positive side, MEPs showed at least some consideration towards micro and small retailers, many of which do not have a sales area larger than 400 square meters and will therefore not be submitted to the new regime. The flexibility added by foreseeing the possibility to use alternative existing collection schemes is also to be welcomed, as well as the clarification on the size of the WEEE items that must be collected free of charge. Unfortunately, slightly larger SME retailers will be clearly affected by the new collection obligations, and the new system is much more complicated than the existing one. This is far from being the revision we had hoped and called for."

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EDITORS' NOTES: UEAPME is the employers' organisation representing exclusively crafts, trades and SMEs from the EU and accession countries at European level. UEAPME has 80 member organisations covering over 12 million enterprises with 55 million employees. UEAPME is a European Social Partner. For further information: <http://www.ueapme.com/>

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