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Waste electric and electronic goods (WEEE)

MEPs approve stronger EU rules and clampdown on illegal WEEE shipments

The European Parliament today adopted a final legislative compromise (1) revising EU rules on waste electrical and electronic equipment (WEEE). The Greens welcomed the strengthening of the existing legislation but regretted that the revision did not go further. Speaking after the vote, Green MEP **Michalis Tremopoulos** said.

"We welcome today's vote giving the go-ahead to tougher EU rules on waste electrical goods, including steps to clamp down on illegal shipments of WEEE to non-OECD countries. The revised rules represent an important step forward for the environment, as well as the EU economy, as improved collection and recycling of WEEE will reduce environmentally unsound treatment and enable us to mine waste electrical/electronic components, improving our resource efficiency.

"The Greens support the increase of collection targets but believe quicker application of the higher targets would have been better for the environment and the economy (2). The group regrets the failure to include either separate reuse targets or recycling targets based on what is actually recycled but is happy that the door to both remains open in the future (3).

"Importantly for consumers, big retailers will be obliged to take back very small waste appliances, such as light bulbs or mobile phones, regardless of whether a new appliance is sold at the same time. Increasing the collection of these small appliances will reduce the amount of them ending up in the general waste stream and thereby escaping adequate treatment. Unfortunately, this new obligation is limited to big retailers. "Importantly, the new rules will also clamp down on illegal exports of WEEE: equipment that is no longer under warranty can only be exported to non-OECD countries if it has been certified to be fully functional and sent properly. It is long overdue that we stop making developing countries the dumping ground for our hazardous waste."

(1) Second reading agreement on the recast of the directive on waste electrical and electronic equipment - Florenz report.

(2) Within 7 years of the rules entering into force, at least 85% of the waste that is arising annually, or 65% of what was placed on the market in the three preceding years, should be collected, and all of it properly treated. The EP had only wanted the 85% target, and it to be applicable as of 2016.

(3) The Commission is tasked to assess the feasibility of a separate reuse target and an output-based recycling target within four years.

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