

Individual Producer Responsibility Making the Environment a Competitive Advantage

We call on the Council of the European Union to support the position adopted by the European Parliament on the issue of producer responsibility under the Waste of Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) directive. At its plenary vote on the 15th May 2001, the European Parliament overwhelmingly endorsed an individual producer responsibility. In doing so it underlined the vital importance of:

- Eco-design, the development of products with improved recyclability; and
- Competition in the recycling sector.

In our opinion, the Commission proposal for producer responsibility would amount to a waste tax, simply handing over the waste management cost to the industry as a whole. It would do nothing to encourage eco-design and increased recycling efficiency.

Therefore it is essential to amend the European Commission's proposal to clearly define a producer responsibility where, for products produced in the future, each manufacturer is financially responsible for the products he produces. Position papers of environmental and consumer NGOs and industry in general express a similar view. The European Parliament has now also reached the same conclusion.

On the 7-8th June the Environment Council will adopt its Common Position on the WEEE directive. At the same meeting it will also adopt conclusions on the European Commission's related Integrated Product Policy (IPP) Green Paper, which: i) Outlines a strategy for strengthening and refocusing product-related environmental policies to promote the development of a market for greener products; and ii) identifies producer responsibility as being central to encouraging prevention at the design stage.

Therefore, if the European Union is serious about achieving the laudable objectives set out in the IPP Green Paper, then the Council needs to endorse an individual producer responsibility on the 7-8th June.

Policy makers must provide the necessary legal framework for just and sustainable competition.



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