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WEEE Recast: Disappointing Environment Committee vote

In its vote today, the European Parliament's Environment Committee has established its position on the Commission recast proposal for the Directive on Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE). *"While the committee under the lead of its Rapporteur, Karl-Heinz Florenz, has in a number of areas taken into account the complexity of the WEEE management process in practice, today's Committee vote has missed the opportunity to introduce several significant improvements to the Commission proposal"*, states Adrian Harris, Director General of Orgalime.

Our industries support the Committee's clear objection to a collection rate that applies on producers and is calculated on the basis of 'equipment placed on the market in previous years'. It has been essential to clarify that the collection target can - for enforcement reasons - only apply on Member States and that it should include all channels of collection. The proposed introduction of a 'WEEE resident agent' is also an important step towards facilitating and strengthening enforcement at a national level, and rejecting the introduction of rules on nanomaterials under the WEEE Directive avoids unnecessary duplication of regulation. *"These are clear signs for Better Regulation and we call upon the Council and Commission to support them,"* advocates Harris.

However, our industries remain seriously concerned with several proposals, which, in our view risk, upsetting the just created WEEE structures in Member States if finally adopted:

- Opening the door for changes on financing of collection from private households risks unnecessarily upsetting freshly set up WEEE schemes. It may require producers to contribute to financing activities, which are not under their control and for which municipalities already charge local taxes today. Also, the environmental benefit remains questionable. *"We are concerned that the adopted proposals on financing would make WEEE management just more expensive for everyone and this is on top of the extra taxes we will all have to pay to deal with national budget deficits"*, added Harris.
- We cannot support the proposal for an open scope, since its consequences are not known today. Even if a set of scope exclusions, which we consider essential, has been backed by the Committee, these exclusions seem watered down via the newly established list of product examples that again includes certain just excluded equipment, such as large industrial tools and machinery. *"This at best creates uncertainty"*, commented Harris, *"at worst it creates an unmanageable situation where manufacturers cannot determine whether their product is in scope or not. This was one area we had hoped would be clarified with the recast. Unfortunately we are going in the opposite direction."*
- The adopted compromise on very small appliances unnecessarily intervenes in the organisation of WEEE take back in practice. Such details, Orgalime feels should be left to be defined at national level.
- A European approach for the definition of producer can only work if national enforcement possibilities are not weakened. This is not ensured today.

Orgalime, the European Engineering Industries Association, speaks for 33 trade federations representing some 130,000 companies in the mechanical, electrical, electronic, metalworking & metal articles industries of 22 European countries. The industry employs some 10.6 million people in the EU and in 2009 accounted for some €1,427 billion of annual output. The industry not only represents some 28% of the output of manufactured products but also a third of the manufactured exports of the European Union.

Orgalime therefore hopes that the institutions will take up these issues in the further proceedings in order to arrive at sustainable legislation, which will take due account of both, the considerable investment made by producers to set up management schemes in record time, while bringing about the adjustments needed to improve environmental protection and predictability of legislation for companies whether large or small.

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