



What is reuse?
View of the reuse not-for-profit sector¹

Contribution to the Thematic Strategy on the Prevention and Recycling of Waste

Summary

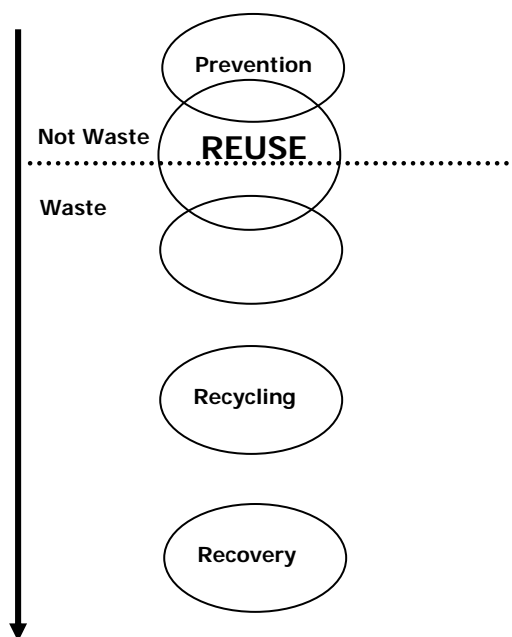
RREUSE (the network for Reuse and Recycling European Union Social Enterprises) suggest that the definition of "REUSE" should be:

An action or operation by which components or whole products are used for the same purpose for which they were conceived

This may include the repair, reconditioning and refurbishment of products, without entailing the remanufacture or upgrade of the product or its components. The product should be of the same condition and specification as it was when first put on the market.

The "REUSE" activity can be carried out on products which have entered the waste stream and on products that are sent directly for second-use and are therefore "not waste". Clearly this suggests that "REUSE" activity can be completely separate and unassociated to waste. But for the purposes of the Thematic Strategy and its association with waste, the "REUSE" activity should therefore been seen as "waste prevention" and "waste reduction". Due to the nature of this hierarchal cross-cutting activity, the activity and definition of re-use has been misplaced and misunderstood. We suggest that "REUSE" requires clarification and a position within the waste hierarchy.

Waste Hierarchy



¹ RREUSE (Reuse and Recycling European Union Social Enterprises) is the not-for-profit reuse sector in Europe representing 17 members in 10 EU Member States. It puts environmental (by reusing and reselling end-of-life products) and social objectives (by giving jobs to groups at risk of social exclusion) an equal level and thus practices sustainable development at local level. More information on: <http://www.rreuse.org/>.

Introduction

There seems to be no common understanding in the European Union of the meaning of 'reuse'. Reuse has been defined in some EU directives regulating different waste streams such as ELV (end-of-life vehicles), WEEE (waste electrical and electronic equipment) and packaging. But confusion exists because a number of other terms prefixed with 're' are in usage including remanufacturing, reconditioning, refurbishing and repairing.

'Re ' - a prefix to indicate a return to a previous condition, repetition or restoration

'Reuse' - to repeat the use or service or action of an item

In the discussions to prepare the Thematic Strategy on the Prevention and Recycling of Waste, RREUSE argues that the concept of reuse needs to be defined properly in the Waste Framework Directive (WFD) so that appropriate measures can be taken to develop reuse activities leading to extending the life of products.

This paper gives the view of what the non-for-profit reuse sector understands by reuse.

A. Existing definitions

Definitions of reuse exist in specific European waste legislation:

'reuse 'means any operation by which components of end-of-life vehicles are used for the same purpose for which they were conceived.

Directive 2000/53/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 September 2000 on end-of life vehicles, Art. 2(6)

'reuse` shall mean any operation by which packaging, which has been conceived and designed to accomplish within its life cycle a minimum number of trips or rotations, is refilled or used for the same purpose for which it was conceived, with or without the support of auxiliary products present on the market enabling the packaging to be refilled; such reused packaging will become packaging waste when no longer subject to reuse;

European Parliament and Council Directive 94/62/EC of 20 December 1994 on packaging and packaging waste, Art.3(5)

"re-use" means any operation by which WEEE or components thereof are used for the same purpose for which they were conceived, including the continued use of the equipment or components thereof which are returned to collection points, distributors, recyclers or manufacturers

Directive 2002/96/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 January 2003 on waste electrical and electronic equipment, Art. 3(d)

These definitions of the 'lex specialis' should remain. What is lacking in the European waste legislation is a definition of reuse in the waste framework directive (WFD).

B. Reuse in the WFD

Reuse has not been defined in the WFD, which is an obstacle for the development of reuse activities. Reuse should include all possible activities to increase the lifetime of discarded products into the reuse definition.

In the OECD-Eurostat Joint Questionnaire on waste re-use is defined as follows:

Re-use shall mean any operation by which end of life products and equipment (e.g. electrical and electronic equipment) or its components are used for the same purpose for which they were conceived.

OECD/Eurostat Joint Questionnaire on waste

This international accepted wording is a good general waste definition. But reuse is also a set of activities, which should be described by the definition.

<u>Reuse means any operation by which end of life products or its components are used for the same purpose for which they were conceived (based on OECD)</u>	
<u>Reuse of product as conceived</u>	<u>Reuse of product with alterations</u>
<u>Refurbish/reconditioning</u> Returning product/component to satisfactory working condition	<u>Remanufacture</u> Returning product/component to OEM performance specification
<u>Repair</u> Correction of a specified fault in a product/component	<u>Upgrade</u> Upgrade a product/component to a better performance compared to the original performance
<u>Resell / remarket</u> Cleaning likely to be the maximum work carried out	

The different activities, which are all part of the concept of reuse in waste legislation, can be divided in two categories;

- 1) Activities where re-user will only continues the lifecycle of the product as conceived
- 2) Activities where the re-user places the product on the market as new or has upgraded the product

The distinction in the two categories is vital because the activities of reuse centers are not only part of waste legislation because of the management of discarded goods but also part of product legislation because of the re-selling of the goods to low-income groups. Having a definition for reuse in waste legislation will lead to the same definition in product related legislation. Coherence and clarity are required in both areas.

C. Reuse and the waste hierarchy

By describing the reuse activities it will also clarify the place of reuse in the current waste hierarchy as being a separate step between prevention and recycling/minimization/reduction. If a product is not discarded but donated and therefore not collected as waste, reuse is part of prevention. If a product is discarded via specific take-back legislation and therefore collected as waste, it should be considered as the best environmental method of handling waste. Specific standards should be set that match with the different reuse activities.

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