



## Recommendations on Waste Framework Directive

### From Re-use and Recycling European Union Social Enterprises

The second reading of the Waste Framework Directive has started in the European Parliament. The rapporteur Caroline Jackson highlights in her report the importance of EU action on prevention, reuse and recycling. This directive should indeed pave the way to change the European waste policy – existing since more than 30 years - towards more prevention, reuse and recycling in order to cope with the environmental and societal problems caused by our increasing consumption. It is not enough anymore to focus on step 4 and 5 of the waste hierarchy! More prevention, reuse and recycling will help us cope with the waste, save resources, help to fight climate change and reuse especially will help shrink the social-economic divide in our society.

**RREUSE** is a European network of social economy companies with activities in reuse and recycling. Our member companies in 10 Member States combine environmental and social objectives and thus contribute towards a more sustainable society. Through collection, repair and reuse of used items we prolong the life of products and delay them of becoming waste. Reuse requires fewer resources and less energy compared to recycling or manufacturing of new products. Reuse conserves valuable natural resources, reduces the amount of water and air pollution and greenhouse gases and is a means for getting products to disadvantaged people. Our social enterprises pursue the inclusion of people at risk by creating job opportunities and training facilities for long-term unemployed and other persons at risk.

**Waste prevention by repair and reuse** is in its basic sense an old human behavior; many cultures repaired a damaged item rather than creating a new one. But our way of living has departed far away from this attitude. Our consumption pattern, the high repair costs and the increasing number of products of low quality and life span, do not favor reuse. Reuse is not an activity promoted or favored by producers, in contrast with some recycling activities, as for economical reasons, as often they see reuse as competitor to the sales of new products.

And although every community has some existing form of reuse (second-hand shops...), getting it better organized, developed and supported is a big priority as we need more reuse! **The basis for this governmental support should be set within this European waste framework directive.**

Reuse should not only be dealt with by volunteer efforts, antique or vintage shops, charity organizations and internet market places but a well organized **network of reuse-centers** where consumers can bring in all kinds of reusable or repairable products (furniture, clothing, electrical household appliances, toys, bikes, doors, ...) for which they do not want to bother for a financial return but just want to get rid off. And this part of reusable products is now thrown away too often by a lack of time finding the right place to sell it and the lack of a reuse-center nearby. The availability of such a reuse-center nearby will redirect many consumers towards it, as most prefer their products to be reused instead of 'burned'. As in some countries or areas, civic amenity sites for separate collection of waste still have to be established, it would be a sustainable way of thinking to foresee a reuse-center nearby.

Such 'discarded' products (whether officially waste or non-waste) will often need some cleaning, checking or repair before they can be resold and reused. The **social economy** can offer here many job opportunities for people at risk and help achieve the environmental goal of reducing waste and the social goal of inclusion and providing affordable goods, as the members of RREUSE already do in 10 Member States. This sustainable aim is promoted by the EU in general terms and is seen as an important link between employment and environment policy. More concrete political support and promoting measures are needed in all Member States.

The **waste framework directive** is of vital importance for the reinstatement of reuse in our societies. It is excellent that reuse and preparation for reuse is defined in itself and recognized as a separate level in the waste hierarchy so that effective measures can be adopted to encourage reuse and preparing for reuse. However, without compulsory measures to be adopted by all Member States the economic tendencies will probably not favor reuse.

Therefore we ask the Council for their support to foresee in core of the WFD two essential issues:

1. That Member States shall take necessary measures to **promote the reuse** of products and/or components, notably through the use of economic, logistic, educational or other measures. Lowering VAT for instance for reused products, set quantitative objectives to help the sector grow, include reusable products where appropriate within procurement criteria, have educational campaigns to raise participation of consumers, etc.
2. That Member States shall take measures to **promote the preparation for reuse** of products and/or components, notably through the establishment of, or support to accredited re-use and repair centers and networks, at least in densely populated regions in order to achieve a network covering the whole territory. In some instances (e.g. WEEE) relevant process and product standards could be developed to guarantee environmentally safe reuse in combination with a consumer guarantee.

The Council Common Position foresees that these measures might be evaluated for their usefulness in each Member State in view of the adoption of a waste prevention plan by 2013 (Annex 4, point 16). However, in view of working towards implementation of the waste hierarchy, it is of utmost importance that promotion of reuse is taken seriously from now onwards. Therefore the adoption of these measures into the core of the directive instead of being an example in an annex is essential.

Furthermore we ask the Council to pave the way for the implementation of the waste hierarchy by setting targets and thus:

1. agree on general **waste prevention targets** to ensure action at all levels to minimize waste and stabilize waste production
2. agree on **preparing for reuse and recycling targets** for specific waste streams

It is the right time to discuss alternative target setting within the Council, if the prevention target expressed as stabilisation in respect to a certain year of reference as proposed by the Parliament is unmentionable. The target setting can be done in different ways and should be explored. The deadlines can be made flexible for low-waste countries or the scope can be reduced to municipal solid waste. The possibility of laying down a cap on the amount of waste going to incineration and disposal should be considered. This can be used in combination with a prevention target expressed as a fixed quantity which should not be exceeded, high enough to allow for EU-12 countries to still raise their waste production and not too high so the EU-15 countries have the incentive not to increase their waste production. Adoption of targets is the best way to achieve action at Member State level and avoiding targets out of anxiety of not reaching them is blocking any progress.

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