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WEEE compromise far from convincing for the European reuse sector

Following today's Parliamentary vote in Strasbourg, RREUSE is hugely disappointed about the lack of ambition of the compromise second reading position reached between the European Parliament and the Council on the WEEE Recast. The measures agreed will severely hinder reuse rates of WEEE in Europe and not exploit the clear benefits and potential of reuse in Europe. This decision was taken regardless of studies showing that one in two Europeans would be happy to purchase second hand electronic equipment and that reusing appliances could not only create up to 200 jobs per 1,000 tonnes of electronics but as well help achieve the resource efficiency needs of Europe that the European Commission is currently promoting.

In particular, failing to introduce a separate 'prepare for reuse' target jeopardises investments at national level which affects the socio-economic and environmental benefits it would bring. What is needed today are strong requirements for an efficient WEEE reuse sector including adequate handling and storage of WEEE at collection points and access to good quality reusable appliances for accredited reuse centres at these collection points. Extensive networks of accredited reuse centres throughout Europe are needed to help make this happen.

Without such a target, the emphasis also on data collection and accountability of actors involved in the WEEE reuse stream will be lessened and will leave the competent authorities unable to identify the so called 'shame reusers' or illegal exporters which play such a major role in building a negative image of the reuse sector.

The provision for a feasibility study of a separate 'prepare for reuse' target and possible legislative proposal to be investigated by the Commission within 4 years of the Directive going into force gives a ray of hope to the sector but is of little consolation at the moment and risks being diluted over time.

RREUSE has been campaigning for a number of related items to help give preparation for reuse activities of WEEE the best possible chance in Europe, but a separate 'preparation for reuse' target for WEEE reuse could, and should have set a precedent for setting targets for other waste streams in the future.

If Europe is serious about achieving a resource efficient Europe, then strong incentives for prevention and preparation for reuse need to be made. As it stands, the compromise deal is a missed opportunity to allow the potential of WEEE reuse to be maximised.

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Who we are:

The Reuse and Recycling EU Social Enterprises (RREUSE) network is the European federation of social enterprises with re-use, repair and recycling activities. Approximately 42,000 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) employees and over 150,000 volunteers work throughout our 22 member organisations across 11 EU Member States. Although structures and national contexts are diverse, RREUSE members share common elements such as the protection of the environment, the fight against poverty and, especially, the progress of disadvantaged people back into the labour market. RREUSE's main goal is to put sustainable development into practice by encouraging job creation and social inclusion in the field of waste prevention and sustainable waste management activities.