



“The voice of crafts and SMEs in Europe”

Electronic waste: SMEs disappointed by Parliament’s committee vote

Brussels, 4 October 2011 – UEAPME, the European craft and SME employers’ organisation, was left disappointed by today’s second reading vote at the European Parliament’s Environment Committee on the revision of the Waste Electric and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) Directive. Further to the vote, retailers would be obliged to collect small waste electric and electronic goods left by consumers at no cost and without any requirement on consumers to buy a new product of the same kind. This is in contradiction with the “one-to-one” principle backed by UEAPME and by the Environment Council’s first reading, according to which WEEE can be brought back to the distributor free of charge as long as a new comparable product is bought at the same time. Although collection obligations may not apply to micro retailers, the vast majority of SMEs will nonetheless be clearly affected, warned UEAPME, which called on the Parliament’s plenary not to carry the amendments approved today.

Sustainable Development Director **Guido Lena** offered the following comments:

“The one-size-fits-all collection obligations imposed by MEPs today are excessive and disproportionate for the vast majority of small electronics retailers. These companies already struggle to survive in the present economic crisis and in a sector dominated by large supermarket and electronics chains. As of today, they also run the risk of being transformed into dumping grounds without their consent. While large stores are able to cope easily with consumers walking in, leaving their old electronic goods and walking out, small retail outlets where surface space comes at a premium will be weighed down with more costs without any additional benefits, as no purchase obligations are foreseen. Although ‘micro’ companies may be exempted, this will not solve the underlying deficiencies of the rules approved by MEPs today.”

“The ‘one-to-one’ system backed by the Council is a much more sensible option to which we wholeheartedly subscribe. Tying the collection of e-waste with the purchase of a similar product on the spot would at least partially balance the additional obligations for SMEs. While nobody questions the need to better handle electronic waste, the burden must be properly shared and cannot be placed squarely on private enterprises. That is why we urge the Parliament’s plenary to revert to the Council’s first reading position. Doing otherwise would set a dangerous precedent and go blatantly against the ‘Think Small First’ principle introduced by the Small Business Act.”

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EDITORS’ NOTES: UEAPME is the employers’ organisation representing exclusively crafts, trades and SMEs from the EU and accession countries at European level. UEAPME has 80 member organisations covering over 12 million enterprises with 55 million employees. UEAPME is a European Social Partner. For further information: <http://www.ueapme.com/>

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