

Press Release

Online sellers should be legally required to take on the duties of “producer” under the WEEE directive

20 September 2017

On 13 September over 80 delegates from across 12 different countries met to discuss ways to tackle the growing number of online market places that fail to be WEEE compliant with the EEE regulations. This is referred to as freeriding.

The introductory speaker Peter Börkey of the OECD presented initial findings suggesting that online freeriding could account for 5-10% of all sales.

EucoLight and WEEE Forum main takeaways from the workshop are that European policy makers and Member States should consider:

- That online sellers and fulfilment houses should be legally required to take on the duties of “producer” under the WEEE directive for the product they sell or stock on behalf of non WEEE registered companies.
- That the concept of Authorised Representative (AR) could help to address the problem, but needs further analysis to ensure it is appropriate, and that liabilities of the AR are adequately defined.

The meeting also reached a number of other important conclusions:

- The huge scale of free riding puts compliant companies, and “bricks and mortar” retailers at a material commercial disadvantage.
- 80% of the problem is related to transactions that take place within the EU. In many cases the product will have originated from outside of the EU, but is held in stock by fulfilment houses and other online operators inside the EU. There was general agreement that tackling this first will be easier, and will solve a major part of the problem.
- Some solutions could include improved codes of conduct in online operators, but other solutions may require tougher measures through the strict enforcement of the existing law.
- More data is needed to quantify the full scale of the problem.
- There is some need for education of online operators, who may not all be aware of the need to comply.
- Certification of online operators that do verify the compliance of the product they sell could help consumers to exercise an informed choice.

The workshop contributors included Maria Banti and Birgit Snoeren (European Commission), Nigel Harvey (EucoLight), Christian Ludwig (WEEE Europe), Jonathan Perry (Dell), Michael

Adams (Environmental Protection Agency, Ireland), Annegret Mayer (E-commerce Europe) and Alexander Goldberg (European WEEE Registers Network).

Commenting on the outcomes of the workshop, WEEE Forum Secretary General Pascal Leroy said "We are delighted that this topic raised such a high level of interest and that the key recommendations have real potential to address this serious problem."

EucoLight Secretary General Marc Guiraud added "The process has started, the ideas are on the table. Now we need to see action on both legislation and enforcement."

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About EucoLight:

EucoLight is The European association of collection and recycling organisations for WEEE lamps and lighting. On behalf of its 19 members, EucoLight engages with everything related to the WEEE Directive, legislations and standards affecting the collection and recycling of WEEE lighting. EucoLight members collect and recycle, in aggregate, 79 % of the lamps waste collected in the 18 countries in which they operate.

EucoLight is the voice of European WEEE compliance schemes specialised in managing the collection and recycling of WEEE lighting; working to make the circular economy a reality for lighting products.

Founded mid-2015, EucoLight has quickly embarked into constructive dialogue with relevant stakeholders to provide expertise in the field of management and treatment of WEEE lighting and to promote the positive role of Extended Producer Responsibility schemes on the environment and society.

For more information, visit the EucoLight website www.eucolight.org, follow EucoLight on Twitter @EucoLight or contact the Secretary General, Marc Guiraud (marc.guiraud@eucolight.org).

About WEEE Forum:

The WEEE Forum, set up in 2002, is a Brussels-based European not-for-profit association speaking for 33 not for-profit electrical and electronic equipment waste (WEEE) producer compliance schemes – alternatively referred to as 'producer responsibility organisations' (PRO).

The 33 PROs are based in Australia, Austria, Belgium, Czechia, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Italy, Greece, France, Iceland, Ireland, Lithuania, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

It is the biggest organisation of its kind in the world. In 2016, its member organisations reported collection and proper de-pollution and recycling of 2,100,000 tonnes of WEEE. Members in 2016: Amb3E, Appliances Recycling, ASEKOL, Australia New Zealand Recycling Platform, Ecodom, Eco-systèmes, Ecotic, ECOTIC, EES-Ringlus, EGIO, Electrocyclus Cyprus, ElektroEko, Elektrowin, El-Kretsen, elretur, Environ, Fotokiklosi, Norsirk, Recipo, Recupel, Remedia, RENAS, Repic, Retela, RoRec, SENS e-Recycling, SWICO, UFH, Úrvinnslusjóður, Wecycle, WEEE Ireland, WEEE Malta and Zeos.

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