

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE REVISION OF THE EUROPEAN UNION RULES ON WASTE SHIPMENT

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European Recycling Platform (ERP) welcomes the European Commission's plans to revise rules on waste shipment and to better align them with the overall objective of transitioning the continent towards a circular economy.

In order to help the Commission in identifying all current legislative barriers for improving circularity and in finding effective solutions to overcome them, we would like to share some thoughts and provide some recommendations based on our long-time experience in operating producer responsibility organisations in multiple countries for waste electrical and electronic equipment (WEEE), batteries and packaging.

In a nutshell, in order to best deliver on the objective of increasing recycling rates and ultimately transitioning towards a circular economy, we believe that the revised legislative framework on waste shipment should allow for:

1. Easy shipment of waste within the European Union to allow producer responsibility organisations to consolidate waste and to send it to the most effective and efficient recycling facility available, thereby ensuring proper treatment at optimal costs;
2. Export of waste to third countries, in accordance with the Basel Convention and the OECD Decisions, to ensure that materials are in places where products are actually produced, thereby promoting a global circular economy;
3. Export of defective electronic equipment to third countries for repair and/or reuse there or in neighbouring countries, or for repair there and return to the European Union for reuse (depending on market opportunities) under a well-documented and controlled process combatting misuse in line with Basel convention.

These requirements are not met under the current legislative framework. The European Union's rules on waste shipment, in particular the Waste Shipment Regulation (WSR), actually hinder the free movement of waste within the internal market. The main reason is that the application of these rules is not consistent across Member States. One example: The classification of electronic waste as hazardous or non-hazardous differs a lot between different countries. Another example: Some Member States abuse the notification process to hinder the movement of waste. The duration of the notification process is very unpredictable in some countries, negatively affecting planning security. Lead times for the notification of up to 12 months make it very difficult to optimise reverse supply chains within the European Union.

When revising the rules on waste shipment, the European Commission should ensure a free movement of goods within the internal market, also if these goods are classified as waste. In a sense, the European Union territory needs to be considered as one single territory/country. Shipments of hazardous waste can be controlled via a European-wide platform. If such regulation is not possible for some reasons, there should be at least a harmonisation of rules across Member States.

Moreover, ERP supports the finding of the evaluation report that the WSR should be aligned with other applicable European Union waste legislation such as directives on WEEE, batteries and packaging, as the WSR itself does not clearly reflect the need to favour recycling (and preparation for re-use) over other recovery operations (like incineration).

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About ERP

European Recycling Platform was founded in 2002 in response to the introduction of the European Union's Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) Directive. ERP's mission is to ensure high quality and cost effective implementation of the Directive, for the benefit of its customers and the environment. In June 2014, ERP became part of the Landbell Group, an international supplier of service and consulting solutions for environmental and chemical compliance. ERP and Landbell Group have collected more than 7 million tonnes of packaging, more than 3.5 million tonnes of e-waste, and over 65,000 tonnes of portable batteries.

ERP is the first and only pan-European producer responsibility organisation authorised to operate in Austria, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Spain and the UK. By passing on the advantages of multinational recycling operations to customers, ERP has proved to be the most competitive solution for companies in the countries where it operates for WEEE, batteries and packaging compliance, as well as take-back services.

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