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WEEELABEX: European standards for sustainable WEEE management

At its meeting in Amsterdam on 1 April 2011, the General Assembly of the WEEE Forum approved its set of WEEELABEX standards. For the first time ever, a uniform, continental set of normative requirements, covering all 10 WEEE categories, will directly affect all parties involved in the WEEE chain of operations, from collection to disposal, changing the WEEE landscape substantially and for good.

The WEEE systems of the WEEE Forum, representing approximately two-thirds of officially reported WEEE collection in Europe, have agreed that they will, in the coming months, require the collection sites, logistics facilities and recyclers, with whom they have a contractual relationship, to implement the standards.

“The WEEELABEX standards will result in less pollution, higher levels of recovery of secondary raw materials, better occupational health and safety conditions for workers and a more transparent material flow management”, says Andreas Röthlisberger, WEEE Forum President. “And there is no scope for semi-legal shipments of WEEE.”

“We expect authorities in Europe to acknowledge and provide support to the implementation of the standards”, comments Pascal Leroy, Secretary General of the WEEE Forum and WEEELABEX project manager. “But the standards will probably resonate globally as well. Operators in other parts of the world will likely wish to adhere to the same high level set of principles.”

At least part of the WEEELABEX requirements will likely end up becoming formal EN standards, affecting all operators on the market. This seems to be ambition of the European Parliament as specified in its amendment 99 to the recast Directive, which the WEEE Forum fully supports.

In the coming two years, a European scheme will be constructed that harmonises the rules for the verification of conformity with the normative requirements. The scheme is of a private and *sui generis* nature, yet is expected to demonstrate how European rules can be enforced in a harmonised manner.

“With the approval of these standards, the producers’ community shows to be taking the principle of producer responsibility very seriously”, says Andreas Röthlisberger.

ENDS

About the WEEE Forum

The WEEE Forum was founded in April 2002. It counts 38 WEEE producer responsibility organisations from Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Italy, Germany, Greece, France, Hungary, Ireland, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and United Kingdom. All organisations are open, non-profit oriented take-back systems run on behalf of a community of about 17,000 producers. Members in 2010: Amb3E, Appliances Recycling, Asekol, Ecoasimelec, Ecodom, Ecofimatica, Ecolec, Ecologic, Ecoped, Eco-RAEE's, ecoR'it, Eco-systèmes, Ecotic, Eco Tic, EEPA, ElectroCoord, ElektroEko, Elektrowin, El-Kretsen, elretur, el retur, Envidom, ICT Milieu, Lightcycle, Lumicom, Recupel, ReMedia, Repic, Retela, RoRec, SENS, SEWA, SLRS, SWICO, UFH, Wecycle, WEEE Ireland and Zeos. Collectively, the members of the WEEE Forum collected and reported proper de-pollution and recycling of more than 2 million tonnes of WEEE. Being one of the world's only multinational e-waste centres of competence, the WEEE Forum's mission is to contribute to an expert and constructive debate based on facts and figures. See www.weee-forum.org.

About WEEELABEX

WEEELABEX is the acronym ('WEEE LABEL of EXcellence') of a project, run by the WEEE Forum in co-operation with stakeholders. In the project steering group, representatives of the producers' community (CECED, DIGITALEUROPE and ELC) and of processing industry (EERA) took part in deliberations. The project (2009-2012) is co-financed by the European Community under the LIFE programme (LIFE07 ENV/B/000041).

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