

SUMMARY

The NVMP Association is pleased with the fact that the provisions for processing the existing stock of electronics represent a solid financial buffer to guarantee the continuity of the national collection system. Considering the high, and continuously increasing, costs of collection and recycling, such a buffer imparts stability to the system.

Since 1999, the European Union and, in its wake, the Netherlands, have established rules for the responsible processing of discarded electrical and electronic equipment. The government has placed the responsibility for collection and recycling of this e-waste with the manufacturers that have put this equipment on the market.

Historic stock

Dutch manufacturers and importers of electronics, united in the NVMP, have given Wecycle the task of organising a national collection system, and they are responsible for financing it. ICT-Milieu has set up a similar system for discarded computers, printers, copiers and telecom equipment.

The manufacturers have thus accepted responsibility for the costs of processing the 'historical stock' of electronics that was already on the market at that time, even though those costs were never included in the sales price. The stock in question is immense: Altogether, Dutch citizens and companies currently have 2.8 billion kg of electronics in use.¹

It has been agreed with the government and retailers that consumers will be visibly charged for the disposal costs through 2011, and for a portion of the products through 2013, by means of a disposal contribution that appears as a separate item on the bill.² This contribution is partially used for the current costs of collection and recycling and partially to establish a cash buffer for processing the historic stock that was already present upon implementation of the scheme and which will eventually have to be processed.

Buffer

The provision for collection and recycling of the historic stock has now reached a total of €230 million – a substantial sum, which covers two-thirds of the costs that manufacturers will be faced with in the coming ten years. A portion of the provision will be used for the processing of this future waste stream, and a portion will have to be retained as a buffer to guarantee the continuity of the system. Collection and responsible recycling are expensive. In many cases the materials recovered from the e-waste can be sold; some appliances, such as washing machines with a stainless steel drum, are even so valuable that commercial scrap dealers will buy them. But that money is not enough to cover the logistical costs (collection and transport) and the costs of monitoring and reporting. Furthermore, much e-waste requires special handling which drives up the costs; some examples are CRTs, refrigerators with CFC-based refrigerants and small appliances and low-energy lamps with their labour-intensive collection.

It is largely this 'loss-making' e-waste that is handled by Wecycle, which also spends money on publicity campaigns and activities to stimulate recycling participation and studies to obtain insight into areas such as the ownership of electronics, waste streams and processing techniques.

On balance it costs 29 cents to process a kilogram of e-waste in a responsible manner.³ Wecycle (including ICT-Milieu) handles 32% of all e-waste.⁴ The total costs now already amount to more than €30 million per year.^{***} If the ambitions to collect even more are realised, the costs will only continue to increase. Fortunately the manufacturers have put aside money during recent years so the costs can be partially financed from that buffer.

1. *Survey of ownership conducted by GfK in 2006.*
2. *Disposal contribution for large white goods will be eliminated by February 2013.*
3. *Wecycle data, 2010.*
4. *United Nations University: The Future Flows
Study into complementary waste streams for e-waste in the Netherlands, 2012*

About the NVMP Association

The NVMP Association was established in 1999 and represents 1500 manufacturers and importers of electrical equipment and low-energy lighting in the Netherlands. These manufacturers and importers have established the first national system in the world for the responsible collection and sustainable processing of electrical appliances and low-energy lighting. The implementation thereof has been entrusted to the non-profit organisation Wecycle.

For more information

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