



Japan Local Government Centre, London

Monthly Report January 2011 (Germany) – 82% of electric and electronic goods are recycled in Germany

From 2005 onwards, producers of electric goods in Germany have been obliged to take used ones back and recycle them. In the meantime a well-functioning waste disposal and recycling system has been established. Between 2006 and 2008 nearly 1.9m tons of obsolete products were collected and recycled, which amounts to nearly twice as much as legally necessary. As the system is based on the Waste Electric and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) directive of the EU, there is a reporting requirement under which figures have to be published every two years. The current situation reflects the years two years up to 2008 as reported by the Federal Ministry of the Environment, Nature Protection and Nuclear Safety in January 2011.

Shorter life cycles of electric and electronic goods

The life cycles of electric goods are continually getting shorter. If new TV sets are now bought on average every 5 years instead of every 10, more waste is generated. However this type of waste includes much valuable resources which can be recycled, leading to a reduction in the demand for new resources. The Law on electrical goods (Elektronikgerätegesetz) based on the EU directive aims to:

- Reduce electric and electronic waste
- Extract resources from waste
- Reduce dangerous substances in new goods
- Remove hazardous substances from waste goods

Efficient waste system

The public waste management systems provide around 1,500 collection points in Germany, and citizens have a duty to separate electric and electronic waste from normal household waste. About 9,000 producers have taken over the management of these waste goods, in line with their market share. In turn, they have tasked about 300 waste management specialist businesses with safe and appropriate waste treatment.

The process of treating such waste has been increasingly automated, and costs could be reduced by on average 50% between 2005 and 2010. In European comparison, costs in Germany are low.

Valuable resources

Between 2006 and 2008 approximately one million tons of steel, 100,000 tons of copper and 40,000 tons of aluminium was retrieved from waste electric and electronic goods. However the extraction of rare metals has proved much more

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complicated; there is room for further development and improvement to increase the yield from waste of these increasingly expensive and sought-after raw materials.

Isolating hazardous substances

Overall over the course of the past years several a thousand tons of hazardous materials could be extracted from waste and its final disposal made safer. In 2008 alone 650 tons of batteries and accumulators were collected, as well as 300 tons of oily liquids which are mostly to be found in cooling equipment. More than a ton of mercury was separated from waste.

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