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Economic importance of raw materials contained in “end-of-life products” including their energy potential

Motion for a resolution

tabled by Mr Miloš MELČÁK and other members of the Assembly

This motion has not been discussed in the Assembly and commits only those who have signed it

Sustainable growth in modern society is increasingly dependent on the efficient use of raw materials, energy and human resources. However, one of the consequences of technological development is the ever faster replacement rate for most products in civilian and industrial use.

On the one hand, this rapid replacement rate places increasing demands on the exploitation of primary raw materials and on energy resources contained in natural deposits. In the current political and economic situation in Europe and the world, the extraction, processing and distribution of these resources represent a challenge not only from the immediate economic point of view but also in terms of energy and transport safety.

On the other hand, when products are technically or otherwise at the end of their lives and their further use is deemed undesirable, the use of inadequate processes causes loss of raw materials, energy and work originally embedded into the products. The global issues related to end-of-life vehicles, which are mainly governed in the EU via Directive 2000/53/EC, as well as electro-products, can be seen as typical examples.

Growing attention has in recent years been paid to recycling, in particular of the raw material potential of end-of-life products. However, support has so far been limited for contemporary recycling technologies which would foster a harmonious link between specific structural and technological solutions of new products and the future optimum reuse of their material at the end of their lives.

In spite of its various deficiencies, the recycling of material from end-of-life products in the form of secondary raw materials represents a branch of international trade annually amounting to millions of tons. It gives employment to hundreds of thousands of workers. Even as primary resources are being exhausted, a new strategic element is emerging which reduces the pressure to exploit such resources. This is well known for e.g. ferrous scrap metal, plastics and paper, recyclable construction materials, etc.

Given the rising demands for high environmental standard of the recycling process and for minimizing any hazard to the environment, a programme is called for which would pay greater attention to:

- technological development of recycling technologies and equipment for a wide range of secondary raw materials;
- adaptation of tax legislation to support recycling and the use of the recycled materials for new production;
- training for a completely new profession, to focus on the optimum handling of a wide range of technological operations on various diversified recycling processes. It should include retraining for workers who have lost their previous employment.



The major economic importance of this programme of support for the recycling of secondary raw materials, accompanied by the training of qualified personnel, points to the challenge we face in solving the raw material, energy and employment crisis, especially in Europe. It deserves economic and legislative support and a coordinated approach by the Parliamentary Assembly and its national delegations, the member states of the Council of Europe and by the European Union.

Signed (see overleaf)

*Signed*¹:

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1. ALDE: Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe
EDG: European Democrat Group
EPP/CD: Group of the European People's Party
SOC: Socialist Group
UEL: Group of the Unified European Left