Parliamentary Assembly
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Resolution 1542 (2007)[1]

Electronic waste and the environment

Parliamentary Assembly

1. Advances in technology have led to rapidly increasing sales of new electronic devices. The increasingly short lifespan of these devices – from computers to televisions and cellphones – is creating an avalanche of electronic waste (e-waste) that threatens to overwhelm the world's landfills with permanent toxic substances like lead, cadmium and mercury.

2. The environmental problems created by e-waste, which is the fastest growing form of waste in terms of volume, are often increased by the exportation of used electronics to countries without protective environmental regulations.

3. The Parliamentary Assembly recalls two directives of the European Union on e-waste: Directive 2002/95/EC on the restriction of the use of certain hazardous substances in electrical and electronic equipment (RoHS Directive), and Directive 2002/96/EC on waste electrical and electronic equipment (WEEE Directive), introducing restrictions on the use of toxic substances in electronic devices and requiring that proper e-waste management legislation and regulations be developed by European Union members states.

4. Member states of the European Union and some major economies such as the United States of America, Japan, Canada, China and Australia have also been actively developing e-waste management systems along with necessary legislation.

5. The Assembly welcomes the increasing public awareness on this issue and encourages European companies producing electronic devices to increase research and development efforts with a view to developing necessary technologies in order to substitute or decrease the quantity of harmful substances used in their products or in their production processes.

6. Consequently, the Assembly invites member states to:

6.1. take legislative and regulatory measures in order to restrict the use of hazardous materials and substances in the production of electrical and electronic equipment and implement effective e-waste management systems;

6.2. introduce fiscal incentives to encourage proper collection, recycling and dismantling of e-waste;

6.3. inform consumers, through awareness-raising campaigns, in order to encourage them to co-operate with the proper e-waste disposal rules;

6.4. develop dialogue and co-operation between the public authorities and trade associations representing producers, distributors and retailers of electronic devices, with a view to developing an effective and efficient e-waste management system;

6.5. encourage initiatives carried out in collaboration with European Union member states in compliance with EU legislation;

6.6. raise awareness on the necessity of research and development efforts addressing the hazardous substances used in the fabrication of electronic devices and their substitutes;

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1. Text adopted by the Standing Committee, acting on behalf of the Assembly, on 16 March 2007 (see Doc. 11106,report of the Committee on the Environment, Agriculture and Local and Regional Affairs, rapporteur: MrCoskunoglu).

6.7. support the strict enforcement of the United Nations Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal, in particular concerning the requirements regarding the conditions in which the e-waste treatment is carried out in receiving countries;

6.8. ratify, if they have not yet done so, the Basel Convention Ban Amendment at the earliest possible date;

6.9. raise awareness of the importance of appropriate e-waste management among the various players involved in producing, selling, consuming, and disposing of electronic devices;

6.10. provide a platform for further pan-European developments in e-waste management systems.

7. The Assembly invites national parliaments to elaborate appropriate legislation on the management of e-waste, taking into account the European Union legal framework;

8. The Assembly invites the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe to encourage local and regional authorities to take appropriate measures in the field of e-waste management.