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European Commission
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UW KENMERK ·
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ONS KENMERK · AMB/KBB/DS/2015/WEEE_certification

Certification of WEEE treatment facilities

Dear Mr. Calleja,

OVAM, the Public Waste Agency of Flanders, supported by several WEEE value chain key actors¹ in Flanders and Belgium, calls on the European Commission to take appropriate measures to make compliance with EN50625 mandatory across Europe

Pursuant to Article 8(5) of Directive 2012/19/EU on WEEE and mandate M/518 of the European Commission, CENELEC is currently developing European standards for the treatment (including recovery, recycling and preparing for reuse) of WEEE, reflecting the state of the art.

Together with several key actors of the WEEE value chain in Flanders and Belgium, OVAM supports the development of these standards, and is in favor of making compliance with these standards mandatory in all 28 EU member states. We therefore call on the European Commission to adopt implementing acts, as provided for in article 8(5) of the Directive, to make the EN50625 standards mandatory.

Across Europe, but also within member states, there are a lot of differences between treatment facilities in terms of depollution performance, recycling rate of raw materials, safety measures and monitoring and control procedures. Currently a significant part of the WEEE generated in the EU is not treated in accordance with these generally accepted environmental standards, which results in a lower quality of recycling of WEEE within Europe. The EN50625 suite of standard that is currently being developed raises the bar, and will become the reference standard for WEEE treatment in Europe and beyond.

Certain member states, such as the Netherlands, Ireland and France, have already legislation in place that requires treatment facilities of WEEE to comply with the EN50625 standards. Some other member states are currently considering this too, while the majority of member states prefers not to take any

¹ RECUEPEL, AGORIA VLAANDEREN, FEE, VITO, KU LEUVEN, CLOSE THE GAP / WORLDLOOP, and the Belgian EERA-members (UMICORE, COOLREC, GALLOO, CLOZDLOOP and SIMS).

action in this regard as long as it is not a European obligation. When a member state decides to oblige compliance to the EN50625 standard, there is always the risk that certain quantities of WEEE will 'leak' to other member states where there is no such obligation to comply with this standard. This situation creates a distortion in the recycling market in the EU and has as a consequence a lower recycling quality throughout Europe.

If compliance with the EN50625 suite of standards remains voluntary, or mandatory in only a couple of member states, a significant part of the WEEE stream in the EU will continue to be treated in a sub-optimal manner within and outside the EU. In order to create a true level playing field in the EU, the EN 50625 set of standards should be made mandatory for all treatment facilities of WEEE in the EU, as well as for all actors who export WEEE outside of the EU. This will significantly increase the quality level in the recycling of WEEE and will have a positive impact on the ambitious goals of the circular economy within the European Union.

Since many member states lack the financial means to carry out extensive and frequent controls of all WEEE treatment facilities, we believe that the obligation to comply with EN50625 will only have a significant effect to the extent that it is accompanied by mandatory certification. This would mean that WEEE can only be treated by EN50625 certified facilities in the EU, or by facilities outside the EU that are certified to that set of standards. Only when this is made mandatory on a European level, a significant improvement can be made in terms of the environmental performance of WEEE treatment. This would also facilitate the control of WEEE flows given that in this case WEEE for recycling can only be transported to certified facilities.

We therefore strongly encourage the European Commission to take appropriate measures that make certification to the European standard EN50625 mandatory for all WEEE treatment facilities in the EU, as well as for the facilities that manage WEEE outside the EU.

Sincerely yours,

Henny De Baets
Administrator-General of OVAM

Supporting organizations:

