

RECOVERY OF ELECTRICAL AND ELECTRONIC WASTE

IN ITALY, THE EUROPEAN WEEE DIRECTIVE HAS INVOLVED ALL STAKEHOLDERS, FROM PRODUCERS TO FINAL USERS, WITH THE GOAL TO SET UP AN EFFICIENT SYSTEM FACILITATING THE CORRECT MANAGEMENT OF THIS PARTICULAR END-OF-LIFE WASTE AND REDUCING ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS.

The new Circular economy Directive is focused on the *Extended producer responsibility* (Epr) approach. This principle extends producer responsibility to the whole product life cycle and has been underlying Directive 2012/19/EU on waste electrical and electronic equipment (Weee) and its implementing legislation since 2002. In this context, the concept of electrical and electronic equipment producer responsibility has been of primary importance from the very beginning and has now been fully understood and accepted by the system.

Legislative Decree 49/2014 on waste electrical and electronic equipment has transposed the European Weee directive in Italy. Its implementation has involved all stakeholders – from producers to final users – with the goal to set up an efficient system facilitating correct Weee management and to reduce environmental impacts. This has been a major milestone in the Italian Weee system and has provided a central role to the *Centro di coordinamento Raee* (Italian Weee Coordination Centre) entrusted with new tasks.

The underlying assumption is that a system where everyone is competing provides equal status for all. In other words, competition creates efficiency which can only exist in a sound system. In this context, the Weee Coordination Centre acts as a guarantor, arbitrator and point of contact among all stakeholders involved.

The role and activities of the Weee Coordination Centre

From a legal perspective, the Weee Coordination Centre is a private consortium under collective management and governance coordinated by a Supervisory Board.



Its primary role is to ensure the correct management of separately collected Weee at a national level, so that all collective systems can work under standard operating terms and conditions. The Weee Coordination Centre decides about the distribution of collection facilities among the different collective systems and tries to increase Weee collection by the Italian municipalities to meet European goals. The Centre also enters into agreements with the municipalities, Weee collectors

and national associations of producers, distributors and treatment companies ensuring monitoring and correct Weee treatment. Acting as a central point of contact, it expresses the demands of the stakeholders involved and establishes clear and equal rules for all.

Italy has more than 2,200 public and private entities managing the various types of collection points scattered throughout the country and working with the Weee Coordination Centre and collective systems to provide collection

services, in line with the legislation in force.

The latest agreements entered into by the Coordination Centre have been signed both with Weee collectors and associations representing treatment companies, with the goal to develop the sector by ensuring competition and equal rules for all. The agreements with distributors and municipalities define the main characteristics of take-back services, standard national operating rules, take-back requirements, any sanctions and the relevant remuneration.

In particular, the Programme Agreement on Weee treatment signed between the Weee Coordination Centre and AssoRae, Assorecuperi and Assofermet – the associations representing national companies managing Weee treatment plants – became fully operational on 14 November 2016.

This document aims at ensuring standard and suitable qualification and treatment levels in household Weee treatment companies, which should register with the Weee Coordination Centre based on specific audits performed by external verifiers. Collective systems can only work with accredited facilities to treat Weee.

This agreement aims both at improving the Weee system in Italy and improving environmental protection. Based on the central role played by the Weee Coordination Centre in managing

electrical and electronic waste, it is a major step forward in the relations between collective systems and companies treating properly managed Weee in Italy.

The Programme Agreement defining the terms for Weee collection and management was signed on 26 June 2015 between the Weee Coordination Centre, producers' associations, waste collection companies associations and trading and distribution associations.

This document establishes the procedures and timeframe for Weee take-back from distributors' collection points, standard collection management throughout the country and the relevant efficiency premiums. It is a final step in the inclusive process where distribution has played an increasingly proactive role in providing correct environmental management of end-of-life Weee.

The Programme Agreement defining the terms for Weee collection and management signed between accredited producers associations, national waste collection companies associations, Anci and the Weee Coordination Centre entered into force on 1 April 2015. Premiums will be given to municipalities and companies managing one or more collection facilities and other important resources to improve Weee management.

These agreements are of the utmost importance to manage this special

type of waste in Italy. In addition to clarifying stakeholders' roles and responsibilities, they have introduced many improvements and consolidated management and operations in the Weee system.

The strong point of the Italian multi-stakeholder system lies in how the legislator has implemented European regulations, i.e. by setting up a Coordination Centre entrusted with the governance of collective systems. This central entity enables the smooth running of the system as it can provide efficient management of collected waste, act as an interface for the whole system, manage Programme Agreements and ensure real competition between collective systems, where anyone can compete according to their characteristics and the best price is easier to find.

What should be improved on a continuous basis is stakeholders' control and ongoing qualification.

In Italy, all collectors (distributors and local authorities) can deliver Weee not only to collective systems but also to private operators, provided they have the necessary authorizations for treatment. It is therefore advisable that all Weee managers have the same responsibilities on proper treatment. This is the prerequisite for a circular economy worthy of its name.

Edited by Centro di coordinamento Rae (Weee Coordination Centre)

