

Event Report

Reuse targets: why they matter and how to make them work

Why re-use targets matter and how to make them work was at the heart of the debate during a conference in Brussels on 20th April 2015. 75 participants took part in the event, organised by RREUSE, a European association representing re-use organisations and held in the European Economic and Social Committee. Speakers included the European Commission, MEPs Bas Eickhout and Karl-Heinz Florenz, the Spanish Ministry of Environment, Producer Responsibility Organisations and social enterprise networks. The conference demonstrated that re-use is measurable; targets are achievable and that support for re-use from producer responsibility organisations is possible and must be further promoted.

Re-use targets from three countries and regions were showcased. With Spain recently having set the first ever national re-use target for WEEE, it was revealed that the main reason was to create much needed job opportunity locally. In Spain the waste sector is the largest green employment driver and the re-use of WEEE is estimated to have created more than 4,700 direct jobs 2007-2013. Elsewhere in Flanders, Belgium, the target 5 kg / capita of re-used materials is currently helping create over 5000 jobs in the sector and it is likely that this target will be increased next year to an ambitious 7 kg / capita, to be achieved by 2022.

It was made clear that in countries where no quantitative objectives for re-use exist and instead are combined with recycling, the latter always is preferentially treated at the expense of re-use. What is needed are homogeneous measurement methodologies, separate re-use targets, and end of waste criteria applying to re-usable goods. Beyond targets, speakers also highlighted the need for lower taxation for re-used and repaired appliances and non-discriminatory standards for re-use operators.

The EU Commission revealed that the outcomes of a feasibility study for setting WEEE re-use targets at EU level will be made public by the beginning of summer. In particular, the study will be used to help the Commission better understand how to help provide access to re-usable goods for re-use organisations as well as the type information requirements they need to refurbish products. The Commission also clarified that the feasibility study will not part of the future revised Circular Economy package, which in the case of re-use and repair will focus on eco-design measures.

Producer Responsibility was highlighted as an important tool in helping support implementation of the waste hierarchy. French producer organisations Valdelia and Eco-Systemes showcased their efforts to support re-use activities as well as re-use operators from the social economy in France. It was made clear that positive relationships between all actors of the waste chain and re-use operators are possible.

It was concluded that re-use activities have significant environmental and socio-economic impact. Current combined re-use/recycling targets undermine the waste hierarchy. Separate re-use targets

are needed in order to ensure access to discarded reusable goods. Re-use is not a threat to producers is instead complementary to it. The second hand market is a socially established and accepted option that promotes green jobs. Without a doubt, circular economy will not be complete without promoting re-use effectively.

You can find photos of the conference [here](#).