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PARLIAMENT - COUNCIL CONCILIATION COMMITTEE

Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment

Hazardous substances in electrical and electronic equipment

The Council and the European Parliament, meeting within the Conciliation Committee¹, reached agreement today on a proposal for a Directive on waste electrical and electronic equipment (WEEE) and on a proposal on the restriction of the use of certain hazardous substances in electrical and electronic equipment (RoHS). For the two proposals to be adopted, this agreement must now be confirmed by the Parliament (majority of the votes cast) and by the Council (qualified majority voting procedure).

The two above-mentioned proposals have as their objective the protection of the soil, water and air against pollution, through better disposal of waste electrical and electronic equipment (WEEE), as well as through the restriction of the use of certain hazardous substances (eg lead, mercury, cadmium, hexavalent, chromium, and certain brominated flame retardants) in that type of equipment.

¹ The Conciliation Committee is made up of 30 members: 15 members of the European Parliament and 15 representatives of the Council. The meeting was co-chaired by Ms. Charlotte CEDERSCHIÖLD, Vice-President of the European Parliament and by Mr. Hans Christian SCHMIDT, Minister for the Environment of the Kingdom of Denmark.

Internet: <http://ue.eu.int>
E-mail: press.office@consilium.eu.int

For further information call 32 2 285 84 15– 32 2 285 63 19

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As far as the “WEEE Directive” is concerned, the compromise obtained relates in particular to the following issues:

- Collection and recovery targets: agreement was reached on a binding annual collection target of four kilograms of WEEE per person from private households, as well as on a set of specific rates of recovery for particular categories of WEEE.
- Financing: agreement was reached on allowing producers to put into practice individual or collective financing schemes for the collection of WEEE.
- Marking of appliances: agreement was reached on ensuring that producers of electrical and electronic equipment clearly mark their appliances in order to facilitate their identification and dating, as well as the later treatment and disposal of WEEE.
- Separation of waste: agreement was reached on ensuring that Member States will adopt measures in order to minimise the disposal of WEEE together with other types of waste.

Regarding the “RoHS Directive”, the compromise obtained relates in particular to the deadline of 1 July 2006, when Member States are required to ensure that new equipment placed on the market will not contain any of the hazardous substances covered by this Directive.