

RREUSE position on re-use targets

In light of the current EU Waste Policy Review, this paper explains the importance of setting separate **re-use/preparation for re-use** targets in the Waste Framework Directive (hereafter referred to as re-use targets) together with a suggested formulation.

1. Snapshot European Situation – Why we need separate re-use targets

Throwaway Society: A significant amount of re-usable products and materials are entering the waste stream, including electronics, bulky items (furniture) and textiles, and are directly being recycled, incinerated or landfilled. In Ireland alone, at least one third of items ending up in the waste stream have reuse potential. This equates to some 1.2 million items with a sale value of 60 million Euros¹. Elsewhere in France, around 2 million tonnes of furniture finds its way into an incinerator annually, a large proportion of which is still reusable².

Material Poverty and employment crisis: The EU is in a state of fragile growth with too few jobs and 25% of the EU population exposed to poverty and social exclusion³. Rising material deprivation is driving down living standards.

Lack of legislative support for waste prevention and preparation for reuse:

Whilst the EU has a waste hierarchy, there are no separate targets reinforcing waste prevention and preparation for re-use activities. Instead preparation for re-use is combined with recycling despite the two activities being completely different by definition. Setting further combined targets will not improve preparation for re-use rates or help improve methodologies about how to calculate them. The combined preparation for re-use and recycling targets, as prescribed by the new WEEE Directive, will mean that a Member State need only to increase the amount of recycling they carry out in order to reach the combined target, rather than focussing on how to improve preparation for reuse rates⁴.

In the face of these issues, support for a high-employment strategy especially through **setting re-use/preparation for re-use targets could generate at least 300,000 new resources jobs in Europe**⁵.

¹ RX3. 2013. *All Island Bulky Waste Reuse Best Practice Management Feasibility Study* [Online]. Available: http://www.rx3.ie/MDGUploadedFiles/file/rx3publications/Bulky_Waste_Reuse_Study_website.pdf.

² ADEME. 2012. *Filières & recyclage 2012: Déchets d'éléments d'ameublement. Une nouvelle filière REP voit le jour*. Available: <http://www2.ademe.fr/servlet/getDoc?id=81066&cid=96&m=3&p1=3&ref=17205>.

³ Eurostat (2014)

⁴ Article 11 of the WEEE Directive calls for an investigation into the possibility of setting separate preparation for reuse targets followed by a potential legislative proposal

⁵ EEB (2014) *Advancing Resource Efficiency in Europe: Indicators and waste policy scenarios to deliver a resource efficient and sustainable Europe* (to be published)

2. Proposal for separate re-use targets

2.1. Municipal Solid Waste:

By **2020** Member States should achieve a rate of at least **6 kg re-used material/capita**, based on the weight of materials put back on the market by **approved re-use centres and networks**⁶. In 2025 this should increase, for example to **9 kg re-used material /capita**. This figure excludes WEEE - as it is regulated by the WEEE Directive⁷.

Targets already exist in certain countries at national/regional level. In Flanders Belgium, there is a re-use target of 5 kg reused material (incl.WEEE)/ inhabitant by 2015 which is applied to social enterprises alone, combined with an employment target of 3000 FTE. This target is well on the way to being met.

The targets proposed above could include the potential contribution by other actors, although it is essential that the role of social enterprises in this field be safeguarded⁸ as they provide significant social value through provision of training opportunities to groups at risk of socio-economic exclusion (See section 4)

2.2. Material Specific Targets

In addition, RREUSE also supports the setting of waste stream specific preparation for re-use targets, because it is clear that waste streams such as furniture and textiles have proven high demand on the second hand market⁹. Together with electrical appliances (which fall out of the scope of this waste review) they represent the most common reuse/preparation for reuse activities carried out by the RREUSE network.

⁶ RREUSE describes approved re-use centres and networks as an organisation or network of organisations where used goods are either re-used and/or prepared for re-use. The term 'network' refers to a number of enterprises working together along the re-use/ preparation for re-use process chain, dividing the tasks where necessary according to their specialization (for more information see the RREUSE position on approved re-use centre and network principles [here](#))

⁷ RREUSE is in full support of a separate preparation for reuse target for WEEE

⁸ Social clauses in tendering procedures favouring actors from the social economy that carry out collection, sorting and preparation for reuse activities would help safeguard the social value of the reuse/preparation for reuse sector.

⁹ A Flash Eurobarometer survey shows that on average 56% of EU citizens would be willing to buy second hand products, 46% second hand electronics and 36% second hand textiles⁹. The survey also shows that demand in many Member States, especially in Western Europe, is higher than the EU average.

2.2.1. Furniture

A minimum of 2 kg furniture (prepared for) reuse / inhabitant by 2020

Based on RREUSE estimates of its member activities in France, the UK and Belgium, social economy networks¹⁰ are putting back between 0.5 and 1.3 kg furniture/capita on the market in these countries.

2 kg re-used furniture would be a reasonable target to be achieved by 2020, especially for countries starting from a low baseline level.

Of interest is France's new 're-use development target' to double the amount of furniture put back on the market by social economy networks over a four year period as part of their new Extended Producer Responsibility scheme for furniture waste.

2.2.2. Textiles

A minimum of 1 kg textiles (prepared for) reuse /capita by 2020

In France, there is a national objective for collecting 4.6 kg textiles/inhabitant by 2019. Of this total, there is a 90 % combined **re-use and recycling rate** (4.1 kg / inhabitant). RREUSE feels it is very important to have a minimum preparation for reuse rate of at least 30-40%¹¹ which would be around 1.5kg/inhabitant, based on what is sold in shops of approved reuse centres and networks at national level. A minimum preparation for reuse target is needed to safeguard potentially reusable clothes from being directly recycled, despite the current market for reused textiles being very strong. Textile sorting is the most labour intensive part of the textile waste management chain and promoting this activity will help create jobs locally.

3. Explanatory Notes and Measurement

3.1. Why 're-use/preparation for re-use'?

RREUSE is aware that across Member States, there are differences concerning the point at which discarded products or materials are actually considered waste. As such this can raise questions about whether 're-use' or 'preparation for re-use' is occurring from a legal point of view. In practice re-use centres sell both products/materials which originate from the waste stream but can also accept donations partially or even fully (the latter sees products not legally entering the waste stream).

¹⁰ This figure is a conservative estimate as it takes into account figures from members of the RREUSE network

¹¹ On average, 40-60% of collected used textiles have direct reuse potential. 30-40% goes to recycling and the rest is disposed of.

Therefore, setting a target based on the output of approved re-use centres would account for these differences, meaning that the target would not be a pure 'preparation for re-use target' but also include 're-use', a form of waste prevention.

3.2. Measurement

Measuring the output of re-use centres in terms of weight can be done using scales or proxy product weight charts, for example. There are a number of good practices in Europe ensuring traceability of products/materials handled by re-use centres. Approved re-use centres should report on these figures on a regular basis which would also include records of the different material streams handled.

4. Provision on access to the waste stream and protection of social value

In order to **improve preparation for reuse** rates in particular and improve job creation especially for marginalised groups, it is essential for Member States to allow approved re-use centres working in this sector to gain access to the waste stream, especially social enterprises.

Access to the waste stream is one of the biggest barriers hindering preparation for re-use rates in Europe. Therefore RREUSE supports a mandatory provision within the Waste Framework Directive for access to the waste stream for approved re-use centres and networks in order to help maximise preparation for re-use rates and meet separate targets.

For any more questions please contact:

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Who we are:

The Reuse and Recycling EU Social Enterprises network (RREUSE) is a European umbrella organisation for national and regional networks of social enterprises with re-use, repair and recycling activities. Approximately 42,000 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) employees work throughout our 26 member organisations across 15 EU Countries and one in the U.S.A. Although structures and national contexts are diverse, RREUSE members share common elements such as the protection of the environment, the fight against poverty and, especially, the progress of disadvantaged people back into the labour market. RREUSE's main goal is to put sustainable development into practice by encouraging job creation and social inclusion in the field of waste prevention and sustainable waste management activities