

Newsletter from August 30th, 2007

1. Chinese light-bulb imports spark EU controversy!

- *Punitive tariff perhaps will be lifted completely!*
- *It could cause job losses for Germany's national light-bulb manufacturer Osram, as below-cost imports from China flow into the EU!*

EU trade chief Peter Mandelson is pushing for the punitive tariff to be lifted completely – a move that could see the price paid by consumers cut by around two thirds. He has the support of a majority of European producers, including the Dutch electronics group Philips, which outsources the manufacturing of its power-saving bulbs to China.

But German industry Commissioner Günter Verheugen is opposed to the move, claiming that it could cause job losses for Germany's national light-bulb manufacturer Osram, as below-cost imports from China flow into the EU. He is expected to call for a compromise in the form of a two-year extension of duties.

Earlier in July, a spokesperson for Mandelson dismissed such claims, saying that it was purely "a question of commercial competition between two European companies" and that "Osram is seeking to continue anti-dumping measures because they hit Philips proportionately harder".

However, according to the Foreign Trade Association (FTA), an umbrella group of importers and retailers in Europe, Verheugen could have the support of a number of his colleagues, such as Commission President José Manuel Barroso and Energy Commissioner Andris Piebalgs.

FTA Legal Advisor Stuart Newman pointed to the "absurdity" of maintaining tariffs at a time when the EU is attempting to increase the use of green technologies in order to achieve its dual goal of cutting energy use and CO2 emissions by 20% by 2020. Lighting accounts for around 14% of electricity use in the EU and experts say that replacing traditional light bulbs with power-saving ones could offset CO2 emissions by 25 million tonnes per year.

Furthermore, the Commission is currently looking to phase out ordinary light bulbs completely (EurActiv 06/06/07) and European manufacturers are thought to be unable to meet total demand in this growing market.

"We cannot believe that it is in the interests either of European industry or of consumers to continue these measures," Newman told EurActiv.

But the issue is also seen as a test case for the future of the EU's anti-dumping policy, currently under review (EurActiv 08/12/06). A number of EU nations fear that it could be used as a precedent in future cases for the EU to give more weight to the interests of companies producing or sourcing goods in countries with cheap labour costs, such as China, than to those with production based in Europe – a move that manufacturing countries such as Spain, Italy and a number of new member states are likely to resist.

Source: EurActiv.com

2. News from Austria, Poland, Belgium and the UK!

- *New tariffs valid from 1 July 2007 in Austria!*
- *Preparation for an amendment of the national WEEE legislation in Poland!*
- *New rules concerning the collection of gas discharge lamps in Belgium!*

Austria:

The Austrian collective System ERA Elektro Recycling Austria GmbH published the new tariffs valid from 1 July 2007. There only have been decreasing changes in the price structure for lamps, all other categories stayed stable. For detailed information on the fees please go to:
<http://www.era-gmbh.at/index.php?id=88>

Regarding the UFH that is running 2 collective systems - one for WEEE and one for lamps - the fees changed one month earlier, on 1 June 2007 and are the following:
<http://file.ufh.at/90.pdf>

The collective system EVA also adapted their WEEE fees, starting from 1 August 2007:
http://cms.interseroh-gruppe.de/interseroh-prod/INTERSEROHGruppe/Dienstleistungen_und_Rohstoffe/EVA/images/PDF/Tarifuebersicht_EAG_2007.pdf

Poland:

As already mentioned in our last Update, the Ministry of Poland is preparing an amendment of the national WEEE legislation. As currently there are no collection targets for producers specified, a suitable solution is discussed now. First announcements of a collection target of 50% were relativised and are now expected to be between 10 to 30% for household appliances. According to CECED Polska the collection figures of household WEEE amounted to 0.5 kg per inhabitant in 2006. They appreciate the lower collection targets as they are more realistic to achieve and argue that the specifications of 10 to 30% would be enough to reach in the future the required 4 kg of the European Union.

The draft version of the WEEE regulation in Poland also includes the proposal to change the reporting frequency. EEE producers now have to report to the Ministry on a quarterly basis – the amendment will require only a semi-annual reporting.

According to the current political disturbances (it is very likely that there will be earlier parliamentary elections in October or November 2007) it is expected that there will be a delay in the introduction of the amendment of the WEEE Act.

Belgium:

Since July 2007, new rules concerning the collection of gas discharge lamps with the collective scheme Recupel exist.

Distributors or professional end users have the opportunity to call on a collection service approved by Recupel. But now it is new that distributors and b2b end users of gas discharge lamps have to register as a collection point of Recupel (household WEEE). To become a collection point they have to fill in an online registration form:

http://www.recupel.be/portal/page?_pageid=520,771095&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL.

The pick up request can also be ordered via internet and personal login (user name and password). Your transport request will be confirmed by e-mail.

The collection service that you can choose from a list

(<http://www.recupel.be/recupel/pdf/lijstvanaanvaardeophalersfr1.pdf>) guarantees to perform the collection within 10 working days. This service is free as long as the basic conditions are met (min. 200 kg per collection, without loss of time during collection, absence of packaging waste or content that is unrelated to the product, etc.).

For more detailed information please visit the homepage of Recupel:

http://www.recupel.be/portal/page?_pageid=531,2248311,531_2248349&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL

United Kingdom:

The Scottish Environment Protection Agency SEPA published information on the new regulations for the Transfrontier Shipment of Waste and its implementation in Scotland.

<http://www.sepa.org.uk/regulation/waste/trans/index.htm>

Source: kerp consulting

3. WEEE Thailand: Dealing with hi-tech waste!

- *Thailand will soon draw up its own directive on Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE), modelled on the European Union's!*
- *The country has to make up for lost time and start to educate the public as well as manufacturers!*

The Electrical and Electronics Institute has announced that Thailand will soon draw up its own directive on Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) to minimise their impact on the environment. At long last, Thailand is shaking off its complacency and doing something about the looming threat to its environment posed by the accumulation of huge amounts of hi-tech waste.

The Kingdom's directive on WEEE, modelled on the European Union's, aims to increase reuse and recycling and reduce the amount of hi-tech waste going into landfills by requiring manufacturers to arrange for the financing, collection, treatment and recovery of waste electrical and electronic goods at the end of their useful life. Distributors of such electrical and electronic goods are also obliged to allow consumers to return the equipment they no longer use for recycling, reuse or disposal, free of charge.

As in the EU, the directive on WEEE will be introduced in Thailand alongside the related directive on Restrictions of the use of certain Hazardous Substances (RoHS) in electrical and electronic equipment. Government regulatory authorities are consulting with manufacturers of electrical appliances and electronic equipment before coming up with the WEEE and RoHS, scheduled for implementation sometime next year.

More recycling of hi-tech junk can only be a good thing for the environment. The fact that manufacturers will be responsible for taking back their products for recycling, reuse or disposal will give them incentive to design equipment in a more environmentally efficient way, such as using parts and components that can be easily taken apart for recycling and reuse, if not also easy disposal.

The proliferation of household electrical appliances and electronic equipment - including computers, television sets, DVD players, mobile phones and refrigerators - grew tremendously in recent years as the country's economic and social development accelerated and people's purchasing power rose markedly. Consumers regularly trade up and upgrade their electrical appliances and electronic equipment and dump anything that is no longer of use.

Until now, little thought was given to how or where to dispose of all of this hi-tech junk. In the meantime, mountains of electrical and electronic waste have accumulated and are now clogging up landfills. Such waste is usually very difficult to dispose of safely because compared with more common recyclable trash like paper, cans and bottles, hi-tech electronics constitute an exceptional complex form of waste. They typically contain dozens of densely packed substances that can be difficult to separate and recycle, and many are highly toxic. For example, cathode-ray tubes in computer monitors and television sets that people are now beginning to throw away after upgrading to liquid-crystal display monitors. The cathode-ray tubes contain lead, a neurotoxin, as do printed circuit boards. Mercury, another neurotoxin, is used to light flat-panel display screens. Several types of batteries and circuit boards contain cadmium, a recognised carcinogen. The old-style tubes also contain polyvinyl chloride, brominated flame retardants, copper, beryllium, barium, zinc, chromium, silver and nickel, which are costly to dispose of safely.

What is worrying is that Thailand has never had a recycling industry to speak of. The country has to make up for lost time and start to educate the public as well as manufacturers about the importance of introducing directives on WEEE and RoHS. Under the planned directives, manufacturers must contribute

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an amount of money, based on their output, towards setting up a fund for safe disposal of hi-tech garbage. Whether or how much of such an additional cost will be passed on to consumers is still to be decided.

Manufacturers and consumers have joint responsibility to protect the environment. Manufacturers, already under obligation to ensure environmentally sound production processes, will have to take on the additional responsibility of taking back their products for recycling, reuse and final disposal, while consumers should consume more responsibly and be willing to chip in by contributing a small fraction of the amounts they spend on new electrical appliances and electronic equipment towards the fund for disposal of hi-tech trash.

Source: The Nation Opinion