

EPR : the challenge of the large number of treatment methods

Session leader: Mr Alain GELDRON

A favourable path ... to be “reformed”

The Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) program has made great progress, pushing producers more along the lines of eco-design and their responsibility for waste generated by our companies. But faced with all these measures, many questions are left unanswered. The Grenelle de l'Environnement was an ideal moment to raise these ideas again. First attempts at answering.

Household waste, batteries, unused cars, pneumatics waste, electrical and electronic equipment ... Since the 90's, many EPR-oriented waste management industries have been created. Today, there are around fifteen of them.

An improved conform agreement

«If the Grenelle recommendations are to be respected – a 15% decrease of waste destined for disposal underground or to be incinerated before 2012 – we must rethink our idea of prevention and start focusing on recycling,» says Alain Geldron, Head of the Ademe Recycling Industry organisation department. *“Unfortunately the EPR generally aims at high recycling goals which tend to confuse the message for the general population at the risk of making these initiatives counterproductive”.* The high-priority objective is to therefore reach a sort of conform agreement on a national level, much “implored” by all Grenelle followers. Among some of the first actions: a study regarding the efficiency of the signs and recycling instructions ... with the results expected by the end of the year.

The other question which is up in the air regards the definition of what are exactly the extended producer responsibilities. *“This concept is rather ambiguous”* continues Alain Geldron. *“Especially since no concrete answer exists. As when it is*



put on the market, we don't know if the product is going to be used by a private individual or by a company. This is the problem with cardboard storage boxes, micro computing ... and the producer is well aware of not having the same obligations depending on the situation.”

The difficulty is therefore to successfully determine the product fields which must be checked. If this is rather simple for used tires, it becomes more difficult with products such as paints and solvents (HHW - Household Hazardous Waste) which are not usually put in this waste category. *“In France we are very focused on having the product being considered household waste. In Belgium they decided to reason in terms of the nature and volume of packaging. For example, a pot of paint weighing less than 20 litres is considered as household waste. Above this weight, it changes to a different status.»*

Review the rules

This is a large risk, as it all depends on the definition given to “household”. The HHW could include related wastes, such as those from artisans or SME. Alain Geldron finishes by saying *“This HHW example shows how we must not reform all the sectors, even if there are some specificities. There should definitely be a legislative and regulatory update if we want to improve our waste management policies by the EPRs.”*