

Brussels, 26 November 2008

Will the Commission let the WEEE and RoHS proposals undermine its European Economic Recovery Plan?

Orgalime welcomes the Commission's adoption today of a European Economic Recovery Plan to support the real economy. Such a coordinated European approach does indeed provide an encouraging and positive signal for Europe's manufacturing companies. For the engineering industry, in particular the proposal to focus more efforts on energy efficiency, on hi-tech infrastructures and on R&D in the area of enabling technologies, it is a welcome signal.

"It is indeed high time that the European institutions & national governments appreciate the fundamental contribution that our industry - the EU's major manufacturing sector - provides to the European economy. The goods and services that our companies provide create real jobs and real wealth: this is particularly important at a time when the financial sector has shown its limitations and is no longer providing the support that the economy, including manufacturing industry, has come to expect of it." stated Orgalime President, Robert Mahler who added *"it is therefore particularly important at this time, that governments and the EU institutions should get their priorities right: they need to focus on helping companies to keep skilled manufacturing jobs here in Europe, rather than on pushing a dogmatic regulatory agenda which imposes significant new burdens on EU manufacturers."*

It is therefore with some dismay that Orgalime has learnt that the Commission intends to launch a revision of the Waste electrical and electronic (WEEE) and RoHS Directives, which, if adopted, will impose significant new burdens and costs on the engineering industry.

The WEEE proposal which is about to be issued, without prior public consultation of stakeholders or supporting data, will force significant and costly structural changes to the recently established system of electrical and electronic waste collection: costs of collection of waste from households will rise sharply and will inevitably have to be borne by consumers without providing a better or any benefit to the environment. Even the Commission's own preparatory review studies do not justify such a fundamental change. These proposals will also undermine the internal market by still allowing divergent national requirements on products put on their markets: now that the EU has established a common internal market framework for eco design, such legislative incoherence should be phased out.

Finally the RoHS proposals will create areas of incoherence with the recently adopted REACH regulation, by focusing under RoHS on new substances which are already on the REACH candidate list. This will just make matters more confusing for companies.

See Over

Orgalime, the European Engineering Industries Association, speaks for 35 trade federations representing some 130,000 companies in the mechanical, electrical, electronic, metalworking & metal articles industries of 23 European countries. The industry employs over 11 million people in the EU and in 2007 accounted for some €1,813 billion of annual output. The industry not only represents more than one quarter of the output of manufactured products but also a third of the manufactured exports of the European Union.

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“It really is time that the Commission adopted a coherent approach: at the macroeconomic level, they are making attractive proposals, but in their day to day approach to regulation, in particular in the area of climate change and the environment, through a raft of ill conceived and ill drafted regulation, they are just making Europe a less attractive environment for companies to invest in: this only increases the temptation of manufacturing companies to redeploy outside the EU. And our figures – we are the suppliers of capital goods to all industries - show that this is happening. So now really is the time to take meaningful initiatives for growth and jobs in Europe” concluded Mahler.

Ends

Notes for Editors:

Orgalime covers all the sectors included in the WEEE and RoHS Directives with the exclusion of toys.

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