

Summary action A1

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A1 preparatory action has three objectives: (1) review the legislative experience at a domestic and international level, (2) review the various economic instruments available to legislators in order to put into practice effective policies designed to manage WEEE and (3) consider the international experience to ensure the correct implementation of life cycle assessment (LCA). Analysis of the comparative experience in the judicial field has allowed us to systemise and bring together all current legislation in Spain (including legislation at a state and regional level), France and Portugal. A connection has also been established between this legislation and the most prominent case law, in order to facilitate its interpretation and application. We also offer brief technical-legal instruction to facilitate the handling of regulations by staff without an academic legal background.

The legal work required for A1 preparatory action was simple as far as Portugal and France were concerned, as these are states which are centralised to the extent that each has a single tier of legislation which regulates the handling of WEEE nationwide. In the case of Spain the complexity was greater as, in addition to legislation applicable on a national level, each Autonomous Region can introduce the variants it deems appropriate.

All of this work is set out in two identical documents (each over 1,000 pages in length) - one in PDF (the format required for deliverables) and the other in MS Word, with hyperlinks in the index which take the reader directly to the content in question, making it easy to use.

Focusing our attention now on the economic instruments that are potentially available in order to implement effective WEEE management policies, there are three main groups: "command and control" regulations, economic or market instruments and other less-commonly implemented instruments. Having analysed the various instruments, in economic, environmental and social terms, and reviewing all relevant theoretical and empirical literature, we concluded that the market-based economic instruments potentially offer the best results, taking into account various criteria (economic efficiency, environmental effectiveness, administrative feasibility, social acceptance and distributive factors). It is also true to say that under certain circumstances (i. e. where there are doubts concerning regulatory costs, doubts concerning environmental costs or results) other regulatory instruments such as command and control regulations or voluntary approaches may also offer good results in terms of the administrative feasibility and social acceptability of environmental policy.

In order to carry out the work required to ensure success in the following phases of the project, the A1 preparatory action also studied the various elements, recognised and supported on an international level, to be taken into consideration to ensure correct life-cycle assessment (LCA).

To this end, the archives of international bodies with authority in the matter, such as the International Organization for Standardisation (ISO) and the Institute for Environment and Sustainability (IES), a division of the European Commission's Joint Research Centre, were consulted.

We also consulted a number of sources covering the promotion and development of this environmental impact analysis model, such as The Life Cycle Initiative. These initiatives are promoted and run by leading companies in various knowledge fields related to LCA, which may be utilities, petrochemistry, raw-material processors and waste managers, as well as technological companies, development centres and a number of related associations who have

also collated specific material, as well as illustrating approaches to results analysis and interpretation outlining specific cases of various applications.

As a result of this research we gained greater awareness of the international regulatory framework (ISO 14040 and ISO 14044), as well as the various ways of evaluating the results obtained from carrying out life cycle assessment (Impact2002+, Eco-Indicator99, LIME, TRACI etc.) and the various organisations considered representative in order to better analyse the environmental impact of a project such as this.

