

Global Forum on Environment: Promoting Sustainable Materials Management through Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)

17-19 June 2014, Tokyo, Japan

Over the last two decades, Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) has developed as a key policy to help improve recycling and reduce landfilling in both OECD and developing countries. The OECD Global Forum on Environment taking place in Tokyo on 17-19 June 2014 will gather policy-makers, corporates, local governments and NGOs from all over the world in order to identify the key challenges and opportunities for further developing EPR policies.

The basic principle of EPR is that producers should assume responsibility for managing the waste generated by their products, lessening the burden on municipalities. This implies, for example, that electronics companies finance and organise the recycling of computers and mobile devices when they are discarded by consumers. In 2001, OECD led the way in EPR policy design through its still widely-cited [Guidance Manual on EPR](#). Since then most OECD countries have implemented EPR policies in key sectors such as packaging, electronics, batteries, tyres and vehicles. In recent years, emerging economies in Asia, Africa and South America have also started to follow the move. To date, there are approximately 400 EPR programmes in place around the world.

Successful EPR can reduce public spending on waste management, dramatically improve recycling rates and even influence product design to be more environmentally-friendly. In France for example, about 15% of the budget spent on municipal waste management is now financed by producers via EPR policies. Sharp improvements in recycling rates can be seen following introduction of such schemes, for example in Japan where the recycling of containers and packaging waste increased by 27% between 1997 and 2000 (1.25 to 1.59 million tons).

OECD work on EPR takes place as part of a broader effort to move towards resource efficient societies. The total volume of material resources extracted, harvested and consumed worldwide reached 62 billion metric tonnes (Gt) in 2008, a 65% increase since 1980 and an estimated 8 fold increase over the last century. It is projected to reach 100 Gt per year by 2030, generating increasing pressures on environmental resources as well as waste. Going for green growth and a resource efficient economy is therefore a major environmental, development and macroeconomic challenge today. In this context, the use of policies that ensure sustainable materials management, building on the principles of the 3Rs – Reduce, Reuse, Recycle – is crucial. OECD is advising governments on Sustainable Materials Management (SMM) policies that aim to reduce the amount of resources that human economic activity requires and to diminish the environmental impacts from their production and consumption.

As expressed by Simon Upton, Director at the OECD Environment Directorate, “*Sustainable materials management helps to address the social, environmental and economic impacts throughout the life-cycle of a product or material. This can improve resource productivity and competitiveness. EPR policies are an effective tool to engage producers in that process.*”

This OECD Global Forum on Environment presents a unique opportunity for a global audience to exchange on their experience in designing and implementing EPR programmes. This is especially important as experience with EPR policies to date has shown significant variation across countries and between product sectors. The OECD can play a key role in facilitating peer-learning and best-practice sharing among governments, the private sector and NGOs. The outcomes of discussions will help shape updated policy recommendations on EPR by the OECD.