

WEEE MANAGEMENT IN URUGUAY

COUNTRY DATA

- **Inhabitants:** 3.3 million (2010)
- **Area:** 176.215 Km² (terrestrial)
- **GDP (PPP):** 14.000 USD/cap.

- **Internet:** 1.4 million users (2009)
- **Notebooks** 450.000 (imports for 2011)
- **Computers:** 650.00 (imports for 2011)
- **Cell-phones:** 1.4 million (imports for 2011)

- **EE-Industry:** most of the electronic equipment is imported, there is assembly of personal computers based on imported electronic components.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

1. Article 21st. of the General Law for the Environmental Protection (Law 17.283, LGPA) states that it is of general interest the protection of the environment against any environmental impact derived from the management and disposal of waste.
2. At present a working group drafts a Waste Law to be submitted to the Parliament, with the objective of introducing new instruments, including economic instruments, and tools which improve Uruguay's capabilities to promote and develop a safer and modern waste management.
3. A specific WEEE Decree will be developed between late 2012 and mid 2013, based on the extended responsibility principle applied to importers in the framework of the General Law for the Environmental Protection (Law 17.283, LGPA).
4. Basel convention.

RECYCLING INFRASTRUCTURE

The first experiences in WEEE disassembly started with a former street pickers' group which then splited and nowadays works on demand at the premises of an authorized waste management company. Additionally, in 2011 another company started providing services. These involve WEEE disassembly, recovery and recycling of non ferrous fractions (e.g. copper from power cables.), recovery of ferrous fraction (e.g. from computer casings) to be sent to recycling. There is recycling for plastics however it is partially applicable to those used in EEE. Finally, several fractions can not be processed in the country, thus they are exported in the framework of the Basel Convention these include CRTs, printed circuit boards and cell-phones.

In any case services are not enough demanded nor stable for the companies to grow and improve their capacities for specific WEEE dismantling and processing. However, given that in the short term a legal framework will be developed and enter in force, these companies are making plans to upgrade their processes and services.

MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS/ TAKE-BACK CAMPAIGNS

To date Uruguay lacks of a formal WEEE management system for the public and organizations to manage their equipment. Therefore, in early 2012 the National Directorate for the Environment (DINAMA) convened EEE-importers, Business Chambers, telecommunications companies among others to conform a working group aimed at designing a voluntary pilot – experience to take back, dismantle, recycle and export as required. This should take into account the existing initiatives and serve for introduce the sectors into the waste management while preparing them for the Decree elaboration in the very short term.

At the moment, several systems exist mainly for the IT equipment:

Since 2007 Uruguay has an educational program at primary school and secondary school level, called PLAN CEIBAL based on the philosophy "one computer per child" and every child attending in the public education system receives a computer similar to a netbook. These pieces of equipment receive regular maintenance, parts and obsolete equipment are changed and up to now, stocked until an adequate quantity and treatment is available.

In 2011, the public telecommunications company (ANTEL) launched the ANTEL INTEGRA program which complements its plan for universal access to internet in low income families, providing a PC along with the connection. To this end, ANTEL receives old computers which comply with a basic standard (e.g. RAM capacity), refurbishes and loads them with open source software. IT students work in the workshops. The system not only enables to trace the equipment given to the homes but also serves to know whether is used or not. Pieces of equipment and parts discarded during the refurbishment process, are stocked at ANTEL's warehouses.

Since march 2012, ANTEL started a national cell phone take back program, including batteries and chargers. These three fractions are stocked separately at their warehouses.

Finally, several Ministries and enterprises store their WEEE, mainly IT devices, until quantities are enough to send them to either dismantling and export. In the meanwhile, all pieces of equipment are tested. Those which could still be suitable for home use, are donated either to NGOs, schools or to the ANTEL INTEGRA program.

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