

WRITTEN QUESTION P-6125/08
by Johan Van Hecke (ALDE)
to the Commission

Subject: Electronic waste sent to developing countries

According to recent reports by Greenpeace, National Geographic, the Basel Action Network and Melodies in Marketing, only 15% of waste from TV, DVD and computer equipment currently reach the official processing facilities. The greatest proportion goes to legal and illegal dealers and is often dumped in sub-Saharan developing countries. In those countries the environmental rules are much less strict and labour costs are much lower; furthermore, thousands of children there often work on a single rubbish tip to retrieve any items of value from this material. Enormous quantities of lead and toxic chemicals such as dioxins are thus released, with potentially serious health consequences.

Some producers of electronic equipment such as Sony, Dell, Nokia, etc. are assuming their responsibility in this area and are paying for the collection and recycling of their discarded products. Other firms, such as Philips, do not. Can the Commission investigate whether this is actually being done? If so, can it force the producers to assume their responsibilities?