To: Monika Reichart

From: Manuel Truxa

Date: 18.12.2018

Subject: E-Waste

**Report about E-Waste**

**General background**

E-Waste is a very important issue in our time. The aim of this report is to inform about e-waste and analyse the reasons and consequences of e-waste. The data mentioned is from the infograph “Occidental E-Waste Impact in Africa” of 2013 published by the company WOELAB, a business operating in a number of West African countries whose main business is building 3D-printers out of electronic waste.

**Trends**

The first very important trend is that in Africa, 515 tons of electronic waste are burned and not recycled (about 93% of the waste). About 35 cities are affected by this pollution. IN 2013, 564.263 computers were sent to West Africa although 2 percent of these were still fully functional. The major problem is that the local population has zero benefits and not the equipment to recycle electronic waste properly. The remains of an electronical device after it has been burned is approximately worth 0,00027$ - this may be one of the reasons why Western European countries export their e-waste rather than recycle it “at home”.

**Problem of burning electronic waste**

Burning this kind of material releases a lot of toxic chemicals that can cause cancer and other diseases. Among these highly hazardous chemicals are for example hydrochloric acid, dioxins, phosgene, benzene and polyaromatic hydrocarbon. Since the lack of safe processes and environmental protection laws make recycling very dangerous, it is the local population and the environment in African countries that are suffering severely from heavy pollution.

Furthermore, most workers in these combustion factories are child workers, exact numbers are of course difficult to determine. The reason is that these countries are very poor, and children are forced to work to feed their families.

**Conclusion**

There are a lot of things that must change:

* Governments, both local African and Western European governments should set stricter rules, regulations and taxes in order to induce manufacturers and retailers to recycle waste in the country of origin in order to deal more effectively with their own garbage.
* Manufacturers should design their products in more environmentally friendly ways, for example in modules so that it is possible, if any component is broken, to exchange the broken part and not to be obliged to buy a new device. Moreover, companies should take more responsibility for the disposal of their products.
* Consumers should evaluate what they have and buy new devices only when they are needed rather than respond to advertising. Ideally, they should buy more durable products with a longer life-span.

Even though this problem is a global one and will require government action as well as manufacturers taking on responsibility, it should not be forgotten that every consumer can contribute to a world with less e-waste.

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