

# Visible environmental fees: Consumer awareness and behaviour



- **Context of visible fees (vEMCs) in Ireland and consumer survey**
- **Main findings of the survey & comparison with results from the Swiss survey**
- **Future of visible fees, eco modulation, labelling, awareness raising**



# Visible fees (vEMCs) - Irish Context

- **Applicable to certain sub-categories of EEE** and approved at national level.
- **Paid by Producers on EEE reported to the PRL Blackbox** in addition to recycling charges – €0.05 to €10.
- **Visible to consumers** – on shelves, online, on receipts, ads...
- vEMCs assist **raising awareness when buying or browsing for new appliances** and support the development of additional infrastructure and programmes to increase take back of WEEE, contributions to the EPA for R&D and enforcement, and to Local Authorities site.

Category	Visible Environmental Management Cost (vEMC)	Placed On The Market	Cost, Excl VAT*	VAT	vEMC**
1.1.1	All side by side / American style refrigeration	Per Unit	€8.13	€1.71	€10.00
1.2.1	All Larder and two door (under / over configuration) appliances	Per Unit	€4.07	€0.85	€5.00
1.2.2	Chest Freezers above 150 litres	Per Unit	€4.07	€0.85	€5.00
1.3.1	All under counter / table top refrigeration	Per Unit	€4.07	€0.85	€5.00
1.3.2	Chest Freezers below 150 litres	Per Unit	€4.07	€0.85	€5.00
2.1.1	Large Televisions 73cm+	Per Unit	€4.07	€0.85	€5.00
3.1.1	All fluorescent lamps	Per Unit	€0.12	€0.03	€0.15
3.1.2	High and low pressure gas discharge lamps including pressure sodium lamps and metal halide lamps	Per Unit	€0.12	€0.03	€0.15
3.1.3	All compact fluorescent lamps (PLS and CFLs)	Per Unit	€0.12	€0.03	€0.15
3.2.1	LED Lamps	Per Unit	€0.04	€0.01	€0.05
4.1.1	Washing machines, washer dryer, clothes dryer, dish washing machine	Per Unit	€4.07	€0.85	€5.00
4.1.2	Combination oven etc (see PRL Listing for full description)	Per Unit	€4.07	€0.85	€5.00
4.1.3	Other large appliances e.g. sunbed	Per Unit	€4.07	€0.85	€5.00
4.5.1	Large LED Luminaire	Per Unit	€0.04	€0.01	€0.05
5.5.1	Small LED Luminaire	Per Unit	€0.04	€0.01	€0.05

\*Invoiced to Producer  
\*\*Visible to Consumer

**32" High Definition Large Screen TV**

Only **€299.99**

*Included in this price is a contribution to recycling costs of €5.00*



# WEEE Ireland's work with distributors

- **Compliance and retailer registration support for all Members**



- **Additional support for online sellers**

Collaboration with Members selling online (based abroad or locally) to explore available take back solutions

- ***We'll take it back* programme**

The '*We'll Take it Back*' Programme supports electrical retailers in their obligation to offer a FREE e-waste take back service. It gives incentives to retailers to go beyond WEEE Regulations take back requirements.



# 'We'll take it back' Programme



- Purchase is no longer required within participating stores to avail of free take back, as long as a similar product is offered by the retailer.
- Majority of WEEE taken back by WEEE Ireland in retail shops – 56% in 2020
- Importance of retailer take back to complement network of Civic Amenity sites.



# Consumer Survey Research Background and Objective

- vEMCs: Understanding Consumer Awareness and Attitudes
- Survey conducted in tandem by **WEEE Ireland** and **SENS eRecycling** on the Irish and Swiss markets with the same methodology. Questionnaire created by SENS eRecycling.
- **30 qualitative in-depth interviews** conducted by third party professional ; Nationwide (rural and urban) - Age spread 33-68 years; Even mix of male and females; All had bought a Large Household Appliance in last 18 months
- The findings from both markets were used collaboratively to **inform the WEEE Forum Eco Modulation Project**



# Main findings

- Consumer awareness of product EOL, vEMCs, WEEE Ireland *We'll take it back* programme
- Consumer mindset and expectations



# vEMCs are seen positively by all - transparency and awareness

- People interviewed were **familiar with the visuals** of visible Environmental Management Costs in stores
- Seen as a **green credit** and reassures people that the product will be disposed of in a safe and environmentally-sound way
- People interviewed liked seeing the **monetary value of the contribution**. For them, it indicated **transparency** and made them aware that recycling has a cost.



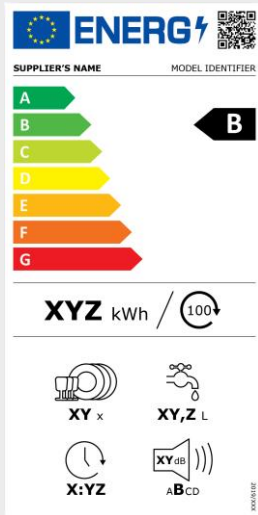


# Visible fees' influence on the purchase decision

- Overall, it's not a cost they perceived to be significant as the **amount is nominal**, especially when buying a large appliance
- **Varied opinions whether they would pay a higher price for a greener appliance** (although not significantly higher €20-50). Some agreed for a moderate increase, whereas for others, it should not be costing more.
- Developing a visible **fee structure depending on some durability/recyclability criteria of a product** could be too much information and confusing. It would makes them wonder if it would be used as an opportunity to increase prices.
- Feedback from this survey also noted that if the fee was an **add-on at the till it would invite scrutiny from people** and could be perceived as a tax or a levy.



# Communicating *Green* is more important than the specifics of the fee



- The **characteristics of the product itself (options, brand, price)** are more relevant. Consumers want to understand if the overall appliance is what they would consider “green”
  - **Energy efficient**
  - **Recyclable**
  - **Safe**

More meaningful if people know what difference they make and their impact on a personal level.

**Durability:** *‘I want my product to last a long time....so I don’t have to replace it’*

**Efficiency:** *‘I want my product to be energy efficient....so I don’t have higher bills’*

**Family:** *‘I want to feel I’m doing my bit...because I’m thinking of the future of my children’*



# Main findings and differences SENS eRecycling's results



# Comparison with Swiss survey results

## Similarities:

- **Good awareness of visible fees** (vEMCs, ARF) but currently low impact of this fee on the buying decision.
- Looking for **accessible and simple information on sustainability**.
- Notion of **urgency** when buying EEE
- If consumers are not informed about a problem, they do not care about that problem. Knowing more makes the consumer matter more.

## Differences :

- **In Switzerland, no understanding of why an appliance that is easy to recycle has a lower ARF.** In the minds of Swiss consumers, sustainability is expensive. For them, a lower ARF would mean lower quality recycling of the product at end-of-life.
- Different **ranking of criteria influencing their purchase**



# Differences between the Irish and Swiss findings

Ireland

Switzerland

**Practicalities** – will it meet my needs, correct size

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**Brand** – is it reputable, trustworthy

**Energy** – is it efficient

**Price** – is it in my range

**Brand** – is it reputable, trustworthy

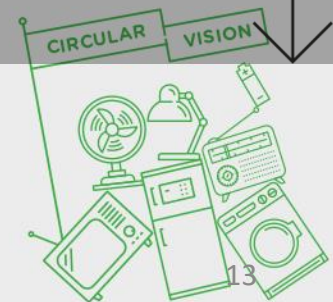
**Energy** – is it efficient

**Design**

**Design**

**Price**

time-related



# What can we draw from these results ?



# Shifting from Positive Intent to Positive Action

- People are more and more informed. As **consumers' values evolve**, purchasing will be more discerning and expectations from manufacturers will rise.
- The shopping experience can already be stressful and vulnerable to information overload. **Clear and consistent communications** can empower the decision-making process.
- **Graphics, colour coding, traffic light system** were all found to be effective in communicating essential information quickly. Consumers are also looking for an **authoritative stamp of approval from public body** –accessible, standardised, trusted.



# There is a general awareness of *'We'll take it back'*

- Most knew of it, **seen as a good initiative**
- Limited awareness that any appliance could be brought to any participating store whether it was purchased there or not
- Having a free take back option not just convenient, it is a **win for consumers and the environment**





# Wider context

Regulation and policy, future of visible fees in Ireland, eco modulation, awareness raising



# Future of visible fees, eco-modulation & awareness raising

- Interesting results, **informing policy-making** in Ireland and Europe.
- How can WEEE Ireland **better support our members and retailers** to ensure awareness, accessibility of information and limited administrative burden?
- At present, number of initiatives underway covering these topics:
  - Recent changes to **energy labelling requirements** for a number of products in the EU
  - **Eco-modulation** for EEE.
  - Upcoming **EU Regulation for batteries**, battery passport, QR code and labelling obligations
  - **Visible fees agreement extended**, to be reviewed by mid-2023
- Highlighted **consumer interest and desire to know more** through clear and accessible information. **Challenge of information overload.**



