

OECD countries update rules on international shipments of electronic waste

25 June 2024 – The OECD has updated its rules for the transboundary movement of electrical and electronic waste (e-waste), meaning that each member country will now control e-waste in conformity with its domestic legislation and international law.

The [OECD Decision on Transboundary Movements of Wastes](#) contains rules that facilitate trade in certain types of waste destined for recovery operations between 38 OECD member countries, while protecting human health and the environment. Allowing waste to be treated in countries with a cost advantage in sorting or recycling can help to boost global recycling rates and strengthen the markets for secondary materials. It also provides a framework for environmentally sound waste trade from or to any OECD country that is not a Party to the international waste shipments regime of the [Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal](#), such as the United States.

The Basel Convention sets rules for controlling the transboundary movements of waste it covers. These rules aim at protecting human health and the environment by ensuring that the waste is managed in an environmentally sound manner. There are currently 191 Parties to the Basel Convention, which entered in force in 1992. In June of 2022, the Conference of the Parties to the Basel Convention adopted by consensus a series of amendments to some annexes of the Convention, which resulted in controls of the transboundary movements of e-waste and a requirement for the prior informed consent (PIC) procedure to now apply to all electronic and electrical waste ([June 2022 amendments concerning e-waste](#)). The amendments will become effective as of 1 January 2025.

Currently, certain e-waste can be traded under the OECD Decision without such controls, facilitating intra-OECD trade in this waste for recycling in an environmentally sound and economically efficient manner.

Following an objection to the automatic incorporation of the recent e-waste amendments to the Basel Convention into the OECD Decision, a series of meetings were held in the framework of the OECD between October 2022 and February 2024 to discuss whether and how to update the rules for e-waste shipped between member countries in light of the Basel Convention e-waste amendments.

As there was no consensus on the continued applicability of the current trade regime, starting 1 January 2025, each OECD member country may apply controls to the transboundary movements of e-waste, in conformity with its domestic legislation and international law. For example, some member countries may continue to apply the current OECD Decision rules for e-waste, while others may apply the Basel Convention controls.

To ensure transparency, OECD member countries have committed to inform the OECD Secretariat of their controls for e-waste, and the list of controls applied will be made publicly available.

The OECD Decision continues to be an important instrument for OECD Member countries to foster a more circular economy through co-operation and trade in waste and scrap for recycling.

[See in track edits the agreed amendments to the OECD Decision, entering into force on 1 January 2025](#)

For further information, please contact the Environment Directorate at envcontact@oecd.org. Journalists may also contact the OECD Media Office at news.contact@oecd.org.