

CRNI response to WSP research into collection, recycling, repair and reuse of electronics and batteries in Ireland

CRNI's role in the repair/reuse sector, specifically for electronics

Community Resources Network Ireland (CRNI) is the representative body for community-based reuse, repair and recycling network in Ireland. Through its active and committed membership of around 40 social enterprises and community-centred organisations, CRNI serves the unique and valuable role of developing resource efficiency and circular economy initiatives via information sharing, member opportunities, and sector development and advocacy.

Our mission is to provide a range of practical supports to our members, and to promote community-based, sustainable management of reusable resources to tackle Ireland's growing waste problem. These practical supports include networking opportunities, training provision and information sharing. We represent the interests of our members to policy makers and ensure their voices are heard in policy development.

Approximately 20% of CRNI's current members handle WEEE within their material streams; half of these deal mainly or exclusively with WEEE.

Main drivers to increasing reuse and repair of electronics in Ireland

The main drivers to increasing reuse and repair of electronics in Ireland as identified in the EPA's National Repair Survey 2022¹ and National Reuse Survey 2023² can be summarised as follows:

- Cost savings are a key motivation for reuse: two thirds of people bought or received a second-hand item for cost reasons.
- The public strongly believe batteries in electronic products should be removable and replaceable by the end-user or by independent operators during the product lifetime;
- There is a strong public demand for producers to provide repair manuals for free
- Over two thirds believe that it should be easy to disassemble and repair mobile phones, tablets, computers and computer servers
- Key encouragements to repair are access to repair manuals or videos, and the cost of repair being less than buying new.

¹

<https://www.epa.ie/our-services/monitoring--assessment/circular-economy/behavioural-insights/repair-national-attitudes--behaviours-survey-2022/>

²

<https://www.epa.ie/our-services/monitoring--assessment/circular-economy/behavioural-insights/reuse-national-survey-2023/>

- Over half of respondents saw a clear link between climate change and reusing or repairing a product rather than buying new

Main challenges/barriers to increasing reuse/repair

The main challenges and barriers to reuse and repair as identified in the EPA's surveys (noted earlier) can be summarised as follows:

- Concerns for the quality of second hand items is a common barrier: almost two thirds of people mentioned the perceived quality of second hand items as a concern (although this concern is not borne out in people who bought or received reused items)
- Availability of items for reuse is a barrier, with over half of people saying they would buy second hand items more frequently if they were more readily available.
- Familiarity of the term "Right to Repair" is moderate, at less than one third of respondents
- Awareness of repair services is low (15% of people strongly agree that 'I am aware of repair services for the products I own')
- Awareness of [Repairmystuff.ie](https://www.repairmystuff.ie) (Ireland's national online repair directory) is low at only 11% of respondents having heard of it
- Time required is the biggest challenge with self-repair – over one third of those who self-repair say the length of time is the main difficulty.

CRNI's relationship with WEEE Ireland and ERP Ireland around enabling the reuse/repair of electronics

Navigating the reuse and repair sector

- In 2021 we were approached by the Senior Operations Executive of WEEE Ireland to discuss implementation of a Reuse initiative in Ireland as part of the WEEE EU Directive. We assisted them to identify Reuse companies that specialise in electrical appliances.
- In 2021 we supported WEEE Ireland's research into Skills Needs Analysis for white goods field service technicians by sharing a questionnaire with our WEEE members. The questionnaire was an opportunity for our members to articulate the talent needs of the sector and to shape future skills training delivery, based on their insights, knowledge, and expertise. The intended outcomes included plans to develop a curriculum and run a pilot training course for Irish Domestic Appliance Field Service Technicians, based on expertise already in the reuse and repair sector.

Advocacy and knowledge exchange

- WEEE Ireland have agreed to contribute to several CRNI conferences and events, including sponsoring an independent guest speaker
- CRNI was invited to have an exhibition stand at a WEEE Ireland national conference

More generally WEEE Ireland have been a helpful ally in facilitating CRNI's work, for example by facilitating introductions and passing on requests on our behalf to large retailers.

To my knowledge, the extent of CRNI's working relationship with ERP Ireland is limited to various consultation groups (eg DCEE's WEEE/Batteries Monitoring Group, National Waste Forum).

WEEE Ireland's / ERP Ireland's effectiveness in facilitating reuse/repair (based on CRNI's experience)

CRNI doesn't have direct experience of either WEEE Ireland or ERP Ireland facilitating reuse or repair; however I am aware of several of WEEE Ireland's initiatives to promote reuse and repair. For example:

- WEEE Ireland partnered with the White Goods Association to promote authorised repair of electrical appliances on RepairMyStuff.ie
- WEEE Ireland partnered with the White Goods Association and technical training agency FIT (FastTrack to Information Technology) to create the 'Circular Economy Skills Initiative' (CESI) course which trains white goods repair technicians

Recommendations for WEEE Ireland / ERP Ireland to facilitate reuse/repair

Details on any support received from WEEE Ireland / ERP Ireland

(see above – **Navigating the reuse and repair sector** and **Advocacy and knowledge exchange**)

What type of support would be the most valuable to support your organisation in increasing reuse/repair of electronics?

- Improving separate collection with a view of facilitating preparation for re-use

Recommendations for DCEE to improve reuse/repair rates

- Increasing consumer confidence in reused items via quality mark initiatives such as ReMark

- Awareness raising campaigns for [Repairmystuff.ie](https://www.repairmystuff.ie)
- Availability of well regulated online market places for second-hand items, with protections for buyers and sellers
- Aligning any WEEE-related economic incentives with the waste hierarchy to promote reuse and repair over recycling
- Implementation of Digital Product Passports with information on disassembly
- Having a separate quantitative target for preparation for re-use - as is already the case in Spain, France and Wallonia - would ensure a proper application of the waste hierarchy. The current practice of combining recycling and preparation for re-use in a single target often leads to the early recycling of potentially reusable goods³.
- Granting access to the waste stream for accredited reuse operators and supporting national reuse networks⁴

Anything else you wish to highlight

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https://cdn.nimbu.io/s/zx3wipv/channelentries/9wruahv/files/1742224912472/2022_11_rreuse_s-answer-to-the-call-for-evidence-on-the-evaluation-of-the-weee-directive.pdf?9i6jccg

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https://cdn.nimbu.io/s/zx3wipv/channelentries/9wruahv/files/1742224912472/2022_11_rreuse_s-answer-to-the-call-for-evidence-on-the-evaluation-of-the-weee-directive.pdf?9i6jccg