



The foundation

The SENS Foundation was established as a non-profit organisation in 1990 (start of operations: 1 January 1991). The foundation promotes innovative recycling solutions organised by the private sector and ensures high quality standards in eRecycling and the environmentally friendly disposal of electrical and electronic equipment (WEEE).

Still a voluntary system

In 1998, the Swiss government issued the Ordinance on the Return, Taking Back and Disposal of Electrical and Electronic Equipment (ORDEE), with just two obligations:

- Customers are obligated to return end-of-life appliances.
- Producers and retailers are obligated to take back any appliances free of charge.

The ordinance does not define, however, how producers and retailers have to fulfil their responsibility regarding the management and financing of eRecycling. The concept is based on the idea that the government can limit the required inspections as long as the private sector fulfils its responsibilities.

WEEE categories covered

SENS eRecycling organises the recycling of household appliances in Switzerland efficiently and reliably. In 2018, the total amount of WEEE processed via the SENS system was 82,000 tonnes and included refrigeration and air-conditioning appliances (20,000 tonnes), large household appliances including photovoltaic systems (33,500 tonnes) and small household appliances including lamps (28,500 tonnes).

Goal and strategy

The customer-oriented scheme guarantees the professional and resource-efficient collection and recycling of waste electrical equipment in line with the latest technological standards. The four pillars of the strategy are a commitment to sustainability, an organisational structure geared towards customer benefits, a focus on maintaining an efficient and transparent system, and systematically working towards innovative solutions for new and emerging trends.

SENS partners (producers, importers and retailers)

As of 1 June 2019, SENS eRecycling has contracts with 820 partners. Together, they cover more than 90 per cent of the Swiss household appliances market. All the key market players participate in the scheme and benefit from the proficiency and high standards of an established system.

The financing system

Producers and importers pay an advance recycling fee (ARF) in Swiss francs per unit for every product sold on the Swiss market. The ARF funds are managed by SENS. The ARF finances the collection, transportation and treatment of WEEE and the management of the system, which is similar to a pay-as-you-go pension scheme.

Collection and logistics providers

SENS works with more than 600 accredited collection points (including municipalities), as well as over 750 individual stores and 6,000 retail chain outlets. Moreover, WEEE can be delivered directly to any of the accredited recycling partners.

Recycling partners

Moreover, the SENS network includes 21 licensed recycling partners and more than 80 dismantling companies as subcontractors. The contract between SENS and the recycling companies includes detailed technical requirements on storage, handling and treatment, as well as the reporting of activities and material flows. In order to ensure that quality standards are adhered to, at least one audit per year is carried out by specially appointed technical experts.

Collection in 2018

In 2018, 9.7 kilograms of WEEE per person was collected on behalf of SENS. The total amount of WEEE collected and treated in Switzerland (including the material collected by Swico, Switzerland's second eRecycling provider) was 14.8 kilograms per person.

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