Consumer Survey on Visible Fees
Preliminary Findings

SENS eRecycling & WEEE Ireland
Consumer Survey Research Background and Objective

- Survey conducted in tandem by WEEE Ireland and SENS eRecycling on the Irish and Swiss markets with the same methodology and among the same target market.

- 30 qualitative in-depth interviews; 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 can be used collaboratively to inform the WEEE Forum Eco Modulation Project.
Visible fees (vEMCs) - Irish Context

- Approved at national level
- Only applicable to certain sub-categories of WEEE
- Paid by Producers on EEE reported to the PRL Blackbox in addition to recycling charges
- Visible to customers – on shelves, online, on receipts, ads...
- vEMCs assist in the development of additional infrastructure and programmes to increase take back of WEEE and contributions to the EPA for R&D and enforcement
Visible fees are seen positively, a reassurance to the consumer their old appliance will be disposed of.

They need to stay embedded in the overall price, otherwise they could be perceived as a tax or levy.

The fee is a nominal part of the product purchase and a lower/higher fee, depending on recyclability, is irrelevant to consumers.

Introducing different fees among products is seen to be confusing although potentially could exist among large/small appliance categories.

The fees become more significant when people consider the wider world of the recycling journey.

Clear and consistent communications can inform and empower the decision-making process.

As consumer values evolve, purchasing will be more discerning and expectations from manufacturers will rise.

It is within this context that the role of Visible Fees can be shaped for the future.
Environmental Information is welcome but needs to be CLEAR and CONCISE

Upfront and on the appliance is where they would take most notice

Having information on the receipt is a nice bonus but not necessary

Showing the value of the visible fee demonstrates transparency

Graphics, colour coding, traffic light system are all effective in communicating essential information quickly

An authoritative stamp of approval from public body – trusted, standardised
Swiss survey
Initial results of the interviews

Consumer behaviour
- The key components are: practical factors (suitability, dimensions, functions), energy efficiency (label), brand, design and price.
- Everything depends on urgency (different decision reached in the case of time pressure).

Sustainability
- Large need
- Relevant at all social levels, but different priorities
- Openness to sustainable products
- Sustainability may (must) cost

Visible fee, ARF
- Everyone is aware of the ARF, or the fact that disposal is paid for when making the purchase. However, it is viewed as a compulsory system. So it is not taken into account. It is not relevant for the purchase decision because of its low financial impact.
- It is not understood why a sustainable product should have a lower ARF. From the consumer perspective, it should be higher (labelled products cost more, sustainably produced electricity costs more, etc.).
How do consumers wish to be informed?

Presentation of sustainability

- At present, it is not possible for consumers to evaluate whether a product is sustainable (aside from energy efficiency).
- Desire for simple, practical evaluation of products by a neutral, independent organisation.
- A label would be desirable; directly on the appliance.
- Transparency must be ensured (additional information on website, on flyers, from sales staff).
- A lower ARF for, say, appliances that are easy to recycle would not be understood. More sustainable products must be more expensive (organic, fair trade, etc.).

However, the most important point is communication. If consumers are not informed about a problem, they do not care about that problem.

Knowing more makes it matter more!
Differences between the Irish and Swiss findings

- **Ireland**
  - **Practicalities** – will it meet my needs, correct size
  - **Brand** – is it reputable, trustworthy
  - **Price** – is it in my range
  - **Energy** – is it efficient
  - **Design**

- **Switzerland**
  - **Practicalities** – will it meet my needs, correct size
  - **Energy** – is it efficient
  - **Brand** – is it reputable, trustworthy
  - **Design**
  - **Price**
Comparison with findings of WEEE Ireland

- 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 less is extracted and it simply goes into the incinerator.

- For many people, energy efficiency is not only a sustainability factor, but a financial consideration as well (that is much more worthwhile than a lower ARF).

- Strong desire for a label that provides an evaluation of sustainability. Desire for presentation as in Ireland, for example, in the form of a traffic light system. The label should enable a good conscience (I only buy “green” products and am therefore doing something good for the environment).

- Advice may be a point of contact for us (from sales staff in the shop as well as via reviews and evaluations online). Swiss consumers use advice offerings, especially for appliances that are not purchased on a regular basis (such as large household appliances).
Thank you