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Dear Ms. McAvon,

I hope that I am contacting you with a reasonable concern; a few years ago I contacted Diana Wallis MEP regarding a European issue and received no response so I am not quite sure what to expect.

Around a year ago I purchased an Epson printer. Yesterday the printer disabled itself and will not allow me to print with it anymore because “the waste ink pads are full”. The waste ink pads are small sponges that collect ink that is discharged at the side of the printer to keep the printing head clean. These pads can obviously become full of ink over time.

Disabling a printer because it has full ink pads is a common practice and the same happened on my previous Epson printer. On that occasion I was able to remove and clean the ink pad and download some free third-party software to reset the waste ink counter on the printer. I have done this twice and used my old printer extensively for nearly eight years before buying my new printer[[1]](#footnote-1).

Epson argue that they disable a printer once the waste ink pads are full to prevent damage to the printer and state that it is rare for a user to reach this limit. Their own recommendation upon reaching the limit is to either purchase a new printer or to have the waste ink counter reset by an Epson service centre. Usually the cost of having the waste ink counter reset when combined with the associated inconvenience is greater than buying a new printer.

If Epson provided a legal utility to reset the waste ink counter I could continue using my perfectly functional printer. They have not provided this utility and they have also implemented systems of encryption to prevent third-parties from writing software to perform this task. By implementing a system which effectively kills a fully functioning printer and by refusing to provide, or allow others to provide, a method of circumventing this feature, I strongly believe that Epson are breaking Article 6 of the European Parliament directive 2002/96/EC on electronic waste (WEEE), namely that,

*“Member States shall take appropriate measures so that producers do not prevent, through specific design features or manufacturing processes, WEEE from being reused, unless such specific design features or manufacturing processes present overriding advantages, for example, with regard to the protection of the environment and/or safety requirements”*

If I felt significantly financially cheated by Epson I would know how to deal with this situation by making a claim for compensation from them. In this case my financial loss is small and I am more than happy to just buy a different brand of printer in future. What worries me more is that this company is deliberately implementing features that unnecessarily increase the amount of electronic waste. This is clearly against the spirit (and probably the letter) of the European Law on electronic waste.

It is of note that Epson USA provides software to reset the waste ink pad counter to customers in the USA and for US printer models only. This software is extremely difficult to find and obtain making me suspect that its availability is the result of a legal settlement in the USA. We need something similar , or better, in the EU.

Yours faithfully,

Thomas Forth

1. This letter is printed on that old printer. It still works perfectly despite having exceeded its Epson-mandated lifespan threefold. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)