

REPORT ON THE MASTER THESIS

IEPS – International Economic and Political Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University

Title of the thesis:	Extended Producer Responsibility: Potential and limits. An analysis of EPR in Theory and Practice
Author of the thesis:	James King
Referee (incl. titles):	Mgr. et Mgr. Miloš Polák

Remark: It is a standard at the FSV UK that the Referee's Report is at least 500 words long. In case you will assess the thesis as "non-defendable", please explain the concrete reasons for that in detail.

SUMMARY OF POINTS AWARDED (for details, see below):

CATEGORY	POINTS
<i>Theoretical background (max. 20)</i>	12
<i>Contribution (max. 20)</i>	13
<i>Methods (max. 20)</i>	10
<i>Literature (max. 20)</i>	12
<i>Manuscript form (max. 20)</i>	15
TOTAL POINTS (max. 100)	62
The proposed grade (1-2-3-4)	2

You can even use a decimal point (e.g. giving the grade of 2.5 for 60 points).

Comments of the referee on the thesis highlights and shortcomings (following the 5 numbered aspects of your assessment indicated below).

1) Theoretical background:

Theoretical background is dealt with chapter 2 "Extended Producer Responsibility: A Background", chapter 3 "Waste Management", chapter 4 "Extended Producer Responsibility in Theory" and chapter 5 "Policy instruments in EPR". From my point of view, in these chapters author clearly introduces what EPR means and his motivation to research this interesting topic. On the other hand, probably the most repeated shortages are questionable assertions without any references, e.g.:

- Page 12: "Recycling is expensive, time-, labour- and energy-intensive, and often is not capable of being self-sustaining without government intervention and support." Is it really true? Reference?
- Page 13: "One of the main reasons that recycling can be economically and environmentally inefficient is that products are not designed specifically for the purpose of being recycled." What kind of products? All of them? Reference?
- Page 22: "Most of the world's existing schemes deal with the disposal of either packaging (usually government-enforced) or electronics waste (often voluntary)." This is not true assertion. Almost all schemes for electronics waste are mandatory, see e.g. WEEE Directive 2012/19/EU.
- Page 29: "Unfortunately, there are examples of the system of advance disposal fees, which is commonplace in the European Union (however usually at the level of the distributor, e.g. electronics stores), being abused by the producers or distributors of the goods, who simply dumped the products that were returned to them (putting pressure once again on the municipal waste system, which these systems are designed to prevent) and pocketing the fees they had charged the customers for the disposal." Is it really true? Is it rare or common case? Which reference?

2) Contribution:

Proposed thesis has mainly descriptive nature, thus author own contribution is not significant. On the other hand, from the work it can be see critical thinking and also some original ideas (chapter 9

“Plastic: EPR’s next battle?”), unfortunately without any deeper analytical approach. Probably the most contributed part of the thesis is chapter 7 “Case study: Product Stewardship in Maine”, which brings value information about present EPR approach.

3) Methods:

Methods are described in chapter 1.1. “Methodology” . Description of methods is quite flat without any deeper analytical approach or more robust analytical tool. E.g. page 3, “One of the reasons an approach using case studies was selected was because of a shortage of existing literature about the topic, meaning that an examination of practical examples, though imperfect, became necessary.” I found 49 articles solely in scientific journals with impact factors with key word “Extended Producer Responsibility”, well for me it is sizeable information basis and not “shortage of existing literature”. In this chapter there is only one reference related to used methods.

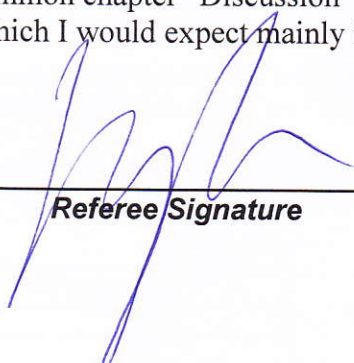
4) Literature:

Literature demonstrates author understanding. As stated above, there are questionable assertions without any references.

5) Manuscript form:

The thesis is cleared structured. I would recommend to use common chapter “Discussion” instead of “Problems in EPR”. There are no own graphs and tables, which I would expect mainly in “case studies” part of the thesis.

DATE OF EVALUATION: 11.6.2014



Referee Signature

The referee should give comments to the following requirements:

1) THEORETICAL BACKGROUND: Can you recognize that the thesis was guided by some **theoretical fundamentals** relevant for this thesis topic? Were some important theoretical concepts omitted? Was the theory used in the thesis consistently incorporated with the topic and hypotheses tested?

Strong Average Weak
20 10 0 points

2) CONTRIBUTION: Evaluate if the author presents **original ideas** on the topic and aims at demonstrating **critical thinking** and ability to draw conclusions based on the knowledge of relevant theory and relevant empirical material. Is there a distinct **value added** of the thesis (relative to knowledge of a university-educated person interested in given topic)? Did the author explain **why** the observed phenomena occurred? Were the policy implications well founded?

Strong Average Weak
20 10 0 points

3) METHODS: Are the **hypotheses** for this study clearly stated, allowing their further verification and testing? Are the theoretical explanations, empirical material and **analytical tools** used in the thesis relevant to the research question being investigated, and adequate to the aspiration level of the study? Is the thesis **topic comprehensively analyzed** and does the thesis not make trivial or irrelevant detours off the main body stated in the thesis proposal? More than 10 points signal an exceptional work, **which requires your explanation "why" it is so**.

Strong Average Weak
20 10 0 points

4) LITERATURE REVIEW: The thesis demonstrates author's full understanding and **command of recent literature**. The author quotes relevant literature in a proper way and disposes with a representative bibliography. (Remark: references to Wikipedia, websites and newspaper articles are a sign of **poor research**). If they dominate you cannot give more than 8 points. References to books published by prestigious publishers and articles in renowned journals give much better impression.

Strong Average Weak
20 10 0 points

5) MANUSCRIPT FORM: The thesis is **clear and well structured**. The author uses appropriate language and style, including academic **format** for quotations, graphs and tables. The text effectively refers to graphs and tables, is easily readable and **stimulates thinking**.

Strong Average Weak
20 10 0 points

Overall grading scheme at FSV UK:

TOTAL POINTS	GRADE	Czech grading	US grading
81 – 100	1	= excellent	= A
61 – 80	2	= good	= B
51 – 60	3	= satisfactory	= C
41 – 50	3	= satisfactory	= D
0 – 40	4	= fail	= not recommended for defence