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Finding a True Balance for Waste Management in the Taxonomy, a Common Statement

Several associations representing both public and private operators of the entire waste management value chain ask for the inclusion of Waste-to-Energy in the taxonomy. They propose criteria under which this inclusion is possible, in line with the Taxonomy Regulation.

On 30 March, the Platform on Sustainable Finance published its final report on the inclusion of new activities in the EU Taxonomy Framework. This report leaves a gap regarding the Waste Hierarchy for non-hazardous residual waste. The EU Taxonomy Framework should push for the implementation of the top steps of the Waste Hierarchy. However, it should also empower the environmentally sound treatment of the non-recyclable material: residual waste.

Despite best efforts to prevent waste and to sort for recycling, there will always be a remaining fraction of non-recyclable residual waste which should be treated in the most sustainable way.

In the attached statement, several associations call for the inclusion of Waste-to-Energy (non-hazardous waste incineration with energy recovery) in the EU Taxonomy Framework. They propose the following conditions to ensure that the activity does no significant harm:

- The Waste-to-Energy facility treats only non-recyclable waste;
- The National Waste Management Plan is designed in such a way as to ensure the separate collection of all mandatory fractions as well as the achievement of waste prevention aims, reuse and recycling targets and is in the process of being implemented or implementation has been completed;
- The facility meets the R1 energy recovery criterion.

With such conditions in place, Waste-to-Energy enables the treatment of non-hazardous, non-recyclable waste higher up in the Waste Hierarchy. It is the very much needed solution in Member States where landfilling non-hazardous, recoverable, residual waste is still the dominant practice. In this way, Waste-to-Energy contributes to the circular economy objective under the EU Taxonomy Framework.

Additionally, it contributes to the pollution prevention objective: Waste-to-Energy ensures the most sustainable treatment for non-hazardous residual waste by destroying pollutants embedded in the waste. At the same time it recovers precious energy and clean materials from the bottom ash such as metals and aggregates.

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Municipal Waste Europe is the European umbrella association representing public responsibility for waste.