

Municipal Waste Europe quick response to the EU Commissions proposal on Circular Economy

MUNICIPAL WASTE EUROPE is the European association of municipalities responsible for waste management and their publicly-owned waste management companies, communicating the important service of general interest represented by public responsibility for waste management, now in the context of a circular economy and job creation. We welcome the Commission's proposal for a Circular Economy of 2 December 2015.

We are pleased to see that many, if not all, of the recommendations put forward by MUNICIPAL WASTE EUROPE, taken from the practical knowledge of municipalities and their public companies implementing waste management, have been taken on board in the new proposal.

'The new proposal is balanced, but still leaves work to be done on the details. It will, if enforced correctly, help Europe to use its resources more efficiently, create new jobs and reduce environmental and climate impacts,' says Weine Wiqvist, President of MUNICIPAL WASTE EUROPE. 'Municipalities play an important role as the mediator between citizens and industry. Municipal waste management is a service of general interest and thus all citizens have a right to it. Equally, they should participate in the waste management system provided by their community, including source-separation,' he continues.

MUNICIPAL WASTE EUROPE highlights the fact that the separate collection of paper, glass, metals, plastics, wood and biowaste is a cornerstone for further true resource management. Nevertheless, the importance of waste prevention, both in terms of limiting the use of hazardous substances and in terms of reducing unnecessary wastage, cannot be underestimated or put aside.

A holistic view to EU legislation and its implementation must be taken in order to create demand for the separately collected waste as feedstock in the production cycle. This includes facilitation of trade, market advantages (such as not applying VAT), support of innovation, promoting the use of compost as a biofertiliser as well as new technologies of the emerging bioeconomy. These actions will close the loop and take Europe into a true Circular Economy.

MUNICIPAL WASTE EUROPE views the proposed definition of municipal waste positively. This is a necessary pre-condition for truly representative and comparative data collection and measuring of progress. However, a single, clearer and unambiguous methodology for calculating recycled quantities should be implemented.

The Commission ambitions on landfill reduction (down to 10% of all municipal waste by 2030) are considered quite feasible by MUNICIPAL WASTE EUROPE and a very important step forward. This reduction goal should be adopted for all types of waste, not only for the 10% of waste represented by municipal waste. Furthermore, the landfill reduction targets should be seen in conjunction with the recycling targets (60% by 2020 and 65% by 2025). All EU-funding for waste management purposes must take these factors into account.

MUNICIPAL WASTE EUROPE also welcomes the minimum rules for EPR (extended producer responsibility). These systems always interact with municipal waste management and therefore a set of ground-rules on roles and methods of cooperation can only assist positively. Furthermore the polluter pays principle should be the guiding principle in the application of EPR, meaning that the total cost of collection and treatment of waste should be reflected in the product price and should be reported as part of the requirements on transparency.

Ultimately, MUNICIPAL WASTE EUROPE points out the need for Waste to Energy, for waste which cannot or should not be recycled (for reasons of environmental protection). Waste to Energy plays the role of the final sink for hazardous substances, supports the fulfilment of local energy needs as outlined in the new Energy Union Communication and reduces greenhouse gases by avoiding methane emissions from landfills.

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