Waste recycling

European Parliament resolution on a Thematic Strategy on the recycling of waste (2006/2175(INI))

The European Parliament,

– having regard to the Commission communication to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on 'Taking sustainable use of resources forward: A thematic strategy on the prevention and recycling of waste' (COM(2005)0666),

– having regard to Articles 2 and 6 of the EC Treaty, by virtue of which environmental protection requirements must be integrated into the various sectors of Community policy with the aim of promoting an environmentally sustainable development of economic activities,

– having regard to Article 175 of the EC Treaty,

– having regard to Decision No 1600/2002/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22 July 2002 laying down the Sixth Community Environment Action Programme¹ (6th EAP), and in particular Article 8 thereof,

– having regard to the Commission's communication on 'A thematic strategy on the sustainable use of natural resources" (COM(2005)0670) (the Resources Strategy),

– having regard to its resolution of 20 April 2004 on the communication from the Commission: 'Towards a thematic strategy on the prevention and recycling of waste²,


– having regard to its resolution of 14 November 1996 on the communication from the Commission on the review of the Community strategy for waste management and the draft Council resolution on waste policy⁴and to the Council Resolution of 24 February 1997 on a Community strategy for waste management⁵,

– having regard to the judgments of the Court of Justice of the European Communities, particularly in Cases C-203/96, C-365/97, C-209/98, C-418/99, C-419/99, C-9/00, C-228/00, C-458/00, C-416/02 and C-121/03,

– having regard to Rule 45 of its Rules of Procedure,

having regard to the report of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (A6-0438/2006),

**Introduction**

A. whereas Article 8 of the 6th EAP has set very clear objectives, targets and principles for EU waste policy,

B. whereas Article 8(2), point (iv) of the 6th EAP provides for the development or revision of the directives on construction and demolition waste, sewage sludge and biodegradable wastes,

**The current situation**

C. whereas, despite some successes achieved by the waste policy of the EU in the past 30 years, the following problems remain:
   1. Waste volumes continue to grow, both for hazardous and non-hazardous waste;
   2. The potential for waste prevention and recycling is not fully used;
   3. Illegal (cross-border) waste shipments are still increasing;
   4. Waste management generates emissions to air, water and soil;
   5. Legislation is missing for certain important waste streams;
   6. Waste legislation is in many cases poorly implemented;
   7. Member States have different approaches to solving waste problems;
   8. The current wording of Community waste legislation gives rise to some interpretation problems,

D. whereas economies are like ecosystems: both systems take in energy and materials and turn them into products and processes, the difference being that our economy follows linear resource flows whereas nature is cyclic; and whereas ecosystems perform functions which convert waste into resources, by transferring energy from the sunlight, and whereas industrial processes are not able to do this; whereas, against the backdrop of rapidly growing economies and populations, production and products that lead to waste streams which nature cannot absorb and turn into new resources are increasingly problematic from the point of view of sustainability,

E. whereas a transformation of the present system of production and consumption is urgently needed; whereas the main objective is to change consumption in a sustainable direction and bring the processes of raw material extraction, production and product design as much into line with natural processes and designs as possible,

F. whereas an enhanced understanding of how natural systems work and of structuring business along biological lines can both improve the environment and establish the
bottom line,

G. whereas promotion of more integrated and systems-based practices, such as for instance the clustering of production, functional thinking (turning products into services), dematerialisation and technology development based on imitating nature is a means to prevent waste generation,

**Aims of an evolving EU policy on waste**

H. whereas in most Member States disposal, in particular landfill, is still the most common form of waste treatment,

I. whereas prevention, re-use, recycling and energy recovery of waste - with the order reflecting the degree of relevance – can save natural resources,

J. whereas Community and national prevention targets have never been achieved, although prevention is still the most important objective;

K. whereas there are no adequate Community minimum standards applying to many recovery and recycling facilities, which results in different levels of environmental protection in the Member States, eco-dumping and distortions of competition,

1. Recognises the Commission’s Communication on 'Taking sustainable use of resources forward: A Thematic Strategy on the prevention and recycling of waste' as a basis for the discussion on future waste policy;

2. Stresses the substantial aim for waste management of achieving a high level of protection of the environment and human health rather than facilitating the functioning of the internal market for waste recovery;

3. Points out that account should be taken not only of the environmental impact in the EU but also of the impact outside the EU;

4. Underlines the importance of the general principles of waste management, such as the precautionary principle and the polluter pays principle, the principle of the waste generator’s responsibility and, for specific waste flows, the principle of individual producer responsibility, as well as the principles of proximity and self-sufficiency;

**Main actions**

5. Emphasises that full implementation of existing Community waste legislation and equal enforcement across all Member States is a key priority;

6. Fails to understand why, despite a proposal for the revision of the Waste Framework Directive, many concrete implementing measures and instruments (which were foreseen in the 6th EAP) are missing;

**Simplification and modernisation of existing legislation**

7. Stresses that the changing of definitions should only be undertaken for reasons of clarification, and not to weaken environmental protection rules or encourage public
acceptance of a concept (for instance by softening the negative connotation of “waste” or “disposal”);

8. Stresses that political decisions, such as the definitions of waste, recovery and disposal, must not be taken in comitology, but by codecision;

9. Emphasises that use of the comitology procedure should be limited to non-political decisions, especially those of a technical and scientific nature;

10. Opposes a general declassification of waste that could lead to inappropriate environmental treatment and a lack of traceability of waste streams; emphasises that procedures for the declassification of waste could only be considered for exceptional cases of homogeneous waste streams, such as compost, recycled aggregates, recovered paper and recovered glass;

11. Emphasises that the end-of-waste status should only be achieved after the waste stream in question has been re-used or recycled or has undergone a recovery operation - which does not exclude the possibility that a recovery operation may generate new waste - and meets agreed European standards, making it fit for a purpose, and after traceability rules have been adopted and are being applied;


13. Emphasises that the lists of recovery and disposal operations contained in the annexes to the Waste Framework Directive should be revised and adapted to current waste management practices in accordance with the codecision procedure;

14. Expresses strong reservations on the proposed energy efficiency calculation method, and the fact that it is to apply to municipal waste incinerators only; calls on the Commission to revise the Waste Incineration Directive, in order to set equal environmental standards (for emissions and energy efficiency) for both incineration and co-incineration of waste;

**Introducing life-cycle thinking in waste policy**

15. Emphasises the key importance of the waste hierarchy, which sets out priorities for action in descending order:

- prevention;
- re-use;
- material recycling;
- other recovery operations, for example energy recovery;

as a general rule of waste management in achieving the aim of reducing the generation of waste as well as the adverse impacts on health and the environment resulting from waste generation and management;

16. Regards life-cycle thinking as a useful concept to evaluate the environmental and human health impacts of waste; stresses that the hierarchy itself is based on this concept, but acknowledges that life-cycle and other analyses can be used in exceptional cases to deviate from the waste hierarchy, though only when there is clear evidence that another option is actually better on environmental or health grounds or to avoid unreasonably high costs;

**Improving the knowledge base**

17. Supports the improvement of the knowledge base with regard to EU waste policy, but stresses that the implementation of concrete actions is more important;

**Waste prevention**

18. Regrets the lack of quantitative and qualitative reduction targets covering all relevant waste, which were indicated as one of the priority actions in the 6th EAP; calls on the Commission to come forward with a proposal for targets in its final assessment of the 6th EAP;

19. Calls on the Commission to come forward with concrete waste prevention measures in the fields of product policy, chemicals policy and eco-design, to minimise both the generation of waste and the presence of hazardous substances in waste, and thereby foster the safe and environmentally sound treatment of waste; emphasises the importance of promoting products and technologies which are less harmful to the environment as well as products which are more suitable for re-use and recycling;

20. Draws attention to the interaction between waste strategies and other strategies, particularly the sustainable use of natural resources, sustainable development and integrated product policy;

21. Calls on the Commission to develop a set of indicators by 2008, as announced in the Resources Strategy;

22. Emphasises that proper implementation of the concept of producer responsibility is a strong instrument to prevent waste;

23. Draws attention to the role of information campaigns on waste policy, particularly on prevention and raising public awareness of the benefits of sustainable waste management;

of 24 September 1996 concerning Integrated Pollution Prevention and Control\(^1\) (the IPPC Directive) and to include relevant guidance in these documents;

**Re-use**

25. Calls on the Commission to come forward with concrete measures to promote re-use and repair activities:
   - setting up an accreditation for re-use centres;
   - introducing a reduced VAT rate on products sold by accredited re-use centres;
   - development of a road-map to elaborate re-use standards at EU level;
   - ensuring monitoring and reporting on re-use activities;

**Towards a European recycling society**

26. Underlines the importance of achieving common minimum standards for recovery and recycling at EU level, and stresses that a level playing field will only be established when the use of economic instruments is approximated throughout the EU;

27. Emphasises the importance of source separation of waste, as well as recycling targets and producer responsibility in order to increase the recycling rate of certain waste streams;

28. Recognises the need for better EU cooperation in managing cross-border waste problems;

29. Points out that any material-based approach to boost recycling should go hand in hand with a waste stream based approach; calls on the Commission to investigate further the feasibility and economic viability of such a strategy;

30. Calls once again on the Commission to propose separate directives on biodegradable waste, construction and demolition waste and sewage sludge, as indicated in the 6\(^{th}\) EAP;

31. Calls on the Commission to follow up on its Green Paper on environmental issues of PVC (COM(2000)0469);

32. Calls for the quantities of waste for disposal to be reduced to a minimum; calls on the Commission again to propose a revision of the Council Directive 1999/31/EC of 26 April 1999 on the landfill of waste\(^2\), including a timetable:
   - from 2010, a ban on landfill of non-pretreated waste with fermentable components;
   - from 2015, a ban on landfill of paper, cardboard, glass, textiles, wood, plastics, metals, rubber, cork, pottery, concrete, brick and tiles;
   - from 2020, a ban on landfill of all recyclable waste;

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from 2025, a ban on landfill of all residual waste, except where this is unavoidable or hazardous (e.g. filter ash);

33. Considers that Regulation (EC) No 1013/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 June 2006 on shipments of waste\(^1\) implements legal obligations from the UN Basel Convention\(^2\) and OECD Decisions\(^3\); supports the prevention of eco-dumping and sham recovery and underlines that an objective of regulating shipments of waste is to enhance the re-use and recycling of waste ensuring a high level of environmental and human health protection;

34. Emphasises the right of Member States to apply the proximity and self-sufficiency principle in relation to recovery or disposal of mixed municipal waste in order to encourage national planning of waste management and waste incineration capacity;

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35. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and Commission, and the governments and parliaments of the Member States.

\(^{1}\) OJ L 190, 12.7.2006, p. 1.
