Italy’s recovery and resilience plan includes at least two measures to simplify the authorisation procedures for waste treatment facilities as well as a component supporting investments in waste management for an estimated cost of EUR 2.1 billion.

The Communication on the Circular Economy Action Plan laid out a vision to achieve a circular economy in the EU, while respecting the waste hierarchy as laid down in Article 4 of the Waste Framework Directive.

Under the EU Taxonomy Regulation, economic activities leading to a significant increase in the generation, incineration or disposal of waste, with the exception of the incineration of non-recyclable hazardous waste, shall be considered to significantly harm the circular economy (Article 17). With regard to anaerobic digestion, the Climate Delegated Act sets criteria for the inclusion of two relevant activities: (i) anaerobic digestion of sewage sludge (5.6), and (ii) anaerobic digestion of bio-waste (5.7). In addition, the Renewable Energy Directive already allows waste of biological origin to be accounted towards the renewable energy targets under certain conditions.

In the event of a severe natural disaster, the EU Solidarity Fund (EUSF) may help cover the costs of emergency and recovery operations. The EUSF can only be mobilised following an application from the country concerned within 12 weeks of the occurrence of the disaster, demonstrating that the total direct damage exceeds either 0.6% of its gross national income or 1.5% of the gross domestic product of the affected regions. However, the EUSF assistance should not relieve third parties of their responsibility who, under the ‘polluter-pays’ principle, are liable in the first instance for the damage caused by them.

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1 Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European economic and social Committee and the Committee of the Regions – A new Circular Economy Action Plan for a cleaner and more competitive Europe, COM/2020/98 final.
2 Directive 2008/98/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 19 November 2008 on waste and repealing certain Directives, OJ L 312, 22.11.2008, p. 3. The waste hierarchy gives priority to waste prevention and preparing for reuse followed by recycling, which includes operations like composting and anaerobic digestion of biodegradable waste. Energy recovery of waste is a less preferred option, which can be used under certain conditions. The least preferred waste treatment is disposal, including incineration without energy recovery and landfill.