

Thematic Strategy on the recycling of waste

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The Council adopted conclusions on waste policy. It welcomes the Commission's Communication on a Thematic Strategy on the prevention and recycling of waste with its objective of contributing to waste prevention and an efficient, environmentally sound and sustainable management of waste and resources with a view to protecting resources and reducing the overall negative impact of resource use. It highlights the close linkage between the Thematic Strategy and other related Strategies, especially the Thematic Strategy on Resources, the Strategy for Sustainable Development, and the Integrated Product Policy. It concurs with the Commission that the results of the review of the Strategy shall feed into the final evaluation of the Sixth Environment Action Programme.

- **Objectives of the EU policy on waste:** the Council stresses the substantial aim for waste management of achieving a high level of protection of the environment and human health. Account shall be taken of all environmental impacts irrespective of when or where they will occur, including impacts that occur outside the European Union, considering also socio-economic impacts.

The Council underlines the importance of the general principles of waste management, such as the precautionary principle and the polluter pays principle, the principle of waste generator's responsibility and, for specific waste flows, the principle of producer responsibility, as well as further principles of waste management, such as the principles of proximity and self-sufficiency where they apply.

The Commission is asked, in the context of the final evaluation of the Sixth Environment Action Programme, to give particular consideration, to the need for realistic long, medium and short term targets and measures to achieve the overall vision of the EU of becoming a "recycling society". It highlights that measures and initiatives based on the strategy on waste must be sustainable and must make a substantial contribution to an eco-efficient use of resources.

- **Legislative measures:** the Council recognises that emphasis should be placed on the full implementation of the EC waste legislation. It supports the Commission's approach to modernizing the existing legal framework by clarifying, simplifying and streamlining the EU waste law with the aim of better regulation, including the promotion of synergies with existing EU law, and stresses the importance of maintaining a high level of protection of human health and the environment. It acknowledges the Commission proposal for the revision of directive 2006/12/EC on waste and takes note of the Commission's intention to draw up and present proposals for the amendment of the other directives and measures in the field of waste management based on the topics listed in the strategy, but highlights the fact that stability of rules is important for all stakeholders. The importance of using the comitology procedure in waste legislation only for decisions of a technical and scientific nature, concerning non essential elements of a basic instrument, and stresses that this procedure needs a clear mandate in the particular legislation.

- **Prevention:** the Council calls on the Commission to come forward with concrete measures on prevention of waste in the fields of product policy, chemicals policy and eco-design to minimize both the generation of waste and the presence of hazardous substances in waste, and thereby to foster the safe and environmentally sound treatment of waste, and emphasises the importance of promoting products and technologies causing less harmful environmental effects and products more suitable for re-use and recycling. The Commission is equally called upon to develop guidelines for waste prevention, including indicators, taking into account the different economic conditions and developments of Member States.

- **Recycling:** the Council underlines: the importance of achieving common minimum standards for recovery and recycling where justified at EU level whilst noting that individual Member States can

maintain or establish higher standards for recycling with regard to the achievement of a high level of environmental and human health protection; the importance of promoting source separation of waste and the important role that the recycling legislation, collection and recycling targets and producer responsibility for specific waste streams continue to play in improving waste management in the Community and increasing the recycling rate of certain waste streams. It highlights that a material-based approach is complementary to the product-based approach and calls on the Commission to carry out an analysis of the long-term feasibility and viability of a material-based approach to waste recycling, including its implications for producer responsibility.

- **Economic instruments:** the Council emphasises that economic instruments can play a crucial role in waste prevention and management and stresses that individual Member States can decide on the use of such instruments. It considers that external costs which arise from waste management will to a greater extent be included in prices of waste management activities for the purpose of reflecting the polluter pays principle.