Procedure file

Basic information

INI - Own-initiative procedure	2006/2175(INI)	Procedure completed
Thematic Strategy on the recycling of waste Subject 3.70.01 Protection of natural resources: fauna, flora, nature, wildlife, countryside; biodiversity 3.70.12 Waste management, domestic waste, packaging, light industrial waste 3.70.20 Sustainable development		

Key players

European Parliament	Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
	ENVI Environment, Public Health and Food Safety	IND/DEM BLOKLAND Johannes	29/11/2005
	Committee for opinion	Rapporteur for opinion	Appointed
	ITRE Industry, Research and Energy	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	
Council of the European Union	Council configuration	Meeting	Date
	Environment	2740	27/06/2006
European Commission	Commission DG	Commissioner	
	Environment	DIMAS Stavros	

Key events

21/12/2005	Non-legislative basic document published	COM(2005)0666	Summary
27/06/2006	Resolution/conclusions adopted by Council		Summary
06/07/2006	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
28/11/2006	Vote in committee		Summary
19/12/2006	Committee report tabled for plenary	A6-0438/2006	
12/02/2007	Debate in Parliament		
13/02/2007	Results of vote in Parliament		
13/02/2007	Decision by Parliament	T6-0030/2007	Summary

13/02/2007	End of procedure in Parliament		

Technical information

Procedure reference	2006/2175(INI)
Procedure type	INI - Own-initiative procedure
Procedure subtype	Strategic initiative
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 55
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	ENVI/6/33976

Documentation gateway

Non-legislative basic document		COM(2005)0666	21/12/2005	EC	Summary
Committee draft report		PE374.495	22/06/2006	EP	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE378.550	08/09/2006	EP	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A6-0438/2006	19/12/2006	EP	
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T6-0030/2007	13/02/2007	EP	Summary
Commission response to text adopted in plenary		SP(2007)1040	21/03/2007	EC	
Commission response to text adopted in plenary		SP(2007)1730/3	30/04/2007	EC	
Follow-up document		COM(2011)0013	19/01/2011	EC	Summary
Follow-up document		SEC(2011)0070	19/01/2011	EC	Summary

Thematic Strategy on the recycling of waste

PURPOSE : Commission Communication presenting a Thematic Strategy on the prevention and recycling of waste.

CONTENT : this Communication analyses and assesses EU waste policy, with a view to setting the strategic framework for the future. As prescribed in the Sixth Environment Action Programme, the Thematic Strategy sets objectives so that the EU may move towards improved waste management.

The paper begins by describing the existing situation, and states that while recycling and incineration are increasing, the absolute amounts of waste land filled are not decreasing because of the growth in waste generation. These unsustainable trends are due in part to unsatisfactory implementation of waste laws which, in turn, is due in part to certain elements of the policy and legal framework that could be improved.EU waste policy has the potential to contribute to reducing the overall negative environmental impact of resource use. Preventing waste generation and promoting recycling and recovery of waste will increase the resource efficiency of the European economy and reduce the negative environmental impact of use of natural resources. This will contribute to maintaining the resource base, essential for sustained economic growth. The basic objectives of current EU waste policy ? to prevent waste and promote re-use, recycling and recovery so as to reduce the negative environmental impact ? are still valid and will be supported by this impact-based approach. The long-term goal is for the EU to become a recycling society. With high environmental reference standards in place the internal market will facilitate recycling and recovery activities.

Action: the proposal is to modernise the existing legal framework ? i.e. to introduce lifecycle analysis in policymaking and to clarify, simplify and streamline EU waste law. This requires a combination of measures promoting waste prevention, recycling and re-use in such a way as to produce the optimum reduction in the accumulated impact over the life cycle of resources, including:

A renewed emphasis on full implementation of existing legislation. Part of this strategy is designed to remove ambiguities, resolve disputed interpretations and amend legislation which has not brought the expected environmental benefits. The Commission will continue to take legal action to ensure equal enforcement of the acquis across all Member States.

Simplification and modernisation of existing legislation. Several actions are proposed under this heading. In addition, and beyond the proposals adopted together with this Strategy, in the context of a continuous and systematic review of EU waste legislation, the Commission will assess the need for additional steps taking the better regulation and simplification objectives further.

Introduction of life-cycle thinking into waste policy. Environmental policy traditionally focused on the early and the final phases of the life cycle: extraction, processing and manufacturing at one end and waste management at the other. It is now recognised that the environmental impact of many resources is often linked to the use phase. All phases in a resource?s life cycle need to be taken into account as there can be trade-offs between different phases and measures adopted to reduce environmental impact in one phase can increase the impact in another.

Clearly, environmental policy needs to ensure that negative environmental impact is minimised throughout the entire life cycle of resources. By applying the life-cycle approach, priorities can be identified more easily and policies can be targeted more effectively.

The life-cycle approach will be incorporated in EU legislation by clarifying the objectives of the Waste Framework Directive so that they explicitly consider the life-cycle perspective. The recent review of recycling and recovery targets for packaging waste materials was the first example of using life-cycle thinking for policymaking. New targets are set for each material concerned by analysing the environmental and economic impact throughout the life cycle of the material. The review of the management of waste oil is another area in which life-cycle thinking was applied.

Promotion of more ambitious waste prevention policies by clarifying Member States? obligations to develop publicly available waste prevention programmes. At EU level the Commission will promote the use of the IPPC Directive, IPP and other tools to encourage the spread of best practice.

Better knowledge and information which will underpin the continued development of waste prevention policy.

Development of common reference standards for recycling. The proposal is to set minimum standards across the Community for recycling activities and recycled materials so as to ensure a high level of environmental protection and to prevent the threat of ?eco-dumping?.

Further elaboration of the EU?s recycling policy. Building on the implementation of existing EU waste legislation, new ways to foster recycling will be sought. A detailed analysis of the long-term feasibility and viability of a material-specific approach will be undertaken. Member States will also be encouraged to make more use of economic instruments and to exchange experience/best practice through improved coordination in the Waste Management Committee.

Impact of the proposed changes. TheThematic Strategy is expected to have implications for current practices in the Member States and to create new opportunities for waste management options other than landfill:

Less waste to landfill. The stronger focus on implementation and on the promotion of economic instruments will help to bring landfill prices up to a level which better reflects the real environmental impact of this waste management option, with the result that less waste should go to landfill.

More compost and energy recovery from waste. As waste moves away from landfill it will be channelled into a variety of options higher up the waste hierarchy. The development of quality benchmarks for composting facilities and for compost will increase the prospects for composting.

Where energy is recovered from waste the Strategy will increase energy efficiency.

More and better recycling. The next five years will be a key period in terms of implementation of the Recycling Directives. By setting minimum quality standards for some recycling facilities, a significant

improvement is expected, moving from the current situation where only 8 to 10% of wastes are covered by minimum quality standards to a situation where a substantial part of waste for recycling is covered.

Key benefits and positive impacts: these can be illustrated by the following quantified examples:

- further diversion of municipal waste from landfill to composting, recycling and energy recovery could produce additional reductions in greenhouse gas emissions ranging from 40 to over 100 Mt CO2 equivalent per year;
- clarifying when wastes cease to be waste could reduce part of the administrative costs related to waste legislation. For example, the aggregates recycling sector estimates these costs at roughly 1% of turnover;
- increased recycling creates jobs: recycling 10 000 tonnes of waste need up to 250 jobs compared with 20 to 40 jobs needed if the waste is incinerated and about 10 for landfill. Taking into account reduced job creation in the extraction and production of virgin materials this should result in a limited net creation of jobs.

For further information concerning the financial implications of this measure, please refer to the financial statement.

Thematic Strategy on the recycling of waste

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.

Thematic Strategy on the recycling of waste

The committee adopted the own-initiative report drafted by Johannes Blokland (IND/DEM, NL) in response to the Commission communication presenting a Thematic Strategy on the prevention and recycling of waste. The report emphasised the "key importance" of the five-stage waste hierarchy and said that the use of the comitology procedure should be limited to "non-political decisions", especially those of a technical and scientific nature.

As far as prevention was concerned, MEPs regretted "the lack of quantitative and qualitative reduction targets covering all relevant waste", which were indicated as one of the priority actions in the 6th Environment Action Programme (EAP). Although the Thematic Strategy had been presented together with the proposal for a revision of the Waste Directive (see COD/2005/0281), MEPs were critical of the fact that "many concrete implementing measures and instruments ....are still missing". They therefore called on the Commission to put forward various legislative proposals:

- a revision of the waste incineration directive;

- concrete waste prevention measures in the fields of product policy, chemicals policy and eco-design;

- concrete measures to promote re-use and repair activities;

- separate directives on biodegradable waste, construction and demolition waste and sewage sludge;

- a separate directive on PVC;

- a revision of the landfill directive with a clear timetable for a ban on landfill of various products: non-pretreated waste with fermentable components (from 2010); paper, cardboard, glass, textiles, wood, plastics, metals, rubber, cork, pottery, concrete, brick and tiles (from 2015); all recyclable waste (from 2020); all residual waste except where this is unavoidable or hazardous (from 2025).

Thematic Strategy on the recycling of waste

The European Parliament adopted a resolution based on the own-initiative report drafted by Johannes Blokland (IND/DEM, NL) in response to the Commission communication presenting a Thematic Strategy on the prevention and recycling of waste. (Please refer to the summary dated 28/11/2006.) The report adopted by 662 votes in favour to 17 against with 3 abstentions.

Thematic Strategy on the recycling of waste

The Commission presents a report examining the progress made in achieving the goals of the Thematic Strategy on the Prevention and Recycling of Waste which will contribute to the evaluation of the 6th Environmental Action Programme. Adopted in 2005, the Strategy sets out key actions to modernise the existing legal framework and to promote waste prevention, reuse and recycling, with waste disposal only as last resort.

The Commission considers that significant progress has been achieved on a number of fronts, particularly in the improvement and simplification of legislation (in the Waste Shipment Regulation (EC) No 1013/2006, and the establishment and diffusion of key concepts such as the waste hierarchy and life-cycle thinking, on setting focus on waste prevention, on coordination of efforts to improve knowledge, and on setting new European collection and recycling targets. In connection with the latter, the Commission cites particularly the revised Waste

Framework Directive 2008/98/EC (WFD) and the Landfill Directive 99/31/EC. The WFD also modernised the concept of ?waste? to encourage a life cycle approach, for example, by clarifying the distinction between wastes and 'by-products' and introducing ?end of-waste criteria' clarifying when waste ceases to be waste. Clear definitions of ?re-use? have also been introduced in the WFD, as well as new re-use targets in the proposal on the WEEE Directive recast.

The report notes that overall, recycling rates have improved (at 38% in 2008, a progress of 5% compared with 2005 and 18% compared to 1995).

The amount of waste going to landfill has decreased: roughly 40% in 2008, compared to 49% in 2005, and 65% in 1995.

The simplification of the waste acquis makes it more cost-efficient. However, large implementation and enforcement differences persist between Member States. Some Member States have gone far beyond achieving the minimum European recycling or landfill diversion targets although others will have to make additional efforts to respect the EU requirements. In addition to good governance and a strong political will, the advanced Member States have created better conditions for the recycling markets by optimally using legal and economic instruments such as landfill bans, applying taxes and charges consistent with the waste hierarchy and applying the producer responsibility concept to various waste streams. This had led to a progressive internalisation of the waste management costs into the price of products and services.

In most Member States, waste generation seems to increase, or at best, has stabilised. However, due to a strong decrease in 4 Member States, for the EU-27, total annual waste generation decreased with 10% between 2006 and 2008. Municipal solid waste (MSW) generation (7% of total waste) has now stabilised around 524 kg per year and per capita (2008) in the EU-27. There is a relative decoupling between waste generation and consumption (which increased by 16.3 % between 1999 and in 2007). Large differences exist between Member States - from around 400 to 800 kg per capita. This compares to 750kg in the USA, and 400kg in Japan.

If little tangible progress can be seen in quantitative waste prevention, some results have been obtained in qualitative waste prevention. For instance, the application of the substance ban of the Restriction of Hazardous Substances (RoHS Directive) 2002/95/EC since 2006 has reduced the amount of potentially harmful substances in electronics placed on the EU market by about 110.000 tonnes annually.

Hazardous waste (3% of total waste) continues to decrease in the EU-12, notably due to the introduction of cleaner technology and mine closures although at EU-27 level an annual increase of 0.5% can still be observed. This also represents a relative decoupling with GPD growth.

Whilst recycling rates vary from one waste stream to another, overall waste recycling in the EU has increased. In 2008, waste recycling was estimated at 38%, a progress of 5% compared to 2005 and 18 % compared to 1995. 40% of municipal waste was recycled or composted in 2008, a progress of 11.4 % between 2005 and 2008, with significant disparities between Member States (from few percent to 70%).

Energy recovery from waste has increased (from 96 kg per capita in 2005 to 102kg in 2008), having led to an increase in energy production: around at 1.3% of the EU 27 total energy production comes from incineration of MSW. It has been estimated that 50 to 60% of municipal waste incinerators in the EU will meet the new energy efficiency criteria of the WFD.

Improved waste management reduces negative environmental and health impacts due to emissions to air, soil and water as well as greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from waste disposal. Direct GHG emissions from the waste sector in the EU-27 ? representing 2.8% of the total emissions in 2007, have decreased by more than 30% between 1995 and 2007.

Since the adoption of the Strategy, the closure of sub-standard landfills and incinerators has led to significant reduction of water, soil and air pollution. A high number of sub-standard landfills have been closed down (around 3.300 closures between 2004 and 2006).

Nevertheless, approximately 1000 substandard landfills have been identified by the Commission as sub-standard landfills to be upgraded or closed as soon as possible.

Recycling provides new economic opportunities. However, the EU's recycling of specific metals which are essential for some key applications remains low. It was estimated in 2009 that waste management and recycling industries in the EU have a turnover of EUR 95 billion. The sector provides between 1.2 and 1.5 million jobs contributing to meet the EU 2020 objective of 75% employment rate and representing around 1% of GDP. Apart from waste avoidance, re-use generates other benefits in terms of job creation, reduction of over consumption and providing second hand products at accessible prices.

The report concludes that, after 5 years, the Strategy's main objectives remain valid. The Commission sees a need for further consolidation of its waste policies and will make further proposals in 2012, including concrete steps it intends to take in order to further move towards an EU resource-efficient recycling society.

Thematic Strategy on the recycling of waste

This Commission Working Document accompanies the Commission?s report on the progress achieved in relation to the Thematic Strategy on the Prevention and Recycling of Waste. It gives detailed references to the data regarding progress in reaching long term objectives and to the relevant legislation mentioned in the report. It also includes a summary the key findings of the stakeholder consultation.

The Commission notes that current policies have led to a decrease of the relative environmental impacts per ton of waste treated. However, this is offset by the negative environmental impacts caused by the expected increase in waste generation. Without further initiatives, opportunities will be missed to reduce green house gas emissions and environmental impacts in general, create jobs and meet the future demands for resources.

The document stresses the following point:

- continuous efforts are needed to improve the knowledge-base: new indicators are needed to measure progress towards a recycling society and to map waste and material streams and resource flows. Better forecasts of life cycle based environmental and health impacts of the waste policies with a specific focus on resource and climate policies should be developed;
- proper implementation and enforcement of the existing EU waste acquis must remain a priority notably by ensuring compliance with key EU targets and to the full implementation of the WFD and the WSR. In this context, a proactive verification procedure combined with an early warning system on compliance with key EU targets will be developed based on the national waste management plans;

- in the light of the recent accident in Hungary, A particular focus will be set on the EU coordination of national inspection activities to be based on result-oriented strategies and on the promotion of peer-review inspections and independent auditing schemes notably for facilities with a potential trans-boundary impact;

- significant room for progress still exists beyond the current EU minimum collection and recycling targets. To this end, the introduction of instruments used by well performing Member States should be strongly encouraged particularly in worse performing Member States. Optimal combination of economic and legal instruments should be promoted notably though landfill bans and by applying the producer responsibility concept to additional waste streams on the basis of a common European approach;
- improving the competitiveness of EU recycling industries is essential for the generation of jobs in the EU. In that context, ensuring that competition takes place within a framework maintaining high levels of environmental protection is a key priority for the Commission. In addition, the Commission will look into how to better prevent illegal exports of waste and ensuring that waste exported to third countries is treated in high standard facilities, particularly for ship dismantling;
- waste policies can help develop the markets of secondary raw materials and strengthen market mechanisms favouring secondary raw materials should be explored, including economic incentives, notably to better take into account the significant potential in terms of GHG emission reduction conferred by recycling;
- defining more ambitious prevention and recycling targets can directly contribute to meet the Europe 2020 objective of promoting a resource efficient economy. In that sense, materials having negative environment and health impacts over their entire life cycle, including on energy use and climate change should be better targeted. These targets could be incorporated into monitoring of Member States' progress towards resource efficient growth in the national reporting for Europe 2020;
- new initiatives to support innovation through Framework Programme and Innovation Partnerships and better incorporate life-cycle thinking in policy development will deserve particular attention. Use of Structural and Cohesion Funds will be encouraged along the lines of the waste hierarchy and for adoption of best available technologies.

Lastly, the report notes the need to improve stakeholder participation and raise public awareness, .as well as better incorporate life-cycle thinking in policy development. The Commission will make further proposals in 2012.