Karl J. Thomé-Kozmiensky
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WASTE MANAGEMENT

Volume 5

Waste-to-Energy

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Current Developments in European Waste-to-Energy

Ferdinand Kleppmann and Ella Stengler

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The Juncker Commission started its work at the end of 2014 by announcing that the Circular Economy package, which was recently published by the previous Commission, would be withdrawn in order to be replaced by a *broader and more ambitious* proposal by the end of 2015.

In parallel, the European Commission is working on the Energy Union Package, a strategy that will be at the core of the institution's work for the next years and in which Waste-to-Energy will play a role.

This article is therefore a timely opportunity to explore which role the Waste-to-Energy (incineration with energy recovery) sector can play in the current and forthcoming proposals from the European Commission concerning energy and waste.

1. The EU Circular Economy Package

Europe's future Circular Economy package should be ambitious in minimising landfilling of recyclable and recoverable waste, in order to maximise the use of waste as a resource. It should take a holistic approach that considers supply of raw materials as well as supply of secure and sustainable energy, which is an important part of the European Energy Union. This approach would be in line with Better Regulation and would benefit the environment, jobs and growth in Europe.

The following topics should be tackled as key priorities for a full Circular Economy:

a) Minimising landfilling of waste and maximising the use of waste as a resource

b) Tackling Quality Recycling – Only a Clean Circular Economy is a good Circular Economy

d) Uniting the Circular Economy and Energy Union goals – taking a holistic approach

1.1. Minimising landfilling and maximising the use of waste as a resource

The new proposal needs to set an ambitious timeline to phase out landfilling of recyclable and recoverable waste. This should cover not only municipal but also other waste. Waste that continues to be allowed for landfilling should have a Total Organic Carbon lower than five percent or ignition below three percent in order to ensure that the waste cannot be used in a more beneficial way.

There can be a step-by-step approach with interim targets, considering the different levels achieved by the Member States (Figure 1). However, it should be considered that already the current Waste Framework Directive requires separate collection of at least paper, metals, plastics and glass from 2015. It would be difficult to understand why these waste streams should be allowed for landfills once they have been collected separately.

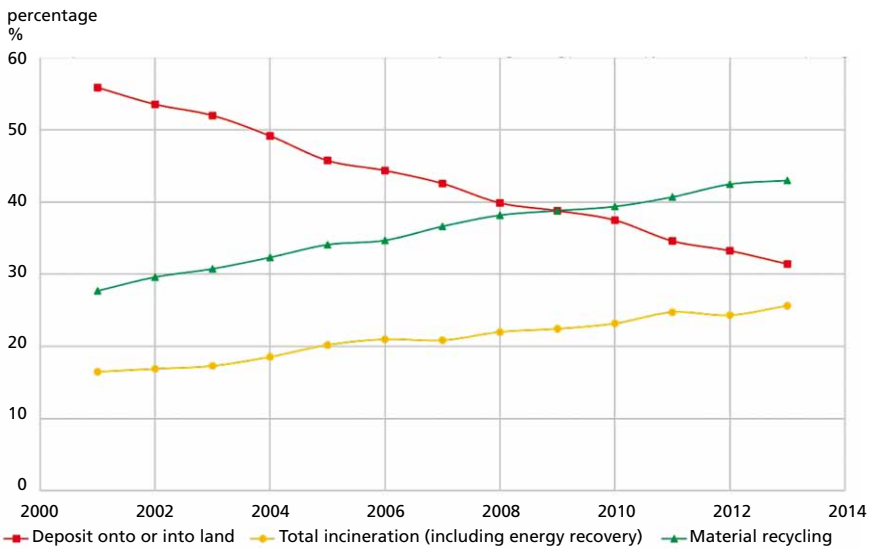


Figure 1: Municipal solid waste treatment trends in Europe, 2001 to 2013

Source: EUROSTAT

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