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NEWS

Eastern states 'risk missing 2020 recycling targets'

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Romania, Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic are unlikely to meet recycling targets for household and construction waste set in the revised waste framework directive, according to a survey of waste management firms in these countries.

The findings were presented at a waste conference in Helsinki last week. According to EU law, half of combined glass, paper, metal and plastic waste from "households or other origins" – and 70% of construction waste – should be recycled by 2020.

A representative from Austria-based waste association VOEB said a major problem in eastern Europe was the preponderance of new landfills. Some countries are even receiving EU cohesion funding to build landfills that are not needed, he said.

Municipalities can be reluctant to build more recycling facilities because they are afraid of losing revenues from landfill fees, he noted. EU funds should be in line with the waste hierarchy which prioritises recycling over landfilling, he added.

Poor implementation of waste legislation was a focus at the conference. A European Commission official said the EU executive will shortly publish a new study on the establishment of a waste implementation agency. An initial study recommended the idea, but there was much resistance from stakeholders and member states.

The new study is set to recommend greater coordination between stakeholders at local level. Earlier this month, environment commissioner Janez Potočnik asked the European Environment Agency to launch two pilot projects on waste law enforcement.

Separately, another official said the commission's industry unit will launch an 'innovation partnership' on raw materials in coming weeks. It will address issues such as material substitution and land access. A study on material flows will also be launched.

Follow-up:

FEAD annual conference (<http://www.fead.be/news/44/151/FEAD-Annual-Conference-2011/>) and VOEB (<http://www.voeb.at/>)

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