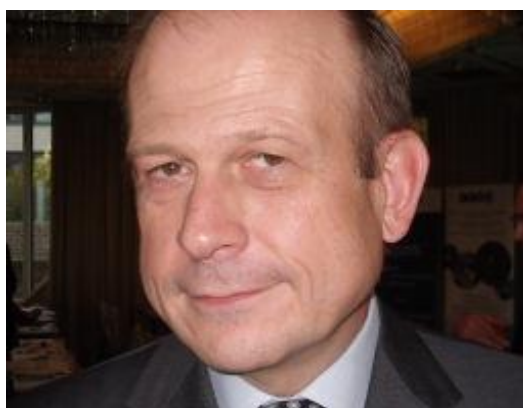


RDF export warning given by SITA waste chief

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SITA's worldwide waste chief Christophe Cros has warned that the UK could be exporting its waste "problem" to Europe through the export of refused-derived fuel.

The note of caution came at last week's FEAD waste management industry conference in Helsinki which prompted a European Commission response that the exports could be seen as the UK "being in a transition stage" but with a reminder that, under the European 2020 Roadmap, the aim is to "only burn non-recyclable waste."



Christophe Cros from SITA said that the UK needed to bear the proximity principle in mind when exporting RDF to the continent

Mr Cros, who has responsibility for all SITA's worldwide waste activities for parent Suez Environnement, and who is also director general of SITA France, told the Helsinki meeting that waste management in the UK had in the past been below average.

Mr Cros said: "Now the UK is one of the most ambitious in Europe, today seeking to divert material from landfill with PFI, LATS, and significant increases in tax. But the timeline is a very significant problem, you need time to build those facilities for waste management."

And, he added a warning that by simply exporting waste for incineration on the continent this was running counter to the concept of the proximity principle of handling waste near to where it arises.

Mr Cros remarked: "There is a growing flow of waste to R1 incinerators on the continent, a temptation to export your problem to another place - there is a proximity principle and we should bear that in mind."

Cross-border

Responding to Mr Cros's concerns, Rosalinde van der Vlies, deputy head of waste management unit, DG Environment, European Commission, said that it should be possible to

speak about cross-border cooperation on waste. “The idea of regional cooperation is included in the Waste Framework Directive and this is one of the great advantages of Europe. We don’t want each member state to set in place a range of recycling processes, in Europe the idea is that member states should work together on recycling and have a network.”

A spokeswoman for the Commission later told *letsrecycle.com* that the export of RDF from the UK is a “tricky issue.”

She emphasised the requirements to separately collect waste for recycling and noted that “lower down the hierarchy it is more of a nuanced article in transposition. We have set a path towards the 2020 vision, with milestones. In order to get there we could agree we are in a transitional phase now.”

And, the spokeswoman added that the Commission required guarantees that Member States will move waste up the hierarchy. “The message is that in the future, waste to energy should be limited to non-recyclable waste. We know this change cannot be reached overnight and we are working towards that vision.”

Trend

Mr Cros had also commented how the waste management industry is “not obsessed” with falling levels of waste and that it “welcomes and supports the road map. It is clear that the right trend has been set in terms of economic competitiveness and sustainability.”

And, he said it can be considered “that there is a parallel between Europe waste strategy and European waste businesses” in areas such as waste minimisation and turning waste into a resource when possible or necessary.

Mr Cros continued: “This is what we have been doing, 50 years ago at the very beginning of history we were dealing with the waste of others, we moved waste out of the city. Then we were asked to eliminate and dispose of waste. Today what is expected is to maximise waste recovery, whatever the definition of recovery. It is very clear that we do whatever is necessary because of the behaviour of our customers and regulation.”