

A modern approach

Waste legislation is ruled by EU regulation. Caelia Quinault attended the FEAD conference in Paris to hear what the Europeans are saying about the revised Waste Framework Directive

For decades, waste and recycling policy in the UK has been dominated by European legislation. The 1999 Landfill Directive alone has helped transform the UK's waste management landscape from one almost entirely reliant on disposal to a more recycling and recovery-lead economy.

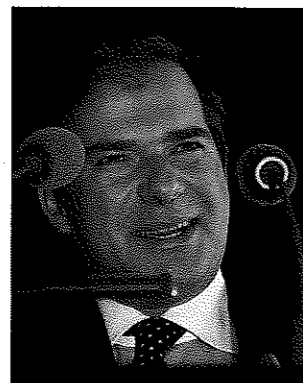
With this in mind, the issue of European legislation – and the future challenges it could pose for the waste management industry – was widely discussed at the annual conference of the European Federation of Waste Management and Environmental Services (FEAD) on September 19 in Paris.

FEAD represents the EU's waste management industry and its members are European trade associations - including the ESA - and many representatives from throughout the sector were present.

Top of the conference agenda was the revised Waste Framework Directive (WFD), which was approved by the European Parliament on June 17, and is expected to pass into law after rubber-stamping from the Council of ministers at a meeting on October 20 2008.

Under the WFD, headline measures include by 2020, targets to prepare for re-use and recycling: 50% by weight of at least paper, metal, plastic and glass from households and possibly other origins as far as those waste streams are similar to households and 70% by weight of non-hazardous construction and demolition waste.

The Directive also allows some energy from waste plants to be classed "recovery" operations, provided they meet a certain level of energy efficiency defined by a formula ("R1"), thereby avoiding certain regulations like the ban on exporting waste for disposal and achieving greater acceptance amongst the public.



"A new society of recycling"
– Dimitri Giotakos

Other proposals include a new five-stage hierarchy – comprising of prevention, reuse, recycling, recovery and disposal – and measures to define the point at which waste becomes a product ("end of waste") and is therefore no longer subject

to the waste label or waste management legislation.

Addressing delegates at the FEAD event, Dimitri Giotakos, who is a member of the cabinet of environment commissioner Dimas, heralded the proposed directive as providing a more modern approach to waste management.

He said: "The reverberations are in a great many areas...the Commission is dependent on this directive to bring about a new society of recycling throughout the European Union."

Questions

However, while the text of the revised directive has been broadly agreed, questions hang over how it will be interpreted and what it will mean on the ground.

For instance, Defra is currently seeking clarification over the 50% household waste recycling target as to

whether it applies to just paper, metal, plastic and glass as the wording suggests – or includes all waste materials, including green waste, as Defra itself believes. This is enormously important because, if green waste were not included in the target, the



"Some problems with 50% target"
– Karolina Frás

UK would have to boost recycling rates even more to meet the goal.

Karolina Frás, administrator for the European Commission's environment directorate general, which is currently looking at the proposals in detail, agreed that there was "some problems" with the 50% target as it was "complicated".

She told delegates: "If there are problems it would be very welcome if you signal them to us – especially over practical aspects."

Ms Frás explained that the Commission would monitor the transposition of the directive into member state legislation and provide guidelines on the definitions of recovery and recycling, as well as rules on the application and calculation of targets – which will be rubber-stamped by MEPs.

Dr Caroline Jackson MEP – who led the European parliament's revision of the Waste Framework Directive – told RMR that she personally believed the recycling target was only "one of two important aspects for the UK" in the directive.

She said: "The second aspect is the relevance of the R1 formula in how it creates opportunity for people planning EfW plants to argue they have recovery operations."

"The real challenge for the UK is to see whether the government is prepared to encourage or mandate that all new developments of housing for example must have district heating schemes linked to local energy from waste plants so waste can be burnt to the advantage of local inhabitants. Government has not done that. I think people in Britain have not thought very

imaginatively about EfW," she added.

While the WFD has dominated Europe's plans for waste, the FEAD event also looked at the implications of a new directive on Industry Emissions, which is awaiting its first reading in the European Parliament.

The review of the existing Integrated Pollution Prevention and Control directive (IPPC) aims to pull together a range of industrial emissions legislation including the Waste Incineration Directive (WID) to remove unnecessary administrative burden.

While unlikely to stray far from the main principles of WID, the review proposes that permits issued to industry operators must be more tightly based around the latest Best Available Techniques (BAT) to prevent and minimise pollution than is

the case at present. This could be problematic for planning and investment reliability, as BAT reference documents are updated on a regular basis, and has been criticised by MEPs for being too idealistic.

Nadine de Greef, FEAD secretary general, explained that the European waste industry also had concerns about the new Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemical substances Directive (REACH).

Ms Greef said that the directive had not been drawn up with the waste management sector in mind and it was unclear if the recycling sector – like other sectors – needed to

register which substances it handled in line with its requirements.

She said: "Waste is heterogeneous so it



"Britain has not thought imaginatively about EfW" – Dr Caroline Jackson



The future: Waste regulations were debated at the FEAD conference, which took place in the Eiffel Tower meeting rooms

is hard to have a substance by substance approach – it is a major concern."

Conclusion

Looking at the wider picture, Mr Giotakos explained that the EU was working to "fill the gaps" in the regulatory framework by treating waste as a resource.

He said that the community needed to take inspiration from across the world, and concluded by saying: "We have a single planet – let us not waste it."

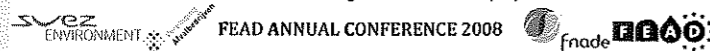
CASE STUDY 1



The significant contribution of Waste Management in reaching the EU Climate targets

FEAD ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2008

Freek van Eijk
Director Strategy and Public Affairs SITA Northern Europe Waste Services
Board Member of the Dutch Waste Management Association (VA)



Freek van Eijk, director of strategy and public affairs for SITA Northern Europe Waste Services, spoke at the FEAD conference about the contribution of waste management in meeting the EU targets requiring member states to achieve a 20% reduction in carbon emissions by 2020.

Mr Eijk explained that he had attempted to help calculate the carbon footprint of waste management activities, and found that recycling was very positive – particularly for materials such as aluminium and textiles – that composting and digestion was slightly positive, incineration was slightly negative and landfill was negative. However, he pointed out that the negatives "could be more than fully compensated" by the benefit of recycling activities – with a very positive overall contribution.

He said: "The positive contribution of waste management in 2020 will be 19-30% of the EU CO2 target."

Mr Eijk added that further EU legislation and the application of the Landfill Directive would further what carbon emissions were produced by the waste management industry, adding that looking at waste management from a carbon perspective was "gaining a lot of momentum."

CASE STUDY 2



Turning Biogas into Biofuel: A new challenge for waste management companies
By Gérard FRIES

ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2008
France
November 2008



Gérard Fries, technical director of Veolia Propreté, told the FEAD conference about Veolia's research into transforming waste-derived biogas into fuel for the waste collection fleet which he claimed was a "new challenge" for the waste management sector.

He said that in 2007 there was the potential to capture an estimated 5.9 million tonnes of oil equivalent (mtoe) biogas across Europe – with landfill providing particular potential – and that this was expected to grow despite moves to reduce landfill.

Mr Fries explained that the majority of biogas which is captured is used to generate energy, but that only 31% of methane potential was actually utilised – providing an opportunity to produce fuel.

However, he stressed that biogas upgrading was a key concern and that Veolia was currently involved in a pilot project in Paris, to look at different technology.

He said: "There is a very clear signal that transforming biogas into something else than electricity is coming and it is almost there. Having said that we are convinced there are some technical hurdles."

Mr Fries added that there were huge discrepancies between member states for supporting the development of biogas recovery, with Germany and the UK currently leading the way.