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CEE Bankwatch Network's mission is to prevent environmentally and socially harmful impacts of international development finance, and to promote alternative solutions and public participation.

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## Bankwatch input to the EC's consultation on the appropriateness of setting targets for bio-waste recycling

**C**EE Bankwatch Network believes the introduction of an EU Biowaste directive and subsequent setting of recycling targets is crucial for several reasons:

- a) It is clearly noted in different official documents of the European Commission that **biowaste recycling is generally a better option than disposal or incineration, even considering energy recovery, with respect to impacts on the environment and resources efficiency (i.e. the waste hierarchy)**. Local authorities often forget this general rule when preparing waste management plans.
- b) Setting recycling targets for biowaste will steer future investments in those CEE countries that today lag behind others in either fulfilling the Waste Framework Directive or Landfill directives. Setting biowaste recycling targets is urgent in order to avoid inappropriate decisions regarding the role and dimensions of disposal/incineration facilities. *Eleven major incinerator projects are now in the pipeline in Poland and consume most EU funds available for resource initiatives. Such projects are publicly unpopular, create far fewer jobs than less expensive recycling measures and do not tackle underlying problems of excessive resource overconsumption.*
- c) Setting biowaste recycling targets will further prevent Member States from over-dimensioning disposal or incineration facilities and systematically using existing disposal and incineration facilities as the most cost-effective option in the short-term. With no legal recourse, the cost effectiveness of new or existing facilities for processing all types of waste may be an argument not to invest in dedicated facilities that are more sustainable and profitable on the long-term.
- d) This communication is as an opportunity for differentiating biogenic emissions when energy is produced. We do not support the idea that burning waste should count towards meeting renewable energy targets as such activities do not require any efforts at separate collection or use of by-products. When mixed waste is burnt it creates low efficiency electricity and toxic by-products like gases and ash that are possible threats to air, soil and waters. *As most Member States rely on energy recovery from organic waste to fulfill their renewable energy targets of 20 percent by 2020, there may be competition to access this biowaste stream.*

- e) Some Member States have already recognised that such “techno-fix solutions” are not acceptable and so introduced incineration taxes in order to reduce waste amounts slated for incinerated. The new biowaste directive could help in diverting this fraction towards more environmentally-friendly solutions where energy can be produced but also the digestate can be used e.g. as a soil improver. *Setting biowaste recycling targets will help to avoid burning biowaste that has low calorific power while maintaining the possibility for Member States to fulfill their renewable energy obligations through other means, including anaerobic digestion.*

More targeted recommendations appear in the attached annex.

For these reasons CEE Bankwatch Network supports the European Commission in establishing a future Biowaste Directive as a necessary measure to reach goals of Europe becoming a “recycling society”.

## Annex – Questionnaire responses

<p>1.-3. <b>Questions aimed primarily at Member States:</b></p>	<p>CEE Bankwatch Network is not representing a Member State but does consist of several NGOs from CEE countries that need significant efforts in order to meet EU standards to comply with the environmental acquis, especially the Landfill directive (1998/31/EC) and revised Waste Framework Directive (98/08/EC).</p> <p>It is clear that setting biowaste recycling targets will contribute to at least improving the implementation of the WFD hierarchy (recycling appearing above incineration and disposal) and the expected benefits of the Landfill Directive – amounts of biodegradable waste sent off to landfills. The Biowaste directive is an excellent opportunity to balance the efforts of CEE countries between fulfilling objectives of the Landfill directive and the Biowaste directive through clear prioritizing of the WFD hierarchy.</p> <p>This legislative act has to promote and suggest best available techniques to manage biowaste – from collection and treatment to parameters for compost/digestate land application.</p>
<p>4. <b>Added Value of EU legislation</b></p>	<p>The Landfill Directive states what should NOT be done with biodegradable waste but does not explicitly say how to treat biodegradable waste in order to ensure the best results in terms of environmental impacts and resources efficiency.</p> <p>Intentions to build treatment facilities would increase standards of the existing landfills but the funding for such projects will drain funding for separate collection described in the WFD. Besides this financial clash, we see contrasts in waste quantity estimations, where large infrastructure projects like incinerators or MBTs are built or planning to be built with inadequate capacities and subsequently prevent further development of separate collection or prevention plans.</p> <p><i>WFD article 5 on by-products does not provide as such any incentive to optimize biowaste management and there is no direct link to recycling targets. In regards to article 22, it states that Member States ‘shall encourage’, but does not create sufficient certainties for securing investments and dedicated recycling actions in waste management plans. The setting of biowaste recycling targets is in fact the anticipated possibility encompassed in article 22.</i></p> <p>Setting a separate collection target for biowaste will deliver added value, since at the moment it is only a fraction of waste that is separately collected in new Member States or candidate countries.</p> <p><i>Recycling obligations <b>will set long term legal drivers</b> for hierarchy (art 4), by-product possibilities (art 5) and “encouragements”(art 22) are not able to replace.</i></p>
<p>5. <b>Areas not appropriate for separate collection</b></p>	<p>CEE Bankwatch supports the introduction of certain standards in biowaste management, including <b>prevention</b>: the “maximum organic waste content of the waste stream going to disposal (including MBT) or incineration (including Waste to Energy)”.</p> <p>Indicators and standards should be produced so that all Member States have an equal point of reference. We do not support economic arguments for areas where treatment facilities (MBT or Incineration) have great overcapacity. We agree that in low populated areas collection systems could be replaced for example with home composting solutions.</p>

6. Differentiated targets	Time horizon differentiations should be aligned with objectives of the Landfill Directive, based on Member State situation regarding biowaste management at a certain date (before entry into force of the WFD). For Member States treating a lot of biowaste at the moment (either in Incineration or MBT facilities), staged objectives could also help re-orienting progressively the streams.
7. Bio-waste from food production	We do not see a problem in creating synergies between household and food production waste as long as there is a quality check to avoid contamination that may prevent existing or future biological treatment facilities.
8. Form of recycling targets	<p>Proper quality biowaste recycling requires clean inputs through separate collection. Sorting biowaste after commingled collection does not ensure long term quality of recycled material.</p> <p><i>To avoid different interpretations by Member States, we favor staged targets stating specifically the separate collection and recycling rate eg "50% of biowaste should be separately collected and biologically treated (id est recycled by composting or AD)".</i></p>
9. Separate collection – barriers	<p>One obstacle is the existing treatment capacities (incineration or MBT), which eventually are the most cost effective options once investments have been executed. Starting a separate collection may not bring financial benefits if the subsequent treatment does not require it.</p> <p>The poor <i>a priori</i> acceptability of compost produced from household biowaste is considered a barrier, resulting in resistance to start separate collection. Such low acceptability could be interpreted as a lack of waste management economics knowledge.</p> <p><i>The inability to take advantage of the integrated collection and management treatment costs are strong obstacles. By setting legal drivers, the biowaste recycling targets will oblige to acknowledge the conditions and gain knowledge to optimise management costs.</i></p>
10. Compost markets	<p>Where compost from mixed MSW exist, this can leave a poor impression to the whole compost market. That is why it is important to ensure a continuous quality certainty through separate collection.</p> <p>The perceived competition between compost and manure is in fact a misunderstanding of their different agronomical uses. Compost is not a fertilizing agent but a soil improver, whereas manure is a fertilizer. In many cases the two are complementary.</p> <p>Soil erosion is a known problem in some EU Member States and we see increased compost markets as a possible solution for some European soils.</p> <p><i>The more humus in the top layer of soil, the more fertile it is. This is because <u>humus gives the soil a good structure for air and water to penetrate.</u></i></p>
11. Good and bad practices	There are several examples and practices throughout Europe. When the economics of waste management are optimised, the market for compost as soil improved is not a crucial problem. For example in Flanders several municipal companies have organised actions where compost is given away for free or at a discounted price to citizens i.e. one euro per cubic meter of compost.
12. Differences in national practices	Factors helping progress in Biowaste management may be linked to country specific situations, but some factors are not country-dependent:

- introducing obligatory treatment
- taxing landfill and disposal activities
- national recycling objectives
- integrating cost management (collection and treatment)
- long-term history in biowaste separate collection and treatment
- educating citizens and local decision-makers

Some Member States currently are likely to fail to achieve diversion targets: those relying strongly on treatment (incineration – MBT – landfilling) and which did not anticipate alternative treatment. The EC should at least try to prevent these situations by setting obligatory biowaste targets.