

Hi all,

The vote in the Environment committee took place this afternoon and I regret to inform you that the reclassification of incineration from disposal to recovery has finally gone through by only 5 votes difference.

The amendments asking all incinerators to be energy efficient also fell and priority was given to incentivise “energy efficiency” with a blurry link to environmental and health protection. The climatic conditions were also included although a confusing amendment by a French MEP in the definition of recovery makes it compulsory that energy recovery involves recovery of the heat...

Unfortunately the proposal to establish a waste consultation forum was also voted against.

The waste hierarchy will finally be composed of 5 steps; prevention, reuse, recycle, recovery and disposal but its application can be deviated following a Life Cycle Thinking approach –that no one knows what it is but it leaves doors open- instead of Life Cycle Assessments.

However, good news are that the recycling targets for household (50%) and industrial waste (70%) by 2020 were accepted as well as stabilization targets by 2012 to levels of 2009.

Also, the definition of by-products was also rejected and the possible loopholes created the by-products legislation are now out.

The vote was preceded by an introduction by the Slovenian Presidency representing the Council in which it was explicitly mentioned the need to accept the reclassification and they highlighted that if parliament does so they will consider adopting the targets. Therefore the trade-off between reclassification and targets was announced before the vote and the MEPs followed.

All in all, it helped to define the position that the EU is taking as regards the waste management strategy that, according to rapporteur Jackson, should guide the EU in the next 30 years. This strategy clearly points in the direction to support recycling, bio-waste treatment, polluter pays principle and incineration as the future means to deal with waste in the future. And with adopting this reclassification of incineration it is clear that the EU finally “came out of the closet”. By doing so the EU it also indirectly does away with the proximity principle that has guided waste policies since 1975; with reclassification the market is open in Europe to ship waste to be burnt in another country incinerator since the restrictions to export waste for recovery are a lot looser than those to ship waste for disposal.

One final consideration to understand why things happen –beyond industry lobbying-; the main driver of waste legislation as it was stated by the council representative as well as by the rapporteur of the EP, C. Jackson is better regulation and efficiency. Environment and health protection were always mentioned as a kind of 2<sup>nd</sup> priority or by-product the efficiency that Europe needs.

All in all, the Waste Framework Directive is moving on and now that reclassification is out of the way and the council kind of agreed on the targets –remains to be seen if they will accept industrial recycling targets- it is possible to reach an agreement for second reading by June 2008. We will see...

Below you can find the PR that HCWH and GAIA have issued for the occasion.

Thanks a lot to all of you who put pressure on the MEPs these last weeks!

Joan Marc

GAIA and HCWH have published a PR on the vote:

<http://www.noharm.org/details.cfm?type=document&ID=1887>

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: April 8, 2008 Also see:**

[Factsheet: EU laws as threat to health and recycling](#)

[More information on our waste legislation page](#)

## **PROPOSED INCINERATOR RECLASSIFICATION UNDERMINES EU HEALTH AND SUSTAINABILITY GOALS, SAY NGOS**

Brussels, 8 April: In a decision criticised today by environment groups, the EU Parliament ENVI Committee voted in favour of EU Commission proposals to reclassify some waste incinerators as energy recovery plants.

Among the critics of the proposals, which form part of the EU Waste Framework Directive, are environmental health network Health Care Without Harm Europe (HCWHE) and waste campaigners GAIA.

Joan Marc Simon, Waste Policy Advisor for HCWHE and GAIA, says: “The decision is subtle but important: by rewarding so-called ‘efficient’ incinerators with the status of recovery operations, more waste will be burned rather than less.

“In the 21st Century, incinerators still pose considerable risks to human health. As a society, we should maximise waste recycling and minimise waste production and burning.”

The ENVI Committee vote will be taken into account when the legislative proposals go into the next phase: negotiation between the European Parliament and Council.

“Recycling rates of 60-85% are being achieved in many communities, and more and more evidence is coming to light showing that recycling is better for the environment than even the most efficient forms of incineration,” says Simon.

“Giving incentives to burn waste is therefore a major backward step away from the EU goal of becoming a healthy, sustainable, recycling society.”

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### **Notes**

(1) HCWHE is a health and environment coalition, working to make healthcare more sustainable without compromising patient safety or care. Part of HCWHE’s work includes promoting waste minimisation and recycling, whilst ending the use of incineration as a waste disposal method for medical waste.

[www.noharm.org/europe](http://www.noharm.org/europe)

(2) GAIA, the Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives, is a global coalition of NGOs promoting sustainable waste practices. This includes discouraging the use of incinerators.

<http://www.no-burn.org/>