



Waste Framework Directive agreed

On 17 June, Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) gave the official approval to the agreement reached with the Council on the Waste Directive. The EU's waste policy has been debated in the Council and the European Parliament (EP) since the European Commission's proposal in 2005 to revise the old 1975 Waste Directive. When the EP first reviewed the Directive in 2007, it asked for tougher recycling targets, while the Council preferred a more 'flexible' approach. On 2 June, after several informal meetings between the Parliament and the Council, an agreement on the text was reached.

The main implications of the revised Directive are:

- The measures are not strictly binding, but the Commission has confirmed that if the targets are not met by Member States by 2020, the Commission will be able to take them to Court for non-compliance.
- Governments will have to recycle 50% of household waste and 70% of construction waste by 2020.
- There will be a waste hierarchy that will set up the order of preference for waste processing: prevention, re-use, recycling, recovery, disposal.
- Regeneration of waste oils will continue to receive priority over incineration. Although not clearly specified, a new amendment on the preference of waste oils has been introduced in the recitals. It reaffirms the need for waste oils management to follow the priority order of the 5 step waste hierarchy, prioritising recycling over energy recovery.
- The Governments will have up to 5 years (after the Directive's entry into force) to set up national waste prevention programmes.
- The Commission will submit interim reports on waste prevention and generation by 2011 and 2014, , outlining proposals for waste prevention targets and their enforceability "if appropriate".

There are conflicting feelings over the agreement reached. The rapporteur of the Parliament, UK MEP Caroline Jackson, said that the Parliament got the best deal possible on the Waste Directive, and that the package "represents a very significant achievement", as for the first time there are recycling targets for household waste and construction and demolition waste in the EU legislation. However, the Green group has criticised the waste recycling targets as being "too low and too difficult to enforce".

The Directive will enter into force after its publication in the European Union Official Journal. Member States will have two years to implement it into national law.