

## **Position paper Situation in Hungary**

### **General indicators**

In regards to the EU's average waste generation per capita, Hungary stood below the EU values in the past decade. However, the rates of composting and recycling can only be considered subpar as there are many other countries besides Hungary that exceed our performance in the EU region.

Of the 3,8 million tonnes of waste produced in 2014 – that corresponds to 385 kg/capita and which was actually a rise compared to the last years' reduction in waste generation – the collected recyclable rate is estimated to be 22-25% (819,000 tonnes), depending on the sources. The amount of waste that undergone energy recovery has risen from 9% to 10%, mostly in the form of incineration. Waste being landfilled in 2014 is still a worrisome issue to handle with its 59% share, although it showed a significant drop from 65% in the past year. The share of organic waste, plastics and paper accounted for 23%, 15% and 13% respectively from the amount of waste collected in the community.

### **Recycling**

The collected recyclables (both from household and household-like waste) are in fact counted as recycled waste, where in reality, only a small fraction of waste is being processed (recycled, reused). Some recyclables – due to contamination, composite materials and small particle size – end up being incinerated. This is clearly a sign of lacking communication towards the general public and the producers that is inhibiting proper recycling.

With the above in mind, the declared waste recycling data might be flawed or can easily be misinterpreted. Moreover, there is no shared publication regarding the calculation methodology that determines the material flow rates of different recyclables. This led to an incoherent and incomprehensibly big share to be drawn into energy recovery.

Furthermore, though it is laid in the Waste Act, separate collection has not been introduced in many places in Hungary, especially in smaller villages.

### **Target numbers fall short**

In connection with the set national targets related to different waste recycling and the permitted landfill fractions, many of the actual performance values stay shy of what was already needed to be accomplished – in case of packaging waste recycling, glass utilization and biowaste being landfilled – or is predicted to fall short by 2020 in case of combined paper, glass, plastic and metal recycling.

### **General consensus in relation to waste incineration**

Although the waste hierarchy is openly communicated as the norm to follow, waste incineration still plays a preferred role in reducing waste, emphasizing the "logic" behind utilizing the energy content of the burnt waste. The limit of 10% on landfilling by 2030 stated in the Circular Economy Package is also interpreted as further encouragement for incineration practices.

Waste incineration though might lower the percentage of landfilling, but is known to be a competition for recycling, reuse and prevention not to mention the reduced workforce needed in comparison to the higher levels of the waste hierarchy. The same trend can be observed with respect to consideration of burning sewage sludge due to its available energy content.

### **Waste fees**

Extended producer responsibility does not apply to the waste producers due to the fact that the environmental taxes are serving just as another form of tax directed to the central budget. They are not or only partially reinvested in the waste management system's operation and its reform. Furthermore, landfill tax has to be paid by the waste management companies and cannot be devolved to the waste producer itself. In Hungary there is a cap for waste fee and is not paid after the actual amount produced, therefore there is no financial incentive for the citizens to reduce waste.

### **Reuse**

Actions towards the promotion of reuse is almost non-existent. In fact, there is only one reuse facility in Hungary that is dealing with E+E waste, and it is not included in the corresponding fundings by the national waste management agency. Seemingly exciting efforts regarding new reuse centers in the capital – being built by the metropolitan waste manager (FKF) – will and confirmed to act only as an awareness raising campaign in the future and not as an actual reuse station.

### **Abandoned waste**

There is a steady occurrence of illegal waste in Hungary, whereas the new regulations basically do not include abandoned waste in their line of thought. The problem is in turn passed to the local municipalities to be solved.

### **Hazardous waste**

The obligatory collection scheme and systematic control and regulation of hazardous waste, or more specifically the lack of it is a significant problem that led to unbearable conditions within respect to waste fractions despite the fact that reducing the level and quantity of hazardous waste supposed to be of prime interest dictated by the national regulations.

### **Discouraging and controversial practices**

Despite the fact that waste prevention along with limiting and minimizing waste and its effect and the maximization of resource effectiveness are the "primary" goals set by the national waste management act, the system is indeed discouraging the public to work toward waste limitation by unnecessary obligation of specific size – mostly too big – trash bins per household and by not funding waste preventive actions.

Involvement of the civil society is minimal, despite the fact that they are the most affected group, the representatives of the society itself. There is little option to give public feedback in relation to the problems, which in turn diminishes progress in the right direction, since no local demands and unique parameters are taken into account. Also, adequate awareness raising campaigns are lacking and are mostly concentrated on waste separating and there is less focus on waste reduction itself. There is very

limited funding for the civil society though it is where the most experience regarding public education campaigns is.

### **Recommendations regarding the Hungarian waste management situation**

There is a handful of essential thoughts that could help in dealing with the present situation:

1. Include and encourage the public and local enterprises with awareness raising campaigns with special emphasis on the higher standing participants in the waste hierarchy, including prevention, reuse and recycling so that people can accept, understand and advocate these fundamental steps besides the development of a well-established infrastructure (including reuse centers).
2. Waste prevention has to be encouraged from both ends (consumer and producer) by the introduction of different landfill, environmental and littering taxes. It is important that these should affect the waste producers themselves and the income should be spent on environmental measurements such as awareness raising campaigns, establishment of good practices, development of infrastructure etc. Landfill taxes should include incineration, as well or a separate incineration tax should be introduced to encourage prevention, reuse and recycling.
3. Waste fees should encourage citizens to waste less and reuse and recycle more. Pay as you throw systems have proved in many cases that recycling rates can be drastically increased while decreasing waste generation. Today in Hungary it is possible to choose from different bin sizes though the smallest can be chose only by people proven to be living alone.
4. Waste management data should be public, clear and harmonized. Waste analysis should be conducted to understand the problem better and address them with specific measurements.
5. Regional and local waste prevention plans have to be made and implemented. Good practice examples should be sought out and applied.
6. An effective sanction system to control, eliminate and monitor illegal waste dumps should be established.
7. Separate waste collection schemes should include as many fractions as possible and collection points, waste yards should be established in a way that it is easily accessible for the public. One of the many problematic fraction is hazardous waste as the general practice is to put them in the mixed waste.
8. Measurements to encourage reuse and preparation for reuse should be made. As latter can be included in national waste management targets it would made it easier to comply with them. Existing practices such as deposit schemes for beverage packaging should be extended and a calculation system should be introduced for inclusion in the targets. Other reuse systems for example reuse centers should

be established. In such schemes actors other from waste management companies should be involved e.g. civil society, social enterprises.

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