

Biowaste - Need for EU Legislation?

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Speaker: Parliamentary State Secretary Astrid Klug

Permanent Representation of the Federal Republic of Germany to the European Union

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Ms. Szech-Kondouros, Ms. Administrator-General, Mr. Deputy Director-General, Ladies and gentlemen,

At this juncture, I would also like to take the opportunity to welcome you cordially to this event.

We, the Directorate-General for the Environment, the Environment Ministry of the Czech Republic, the Flemish Waste-Management Authority and the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMU), are holding this event today to provide an opportunity to discuss with you the issue "Biowaste - Need for EU Legislation?". All of this event's hosts share a central insight: biowaste is a great deal more than simply waste. Biowaste is a valuable resource, one that we must use. It may admittedly be true that the event's hosts have their differences regarding the specific approaches to be taken and the political options available. However, at the same time we agree that we urgently need an international dialogue about this issue from the point of view of the waste-management sector and for climate protection reasons.

Ladies and gentlemen, the greatest challenge facing us in the coming decades will be that of conducting our economic development with a reduced use of natural resources, in the interest of leaving future generations an intact planet with adequate resources. Careful, efficient and innovative use of energy, materials and resources will become the key issue for a globalised economy. Europe's economic systems depend on natural resources such as minerals, biomass, air, water and soil. The manner and the speed with which we are squandering our renewable and non-renewable resources are increasingly undermining our planet's ability to regenerate the resources and the environmental functions upon which our growth and prosperity are founded. Over the past 50 years, we have modified ecosystems more rapidly, and more profoundly, than we have done in any other comparable period of human history.

It is eminently clear that we will have to use our resources more efficiently. And addressing that need will include intensifying our efforts to reuse and recycle raw materials after they have been used. In keeping with the principles of a closed-cycle economy, the waste-management sector will play a growing role in our efforts to meet the challenge of sustainable resources management.

In addition, we must also intensify our efforts to raise environmental awareness, and enhance pertinent legal requirements and technical standards, throughout Europe and the world: the handful of countries with modern waste-management sectors, oriented to resources conservation and climate protection, is but a small minority in comparison to the many countries which still have a lot of catching-up to do in their waste-management sectors.