

Complying with the Landfill and Framework Directives in the Visegrad Four Countries

Requirements of the European waste directives represent an important driving force of waste management development in the Visegrad Four countries. However, it should be mentioned that some Visegrad Four countries have problems with meeting the requirements, in particular due to non-unified and unclear methodology for determination of basic - historical data on waste production. In the countries that have not succeeded in complying with the requirements of the European waste legislation in the long term, among other things for these reasons, its driving force may be used by political and/or interest groups for pushing through procedures and technologies connected mainly with a chimera of easy and quick complying with the set aims. One of the representative examples is considerable increase of the number of new municipal waste incinerators planned to be constructed.

The Landfill Directive 1999/31/EC in its Article 5 requires reduction of biodegradable waste going to landfills to the level of 75 %, 50 %, and 35 %, in 2006, 2009, and 2016, respectively, in relation to the production in 1995. The Czech Republic, Poland and Slovakia have an exception residing in that they may meet these aims with a postponement of 4 years (for the reason that they landfilled more than 80 % of solid municipal waste in 1995). Hungary did not request the postponement. Article 6 of the Directive requires that only waste that has been subject to treatment is landfilled.

The Waste Framework Directive 2008/98 requires recycling of 50 % of municipal waste, namely at least 50 % of paper, plastic, glass, and metal. The member states had 4 possibilities for determination of the recycling level, namely:

- a) 50 % recycling of paper, plastic, glass, and metal, from household waste
- b) 50 % recycling of paper, plastic, glass, and metal, from municipal waste and similar trade waste
- c) 50 % recycling of household waste
- d) 50 % recycling of municipal waste and similar trade waste.

Landfill Directive

The Czech Republic set, on the basis of records, the production of biodegradable municipal waste (BMW) to be 1530000 tons (148 kg/inhabitant) in 1995. However, this amount does not include all green waste, both of municipal and household origin, as it was not managed according to the Act on Waste (home and community composting, illegal landfills). 11475500 tons may be landfilled in 2010, 765000 tons in 2013, and 535500 tons in 2020. The aim was met in 2010 (999047 tons), however, a higher than allowed amount of BMW was landfilled in 2013 (895192 tons, it means ca 59 % of the set value of 1995). Compliance with the aim is proved by a calculation, using analyses of waste going to landfills as the basic data. In the Czech Republic, the term of ban of mixed municipal waste landfilling has been set already (2024).

Hungary estimated the production of biodegradable municipal waste (BMW) to be 2,34 million tons (234 kg/inhabitant) in 1995. Out of this amount, 1.57 million tons was biodegradable waste (35 %), and 765000 tons was paper (17 %). Material flows recording has only been started in 2004, this being also the first year since waste statistics exist in Hungary. Aims set for years 2006 and 2010 were met by Hungary. For 2016 the amount of biodegradable waste going to landfill has to be less than 820 000 tons. It is expected that the aim for 2016 will be met, too. Today there is a gap of 73000 tons. However, high amount of compost is of low quality, it contains a lot of plastics, heavy metals, etc. They are mostly used for landfill recultivation. In 1995 paper was included in the number, too whereas today only biowaste is calculated in the statistics. Consequently, due to the new methodology, when fulfilling the targets, Hungary is actually over-performing. However, national data are ambiguous. Hungary does not plan complete ban of mixed municipal waste landfilling. Only ca 70 landfills are in operation currently, and transport distances are



rather high already (landfills that were not in accordance with the European legislation requirements were closed down by the end of 2009).

Poland determined biodegradable municipal waste (BMW) production to be 4380000 tons (155 kg/inhabitant in cities, 47 kg/inhabitant in the country) in 1995. The calculation was based on waste production in the individual areas (city/country), and the biodegradable components share therein. Similarly as in the Czech Republic, green waste was not fully taken into account in Poland. Aim for 2013 has not been met, it has been exceeded by ca 15 %. End of mixed municipal waste landfilling is not planned.

Slovakia determined biodegradable municipal waste (BMW) production to be 695000 tons (121 kg/inhabitant) in 1995. The estimation was based on the share of scrap paper and cardboard (238000 tons) and waste from gardens and restaurants (457000 tons). The European Commission questions this number, and proposes production estimate of 944000 tons (174 kg/inhabitant) in 1995, this being increase by 249000 tons, representing 50 % of the mixed residual waste. The European Commission's estimate did not include BMW share of bulky waste and textiles. Complete ban of mixed municipal waste landfilling is not planned.

Waste Framework Directive

The Czech Republic has set aim a), and optionally, b).

Hungary has set aim b).

Poland has set aim b).

Slovakia has set aim c). In the future, it will probably adopt aim d), because household waste is not recorded separately.

Comments of NGO representatives concerning situation in the individual countries

Czech Republic - Arnika, Toxics and Waste Programme

As a priority, it considers support of home composting (this kind of waste is not included in waste statistics), and utilisation of motivation fees. The best waste is the one not produced. Further, the NGO regards as a problem determination of BMW production in 1995, when the statistics did not include green waste. This resulted in setting very strict conditions, and overestimated conditions concerning percentage of waste diversion in comparison with 1995.

Humusz

Landfill tax has been introduced. However, due to the household cost reduction campaign, waste management companies may not transfer the extra costs to the households. Thus, the polluter pays principal is not realized while driving away foreign companies from the country and impeding public services waste management. In Hungary sufficient capacities for biodegradable waste treatment exist, however, they are not fully used. Humusz also drew attention to weak limits concerning quality of produced composts, and on the contrary, strict public health requirements for kitchen waste management. The best and most feasible possibility would be treatment on site as in home and community composting. Similarly to the case of Slovakia, methodology to include them in the calculation is necessary. A new decree on biodegradable waste is being drafted. The main goal is to determine the regulations of collection and recycling, furthermore to set the minimum requirement for the end of waste status. However, it still does not concern kitchen waste.



Polski klub ekologiczny

It sees a problem in Landfill Directive implementation at the municipal level. Further, financial motivation of people is missing. The NGO drew attention to low sum of the fees (they do not motivate people). However, they also drew attention to a problem of introduction of such tools in housing estates. Better public education is missing.

SPZ Košice

It agrees with higher estimate of biodegradable waste production in Slovakia, and with higher recycling aims (70 %). They consider the higher aims to be achievable, but simultaneously, they consider necessary to create conditions for people to do this (sufficient volume of separated waste containers; standards are proposed that will have to be met). In the case of biodegradable waste, the NGO considers that it is necessary to have a possibility to include volume of waste composted at home into meeting the aims of the Landfill Directive.

Final Summary

Experience of the Visegrad Four countries shows that the states have different approaches to complying with the Landfill Directive 1999/31/EC. This is caused, among other things, also by the fact that waste management level and administration differ in these countries, and that even a unified interpretation of the used terms does not exist. This has manifested itself, for example, in differing balances of biodegradable municipal waste production in 1995, and in different approaches to proving compliance. Another problem of the Landfill Directive is that it hinders prevention. In view of the fact that it is not clear how to calculate amount of biodegradable waste diverted through home and community composting, these volumes cannot be included into the calculations. Consequently, it results in lower support of home composting and useless transport of biodegradable waste. Because of that, it is necessary to find a way how to include this diverted waste into the balance. This is particularly important for the Visegrad Four countries, where home and community composting has a long tradition.

In the case of Hungary, the means to achieve the set targets are available, “hardware” is given: technology and infrastructure development is entirely covered by EU co-financed projects. “Software”, however, is missing: wide public lacks attitude forming. About 95% of the population knows what separate collection means, but only ca 5% of household waste is collected separately. The policy is following an easier path fulfilling targets by increasing separate collection of household-like waste, but we retain this to be a dead end. Without involving households – meaning motivating individuals to participate - there is no chance to make long-term development in targets.

Complying with the directives is feasible on paper, but there is a huge gap between theory and reality. Humusz claims that there are permanent uncertainties in data collection. Legislations concerning methodology and definitions must be clear to provide good quality composting and recycling. Landfill tax is motivating, but should be allowed to be paid by the waste producer and/or PAYT systems should be introduced. Furthermore, incineration tax should be levied to ensure that solutions on the higher steps of the waste hierarchy are to be implemented. Rethinking food waste health regulations is crucial in order to increase the amount of biodegradable waste directed from landfill. Composting programs are already widespread in Hungary, their completion is continuous.



Supported by the International Visegrad Fund.

