

Waste or Resource? The path to a Circular Economy and Sustainability

25 September 2014

**Vanya Veras
Secretary General
Municipal Waste Europe**

Municipal Waste Europe is a non-profit association which represents European municipalities and their waste management companies, in their responsibility to ensure the management of municipal waste.

Throughout Europe, municipalities are **responsible** for the recovery of material resources from European households.

**MWE members:
national public waste
associations**

**EU Municipalities
and their public waste
management
companies**

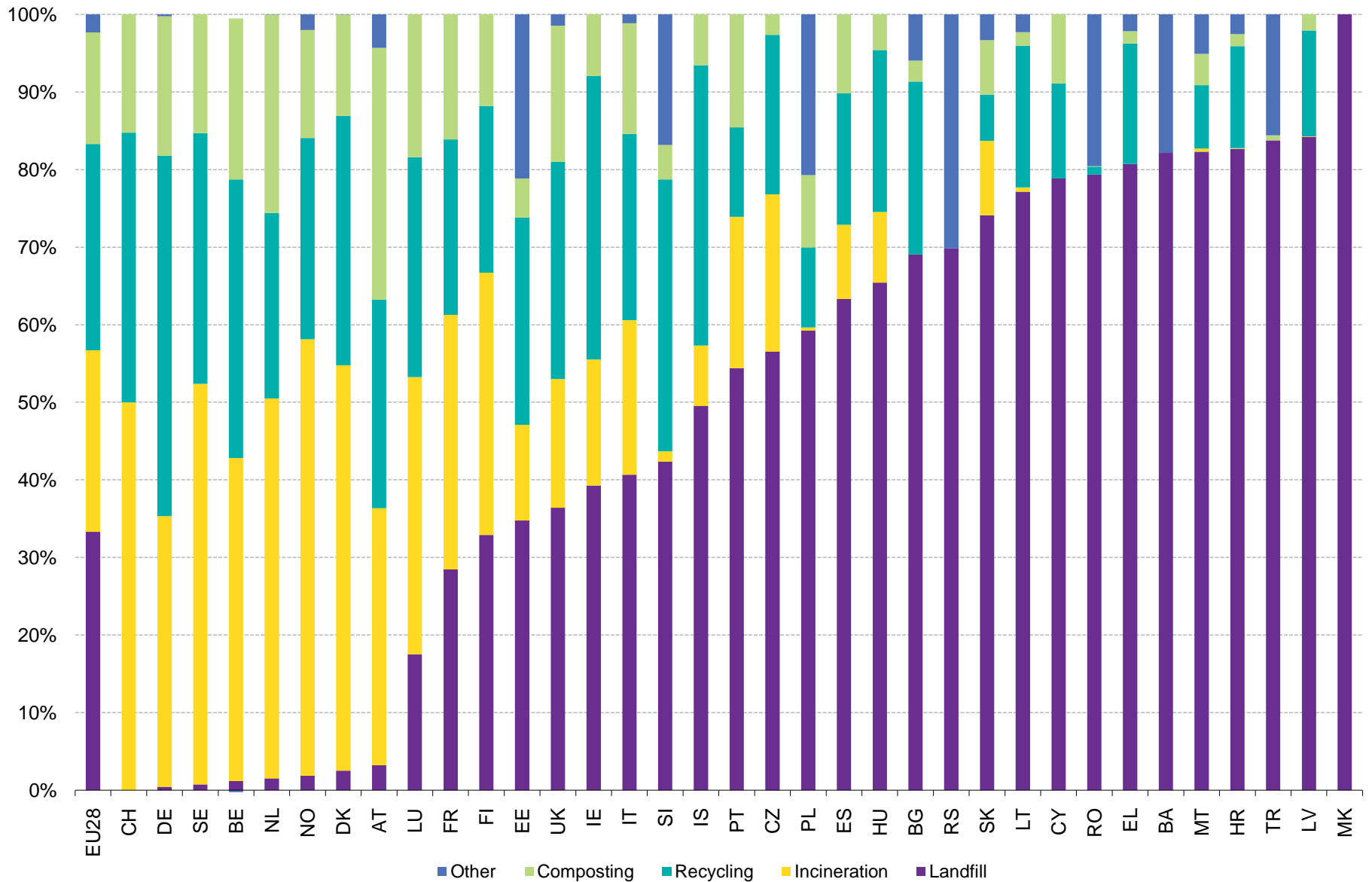
17 Members

15 Member States

**Serving 60% - 100%
of the national
population**



Municipal waste treated in 2012 by country and treatment category, sorted by percentage of landfilling, (kg per capita). *EUROSTAT*



Waste or Resource?

- We could call separate collection of recyclables **HARVESTING**
- No machine can harvest recyclables as cheaply and efficiently as citizen in their households
- Municipalities are the key to creating the appropriate, easy systems for citizens to recycle
- Municipalities are the first port of call and therefore are the best placed to communicate

Waste or Resource?

- Without consumption, there can be no recycling
- In the higher income neighborhoods, people sort and separate more recyclables which contain more valuable materials than in poorer neighborhoods
- ...In an age of conspicuous consumption, the global recycling business has taken on the burden of cleaning up what you don't want and turning it into something you can't wait to buy...

Waste or Resource?

- ...a recycled beer can requires 92% less energy to manufacture than one made from bauxite ore...
- Is that not a sustainable economy?
- China has learnt this lesson, but in Europe we are not there yet
- We still recycle less than 50% of what goes into our waste as the EU and most of the remainder ends up in landfills

Waste or Resource?

- True, we do not have the production plants that China has,
- ...but is re-industrialisation not our way forward?
- We sell sorted, baled PET to China for 450 euro/ton and our industry buys it back for 1100 euro/ton...
- A Europe producing only service industries will not find economic stability
- Today, we import 2/3rds more than we export...
- ...the answer?
 - I'll tell you in a moment...

VALUABLES

- Our waste contains valuables: plastic, metals, paper, glass, WEEE is valuable – most of us know this now
 - E.g. 1 ton mobile phones for recycling contain more gold than 1 ton mined ore
- Many current collection systems have insufficient traceability or security
- Uncontrolled access to valuables attracts illegal activity

COLLECTION SYSTEMS

Producer Responsibility Organisations

Retailers



Municipalities



ACHIEVING A CIRCULAR ECONOMY

- Progressive European industry has increasingly recognised the business value of resource efficiency over the last fifteen years:
 - implementation of environmental management systems
 - reduced their raw material needs
 - increased their recycling
 - reduced their waste generation.

ACHIEVING A CIRCULAR ECONOMY

- If applied across European industry, it is estimated that such a circular economy could reduce raw material needs by:
 - **17%-24% by 2030**
 - and save **approximately €630 billion per annum**

Municipality = THE ENABLER

- First point of Contact
- Network/Access to the public
- Communication, Training, Motivation
- Inspection
- Data gathering and reporting to Nation and EU
- Communication of results back to citizens
- Job creation

SITUATION IN THE EU TODAY

- Waste Management in the 35 EU Member States and wider EU area:
 - 19 still landfill 50% or over
 - 3 landfill around 40%
 - 8 incinerate around 50%
- The average recycling rate in the EU28 was 40% in 2011, and is proposed to reach 70% by 2030

SOCIO-ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

- Implementation of current Waste legislation can create 400 000 jobs
- Around 180 000 more could be created through the proposed revision
- Increased material recovery and use of materials in European industrial processes will create more jobs
- Europe must re-industrialise to survive economically

PRODUCER RESPONSIBILITY

- Producer Responsibility and the relevant compliance schemes play a key role in the achievement of recycling targets
- For these to achieve their full potential, the Commission proposes to set minimum requirements for producer responsibility schemes at EU level
- To help cut costs and eliminate barriers faced by producers having to respect several national schemes in the EU and provide transparency.

EUROPEAN SOLUTION

- Moving from no waste management (illegal landfills) to prevention, recycling and a circular economy will not happen overnight
- Building realism into the equation, widely accepted that during transition, there should be shipments of residual waste to better treatment options in other EU Member States
- It is the better environmental option while recycling systems are being put in place
- Commission promotes data exchange on available capacities throughout the EU, e.g. in Waste to Energy

ACHIEVING A CIRCULAR ECONOMY

- To get from the relatively low average EU recycling rates today, to higher recycling rates by 2025/30:
 - Municipalities are a key
 - Business is a key
 - Coordination
- Challenging but achievable

ACHIEVING A CIRCULAR ECONOMY

- Progressive European industry has increasingly recognised the business value of resource efficiency over the last fifteen years:
 - implementation of environmental management systems
 - reduced their raw material needs
 - increased their recycling
 - reduced their waste generation.

CONCLUSION

Municipalities play a key role in:

- Coordinating and enabling access to the raw materials in the waste stream
- Collecting and reporting data
- Inspecting and controlling illegal shipments
- Delivering more, cleaner materials for recycling to the market

Thank you for your Attention

Vanya Veras

Secretary General

www.municipalwasteurope.eu