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Biowaste Set to Play Central Role in the Emerging Circular Bioeconomy

Obligatory Source Separation of Biowaste needed to Maximise Potential

At a workshop in Brussels yesterday, 6th September, delegates heard from representatives of the European Commission, European Parliament, member states, industry organisations and municipalities about biowaste and revisions to the Waste Framework Directive. Uncertainties surrounding the conditionality statement in Article 22, which would require the separate collection of biowaste only where it is 'technically, environmentally and economically practicable', were identified as a 'loop hole', potentially undermining its collection and treatment.

European Compost Network's Chair, Henrik Lystad, commented: "The current 'TEEP' conditionality creates uncertainty for local authorities and the biowaste industry. Instead of providing flexibility for member states, it has the potential to be used as an excuse for inaction, curtailing development and failing to maximise bio-waste's potential. ECN would rather see clearly-defined derogation for scarcely populated areas with notification procedures, as proposed by the European Parliament."



Henrik Lystad, Chair of the European Compost Network

Delegates heard about innovative examples of biowaste management in Germany (Munich) Italy (Milan), and Estonia, as well as variable taxation and performance-related rebates for municipalities in Catalonia (Spain). Lystad noted: "The examples presented at yesterday's workshop demonstrate that municipalities can tailor separate collection and treatment systems to meet their individual circumstances. Local initiatives, coupled with binding EU targets for recycling and legal obligation for source separation of biowaste, can yield good results – there is no one-size-fits-all approach."

Revisions to the Waste Framework Directive are being debated over the coming weeks through the trilogue process between the European Commission, the Parliament and the Council. ECN calls for the so-called TEEP conditionality to be removed and clarity provided through the setting of unambiguous biowaste collection and treatment targets. Without these, many million tonnes of valuable biowaste and potential green jobs will be lost to the circular bioeconomy every year.

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Notes to editors:

1. The European Compost Network (ECN) is the leading European membership organisation promoting sustainable recycling practices by composting and anaerobic digestion of organic resources and guarding over the quality and safe use of the recovered organic fertilisers/soil improvers.
2. The workshop was organised by ECN in collaboration with the European Committee of the Regions. It was held under the patronage of Dr Babette Winter, CoR Member and Rapporteur of the Circular Economy, and State Secretary for Culture and Europe in the Thuringian State Chancellery, Germany.
3. Text proposed by the Commission: Article 22 - Member States shall ensure the separate collection of bio-waste where technically, environmentally and economically practicable and appropriate to ensure the relevant quality standards for compost and to attain the targets set out in Article 11(2)(a), (c) and (d) and 11(3).
4. The European Parliament proposed in its revision to delete the general TEEP and replace it with exceptions for scarcely populated areas with notification procedures.
5. Bio-waste plays a key role in sustainable waste management. Bio-waste accounts for the largest fraction (40%) of municipal solid waste. Today only 30% of bio-waste across Europe is collected separately and recycled in a sustainable way by composting and anaerobic digestion.
There is potential, subject to satisfactory amendments being made to the Waste Framework Directive, for more than 60 million tonnes of bio-waste to be recycled annually, resulting in the creation of 52,000 new jobs.
6. For background information on bio-waste in the circular economy please find our fact sheet [here](#).

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