

PRESS RELEASE

A resilient waste management system to overcome the next crisis

Public authorities are now planning the post-coronavirus recovery, but the worst mistake would be to endure, fix, then forget. To prevent further environmental and health issues, a resilient waste management system is crucial. Hygienisation through Waste-to-Energy plays a key part in it.

Brussels, 20 April 2020 - The COVID-19 outbreak is showing the increasing number of challenges the world has to face to keep a dramatic situation under control. This outbreak has disrupted the functioning of essential services and critical infrastructures that are all the more needed in time of crisis.

As a complement to recycling, Waste-to-Energy already has a fundamental role to play in the treatment of residual waste. The technology allows the safe treatment of non-recyclable waste, as it reduces its volume by about 90% and removes safely pollutants and pathogens from the eco-cycle.

“In these days, the responsibility of the WtE sector has expanded because of the outbreaks’ disruptive effects on waste collection, its sorting, and waste streams as a whole. At the same time, waste management operators and their supply chain have to ensure the safety of their employees and comply with emergency measures, making their mission all the more challenging”, says Patrick Clerens, Secretary General of ESWET.

Thus, the disrupting impact of the pandemic has clearly highlighted the need for a strong and resilient waste management chain. Public authorities are now planning the post-coronavirus recovery, but the worst mistake would be to endure, fix, then forget: the world is dealing today with a pandemic, but it will face tomorrow new crisis, including more frequent climate change-related crisis as the scientific community keeps warning us. Also, it is particularly important to prevent as of today a potential lack of trust from consumers which could trigger a surge of a throwaway culture.

Our society requires decision-makers to address these issues properly and this is why ESWET calls for the European Union and national authorities to:

- consider waste management operators, but also the technology suppliers they heavily rely on for maintenance and products, as essential services in all Member States;
- anticipate the needs of all essential services in this outbreak as well as for any future health and environmental crisis.

Waste management workers are contributing today to the functioning of our society. They are taking the streets daily to ensure that our waste is collected, sorted, recycled and recovered. As other key services, they are coping with the threats of the outbreak to keep the environment as clean and safe as possible. They need support for their essential work in these difficult times and the next to come.

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