



Joint Press Release

Environmental organisations criticise the German government for reducing the EU recycling targets

Higher EU recycling quotas and quick-acting measures against the increasing waste incineration required

Berlin, Germany, 28 September 2016: The Nature and Biodiversity Conservation Union (NABU), Friends of the Earth Germany (BUND), Environmental Action Germany (DUH), and the umbrella organisation German League for Nature, Animal and Environment Protection (DNR) criticise the German government's current attempt to prevent recycling quotas from being increased on a European level. According to a paper by the EU circular economy working group obtained by the organisations, the German government had attempted to delay the setting of higher recycling quotas because it rejected the calculation method proposed by the EU commission. In the EU working group, Germany pushed for the setting of recycling targets for municipal solid waste to be delayed by years.

The environmental organisations warned that Germany – as a self-proclaimed "world champion" in recycling – could be sending a wrong and devastating signal to other EU Member States. The organisations urge the German Federal Environment Minister, Barbara Hendricks, to support the timely setting of the ambitious EU recycling quotas and to withdraw Germany's current proposal to remove the recycling quotas from the EU circular economy package.

It is necessary to set higher recycling quotas in a timely manner so that long-term decisions can be made for investment in building up collection systems, sorting facilities and recycling technologies. Instead, the current stance of the German government only supports a ban on disposing untreated solid wastes into landfills without setting additional recycling targets. The environmental organisations state that this would only incentivise the construction of more waste incineration plants, whose long lifespan and low disposal cost would hinder the building up of a strong recycling industry. Therefore, Germany also needs to accept the calculation method proposed by the EU Commission that wastes are only considered recycled when they are fed into an end-of-life recycling process – and this includes first sorting out foreign materials and wastes introduced by mistake.

In Germany, until now, foreign materials and wastes introduced by mistake have been considered recycled in most of the separately collected domestic waste streams, leading to unrealistically high recycling figures. The organisations strongly urge that the German government spare no effort in consistently implementing the EU waste hierarchy and striving towards ambitious goals concerning waste prevention, recyclable waste collection and recycling. They also warn that if Germany pushes through their new plan, this will have long-term negative consequences for the circular economy in the EU.

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