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EU Resource Efficiency Roadmap

As has been announced in the Resource Efficiency Flagship, the Commission has launched the Roadmap to a Resource Efficient Europe. The Commission makes clear that current consumptions of resources can not go on, we would need two planets to fulfil our future demands. Decoupling of economic growth and resource demand is essential. The Roadmap is a first step to go that direction. Amongst others, the Roadmap aims to have sustainable management of all resources and prices must reflect true costs and value. The Commission wants to give more priority to re-use and recycling. Measures for that will be stimulation of the use of recycled materials using economic tools and development of end-of-waste criteria. The Commission will for instance assess the introduction of minimum recycled material rates and extension of producer responsibility.

End-of-waste study

The Joint Research Centre carries out a study into end-of-waste criteria for aggregates, amongst which recycled aggregates. The study specifically looks into the relation between leaching

behaviour of aggregates and end-of-waste criteria. An interim report was presented in summer. The study seeks to identify environmental risks of the use of waste derived aggregates and assess the use of different types of pollutant limit values. The study must provide for a methodology to derive such limit values and for testing approaches and methods.

The interim report was discussed at a recent meeting of EPRA. It was felt that approaches are taken that focus too much on theoretical risks whereas in practice there are hardly cases known where recycled aggregates have led to environmentally adverse effects. EPRA will respond to the Joint Research Centre by stressing this issue and by continuing to ask for overall and global criteria that take account of national end-of-waste approaches and quality assurance schemes.

Europe exports its resources

Whereas the EU wishes to become a Recycling Society and wants to pursue resource efficiency, more and more waste is exported outside the EU. Paper, plastics, metals and other valuable materials are shipped to Asian economies. From 1995 to 2005 waste export increased from 1.2 to 7.8 million tonnes from the EU-15. Export goes to China, but also to India and Indonesia. Much metals are also exported (though partly illegal) as electronic and electrical waste. Several factors contribute to the increased export, such as lower costs of treatment, increased materials prices and low prices for transport.

REACH reviewed

Although recycled aggregates need not be registered for REACH, any developments concerning this legislation keep the attention of the recycling industry. The European Commission is now preparing to review the REACH regulation, which has been the cause of immense lobbying efforts. A lot of criticism still targets the regulation. Only a few substances have so far gone through the process, there are a lot more of substances for which all information is still to be established. There are many concerns in the market, for instance, will data supplied to ECHA (European Chemicals Agency) be treated confidentially. There is also doubt about the scope of REACH, as it seems that certain substances need to undergo full assessment which will never be into contact with consumers at all. And there are examples of companies having to spend significant budgets for sometimes small quantities of a substance to be registered. One issue of the Commission's review will be possible amendments to the scope.

Flanders from waste to resource

Flemish waste legislation has been successful during the last thirty years. Illegal dumping has been banned, landfilling and incineration have been successfully reduced. There is now a turning point in the approach of waste and of materials in general. The focus is no longer on safe and sound waste management. Instead the focus is on how efficient use can be made of these materials. An important driver is the dependency of materials import that demands a policy on raw materials instead of waste policy. A new "Materials Decree" must integrate the management of materials through the whole life cycle. The decree will at the same time implement the Waste Framework Directive. The decree seeks to close materials loops, demanding cooperation of all stakeholders in the chain. Based on the decree, a new regulation is now in preparation to implement the decree. The regulation will amongst others provide for end-of-waste criteria.

Baltic Inert Materials Management

On 21/22 November FIR, together with Swedish partners, organizes the Baltic Inert Material Management Symposium. One central issue of the workshop is the recycling of Construction & Demolition Waste. Whereas currently recycling is relatively low, industry and authorities want to develop recycling and realize the European 70% recycling target. Representatives from several Baltic countries are expected. Representatives of FIR will provide for presentations from Member States where recycling has successfully been developed.