

**European Waste and Resource Days**  
„Implementing Waste Prevention at Local and Regional Level“  
PRE-WASTE Project Final Conference  
**7 November 2012, 9.00 a.m., JDE 52**  
**Speaking points for the welcome speech by Gerhard Stahl,**  
**CoR Secretary General**

**Dear Mr Jean-Pierre Hannequart, President of ACR+,**  
**Dear speakers,**  
**Dear participants,**

It is as great pleasure for me to welcome you to this major 2-day event, the “European Waste and Resource Days” at the Committee of the Regions.

My special thanks go to the organisers, namely ACR+, the Association of Cities and Regions for Recycling and sustainable Resource management, and to Brussels Environment.

I am impressed of the rich and very promising programme that you have put together. The “European Waste and Resource Days” will gather cities’ and regions’ experts from all over Europe to address the pressing first steps of the “waste hierarchy”: waste prevention, as discussed today; and the re-use of products, and material recycling, as both to be looked at tomorrow,

Let me start with a brief introduction to the Committee of the Regions, especially for those of you who may be not be familiar with it: The Committee of the Regions is the political assembly that provides the regional and local levels with a voice in European Union policy development and legislation. The Committee's 344 members come from all 27 European countries, and they include mayors, city counsellors, presidents of regions, and members of regional parliaments.

The last time the Committee of the Regions has pronounced itself on the issue of sustainable waste management has been its **Opinion on the Europe 2020 Flagship Initiative “A resource efficient Europe”**. I am very happy to see that the Committee of the Regions’s rapporteur, Mr Michel Lebrun, will join your conference tomorrow morning.

The Committee of the Regions in its Opinion considers the move to a "**zero waste society**" as a key element of the European Union's "Resource Efficiency" roadmap.

Waste and resource management is a **key issue** for local and regional authorities. I am very pleased to see that this event aims at providing answers and tools to decision-makers and experts in European cities and regions to promote the move to a zero waste society and a circular economy.

European society and the European economy do not yet exploit the full potential for resource efficiency. Much recyclable waste is either exported or sent to landfill. There is **untapped potential** for the EU economy to be more innovative, productive and competitive whilst using fewer resources and reducing environmental damage.

The report presented by BiPRO<sup>1</sup> in July this year on the Screening of Waste Management Performance of Member States confirms that most Member States are not yet effective in enhancing decoupling. This shows that much needs to be done by cities and regions to achieve and increase absolute decoupling.

According to a Eurobarometer survey<sup>2</sup>, almost 60% of Europeans do not think that their household produces too much waste – this is in contrast with the current statistics on waste. There are substantial differences in waste generation, up to a factor of 39, between all Member States.<sup>3</sup>

**Waste prevention** is the highest priority in the waste hierarchy. During these European Waste and Resource Days, I particularly appreciate today's final conference of the "Pre-waste Project"<sup>4</sup>, which will highlight the main outputs of the project.

Until end of 2013 Member States are obliged to **establish a waste prevention programme** as own plan or integrated in the waste management plans. About one third of the Member States have already done so. Other Member States are still in the phase of elaboration.

The Pre-Waste project reflects the CoR's political priorities in two respects:

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<sup>1</sup> BiPRO (2012): Screening of waste management performance of EU Member States. Report submitted under the EC project "Support to Member States in improving waste management based on assessment of Member States' performance". Report prepared for the European Commission, DG ENV, July 2012., [http://ec.europa.eu/environment/waste/studies/pdf/Screening\\_report.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/waste/studies/pdf/Screening_report.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> IP 11/369, Eurobarometer March 2011

<sup>3</sup> COM(2011) 13 final, EEA SOER 2010

<sup>4</sup> [www.prewaste.eu](http://www.prewaste.eu)

First, the Committee of the Regions' Opinion on a Resource Efficient Europe has called upon Member States and waste management authorities **to make their waste prevention programmes ambitious**. - The Pre-waste Project, involving 10 European partners, aims at providing cities and regions with guidance, good practices and monitoring tools in order to help them to set up and implement exactly such ambitious waste prevention actions!

Second, the Pre-waste project is co-financed by the current European Regional Development Fund and made possible by the INTERREG IVC Programme. - The Committee of the Regions' Opinion has called for the future EU Structural Funds to support even more of such projects and that promote the transition to a resource efficient society.

Dear participants,

I strongly hope that the European Waste and Resource Days will stimulate a broader debate amongst local and regional authorities, as well as in the Committee of the Regions, how to best feed in the experiences of those cities and regions which are frontrunners in waste prevention and sustainable waste management, into the Review of EU Waste Policy and Legislation, as announced by the European Commission for 2014.

Moreover, the European Commission will adopt soon its proposal for a 7<sup>th</sup> Environment Action Programme. The Committee of the Regions expects the 7<sup>th</sup> EAP to give renewed impetus to better implementation of EU environmental law, including in particular of the existing EU waste legislation.

On 5 December, we are launching together with Commissioner Potocnik, the so-called "Technical Platform for Cooperation on the Environment". This platform will include biennial meetings on local and regional challenges and solutions in the implementation of the EU environmental acquis – and this could include the implementation of the European waste legislation as well.

You will find draft programmes of the 5 December event on display during the conference.

To conclude, the Committee of the Regions will continue to support and facilitate effective networking and exchange of experiences between cities and regions, to allow innovative solutions to be more rapidly replicated around Europe. The European Waste and Resource Days, and the overall work of ACR+, including also

the major initiative of the European Week for Waste Reduction<sup>5</sup> are crucial in this regard.

I would like to offer to you that the Committee of the Regions becomes a permanent partner for hosting the future series of European Waste and Resource Days.  
I wish you very fruitful debates in the next two days and all success for your conference.

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.acrplus.org/EWWR>