



Norwegian proposal to the Basel Convention: call for free movement of mixed plastic wastes within the EU and the OECD

June 2019

On 10 May 2019 the Conference of Parties (COPs) to the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions in Geneva, comprising 180 governments, adopted the Norwegian proposal to amend the Basel Convention.

As the representative body of the private waste management industry in Europe, FEAD concurs with European Council's position from 15th April 2019 concerning the outcome of the COP 14, and its potential incorporation into the legal framework. FEAD supports maintaining the current proceedings for the shipment of non-hazardous plastic wastes, including mixtures of non-hazardous plastic wastes within the EU, EEA and OECD.

The [OECD Decision](#) on transboundary movements is a transnational agreement that regulates the shipment of wastes between OECD countries. In the light of the changes to the Basel Convention, OECD members will have to consider by 9 July, whether to incorporate these changes into the OECD's provisions for the shipment of wastes.

The objective of the Basel Convention amendment is to combat maritime pollution caused by plastic littering. However, an automatic transfer of the rules foreseen in the updated Basel Convention to the OECD and EU levels would not contribute anything to solving the problem of ocean littering. In fact, constraining the free movement of mixed plastic wastes within these areas could jeopardize important progress made with regards to the effective treatment of plastics.

Member States of the European Union should therefore refrain from an incorporation of the changes made to the Basel Convention into the OECD Decision. Considering the extensive technical capabilities and prevalence of large capacities for the treatment of waste in OECD and EU countries, a restriction to the free movement of plastic waste would impede the effective recovery and recycling of these.

Under no circumstances should the OECD Decision hinder the environmentally sound treatment of unproblematic plastic e.g. PVC, which accumulates in waste quantities.

Reasons for maintaining current legal provisions on waste shipments are as follows:

1. At EU level:

- The EU legislation in the area of circular economy provides for some of the highest environmental standards in the area of plastic recycling and recovery.
- Europe is at the forefront of technological progress when it comes to the recycling of plastic waste. The EU has one of the highest prevalence in terms of state of the art sorting and recycling facilities worldwide, making it the best place to conduct recycling activities.
- Plastic recycling is a complex process that involves many different steps before reaching a final product. Trading mixed plastic wastes allows stakeholders in different Member States to participate in the recycling supply chain, using their different know-how and comparable advantages, thereby always reaching better recycling performances.
- The continued free movement of non-hazardous plastic waste in the EU will ensure that waste is treated where it makes the most sense both economically, and from the perspective of environmental protection.

APOH, Slovakia

BDE, Germany

ESA, UK

FLEA, Luxembourg

HRABRI ČISTAČ,
Serbia

NORSK INDUSTRI,
Norway

SRI,
Sweden

ARMD, Romania

CAObH, Czech
Republic

EWMA, Estonia

FNADE, France

IWMA, Ireland

PASEPPE, Greece

VOEB,
Austria

ASEGRE, Spain

DWMA, Netherlands

FISE, Italy

go4circle, Belgium

LASUA, Latvia

PIGO, Poland

YTP,
Finland

- By sustaining the free trade of wastes across Europe, the EU will also be able to retain and expand its competitive advantage in the area of plastics recycling.

2. At OECD level:

- The OECD comprises the most affluent nations in the world. Their aggregated capacities to treat plastic wastes are abundant. In line with the principles enumerated for Intra-EU shipments of waste above, there should therefore be no doubt that free shipments of waste, without the constraint of a notification, would best serve the purpose of the effective recycling and recovery of plastic wastes within the OECD.

FEAD, the European Federation for Waste Management and Environmental Services, represents the private waste and resource management industry across Europe. FEAD's members are national waste management associations covering 19 Member States, Norway and Serbia.

FEAD's members represent about 3,000 companies with activities in all forms of waste management. Our companies have an approximate 60% share in the household waste market and handle more than 75% of industrial and commercial waste in Europe. Their combined annual turnover is approximately € 75 billion. These companies employ over 320,000 people who operate around 2,400 recycling and sorting centres, 1,100 composting sites, 260 waste-to-energy plants and 900 controlled landfills.

They enable the transition to a circular economy by producing resources which can be re-injected in the economy and by supplying energy. Our companies add value through innovative and cost-efficient collection, sorting, and recycling of secondary raw materials. As a result, they play a crucial role in achieving the best economic and environmental outcomes.