

# What role for waste incineration in the circular economy?

*Local governments support energy recovery while phasing out old and inefficient incineration plants and promoting recycling*

**Waste-to-energy is acknowledged to be a necessary tool to move towards a more sustainable circular economy as it helps avoiding landfilling and generates energy. However, local governments ask to strictly respect the waste hierarchy putting waste prevention first. Members are in favour of creating stable markets for products and materials based on secondary raw materials and of making every effort to reduce landfilling.**

Members of the European Committee of the Regions have adopted an opinion on '[The role of waste-to-energy in the circular economy](#)' by rapporteur Kata Tűttő (HU/PES), municipal councillor from Budapest – District 12. **Waste-to-energy is the process of recovering energy from waste combustion.**

Local leaders baseline is clear. The waste hierarchy, which sets up priority actions for more resource efficiency and less waste, must be the guiding principle in waste management. On top of the hierarchy is waste prevention, followed by product reuse, product recycle, energy recovery and landfilling as the less optimal scenario.

“Landfilling waste is the worst thing that we can do because things we throw away can actually be reused, recycled or transformed into energy”, said rapporteur Kata Tűttő. “With modern waste-to-energy treatments municipal waste can be transformed into electricity, heat or biogas”, added the Budapest city councillor.

Cities and regions recommend Member States with little or no incineration capacity not to develop energy recovery unless it is under very careful planning and to prioritise separate collection and recycling programmes instead.

Local leaders show concern over how and by whom, waste management costs are to be borne. European cities and regions reiterate the need to create stable markets for products and materials based on secondary raw materials.

The use of waste as fuel for heating households is a major problem for public health and the environment. Energy poverty is often the main reason for private dwellings to use waste for heating. The EU's assembly of local and regional representatives urges the European Commission to incorporate efforts to combat energy poverty into waste-to-energy activities and to adopt awareness raising strategies.

Local leaders support waste shipments between Members States for energy recovery purposes as long as it avoids or reduces landfilling or helps making better use of existing facilities. However, distance from the waste location

to the incineration plant should be limited to avoid environmental damage.

Members of the CoR request the European Commission to ensure Members States involve local and regional authorities closely in drawing up waste management strategies.

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