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Storage and management of hazardous waste

Towards common EU standards

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A number of ecological disasters that we have witnessed in today's world force us to reflect on the theme of hazardous chemical substances. Hazardous waste poses a greater risk to the environment and human health than non-hazardous waste and thus requires a stricter control regime. To ensure the full security of the population, a high level of common environmental protection standards for hazardous chemicals should be introduced in all EU countries.

The main problem nowadays is not a lack of EU legislation, but its implementation and execution at Member State level, according to the European Commission. NGOs, on the other hand, point out that because there are so many European Directives on waste, meaning legislation is dispersed, there are no common standards in the EU on hazardous waste storage and management. There is little information flow as to how EU countries store dangerous waste and, given the EU response to disasters such as that in Hungary, much has to be done.

Background - Sludge in Hungary

Taking into account the recent disaster in Japan, developments related to the leakage of sludge in Hungary and the number and extent of ecological catastrophes that have hit Member States in recent decades, it is important to review discussions on the storage and management of hazardous waste.

In the Hungarian incident in October 2010, over one million cubic metres of toxic waste leaked out of waste containers. There were nine casualties, 130 people suffered serious health damage and hundreds were evacuated. The preliminary costs were estimated at 73 million euro. A major problem was finding those responsible, as the company MAL, owner of the waste container, did not have sufficient funds to cover the damages.

EPP Group Hearing on Hazardous Waste

The aim of the EPP Group Hearing is to identify sources of weaknesses in the management of hazardous waste and eliminate them in the future. We believe that it is important to identify whether these weaknesses are legislative in nature, or more to do with the implementation and coordination of laws at a national level.



The panellists will discuss the challenges posed by storage and management of hazardous waste in the framework of overall waste legislation and existing regulatory options and try to answer the following questions. What should the main objective of EU policy on hazardous waste be? Are there any important gaps that remain in current EU legislation? How should we protect our environment and public health more effectively? Is there a need for an EU-level inspection of environmental legislation? And how to ensure that past disasters will not happen again in the future?

The EPP Group position

"It is high time we stopped circumventing the problem and finally face the challenge. It is extremely important to make Member States review the amount, types and locations of collecting hazardous waste. The analysis of the problem and immediate action at the European level are indispensable," said EPP Group Vice-President of the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety Committee in the European Parliament Bogusław Sonik MEP.