



**EUROPEAN COMMISSION**

**PRESS RELEASE**

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## **Environment: Commission fights back against illegal waste shipments**

The European Commission took action today to tackle illegal waste shipments that are causing damage to human health and the environment. The Commission proposed stronger legislation on national inspections of waste shipments to ensure that all Member States have similar levels of control. Around 25 % of waste shipments sent from the EU to developing countries in Africa and Asia are thought to contravene international regulations. When it arrives, that waste is often dumped or mismanaged, causing serious negative impacts on human health and the environment.

Environment Commissioner Janez Potočnik said: *"It's time for stricter controls in all Member States – that's the best way of stopping dishonest exporters from taking advantage of the system. Today's proposal will help to reduce mismanagement of waste, make sure hazardous waste is dealt with properly and see that valuable resources are reused."*

While some Member States have thorough, well-functioning inspection systems targeting either illegal waste shipments in ports or on the sites of waste producers and collectors, others lag behind. This leads to 'port hopping' – exporters of illegal waste choosing to export their waste from Member States with the most lenient controls.

Today's initiative proposes risk-based inspections to be carried out regularly by Member States, with greater co-operation between authorities and better training of inspectors. This will help authorities focus on routes, times and vehicles that are most frequently involved in illegal shipping. Focusing more on collection points and storage facilities will also allow inspections to be made at an early stage. By preventing illegal waste exports up-stream, pressure will be eased on regular points of exit. Inspection planning will also help authorities increase their capacity to carry out effective inspections.

On-the-spot inspections – a key element of the proposal – will make it possible to get evidence about the legality of a shipment from the person responsible for a shipment proving, for example, that the waste it contains is destined for environmentally sound management in a third country.

Effective inspections will mean savings and direct economic benefits for Member States and industry, as clean-up and repatriation costs will be avoided. They could also prevent the "leakage" of valuable raw materials contained in waste, such as precious minerals like cobalt and indium in electronic waste, which will be available for recycling and to re-enter the market. This will eventually lead to optimised waste treatment processes, better sorting and recycling techniques and provide better access to high quality raw materials.

## Background

The significantly lower costs in developing countries for waste treatment and disposal is an important economic driver for illegal waste shipments. These lower costs are mainly a result of less stringent environmental and health regulation than in the EU, and indeed complete side-stepping of controls in some cases. If recycling standards and capacity are not adequate in the country of destination, potential environmental and health hazards are simply being exported to other parts of the world. The dumping or substandard treatment of waste has severe implications on the environment and poses long-term health risks for citizens and workers. Leaks from the discarded waste can harm soils and water streams and produce air pollution, through emissions of heavy metals and persistent organic pollutants. Emissions also cause global warming and ozone depletion.

The EU [waste shipment regulation](#) bans all exports of hazardous waste to non-OECD countries and all exports of waste for disposal outside the EU/EFTA. Illegal waste shipments must be taken back when detected. The WSR allows non-hazardous waste to be exported for recovery operations outside the OECD but requires national authorities to verify that it will be treated in a way which is broadly equivalent to rules applied in the EU. The regulation does not contain any specific provisions on inspection planning or how inspections shall be carried out.

The proposal takes account of the results of a public consultation during which stakeholders expressed wide support in favour of EU legislative requirements on waste shipment inspections (90 % of respondents). The proposal also helps address a number of concerns recently raised by SMEs about the operation of the Waste Shipment Regulation, in particular the fact that due to differences in implementation and interpretation across Member States, the Regulation has not led to the creation of a common market for waste utilisation and recycling, and that more should be done to ensure uniform implementation of the WSR with more focus on hazardous waste and less on unproblematic waste.

## For more information:

Link to the Communication:

<http://ec.europa.eu/environment/waste/shipments/news.htm>

See also:

<http://ec.europa.eu/environment/waste/index.htm>

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