



Arnika – Toxics and Waste Programme

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Janez Potočník
Member of the European Commission
Environment
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Prague, 18 September

Dear Mr. Potočník,

We are writing with regards to the issue of the waste management system of the Czech Republic, as it is perceived in the context of the European Union. In a recent report named SCREENING OF WASTE MANAGEMENT PERFORMANCE OF EU MEMBER STATES, the Czech Republic was found to be amongst the ten countries with the lowest score. We would like to note that some of the conclusions of this report are questionable and that we agree with the necessity of a serious debate about the results. Nonetheless, we find these results alarming. Through this letter, we want to contribute into a discussion which will be held in Prague on 19th September, as this discussion may set a new course of action for the countries with the worst ranking.

Currently, the Czech Republic is not adhering with its commitments regarding the landfilling of the bio-waste. The amount of the waste landfilled is not being constantly reduced and no system of objectives and key metrics which would help prevent the production of such waste exists. Also, there are no objectives set for the waste produced by small businesses. State planning presumes that the amount of the waste produced will constantly grow, and such presumption provides the basis for the countermeasures taken. Right now, we are witnessing somewhat desperate efforts conducted by the Ministry of Industry and Trade and the Ministry of the Environment. Both agencies strive to solve the problem as quickly as possible (and "at all costs") to avert possible sanctions by the European Union. The officials just want to redirect the majority of the waste from landfills to incinerators ("facilities for an energetic usage of the waste").

Currently, the Government of the Czech Republic is discussing an updated plan for state energetics and resources policy which should set new areas of priority and objectives for the next 30 years. Both documents express strong and one-sided support of the solution in which the waste would be used for the energy production. The government wants to use the public funds to build plenty of new incinerators in the future, whereas the support of recycling and prevention is being put aside.

We fundamentally disagree with such approach. The Arnika association proposes sustainable solution promoting the prevention and recycling, systems of reverse logistics waste collection and deposit packaging.

Any plans prioritizing the incineration of the waste against more appropriate ways of dealing with the waste are considered by us to be harmful for both the environment and the economics. A massive support towards the incineration will presumably lead to lower motivation of the people to proactively reduce the amount of waste being produced and to recycle. This way, public funds which could be used for a more considerative and

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decentralized waste management will be bound for oversized projects of the energetical use of the waste. Those projects may also jeopardize the development of recycling for many upcoming years.

We also do have few examples from regions which were able to reduce the amount of the communal waste per one person and year to a level 100 kg lower then the standards in the Czech Republic (e.g. Turin, Flanders). High potential of recycling was also proved by a recent study conducted by the association of the Czech municipalities. We consider this as a right way as well. Therefore, we sent a letter to the minister of the Enviroment Tomáš Chalupa in which we ask him to support the ideas of recycling and prevention widely accepted to be on a better position in waste management hierarchy then the incineration.

According to what was said above, we would like to ask you as a representative of the European Commission and the Commission itself to consider our proposals regarding the alteration of the financial flows to Czech Republic in the following ways:

- Ceasing the financial support for the construction of any facilities designed for an energetic use of waste.
- Transferring the funds towards establishing the reverse logistics waste collection system and measures for reducing the amount of waste which is produced.
- Enhancing the support for the recycling system and solutions for repurchasing and processing of the secondary raw materials.
- Helping to establish a system promoting the deposited packaging.

Yours sincerely

Matěj Man
Toxic and waste programme - Arnika