

**Improving municipal waste management in Cyprus from a
legal perspective:**

A long way to go until 2020?

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Abstract

Municipal waste management has evolved over the last two decades in the European Union. Although new municipal waste legislation and targets were put forth at EU level encompassing minimum standards for managing certain waste types resource use is still largely unsustainable and inefficient, and waste is not yet properly managed. A good example of this statement is Cyprus that despite being one of the relatively small countries of the EU, due to its very high consumption patterns, it has one of the fastest rising waste generation rates.

After presenting in brief the implementing legislation adopted by the Cypriot government in transposing the EU Waste Framework Directive into national law, this paper brings forward the four key targets that were set forth by this Directive these being separate collection, 50% recycling target for waste materials, introduction of a waste management plan and introduction of a waste prevention program. More importantly this paper examines the extent to which these targets have been practically implemented at national level. After reaching its conclusions regarding this matter this paper assesses the need for stronger policy instruments currently used in other member states, that Cyprus has employed / may additionally consider employing, as tools towards the improvement of municipal waste management.

All in all in the context of the EU's current attempt to support various member states to get back on track to meet the EU waste 2020 targets as part of Europe's transition to a more circular economy, this paper aims to examine whether Cyprus have a long way to go in order to reach the 2020 target in less than five years

Keywords

Municipal waste management, Cyprus, transposition of EU legislation, separate collection, 50% recycling target, Municipal Waste Management Program

A. Introduction

Municipal waste management has evolved over the last two decades in the European Union (hereinafter “the EU”). Interestingly new municipal waste legislation and targets were put forth at EU level encompassing minimum standards for managing certain waste types and methods, such as the Landfill Directive 1999/31/EC¹, the Packaging Waste Directive 94/62/EC², the Battery Directive 2006/66/EC³ and lastly and most importantly the EU Waste Framework Directive 2008/98/EC⁴ (hereinafter “the Waste Framework Directive” or “EU Directive”).

However, according to the European Parliament and the Council of the EU, while progress has been made due to these legislative initiatives, “resource use is still largely unsustainable and inefficient, and waste is not yet properly managed”⁵. A good example of this statement is Cyprus that despite being one of the relatively small countries of the EU, due to its very high consumption patterns, it has one of the fastest rising waste generation rates. More specifically according to Eurostat⁶ in 2012 its per capita waste generation reached 663 kg/cap/y. Although at present this member state scores one of the highest increases in recycling rates reaching 21% in 2012, from 3% in 2004, this percentage remains problematic as firstly it is relatively too low compared to the target of 50% of 2020 set forth by the Waste Framework Directive, and secondly landfill, reaching 80% in 2012, remains the dominant waste generation treatment path in the country. Examining these percentages one may wonder why is this happening?

In January 2016, the European Commission in the context of the 2014-2015 'Municipal Waste Compliance Promotion Exercise'⁷ met with representatives from

¹ Council Directive 1999/31/EC of 26 April 1999 on the landfill of waste (OJ L 182, 16.07.1999)

² Directive 96/42/EC of European Parliament and Council of 20 December 1994 on packaging and packaging waste (OJ L 365, 31.12.1994)

³ Directive 2006/66/EC on batteries and accumulators and waste batteries and accumulators and repealing Directive 91/157/EEC (OJ L 266, 26.9.2006)

⁴ Directive 2008/98/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 19 November 2008 on waste and repealing certain Directives (OJ L 312, 22.11.2008)

⁵ Council Decision No 1386/2013/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 November 2013 on a General Union Environment Action Programme to 2020 'Living well, within the limits of our planet', (OJ L 354, 28.12.2013)

⁶ Statistics based on European Environment Agency report titled “Waste — municipal solid waste generation and management” completed in the context of SOER 2015

⁷ European Commission: “Cyprus: Municipal waste generation and management: Current situation and distance to target”

Cyprus, along representatives from other seven Member States, in order to assess waste management policy at national level and assist these eight member states to get back on track towards meeting the EU waste targets, as part of Europe's transition to a more circular economy.

In the context of this attempt this paper aims to discuss from a legal perspective the extent to which Cyprus has a long way to go in order to reach the targets set by the Waste Framework Directive and more importantly the 50% recycling target in less than five years. In order to reach its final conclusions various issues need to be examined thoroughly. More specifically after presenting in brief the implementing legislation adopted by the Cypriot government in transposing the Waste Framework Directive into Cypriot law, this paper will focus on the key targets set forth by this Directive aiming to assess the extent to which these can be or have been practically implemented and therefore achieved at national level. Furthermore the possibility of introducing stronger policy instruments, currently used in other member states will be elaborated, as tools that Cyprus has employed / may additionally consider employing, in its new national initiatives, towards the improvement of municipal waste management.

B. Transposition of the Waste Framework Directive into national law

According to Article 40 of the Waste Framework Directive Member States should have transposed the Waste Framework Directive into national law by December 2010. In June 2011⁸, according to the procedure prescribed in Article 258 of the Treaty of the Functioning of the European Union, the European Commission sent to Cyprus and four other member states⁹ a reasoned opinion regarding their failure to inform the Commission about the transposition of the Waste Framework Directive into national law. The five member states concerned had two months to comply with this reasoned opinion. The provisions of the Waste Framework Directive were finally transposed into domestic law in November 2011 through the Cyprus Waste Law (Law 185(I)/2011) (hereinafter “Cyprus Waste Law”) that was subsequently corrected in

⁸ European Commission - Press release Environment: Commission asks five Member States to comply with EU waste framework directive , June 2016

⁹ Bulgaria, Estonia, Greece and Poland

2011¹⁰ and amended in 2012¹¹, 2014¹², 2015¹³ and 2016¹⁴. This legislative instrument has been additionally supplemented by various regulations.

More specifically the Cyprus Waste Law transposed, *inter alia*, the basic terms and definitions found in the Waste Framework Directive such as the definition of waste¹⁵, recycling¹⁶ and recovery¹⁷ as well as the key concepts of “extended producer liability”¹⁸ and “polluter pays principle”¹⁹. Moreover it introduced the fundamental, in EU Waste Law, waste hierarchy²⁰ employing in priority order (a) prevention (b) preparing for re-use (c) recycling (d) other recovery, e.g. energy recovery and (e) disposal. Furthermore the transposing legislation welcomed the conditions brought forward by the European legislation under which an object is considered to be a by-product²¹ or it gains an end-of-waste status²², concepts that have emerged through various rulings of the Court of Justice of the European Union²³. In addition other provisions of the Waste Framework Directive including the issue of permits²⁴, various categories of exemptions from permits²⁵ as well as the conditions for the determination of hazardous waste²⁶ were introduced.

Apart from the transposition of general provisions of the Waste Framework Directive in its implementing legislation, the Cypriot legislator proceeded to the transposition of the targeted obligations found in the EU Directive placed upon this member state. The four most important ones will be discussed in detail below. Although the former two relate to re-use and recycling targets for which measures must be undertaken at national level, the latter two relate to the preparation and

¹⁰ (Law 185(I)/2011 CORRECTION)

¹¹ (Law 6(I)/2012)

¹² (Law 32(I)/2014) and (L.55(I)/2014)

¹³ (Law 31(I)/2015)

¹⁴ (Law 3(I)/2016)

¹⁵ Cyprus Waste Law: Article 2

¹⁶ *Ibid* Article 2

¹⁷ *Ibid* Article 2

¹⁸ *Ibid* Article 11

¹⁹ *Ibid* Article 23

²⁰ *Ibid* Article 9

²¹ *Ibid* Article 6

²² *Ibid* Article 7

²³ Case C - 9/00 *Palin Granit* [2002] ECR I -3533; Case C - 444/00 *Mayer Parry Recycling Ltd* [2003] ECR I - 6163

²⁴ Cyprus Waste Law: Article 25

²⁵ *Ibid* Article 28

²⁶ *Ibid* Annex III

submission of documents regarding effective waste management again to be pursued at national level.

Article 13 of the Cyprus Waste Law can be characterised as the cornerstone provision of this legislative instrument. This is due to the fact that the Cypriot legislator has transposed in its content the two main re-use and recycling targets found in the Waste Framework Directive.

I. Separate collection of waste by 2015

Initially according to Article 13(3) “subject to Article 12(2)²⁷, by 2015 separate collection shall be set up for at least the following: paper, metal, plastic and glass”²⁸.

II. Preparing for re-use and recycling of (a) waste materials to be increased to a minimum of 50% by 2020; (b) non-hazardous construction and demolition waste to be increased to a minimum of 70% by 2020

Secondly according to Article 13(4)(a) “by 2020 the preparing for re-use and the recycling of waste materials such as at least paper, metal, plastic and glass from households and possibly from other origins as far as these waste streams are similar to waste from households, shall be increased to a minimum of overall 50 % by weight”²⁹. Furthermore according to Article 13(4)(b) “by 2020, the preparing for re-use, recycling and other material recovery, including backfilling operations using waste to substitute other materials, of non-hazardous construction and demolition waste excluding naturally occurring material defined in category 17 05 04 in the list of waste shall be increased to a minimum of 70 % by weight”³⁰. The analysis conducted below will focus solely on (a) regarding the 50% waste materials target.

The Cypriot legislator introduced additionally in its national implementing legislation various obligations regarding the preparation and submission of documents as tools towards the attainment of the aforementioned re-use and recycling targets and therefore the realisation of effective waste management at national level.

²⁷ Article 12 (2) of Cyprus Waste Law reads “To facilitate or improve recovery, waste shall be collected separately if technically, environmentally and economically practicable and shall not be mixed with other waste or other material with different properties”.

²⁸ This provision follows per se the wording of the Waste Framework Directive: Article 11(1)

²⁹ *Ibid*: Article 11(2)(a)

³⁰ *Ibid*: Article 11(2)(b)

III. Preparation of a Waste Management Plan

Initially in Article 35 of the Cyprus Waste Law the Cypriot legislator brought forward the obligation of the member state to establish waste management plans³¹. Reading this Article one realizes that the responsible body for bringing forward such a plan is the Council of Ministers after it receives a proposal by the Minister of Agriculture, Rural Development and Environment who consults on his behalf the Advisory Committee for the Management of Waste. Furthermore the same Article encompasses in its content provisions regarding the evaluation of a waste management plan, the possible co-operation with other Member States concerned and the Commission as well as the information to be submitted to the Commission³². No specific deadline regarding the preparation for such a plan was set either by the EU Directive itself or the Cypriot legislator.

IV. Preparation of a Waste Prevention Programme no later than 12 December 2013

Secondly in Article 36 of the Waste Framework Directive, the Cypriot legislator transposed another fundamental obligation of all member states of the EU, including Cyprus, that of bringing forward a waste prevention programme³³. Interestingly one notes that although the original text of Article 36 of the Cyprus Waste Law included in its content the EU deadline of 12 December 2013 regarding the preparation of such a programme, after the introduction of the Waste Amending Law 3(1)/2016 this deadline was erased. This later on added omission appears problematic regarding the transposition of this Directive into national law as it wrongfully removes from this member state the original obligation to prepare this programme within the deadline set by the EU.

³¹ *Ibid*: Article 28

³² These provisions transpose the content of Articles 30, 32 and 33 of the Waste Framework Directive accordingly into national law.

³³ This obligation derives from Article 29 of the Waste Framework Directive. At national level, similarly as in the case of a waste management plan, responsible for bringing forward such a programme is the Council of Ministers after it receives a proposal by the Minister of Agriculture, Rural Development and Environment who consults on his behalf the Advisory Committee for the Management of Waste. Furthermore Article 36 encompasses in its content provisions regarding the evaluation of a waste prevention programme, possible co-operation with other Member States concerned and the Commission as well as information to be submitted to the Commission that can be found in Articles 30, 32 and 33 of the Waste Framework Directive accordingly.

Examining the text of this legislative instrument as a whole one can note that the Cypriot legislator has proceeded to an, in theory, overall literal transposition of the provisions and most importantly of the targets of the EU Directive into national law albeit minor exceptions. Based on the above one realises that no problems appear to derive from the transposing text itself regarding the attainment of the targets set forth by the EU Waste Framework Directive. The only issue at this point that one has to bear in mind is that all targets were set for implementation at national level with almost one year delay. Consequently at this stage one needs to examine the practical implementation of these delayed transposed targets. To which extent have they actually been implemented so far?

B. Practical Implementation of the Waste Framework Directive's targets into national law

Since November 2011 and the introduction of the Cyprus Waste Law, waste management has become a high priority for Cyprus given the need for effective municipal waste management as well as for a high level of protection of the environment and human health. As a result various actions have been taken and multiple discussions have occurred in Cyprus regarding the correct implementation of the Waste Framework Directive into national law. In practice what has actually been achieved so far? Has Cyprus a long way to go in order to reach the 2020 target?

One must note that analysis at this stage will be completed from a purely legal perspective and therefore discussion will be concentrated mostly on the extent to which national legislative compliance has been or will be achieved based on the actions taken, if any, rather than on the actual content of these actions, that is a matter left to be discussed by environmental scientists and engineers.

I. Separate collection of waste by 2015

As aforementioned in the previous section Cyprus was required to implement separate collection of paper, metal, plastic and glass by 2015. In November 2015 BiPRO GmbH and the Copenhagen Resource Institute (CRI) in cooperation with ENVIRON, ENVIROPLAN, Geotest and ACR+ prepared a report on behalf of the European Commission titled "Assessment of separate collection schemes in the 28

capitals of the EU”³⁴ (hereinafter “the Report”). According to this Report it appears that this obligation has not been entirely executed in Cyprus up to now.

More specifically according to the Report’s National Factsheet on Separate Collection for Cyprus³⁵ “waste at local level is at present collected in a mixed manner. Separate collection has been implemented only partly by the collective system of Green Dot Cyprus (a private collective organisation created from producers in order for them to comply with the packaging waste law that adopts producers’ responsibility) that offers separate collection for packaging waste of paper, glass and PMD (plastic, metals and drink cartons). This system collects also printed paper (the cost of the collection paid by the local authority) mixed with package paper”³⁶.

Furthermore according to information given in the National Municipal Waste Management Plan 2015 - 2021 (hereinafter “National Waste Management Plan”)³⁷ separate collection is implemented by Green Dot Cyprus solely after an agreement has been reached with the local authority concerned. However due to various financial difficulties encountered several local authorities have now brought the implementation of this collective program to an end. On the other hand some other local authorities have concluded contracts with private waste managers for separate collection of waste paper, plastic, metal and glass from households and / or commercial activities. In any case one must note that up to now, separate collection does not constitute according to the Cyprus Waste Law a legislative obligation of the local authorities³⁸.

More importantly according to the Report’s National Factsheet on Separate Collection for Cyprus no separate collection of bio-waste has been implemented up to

³⁴ European Commission: Assessment of separate collection schemes in the 28 capitals of the EU: Final Report, 13 November 2015 (Reference: 070201/ENV/2014/691401/SFRA/A2)

³⁵ European Commission: Assessment of separate collection schemes in the 28 capitals of the EU: National factsheet on separate collection: Cyprus (070201/ENV/2014/691401/SFRA/A2)

³⁶ In particular, glass is collected to green bins placed in various central locations (bring points). Paper/printed paper and PMD streams are placed, separately, in brown (paper) and transparent bags (PMD) and collected door-to-door or in bins (brown bins for paper and blue bins for PMD) placed in various central locations (bring points). In 2014, this system covered 78% of the population out of which 77% was door-to-door and 23% was based on central collection locations (bring points)”.

³⁷ Republic of Cyprus: National Municipal Waste Management Plan 2015 - 2021

³⁸ According to the Report, Cyprus proposes to set legal provisions for compulsory application of separate collection schemes at least on paper, plastic, metal and glass from local authorities and evaluation of the possibility of mandatory separation at source for all citizens for these materials. This has been additionally the informal position of the Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and Environment, based on oral feedback received in June 2016.

now and this is in practice collected with mixed municipal waste by municipalities or municipality networks.

Looking at the above results one cannot remain silent on the fact that at present this obligation is not fulfilled by Cyprus despite its theoretical transposition in the Cyprus Waste Law and the fact that the deadline for its practical implementation has expired at the end of 2015. This is an issue that the Cypriot government must actually, based on the National Waste Management Plan³⁹ and National Waste Management Strategy, work upon thoroughly and extensively within the next few months as at present it appears to be in non-compliance with EU law and its obligation for separate collection as a member state of the EU. One must additionally highlight the urgency of this issue taking into consideration that the key target of preparing for re-use and recycling of waste materials to be increased to a minimum of 50% by 2020 is founded in practice, among others factors, on the attainment of separate collection of waste materials.

II. Preparing for re-use and recycling of waste materials to be increased to a minimum of 50% by 2020

Article 13(4) of the Cyprus Waste Law, following the Waste Framework Directive has implemented the target for 50% of municipal waste (more precisely the target applies to specific types of household and similar wastes). Looking at Figures 1 and 2 one notes that despite the significantly high waste generation in Cyprus⁴⁰, the latter is among the member states with the highest increases in recycling rates between 2004 – 2012. More specifically recycling rate in Cyprus has reached 21% in 2012, from 3% in 2004.

³⁹ More specifically the National Waste Management Plan includes in its legislative targets the introduction of a legislative measure by the end of 2016 regarding mandatory separate collection for paper, metal, plastic and glass.

⁴⁰ This might be due to the high number of tourists visiting the country every year

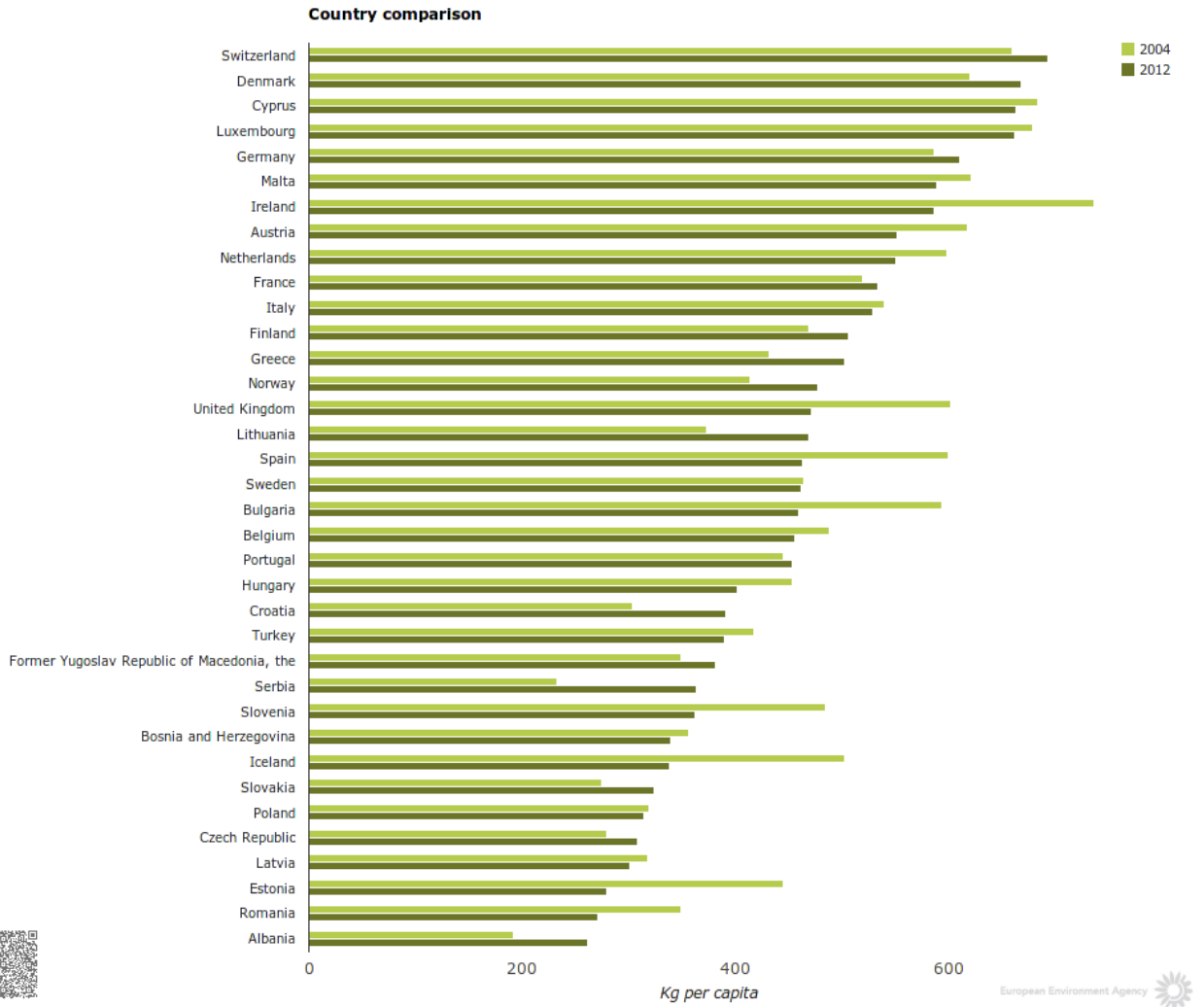


Figure 1: Municipal waste generated per capita in 36 European countries (2004 and 2012) Source: European Environmental Agency website

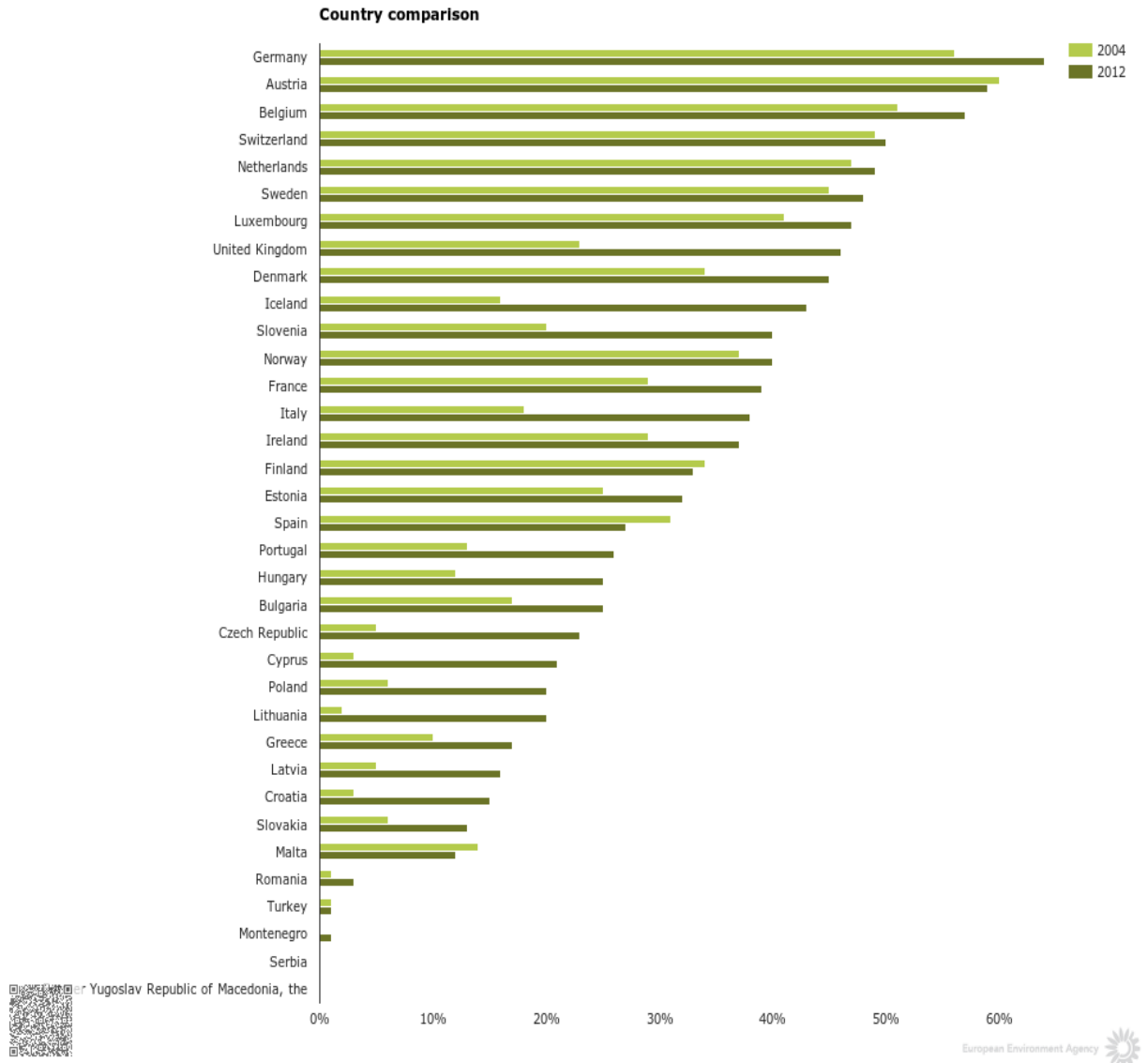


Figure 2: Municipal waste recycling in 35 European countries (2004 and 2012) Source: European Environmental Agency website

According to these findings this appears to be one of the “success stories”⁴¹ of environmental policy in Europe as member states have achieved in total an average recycling rate of 29% in 2012, compared to 22% in 2004.

However at the same time this recycling rate is according to the European Commission⁴² “relatively still too low (21%) to comply with the 50% set in the Waste Framework Directive...which has to be met by 2020”. Various underlying causes for this low percentage have been identified to exist such as the (a) lack of incentives to manage waste according to the waste hierarchy, as there was no waste prevention

⁴¹ See footnote 6

⁴² See footnote 7

programme in place until recently, (b) insufficient (door-to-door) separate collection of waste, (c) no developments in infrastructure and collection systems to divert biodegradable waste from disposal, (d) lack of co-ordination between the different administrative levels⁴³, and (e) lack of capacity at local level⁴⁴.

Therefore according to Ioannis Bakas⁴⁵ Cyprus needs to make an exceptional effort to reach the 2020 target. Yet one must note that the Cypriot government has actually started to work on this priority matter closely. More specifically according to the National Waste Management Plan the target of 50% by 2020 shall be achieved within the following time frame:

Target	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Preparing for re-use and recycling of waste materials to be increased to a minimum of 50% by 2020	26%	30%	35%	40%	45%	50%

Figure 3: Source: National Waste Management Plan

Looking at the above timeframe one may comment that Cyprus needs to invest in municipal waste recycling in the next coming years in order to stick to this demanding yet plausible time frame in order to reach the recycling target of 50% by 2020. Furthermore “the big increase in performance in both organic and material recycling in 2010 could be a sign of an increased effort in Cyprus regarding municipal waste management”⁴⁶ that could point towards a success direction. Yet one may claim that more efforts are needed to “develop separate collection at source combined with the required facilities to ensure a high level of recycling and composting”⁴⁷.

All in all the attainment of this 50% target is indispensable apart from an environmental but additionally from a legal perspective as this constitutes the primary legal obligation that Cyprus embraces as a member state of the EU in the context of the correct implementation and application of the Waste Framework Directive at national level.

⁴³ Although this has been partly solved in February 2016 with the amendment of the Cyprus Waste Law and the transfer of the responsibilities of the Minister of Interior to the Minister of Agriculture, Rural Development and Environment

⁴⁴ See footnote 7

⁴⁵ European Environmental Agency: *Municipal Waste Management in Cyprus* (February 2013)

⁴⁶ See footnote 35

⁴⁷ See footnote 7

III. Preparation of a National Waste Management Plan

A national strategic solid waste management plan existed in Cyprus since 2002. This plan reflected the Landfill Directive's legislative targets and introduced at national level a legislative framework of standards on MSW management⁴⁸. However despite full harmonisation of the relevant EU waste legislation at national level, in 2011 the largest share of municipal waste was still landfilled inappropriately. Furthermore after the transposition of the Waste Framework Directive into national law, through the Cyprus Waste Law, public consultations took place regarding the need for an updated plan. Taking into consideration these discussions as well as the new legislative, economic and environmental requirements of the new EU Directive, the National Waste Management Plan was prepared in accordance with the requirements of EU waste legislation in order to plan the way forward regarding effective waste management. The National Waste Management Plan was approved by the Council of Ministers in November 2015.

From a legal perspective the National Waste Management Plan seems to encompass in theory all the information that shall be made available in such a plan according to Article 28 (3) of the Waste Framework Directive. More specifically it encompasses (a) in Chapter I the type, quantity and source of waste generated within the territory of Cyprus, (b) in Chapter VI an evaluation of the development of waste streams in the future, (c) in Chapter V the existing waste collection schemes and major disposal and recovery installations as well as sufficient information on the location criteria for site identification and on the capacity of future disposal or major recovery installations, (d) in Chapter III the general waste management policies, including planned waste management technologies and methods and (e) in Chapter VII an assessment of the need for new collection schemes and additional waste installation infrastructure.

IV. Preparation of a National Waste Prevention Programme no later than 12 December 2013

Apart from a National Waste Management Plan all member states had to implement at national level a waste prevention programme no later than 12 December

⁴⁸ See footnote 45

2013. Unfortunately Cyprus delayed almost two years to implement this document, not complying in this way with its obligation under Article 29 of the EU Directive. More specifically the National Waste Prevention Programme 2015 – 2021 (hereinafter “Waste Prevention Programme”) was adopted by the Council of Ministers, along the National Waste Management Plan, in November 2015. This Waste Prevention Programme includes, as prescribed by the EU Directive relevant provision, existing prevention measures and an evaluation of the usefulness of these measures through various examples.

One shall note that the Management Strategy on Municipal Waste upon which this National Waste Management Plan and the Waste Prevention Programme have been adopted forms a comprehensive integrated 6 year management strategy that is partly co-financed by European Structural and Investment Funds.

D. Improving municipal waste management: lessons to be learned

Looking at the above analysis one realises that the major problem faced by Cyprus at present, from a legal perspective, is its non-compliance with the 2015 target of separate collection of paper, metal, plastic and glass. As it has been aforementioned this non-compliance is extra important due to the fact that separate collection of these waste materials forms the basis upon which the 50% recycling target shall be achieved. One may wonder what could actually help Cyprus reach this target, even a bit delayed?

The National Waste Management Plan includes policy instruments, already used in other countries to reduce landfilling of biodegradable municipal waste and to enhance recycling of municipal waste management. These are various economic incentives for local authorities, private companies and households to recycle or reduce waste that have been / are planned to be introduced such as pay as you throw plans, penalties for not complying with national waste legislation and the promotion of separate collection. Yet additional instruments could be employed. Firstly Cyprus could consider employ the legislative imposition of a landfill tax or ban, currently employed in other Member States according to Figure 4. Interestingly comparing Figure 4 and Figure 5 one realises that countries that have been using landfill tax like Belgium and Netherlands seem to have effectively diverted waste from landfill to

recycling. Secondly the legislative introduction of mandatory separate collection of bio-waste already introduced in various member states⁴⁹ could additionally be considered as this initiative would result in high municipal waste recycling levels.

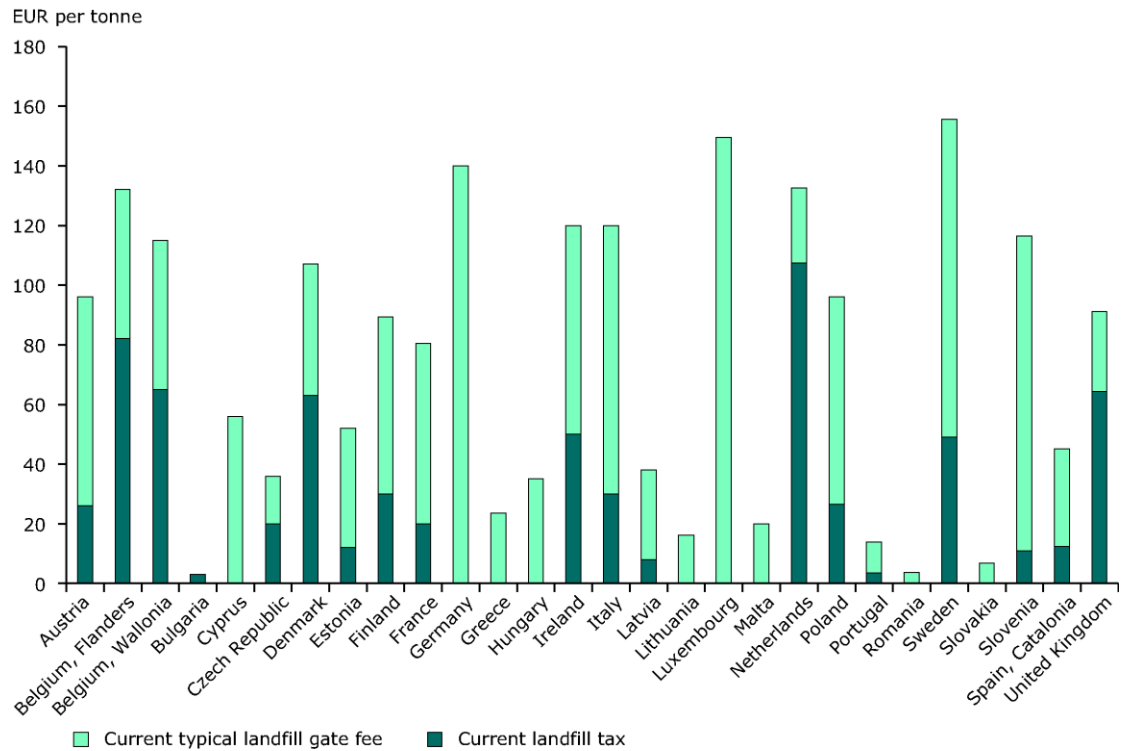


Figure 4: Typical charge (gate fee and landfill tax) for legal landfilling of non-hazardous municipal waste in EU Member States and regions, Source: European Environmental Agency website

⁴⁹ *Inter alia* Austria, Slovenia, Germany, see footnote 34

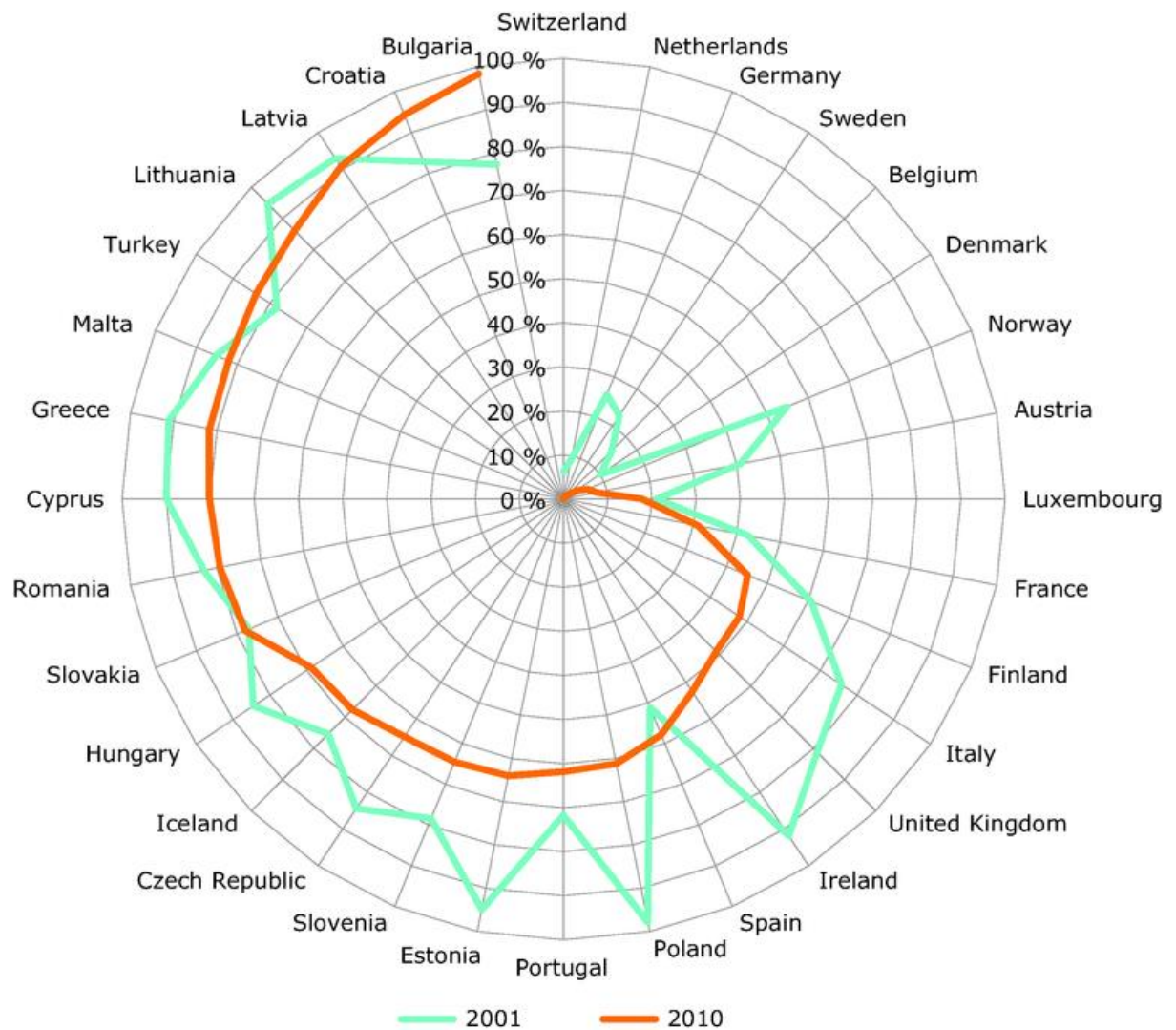


Figure 5: Municipal waste landfilling rates in 32 European countries, 2001 and 2010, Source: European Environmental Agency website

E. Conclusions

All in all the above paper has presented and discussed from a legal perspective the current position of Cyprus regarding the realisation of the major waste management targets found in the Waste Framework Directive. One could conclude that, although delayed, the EU legislative targets have been implemented *per se* in national legislation as well as within the Municipal Waste Management Plan and Waste Prevention Program. Yet Cyprus has a long way to go regarding the achievement of separate collection and the realisation of the 50% recycling target both being legislative obligations of this member state. However one must note that if Cyprus can actually follow the challenging Municipal Waste Management Plan set

forth at the end of last year, it will be able to reach these results and therefore comply in full with the Waste Framework Directive provisions. At present though, the way is still long.

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