
Cefic views on the revision of Directive 2008/98/EC on waste

As an important element of the Circular Economy strategy, the Waste Directive should provide the appropriate framework to ensure optimal use of valuable resources

The chemical industry continuously strives to minimize waste by developing resource efficient production processes and innovative products enabling significant resource savings across the value-chains of many important industry sectors¹. Cefic believes that EU waste legislation should enable further development of business practices providing life-cycle solutions to keep the value of materials and energy in the economy for as long as possible.

Cefic welcomes the revision of the Waste Framework Directive aiming to support a more circular economy, in particular that the Commission:

- Recognises that the Industrial Emissions Directive is the appropriate legislative framework to address the prevention and management of industrial waste² allowing to: 1) develop production process orientated measures, 2) minimise industrial waste and 3) optimise industrial waste management;
- Clarifies the application of the end-of-waste provisions in order to achieve harmonisation across Europe.

In order to deliver on its objective, the legislative proposal should have been more ambitious in removing regulatory barriers preventing the chemical industry from reintegrating valuable resources in production processes.

All too often, materials which can be easily reintegrated in the production process, without any safety and pollution risks, are defined as waste. Classifying valuable materials as waste discourages investments in business practices seeking to optimise the utilisation of valuable resources. And it runs counter to the basic principle of the Circular Economy strategy.

Cefic strongly believes that the criteria for by-products should be defined in such a way that

- Production residues³ which will be further used, without entailing any safety and environmental risks, are not classified as waste.
- By-products criteria are not open to varying interpretations by national authorities, leading to legal uncertainty for businesses investing in resource-efficient production processes.

In the long term, the EU should move from a waste to a resource-oriented legislative framework to maintain the value of materials for as long as possible. To this end, Cefic recommends EU policy-makers to assess to which extent the current definition of waste is hindering the development of a circular economy. This ex-post evaluation could be planned under the Commission's REFIT Programme.

¹ Discover some of our contributions to a circular economy at <http://www.cefic.org/Policy-Centre/Circular-Economy/>

² Except industrial packaging waste as this is covered by Directive 94/62/EC on packaging and packaging waste

³ Meaning substances or objects resulting from a production process of which the primary aim is not the production of that item

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About Cefic

Cefic, the European Chemical Industry Council, founded in 1972, is the voice of 29,000 large, medium and small chemical companies in Europe, which provide 1.2 million jobs and account for 17% of world chemicals production.