



RESOURCE EFFICIENCY

Banning construction waste from landfill: A stepwise challenge! EAACA outlines its views on a possible ban on landfill

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Resource efficiency is increasingly becoming a necessity for European industries. In the construction sector, the use, reuse and recycling of raw materials has a clear economic impact on the business. The European autoclaved aerated concrete (AAC) industry has long understood the importance of minimising waste sent to landfill and dedicated many efforts to step up **recycling of construction and demolition waste**. AAC manufacturers have taken on a voluntary commitment to recover separated and sorted AAC waste from construction and demolition sites for recycling and reuse. Where AAC waste is sent to landfill, its environmental impact is minor since it contains no toxic substances.

EAACA, the association representing the interests of the European AAC industry, manufacturing a light-weight construction product with excellent thermal performance, has been supportive of an ambitious drive towards high recycling targets. We have endorsed the objectives laid down in the EU **Waste Framework Directive** of a 70% recycling quote for construction and demolition waste by 2020.

While the European Commission is about to undertake a review of the EU Landfill Directive and will also review waste legislation, the European Parliament has recently called on the Commission to introduce in 2014 a **ban on all landfill**¹, which could even cover inert waste, and may be preceded by an EU-wide landfill tax as a transition period.

EAACA supports the principle of recycling virtually 100% of the waste and thus removing the need for landfills as a long-term objective. Much of our members' research and development activities have been dedicated to achieving the highest performance with recycled AAC, to pave the way for a waste-free production process over the lifecycle in a longer term. Nevertheless, we would warn European institutions against imposing a too hasted pace for this transition, as it would not be feasible overnight.

The AAC industry has proven it is able to recycle construction and demolition waste. Our industry uses granulates coming from demolition sites as a substitute for raw materials. AAC granulates are currently also used as a raw material in other products and applications. The remaining waste which is landfilled is considered inert according to the Decision 2003/33/EC and the EU Landfill Directive, and does not emit any toxic substance into the environment. We are constantly striving to achieve higher recycling rates, in line with the objective of 70% recycling of construction and demolition waste by 2020.² However, we believe that a number of obstacles should be addressed, before envisaging a blank ban on landfill:

- Building demolition techniques nowadays rarely enable to **sort waste** in a perfect way, which makes it challenging to obtain pure AAC waste. This is a major obstacle to the full recycling of every specific construction material from demolition waste, including for AAC. This situation has been duly noted in the recent Commission's Strategy on the Sustainable Competitiveness of the Construction Sector³. Our industry and the academic world have been dedicating

¹ European Parliament resolution of 24 May 2012 on a resource-efficient Europe ([2011/2068\(INI\)](#)), §33.

² Directive 2008/98/EC, Article 11.2.b on Re-use and recycling.

³ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council: Strategy for the sustainable competitiveness of the construction sector and its enterprises, 31 July 2012, [COM\(2012\)433](#).

considerable efforts over the past years to promote research and innovative techniques in this field, which we believe is of crucial importance to the whole construction sector.

- The demolition of buildings creates large quantities of material. **Landfills** are available in most Member States and in easy reach of transportation. Production facilities that could recycle the material into new products are currently located only in certain areas of the EU. Until this situation is addressed, a ban on landfill would therefore create enormous freight volume and require transportation over long distances, which would conflict with the European Commission's aim to reduce emissions from road transport by 90% until 2050.⁴

This is why we would encourage EU institutions to consider our concerns and help us address these obstacles. Plans for a blank ban on landfill should be delayed at this stage, in order for the concerned industries to find the most appropriate solution and avoid any "waste leakage" outside the EU, which would not serve the common objective of resource efficiency. Our association would be delighted to cooperate further with policymakers on this topic in a constructive way.

European Autoclaved Aerated Concrete Association (EAACA)

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⁴ White Paper "Roadmap to a Single European Transport Area – Towards a competitive and resource efficient transport system", 28 March 2011, [COM\(2011\)114](#).