

## Press release

### No space for waste: OVAM organizes workshop on the future of European waste policy during the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the European Union

Under the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the European Union, The Public Waste Agency of Flanders (OVAM) organized last Friday a workshop on the future of the EU Waste Framework Directive, cornerstone of the EU's waste policy. In an ever changing world, the EU Waste Framework is in need of being further strengthened, so as to contribute managing resources more sustainably, lowering the material footprint of our consumption and preventing as much as possible that waste is generated. Responsible for waste policy in Flanders since 1981, OVAM continues to be a driving force behind EU agendasetting regarding waste policy.

The workshop welcomed participants from the European Commission, the European Parliament, the European Environment Agency, EU Member States and relevant EU sector federations on the future of the EU Waste Framework Directive.

#### Sustainable management of raw materials

The workshop started with a **plenary session** with welcoming words from **Bart Somers**, mayor of the hosting City Mechelen and from **Zuhal Demir**, minister of Justice and Enforcement, Environment, Energy and Tourism of Flanders. In his keynote speech, **Werner Annaert**, CEO of OVAM highlighted OVAM's long standing experience in waste policies, stressed the importance of EU waste policy with the Waste Framework Directive as its cornerstone and reflected on

the challenges that lie ahead and merit a holistic approach. **Karolina D'Cunha** from DG Environment of the European Commission looked back to the last 5 years accomplishments with regards to waste policy and circular economy. She also reflected upon opportunities to further improve the implementation of the Waste Framework Directive. **Almut Reichel** from the European Environment Agency stressed that EEA studies and other recent analyses point to the need to reduce the materials we feed the economy with. Less resource use should become a priority.

### **Multidisciplinary approach**

During a panel discussion, **Stéphane Arditi** from the European Environmental Bureau, **Andreas Brieger** from SMEUnited and **Carin Lidman** from the Council of European Municipalities and Regions brought the insights from civil society, business and local governments regarding the challenges and opportunities to further strengthen the Waste Framework Directive and EU policies on waste, sustainable management of resources and circularity. Sustainable choices should become the most logical, convenient and affordable choices for both citizens and businesses. Making repair affordable and scaling up circular business models so that they are competitive were two concrete solutions put forward. The combination of more harmonisation at the European level to give the right market signals while at the same time cooperation between the local level and small and medium-sized local businesses to allow consumers to access circular solutions was also highlighted.

In the afternoon, participants addressed the following topics in six **breakout sessions**: waste prevention – the waste hierarchy – waste/non-waste status/biowaste collection/substances of concern in material loops – incineration in a circular economy.

The main findings of the workshop will be published on OVAM's website and will

be shared with the European Commission to inspire future action.



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