

PRESS RELEASE

Waste management services in the fight against coronavirus

Brussels, 19 March 2020 - Waste management and recycling activities, as Services of General Economic Interest (SGEI), need to be clearly recognised as “**essential public services**” in each Member State. Allowing for priority measures, such as benefitting from protection equipment and materials, and adapting to crisis mode, under the supervision of national public authorities.

Collecting, transporting, disposing of hospital and healthcare waste, continuously and safely, and managing household/municipal waste, as well as industrial and commercial waste, is now more than ever, vital for the European economy and population in the fight against coronavirus. Private waste management companies are major operators in this service, operating in 60% of municipal waste markets in Europe, and in 75% of industrial and commercial waste.

Reduced staff, increased hospital waste, heightened safety conditions for workers and population, combined with nonstop vital services, pose a real and tremendous challenge to waste management companies.

Until the situation is back to normal, **adaptation and new operational conditions**, are at the very heart of our companies' mobilisation:

- The **right level for adapting regulations is the national one**, with regards to safety equipment and protocols for collection and treatment.
- **Hospital and healthcare waste** collection and disposal are already well regulated. Hospitals can be asked, by national authorities, to take further precautions, such as ensuring that waste containers are properly closed before collection, or, if needed, using single-use containers. They must ensure there are **no bottlenecks at any step in the waste chain**.
- Other **hazardous waste treatment operations** must be maintained, as part of the continuity of industry's activities, particularly in regard to vital sectors that produce hazardous waste. It is not possible, for reasons of industrial risk management, to over-store hazardous waste either on industrial sites or on the hazardous waste treatment sites themselves. Storing residues for more than a few days, if not evacuated, would leave no other choice but halt the industrial activity, or the waste treatment facility, which would add to the health crisis. Full protection of operators must be ensured based on specific requirements set up by national authorities.

- For municipal waste, **adapting working rules and ensuring adequate protection equipment and protocols are in place**, falls under the responsibility of national authorities. Giving the much-needed safety and flexibility on working days and hours, is crucial for the continuity of a functioning service for waste collection and treatment. National or local authorities must organise childcare services for waste management employees.

- **Adaptation in waste collection contracts and systems**, must include temporary collection points and the provision for increased volumes. If needed, waste treatment chains must be shortened to avoid putting workers at risk, for instance at sorting installations. Derogations to the hierarchy of waste treatment must be accepted.

- **Industrial and commercial waste** collection and preparation remains critical, including recycling, in order to avoid massive storage, and not disrupt supply chains for industries using recyclates such as metal, paper, glass, plastic

- Intra-EU **waste shipments** are essential. Free movement of goods is maintained, as well as movements of waste. Situations in which large volumes of collected waste would have to be stored before the final treatment step must be avoided. Waste chains rely on cross-border shipments, as with most logistical chains in any EU industry, and because many MS do not have the full range of installations to treat all waste fractions.

- **Transport** companies and drivers currently offer **reduced capacities**, due to less activity on goods. Transport capacity for waste is also affected. Notified shipments need to be authorised to change the routes, if needed, to facilitate shipments, avoid possible delays at borders, and avoid blocking the chain. Adapting working days and hours in the transport sector is also needed.

For further information, please contact: info@fead.be

FEAD, the European Federation for Waste Management and Environmental Services, represents the private waste and resource management industry across Europe. FEAD's members are national waste management associations covering 19 Member States, Norway and Serbia. FEAD's members represent over

- 3,000 companies with activities in all forms of waste management;
- 60% share in the household waste market;
- Handle more than 75% of industrial and commercial waste in Europe;
- Combined annual turnover of approximately € 75 billion;
- Employment of 320,000 people who operate around 2,400 recycling and sorting centres, 1,100 composting sites, 260 waste-to-energy plants and 900 controlled landfills.

They enable the transition to a circular economy by producing resources that can be reinjected in the economy and by supplying energy. Our companies add value through innovative and cost-efficient collection, sorting, and recycling of secondary raw materials. As a result, they play a crucial role in achieving the best economic and environmental outcomes.