

## Climate will not Benefit from EU ETS being Extended to Waste Incineration

CEWEP fully supports the European Green Deal, EU Climate Law and the climate and sustainability targets associated with these policies. However, we would also like to point out certain specificities that have to be considered when discussing the waste sector's contribution to these goals.

The incineration of municipal and hazardous waste is exempted from the current EU Emission Trading System (ETS), for good reasons, [CEWEP stated](#) in the context of the roadmap for the revision of the EU ETS. Waste-to-Energy (WtE) plants are part of an integrated waste management system whereas ETS is a market mechanism. It should not be applied to the waste sector, which aims to reduce as much as possible the impact of waste to the environment. Applying measures such as the EU ETS exclusively to WtE (and not to the entire waste sector) would be counter-productive, as the market would encourage diversion of some waste streams to cheaper, less environmentally sound routes.

*“WtE incineration, like all the other industries, must and does contribute to the greenhouse gas mitigation. However, extending the EU ETS to waste incineration would not provide an actual decrease in GHG emissions from WtE plants. It would be applied too far from the source of CO<sub>2</sub> – plastic products and packaging that reach us as unrecyclable waste, and therefore it would not have the desired steering effect.”*, said CEWEP's President Paul De Bruycker.

Differently from other industries, WtE operators do not have a choice on the characteristics or carbon footprint of the input to their plants – waste that cannot be recycled. Adding supplementary carbon-related costs to the taxes already imposed on WtE in numerous EU member states would make waste treatment more expensive for municipalities and therefore citizens. While at the same time this measure would not bring about any additional GHG steering effect. It would also increase the price of recycling as WtE plants treat the residues from sorting and recycling plants.

Making WtE more expensive could be even counterproductive for the climate considering that numerous EU member states still heavily rely on (cheaper) landfills and might be inclined to continue putting their waste on landfills despite their heavy climate impact.

For the non-recyclable plastic waste (the source of the fossil CO<sub>2</sub>) treated in European WtE plants the only alternatives to WtE are landfilling, export to other countries, often with lower environmental and social standards than in Europe or treatment in industrial plants that do not have to fulfill the same environmental requirements. On the other hand, in WtE plants the pollutants embedded in this waste are safely and permanently destroyed. The important hygienic task that WtE fulfils for society was also demonstrated during the COVID-19 pandemic when contagious waste from hospitals, medical facilities and households were safely treated with high temperatures in waste incineration plants across Europe.

European WtE plants offset the GHG emissions through landfill diversion, replacement of fossil fuels in energy production and material recovery from bottom ash. Additionally, they are exploring carbon capture and use/storage technologies where appropriate.

For further information, please contact CEWEP ([info@cewep.eu](mailto:info@cewep.eu)), tel. +32 2 770 63 11

*CEWEP (Confederation of European Waste-to-Energy Plants) is the umbrella association of the operators of Waste-to-Energy plants across Europe. CEWEP's members are committed to ensuring high environmental standards, achieving low emissions and maintaining state of the art energy production from remaining waste that cannot be recycled in a sustainable way.*