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PRESS RELEASE

Green Paper on Bio-waste

ACR+ URGES EUROPEAN COMMISSION TO FOCUS ON BIO-WASTE PREVENTION AND RECYCLING

[Brussels, 30 March 2009] In December 2008, the EU Commission issued a Green Paper on the management of bio-waste in the European Union, asking for contributions from stakeholders by mid-March 2009. The Green Paper aims at opening an EU-wide debate on the different bio-waste management options and contributing to the assessment of the need for legislative action.

The Association of Cities and Regions for Recycling and sustainable Resource management (ACR+) submitted its comments on the Green Paper, reflecting the concerns of its membership base, made up of local and regional authorities across Europe. The following main comments and proposals were submitted:

- **Waste hierarchy:** there is sufficient evidence to argue in favour of complying, with regard to bio-waste management, with the waste hierarchy as adopted in the new Waste Framework Directive, choosing waste prevention and recycling (composting) as the options to favour. This is not properly reflected in the Green Paper.
- 1. **More focus on waste prevention:** the Green Paper hardly refers to waste prevention. Therefore, carrying out an impact assessment based on the Green Paper as it now stands risks to neglect bio-waste prevention (smart gardening and smart food consumption) and short cycle management (home, community, farm composting) as viable and interesting options.

Those bio-waste prevention schemes have proven to be successful and are perfectly suitable and applicable in an urban/rural environment.

Bio-waste is the biggest household waste fraction, accounting for 30 to 40% of Municipal Solid Waste across Europe. Interestingly, bio-waste prevention programmes are capable of targeting between 22 and 25% of the generated bio-waste stream.

2. **Inclusion of complementary recycling schemes associated with targets:** besides waste prevention (and reuse), selective collection of bio-waste followed by composting or anaerobic digestion (followed by a post-composting process) are interesting options to be promoted as part of the EU strategy to turn the EU into a resource-efficient 'Recycling Society'.

Setting harmonised recycling targets at EU level will therefore send an important political message at a critical time period when Member States and local authorities are taking long-term decisions on future waste management policy direction and investments.

- **Life Cycle Analysis:** LCA is an important tool for identifying different options and making appropriate choices. However caution is required as LCAs, in particular with regard to bio-waste, are still too dependent on relatively arbitrary assumptions and not robust enough to allow meaningful conclusions on which (bio-)waste management practices to opt for. LCAs are not designed to show up the whole range of positive environmental effects brought by a scheme, let alone other, not strictly environmental benefits. In previous LCAs the manifold positive aspects of compost in soil were not fully reflected.
- **A complex and time-consuming approach:** it would have been more productive to issue a directive proposal straight away and request comments from stakeholders. The next steps, i.e. the assessment of the need for a legislative proposal and the development of Life Cycle Thinking guidelines, seem unnecessary and might not provide sufficient decisive arguments to guide the Member States in their pressing need to strategise and invest in optimal bio-waste management options.
- **Need for a directive – Link with Soil and Waste Policies:** a Directive is therefore badly needed and should be based on a strategic, long-term vision designed to promote recovery of bio-waste for land application. Such bio-waste legislation is a crucial strategic element of both Soil and Waste Policies, and has a powerful potential to help Member States fulfill the diversion targets of the Landfill Directive as well as positively contribute to European Climate Change and future Soil Policies.

All in all, the Green Paper should be complemented by the views of the respondents to the consultation process and should adopt new priorities with regard to options taking into account the waste hierarchy. It is from this basis that a bio-waste directive should be drafted and finalised in 2009.

Full reactions of ACR+ to the Green Paper: www.acrplus.org/biowaste

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*The **Association of Cities and Regions for Recycling and sustainable Resource management** (ACR+) is an international network of members who share the common aim of promoting the sustainable consumption of resources and management of waste through prevention at source, reuse and recycling.*

ACR+ currently has nearly 100 members, mainly local and regional authorities as well as national networks of local authorities representing around 1100 municipalities. ACR+ also welcomes other key players in the sustainable resource-product-waste management, such as NGOs, academic institutions or private organisations, as partner members.