

Open letter to the Government of Denmark
from Non-Governmental Organizations
calling for a change in the objectives and policy of financing projects in the area of
waste management in the countries of
Central and Eastern Europe and Africa

For more than ten years now, the Government of Denmark has been earmarking large funds for projects relating to municipal and hazardous waste treatment in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and Africa.

Those projects are meant to lead to environmental improvement and, at the same time, create foundations for waste management systems in the above mentioned regions.

Unfortunately, according to the undersigned non-governmental organizations, a vast majority of the projects carried out until now can be deemed a total mistake and failure.

Firstly, those projects give priority to waste incineration. In both regions there are still many opportunities that need to be used for changing production and energy generation processes so that they are cleaner and result in less waste. In the countries of CEE and Africa, waste collection and recycling systems are just being set up. The building of waste incineration plants - without a well-developed infrastructure of municipal services and adequate systems of hazardous waste monitoring - can only contribute to the giving up of actions aimed at waste reduction at source, while hampering proper development of services connected with the recovery of secondary raw materials. Moreover, waste incineration technologies will not contribute to environmental improvement, as they themselves are a big source of emissions of persistent organic pollutants and other toxic substances.

Secondly, public participation in the projects pursued until now has been minimal or none. We do not know of any cases of wide public consultations with non-governmental organizations and local communities being conducted at the stage of preparing project assumptions and implementing the concepts adopted. Public participation was limited to just expressing opposition to the solutions proposed. As a result, most of the hitherto projects have not been completed.

The above problems can be illustrated with examples from recent months; they concern proposals for pesticide incineration in Belarus, Lithuania, Ukraine, Poland and Mozambique.

Thus, the non-governmental organizations listed below appeal to the Government of Denmark to review the objectives and policy of financing projects relating to waste management in CEE and African countries, and in particular, to put an emphasis on:

- **supporting projects aimed at preventing waste generation at source, in line with the generally accepted waste management hierarchy;**
- **supporting development of the market for secondary raw materials recovery and recycling;**
- **using those waste treatment technologies which are environmentally safe and can be an alternative to incineration;**
- **taking account – as a precondition – of the participation of non-governmental organizations and local communities at all stages of project planning and implementation.**

We believe that your taking account of our postulates will contribute to the efficient use of Danish taxpayers' money and to environmental improvement in CEE and African countries.

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