

WASTE AND SUSTAINABILITY IN EUROPE

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

From an engineering point of view it is quiet clear that waste is not sustainable, nevertheless you will hardly find a clear and easy answer in the numerous publications dealing with sustainability. In the European discussion you will find the waste problem hidden behind the demand of “sustainable production” and “consumption”, “cleaner production” and nevertheless not to forget directly behind the political principles “waste prevention and material recycling”.

Prevention has formed the cornerstone of the EU initiatives: Fifth EC Environmental Action Programme – “Towards Sustainability” and The European Commissions 6th Environmental Action Plan for 2001 – 2010. The objective of the Action Plan is to ensure the consumption of renewable and non-renewable resources does not exceed carrying capacity of the environment.

The waste management strategy of the last decade and for the future will be, to achieve a de-coupling of resource use from economic growth through significantly improved resource efficiency, de-materialisation of the economy and waste prevention.

Avoiding waste is possible in private households and of hazardous waste in industrialised settings as well.

It could be part of our energy recovery and also part of our green house gas reduction strategy.

Key words: Solid waste management, sustainability, resource efficiency, clean production