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OUTCOME OF PROCEEDINGS

From: General Secretariat of the Council

To: Delegations

Subject: European Court of Auditors' Special Report 23/2025 entitled 'Municipal waste management – Despite gradual improvement, challenges remain for the EU's progress towards circularity'
- Council conclusions

Delegations will find in the Annex the Council conclusions on the European Court of Auditors' Special Report No 23/2025, as approved by the Council at its 4179th meeting held on 4 June 2026.

European Court of Auditors' Special Report 23/2025 entitled 'Municipal waste management – Despite gradual improvement, challenges remain for the EU's progress towards circularity'

- Council conclusions -

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

1. WELCOMES the ECA Special Report 23/2025 entitled 'Municipal waste management – Despite gradual improvement, challenges remain for the EU's progress towards circularity'¹ and TAKES NOTE of the Commission's replies² to this Special Report; RECALLS that, pursuant to the Treaties, the Commission is responsible for ensuring the application and the enforcement of Union law under the control of the Court of Justice of the European Union;
2. ACKNOWLEDGES the observation of the Special Report that, despite gradual improvements in recycling rates and reductions in landfill, several member states still face challenges in their progress towards sustainability, due to financial, implementation or capacity constraints and NOTES the challenges identified by the ECA concerning insufficient separate collection systems in parts of the Union and delays in the infrastructure development;

¹ The report can be consulted at the European Court of Auditors' website:

https://www.eca.europa.eu/ECAPublications/SR-2025-23/SR-2025-23_EN.pdf

² https://www.eca.europa.eu/Lists/ECAREplies/COM-Replies-SR-2025-23/COM-Replies-SR-2025-23_EN.pdf

3. TAKES NOTE of the ECA’s recommendation to address structural barriers in the recycling markets and to strengthen the business case for recyclers; NOTES the Commission’s ongoing assessment of the latest national, regional and local waste management plans; and ENCOURAGES the Commission to continue its efforts to facilitate the functioning of the single market for secondary raw materials and waste, notably in relation to critical raw materials, including measures to increase the supply of high-quality recyclates and stimulate demand for circular products;
4. RECALLS the Commission’s efforts to establish relevant targets, based on a robust rationale, and other legal requirements on recycling; NOTES that the Commission has provided pertinent recommendations to member states and maintains regular operational exchanges with Member State authorities regarding the application and implementation of the EU environmental legislation; ENCOURAGES the Commission’s efforts to use all the necessary tools to facilitate compliance;
5. TAKES NOTE that certain provisions of Union waste legislation, including Article 11(4) of the Waste Framework Directive, do not always set explicit time-limits for assessments, and WELCOMES the Commission’s intention to address identified legal gaps in the waste legislation and improve clarity in the context of the upcoming evaluation of the Waste Framework Directive, scheduled for 2029;
6. WELCOMES the Commission’s intention to further assess the feasibility and effectiveness of various economic instruments, including pricing mechanisms related to landfilling and incineration (in line with the polluter-pays principle);
7. HIGHLIGHTS that achieving the Union’s circular economy and climate objectives requires coordinated action by the Commission, Member States, regional and local authorities, economic operators and citizens, and that improving municipal waste management is essential for reducing environmental impacts, increasing resource efficiency and strengthening the Union’s resilience and competitiveness.