FEAD
European Waste Management Association

Challenges for waste treatment and Waste to Energy in Europe

The International Environment Forum
04 March 2026
ROMEXPO, Bucharest

Paolo Campanella
FEAD Secretary General

FEAD
European Waste Management Association

FEAD, the voice of Europe's private resource and waste management industry

- **We represent 21 national associations** from the EU, EFTA and the UK, steering Europe towards a circular economy for **over 40 years** today.
- Our members represent the **entire waste management value chain, which allows us to offer a holistic overview** on the industry that provides a second life to waste and resource.

EU targets for waste

Preparation for re-use and recycling of municipal waste:

- 55% by 2025 (by weight)
- 60% by 2030 (by weight)
- 65% by 2035 (by weight)

Reduction of packaging waste (compared to 2018):

- 5% by 2030
- 10% by 2035
- 15% by 2040

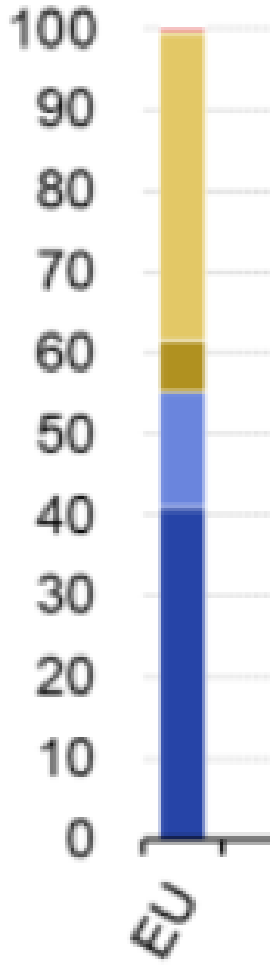
Recycling of packaging waste:

- 65% by 2025
- 70% by 2030

Landfilling reduction of municipal waste:

- Less than 10% by 2035

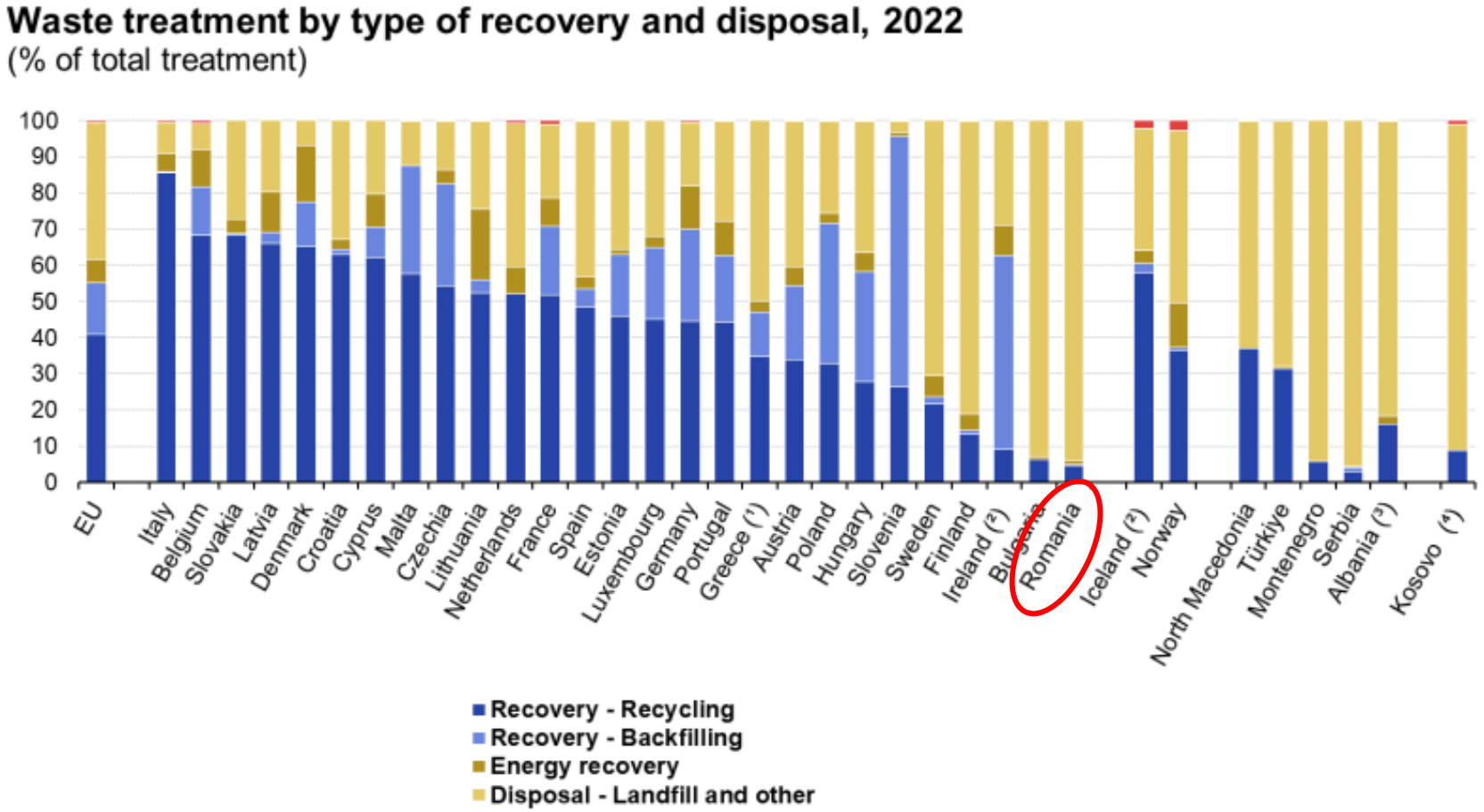
State of play – EU waste treatment



In the EU in 2022:

- more than a half (**61.4 %**) of the waste was treated in **recovery operations**
  - recycling (40.8 % of the total treated waste)
  - backfilling (14.2 %)
  - **energy recovery (6.4 %)**
- **38.6 %** was **disposed**
  - landfilled (30.2 %)
  - incinerated without energy recovery (0.4 %)
  - disposed of otherwise (8.0 %)
- **Significant differences** could be observed among the EU Member States

State of play – EU waste treatment



FEAD
European Waste Management Association

State of play – EU waste treatment

- Moves up the waste hierarchy and is a key complement to more recycling
- Is a safe, local, reliable source of heat and renewable energy, with potential to produce hydrogen and e-fuels
- Through CCUS technologies, CO2 emissions can be either stored or even utilised in other applications
- Gypsum can be produced from flue gas and metals and minerals recovered from bottom ashes

FEAD
European Waste Management Association

Some (diverging) numbers…

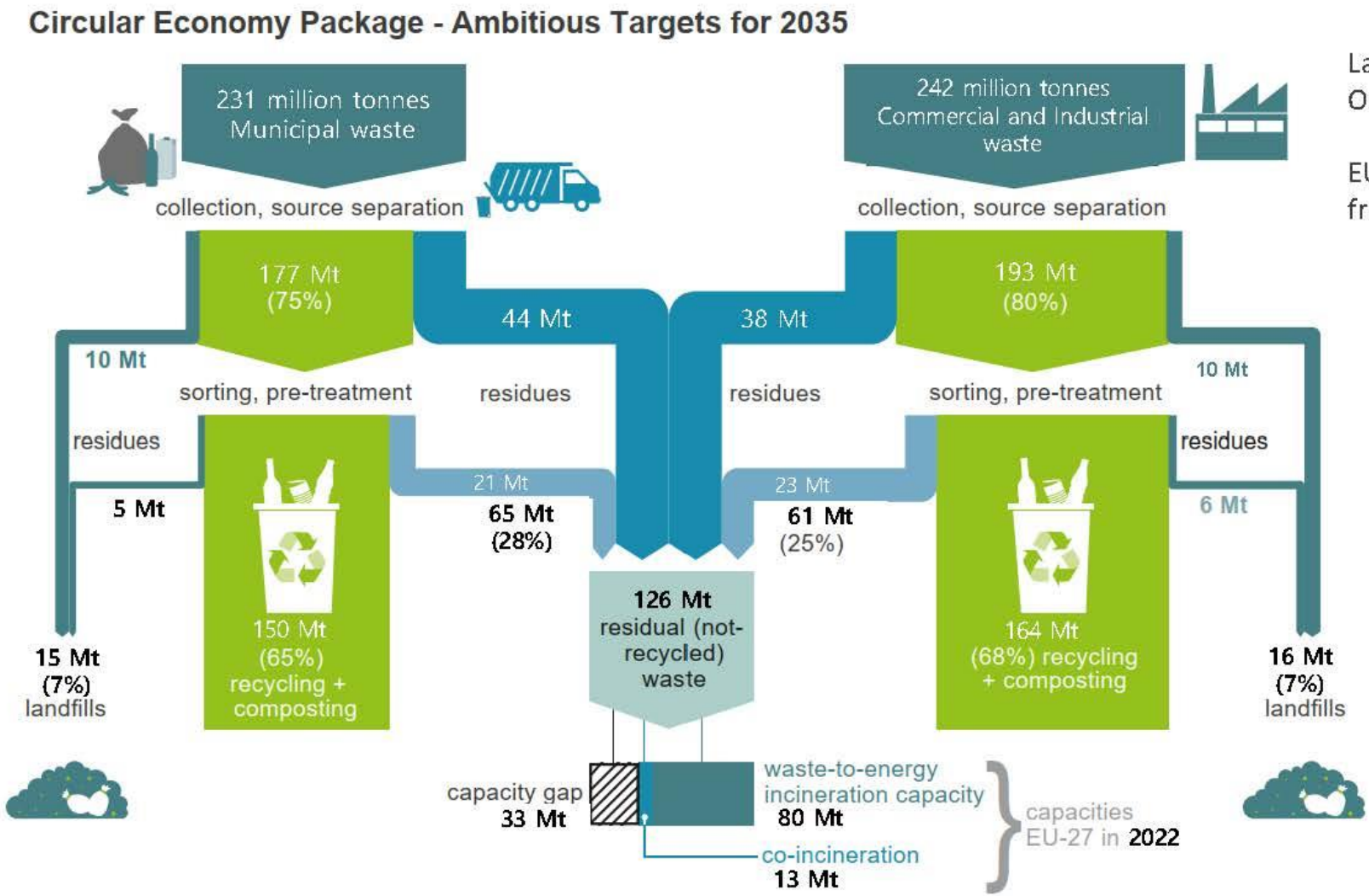
- There are 504 Waste-to-Energy plants operating in Europe
- European WtE plants treat over 101 million tons of waste and generate ca. 10% of Europe's district heating energy.
- Waste-to-Energy Plants in Europe can supply 18 million inhabitants with electricity and 15.2 million inhabitants with heat (CEWEP). The energy output is about 50% renewable.

According to Eurostat

GEO \ WST_OPER	Disposal - incineration (…	Recovery - energy reco…
European Union - 27 countries (from 2020)	14 180 000 (i)	184 250 000 (i)
Germany	4 127 363	67 308 355
Poland	3 291 360	9 320 532
Czechia	2 055 855	2 220 184
France	1 624 800	14 716 030
North Macedonia	1 054 508	0
Belgium	891 037	9 878 991
Italy	839 573	12 314 048
Türkiye	747 462	5 785 685
Romania	284 100	7 276 850

According to CEWEP

EU 27



Latest update: October 2025

EUROSTAT data from 2022/2023

Challenges

1. **Develop capacities** where they are missing to ensure implementation of the waste hierarchy and achieve landfill targets **while upgrading existing facilities** to be more energy efficient and sustainable

2. **Possible inclusion of waste incineration into ETS**
Any carbon pricing system that may be developed for the waste sector must ensure predictability, efficiency and avoid double taxation..

3. **Robust framework with the needed incentives and infrastructure to develop CCUS technologies.**

4. **Recognition of waste heat & residues recycling**.

5. For non-recyclable waste, the positive contribution of WtE plants to the circular economy must be **recognised and reflected in Taxonomy.**.

Proposals

1	Recognition	Recognise WtE and bottom ash recovery within EU sustainability and climate frameworks
2	Access to finance	Enable access to EU climate finance and innovation support for advanced WtE systems
3	Pragmatism	Promote a balanced and pragmatic role for WtE in EU waste policy

FEAD
European Waste Management Association

Thank you for your attention!

info@fead.be - www.fead.be