



## It's not all about tonnage!

### Implementing the circular economy in Europe requires continued support and investment for the separate collection of Household Hazardous Waste

#### JOINT DECLARATION

**Household hazardous waste (HHW)** originates from common products found in our homes such as paints, solvents, adhesives, oils, cleaning agents, and pesticides, that contain substances posing risks to human health and the environment if not properly managed.

While the volumes of HHW account only for approximately 1% of municipal waste, these small fractions **must be recognised as a priority waste stream due to the risks for human health and the environment, as well as the potential contamination of recycling processes in other waste streams**, thereby undermining the quality of secondary raw materials. At the same time, effective HHW management should go hand in hand with efforts to prevent waste generation and reduce the use of hazardous substances, as key elements of a circular economy.

Although the separate collection of HHW is mandatory in the European Union since January 2025, as specified in Article 20 of the revised Waste Framework Directive 2008/98/EC, many European municipalities and waste management operators are not fully prepared for the implementation of these sorting obligations and face operational or financial challenges.

That is why **ACR+** (the Association of Cities and Regions for Sustainable Resource Management), **FEAD** (the European Waste Management Association) and **Hazardous Waste Europe** have joined forces under the [Hazards Out!](#) initiative to raise awareness, share best practices, and build capacity for the separate collection of HHW.

Through a series of workshops and collaborative exchanges, the **Hazards Out!** project has engaged with municipalities, waste management operators, producer responsibility organisations (PROs), industry, national environmental authorities, academia and other relevant stakeholders, to identify barriers, solutions, and opportunities for better HHW management across Europe and build an active community of professionals dealing with HHW.

Based on the experience gained during these workshops, this declaration lays down key recommendations to ensure the effective separate collection of HHW:

### **1) Support data collection, monitoring and material characterisation**

Effective governance and collection systems require reliable data. Currently, in many Member States, data on the volumes and composition of separately collected HHW is incomplete or inconsistent, including limited data on treatment outcomes, which makes it difficult to assess the quantities of hazardous products placed on the market and the quantities of HHW collected and treated.

Improved monitoring and characterisation of HHW streams are essential to assess the effectiveness of the collection systems and identify the progress to be made on current collection systems in relation to what is actually placed on the market. In addition, better HHW material characterisation can help the transparency of the cost-sharing mechanisms and support potential recycling and recovery solutions.

We therefore call on the European Commission and EU Member States to:

- **Establish harmonised methodologies for monitoring HHW** volumes, composition and treatment outcomes across Member States;
- **Strengthen reporting obligations** linking products placed on the market with quantities collected and treated as HHW;

### **2) Recognise the true cost of HHW management**

Municipalities bear the primary responsibility to establish appropriate collection systems for HHW, but there is a lack of financial, technical, and operational capacity to manage this waste stream effectively.

In this context, **shared responsibility across the value chain** is essential to contribute financial resources, technical expertise and long-term infrastructure investments to guarantee the effective separate collection and treatment of HHW. There is currently no consistent financial instrument supporting the effective roll-out of the separate collection obligation on HHW.

Producers placing hazardous products on the market should contribute in line with the polluter-pays principle, in a transparent and proportionate manner to the full costs of collection, transport, storage, treatment, recovery and public awareness. Such a financial mechanism should take into account the diversity and low volumes of the HHW stream, as well as reflect the real operational costs of HHW management, including the need for investment in infrastructure, staff training, safety measures, reporting and compliance.

We call on the European Commission and EU Member States to:

- Develop **analysis and guidance on governance models** including roles and responsibilities, accountability mechanisms and alignment with existing waste and recycling systems.

- Ensure the **development of an effective, transparent and performance-based financial instrument**, such as a financial Extended Producer Responsibility scheme, or another feasible financial instrument.

### 3) Strengthen awareness and citizen engagement

Awareness of sorting obligations for hazardous waste in households remains low. Many households are still unaware that certain everyday products are hazardous and must be disposed of separately.

The mandatory separate collection obligation for HHW requires significant efforts to help citizens identify HHW and use the appropriate collection systems by providing clear information and sorting instructions on household hazardous products.

We call on the European Commission to:

- Support the development of a **European-wide best practice exchange of awareness-raising and communication strategies on HHW** at national, regional, and/or local level;
- Evaluate whether the proposed measures on **harmonising pictograms on-pack and on waste receptacles** will clearly distinguish hazardous waste in households and signal their appropriate disposal.

### 4) Develop the skills and expertise required to handle hazardous waste

Operators at collection points for HHW, such as civic amenity sites or mobile collection points, require specific knowledge and skills to identify the different hazardous substances, including understanding the downstream impacts of hazardous substances on recycling processes and worker safety in treatment facilities ensuring they are separated in an appropriate manner and adhere to safety protocols. At the same time, the local authorities responsible for waste management must be aware of the scope of HHW and how to collect and treat it efficiently and safely.

To ensure safe and compliant management of HHW, municipal experts, waste management operators, and other professionals require specific training, including practical exercises, exchange of experiences, and access to standardised guidance.

We call on the European Commission and EU Member States to:

- Support the creation of dedicated **HHW training programmes** with a focus on operational safety, for local authorities, waste operators, and industry representatives that can facilitate the exchanges of best practices, enhance work-based training, and peer learning between municipalities and waste management operators.
- Integrate the **HHW management into broader circular economy and environmental education initiatives** to confirm its relevance and key role in preserving the resources and environment.

## SIGNATORIES

### the Association of Cities and Regions for Sustainable Resource Management – ACR+



**ACR+** is an international network of cities and regions sharing the aim of promoting a sustainable resource management and accelerating the transition towards a circular economy on their territories and beyond. Established to encourage cooperation, knowledge transfer, and innovation, we highlight the key role of sub-national authorities in driving a successful circular transition for all and build strong collaborations with a multitude of stakeholders to support systemic change.

### European Electronics Recyclers Association – EERA



**EERA** is the voice of WEEE recycling in Europe being the professional association for the e-waste recycling and reprocessing industry. Our mission is to achieve a level playing field for fair competition in the WEEE value chain, harmonisation of regulations, effective and efficient recycling, and reprocessing with prevention of pollution, minimization of emissions and a high quality of secondary raw materials and components.

<https://eera-recyclers.com>

### the European Waste Management Association – FEAD



**FEAD** represents the entire waste management value chain, from collection and sorting to recycling, energy recovery, and final disposal. It brings together the private waste and resource management industry across Europe through its 21 national member associations and associate members, which collectively represent over 3,000 companies. Together, the sector provides more than 500,000 local jobs and fuels €5 billion in investments into the economy every year. For more information, please contact: [info@fead.be](mailto:info@fead.be)

### Hazardous Waste Europe – HWE



**HWE** is the trade association representing European hazardous waste treatment professionals, with the aim of promoting European and international legislation for a treatment of toxic waste which is environmental, worker and health friendly.

### International Solid Waste Association – ISWA



**ISWA** is a non-profit, membership-based association that brings together all stakeholders in the waste management sector, including the public and private sectors, academia, young professionals, and individuals committed to sustainability. With members in over 115 countries, ISWA connects a global network of experts working to advance sustainable waste management and the circular economy.