Parliamentary Assembly
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Resolution 1032 (1994)[1]

Use of primary and recycled fibre in the European paper industry

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Parliamentary Assembly notes that, due to growing consumption of paper and board products, the management of waste paper has become a problem which must be solved in co-operation between all European countries.

2. The Assembly further notes that:

2.1. solving the problem requires that an optimum balance be found between uses of waste paper as a source of recycled fibre and as a renewable biofuel. Solutions differ according to the country and must take into account the European situation as a whole;

2.2. in the Nordic countries (Finland, Norway, Sweden) the paper and board industry is highly developed due to large forest areas and to the favourable characteristics of fibres obtained from Nordic trees. The export greatly exceeds domestic use and hence there is little waste paper available for recycling as compared to production. The optimum solution for these countries is to use a relatively large percentage of primary fibre in their production;

2.3. in most other member countries plenty of recycled fibre can be made available due to large imports of paper and board and comparatively low production of primary fibre. Hence it is advantageous to use relatively more recycled pulp in their production.

3. In the search for optimum balance between recycled and primary fibre the following technical, economic, and environmental aspects must be taken into account:

3.1. modern procedures for obtaining primary chemical fibre are self-sufficient in energy and actually generate some extra energy because of waste lignin from the process being used as a renewable biofuel. The production of primary fibres via mechanical means causes fewer waste water problems than the production of deinked recycled fibres;

3.2. due to progress in technology it is possible to use increasing amounts of recycled fibre in different paper and board grades. However, since fibre can be only re-used three to five times before it deteriorates, sustainably-managed forests remain the source of all primary and recycled fibres;

3.3. economically it is not advisable to try to reach a technically maximal use of recycled fibre. It is advantageous to use low grade waste paper as a renewable biofuel;

3.4. recycling can cause certain environmental problems due to waste water and large amounts of wet sludge. If wet sludge cannot be used as landfill, it must be incinerated - a process which requires fossil fuels;

3.5. environmentally it is advantageous that a relatively large proportion of Nordic forests be in productive use. This reduces climate change by fixing carbon from the atmosphere in forest products. Maintained forests absorb carbon dioxide effectively. Natural old forests do not engage in net absorption of carbon dioxide, but they are important for securing the biodiversity of forest ecosystems.

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1. Assembly debate on 15 April 1994 (16th Sitting) (seeDoc. 7020, report of the Committee on Science and Technology, Rapporteur: Mr Tiuri). Text adopted by the Assembly on 15 April 1994 (16th Sitting).

4. In the light of the above-mentioned, the Assembly calls on member states to implement the following policy responses:

4.1. to carry out a specific study of the cycle of production of paper and board in each country;

4.2. to set national targets for the recovery of waste paper;

4.3. to organise waste paper collection in such a way that high quality waste paper and low grade waste paper are separated;

4.4. to avoid setting targets for the amount of recycled fibres in individual paper grades, because market forces are the most effective way of keeping paper out of the waste stream;

4.5. to beware of unreasonable taxes on primary fibre paper products, which might upset the optimal balance between the use of primary and recycled fibre, and which would also lead to increased use of substitutes made from non-renewable material with negative environmental consequences;

4.6. to promote the research and development of environmentally friendly methods of deinking and other means of producing recycled fibres as well as methods of incineration and energy recovery of renewable biofuels, especially waste paper;

4.7. to promote the use of low grade waste paper as renewable bioenergy in order to reach an environmentally minimal impact on the whole life cycle of wood fibres;

4.8. to consider sustainably managed forests as carbon dioxide sinks, crucially important in the fight against climate change;

4.9. to take care that sufficiently large forest areas are