

## Press Statement EURELCO: European Parliament hosts first ever seminar on Enhanced Landfill Mining on 20 October in Brussels

**BRUSSELS, 15-10-2015** – On 20 October 2015 the European Parliament hosts the first ever formal seminar on the ambitious topic of Enhanced Landfill Mining (ELFM). During this event, organised by two members of the European Parliament (Hilde Vautmans (ALDE) & Mark Demesmaeker (ECR)) in collaboration with EURELCO (European Enhanced Landfill Mining Consortium), the benefits of ELFM for the EU-28 are discussed by leading academics, industrial representatives and national and EU policy makers. EURELCO launches new data on the amount, type and potential of Europe's landfills, which are based on a voluntary, bottom-up inventory exercise. Three DG's of the European Commission – DG GROW/Industry, RTD/Research and ENERGY will offer their views on this new opportunity for moving towards a circular economy.

### Europe's 150,000 to 500,000 landfills

Since the earliest days of the Industrial Revolution, Europe has been disposing of out-of-date materials in waste dumps known as "landfills". Even in member states that in recent times have developed recycling programmes, this disposal option has often remained important. Previous estimations by several academics have indicated that there are between 150,000 and 500,000 historic and active landfills in the EU-28, many of which are located in urban and semi-urban environments. It is a well-known fact that landfill deposits may cause a host of environmental implications, ranging from local pollution concerns and land use restrictions to global impacts in terms of greenhouse gas emissions.

### New data on the amount and type of landfills in the EU-28

However, as corroborated by the response of the European Commission (28-7-2015) to a Parliamentary Question (E-007864/2015), Europe does not yet have a clear strategy with respect to its historic landfills. The European Commission acknowledges that it hasn't yet made a cost estimate of the total landfill remediation bill for the EU-28, nor does it have any confirmed data on the precise amount, the content, the type (sanitary/non-sanitary landfills) or ownership situation (private/public) with respect to its landfills. In the seminar EURELCO will launch brand new data on the amount and type of landfills in the EU-28. The data are based on a voluntary, bottom-up inventory exercise. It will be shown that the 500,000 figure is an underestimate and a large fraction of EU's landfills are "non-sanitary" landfills, predating the EC Landfill Directive (1999).

### Turning the landfill problem into an opportunity

To avoid far-reaching environmental and health effects for EU's non-sanitary landfills, expensive remediation measures will eventually be needed. For instance, OVAM, the Flemish Public Waste Agency (Belgium) recently spent 80 million euro of tax payer's money on the remediation of just 5 problematic landfills, where landfilled material was excavated, transported and re-landfilled in a state-of-the-art sanitary landfill. For most EU member states, deploying such extensive budgets is difficult and the currently available clean-up funding schemes are largely insufficient, especially if one realises that the extrapolated (cumulative) remediation cost for the EU-28 as a whole could be as high as 0,1 to 1 trillion euro. However, when remediation is combined with resource recovery, through Enhanced Landfill Mining (ELFM), the situation is set to change substantially.

### Enhanced Landfill Mining will create new jobs

Enhanced Landfill Mining, i.e. *"the integrated valorisation of landfilled waste streams as materials and energy, using innovative transformation and upcycling technologies, and respecting the most stringent social and ecological criteria"*, allows to unlock the vast resource potential of Europe's landfills while simultaneously remediating the landfill sites. Such an integrated strategy would drastically reduce landfill remediation costs, regain valuable urban land for more prosperous activities and inject additional resource circularity and resilience into the EU's economy by bringing back the billions of tonnes of previously abandoned materials and energy resources to work. For ELFM to prosper, Public Waste Agencies need to create the legal frameworks, in harmony with local urban residents living close to the targeted landfills and who need to be integrated right from the early start in new ELFM projects. ELFM can trigger technological innovation in a circular economy framework. The potential for local job creation, including both high and low skilled jobs, is also clear, while private businesses are ready to take part in this broadened circular economy model.

### ELFM EP Seminar:

The programme includes a general introduction into the ELFM concept and two panel sessions on, respectively, industrial residue landfills containing critical metals and Urban Solid Waste landfills.

Full programme through <http://www.eurelco.org/news/european-parliament-enhanced-landfill-mining-seminar>

Registration via [Katleen.vandormael@i-cleantechvlaanderen.be](mailto:Katleen.vandormael@i-cleantechvlaanderen.be) or +32/495 55 10 12

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