

THE EVOLUTION OF CONTROL BY ENVIRONMENT AGENCIES

THE ACTUAL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY PRINCIPLES MAY LEAD TO MAJOR CHANGES IN THE WORK OF ENVIRONMENT AGENCIES. THE INCREASE IN BY-PRODUCTS AND RECOVERY PLANTS WILL REQUIRE A GREATER LEVEL OF COORDINATION.

Waste management has always played a key role in the control and technical support activities carried out by Environment Agencies. The data reported on *figure 1* show meaningful figures referring to an equally meaningful quantity of people and resources needed for documentation checks, on-the-spot inspections, sampling activities, reports, sanctions.

As a matter of fact, every year, disregarding the application eligibility scope of Environmental Authorizations, more than one thousand waste recovery and treatment plants are controlled out of a total number of regional operating plants, regardless of their authorization procedure, may it be simplified or normal, varying from 1,200 to 1,400.

How would these control activities evolve in case, after an already too long phase of words and promises, a waste material circular economy was really implemented?

The European Commission in his report *“Towards a circular economy: a zero waste programme for Europe”* stated that in circular economy systems products retain their added value longer and waste is eliminated. When a product reaches its end of life, the economic system preserves the resources, which can then be re-used several times for production purposes in order to create new value.

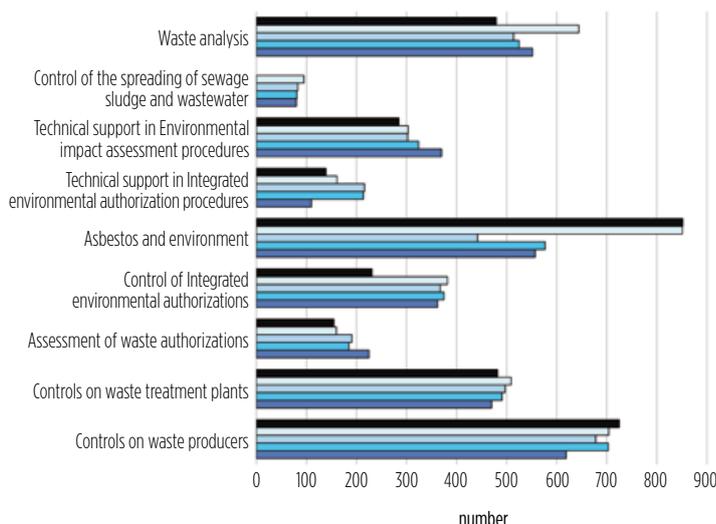
Among the many and complex scopes of action there is the re-use of by-products, not waste but real resources, as well as the proper and consistent application of European end-of-waste criteria, including their coordination with the current regulation on secondary raw materials.

That would imply the adoption of standardized, multi-sectorial and consistent technical norms regulating product quality standards, targets, contract terms and access to market, as well as striking the right balance between demanding re-use goals and the elimination of hazardous waste.

The control system will have to adapt

FIG. 1
CONTROL ON WASTE IN PIEMONTE

Control and assessment on waste by Arpa Piemonte in the last 5 years.



to a new commercial and production setting where considerable quantities of waste will be managed as by-products and considerable quantities of waste will be treated until reaching their end of waste in order to be recovered by the production cycle.

In order to get ready to tackle such a scenario, where controls not only will not certainly decrease but will also undergo major changes compared with the current situation, two key elements need to be considered:

- a major regulatory change clearly defining the features of by-products and also when and how waste stops being such and also stating clear and applicable technical norms
- an indispensable professional update

of controllers, likely to give them the required skills in order to be able to check not only traditional waste but also “products”, “by-products” or end-of-waste and check their compliance with the quality requirements that will be adopted. Provided that in the future there will be more recovery and re-use plants and also a wider application of the notion of by-products, a closer coordination between the existing control bodies will be of paramount importance, as well as a greater exchange of information, training, technical and lab skills.

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