

## Statement

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## How is environmental technology changing our future?

Or: How to meet the challenges of the future with environmental technology?

Challenges of climate and environmental protection require a more sustainable use of resources. Waste management in Germany already contributes to a great extent to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, which is mainly a result of avoiding landfill gases. But further steps are necessary. We need more specified environmental technologies to create an environmentally friendly recycling management. New technologies and methods are necessary in the following fields.

- **Further development of recycling:**
  - **Bio-waste:** Especially bio-waste can contribute to a great deal to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. More research and development work is needed to improve methods to produce compost, biogas and other bio-waste based products.
  - **Electronic equipment:** To improve the recycling ratio of electrical and electronic equipment higher standards of sorting plants are essential. Sorting of some waste fractions is not cost-effective now, but it will be in the future when prices for raw materials will rise up. Therefore we need further development in that field.
  - **Packaging and composite materials:** We need to go new paths in packaging and product responsibility, too. The amount and the complexity of products and packaging have grown over the years. But some composite materials are extremely difficult, if not impossible to recycle. Therefore we need a closer exchange between producers and representatives of waste management, how packaging can be designed. It is also necessary for the producers to use less packaging, in order to reduce the total amount of municipal waste, which is the most important goal when it comes to waste.
- **Further development of separated waste collection:** German legislation requires separate collection of bio-waste, metals, and other fractions from 2015 onwards. This is why we need close-knit and flexible collection systems which

are adapted to regional specifics and changing settlement structures. Municipalities have built waste collection systems and new ones, such as a ton for raw materials are being tested at the moment by dozens of members of VKU.

- **Reduction of landfilling:** The reduction of landfilling of municipal waste is a very effective and eco-efficient measure to avoid greenhouse gas emissions because the degradation of biowaste in landfills results in the formation of methane. Landfill gas is, thus, rich in energy and can be used for the generation of heat and power, and cooling. However, despite the European and national efforts such as the EU Landfill Directive, there are still landfills in Europe without landfill gas collection and utilisation systems.

The European waste management framework and the implementation in German legislation open up new areas for innovations. Municipal waste management companies are partners to the industry to bring environmental technologies forward. Persistent growth in this area will be necessary to meet the challenges of the future.

*Verband kommunaler Unternehmen (VKU) is the largest association for municipal companies in Germany, representing 1.400 members in the energy, water, and waste management sector. VKU's members employ more than 236.000 people. In 2009, they generated revenues of about 94 billion Euro and invested about 8 billion Euro. The association's headquarter is based in Berlin. VKU also runs offices in Brussels and on a federal level all over Germany.*

**If you have any questions, please contact us:**

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