

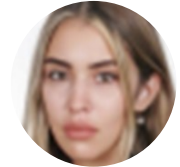
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Law 4819/2021: use of waste for energy production

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With the enactment of Law 4819/2021,⁽¹⁾ which came into force on 23 July 2021 and concerns waste management, plastic products and the protection of the environment, Greece incorporated (albeit belatedly) the two most important EU directives of the second European Action Plan for the Circular Economy (2020) (ie, EU Directive 2018/851 on waste and EU Directive 2018/852 on packaging and packaging waste) into the national legislation.

The new law upgrades the regulatory framework for waste management, thus supporting the national waste management plan, with the goal of minimising landfills to 10% by 2030, five years earlier than the EU requirement. This provision sets a particularly ambitious target as 80% of municipal waste in Greece ends up in landfills and only 20% gets recycled. Indeed, this constitutes the third -worst country performance in the European Union.

With respect to energy-related provisions, the aforementioned law introduces alternative waste management options that are aimed at assisting the transition towards a more circular and sustainable economy. Therefore, waste management legislation and policy now includes, in addition to reuse and recycling, other waste streams such as energy recovery – although, they are ranked at a lower level of priority.

"Waste energy production" is a broad term that includes various processes of waste treatment for energy production (eg, in the form of electricity and/or heat or fuel production), with different environmental effects and with different potentials in the context of a circular economy. The basic processes of energy production from waste are:

- co-incineration of waste from incineration plants (eg, in power plants) and secondary fuels from the production of cement and lime;
- incineration of waste from special facilities;
- anaerobic fermentation of biodegradable waste; and
- production of solid, liquid and gaseous fuels from waste and other processes involving indirect incineration after the cracking stage or gasification.

The national waste management plan sets out the strategy, policies and objectives for waste management at national level (article 55(1)). There is a provision for the creation of waste energy recovery units, as of January 2022, where the solid waste will be used for energy production (article 63).

As of January 2022, all non-recyclable waste (residue) will be used as secondary fuel in the energy-intensive industry and in energy utilisation units. This solution will lead to the reduction of landfill waste and of the dependence of energy-intensive industries on polluting conventional fuels.

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Endnotes

(1) Official Gazette A' 129/23.07.2021.