

**2nd ELM Seminar in the European Parliament (November 20, 2018)**  
**Towards a dynamic landfill management and mining strategy for Europe's 500,000+ landfills**  
**(European Parliament, Brussels, 15-17.45h + Reception (18-20h))**



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**SPEECH MEP HILDE VAUTMANS (2ND ELM SEMINAR EP, 20 NOVEMBER 2018, BRUSSELS)**

Dear audience,

Let me first welcome you all in the European Parliament. Today, we are here for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Seminar in the EP on the topic of Enhanced Landfill Mining. The title of our seminar explains very well what this seminar will be about: "*Towards a dynamic landfill management and mining strategy for Europe's 500,000+ landfills*".

In Europe, we have more than 500 000 landfills and anno 2018 it seems like there is still no clear strategy on what we will do with these landfills. The seminar of today should therefore provide us with the building block of a roadmap for how Europe is going to deal with, and also profit from, its 500,000+ landfills.

As a Member of the European Parliament I took the initiative in October 2015 to organise the first ever seminar in the European Parliament on the topic of Enhanced Landfill Mining. I did this together with my colleague Mark Demesmaeker and the European Enhanced Landfill Mining Consortium (EURELCO).

Today, three years later, we are here for the 2nd seminar on ELM because there is still much we can do.

**[PARLIAMENTARY QUESTION]**

Let me take you back in time. In May 2015, I asked the European Commission a question with regard to their position on landfills and their future management. The commission replied to my question, saying that it did not yet have a clear strategy with respect to its landfills and their potential mining/remediation. The Commission also stated that it did not yet perform any cost estimates of the total landfill-remediation bill.

This response justified the need for a seminar where experts would present their views on the landfill mining concept, while initiating a dialogue with Members of the European Parliament and the different DG's of the European Commission involved.

**[FIRST ELM SEMINAR IN THE EP]**

The conclusion of the seminar that we hosted in 2015 were the following:

1. There is a clear need to develop sound inventories of the landfills in the EU-28, in terms of knowing the amount, the age, the size, the type, and the environmental profile of these landfills.
2. There is also a clear need to develop a more comprehensive long-term vision for the future management and rehabilitation of Europe's 500,000+ landfills.
3. In order to reduce the future remediation bill for Europe's non-sanitary landfills, which represent the vast majority of Europe's 500,000+ landfills, remediation should be combined with a resource recovery approach through ELM.

4. And finally, major attention should go out to develop and demonstrate a set of innovative upcycling technologies that deliver higher added-value outputs so that the economics of ELFM projects can be improved.

The seminar has been highly instrumental in triggering a number of evolutions.

#### [1. EP SEMINAR LED TO WINNING EU PROJECTS]

Firstly, following the EP Seminar, several EU-funded projects related to landfill management and landfill mining were granted. It pleases me to see that the ELFM Seminar in the EP was instrumental in winning these projects.

These projects are the two EU Horizon 2020 projects NEW-MINE and SMART GROUND as well as two Interreg projects: Interreg Europe COCOON and Interreg North West Europe RAWFILL.

Today you will hear representatives from these projects providing their lessons learned.

#### [2. EP SEMINAR LED TO THE EP ADOPTION OF THE ELFM AMENDMENT]

Secondly, following the EP seminar, the EP adopted its Waste Package on in March 2017, which included an amendment on ELFM to Art. 5 of the Landfill Directive.

The amendment asked the Commission to further examine the feasibility of proposing a regulatory framework for ELFM and asked the Member States to map existing landfills.

Unfortunately, despite the support for the ELFM concept by the European Parliament, this amendment was later blocked by the Council in the trilogue negotiations.

Later today, the author of this ELFM Amendment and shadow rapporteur of the Landfill Directive, MEP Demesmaeker will provide his view on the situation.

#### NEW PARLIAMENTARY QUESTION TO THE EC

Following this rejection of the ELFM Amendment to the Landfill Directive, in June 2018 I asked the European Commission to justify its position with respect to ELFM, knowing that in recent years the European Commission - and DG GROW in particular - has been quite supportive to the ELFM concept. Apart from funding several ELFM-related EU projects, in 2018, the EC organised the EIP Raw Materials workshop "Enhanced Landfill mining for critical raw materials".

The European Commission's answer stated "... *the [Landfill] directive does not specifically regulate landfill mining and the Commission does not currently envisage proposing to amend the directive in this regard. Landfill mining is, however, not prohibited, if carried out in line with EU legislation on waste (...)*"

Although this is the first time the Commission somehow endorses the use of ELFM as a concept, the words "not prohibited" are not the same as "facilitates".

#### WHICH WAY FORWARD?

In my view it remains a major problem that there is still no formal political acknowledgement of ELFM, nor a legal definition of ELFM in official European legislation, to facilitate the sustainable management of Europe's 500,000+ landfills. Landfills are still considered as static "end stations" of dumped waste, as a source of pollution that should be contained and eternally monitored in view of eco-protection. It is a matter of THE ENVIRONMENT only, while in fact there is so much more we could do with it if we consider the landfills as dynamic landfill reservoirs in a broader circular economy context.

Politics is a matter of long-term thinking. Let us all imagine the surface of those 500 000+ landfills and what we could do with that area if we could recover it through landfill mining? It means that in the whole EU we could recover an area as large as Flanders. The mining would not only lead to the recovery of land surface, it would also lead to the recovery of materials and energy. Such an approach would also directly contribute to Europe's climate change mitigation goals, as well as regional development and job creation targets.

The transformation of emerging concepts to conventional practices relies on a clear political direction and support. Here is where we, MEPs and other policy makers have a say and where we can be instrumental in making that transition to a circular economy. I think that in the last year, we have seen a mentality shift. People are much more concerned about our planet, about the world in which our children will live. So in terms of timing, I think the moment to act, to raise awareness about the opportunities of ELFM is now.

But how can we stimulate the Council and Commission to embrace a 21st century view on landfills instead of a 20th century view?

1. First, keep raising awareness. Three, five, ten years is nothing if our ultimate goal is to institutionalize ELFM. It will take time but if we truly believe in the concept of ELFM, let us show others why we believe in the concept. Let us convince others of the opportunities of ELFM in the context of circular economy.

2. Second, in May 2019, there will be European elections. That means there will be a new European Commission and a new European Parliament. I hope that I will be part of that new European Parliament. It is a new momentum for creating a group of parliamentarians who discuss the state of play on ELM and who find political support in the other institutions. If by then, we have sufficient cross-party support in the Parliament, we can maybe even push for a resolution.

However, you can do something too. Like many other politicians and MEPs, I receive a lot of election memoranda of different organisations, asking for my support should I be re-elected. By doing so, you can raise awareness and explain ELM and its opportunities to European Parliament candidates and even the future Commissioners.

## THE SECOND ELM SEMINAR

This new paradigm with respect to landfills and their management provides the background for today's seminar.

Together with the different co-organisers we have brought together key stakeholders from both regional, national and EU public bodies, industry, academia and civil society.

Today, I want to stimulate an interactive discussion on the regulatory framework for landfill management and mining in the context of multiple European policy challenges, not only with respect to waste management, but also in the context of the Circular Economy, climate change, spatial planning and regional development challenges.

As such, this seminar should provide us with the building block of a smart roadmap for how Europe is going to deal with, and also profit from its 500,000+ landfills.

I thank you for your attention and wish you an inspiring and truly interactive seminar.



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