



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Research and Information Service Briefing Note

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Hazardous waste exports from Northern Ireland

1 Introduction

The following paper is a follow up to the briefing on Waste Management (NIAR 435-16) and provides further information in relation to hazardous waste exports from Northern Ireland (NI). It considers the amount of hazardous waste exported from NI and the main destinations.

2 Background

The system of control of hazardous waste within NI, from production to disposal or recovery, is dealt with through the Hazardous Waste Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005¹ subject to the Hazardous Waste Directive 1991 (as amended).

The definition of hazardous waste for Northern Ireland is contained within the Hazardous Waste Regulations 2005 and is pursuant to the list of hazardous waste under Article 1 and Annex I, II and III of the Hazardous Waste Directive 1991 (as amended). Article 1 lists waste considered to be hazardous, however waste (even waste not on the list or considered non-hazardous) may be classed as hazardous if it

¹ Hazardous Waste Regulations 2005 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisr/2005/300/contents/made>

contains any of the components in Annex I and II, or displays any of the properties in Annex III. The 2005 Regulations allow for the Department (DAERA) to determine a waste as hazardous based on these principles.

Hazardous waste is subject to stronger controls, and due to the complex nature of identifying whether a waste is hazardous or not, the Department refers to a number of guidance documents:

- *The controls on hazardous waste and how they affect you* (2009) – this provides guidance on how to implement the Hazardous Waste Regulation 2005.²
- *UK wide waste classification technical guidance WM3* (2015).³
- *Guide to consigning hazardous waste* – explains how to use consignment notes for hazardous waste.⁴

3 Movement of hazardous waste

Importing and exporting of waste to and from Northern Ireland is dealt with by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA). The EU Waste Shipment Regulation 2006 incorporates the provisions of the Basel Convention, which addresses the movement of hazardous waste. The Regulations set out the rules for cross-border shipments of waste within, to and from the EU area. These are transposed nationally through the UK wide Transfrontier Shipment of Waste Regulations 2007⁵.

The regulations generally refer to shipments of green and amber list waste for recovery within and from the EU. Under the regulations, green list waste is considered not to represent a significant risk to the environment or human health (non-hazardous)⁶. Amber list waste is considered to be potentially harmful to the environment and human health.⁷ However, not all amber list waste is considered hazardous, only waste displaying certain properties is considered so, such as being explosive, oxidising, flammable, toxic, carcinogenic, corrosive or infectious. Green list waste is not subject to the same procedure of consent and notifications as amber listed waste.⁸

The last paper (NIAR 435-16) detailed that according to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in the Republic of Ireland (2016), in 2014 only 1% of hazardous waste exports were exported to Northern Ireland, as illustrated in Figure 1⁹.

²According to the Department, this guidance is likely to change to reflect EU health and safety requirements. Current guidance is available at <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/controls-hazardous-waste-and-how-they-affect-you>

³ <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/hazardous-waste>

⁴ <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/guide-consigning-hazardous-waste>

⁵ Transfrontier Shipment of Waste Regulations <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2007/1711/contents/made>

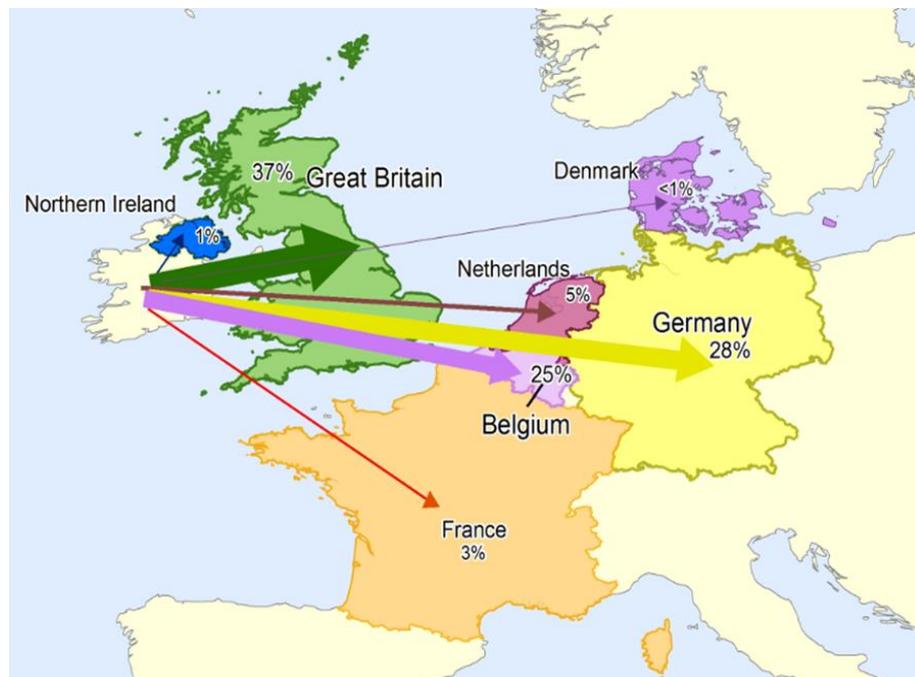
⁶ Examples include glass fibre waste, electronic scrap and certain types of solid plastic waste.

⁷ Examples include sewage sludge, hydraulic fluids, unrefined calcium sulphite and wastes from the manufacture of iron and steel.

⁸ Comptroller Auditor General (CAG) 2014. *Transshipment of waste, report 84* p.19. Available at <http://www.audgen.gov.ie/viewdoc.asp?DocID=2043>

⁹ EPA, 2016. Hazardous Waste Data for Ireland 2014 – Figure 2: Destinations of hazardous waste exports 2014. Available at <http://www.epa.ie/pubs/reports/waste/stats/hazardouswaste2014/>

Figure 1: Main destinations of hazardous waste exports (including contaminated soil)



Source: EPA, NTFSO (2016)¹⁰

Figure 1 also demonstrates that the largest percentage of hazardous waste goes to Great Britain with 37%, then Germany with 28%, followed by Belgium with 25%.

3.1 NI Hazardous waste exports

The Committee asked for comparable figures for hazardous waste exports from Northern Ireland.

According to the Department, data on hazardous waste exports is not publically available as there is no legislative requirement to publish it. Therefore, the following information was provided through communication with the Department and is based on **approximate figures** for 2015.¹¹

¹⁰ EPA, 2016. Hazardous Waste Data for Ireland 2014 – Figure 2: Destinations of hazardous waste exports 2014. Available at <http://www.epa.ie/pubs/reports/waste/stats/hazardouswaste2014/>

¹¹ Information provided by DAERA (December 2016) via telephone conversation following an information request from the Assembly Research and Information Service

Northern Ireland generates around 70,000 tonnes of hazardous waste a year of which approximately 15,666 tonnes (22%) is transported across to England and Scotland, and just over 5,000 tonnes (7%) is exported outside the UK. The remaining hazardous waste, approximately 71%, remains in NI.

Of the 7% of waste exported outside the UK:

- 54% goes to the RoI (this equates to 3.9% of hazardous waste generated (70,000 tonnes))
- 40% to the Netherlands
- Remainder (about 6%) goes between Germany and Belgium

Approximately 15,666 tonnes (22%) of the 70,000 tonnes is transported across the water to both England and Scotland. Some of the reasons include, but are not limited to:

- Redundant pharmaceutical waste is sent to England as it requires high temperature incinerators for its treatment.
- Hazardous waste is also sent to England and Scotland for landfilling, as not all landfills in NI can accept hazardous waste.

The Landfill Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2003¹² transpose the Landfill Directive, and ban certain hazardous waste from landfills.¹³ However, to accept permitted hazardous waste, landfills must be of a certain class that meet particular criteria. That being said, according to the Department, there are no landfills in NI that may accept hazardous waste, hence it is sent to England or Scotland.

Summary:

Based on approximations, NI produces around 70,000 tonnes of hazardous waste, of which:

- Approximately 71% remains within NI.
- 22% is sent to England and Scotland for incineration or landfill.
- 7% is exported outside the UK.
- Of hazardous waste exports outside the UK, 54% is sent to the RoI (as of 2015), in comparison, the RoI sent 1% of its hazardous waste exports to NI in 2014.
- The next most common destination for NI hazardous waste exports is the Netherlands with 40%.

¹² Section 9 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisr/2003/496/regulation/9/made>

¹³ i.e. waste which in a landfill would be explosive, corrosive, oxidising, flammable or highly flammable; hospital and other clinical wastes – from medical or veterinary establishments – which are infectious; unknown chemical substances from research and development or teaching activities.