

"How to harmonise separate collection - Best practices, local realities and EU wide needs"

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Keywords: Circular Economy, Source separation schemes, Household separation techniques of MSW

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This paper will be delivered in the form of Power Point Presentation

Municipal solid waste (MSW) represents around 10% of the total waste generated in the EU ([Eurostat](#)) and is produced mainly by households and, to a lesser extent, by other sources, such as businesses, offices and public institutions ([Eurostat](#)). Between 30% and 40% of this MSW is estimated to be made up of packaging waste ([Eurostat](#)).

Separate collection of the different waste fractions is seen as a pre-condition for better recycling, both in terms of quantity (higher volumes / rates) and quality ([EU Circular Economy Action Plan](#) and [European Green Deal](#)). According to Article 11 of the WFD, the preparing for re-use and the recycling of waste materials (such as paper, metal, plastic and glass) from households shall reach a minimum of 50 % overall by weight. These rates will increase to 55% by 2025, 60% by 2030 and 65% by 2035.

Encouragingly, almost all Member States have, in the past 15 years, significantly lowered the proportion of household waste collected as mixed waste. In order to further support these efforts, the 2020 Circular Economy Action Plan (EC, 2020) calls to investigate the possible harmonisation of waste collection. As part of the initiative to harmonise separate collection systems, the Commission will assess the feasibility of EU-wide labelling that facilitates the correct separation of packaging waste at source.

Based on the experience of EXPRA members, below is an overview of the current status of Separate collection of packaging waste in EU:

Mix of packaging wastes in collection streams

Typically, collection streams (materials collected together) are mixes of packaging, however, there is some mixing with non-packaging formats in separate collection systems. Most notably, the mixing of non-packaging paper grades, such as newspapers, magazines, and office papers with packaging. Whilst there are variations across the EU, the most common collection stream combination used by EXPRA members is:

- Light packaging fraction: packaging plastics, metals and, often, drink / liquid food cartons.
- Recovered fibres, a mix of packaging and non-packaging papers and board.
- Glass bottles and containers, often separated into clear and coloured fractions.

Colour of banks

The colour of banks is often used to signify what should be placed in them, although this is not always the case and in some countries banks for different materials are uniform in colour with labelling and pictograms used to indicate what should be placed in them. The colour of banks / collection bags often differs from country to country

Pictograms

These are often used to indicate what packaging items can be placed in a collection container. However, national variations in packaging design need to be considered when choosing pictograms used in multiple countries.

Information type and instruction for consumers

Collection banks contain a range of information, for example, the type of material, formats, and treatment instructions. Instruction typically relates to how empty packaging should be presented. This might relate to emptying containers, squashing bottles or removing caps, for example. Instruction is also often given on items that cannot be placed in collection banks as well as in relation to how clean items should be.

Types of bring bank or kerbside container

There are a wide range of different bring bank types and kerbside containers / bags used across Europe.

Important considerations for separate collection - experience of EXPRA members (best practices)

- **Access to separate collection systems.** For bring systems, use of KPIs for access to banks. *Example Eco-Rom, Romania: a target of recycling containers for every 500 residents and at a maximum distance of 100m from each household.*
- **Mechanisms to minimise contamination.** *Example Fost Plus, Belgium: transparent bags to identify contamination and communication stickers to residents explaining why a contaminated bag was not collected. Incentivised payments to contractors for supply of high-quality material.*
- **Communication.** What should be placed where and how it should be presented. All EXPRA members are active with communication. *Example RINKI, Finland: information bulletins during prime-time television. Reported increase in tonnage & quality after campaigns. Regarding introducing innovative*

approaches, many PROs are already using or considering using digital labelling for providing information to citizens (EAN Code, QR code, geo-App on local collection info, etc.).

- **Targeted interventions to improve performance.** *Example CONAI, Italy:* interventions in 5 regions in 2020 (8.3M inhabitants). Analysing waste flows, identifying objectives to increase collection and quality, assessing sorting plant requirements, carrying out market research and feasibility studies, and support with communication
- **Use of technology to manage collections and sorting.** *Example Greenpak, Malta:* network of iBiNs fitted with smart technology where waste levels are constantly monitored with data fed back to a central fleet management system informing drivers which containers require emptying. *Ecoembes Spain SmartWaste:* a digital system capturing information from all actors in the collection, sorting and recycling ecosystem.
- **Harmonisation of sorting centre's output grades and specifications.** Providing a commodity input to recyclers is supporting high and supporting quality recycling objectives and driving best practice in sorting.

Of less importance with respect to harmonisation – experience of EXPRA members

- **Mix of recyclables collected in streams.** A three-stream collection of PMD, fibres and glass is most used by EXPRA members and provides quality material. However, there must be flexibility to deviate from this to fit local circumstances:
 - Remote areas, e.g. mountainous, islands, area of low population density.
 - High density areas, such as apartment blocks.
 - Distance to the nearest sorting centre.
- **Colour of containers.** Of most importance is a clear mechanism to show what packaging needs to be placed in each container rather than the colour. Use of harmonised pictograms on packaging and containers can help here. Colour changes in well established collection systems will result in consumer confusion with associated impacts, such as contamination.
- **Types of containers / collection vehicles.** These need to fit local circumstances. For example, collections from larger recycling centres or historic city centres will use different bins and vehicles.

Conclusions and suggestion for action at EU level:

We believe that the untapped potential of collection and sorting should be better exploited with the goal of improving and enhancing recycling and prevent the wastage of precious resources. To this end, we call for common effective and consistent principles guiding the rules on the relevant information that must be provided to consumers. Furthermore, the immediate and effective transposition and implementation at a Member State level of the current legislation (PPWD & WFD of 2018, SUPD, etc.) will significantly contribute to improving waste management operations and ultimately recycling.

We recommend that the information towards consumers for sorting at source should be focussed on the necessary packaging waste separation information (e.g., type of waste, type of material, sorting at source modalities etc.). Of course, the easiest way of communication to consumers of this information should be sought as for example pictograms mainly based on the material family, showed on packaging and on separate collection infrastructure complemented by digital labelling (EAN Code, QR code, geo-App on local collection info...), again first ensuring that these follow common principles. This should be preferred over the harmonization of waste streams, bin types and bank colour or pictograms since in all MS, they are long established towards standardisation at national level.

Operative rules, e.g. those which define the collection model (i.e., mono/multi streams, door to door/street bin, etc.) should be left to the Member States/regional/local authorities. As showcased by numerous best practices, these are the best placed entities to guarantee the consistency and effectiveness of the national EPR systems on the basis of the available infrastructures, demographic and geographical requirements.

We support the adoption of standardized specifications format for the outputs of sorting centres. This would trigger a better and more significant impact than possible changes on separate collection systems. Harmonising the specifications parameters and info of outputs from sorting centres across the EU has the potential to support quality recycling objectives and drive best practice in terms of separate collections, making sorted waste a commodity instead of a problem. EXPRA are active in this area through their work with CEN TC261 on Quality Standards for Sorted Plastic Waste.