

# LIFE BIOBEST

GUIDING THE MAINSTREAMING OF BEST BIO-WASTE RECYCLING  
PRACTICES IN EUROPE

## D3.4: Country Factsheets on the analysis of communication and engagement practices

WP3: Set of Guidelines

T3.4: Analysis of communication and engagement practices

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Public Report



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## N°3: Factsheet on Exemplary Communication and Engagement Strategies for bio-waste collection | Spain: Communication strategies of the Catalan Waste Agency

Catalonia has been at the forefront of bio-waste management since 1993. The "[Law 6/1993, de 15 de juliol, reguladora dels residus](#)" mandated bio-waste separation in municipalities with over 5,000 inhabitants. Later, "Law 9/2008, of 10th July," amending "Law 6/1993 of 15th July," extended this requirement to all towns and villages across Catalonia.

At regional level, the Waste Agency of Catalonia (*Agència de Residus de Catalunya* (ARC)) plays a central role in supervising, promoting and improving bio-waste collection across the 940 Catalan municipalities. Communication and information activities play an important, if not crucial, role in promoting source separation of bio-waste, an importance well understood and strongly supported by the activities of ARC's communications department.

For years, the agency has been promoting greater public understanding of and participation in bio-waste sorting and management. This has been through large-scale communication campaigns, a variety of awareness-raising tools, and innovatively, grants regulations that make all financial assistance to municipalities conditional on the implementation of communication activities for the general public and commercial actors (larger businesses). ARC's expertise in this field is now well established, and a source of inspiration for other regional administrative bodies.

### WASTE AGENCY OF CATALONIA

Population	Density (inhab./km <sup>2</sup> )
7,901,963 (2023)	246.1

#### Background elements

At the regional level, ARC oversees the rollout of bio-waste collection by municipalities, authorises and finances bio-waste treatment facilities, and promotes the implementation and improvement of separate bio-waste collection through annual grants, using their own budgets and revenues generated by the landfill tax.

Over the years, ARC has demonstrated its considerable expertise in communications and the importance attached to it. A dedicated department is responsible for designing annual communication campaigns and activities. Bio-waste is one of the central themes

often addressed, through specific or general campaigns and actions, promoting the correct separation and management of all waste fractions.

### Bio-waste collection model

In Catalonia, most municipalities collect bio-waste separately, with around 350 collecting it D-t-D and about 70 utilising bio-waste containers with user identification. Nearly 100% of the population has access to bio-waste services, comprising a 95% collection service and 5% self-composting. Only a handful of very small villages lack collection or composting services. Other municipalities manage bio-waste through open containers or home and community composting, the latter especially in small and rural areas. In urban and tourist-heavy areas, there's often a separate collection system for commercial bio-waste, typically D-t-D. Additionally, some medium to large businesses may opt for private companies to collect their commercial bio-waste directly. In 2023, 409,857 tonnes of separately collected bio-waste were valorised in Catalonia's treatment facilities through composting, anaerobic digestion and anaerobic digestion with composting as a second phase treatment.

### Best Practices description

#### 1. Requirements for communication activities conditioning the attribution of grants to local authorities

The development of communication campaigns and engagement activities is a clear requirement of ARC's grant policy. These include communication campaigns, training information actions for households and large generators, and communication materials production. To be eligible for funding, the communication and information campaign envisioned by municipalities must include the following key elements:

- **Environmental benefits:** Emphasise the positive impact of separate bio-waste collection on the environment, highlighting reduced landfill waste and greenhouse gas emissions.
- **Service guidelines:** Clearly outline how to properly use the separate bio-waste collection service, including collection methods and any associated costs.
- **Economic aspects:** Provide information on the economic aspects of bio-waste management, such as collection fees, refunds, transportation, treatment costs, and the value of recycled products.
- **Complete management cycle:** Present a comprehensive overview of the waste management process, from generation to product utilisation, including the possibility for the public to visit recycling facilities.

- **Product origin:** Highlight the origin and good quality from compost produced with separately collected bio-waste, which is particularly relevant for gardeners and the agricultural sector.

To facilitate their implementation and shorten the design phase, the ARC has developed **customisable information and dissemination templates with content that can be used and adapted by each entity or administration** with the aim of to make the information more specific, facilitate the work of local entities and to adapt the contents to local realities.

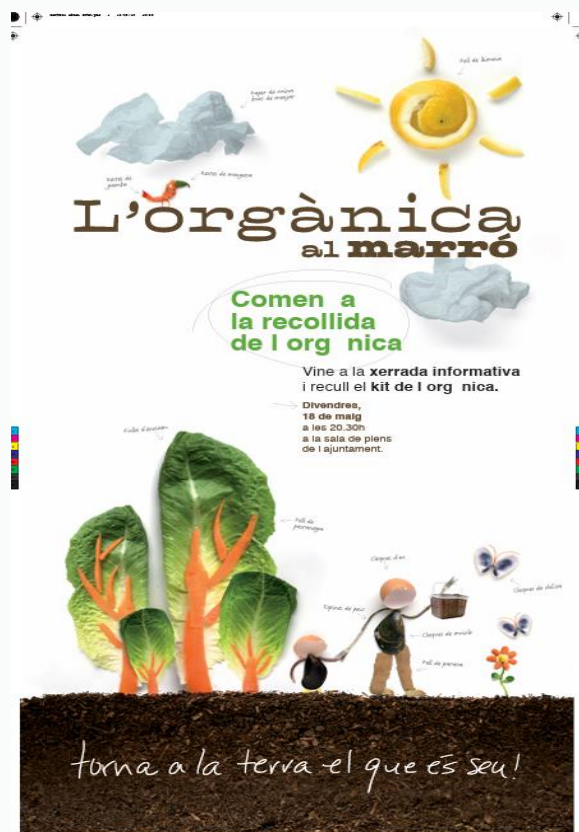


Image 1. Customisable poster for bio-waste collection.

Source: ARC [website](#)

## 2. Regular promotion of bio-waste separate collection and composting through communication campaigns and the dissemination of information materials

While early communication campaigns targeting bio-waste collection focused on how to sort the organic fraction and what could be collected, over the years the ARC has slowly moved from the "how" and "what" to the "why", with a strong emphasis on the bio-waste cycle. This narrative shift occurred because it was recognised that to boost intrinsic motivation, individuals require a clear understanding of why they should adapt their habits and participate in the separate collection service. The significant environmental impact of separate

waste collection means that when people are informed about its benefits and the final use of the treatment's outputs, their participation levels rise accordingly.

- The campaign, *Si l'orgànica va al marró bé! Si no hi va, no ve* (If the organic waste goes to brown bin, that's great! If not, it does not come to recycling/compost production), is a great example of this narrative shift. Funded entirely by ARC with a budget of approximately €1.3 million, the campaign ran its first edition between December 2017 and January 2018 and its second edition during four non-consecutive weeks from July 23 to August 6 and September 3 to 18, 2018. It aimed to address the stagnant rates of bio-waste separate collection. Despite organic waste constituting around 34% of total waste generated in 2017, the separate collection rate remained at only 30%. The ARC objective was to recover 60% of bio-waste by 2020.
- Maintaining high-quality bio-waste is crucial for effective recovery processes, reducing management costs, machinery wear, and ensuring the quality of compost obtained from treatment. Its core message highlighted therefore the importance of separating food waste and small garden waste - such as leaves, grass or branches - emphasising the cycle of organic matter and highlighting its potential for recovery by conversion into compost or biogas. It consisted of a series of posters displayed in public spaces, radio and television spots, videos and images with key messages for social media. All the materials created can be viewed and downloaded in high resolution on the ARC's website.



Image 2. "Thanks to the natural compost obtained from the recycling of bio-waste, we avoid the use of chemical fertilisers"



Image 3. "Bio-waste, properly valorised, contributes to reducing the carbon footprint of each individual"

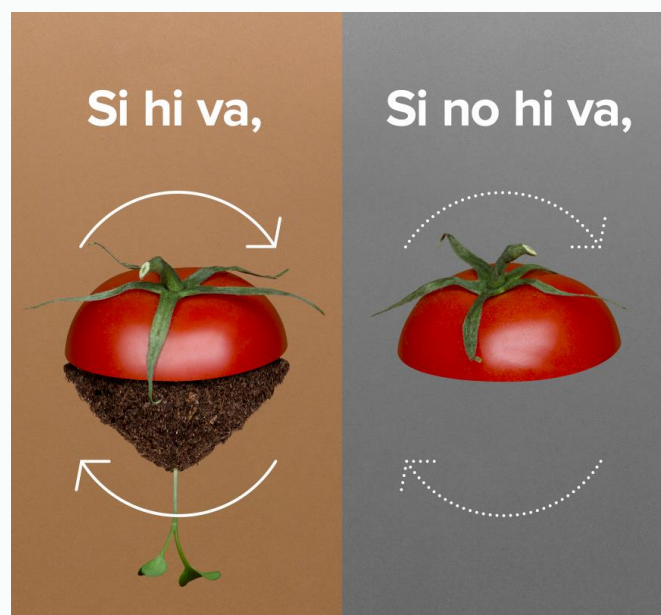


Image 4. Poster showing the bio-waste cycle, from waste to compost, when properly sorted. The platform "RESIDU, ON VAS".

Source: ARC [website](#)

- The ARC provides educational material to explain and clarify the different stages of the bio-waste cycle, from production to recycling. For example, a series of brochures titled *El cicle de la matèria orgànica* ("the cycle of organic matter") was developed in 4 languages and distributed online. These publications were valuable for their transparency regarding the rationale behind the separate collection of bio-waste. The different stages of the cycle and their aspects were highlighted through various leaflets, including didactic explanations, tips, key data, and visual elements:
  - Understanding the organic fraction: its collection, recycling methods, and reasons for doing so,
  - Explanation of different bio-waste collection systems and their operations,
  - The significance of self-composting and guidance on getting started,
  - Operations of a composting plant,
  - Operations of an Anaerobic Digestion plant and
  - Understanding compost, its benefits, and practical applications.



Image 5. Publication on the different stages of the organic fraction cycle.

Source: ARC [website](https://www.arc.cat/)

It's worth mentioning that an annual major campaign is held at the end of each year by the ARC, starting in December and continuing into the following months. This campaign is a collaborative effort between the Government of Catalonia (*Generalitat de Catalunya*) and the producer responsibility organizations, aiming to encourage proper sorting of all waste fractions, including organic waste - even though the latter is not covered by an EPR - which results from an agreement between the ARC and the producer responsibility organisations, which manage the EPR scheme.

## Lessons-learned

- By funding communication activities at local level together with projects to implement and improve bio-waste separate collection and **requiring comprehensive communication plans as a condition of receiving the funding**, regional authorities can ensure that local entities actively engage in outreach efforts aimed at educating and involving the public in bio-waste management practices.
- By **highlighting the positive outcomes and impact resulting from bio-waste sorting and treatment**, intrinsic motivation among individuals can be boosted, leading to increased participation levels. Indeed, providing educational materials that explain the rationale behind bio-waste management practices fosters understanding and buy-in from the public. Brochures and publications that detail the stages of the bio-waste cycle, recycling methods, and the significance of composting empower individuals to make informed decisions and take meaningful actions.





- **Implementing communication campaigns that utilise various channels**, including public spaces, radio, television, social media, and online platforms, ensures broader reach and engagement.
- **Providing communication and educational materials in multiple languages, accessible formats and customisable final designs**, helps facilitate the work of local entities when implementing communications actions standardising the messages and the understanding and participation among diverse audience groups.
- **Incorporating visual elements**, such as images, infographics, and videos, enhances the effectiveness of communication materials. For example, visual representations of the bio-waste cycle and composting processes help clarify complex concepts and reinforce key messages, making them more memorable and engaging for the audience.



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