ZERO WASTE EUROPE

THE STATE OF ZERO WASTE MUNICIPALITIES REPORT

5th edition

Contents

Foreword

Encarna Garcia
Deputy Mayor of the Environment and Sustainability Area, Viladecans City Council

Viladecans has been working for years to reduce its waste—a commitment that is the result of longstanding political will embedded in the city's strategic documents, such as the 2030 Strategy and the Local Urban Agenda. It is, though, in the Declaration of Climate Emergency approved by the municipal plenary where the priority is established to implement actions to face the challenges of climate change and establish concrete measures to reduce its consequences at a local scale.

We know that the best waste is the one that is not produced and, for this reason, we prioritise actions to reduce waste generation, which require both cultural and behavioural changes in production and consumption. This change makes it absolutely essential to work together with the economic and social sectors and, above all, with the citizens. Their engagement is essential for the success of any action—without the willingness to change, it is impossible to move forward on this path.

In Viladecans we have created a shared governance space, the **Citizens' Climate Roundtable**, which produced the Climate Pact—the roadmap that describes six work programmes to address new climate challenges. The central pillar through which the Pact has begun to be implemented is waste prevention, with specific projects such as reducing food waste and single-use plastic waste. These types of initiatives, created from the bottom up, are crucial for raising awareness, engaging citizens and making the necessary social and economic transformation a reality.

Viladecans has committed to become a **Zero Waste City**, a milestone that helps us frame current projects like Viladecans Repair, which brings together various waste prevention actions; in addition, allows us to put into practice new strategies to reduce the waste generated and promote reuse and recycling. The Zero Waste City certification, promoted by Mission Zero Academy, must be the validation of this commitment, recognizing our efforts towards more efficient and sustainable waste management. This certification process also allows us to join a global network of municipalities that share the same objectives and exchange knowledge and good practices.

Within the framework of the European project **Elevating Reuse in Cities (ERIC)** promoted by Zero Waste Europe and with the support of Rezero, we have developed and begun implementing the Plastic Waste Prevention Plan, promoting sustainable alternatives and involving local businesses in the paradigm shift. Local businesses play a crucial role in this process, as they are closer to citizens and can have a major impact on consumer habits.

Our commitment to zero waste is more than just an environmental issue, it is a political objective to work towards a fairer and more responsible future for our planet. Sustainability is not just a goal, but a continuous process that involves daily efforts from all sectors of society.

Being part of a European network of Zero Waste Cities allows us to learn from the best practices of other cities, as well as sharing our own experiences. Cooperation at local and international scope is essential to achieve global goals. Through this network, we can inspire other municipalities to adopt zero waste policies and continue developing innovative solutions that benefit all citizens.

Initiatives such as reuse, composting and recycling, not only help reduce waste but also generate jobs and encourage the growth of small local businesses. This circular economy approach favors the creation of value from waste, minimising its generation and promoting responsible consumption.

Ultimately, the transition to zero waste is a necessary political and social action to face the environmental challenges of the 21st century. Viladecans is committed to this change. The path to zero waste is long, but we know that only through collaboration and collective effort can we build a more sustainable and resilient city for future generations. We will continue moving forward, knowing that each step brings us closer to a better future for our planet.

Introduction

Across Europe, a different story is taking shape: one of hope, resilience, and positive transformation.

Communities are reimagining how we live in our communities and how we produce and consume materials—proving that change is not only possible but already happening in many parts of the world.

Even in an era of overlapping crises, from climate pressures and limited resources to growing geopolitical tensions, the weight of what needs to be done can feel heavy and daunting. But instead of dwelling on the scale of the challenge, it's time to highlight the momentum already building. **The actions unfolding across the continent remind us that real progress is not a distant dream, it is alive and advancing, community by community.**

This is the fifth edition of the State of Zero Waste Municipalities Report. As ever, it showcases data-driven progress and first-hand stories from those leading European communities towards a more circular future. The past year has, once again, seen exciting growth in the number and quality of zero waste solutions being implemented by local authorities. **This flagship Zero Waste Europe publication highlights how these zero waste policies have enabled communities to reduce waste, cut harmful greenhouse gas emissions, save money, and help build both social cohesion locally and new business models that are resilient to a turbulent global landscape.**

This fifth edition is our most comprehensive overview of the innovative policies, technologies and community engagement strategies that are helping European cities advance toward true circularity. This year's report reveals a landscape of new experimentation and tangible progress, alongside continued, stubborn challenges that persist with the current legislative framework and our linear economic model.

Since the first ever Zero Waste City was announced by Cappanori in 2007, the concept and movement of zero waste has evolved from a niche concept championed by environmental activists, to being a mainstream approach embraced today by hundreds of municipalitie, with its benefits recognised by legislators worldwide. What originally began as isolated success stories has since blossomed into a powerful network of cities sharing knowledge, resources, and best practices.

We have gone from zero waste being an impossible concept to an inevitable one: the questions we get from cities and businesses are not *why* we should implement zero waste, but *how*.

This year's report highlights how municipalities are moving beyond waste collection and recycling to address the entirety of material flows through their communities. From procurement policies that prioritise durability and repairability to community education programmes that shift consumption patterns, **local governments are increasingly working with a broader range of stakeholders to start tackling the root causes of waste generation, rather than merely managing the symptoms.**

The core of this report is a deep dive into the European countries where we have municipalities actively implementing zero waste solutions, both with the holistic vision that our Zero Waste Cities Certification provides, as well as detailed topic or waste stream focused projects, such as the 'Elevating Reuse in Cities' (ERIC) project that looks at plastic prevention. We also feature updates from the growing zero waste cities movement globally via our alliance GAIA, including groundbreaking initiatives that have emerged in the last year such as the Asia Reuse Consortium.

The best practices section of this edition of the report will look at one of the most complex but urgent issues facing municipalities today: textile waste management and prevention.

It is now mandatory for municipalities in the EU to separately collect textiles, causing a huge influx of extra materials to manage, the vast majority of which cannot be reused or recycled. The EU Waste Framework Directive, amended in early 2025, also now stipulates that Member States must introduce Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) schemes for textiles - but only from 2028 onwards. So what to do within this time gap, and how to shape EPR schemes so that they prioritise prevention and adequately cover the costs for sorters and collectors, is one of the most critical problems facing European policymakers across all levels of government today.

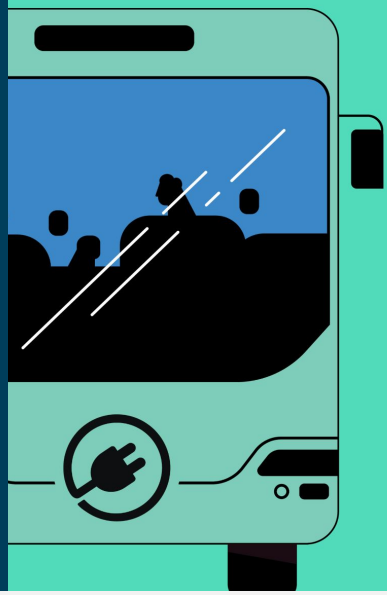
This report showcases a selection of good measures from municipalities on textile waste management, looking at the issue from different perspectives of what local authorities can do. The report ends by shining a spotlight on how the zero waste cities model and the work implemented on the ground by Zero Waste Europe members is directly helping local and national authorities fulfill their obligations in regards to environmental requirements(e.g. mandatory recycling targets).

The stories and data compiled in these pages represent more than isolated success stories - they provide a roadmap for impact that can be adapted to diverse contexts across Europe and globally. As we navigate increasingly complex environmental challenges, the leadership shown by these pioneering municipalities offers hope and practical guidance for building truly circular, resilient communities.

In the following chapters of this report, we hope you find inspiration and hope within the innovations being tested, challenges overcome and achievements made that are shaping the zero waste landscape globally. **Our aim is that this report sparks new ideas and provides useful lessons for how zero waste solutions can be brought to your own community in 2025 and beyond.**

Jack McQuibban
Head of Local Zero Waste Implementation at Zero Waste Europe

Overview of 2024



2024 saw impressive progress in both the quantity and quality of zero waste solutions being implemented in Europe, whilst also cementing an important shift in our strategy when working with local authorities together with our sister organisation, the Mission Zero Academy (MiZA).

Looking at our work across Europe, the key highlight from 2024 is that Zero Waste Europe and MiZA now collectively work with **86 European municipalities across 18 countries, covering a population of just over 18 million people.** In 2024 alone, the population of cities we work with to implement city-wide zero waste solutions grew by over 10%, from 16 to 18 million people.

The Zero Waste Cities Certification operated by MiZA, which only celebrated its third birthday in 2024, now collectively works with:

- 19 Zero Waste Certified Cities;
- 29 Zero Waste Candidate Cities;
- 40 accredited mentors who are verified experts to provide technical assistance to local authorities.

Some of the most notable highlights from 2024 that showcase the growth and impact that our Zero Waste Cities Certification has had over the past 12 months include:

- Two new Zero Waste Candidate City commitments from Ukraine—Lutsk and Khmelnytski—showcasing an incredible desire for protecting our environment despite the ongoing horrors that the Russian invasion continues to provide for Ukrainians.
- The island of Krk in Croatia became the first Zero Waste Certified City in Croatia and the second Certified island in Europe. This is particularly exciting as it showcases a clear model of collaboration with waste companies, as the seven municipalities on the island of Krk were certified together within one waste company.
- Zoersel becoming the first ever Zero Waste Candidate City in Belgium
- Albergaria-a-Velha becoming the fifth Portuguese Zero Waste Candidate City, following in the footsteps of Corvo, Guimarães, São João da Madeira, and Vila de Rei.

"The cooperation with Zero Waste Europe and MiZA is a natural next step in our commitment to lowering residual waste," said Marc de Cordt, Alderman for the Environment of Zoersel municipality.

With MiZA, the Zero Waste Cities Certification was designed to be a supporting tool for municipalities who want guidance on what it practically means to be, and become, a Zero Waste City. It is not in our plans or business model to be certifying hundreds of municipalities a year. The Certification is designed to be robust insofar as it acknowledges the best performers in Europe today, rather than a quick recognition. It (*unfortunately*) requires commitment and hard work year after year to work towards a long-term goal of reducing waste generation.

However, both Zero Waste Europe and MiZA very much remain keen to engage with any municipality that is seeking to improve its relationship with resources. **We believe the best way to deliver positive impact is through our Certification, but this is not the only support package or tool we provide. There are smaller package deals or specific, tailored support that can be provided to tackle just one issue within a city's waste system, for example.**

Outside of the Certification, Zero Waste Europe works with a wider pool of partner cities in our projects—ones which focus solely on implementing a zero waste solution rather than the wider holistic strategy that the Certification provides. The below section provides a short update on the focus areas and achievements in our projects with municipalities during 2024.

Building the ecosystem needed to deliver packaging reuse and prevention systems

Zero Waste Europe has developed an ecosystem around waste prevention and reuse with cities, national governments, businesses, multinationals, and service providers—all increasingly coming to us for collaboration, data, and assistance to facilitate the design of local systems. This includes 36 European cities—including five capital cities (Berlin, Paris, Nicosia, Zagreb, Brussels)—being directly supported by Zero Waste Europe and our members to implement plastic prevention and reuse strategies.

Over the past two years, Zero Waste Europe and its members have built partnerships with 30 European cities through the 'Elevating Reuse in Cities' (ERIC) project. This network now spans 3 million citizens across diverse municipalities: from major cities like Nantes and Lyon, to capitals such as Brussels, Nicosia and Zagreb, and smaller communities like Villadecans (Catalonia) and the tourist destination Bled (Slovenia).

To support these cities, we have developed comprehensive tools: a Plastic Prevention Plan template, a performance evaluation model for impact assessment, key performance indicators, and data collection strategies aligned with local capabilities.

Some key highlights from the project include:

- The adoption and publication of plastic prevention plans across key French cities, including Lyon metropolis (covering 1.4 million inhabitants). You can read the Plastic Prevention Plans (in French) of Lyon, Nantes and Bordeaux, along with a great summary of the work done in France during the ERIC project by our member Zero Waste France.
- The publication of a video from our 2 Catalan municipalities with local Mayors and stakeholders explaining their plastic prevention policies and support for zero waste principles.
- This factsheet on the impact of the City of Brussels' reusable nappy initiative, supported by our member Zero Waste Belgium. By adopting washable nappies, the City of Brussels is helping to avoid 1400 tonnes of CO_2 emissions over 4 to 6 years, while drastically reducing the amount of waste produced and helping save up to €80,000 a year on waste collection.
- In March 2024, we gathered over 50 city officials and Zero Waste Europe members in Berlin for a training on waste prevention and reuse strategies, a collective action as part of our ERIC and RSVP projects. The resulting video is a great, short summary highlighting what we want to achieve and how we're trying to do so.

> **We are firmly committed to informing and raising awareness among citizens about the environmental and human health problems caused by plastic consumption.The Plastic Prevention Plans serve as a guide and help us plan our work and economy.**
>
> **Ignasi Llorente, Councillor of Climate Action and Public Transport of Torrelles de Llobregat**

Overview of 2024

Additionally, we have strengthened local expertise by regularly training over 40 professionals, including staff from Zero Waste Europe member organisations, city officials, and technicians. Our efforts have centred on strategic priorities such as implementing effective reuse systems at events and advancing procurement practices to reduce single-use packaging. Cross-European collaboration between pioneering cities and experts has enriched this knowledge exchange further. In 2024, we launched our **network of prevention pioneers**—progressive cities committed to reducing single-use packaging and collaborating on effective policies.

In our ReuSe Vanguard project (RSVP), we've made continued progress towards our goal of establishing city-wide reuse systems for take-away food and beverage packaging in six of Europe's largest cities—Barcelona, Berlin, Gent, Leuven, Paris and Rotterdam. Our success has seen the project grow to welcome a new city into the project—Aarhus in Denmark—which is implementing one of Europe's best-performing reusable coffee cup systems. A highlight of the past 12 months was the Zero Waste Europe-led study visit and workshop with local stakeholders to the 'Evernew' RSVP project in Rotterdam.

The RSVP project combines local-level action with broader narrative change through strategic communications that showcase the data and evidence as to why, and how, more cities can transition towards greater adoption of reuse systems.

Some highlights from the past 12 months include:

- First-of-its-kind research that studied data from Berlin and Aarhus, showcasing that only small packaging items had the feasibility to break even for businesses compared to the costs of offering single-use alternatives. This paper has been widely cited as influential in our advocacy for more fiscal and economic incentives.
- The inaugural Reuse Barometer, the first-ever overview of the size and scale of reuse businesses in operation across Europe today.

Read The Guardian's article on the efforts to promote packaging reuse systems in Europe, featuring the ReuSe Vanguard Project (RSVP).

Visit the Fork to Farm project page and learn more about its flagship #ForkToFarm campaign.

Bio-waste management as a means of methane mitigation

The past year has been especially inspiring and impactful for our work to improve the volume of collected and treated bio-waste, rather than ending up in landfills and emitting harmful methane emissions. A groundbreaking report that we co-published in late 2024 looked at data from all EU Member States and showcased that only 26% of all food waste generated in the EU is captured—meaning nearly 75% of all food waste is still ending up in landfills or incinerators. Despite the number being shockingly low, we can see some positive impact of our work, as the figure of **26% still represents an increase of 8% since the time of our first edition of our State of Zero Waste Municipalities report in 2020, where only 18% of food waste was captured.**

As part of a Global Methane Hub project, where we are part of a cross-sector consortium of five European NGOs—Methane Matters—that in 2024 we worked together with our members Zero Waste France, ZERO (Portugal), Polish Zero Waste Association, Zero Waste Alliance Ukraine, Zero Waste Montenegro, Friends of the Earth Slovakia and Za Zemiata (Bulgaria) to support 12 municipalities to drastically improve their local bio-waste management systems.

The project has resulted in many tangible successes, with data to showcase, some of which are outlined in the chapters of the participating countries. Collectively, data from 2024 shows that as a minimum, **300 tonnes (300,000 kg) of bio-waste has been diverted from landfills to compost** across the municipalities within our bio-waste project.

Overview of 2024

This local level work has been supplemented with our European-wide campaign, '#ForkToFarm'. The campaign brings a shared narrative and branding together to help stakeholders communicate about the need for fixing the systems many municipalities and regions currently implement for bio-waste collection and management which are not performing well enough—given the fact 18 countries are off track to meet their recycling targets and 74% of food waste generated still ends up in landfills and incinerators.

Underpinning all of the success we have had in 2024 on the topic of bio-waste has been our continued role within the LIFE BIOBEST project. Alongside four other consortium partners—ENT Foundation, the Italian Composting Association, ACR+, and the European Compost Network—the project aims to provide data-filled and expert-led publications to showcase the common barriers preventing progress on this topic, highlighting many examples from a variety of European municipalities on how to overcome these challenges.

An example of these data-backed, expert-written publications to help inspire how municipalities can improve their local bio-waste systems can be found below:

- Guideline on governance and economic incentives for bio-waste separate collection and treatment.
- Country factsheets on the analysis of communication and engagement practices for bio-waste separate collection and treatment.
- Guideline on the separate collection of bio-waste.
- Guideline to promote quality compost and digestate.
- Detailed policy recommendations for the EU (and a short animated video to bring to the EU policy guidance publication to life).

Bringing solutions to the problem of textile waste

In December 2024, Zero Waste Europe started an exciting new 2-year project designed to help make textile systems in European cities and countries more circular. **The 'Strengthening the Implementation of Circular Textiles Strategies in the EU' project (STICT) is a landmark moment for us, being our first dedicated project on textile waste**. It's based upon the delivery of three separate but intertwined strategies, from the local to national and EU levels, whereby local best practices are supported to emerge that can help positively feed into the design of upcoming textile Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) schemes nationally, with the EU setting a more ambitious framework for Member States to work within.

In the STICT project, we collaborate with four members—Zero Waste Belgium, Zero Waste Estonia, Ekologi brez meja (Slovenia) and the Fair Resource Foundation (Belgium)—to support three municipalities in introducing best practice measures for textile waste management and prevention locally, and to make the design processes and discussions of EPR in these three countries more inclusive of stakeholders. The three participating municipalities are the City of Brussels, Saku (Estonia) and Bled (Slovenia). The project also aims to build and work with a wider group of municipalities to replicate similar standalone measures that ensure textiles are removed from the residual waste, and as much is reused locally as possible.

A shift in strategy and narrative: quality over quantity

Zero Waste Europe and our network of member organisations have informally worked with municipalities since the late 2000s. For most of the following decade (2010-2020), this work was spearheaded by the Zero Waste Cities programme, which brought together 400 municipalities committed to becoming zero waste during this period. This commitment was based on a letter of intent, centralised by Zero Waste Europe, with member organisations in different countries (dominated by Italy, Slovenia, Spain, Croatia, and Romania) operating their own unique system to monitor the progress made by these municipalities.

#LIFEBIOBEST | From waste to resource: 5 policy actions to transform bio-waste management in Europe - video

Zero waste cities around the world

As with every edition, the State of Zero Waste Municipalities Report aims to highlight and celebrate the exciting developments happening worldwide with municipalities on zero waste, coordinated with other regions as part of the Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives (GAIA).

In this chapter, we have updates from each of the regional leads working on zero waste at the local level. It includes some inspiring stories and successes, such as the launch of the pioneering Asia Reuse Consortium and the Earthshot Prize awarded to GAIA's Ghanaian member organisation for their zero waste work within the capital city of Accra.

Global

Written by Cecilia Allen,
Global Zero Waste Cities Programme Lead
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The Global Zero Waste Cities Programme supports members and regional GAIA offices to advance zero waste municipalities implementation and promotion. In 2024, we supported efforts oriented towards driving climate finance and policies to support zero waste.

Our work with municipalities

Our central aim is to amplify the work being done by municipalities and organisations, helping them transition into zero waste. We want to build the capacity globally for zero waste implementation and create more opportunities for peer learning, as well as improving data collection to better show the scope and impact of the zero waste movement. Finally, we aim to broaden the base of support for zero waste by engaging with organisations from different sectors.

2024 activities

The GAIA Global team amplified the work done by organisations and municipalities, providing tools and spaces to build capacity and inspire others to transition into zero waste. Key highlights from 2024 include the International Zero Waste Cities Conference, case studies on methane and food waste, videos, webinars, and more.

As more government officials, citizens and organisations learn about the benefits of decentralised, people-led zero waste systems, more power will be built to shift the waste paradigm and conceive a zero waste world. We joined efforts to drive more climate finance and policy to support zero waste, and embed environmental justice in methane reduction in the waste sector.

Photo credits: GAIA

This involved research, advocacy, and networking. **We worked to expand the geographies with zero waste models supporting resource mobilisation for implementation, especially with engagement of wastepickers in diverting organic waste from landfills.** We also started improving data collection and management to better monitor and communicate the scope of zero waste around the world.

One of our main strategies was to increase our advocacy for zero waste as the best approach to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, particularly methane. With new global commitments in the climate agenda, such as the Global Methane Pledge, more finance is being mobilised into the waste sector, and more pressure is being put over governments to reduce methane emissions in this sector. **However, 99% of methane finance goes to waste-to-energy incineration**, so there is a lot of work to be done to shift that flow to go into real, zero waste solutions that recover source-separated organics, diverting them from landfills.

2025 priorities

For the team, the priorities in 2025 are to:

- Support the upscaling of more zero waste systems in municipalities with GAIA members around the world.
- Ensure more climate finance is directed for zero waste implementation and not false solutions.
- Expand the reach of the capacity building tools offered by GAIA.
- Collect and analyse data to better reflect climate benefits of zero waste and understand financial mechanisms to support zero waste systems.

Africa

Written by Desmond Alugnoa and Ana Rocha,
Africa Programme Manager and
Director of the Global Plastic Programme
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GAIA Africa works with municipalities and cities through our member organisations located within these cities and municipalities of the various countries. In Africa, waste management is the sole responsibility of the metropolitan, municipal, and district assemblies (MMDAs); however, waste management policies are greatly influenced by climate leads and UNFCCC focal points in the different countries—as such, these policy experts are considered key stakeholders. Recognising the critical role of wastepickers in achieving zero waste, GAIA Africa also promotes the formal integration of wastepickers into municipal waste systems, advocating for their right to decent working conditions and recognition as key actors in resource recovery.

Strategy for 2024

The strategy for GAIA Africa in 2024 was set to promote Zero Waste Cities in three critical aspects. First, through the member organisations signing Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) with cities to work with wastepickers in education and the establishment of Material Recovery Facilities (MRFs), where they show cities how zero waste is done while ensuring that wastepickers are meaningfully engaged in these operations. Second, by working with **national focal points on climate change to ensure the inclusion of zero waste practices grounded in community-led solutions** and the role of wastepickers in Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and National Adaptation Plans (NAPs). Lastly, by contributing to policy transformation through effective participation in negotiations in key global spaces such as COPs and INCs.

Over the past year, GAIA Africa, through its members, have signed new MoUs with new municipalities in **Ghana, Tanzania, and Zanzibar Island**. Furthermore, we have piloted a project to mainstream organic waste management in eleven countries and funded seven member organisations to undertake campaigns to support wastepicker integration across **Uganda, the Democratic Republic Congo (DRC), and** Ethiopia.

Recognising that waste management in Africa is primarily managed by local government structures and working through its members to establish formal collaborations with the municipalities through MoUs, GAIA Africa has been able to grow its influence in 2024 in national policies, helping GAIA to play a significant role in the Global Plastic Treaty negotiations. These agreements have led to the creation of more MRFs, serving as practical models to demonstrate zero waste systems that prioritise source separation, composting, and recycling.

Best practice examples/wins from 2024

During the past year, we can look specifically at two key priorities within our team's efforts:

- **Demonstrating zero waste implementation at the city level:** a major focus was on signing MoUs with municipalities to MRFs, enabling member organisations to showcase practical zero waste solutions and influence local waste management practices. These facilities not only serve as hubs for source separation and composting but also formally integrate wastepickers into municipal systems, recognising them as key stakeholders in resource recovery. Through training, capacity building, and inclusion in operations, wastepickers are empowered with better working conditions, improved livelihoods, and a stronger voice in waste governance.

- **Integrating zero waste into national climate Policy:** GAIA Africa prioritised engaging with national climate leads and UNFCCC focal points to ensure the inclusion of zero waste approaches in countries' NCDs and NAPs, reinforcing the link

between waste management and climate action. As part of this advocacy, GAIA emphasised the critical role of wastepickers in delivering climate-smart waste solutions, highlighting their contributions to emissions reductions through informal recycling and calling for their protection, recognition, and integration in national policies and climate frameworks.

Best practice examples from the region

One successful example is Zero Waste Accra by Green Africa Youth Organisation (GAYO) in **Ghana**, a GAIA Africa member organisation that worked closely with the **La Dade-Kotopon Municipal Assembly** to establish a MRF. This facility serves as a model for zero waste practices, showcasing how waste can be separated, recycled, and diverted from landfills. Importantly, GAYO ensured the formal integration of wastepickers organised through local cooperatives into the operations of the MRF, providing them with safer working conditions, protective equipment, and equitable pay, while leveraging their expertise in resource recovery.

The initiative led to improved waste management practices within the municipality, with a significant reduction in waste sent to landfills and increased local participation in recycling programmes. The MRF has successfully processed over 50% of the waste collected, reducing waste management costs and environmental impacts. Its success has encouraged neighboring municipalities to explore similar partnerships and zero waste initiatives, with wastepickers acknowledged as key stakeholders in the transition. The project won the 2024 Earthshot Prize for Cleaning the Air in Accra through waste management and campaigns against burning of waste.

GAYO's Earthshot Prize - video

In **Cape Agulhas (South Africa)**, the Zero Waste Association of South Africa (ZWASA), in collaboration with the local municipality, has spearheaded the development of a municipal zero waste strategy which explicitly centres the inclusion of wastepickers as agents of change in building a circular economy. Through the initiative, wastepickers were trained, organised into cooperatives, and provided with formal ID cards, safety gear, and sorting infrastructure. **As a result, the municipality saw a 35% increase in recycling rates and a reduction in illegal dumping cases**. ZWASA's work in Cape Agulhas is now being used as a model for other small towns across the Western Cape.

In **Durban (South Africa),** our member GroundWork, through its zero waste project done in partnership with the municipality and SAWPA (South African Waste Pickers Association), provides wastepickers with proper sorting facilities, training, and access to waste management contracts with the city. **The programme has contributed to a 40% increase in material recovery rates and a 25% reduction in waste sent to landfills**. Previously marginalised wastepickers now have the opportunity to organise into cooperatives, which has improved their financial stability and working conditions. **Additionally, this initiative has brought more than 200 wastepickers into formal roles within the city's waste management system**.

In **Accra (Ghana)**, GAYO worked closely with the Madina Municipal Assembly to successfully established a community-based MRF. This initiative is especially impressive given the active leadership of wastepickers in the facility's daily operations—from sorting and data collection to community education. Since its launch, **the MRF has diverted over 50% of the municipality's collected waste from landfills, drastically lowering transportation and disposal costs**. Wastepicker groups have reported improved earnings and working conditions, with the municipality now formally including them in its waste strategy discussions.

In **Dar es Salaam (Tanzania)**, the Bonyokwa district is an inspiring best practice, with the local MRF expanding it's collection services to 2800 households, 95% of which comply with the request to separate their waste at the household. **85% of waste is recycled or reused, managing over 40 tonnes per month. 35 jobs have been created and the equivalent of 16.4 tons of methane has been diverted.**

On the touristic island of Zanzibar, in the Chumbuni district, the MRF has recovered 82% of materials it has collected, servicing 2300 households locally and 35 businesses. Developing this local MRF has led to the creation of 21 jobs.

A key highlight of 2024 was the International Zero Waste Cities Conference hosted by GAIA and Nipe Fagio, that took place in July within the city of Dar es Salaam. The conference saw 240 participants come together from around the world, with a exciting notable outcome being the launch of TAWAPA—the Tanzania Wastepickers Association. The conference was followed also by the Methane Action & Environmental Justice Summit, where **100 participants from around the world looked specifically at the emerging best practices on methane mitigation from the waste sector globally**, examining key strategies for scaling these up through greater finance and education.

Wastepicker integration

A key group benefiting from the impact of zero waste solutions in municipalities is the local wastepickers and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) involved in recycling and waste management. These individual community members and groups have seen significant improvements in their livelihoods due to the structured systems created by GAIA Africa's collaborations with municipalities across many countries.

For example, in the Korle Klottey Municipal Assembly (KoKMA) in Accra, the establishment of a MRF has directly benefited informal wastepickers by formalising their roles in the waste management process. **Previously working in informal and often hazardous conditions, wastepickers are now integrated into a more organised and safe system**. They receive training on proper waste segregation and recycling techniques, improving their efficiency and safety. As a result, their income has increased, as they are now paid for the materials they collect and sort in a more structured manner. Additionally, their work is now recognised and supported by the municipal government, which has led to better job security and opportunities for advancement.

This initiative has not only created economic benefits for these individuals but has also contributed to local environmental sustainability by increasing recycling rates and reducing waste sent to landfills. The local community as a whole benefits from a cleaner, more sustainable environment, while wastepickers and SMEs have improved livelihoods and job prospects through their involvement in the zero waste system.

2025 priorities

We will focus on scaling up zero waste initiatives and enhancing policy integration at the local level. Specifically, our priorities include:

- **Expansion of MRFs:** continuing to establish and expand MRFs in more municipalities will be a major priority. These facilities serve as practical models for zero waste systems, helping to divert waste from landfills, reduce emissions, and create job opportunities. GAIA Africa plans to work with additional municipalities to implement these systems and showcase the potential of circular economies.
- **Strengthening policy integration and advocacy:** GAIA Africa will prioritise working with municipal governments to integrate zero waste strategies into local waste management policies. This includes pushing for the inclusion of zero waste practices in local development plans and the alignment of waste management systems with national climate goals. Advocacy efforts will focus on strengthening the connection between waste management, climate action, and economic development.
- **Capacity-building and community engagement:** GAIA Africa will continue training local governments, waste management workers, and community groups to build capacity around zero waste practices. A key component of this will involve expanding community engagement programmes to encourage waste segregation, recycling, and the adoption of sustainable waste management practices at the household and local business levels.

These priorities aim to create more sustainable and inclusive waste management systems, benefiting both the environment and local communities while fostering greater local ownership of zero waste solutions.

Photo credits: GAIA Africa

Asia-Pacific

Written by Ambily Adithyan,
Regional Zero Waste Cities Lead at GAIA Asia-Pacific
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Across the Asia-Pacific (AP) region, we have around 35 large zero waste cities and over 100 zero waste wards, villages, and *barangays*.

Strategy for 2024

The GAIA Asia Pacific team supports its members in accelerating zero waste in their cities and countries.

To this end, we adopted the following strategic pillars:

- ➜ Movement building.
- ➜ Narrative shifts and visibility.
- ➜ Policy influencing and financing.

2024 activities

The Zero Waste Cities Network (ZWCN) formally launched its Philippines chapter for a collaborative effort to advance sustainable waste management nationwide. ZWCN-Ph comprises government officials from Zero Waste Cities sites across the Philippines and advocates prioritising the integration of zero waste into the National Climate Action Plan (NCAP) and Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC).

The Asia Reuse Consortium, a joint initiative between GAIA Asia Pacific, Dietplastik Indonesia, and Break Free From Plastic Asia-Pacific, is the first cross-sectoral association representing civil society organisations, reuse businesses, funders, incubators, and local governments to facilitate learning and collaboration and advocate for reuse solutions against the plastic pollution crisis in Asia. The consortium launched the 'Unpacking Reuse in Asia' report in 2024, which takes a deep dive into the reuse systems, a game-changer, for packaging across the region. The report was launched as part of a side event at INC-5, with attendance from over 100 participants.

Organic Congress
The first Regional Congress on Organics and Climate, co-organised by Hasiru Dala, GAIA, and the India Zero Waste Alliance, brought together over 220 participants from 70 organisations across 14 Asia Pacific countries and laid a strong foundation for continued collaboration and impactful climate action. The Congress served as a unique platform for experts, policy-makers, grassroots activists, waste workers, and innovators to connect on shared goals, focusing on methane reduction and the urgent need for sustainable waste management. Over two days, participants engaged in technical sessions, practical workshops, and an interactive expo, with a special emphasis on just transition strategies that honour the essential roles of waste workers in climate resilience.

Methane emissions from large waste dumps across Asia have been identified as a major concern, and it is necessary to prevent organic waste ending up in landfills and/or waste dumps. This mandates for scaling up and mainstreaming of recovery of organic waste as a climate mitigation strategy, and has been a key area of focus for the GAIA Asia Pacific team and its members in 2024.

Reuse
Transitioning from single-use to reuse models presents one of the most significant opportunities to reduce plastic pollution (it is estimated that moving to reuse models can provide over 20% reduction in total annual plastic leakage to the ocean by 2040). It can create economic opportunity, including job creation in the value chain. Asia offers innovative, cost-effective, and scalable reuse solutions that challenge the perception of reuse as exclusive or high-tech, proving their feasibility in low-income, high-density areas. Showcasing these efforts and feeding these perspectives to global treaty discussions was essential to highlight the need for supportive infrastructure and financing for upstream solutions.

Best practices from 2024

Pune (India)
Waste from 70% of Pune's households is collected by the wastepickers of the SWaCH waste company, within the framework of a unique pro-poor, public-private partnership with the Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC). As per the terms of the agreement, wastepickers retain the right to recover and sell any recyclable materials from the waste they collect. As SWaCH wastepickers handle waste at the point of generation, they are uniquely positioned to retrieve recyclables and divert them from landfills. The wastepickers are also trained in *in situ* composting and running small-scale biogas plants. **Through their service, approximately 4000 wastepickers manage 1400 tonnes of waste generated every day in Pune city, while ensuring a segregation rate of as high as 98%**

San Fernando (Philippines)
With a waste diversion rate as high as 92%, San Fernando was one of the first cities in the Philippines to achieve its zero waste status. San Fernando has declared a total ban on plastic bags, which has a 90% compliance rate today. This city also strictly implements a policy of no-segregation and no-collection, encouraging compliance with the zero waste strategy. The city has also integrated the informal workers into the system since 2012.

Other examples of key wins at the national level include:

- **Thailand** has stopped importing plastic waste since January 2025 to curb toxic pollution in the country.
- In 2024, **Hong Kong** introduced a plastic ban in two phases. The first phase (in place since April 22, 2024) prohibits eateries from offering or selling nine types of single-use plastic items (including straws, stirrers, knives, spoons, and forks). Phase 2, expected to start in 2025, will likely ban the sale and distribution of single-use plastic cups and food containers for takeaway services.

With Hong Kong's recent ban on single-use plastics, reuse businesses are uniquely positioned to expand their impact by addressing the growing demand for reusable tableware solutions while building towards long-term financial sustainability.

Photo credits: GAIA Asia Pacific

2025 priorities

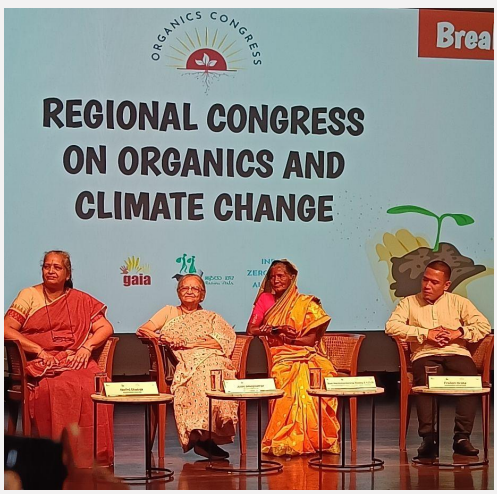
We will conduct and present a new research report on the case of Quezon City. Although Asia has numerous examples of successful zero waste cities, investments in waste-to-energy technologies continue to rise. With Quezon City recently earning recognition as a C40 city and joining the Resilient Cities Network, our upcoming report will demonstrate how adopting zero waste strategies can deliver both environmental and economic benefits, presenting a compelling alternative to waste management approaches reliant on incineration and other burning technologies.

Zero Waste Transition Fund
To scale up zero waste solutions across Asia Pacific, GAIA has begun the process of setting up a Zero Waste Transition Fund (ZWTF). The Fund seeks to support cities in moving to zero waste systems. Currently, consultations are being held at the country and sub-regional levels to understand local needs and context and decide on the framework and modalities of the Fund.

Organics and Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)
Reducing methane emissions from waste is a low-hanging fruit that can bring substantial gains in combating climate change. Methane from waste comes primarily from organic waste, which forms the majority of waste in Asia. GAIA will be looking to reduce methane emissions by:

- Working with our members to bring in systems to reduce food loss and food waste.
- Getting cities to sign the Methane Pledge as a starting point of their zero waste journey. We will also work with members to help national governments incorporate methane emission reduction targets in their NDCs before COP30 in Brazil.

Reuse
Reuse will remain a key priority, especially given the ongoing negotiations for the Global Plastic Treaty. Some of the plans include developing an Asian taxonomy on reuse; launching a map of reuse solutions across Asia; and preparing policy recommendations on reuse for INC 5.2.



Latin America and the Caribbean

Written by Mariela Pino,
Member and Technical Support Officer at GAIA Latin America & the Caribbean
www.no-burn.org/latin-america-the-caribbean

Many districts/sectors of the Latin American region have zero waste initiatives and commitments, where political willingness and civil society buy-in are present.

These include:

- Chile (Concepción, Los Rios association of municipalities, Santiago, Valparaiso, El Monte, Puerto Natales, etc);
- Colombia (Bogotá, Huila);
- Brazil (São Paulo, Florianopolis, etc);
- Guatemala (San Pedro la Laguna);
- México (Jalisco, Apaxco, Baja California);
- Ecuador (Chocó Andino, Cotacachi, Pomasqui);
- Argentina (Buenos Aires, Rosario);
- El Salvador (San Salvador).

Latin America is a region with big challenges ahead. While many regions still lack municipal waste collection, and dumpsites and open burning are still a reality, municipal operators and local governments struggle to understand the path to implement improved municipal solid waste systems when not awarded to expensive tenders of waste corporations offering business-as-usual schemes. Luckily, curiosity, willingness, and political determination are the core features we have seen in committed teams.

Latin America is currently suffering from rising food prices; in the most vulnerable areas, boosting community empowerment and supporting those struggling has been especially relevant for our work. By promoting and implementing waste segregation and community composting, inclusion of wastepickers and young people, organic waste recycling, and the rise of vegetable gardens, we are promoting and helping increase food sovereignty and food security in many places.

Areas with high indigenous population and family farming have most benefited from these initiatives.

GAIA Latin America and the Caribbean members in Chile, Ecuador, Argentina, Brazil, México, El Salvador, Guatemala, Colombia, Perú have been accompanying local governments in the design, implementation, environmental education, and awareness-raising among neighbours to introduce reuse systems, waste segregation at source, and—equally important—to modify public policies in order to create the enabling conditions for a change of paradigm.

Currently, we expect to build on, and secure more financing and improved policy shifts for, solid and widespread zero waste solutions in the region. Our priority in 2023 was to increase our available capacity-building resources for municipalities, following up with the existing zero waste processes, and raising awareness within society.

Best practice examples/wins from 2024

- Wastepickers involved in the organic waste management streams in Florianopolis (Brazil), this being the leading state and benchmark.
- Food loss and waste case studies in Chile have identified diverse grassroot solutions which positively increase the livelihoods of local communities and contribute to unexpected spin-off opportunities.
- The wastepickers cooperative ASOREBAQ in Barranquilla (Colombia) has reached an impressive increase in households segregating their organic waste, and

delivering dry and clean recyclables when working together with their political leaders. 41 building blocks are included in the *Barranquilla Composta y Cultiva* (Barranquilla composts and grows) programme. Adding to this, we can learn from the experience of wastepickers and members from Colombia and Argentina, who are dealing with organic waste in areas with enforced source segregation.

- The Brazil Polis Institute, supported by POLIS, continues to be a shining example of positive action on composting and organic waste treatment.

- In Ecuador, we have witnessed a growing composting network and increased the development and use of zero waste roadmaps for municipalities.

It's also relevant to highlight the need for global collaboration to avoid not just having to deal with our own residues, but also the inflows from the global waste metabolism (which is now broader than ever), namely waste colonialism—a phenomena that researchers consider to have started when China decided not to receive more "plastic waste".

On top of that, Latin America is now not only suffering from plastic waste from packaging, but also textile dumps; and the threat that arose from the electric vehicle batteries, which is already being identified and documented here.

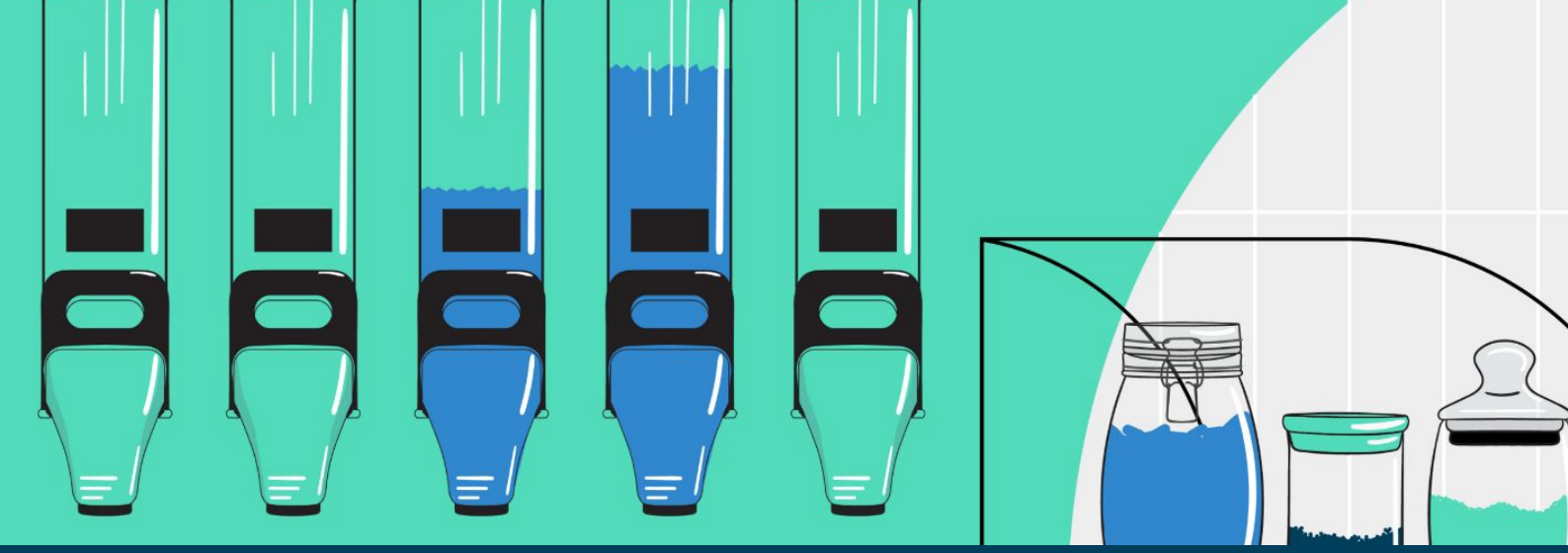
Photo credits: Alianza Cero Basura Ecuador

Priorities for 2025

We will keep on working together to provide tools to understand, implement, and follow up zero waste implementation processes within the municipalities that have committed to this goal.

We will continue opening up spaces for wastepickers integration, as well as helping ensure that financial and public policy shift towards true solutions that create the an enabling environment for zero waste, fighting against false solutions like incineration, chemical recycling, and single-use plastic enforcement.

We're carefully watching food systems' involvement in targeting fast action for methane reduction, as many countries have adhered to climate commitments in Latin America; namely, the ministerial pledge to include in the NDC's 3.0 waste and environmental justice principles, and the COP29 declaration which goes beyond methane mitigation and includes general emissions from food, water, and agriculture.



US/Canada

Written by Marcel R. Howard,
Zero Waste Programme Manager, GAIA US & Canada
www.no-burn.org/united-states-canada

Our region typically doesn't engage directly with municipalities and cities, but rather engages and supports our members who work on various zero waste campaigns and policy initiatives through engagement with their local municipalities and other key stakeholders. Zero waste cities are hard to define in the context of the U.S, and as a result, we don't have a complete definition of a "Zero Waste City".

Our approach with cities

GAIA's U.S./Canada regional zero waste work has adapted to an ever-changing policy and advocacy landscape. With the successful closure of the last two incinerators in the State of California (SERRF & Covanta Stanislaus) in 2024, our focus has shifted to working with communities on what life looks like after incineration, with an emphasis on zero waste strategies. In addition, our work on food waste and organics has increased substantially, as methane in the waste sector became a growing priority for our region and other international stakeholders throughout the year. Ensuring that environmental justice is at the forefront of the evolving methane reduction movement was critical for this work. In 2025, we expect to continue prioritising work at the state and local levels and providing additional opportunities for environmental justice groups to engage in various zero waste strategies through both advocacy and policy.

In 2024, our biggest priorities involved developing our new regional methane and organics strategy and supporting communities, whose advocacy has led to an incinerator shutdown, with their transition to zero waste. Our methane and organics strategy has evolved into a priority due to the increased focus on methane emissions reductions at the local, state, national, and international levels. In addition, we're in a critical time in the United States as more incinerators are closing due to sheer costs and lack of consistent revenue. This has made zero waste more possible than ever in the region, but it's critical to find and stop new "false solutions" from filling the gaps left behind from closing incinerators.

Best practice examples/wins from 2024

California
The last two remaining incinerators (SERRF & Covanta Stanislaus) in the state of California have officially shut down due to strong grassroots advocacy spearheaded by GAIA member groups such as East Yard Communities for Environmental Justice, Californians Against Waste (CAW), and Valley Improvement Projects (VIP). The successful shutdown of these two incinerators was a direct result of multiple campaign strategies meant to strip away the subsidies the incineration industry relies on to operate facilities.

While working to "defund" incineration, these groups and allies also advocated for decentralised zero waste strategies to address the ever-growing waste problem in the state. More specifically, these groups are advocating for the proper implementation of California's organics

recycling law (SB 1383), along with improving landfill regulations and monitoring requirements and investment in zero waste infrastructure.

Minneapolis, MN
After years of strong advocacy from GAIA member groups CURE and the Minnesota Environmental Justice Table (MNEJT), the Minneapolis City Council unanimously voted to shut down the HERC incinerator located in Downtown Minneapolis. Although there is still a battle with the County on an official closing date, all signs point to a closure date in 2028. GAIA members are now working with city officials on a new zero waste plan with an emphasis on environmental justice and a just transition. In addition to the plan, CURE and MNEJT are advocating for a strong organics recycling bill at the state level, along with stronger landfill regulations and monitoring requirements.

Priorities for 2025

2025 will see our zero waste programme continue prioritising our ever-evolving methane and organics work. More specifically, we just launched our U.S. Methane Reduction and Environmental Justice Regrant Programme, where we are funding 12 organisations across 9 projects to work on campaigns/projects around reducing methane emissions from the waste sector. These projects cover everything from investments in food waste/organics infrastructure to food donation, advocating for food waste prevention measures, and much more. In addition, we are prioritising changing the narrative in the U.S. around methane emissions being a "landfill issue", which provides a perverse incentive for incineration. Along with fighting this narrative, we will also be working to align our movement and others to ensure environmental justice is at the forefront of this ever-evolving methane space.

Photo credits: GAIA US/Canada

Zero Waste Cities in Europe

In this part of the report, we examine the local work that ZWE members have undertaken across the continent during 2024.

Each chapter has been written by the individuals who have been most active and involved in this work with their local authorities. There are specific chapters for each of the countries where we have seen the most progress, and each of them highlights both the most significant victories over the past year, along with some of the persistent challenges faced in each country; and how the local work will evolve into 2025 and beyond.

Austria

Written by Evelyn Rath,
Verein westwinkel (Zero Waste Austria)
www.zerowasteaustria.at

- **Zero Waste Austria is actively collaborating with the municipality of St. Valentin to advance the adoption of zero waste strategies.**
- **Across Austria, several strong local examples are emerging, and Zero Waste Austria is providing targeted support to help scale and replicate these successes.**

St. Valentin

This support has been focused a lot in the municipality of St. Valentin which is in the federal state of Lower Austria, one of the Austrian states where there is no obligation for reusable containers at public events. Instead, the municipality incentivises businesses to switch to reuse by voluntarily offering a mobile dishwasher for events with up to 1,000 participants. The mobile dishwasher containers two commercial dishwashers and also supplies reusable tableware for events. It was purchased by the municipality in 2023 and has been a good success locally, with events often hiring it.

Reuse in events

In the three federal states of Salzburg, Upper Austria and Vienna, there is an obligation for reusable containers for food and drinks at events. In Salzburg this obligation applies for events with over 600 visitors, in Upper Austria with over 300 visitors, and in Vienna for events starting at 1,000 visitors. In general, also in regions without obligations the reusable cups, especially for cold drinks, become more and more popular. This is a trend we see nationally within municipalities and one that Zero Waste Austria will continue to actively support in 2025 and beyond.

Whilst there seems to be little broader interest from municipalities in Austria in becoming zero waste cities, it does not mean the topic is not discussed or featured in political debates. For example, in September 2024 Zero Waste Austria participated in a panel discussion on “(Zero) Waste in the City? Between Activism and Urban Agenda" in the City of Graz, organised by the Research Network "Waste in Motion" (WiM). The discussion was with experts from the WiM network, with representatives of the City of Graz, Katja Sres from fellow Zero Waste Europe member Ekologi Brez Meja (Slovenia).

Photo credits: Zero Waste Austria

Belgium

Written by Pauline Talbot,
Zero Waste Belgium
www.zerowastebelgium.org

- **Zero Waste Belgium collaborates with the City of Brussels, providing expert guidance on implementing zero waste initiatives and transforming public events into sustainability showcases.**
- **Through our evidence-based research and carefully documented best practices, we equip our partners with practical tools and innovative strategies to advance their waste reduction goals.**

National and regional context

In July 2024, Belgium took a decisive step forward with the publication of a new Royal Decree (AR SUP II), building on the foundation laid by the 2021 decree. **This legislation seeks to ensure a demonstrable reduction in single-use packaging consumption, aiming to phase out disposable cardboard cups with plastic liners and ban food containers with excessive plastic content** for both dine-in and takeaway services.

This progressive regulatory framework strengthens our municipal engagement, providing legal backing for our advocacy work on reusable alternatives and waste reduction strategies.

Further collaboration with municipalities

Zero Waste Belgium's primary municipal partnership has been with the City of Brussels, which is already well advanced in its thinking and actions favouring reuse. Key collaborative initiatives include:

- **Zero Waste Events:** we have conducted in-depth research to help the City of Brussels implement zero waste practices throughout events held in the city. This involved compiling data, presenting case studies from other cities, and navigating legal frameworks to create innovative measures.
- **Eco-crèche project:** working closely with the City of Brussels, we have documented and promoted their innovative eco-crèche (eco-nursery) initiative, which implements washable nappies in the city's day-care centres.

2024 successes

In 2024, Zero Waste Belgium published a comprehensive best practice guide based on the eco-crèche project. This guide provides a practical blueprint for municipalities looking to reduce waste in childcare.

We also developed **a strategic action plan for managing events in the City of Brussels**. While full implementation is planned for 2025, the groundwork we established in 2024 represents a significant step in applying zero waste principles to municipal operations.

2025 priorities

Our key priorities for 2025 include:

- Supporting the implementation of the zero waste events action plan in the City of Brussels.
- Expanding our advisory roles for waste reduction measures in the Brussels region.
- Collaborating with the City of Brussels on the STICT project, which aims to implement and replicate best practice models for textile waste prevention and management.

We continue to connect research with practical application, demonstrating zero waste approaches as essential to good public authority management.

Belgium and the Netherlands

Written by Maïté Liekens,
Fair Resource Foundation
www.fairresourcefoundation.org

- **Fair Resource Foundation works with the Zero Waste Candidate City of Zoersel (Belgium), and is looking to onboard more cities and municipalities across Belgium and the Netherlands.**
- **Fair Resource Foundation works with the municipalities of Gent and Leuven (Belgium) within the ReuSe Vanguard Project (RSVP); their coalition Mission Reuse works with Rotterdam (the Netherlands) as part of the same project.**

National and regional context

The past year has seen elections in both Belgium and the Netherlands, with a sharp turn to the right side of the political spectrum. This shift has impacted the context in which Fair Resource Foundation operates, particularly when it comes to the implementation of zero waste and circular economy initiatives.

When implementing circular solutions, the primary challenge municipalities and inter-municipal associations face is the political willingness to enact legislation and provide the necessary funding for these solutions.

Further collaboration with municipalities

Outside of our collaboration through the ZWE projects and the MiZA certification system, we continue to support and work with a broad group of municipalities across diverse topics:

- **Deposit Return Systems:** through the Statiegeldalliantie/L'Alliance pour la consigne, approximately 730 cities and municipalities have signed on to support deposit return systems.
- **Reuse systems:** our coalition Mission Reuse collaborates with Dutch cities, including Hoeksche Waard and Wageningen, to explain reuse systems and their implementation. They also created a "knowledge network" with the province of Noord-Brabant to facilitate a shared reuse system for reusable cups during carnival celebrations.
- **Knowledge sharing:** we organised a webinar attended by 80 people to explain the reuse guide created for the Dutch government; we also participated in multiple events to disseminate this work. Our Reusable Packaging Fair brought together many municipalities seeking inspiration for reuse solutions.
- **Specialised projects:** we are working with municipalities on textile initiatives through Collectief Circulair Textiel, as well as on the No Butts Day action on cigarette butts via the Plastic Peuken Collectief.

Belgium and the Netherlands

2024 successes

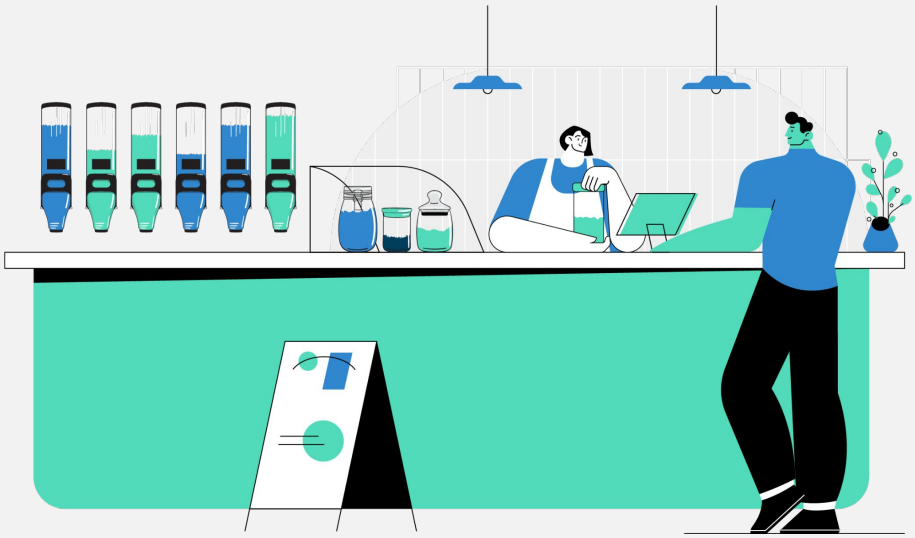
Over the past year, our most significant priorities have been the Kombak project and the Statiegeldalliantie. Our biggest 2024 success was the second edition of the Reusable Packaging Fair, which brought together over 480 visitors, 55 speakers, and 25 exhibition stands.

Our zero waste solutions have specifically benefited local HORECA (Hotel/Restaurant/Café) businesses, supporting them in implementing reuse solutions before these practices become mandatory under new regulations.

2025 priorities

Our primary focus will be onboarding more zero waste cities and municipalities. We are actively seeking proposals for stimulating reuse projects in urban and municipal settings, continuing our mission to advance zero waste principles across Belgium and the Netherlands.

Photo credits: Fair Resource Foundation



Bulgaria

Written by Evgenia Tasheva,
Za Zemiata
www.zazemiata.org

- **Za Zemiata collaborates directly with municipalities like Svilengrad and Gabrovo, both recognised for their innovative zero waste efforts.**
- **We engage with other local authorities through campaigns, such as Plastic Free Bulgaria, supporting both policy and on-the-ground actions.**
- **Our partnership with the EcoObshtina (Eco Municipality) initiative raises awareness about sustainability, amplifying the visibility of our work at national and international levels.**

National and regional context

In 2024, Bulgaria faced two parliamentary elections (in June and October), leading to delays in vital legislative actions and funding. Most notably, the mandatory shift to the Pay as You Throw (PAYT) principle has been delayed by Parliament until 1 January 2026, prompting an infringement procedure by the European Commission for not meeting prior deadlines.

Despite the broader political instability, Za Zemiata continues to prioritise local-level solutions, advocating more effective separate waste collection (particularly biowaste) and awareness-raising about improved waste management practices.

Svilengrad

Svilengrad, a member of ZWE's Elevating Reuse in Cities (ERIC) project, stands out for its leadership on PAYT, employing RFID-based technology for bin identification, measurement, and recording of household waste volumes. It has expanded its separate waste collection infrastructure to rural villages, an uncommon practice in Bulgaria. Residents of a local Roma neighbourhood have co-organised a major cleanup that collected 1,700 kg of waste in a single day, followed by the permanent installation of separate collection bins. Lastly, the municipality's free recyclables pickup service for local businesses and public offices has recovered hundreds of tonnes of high-quality, recyclable material.

Gabrovo

Gabrovo, also a member of the ERIC project, hosted a plastic-free public event that piloted solutions for the city's Plastic Prevention Plan. In terms of public engagement, the annual Uzana Fest continues to embrace reusable deposit cups, despite challenging regulations. The city's landfill facility welcomes hundreds of students each year, enabling them to gain firsthand experience of waste processing. Alongside Svilengrad, Gabrovo also received the EcoMunicipality 2024 award, in recognition of its innovative and effective waste management services.

Blagoevgrad and Varna

In Blagoevgrad, which is part of Zero Waste Europe's #ForkToFarm campaign, we collaborated with the local government to develop a pictorial guide on household waste separation, making waste sorting more accessible to residents.

Bulgaria

Meanwhile, in Varna, grassroots activists have taken the lead in integrating zero waste principles into education, working with schools and kindergartens to introduce waste reduction initiatives.

Through these local partnerships, Za Zemiata continues to bridge the gap between policy, advocacy and real-world implementation.

Further collaboration and best practices

Za Zemiata has actively partnered with Bulgaria's EcoObshtina (Eco Municipality) competition, initiated by the French Embassy, shaping evaluation criteria and promoting measurable impacts in waste reduction. This cooperation has significantly raised the visibility of zero waste solutions and contributed to stronger high-level decision-making support.

Beyond municipalities, we nurture local grassroots movements dedicated to plastic-free initiatives, anti-incineration efforts, and youth education programmes.

2024 successes

- Despite its postponement, Bulgaria's delayed PAYT rollout has been kept in the public eye thanks to media coverage and local stakeholder events. Svilengrad's progress is a particularly strong proof-of-concept for other cities.
- Za Zemiata's influential role the EcoObshtina competition has boosted our messages among national ministries, the National Association of Municipalities, and the French Embassy, amplifying our impact.
- Publications and Guides
  - Incineration report: exposed health and environmental risks tied to waste incineration and stressed that Bulgaria's incineration capacity is already near the legal threshold.
  - Packaging waste report: supports municipalities demanding more robust financial and infrastructural contributions from producer responsibility organisations.
  - Zero waste event guide: embraced by partners (including businesses), offering practical tips on hosting sustainable, low-impact gatherings.
- Local groups visited Sofia's MBT plant, generating articles, social media content, and encouraging open, transparent dialogue on waste processing. Similar local-led actions in Varna, Blagoevgrad, and elsewhere keep momentum growing.

2025 priorities

In 2025, Za Zemiata will intensify efforts to accelerate the implementation of PAYT by highlighting the success of Svilengrad as a model. By advocating for a nationwide rollout by 2026, we aim to ensure that local authorities are financially and logistically prepared for the transition.

Alongside this, **we will expand bio-waste separation initiatives,** increasing public awareness through media campaigns and launching pilot programmes to facilitate the separate collection of household and commercial organic waste.

We will also advance plastic prevention by supporting municipalities in developing local plastic-free strategies. Equally important, we will continue to **empower local communities** by providing neighbourhood groups and schools with the resources they need to adopt zero waste practices, fostering a grassroots movement that bridges knowledge gaps and drives bottom-up transformation.

Photo credits: Za Zemiata

Croatia

Written by Marko Kosak,
Zelena Akcija
www.zelena-akcija.hr

- **Croatia is home to 7 Zero Waste Certified Cities, all located on Krk Island, and 14 Zero Waste Candidate Cities: Prelog, Goričan, Donji Kraljevec, Sveta Marija, Donji Vidovec, Donja Dubrava, Kotoriba, Belica, Dekanovec, Domašinec, Podturen, Martijanec, Jalžabet, Pribislavec.**
- **Zelena Akcija works also with the city of Zagreb within the Elevating Reuse in Cities (ERIC) project.**

National and regional context

In Croatia, national policies are hindering the efforts of cities and municipalities to develop sustainable waste management solutions. The Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development has imposed a law requiring municipalities to deliver their mixed waste to regional waste management centres, all of which rely on technologies for producing Refuse Derived Fuel (RDF) and incineration. This mandate prevents the development of decentralised, environmentally friendly infrastructure for managing mixed waste.

Adding to the issue, the ministry's latest National Waste Management Plan falsely claims that certain regions have adequate waste sorting and composting capacities. However, this assessment includes private sector facilities that serve multiple regions rather than exclusively supporting local municipalities. As a result, cities like Velika Gorica are unable to access EU funding for much-needed waste sorting and composting infrastructure. With limited budgets, many municipalities cannot afford to finance these large-scale projects on their own that have waste prevention and better management at their core.

Moreover, the accuracy of waste management statistics published by the ministry is increasingly being questioned. For instance, reports on separate waste collection for municipalities include mixed waste collected by public utility companies, not only from households but also from industries, hospitality, and other commercial sources, while separately collected waste from these sectors is excluded. This misrepresentation significantly distorts municipal waste collection performance, often leading to unjust financial penalties for local authorities.

Another alarming development is the ministry's intensified push for waste incineration as a supposed solution to closing the circular economy loop. Croatia currently lacks sufficient capacity to incinerate RDF from regional waste centres, and exporting it is costly. This has triggered the construction of multiple private incinerators. Additionally, the first public incinerator is now being built as part of one of the regional waste management centres, raising concerns that similar projects will spread across the country. **If this trend continues, Croatia could soon see a proliferation of both private and public incinerators, undermining efforts to move towards truly sustainable waste management.**

Croatia

Zagreb

Significant progress has been made in Zagreb through cooperation in the city's working group focused on reforming the separate collection system, implementing Pay As You Throw (PAYT), and developing infrastructure, as well as working together on plastic prevention within the ERIC project:

- **PAYT:** following our recommendations, Zagreb has implemented PAYT city-wide and is expanding door-to-door waste collection. In the city centre, open street bins have been replaced with underground containers, while elsewhere bins have been relocated to buildings and courtyards, with cages and semi-underground systems added. Full rollout is set for 2026. These changes have cut landfilling by 20% and boosted separate waste collection by over 50% compared to 2022.

- **Waste plan:** the City of Zagreb has developed a feasibility study to enhance waste treatment infrastructure, including plans for a composting plant, sorting plant, and mixed waste sorting. However, disagreements remain over residual waste treatment, with the city proposing RDF production, while efforts continue to promote Material Recovery and Biological Treatment (MRBT). Additionally, the city is working to establish a reuse centre by the end of 2026.

- **Plastic Prevention Plan (PPP)**: Zagreb has developed a PPP which includes the decision to ban single-use plastics in all city buildings and institutions. Measures already underway include repairing and adding public water refill stations, eliminating single-use plastics at certain events, and supporting initiatives for reusable packaging in hospitality.

Further collaboration with municipalities

Several cities in Croatia are advancing zero waste initiatives.

- **Velika Gorica** is preparing to become a Zero Waste Candidate City and is collaborating on the implementation of a wider door-to-door collection system.

- **Orle** is also preparing to become a Zero Waste Candidate City.

- **Lastovo Island** is working on recommendations for its Waste Management Plan.

- **Pula** is collaborating on the development of a reuse Centre.

- **Sali** is implementing recommendations for both the Waste Management and Plastic Prevention Plans.

- **Koprivnica** is following our recommendations for improving its own local Waste Management Plan.

Best practices

Excellent results were achieved by 7 municipalities on Krk Island in continuing to increase separate waste collection, reaching an average of 60%, as well as the City of Zagreb, reducing waste disposal and increasing separate collection.

14 municipalities in northern Croatia (operated by our partner, the waste management company PRE-KOM form Prelog) continued with impressive results in separate waste collection and remain national leaders, with an average of over 71% separate waste collection and an average of less than 73 kg of residual waste *per capita*, which is significantly lower compared to the national average of 247 kg. They produce 224 kg of municipal waste *per capita*, in comparison to the national average of 474 kg.

The recent Zero Waste Cities Certification of the island of Krk, will inspire other cities and municipalities to adopt zero waste strategies as a model of good practice,, enhance the island's reputation for quality of life, and boost our media visibility as the national coordinator of zero waste efforts. This is especially important in the face of rising greenwashing by industry and organisations linked to polluting sectors. This success will allow us to collaborate with more municipalities in Croatia's coastal tourist areas, where waste management has traditionally been the poorest due to tourism's impact.

Impact on the communities
Implementing zero waste solutions on Krk Island benefits residents by improving quality of life, simplifying waste management, and giving them control over their monthly bills. Island farmers also benefit as their waste is integrated into the municipal system, while local restaurants and hotels enjoy easier waste management and reduced costs. Tourists easily adapt to the system, and the Tourist Board is gaining recognition in both domestic and international markets.

Croatia

2024 successes

The biggest successes in cooperation with Croatian municipalities are certainly the activities in which we helped the municipalities on Krk to obtain the Zero Waste Certification and achieve its numerous outstanding results, as well as many positive advances in the waste management system in Zagreb, which resulted in a significant reduction in waste disposal and an increase in the recycling rate.

Additionally, we started a cooperation with the City of Velika Gorica on the door-to-door waste collection system and PAYT, as well as on its preparation for becoming a Zero Waste Candidate City with MiZA.

As for our other work, a significant achievement is that through 2024, we expanded our successful multi-year volunteer collective for bike repairs and launched new activities in collaboration with numerous new volunteers, including collectives for clothing and small appliance repairs, transforming our premises into a vibrant community reuse hub.

Photo credits: Zelena Akcija/Friends of the Earth Croatia

2025 priorities

In 2025, our priorities will be to:

- **Support municipalities across Croatia in their zero waste efforts.** We will provide expert assistance to VG Čistoća in Velika Gorica and the municipality of Orle as they work toward achieving the Zero Waste Certification.
- **Continue our collaboration with PONIKVE Waste Management on Krk Island**, we aim to improve waste management systems, with a particular emphasis on prevention and reuse, driving further successes.
- **Work closely with the City of Zagreb's waste working group** to refine the waste management system and promote sustainable infrastructure.
- **In Pula, we will assist in the establishment of a reuse centre**, help enhance their local waste management plan, and begin discussions on their potential to become a Zero Waste Candidate City.
- **Explore potential cooperation with the municipality of Lumbarda** on Korčula, expanding our reach.
- **Support the City of Prelog** and 13 surrounding municipalities in their journey toward Zero Waste Certification.
- **Collaborate with municipalities like Koprivnica and Sali** to expand the zero waste movement in Croatia.

Cyprus

Written by Sara Mariza Vryonidi,
Friends of the Earth Cyprus
www.foecyprus.org

- **There is one Zero Waste Candidate City in Cyprus: Ipsonas (now called Kourion Municipality after the reformation).**
- **Friends of the Earth Cyprus works with the cities of Limassol and Nicosia within the Elevating Reuse in Cities (ERIC) project.**

National and regional context

Over the past year, the national context for zero waste work in Cyprus has been shaped by delays in the implementation of the Pay As You Throw (PAYT) system. Although it was initially planned to start in 2024, the system has not yet been introduced. The Department of Environment has provided guidelines for municipalities to develop their PAYT action plans, and each municipality has submitted its plan, which is currently under review. It **is expected that the system will finally be implemented in 2026**. Notably, the Kourion Municipality has proposed a more digital and advanced PAYT system compared to other municipalities, introducing an innovative approach to waste reduction.

In addition to PAYT, municipalities are exploring other waste reduction measures, such as repair stations and collection points for hazardous waste, as part of the LIFE project Zero Waste Cyprus coordinated by the Department of Environment.

However, structural and bureaucratic challenges continue to slow down the large-scale adoption of zero waste policies across the country.

For example, retailers lobby heavily against the Deposit Return Scheme (DRS), which makes implementing the Single-Use Plastics (SUP) Directive challenging.

Our two biggest priorities over the past year in our work with cities have been to support zero waste event management and engage municipalities in structured plastic prevention and resource management strategies through Plastic Prevention Plans.

Further collaboration with municipalities

- **Limassol Wine Festival:** we are collaborating with the municipality of Limassol to integrate zero waste principles into large-scale events, starting with the Limassol Wine Festival. This has allowed us to introduce reuse systems, reduce single-use plastics, and prepare the ground for more as we also did a waste audit.
- **Nicosia plastic prevention plan**: we engaged with the municipality of Nicosia to develop a Plastic Prevention Plan and improve waste management at public events as part of a broader resource strategy.

Cyprus

Best practices

Focusing on events has proven effective for engaging municipalities, offering a tangible way to demonstrate the benefits of zero waste policies and build momentum for broader systemic change.

Following the example of the Limassol Wine Festival, we expect more events to adopt waste reduction measures and seek certification. With the upcoming PAYT implementation, municipalities will need to adopt sustainable practices, even if institutional change takes time. Private events in public spaces will also feel greater pressure to minimise their environmental impact and remain competitive.

Several festivals have already reached out about waste reduction, and engaging in the Certification process offers a clear starting point. This is a positive step for Cyprus, as it will reduce waste, cut costs, conserve resources, and shift public expectations about events that are typically wasteful.

2024 successes

In 2024, our key achievement was partnering with Limassol to launch its waste prevention efforts by carrying out a waste audit at the Limassol Wine Festival and set up a refill station at the Municipal Gardens. This marked a significant step forward and showcases the municipality's commitment to waste management for large events.

The audit highlighted the need for better waste separation and revealed that organic waste made up the largest share, stressing the urgency of tackling food waste. Building on this, we'll work with the municipality to reduce food waste and single-use materials at future festivals, ensuring a more sustainable approach for 2025 and beyond.

Impact on local communities

Municipalities benefit from reduced waste management costs and more efficient resource allocation. By implementing zero waste practices, local authorities can optimise waste streams and minimise landfill use.

Private recycling companies gain access to higher-quality recyclables, which can improve the efficiency and profitability of their operations. Additionally, they may explore more advanced, cost-effective recycling technologies.

For local businesses, zero waste presents a valuable opportunity as it benefits companies already committed to sustainability, as well as those looking to innovate and collaborate. Beyond long-term cost savings, adopting zero waste practices helps attract environmentally conscious consumers and stakeholders, enhancing brand reputation.

Photo credits: Friends of the Earth Cyprus

Estonia

Written by Marianne Sepp,
Zero Waste Estonia
www.zwee.org

- **Estonia has one Zero Waste Candidate City—the capital, Tallinn.**
- **The municipality of Saku is involved in the STICT project on textiles waste prevention and management. In addition to this project, Zero Waste Estonia actively supports municipalities nationwide.**

National and regional context

Estonia has undergone significant waste reform over the past 12 months. New national legislation emphasises improved waste collection, transparent data management, and higher fees for landfilling and incineration. The Single-Use Plastics Directive now requires public events to use only reusable dishes, cups, and cutlery, with plans to extend these requirements to other venues.

The country currently pays the EU over €20 million annually for non-recycled plastic waste, making zero waste strategies critical for municipalities seeking to reduce costs and comply with new regulations.

On the other hand, the national and Tallinn-specific legislation on reusable alternatives has had a mixed impact. While it has shifted public discourse significantly, the intended 25% reduction in plastic waste has not yet been achieved. However, the initiative has catalysed a cultural shift and spurred innovation in reuse systems.

Further collaboration with municipalities

Besides our involvement in ZWE projects, we continue to support municipalities through diverse initiatives:

- **Community projects:** the CARE Project with the municipality of Lääne-Harju focuses on incorporating zero waste principles into local support services and resource management.
- **Capacity building:** the Zero Waste Ambassadors Training equips municipal teams with zero waste knowledge. Training sessions have been conducted in 2024 in Saaremaa and Tallinn, and new groups are planned to be launched in Tallinn and Ida-Viru County in 2025.
- **Knowledge sharing:** ZWEE partnered with Tartu City to organise the III Zero Waste Conference, bringing together experts to share sustainable development solutions.

Photo credits: Zero Waste Estonia

Estonia

2024 successes

Our Zero Waste Ambassador training in Saaremaa and Tallinn has been particularly impactful. This initiative strengthened our position as a trusted partner, leading to greater involvement in city projects.

Most notably, Tallinn has carried on its zero waste journey. Estonia's capital has made significant progress in circular economy practices, opening its first circular economy centre and developing a network of over 10 municipal waste collection, reuse, and repair centres.

These zero waste initiatives have benefitted many communities and local groups, including:

- **Residents** who gain access to waste reduction resources, helping them save money and adopt sustainable habits.
- **Local entrepreneurs** who find new opportunities in repair, restoration, and upcycling, fostering green businesses.
- **Students and schools** benefit from educational programmes and hands-on learning experiences at the new circular economy centre.
- **Community organisations** collaborating on awareness campaigns, with some providing refurbished goods to communities lacking access to basic services.

2025 priorities

For the coming months, we will be focusing on:

- Strengthen the visibility and recognition of the Zero Waste Estonia brand nationwide, positioning it as a key voice in sustainability and circular economy discussions.
- Increase public awareness and understanding of zero waste principles, including why they are important, and how communities and institutions can contribute.
- Support and guide the City of Tallinn on its Zero Waste City Certification journey, while encouraging other municipalities to take similar steps through strategic engagement and peer learning.
- Expand the Zero Waste Ambassador and Zero Waste Trainer programmes by launching new open training groups accessible to individuals and municipal representatives.
- Deepen collaboration with businesses through training, consulting, and certification services, positioning zero waste as a practical and beneficial approach for the private sector.

France

Written by Noémie Brouillard,
Zero Waste France
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- **Zero Waste France (ZWF) supports municipalities like Nantes Métropole, Métropole de Lyon, and Ville de Bordeaux through the Elevating Reuse in Cities (ERIC) project, helping them implement zero plastic action plans, organise zero waste events, and develop reuse solutions for take-away food.**
- **Through our sustained advocacy, the first reading approval of the law on the environmental impact of textiles was a major success.**
- **Political instability and budget cuts affecting bio-waste sorting, which include a €1.5 billion reduction in the Green Fund, pose major hurdles.**
- **We're scaling up efforts in cities: Lyon is preparing for a zero plastic festival, Bordeaux is implementing reusable meal kits for seniors, and Nantes is strengthening public engagement in its zero waste strategy.**

2024 legislative wins and setbacks

France's waste reduction efforts in 2024 unfolded in an interesting context. On the legislative front, we saw the enforcement of the AGEC law (anti-waste for a circular economy). AGEC, which covers a great variety of topics, introduced a mandate for source separation of bio-waste, which took effect on 1 January, 2024. While this was a significant step forward, many municipalities struggled with implementation due to insufficient state support. This is where our role as sustainability watchdog became really valuable.

Public awareness of environmental issues grew. We saw strengthened support for strong policies such as a proposed ban on plastic bottles under 50 cl.

Key legislative progress was also made with the anti-fast fashion law (adopted as a first reading) which addresses the environmental impact of textiles. These advances were largely driven by sustained NGO pressure, alongside the Stop Fas0.25t-Fashion coalition, of which ZWF is a member. 2024 also saw important achievements in local zero waste initiatives, like the cancellation of the Boralex plant in Marseille, the coordination of 120 events for European Week of Waste Reduction all contributed to the broader national zero waste movement.

But it wasn't all roses. Political instability following the dissolution of the National Assembly in June and the censure of the Barnier government created legislative uncertainty, delaying critical policy decisions.

France

Budget cuts, particularly a €1.5 billion reduction in the Green Fund, severely impacted local sustainability projects. We saw the annulment of the decree banning plastic packaging for fruits and vegetables and the rejection of an appeal against the expansion of the Créteil incinerator – an extremely rare occurrence where the court decided not to follow the public rapporteur's analysis and solutions. And of course, continued resistance to environmentalism from industry and institutional actors exacerbated the problems we face.

Supporting municipalities through ERIC

Our core work with cities in 2024 focused on the ERIC project, supporting Nantes Métropole, Métropole de Lyon, and Ville de Bordeaux in developing and implementing zero-plastic action plans. This involved helping municipalities shape communication strategies to engage residents in plastic reduction efforts, ensuring broad public awareness and participation. We also supported the organisation of zero-plastic events, demonstrating waste-free alternatives in public spaces and encouraging more sustainable practices.

Another key aspect was the drafting of zero-plastic procurement charters. To further support the transition away from disposable plastics, we worked to facilitate reuse solutions for take-away food, including city-supported programmes for reusable containers. A major milestone was securing funding through CITEO's call for expressions of interest, which allowed Lyon to introduce reusable containers for public events and Bordeaux to implement stainless steel dish kits for senior home meal deliveries. These projects serve as replicable models for other municipalities looking to adopt similar zero-plastic strategies.

Leading municipal efforts in zero waste

Throughout 2024, Zero Waste France worked closely with municipalities to define action plans and implement tangible waste reduction solutions. While the full impact of these initiatives will emerge in 2025, several key projects were set in motion. In Lyon, preparations began for a major zero-plastic event in 2025, potentially linked to the Lyon Street Food Festival, to showcase waste-free event solutions. Bordeaux advanced its reusable meal delivery kits for seniors, aiming to significantly reduce single-use packaging in social services. Meanwhile, Nantes focused on public engagement campaigns, strengthening awareness and participation in its zero waste strategy.

The zero waste event in Lyon in March 2024 was a pivotal moment for municipal bio-waste management, as it provided cities with concrete, replicable models to improve source-separated bio-waste collection. Milan's door-to-door collection success, Catalonia's ambitious legislative framework, Germany's community-led waste separation initiatives, and Croatia's tourism-adapted bio-waste solutions offered valuable insights. This exchange of experiences helped reinforce municipal commitment, despite ongoing financial and regulatory challenges.

2025 priorities

Looking ahead, ZWF's key priorities for 2025 include:

- **Scaling up reuse systems**, particularly in food take-away and public procurement.
- **Strengthening municipal support** for ambitious zero-plastic and waste reduction policies.
- **Advocating for stronger state funding** for waste management and circular economy initiatives.
- **Sustaining pressure on policy-makers** to ensure the long-term viability of zero waste initiatives.

Photo credits: Zero Waste France

Germany

Written by Michael Cieslik,
Zero Waste Germany
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- **Germany has one Zero Waste Certified City: Kiel.**
- **Three cities have committed to becoming Zero Waste Candidate Cities: München, Leipzig, and Düsseldorf, although these processes are currently paused. The region of Kreis Höxter is working with MiZA in its preparation to become a Zero Waste Candidate City soon.**

National and regional context

The zero waste landscape in Germany is evolving with increasing interest from various sectors. We've observed the emergence of multiple certification systems from established organisations such as DEKRA Assurance Services, DQS GmbH, GUTcert GmbH, and TÜV-Verband. This is alongside long-standing experts such as the Wuppertal Institute and INFA, which offer support to municipalities in developing zero waste concepts.

The German waste management association (VKU) has also shown interest in zero waste approaches, hosting a conference earlier this year where Selina Kahl from our only Certified city, Kiel, presented. This one example represents a wider growing institutional awareness of zero waste principles and their practical implementation. In Germany, we have noted that attention and funding are moving beyond just the 'traditional' scope of zero waste programmes, instead shifting toward broader circular economy initiatives and framing such as 'circular cities.'

Further municipality engagement

Beyond our certified and candidate cities, Zero Waste Germany has been establishing and developing relationships with several municipalities in Germany. We can see exciting interest and appetite to become a Zero Waste Certified City in Düsseldorf and the Kreis Höxter region. We have continued providing technical support and building relationships with city officials implementing ambitious measures in Köln, Freiburg, and the Neukölln district in Berlin regarding their zero waste concept development.

Since the German Federal Court confirmed the legal jurisdiction of cities to apply a tax on single-use packaging items and cutlery using the Tübingen case, we are seeing an exciting growth in German cities beginning to follow in the footsteps of Tübingen and introduce their own municipal tax. We believe this would have a very positive impact on helping promote reusable packaging alternatives for on-the-go beverages and food, reducing a key waste stream for many large cities.

2024 activities

Our primary focus this past year has been building foundational capacity for supporting German municipalities, including:

- Re-establishing a working group to coordinate zero waste initiatives.
- Translating essential documents into German to improve accessibility for city officials.
- Maintaining communication with and providing support where possible to zero waste managers across municipalities.
- Preparing for a roundtable of municipal zero waste teams, which took place in January 2025.

In the municipalities we work with, Düsseldorf has made notable progress with its zero waste initiatives despite various challenges locally. Their efforts include implementing mandatory reuse systems for public city events and developing a compulsory city-wide bio-waste collection system.

2025 priorities

Looking ahead to the next 12 months, our central priorities include:

- **Exploring the development of an online platform** where municipalities can exchange ideas, projects, documents, and contact information.
- **Identifying specific projects to focus on with municipalities** and provide mentorship to help improve local policies.
- **Securing extra resources** to support ZWG having dedicated staff time for these initiatives.

As Zero Waste Germany continues to evolve as an alliance, we aim to build capacity to meet the expectations of municipalities seeking expertise and support in their zero waste journeys.

Greece

Written by Elena Oikonomou,
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- **ECOREC works with one Zero Waste Certified City in Greece: Tilos.**
- **There are two Zero Waste Candidate Cities in Greece - Skiathos and the municipality of Vari Voula Vouliagmeni.**

National and regional context

In 2024, Greece introduced Law 5151/2024, significantly updating national waste management regulations. The law provided important advancements such as improved collection systems for bio-waste and recyclables, increased transparency, and stronger enforcement measures. Yet persistent delays, especially in developing organic waste management facilities, continue to hinder timely advancements towards comprehensive zero waste practices.

What is more, support for waste-to-energy, has been officially incorporated in government planning for the year 2030. Plans include the construction of up to 6 waste-to-energy facilities, aiming to substantially reduce landfill reliance. This move towards energy recovery from waste poses a challenge for zero waste initiatives, potentially diverting focus from separate collection, waste prevention and reuse strategies.

Tilos
The certification of Tilos as Greece's first Zero Waste municipality through the Just Go Zero programme has received positive national attention. The decision of the South Aegean Region to fund Tilos' ongoing project costs has increased the potential for neighboring small islands to pursue similar strategies, facilitating greater municipal interest and engagement in zero waste practices in the region.

2024 successes

Zero Waste Ρότα—Coastal waste management in Skiathos
In 2024, the "Zero Waste Ρότα" project, developed in collaboration with the Municipality of Skiathos, successfully tackled waste management challenges in coastal tourism. The project focused on transforming waste practices aboard the numerous touristic day boats operating on the island. These efforts led to a measurable increase in recycling rates and improved separate waste collection.

A key innovation was empowering dayboat operators to educate tourists on proper waste disposal, especially when visiting remote beaches that are inaccessible by road. This not only helped protect these vulnerable natural areas, but also fostered a culture of environmental responsibility among visitors.

Despite delays in the development of a local organic waste facility due to persistent bureaucratic hurdles, the municipality has remained committed to its zero waste targets. By September 2024, the initiative had successfully diverted approximately 14,600 kg of recyclables from landfill, significantly improving local environmental conditions and boosting community engagement.

Greece

Addressing barriers to PAYT implementation
One of the major obstacles to implementing Pay As You Throw (PAYT) systems at the municipal level has been the Ministry of Finance's interpretation that PAYT bags should be subject to 24% VAT on the full cost, including waste management services (i.e. not just the bag itself). This interpretation imposes an unjustified financial burden, effectively increasing the cost of waste management by 24% without providing any additional benefits.

As a result, many municipalities have expressed strong opposition to PAYT. To counter this, we've collaborated with relevant authorities to explore alternative approaches, including using Reverse Vending Machines (RVMs) as a way to bypass VAT complications, and addressing data collection and citizen privacy concerns.

Promoting EPR for bio-waste from large producers
To address the pressing issue of bio-waste from commercial sources such as restaurants, hotels, and catering services, we are advocating for the introduction of a dedicated Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) system. This would ensure that large-scale producers are held accountable for the collection and treatment of their organic waste, enabling faster and more effective management of this critical waste stream.

Photo credits: ECOREC

Impact on communities
Local communities, especially in tourism-driven regions and islands like Tilos and Skiathos, significantly benefit from zero waste initiatives. Residents enjoy cleaner environments, businesses gain economic advantages from improved environmental branding, and educational initiatives empower youth and schools to adopt sustainable practices. NGOs and social enterprises have increased resources and visibility, enhancing local sustainability efforts.

2025 priorities

In 2025, ECOREC will focus on driving systemic change at the local level to support municipalities in transitioning towards more sustainable waste management practices. One of the main goals will be to resolve the obstacles that hinder the implementation of PAYT systems. ECOREC aims to see at least one municipality fully implementing a PAYT system as a successful pilot that can inspire others.

At the same time, the organisation will work with five municipalities to help them begin taking concrete steps in waste prevention. Progress in bio-waste management will also be a key focus, with at least two municipalities moving forward with specific actions in this area.

ECOREC will increase efforts to raise public awareness on waste prevention and the importance of separate collection, ensuring that communities are engaged and informed. The organisation will also support municipalities in effectively applying national and European waste legislation, ensuring legal compliance and best practice alignment.

Finally, it is critical for us to help municipalities prepare practical zero waste action plans that are tailored to their context and include clear, measurable goals.

Italy

Written by Rossano Ercolini,
Zero Waste Italy
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- Zero Waste Italy (ZWI) works with the biggest country network of zero waste municipalities in the world, with a total now of 340 municipalities.
- Capannori was one of the first Zero Waste Certified Cities in Europe.
- Two municipalities - Lodi Vecchio and Codevilla - have committed to become Zero Waste Candidate Cities.

2024 activities

During 2024, we have been busy promoting a pilot project, in action since the start of 2023 in fact, with 51 zero waste municipalities across the Tuscany region. The process has been helpful for ZWI to better understand the opportunities and difficulties faced today with our network of zero waste Italian municipalities. Also in the Marche region, we started a similar pilot project confirming some updates and embedding the path to zero waste for municipalities locally, overcoming the difficulties that come with regular changes with different mayors and different political majorities within local offices.

Our biggest success in 2024 was in Livorno, where we helped mobilise the community to ensure that the local incinerator was finally closed.

We have also seen many different municipalities taking positive steps, but maybe the best result was in Calatafimi Segesta and in Trapani province, where source separation of municipal waste reached over 877%.

2025 priorities

One of the biggest challenges ZWI faces and priorities for the coming years is how we can keep effectively supporting the current network of municipalities, which is not a simple task. Despite the big number of municipalities adopting zero waste strategies, our organisation is not strong enough to follow such a large amount of cities.

Despite this, we continue to have a broad picture of the entire zero waste cities movement, both in Italy and across Europe, which we use to support the implementation of best practice models in Italy and to help stimulate other municipalities to follow the zero waste path. One of the most important factors is that the movement keeps a bottom-up approach, made possible by the development of regional and provincial zero waste reference points, as well as the development of local zero waste watchdog points and observatories.

Luxembourg

Written by: Kristina Hondrila,
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- **Oekozenter Pafendall (OEKO) has worked with the municipalities of Sanem and Differdange, as well as PRO-SUD, an inter-municipal structure of 11 municipalities, to pilot reusable take-away systems through the ReuSe Vanguard Project (RSVP).**
- **364 public events across nearly 40 Luxembourgish municipalities received the "Green Events" logo in 2024, collectively hosting nearly 250,000 attendees with minimal single-use waste.**
- **Despite shifting national policy, OEKO continues to advise municipalities and event organisers on dishwashing facilities, reusable dishware, and local waste prevention measures, keeping the drive toward zero waste on track.**

National and regional context

Luxembourg underwent a major political shift at the end of 2023. Most single-use plastic packaging at public events has been banned since January 2023. However, the national waste law also stipulated a ban of most single-use items made of other materials (such as cardboard, wood, glass, aluminium) at public events from 1 January, 2025 that is now set to be postponed to 1 January, 2026. Public subsidies for green events have been reduced. M**ore consequentially, seeking to align with EU requirements, the single-use ban in take-away inscribed in the national waste law will be removed entirely so that Luxembourg, once a legislative pioneer, will limit itself to PPWR rules**. This policy shift has created uncertainty for municipalities and businesses that had been preparing for a transition to reuse.

OEKO and allied organisations had advocated strongly to preserve the original provisions. It compiled reuse case studies and liaised with the Environment Ministry to maintain the single-use bans in place. Furthermore, throughout 2024, OEKO maintained a focus on municipalities committed to zero waste.

Through its Green Events initiative co-coordinated with SuperDreckskëscht, OEKO facilitated the transition to reusable dishware, mobile dishwashing trailers, and other reuse-friendly infrastructure at public events**. In 2024 alone, 364 events (spanning local fairs, cultural festivals, and sports gatherings) received the "Green Events" logo, eliminating single-use packaging in food and drink services for around 250,000 participants.**

Luxembourg

Sanem, a leader in reuse

One leading example is the municipality of Sanem, which took proactive steps in 2022 by constructing a **large-capacity dishwashing facility capable of cleaning up to 1,700 cups per hour. By 2024, demand had grown so significantly that weekend shifts had to be added,** prompting plans to expand the facility to also wash reusable food containers.

Sanem stands out for its strong municipal guidelines on zero waste events. **All public events held on municipal premises are required to meet Green Events standards, ensuring a transition away from single-use packaging.** To support event organisers, the municipality provides guidance, reusable dishware, and direct consultations. This proactive approach has made Sanem a model for other municipalities looking to implement reuse systems.

2024 successes

For OEKO, a standout achievement was scaling up "Green Events" so that reuse and minimising waste are now seen as the "new normal" across Luxembourg. Increasingly, this also applies to Green Business Events.

Beyond events, the municipality of Sanem's ambitious "industrial" dishwashing system has served as a practical example for other municipalities aiming to reduce single-use items.

Another key win was forming a pilot consortium with urban municipalities, particularly Sanem and Differdange, to launch a reuse system for take-away as part of Zero Waste Europe's ReuSe Vanguard Project (RSVP).

2025 priorities

Looking ahead, OEKO's key priorities for 2025 include:

- **Scaling reuse in take-away**: OEKO aims to roll out its pilot take-away reuse project in the southern region, engaging local businesses, citizens, and municipalities.
- **Infrastructure and policy**: building on the Green Events programme, OEKO will continue helping municipalities adopt reusable dishware, and create supportive local policies and infrastructures
- **Wider stakeholder engagement**: through awareness activities, the organisation will showcase the environmental benefits of reuse, encouraging the adoption of zero waste solutions at public and business events as well as in the hospitality sector.

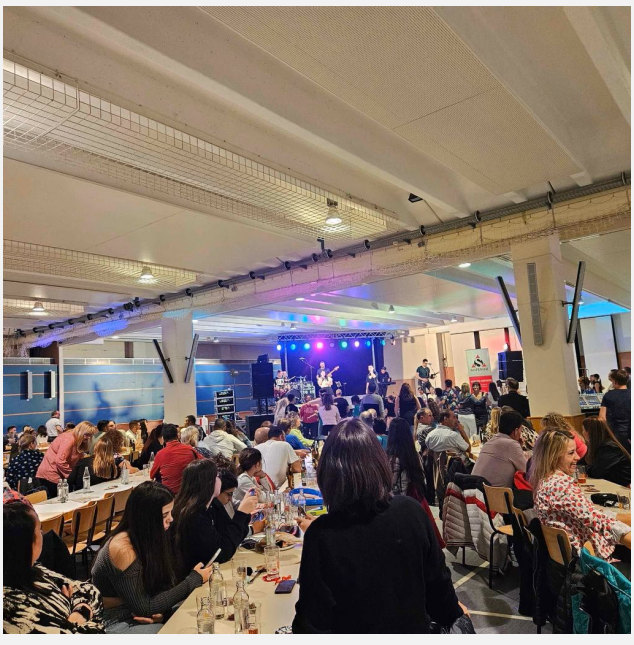

Photo credits: Oekozenter Pafendall

Montenegro

Written by Vanja Cicmil,
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- **Zero Waste Montenegro works on the #ForkToFarm campaign with Danilovgrad, Podgorica, Tuzi, and Kotor municipalities.**
- **While our advocacy work primarily operates at the country and regional levels, we focus on specific pilot areas for implementing zero waste practices.**
- **Zero Waste Montenegro coordinates the CleanupMontenegro network, which has expanded to 40 organisations and informal groups across 13 municipalities.**

National and regional context

In April 2024, Montenegro passed a new Law on Waste Management, introducing important provisions such as Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) and a Single-Use Plastics (SUP) ban. This legislative development has created new opportunities for advancing zero waste principles throughout the country.

Bio-waste management has gained significant momentum and interest across Montenegro, with the #ForkToFarm campaign contributing substantially to this growing focus. After years of advocacy, our anti-incineration campaign has also begun to show promising results, with signs of a shift in waste management infrastructure priorities.

Further collaboration with municipalities

As a partner of the Zero Waste Europe-led #ForkToFarm campaign, Zero Waste Montenegro implemented several bio-waste management initiatives across partner municipalities:

- In **Danilovgrad**, our focus has been on backyard composting, equipping households with composting kits with bins and Bokashi liquid. To ensure ongoing engagement, we established a Viber community where participants can share experiences and receive guidance.
- In **Tuzi**, our campaign took a dual approach to organic waste management, combining separate collection with backyard composting for additional households.

Photo credits: Zero Waste Montenegro

Montenegro

- In **Podgorica**, our collaboration with "Urban Garden Podgorica" has created an integrated approach, with composting bins distributed and the municipality approving the construction of a composting site within the urban garden.

- The success of the Urban Garden Podgorica has enabled us to set up a new project, **"Urban Garden Pomorandza"**, which is financed by the Ministry of Ecology and Sustainable Development. The project aims to implement organic waste separation inside an urban area, which, in addition to the building of an urban garden with a large composter in front of a residential building, includes educational activities and providing organic waste bins to residents.

Outside of #ForkToFarm, our work with municipalities focused on waste data accountability, door-to-door collection systems, and anti-incineration campaigning at the national level.

2024 successes

The CleanupMontenegro network stands as our most visible achievement in 2024. Orchestrating a full week of clean-up activities in September, the network mobilized 725 volunteers across 13 municipalities who collectively removed nearly 5 tonnes of waste through 22 strategic cleaning events in areas ranging from coastal to mountains. The network's remarkable growth—expanding from 18 to 40 organisations since 2023—showcases the growing community commitment to zero waste principles.

The #ForkToFarm campaign delivered equally impressive results in bio-waste management across Montenegro. In Danilovgrad, 150 households embraced backyard composting; in Tuzi, 300 households participated in separate organic waste collection with an additional 50 households adopting backyard composting practices; and in Podgorica, 100 composting bins were distributed among citizens.

2025 priorities

Looking forward, our priorities include:

- **Engaging communities** in zero waste practices.
- Facilitating i**mprovements in separate waste collection** in pilot neighbourhoods.
- **Engaging businesses i**n zero waste practices and certification.
- **Monitoring the implementation of the Waste Management Law**, as well as national and local plans.
- Exploring possibilities for **supporting the inclusion of informal wastepickers** in the waste management system and improving their wellbeing, through the lens of social and environmental justice.
- Advancing **Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)** policy.

Through these strategic priorities, Zero Waste Montenegro will continue to foster education, innovation, and collaboration to build lasting environmental change across the country.

Poland

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Polish Zero Waste Association
www.zero-waste.pl

- **The Polish Zero Waste Association has been collaborating with the municipalities of Rydułtowy, Gmina Pruszcz Gdański, as well as the municipality of Ustka.**
- **After five years of persistent advocacy, we secured a major win for a national Deposit and Return System (DRS).**

National and regional context

In 2024, Poland introduced significant waste management changes, including:

- A national deposit return system launching on 1 October 2025.
- Mandatory separate collection of textile waste starting 1 January 2025.

The implementation of these new regulations presented challenges for municipalities, particularly around resident education. Many municipalities, especially those with limited resources, have struggled to develop sufficient educational programmes.

Further collaboration with municipalities

In 2024, we worked with a range of municipalities across different regions, including **Rydułtowy Municipality** in southern Poland, **Gmina Pruszcz Gdański** in the north, and **Ustka Municipality** located on the Slovenian Coast on the Baltic Sea.

Our collaboration with Ustka was centred around a specialised ghost nets management initiative, part of the LIFE Pom GOZilla.PL project.

Working closely with Ustka, we are planning to develop standards for waste management along the Baltic Sea coast, creating a model for replication for other coastal municipalities.

2024 successes

The Polish Zero Waste Association achieved two significant milestones in 2024. Firstly, we finally succeeded in securing a national Deposit Return System (DRS) after half a decade of strong advocacy. Secondly, we received an **invitation from the Pomeranian Voivodeship to support them in creating circular models for their citizens** through sub projects like the Ustka project on ghost nets management.

2025 priorities

Our key priorities for the coming year include:

- Overseeing proper **DRS implementation** nationwide.
- Implementing **Extended Producer Responsibility** (EPR) for packaging.
- **Continuing our work on the #ForkToFarm campaign** and improving bio-waste collection rates across three Polish municipalities.

Portugal

Written by Ismael Casotti Rienda,
ZERO – Associação Sistema Terrestre Sustentável
www.zero.ong

- **There are currently no Zero Waste Certified Cities in Portugal, although we hope that the first one might come at the beginning of 2026 (Guimarães).**
- **There are five confirmed Zero Waste Candidate Cities - Albergaria-a-Velha, Corvo, Guimarães, São João da Madeira, and Vila de Rei.**

Further collaboration with municipalities

In addition to the five Zero Waste Candidate Cities, ZERO also works with:

- Fornos de Algodres, which will potentially be joining the Zero Waste Cities programme, since we implemented a small project of door-to-door collection combined with community composting, funded by Zero Waste Europe and GAIA (Muxagata project).
- Silves, where we monitor their pilot of door-to-door collection in the Algarve region.
- Castelo Branco, where we accompany the roll-out of community composting pilot.
- Funchal, where we are finishing the onboarding for the Zero Waste Cities Certification.

National context

There were some important developments at the national level which have affected our work, mostly due to the change of government. **After some years of stagnation, the government has approved a huge increase in the compensation values for recyclables.** We have been supporting this for a long time, as it's a key and necessary tool to increase the financial viability of separate collection models. It encourages many municipalities to reconsider a shift towards door-to-door separate collection models, based on a structure of similar costs but increased incomes.

At the end of November 2024, the national government also approved the creation of a working group with stakeholders to solve the landfill crisis (landfills fill up quickly as they are receive 60% of Portugal's municipal solid waste waste). ZERO published a strategy and set up meetings with relevant stakeholders to understand where and why there is an increased push for incineration instead, to help us build up a strategy and demystify most misconceptions that promote waste burning to this day.

Lastly, the opening of new funding schemes for Pay-As-You-Throw (PAYT) is a key national development, with municipalities now more aware that the topic must be addressed sooner rather than later. The specifics of these funding schemes will be further developed in 2025.

Portugal

In 2024, we had two main focus areas:

- Showing best practices in the implementation of PAYT schemes.
- Monitoring the performance of bio-waste (and recyclables) collection in municipalities.

2024's activities

We are seeing an increase in the interest for our events aimed at municipalities, and for the content that we offer. It means that we were able to provide a credible narrative, regarding for instance collection models and composting. **Moreover, the increasing costs of waste management (higher landfill tax), more stringent monitoring from authorities, and other developments make zero waste a more viable option rather than an unreachable target.**

At the national level, we have been having closer contact with regional waste management companies (two big groups for the mainland territory and two in the islands of Madeira and Azores). In all cases, we have established a relationship of mutual understanding and they've been providing us with both some helpful data but also insights to comprehend the whole panorama of waste management in Portugal. A Memorandum of Understanding was signed with one of them (EGF), allowing us to discuss matters under confidentiality.

Photo credits: ZERO

Local highlights

We can showcase the example of great initiatives in several municipalities. Fornos de Algodres, São João da Madeira, and Silves have all been implementing the measures they saw during the study visits we organised to Italy and Spain, including door-to-door collection, proper collection schedules, sanitary textiles/diapers as separate stream (only Silves), tags to identify and reject bins when wrongly sorted, and software or other user ID methods to monitor waste generation.

2025 priorities

Looking ahead, our priority is to get more municipalities in Portugal to showcase their data and their experience as best practices. Ahead of the local elections in October 2025, we want to be able to showcase municipalities where politicians have returned to power after implementing zero waste measures.

Slovakia

Written by Lenka Beznakova,
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- **There are four Zero Waste Candidate Cities in Slovakia: Partizánske, Košeca, Úľany nad Žitavou and Chocholná-Velčice.**
- **A number of municipalities collaborate with FOE—SPZ Slovakia in the Zero Waste Europe Elevating Reuse in Cities (ERIC) and Fork To Farm projects. In the case of the ERIC project, Chocholná-Velčice, Partizánske, and Koseca all participate, while the same three municipalities are also involved in Fork To Farm, alongside Úľany nad Žitavou.**

Further collaboration with municipalities

In addition to the four Zero Waste Candidate Cities and municipalities collaborating with us on projects, FOE—SPZ Slovakia also works closely with:

- **Žilina**—on the introduction of kitchen waste collection and quantitative collection; we started last year with family houses. Also the separate collection system in family houses changed to door-to-door. All changes started from January 2025. Citywide, this has resulted in a 16.85% decrease in mixed waste generation in the first 2 months and a 7.7% increase in sorting.
- **Bošáca**—streamlining the waste collection system with a focus on their Pay-As-You-Throw (PAYT) system.
- **Raslavice**—training Roma workers in the municipality's waste enterprise on how to properly manage waste.
- **Vrbové**—streamlining the local kitchen waste collection system.

National and local context

The situation in Slovakia continues to deteriorate in terms of environmental protection and care. The government's direction in the field of waste management leads to the promotion of waste incineration, no work is being done on the state's strategic documents in the field of waste, no measures are being promoted to prevent waste. There are restrictions on citizens' rights in the EIA process or on the activities of NGOs.

Local governments are in legislative uncertainty, share taxes are being reduced, VAT and prices of goods and services have increased, and transaction tax has started to apply. Small local governments (98% of them in Slovakia) have problems providing basic services for their citizens, and find it difficult to make space for development activities. This also has an impact on the involvement of municipalities in the Zero Waste Cities programme.

We continue to work with municipalities to find solutions to prevent waste, which ultimately leads to savings.

Slovakia

2024 priorities

We continued with the introduction of efficient kitchen waste collection and showcasing the results to other municipalities. Partizánske **serves as an example of a well established system of kitchen waste collection in apartment buildings, whilst Úľany nad Žitavou show how effective kitchen waste collection in family houses also makes sense.** This is a village where a lot is grown and farmed, and there was an idea that people could compost or feed everything. But that is not the case. In Slovakia, the vast majority of municipalities have kitchen waste collection in place, but it is not effective and people are discouraged from getting involved. That is why it is very important to show that it can be done properly and efficiently.

Another 2025 priority was our ongoing fight against the construction of waste incinerators in Slovakia. There are eight planned so far, the Minister of Environment says that Slovakia needs at least three. We are working closely with the affected municipalities and the local community to try to showcase other alternatives.

Two of our biggest successes from 2024 include:

- Canceled EIA plans to build 2 incinerators in the municipalities of Šaľa and Selice, each with the capacity for 100,000 tons of municipal waste.
- Canceled EIA plans to build 2 chemical recycling facilities in the cities of Nováky and Liptovský Mikuláš.

Impressive local policies in Slovakia

We consider the implementation of a pilot project in a section of apartment buildings in Partizánske to be the greatest success, where we tried to introduce the collection of mixed waste into small buckets directly from households, with the aim of introducing the fairest PAYT system possible.

Large containers for mixed waste were removed from the stands in front of the entrances of apartment buildings, meaning only stands for sorted waste collection remained. Kitchen waste is collected into buckets directly in front of the apartments. **128 households actively participated in mixed waste collection, reducing the production of mixed waste by 17.25 tons (65.17%) in 5 months.**

Partizánske introduced the collection of kitchen bio-waste in family houses (so far in 2 city districts) in 2024. 76.5% of households are participating, whilst uninvolved households continue to compost independently. In the 6 months of collection, 23.4 kg of kitchen waste/inhabitant was collected and the amount of mixed waste was reduced by 39.35 tons. Last year, the amount of mixed (residual) waste per capita was 200.9 kg and the local separate collection rate was 42.27% according to Slovak legislation. Partizánske is a nice example of a circular economy in the area of biological waste. Green and kitchen waste collected from households in the city ends up in the city's composting plant, and this year the city is starting to offer compost to its residents. Our organisation is a mentor for the composting process at the composting plant.

The introduction of kitchen waste collection in family houses in Úľany nad Žitavou was also particularly impressive. 75% of households now use the system, with the remaining composting at home. In the 5 months of collection, 17.38 kg of kitchen waste/inhabitant was collected and the amount of mixed waste was reduced by 10.07 tons. There is a strong campaign in the village to support home composting. Last year, the amount of mixed waste per capita was 112.43 kg, with a separate collection rate of 65.78% according to Slovak legislation.

In the municipality of Košeca, a very targeted Pay as You Throw (PAYT) system was introduced in 2024, which resulted in a reduction in mixed waste by 4.59 kg *per capita*, which is a total of 15.4 tons. Last year, the amount of mixed waste *per capita* decreased to 90 kg and the separate collection rate was 52.99% according to Slovak legislation.

We set up a PAYT system at the end of the year in Chocholná-Velčice, and the first results will come in 2025. Last year, the amount of mixed waste per capita was 104.77 kg. The sorting rate was 52.59% according to Slovak legislation.

Photo credits: Friends of the Earth - SPZ (FOE)

Slovenia

Written by Zaklina Zader,
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- **There are five Zero Waste Certified Cities in Slovenia: Bled, Gorje, Vrhnika, Borovnica, and Log-Dragomer.**
- **There are also 7 Zero Waste Candidate Cities: Laško, Zreče, Gorenja vas-Poljane, Ormož, Sveti Tomaž, Središče ob Dravi, and Gorišnica.**
- **Through Zero Waste Europe's Elevating Reuse in Cities (ERIC) and STICT projects, EBM collaborates on specific topics with the municipalities of Bled, Gorje, Škofja Loka, Vrhnika, Laško, Zreče, Gorenja vas-Poljane.**
- **Over the last two years, EBM has also collaborated closely with the tourism board of Ljubljana and VOKA SNAGA (local waste management company) on increasing waste prevention and reuse within the hotel and events sectors.**

2024 successes

Looking back at 2024, our primary focus was finalising zero waste strategies for three new municipalities—Laško, Zreče, and Gorenja vas-Poljane—along with their plastic prevention plans. All of these strategies were successfully approved by the end of the year. Additionally, we developed a handbook aimed at promoting the use of reusable nappies at the local level. For example, we helped organise the TURBO event in Bled, which brought together local municipalities, waste management companies, tourism promoters, and representatives from accommodation facilities to explore and unlock the potential for waste prevention within the accommodation sector.

Looking at the work of Slovenian municipalities in 2024, the waste management company Komunala Škofja Loka recently launched a new service for renting and washing reusable cups.

In 2024, the service was embraced by 25 public and private event organisers, contributing to a significant reduction in waste.

Through this rental system, they have successfully prevented the use of 23,000 single-use cups, making a meaningful impact in the fight against plastic waste.

The main beneficiaries of these zero waste solutions include:

- **Event organisers** through reduced costs and enhanced sustainability by using reusable cups, promoting their environmental responsibility.
- **Local communities** which experience a cleaner environment and increased awareness of sustainable practices.
- **Municipalities** by achieving their sustainability goals and reducing waste management costs.

Slovenia

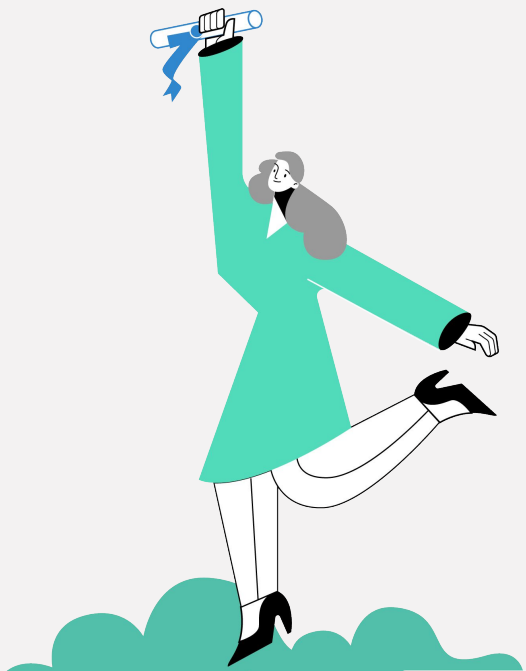
- **Consumers** who have more access to eco-friendly options, fostering healthier, sustainable lifestyles.
- **Waste management companie**s that can expand their services, help reduce waste, and strengthen their sustainability leadership.

2025 priorities

For these 12 months, the EBM team has a number of priorities related to cities:

- **Our reuse project** which aims to promote reuse in Slovenia by supporting the introduction of reuse systems at events and in local communities, including guidelines for washable cups and cutlery. We'll also update the *Manj je več* portal to make reuse easier for individuals. The project will provide expert baselines to help the Ministry of the Environment adopt official reuse monitoring methods, and include school activities on reuse and a Reuse Festival.
- **Zero Waste Cities** and the onboarding of 4 new candidate municipalities, which involves integrating them into zero waste initiatives, providing support for implementing reuse systems, waste reduction strategies, and community engagement. Furthermore, continuous work with our existing network of zero waste municipalities and preparation for the 2nd audit of 5 municipalities.
- Additionally, we will follow the implementation of **Plastic Prevention Plans made in the ERIC project**. This will include ongoing guidance, monitoring, and collaboration to ensure effective execution of these plans. One city will receive focused help with implementation of a concrete prevention measure.
- **STICT:** we've kicked off a collaboration with Bled municipality to tackle the textile waste challenge. Together with international experts, we'll explore sustainable solutions and assess their environmental and economic impacts.

Photo credits: Ekologi brez meja



Spain

Written by Alba Cabrera,
Rezero
www.rezero.cat

- **Rezero works with five Zero Waste Certified Cities across Catalonia and the Basque region of Spain: Hernani, Astigarraga, Usurbil, Torrelles de Llobregat and El Boalo.**
- **There are two Zero Waste Candidate Cities in Catalonia - Viladecans and Vilablareix.**
- **Rezero works with the City of Barcelona within the ReuSe Vanguard Project (RSVP), as well as the municipalities of Torrelles de Llobregat and Viladecans within the Elevating Reuse in Cities (ERIC) project.**

National and regional context

In May 2024, elections were held for the Parliament of Catalonia, which required Rezero to introduce ourselves to the new government teams to establish further collaborations. This also resulted in delays in several actions, such as the approval of the upcoming Waste and Resources Law of Catalonia, the approval of grant calls, contracting services and more. **In November 2024 the Spanish Ministry for Ecological Transition officially confirmed the implementation of a Deposit and Return System (DRS) for beverage light packaging within two years due to the country's failure to meet the 70% collection target for light beverage packaging, which was set for that year. This has been a cause for celebration for Rezero and the other organisations in the territory that have been working for years to make the DRS a reality.**

Being part of the Spanish Zero Waste Alliance has allowed us to have a global/national perspective on the state of the issue and the different needs of the territories. It has also made it easier for us to present regulatory proposals to local and supramunicipal governments. On the other hand, the workshops and webinars we have organised through the Alliance have enabled us to share our knowledge to municipalities beyond our own territory.

At Rezero, we have developed a tool called RezerolabDades, where we analyse around 30 indicators each year. These indicators help us assess whether territories are making progress towards zero waste, and has helped prepare the following summaries for the two main regions we work in.

Catalonia
In 2023, 317 municipalities in Catalonia had a selective collection rate higher than 60%, representing 33.5% of the municipalities in Catalonia and 11.1% of the Catalan population (874,399 inhabitants). In the same year, 226 municipalities in Catalonia had a residual waste generation of less than 120 kg per capita per year. However, they only represent 23.9% of the total municipalities in Catalonia and 6% of the Catalan population.

Spain

Balearic islands
The number of municipalities with a separate collection rate for municipal waste that's above 60% has increased significantly between 2010 and 2023, rising from 2 municipalities to 13.

Nevertheless, in 2023, the majority of the Balearic population (88.6%) still lived in municipalities with a selective waste collection rate below 40%. In 2023, only 12 municipalities in the Balearic Islands generated less than 120 kg (17% of the total) of residual waste per capita. The vast majority of municipalities generating less than 120 kg per capita per year in the Balearic Islands are municipalities with fewer than 10,000 inhabitants and those which implement a door-to-door waste collection system.

Some municipalities with whom Rezero doesn't directly work have notably achieved strong results in terms of low residual waste generation *per capita* (e.g. under 120 kg per inhabitant) and high collection rates (e.g. over 60%):

- **Catalunya**: Arenys de Munt, Argentona, Berga, Cardedeu, Llagostera, Lliça de Vall, Matadepera, Palau Solità i Plegamans, Roda de Ter, Manlleu, Navarcles, Porqueres, Sant Sadurní d'Anoia, Santa Eulàlia de Ronçana, Sant Hilari de Sacalm, among others (Rezero has previously worked with some of these municipalities)
- **Balearic Islands**: Esporles, Bunyola, Valldemossa, Puigpunyent, Mancomunitat Raiguer.
- **Euskadi**: Arrasate/Mondragón, Beasain, Zumarraga, Mancomunidad Urola Kosta, among others.
- **Other Spanish regions**: Comarca Matarraña (Aragón), Mancomunidad de la Ribera Alta (Comunitat Valenciana).

Further collaboration with municipalities

Outside of our collaboration on projects with Zero Waste Europe and through the MiZA Certification, we continue to support and work with a wide group of municipalities across diverse topics. These include:

- **Food waste prevention:** Rezero and Banc de Recursos collaborated with the Barcelona City Council to manage food surpluses from school canteens and with the La Noguera City Council to develop a food waste prevention campaign.
- **Sustainable menstruation and reduction of sanitary textiles**: the City Councils of Castellbisbal and Barcelona have joined the "Lavabos Amics de la Menstruació" network. Barcelona, as well as Ciutadella, has developed the "Sustainable Menstruation" project, while Pallejà and Torrelles have joined the "Nou Període" initiative. Rezero has also been active in Ripollet, Molins de Rei, and Santa Coloma de Gramenet as part of a service provided to the Metropolitan Area of Barcelona to promote reusable nappies and menstrual products.
- **Plans, ordinances, and studies:**
  - With Barcelona City Council, we conducted an analysis of the effectiveness of the new beach raking machine and played the role of technical secretariat for the municipal markets sustainability plan (focusing on plastic reduction).
  - In the municipality of Vilobí del Penedès, we helped create a plastic reduction plan, whilst more broader prevention and management plans were created for Banyalbufar and Cornellà de Llobregat;
  - In the municipality of St. Llorenç des Cardassar, Rezero helped review the local waste ordinance and provided guidance on how to incorporate preventive management criteria.
- **"Library of Things:"** to support the search for funding to launch new libraries or reinforce existing ones, Rezero has worked with the municipalities of Tiana, Prats de Lluçanès, El Papiol, and Premià de Mar. Santa Margarida i els Monjos has inaugurated its own Library of Things, developed with guidance from Nusos and Rezero. More information here.
- **Green Consumption and Commerce:** Sant Joan Despí and El Papiol have developed actions as part of the "Jo Coco" project. Castellbisbal also participated, focusing on schools and reducing plastic in breakfasts. In Sant Pol de Mar, Sant Joan Despí, and Viladecans, Rezero developed campaigns for responsible consumption, while in Manacor, the Green Commerce initiative was promoted.

Spain

Best practices

Some of the most impressive policies we've seen from the municipalities we're collaborating with include Barcelona City Council setting up the Barcelona Zero Waste Observatory. This space will bring together experts and organisations driving the zero waste movement in Barcelona. It will serve as a city advisory body and coordinating agent, facilitating communication between the City Council and the entities or organisations in charge of the projects. **Furthermore,** Viladecans and Torrelles de Llobregat have approved their binding plans to fight plastic pollution **and to promote zero waste in the municipalities, with both municipalities having already implemented some measures included in the plans. Finally, the Catalan municipality of Mataró has also approved an ambitious local waste prevention plan.**

2024 successes

If we are to consider what Rezero feels have been our biggest successes and victories in 2024, primarily it would be that Rezero launched the Toxic-Free Future Declaration, which has been signed by over 100 experts from the fields of science and medicine.

The Declaration emphasises the toxicity of consumer products and their harmful effects on health, while calling on both industry and public administrations to urgently adopt a necessary change in direction. The Declaration has had a high impact in the national media and has been presented to the Spanish Government (Congress of Deputies, Ministry of Health) and other political bodies.

2025 priorities

In 2025, one of our biggest priorities is to deliver the 2nd edition of the Zero Waste Festival, organised in collaboration with Zero Waste Europe. We will take on new research projects, with the participation of two municipalities in Mallorca, aiming to quantify takeaway packaging generation and assess the potential for implementing reusable options.

Building on 2024's successes, we will continue to elaborate on and approve new local zero waste plans and strategies, providing support to the municipalities in the implementation of the measures and help contribute to the approval of new municipal waste ordinances including waste prevention criteria. We hope and expect to get the commitment of new municipalities in the zero waste certification. Finally, we will continue to conduct awareness-raising campaigns in municipalities promoting sustainable business behaviours, conscious consumption, sustainable menstruation and support in the establishment of municipal-backed libraries of things.

Photo credits: Rezero

Ukraine

Written by Svitlana Karytun,
Zero Waste Alliance Ukraine
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- **Members of the Zero Waste Alliance Ukraine (ZWAU) support four Zero Waste Candidate Cities: Khmelnytskyi, Lutsk, Lviv, and Liubotyn.**
- **As part of the #ForkToFarm campaign, the alliance is working with the municipalities of Horokhiv, Pidkamin, and Zabolotsiv. Collaboration will continue into 2025 to establish new partnerships with municipalities on separate collection of bio-waste.**

Broader work with municipalities

We work with four Ukrainian municipalities and communities, **Lutsk, Kherson, Pokrovsk (Donetsk oblast), and Derhachi (Kharkiv oblast)**, within the Zero Waste Cities in Ukraine project, under the financial support of the European Commission LIFE Programme.

The project is authored and implemented by the Zero Waste Alliance Ukraine with the support of a number of key partners: Landscape Laboratory of Guimaraes, Association for the Promotion of Sustainable Development (Portugal), Guimarães Municipality, Oeiras Municipality (Portugal), Carmignano Municipality (Italy), HiiCCE (Hamburg), Zero Waste Europe, Zero Waste Italy, Zero Waste Lutsk, Zero Waste Kharkiv, EcoNews, and Zero Waste Mariupol.

The project aims to support local governments in implementing new legislative requirements in the field of waste management.

Within the project Best Practices of Bio-waste Management in Small Communities of Ukraine, which was implemented by ZWAU member Ecological News, we worked with three communities: **Pidkamin, Zabolotsiv (Lviv oblast), and Horokhiv (Volyn oblast)**. During the project we successfully achieved the following results:

- 23 public composters were installed in the Pidkamin, Horokhiv, and Zabolotsiv communities;
- Ongoing monitoring of the implemented system of public composting in Pidkamin community
- Development of individual waste management plans for three participating communities;
- Conducting an information campaign on effective bio-waste management with special attention paid to the harmfulness of bio-waste incineration;
- Bio-waste generation was reduced by using permaculture design and replacing plants in flower beds with perennials, which will reduce the amount of garden waste;
- Development of the Roadmap for Bio-waste Management in Small Communities of Ukraine.

Ecological News also started their cooperation with the **Chornomorsk community (Odesa oblast)** with the aim of opening and developing a local Reuse and Repair Centre.

Ukraine

Finally, the ZWAU member Zero Waste Zaporizhzhia launched a project aimed at promoting the principles of zero waste in the **Zaporizhzhia community**, by facilitating the creation of regional and local waste management plans in Zaporizhzhya and communicating these principles to the public through social media, a podcast, and reuse and repair workshops.

National context

We understand that the Russian-Ukrainian war is not a reason to stop doing our work and forget about environmental protection. **Moreover, the war has only added to our work. After all, new types of waste have drastically emerged—demolition waste, which, unfortunately, are only increasing in quantity after daily shelling by Russia.** The members of our union, for example Kharkiv Zero Waste, works with these types of waste in close proximity to the front line of the war. They continue to develop the case of reusing the waste of destruction through their Circular Construction Yard initiative.

Despite the war, Ukraine continues to develop the waste management sector, and as a public union, we contribute our knowledge and experience to solving the country's waste problem. Ukrainian communities are faced with the fact that they do not have enough funding to cover the needs of the waste management sector, as a large chunk of their budget is often now spent on defense measures.

While implementing the Zero Waste Cities in Ukraine project, we faced with almost impossibility to realise the planned objectives in some communities, such as the **Pokrovsk community in Donetsk region**, because as of the beginning of 2025, the city is within the active military action, and a significant number of residents are forced to leave due to constant shelling by Russia. Therefore, unfortunately, the war takes away many opportunities and resources, and does not allow us to implement the planned changes.

Despite the war, communities in Ukraine still face basic problems in household waste management. That is why we focus our efforts on helping communities, taking into account our priority areas of work as well as their direct requests. Still we see the great potential of some communities to become Zero Waste Cities. During 2024, we received several requests regarding the participation in the Zero Waste Cities Certification. Our aim is to work on increasing the number of municipalities who are ready to develop waste management systems based on the zero waste principles.

Influencing national legislation to improve local action

In 2024, together with the NGO Ecology-Law-Human, we implemented an advocacy campaign to improve the national technical requirements for the operation of waste incineration facilities.

Together, **we collected 32 signatures in an appeal from representatives of the public sector regarding the need to amend the Ministry's proposed resolution on the topic.** The Ministry of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources took into account most of our warnings and recommendations in subsequent regulations, in particular in the Rules for the Technical Operation of Waste Incineration Facilities and Combined Waste Incineration Facilities.

ZWAU continues to cooperate with the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources of Ukraine within the framework of the working group on the development of an ambitious and effective law on packaging and packaging waste, which is intended to establish such an instrument as extended producer responsibility.

ZWAU members, Mariupol Zero Waste, together with Boyarka Community Foundation, and Ecology-Law-Human, studied the current situation with demolition waste management in Ukraine on the basis of three oblasts, the legal aspects of the problem, and international experience.

Within the project, the team conducted a sociological study which helps to understand the real situation on sites, taking into account the opinions of local authorities and contractors authorised to deal directly with the problem of demolition waste, as well as affected citizens, to understand the needs and capabilities of the communities affected by the destruction.

Ukraine

The project studied Ukrainian legislation on demolition and construction waste management, as well as EU, UK, and Japanese legislation on demolition waste, construction standards, and other related topics. Based on the research, proposals were developed to amend, supplement or clarify the existing legal acts in Ukraine to better regulate the process of managing demolition waste.

2024 priorities

For the Alliance and our members, 2024's priorities looked at two main areas:

- **To reduce the amount of bio-waste in Ukraine.** in most communities, the potential of bio-waste isn't used at all, as around 40% of bio-waste normally goes to landfills or is burned. That is why it is important to work with communities and help them to solve this problem. In 2024, we focused mainly on small communities. As a result, three small communities implemented the separate collection of bio-waste and composting. Now we have a great instrument to work with in 2025 - on the basis of these communities' experience and the expert knowledge we developed while working on the Roadmap for Bio-waste Management in Small Communities of Ukraine.
- **To incorporate and advocate for strong prevention measures in the Packaging and Packaging Waste Law**, which has been under development during 2024. ZWAU was a part of the working group in charge of the law draft development, and managed to have input on mandatory Deposit and Return Systems (DRS), refill requirements, etc. Unfortunately, we haven't managed to push for the reuse targets, but since the draft law has not been published yet for the public, we hope to have input during the public hearings.

2024 successes

- **Two Ukrainian Municipalities - Lutsk and Khmelnytskyi - became the Zero Waste Candidate Cities**. Given the ongoing conditions of the war, this is a great result.
- **The close cooperation with the Ukrainian government**. We analysed three draft laws and provided relevant recommendations to the Verkhovna Rada Committee on Environmental Policy and Nature Management. ZWAU continues to cooperate with the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources of Ukraine within the framework of the working group on the development of an ambitious and effective law on packaging and packaging waste. Also, the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources took into account most of our warnings and recommendations on technical requirements for the operation of waste incineration facilities.

Specific local impressive policies

In three communities with a population of up to 20,000 people - Pidkamin, Zabolotsiv (Lviv oblast), and Horokhiv (Volyn oblast)- we helped to set up a system for collecting bio-waste and composting. In each community, we helped install and test community composting at various critical infrastructure facilities (educational institutions and hospitals). Within these different communities we developed individual bio-waste management plans, which the communities ought to use further. For Horokhiv, we plan to continue cooperation in 2025, and help them develop a local waste management plan.

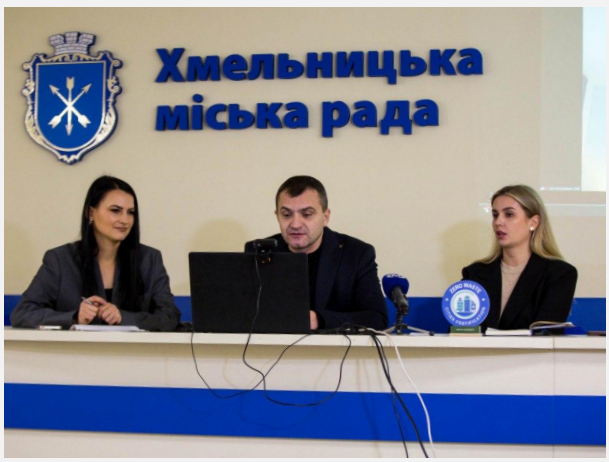


Photo credits: Zero Waste Alliance Ukraine

Ukraine

From the ongoing development and successes of our local work, we can see that generally there are **four main categories of stakeholders who benefit from the zero waste policies** we're trying to implement:

- **Local authorities**, which are obliged to improve waste management systems but currently lack capacity, knowledge, and/or experience to do so.
- **Waste management companies** who are struggling with a lack of capacity are supported with an improved system that enables them to invest their resources into quality actions rather than quantities of waste.
- **Local community youth** - while working with schools, we incorporate the new norm where resources are valued instead of wasted, and used rationally.
- **Communal establishments** (such as hospitals) which usually lack resources and capacity, and now receive extra support while improving their waste management.

2025 priorities

We will spend the next months focusing on:

- **Reducing the amount of landfilled bio-waste** in Ukraine.
- **Influencing the Packaging and Packaging Waste Law adoption** with mandatory prevention measures.
- **Increasing the number of Zero Waste Cities** in Ukraine.
- Reducing the amount of **recyclable materials and demolition waste** that ends up in landfills, incinerators and the environment in Ukraine.

Zero waste best practices

As with each of the previous four editions, this report will take a deeper look at a pressing theme currently faced by European municipalities, showcasing best practice examples to inspire replication elsewhere.

For this fifth edition, we compiled four great examples of how municipalities can develop strategies, connect with stakeholders, and implement solutions that locally reduce the volume of textile waste generated.

Textile waste management and prevention

Globally, the textile sector has a significant environmental impact. Fashion and textiles are the fifth highest producers of greenhouse gas emissions and account for 4-10% of global emissions.

Annually, 98 million tonnes of non-renewable resources are consumed to produce textiles, making it the fourth highest industry in terms of raw material usage. Current statistics reveal that less than 1% of textiles worldwide are recycled into new textiles, while global annual clothing sales have reached 100 billion items.

As outlined in the Waste Framework Directive (WFD), from 1 January, 2025 the European Union requires that Member States separately collect textile items with the aim of increasing the reuse and recycling of such materials. The latest revision of the WFD, wrapped up in early 2025, also introduces the requirement on EU Member States to introduce Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) schemes for textiles by 2028. Within Europe today, economic incentives are not yet strong enough to drastically increase collection, reuse and fibre-to-fibre recycling.

This means that the systems to collect textiles and how they are funded will be a central feature in the planning and implementation of waste- and material recovery-related policies across the EU in the coming years.

This report takes a specific look at some of the best examples of how to design strategies that consider the whole supply chain and how to meaningfully operate effective local systems. This is particularly important as textiles require a completely separate collection system from other waste streams to properly retain their value, given the unique challenges for sorting and preparing for reuse and recycling.

London, United Kingdom
How to define a city-wide strategy

The London Textiles Action Plan presents a best practice example of how to create a comprehensive strategy for large cities to make the fashion and textile industry more circular, aligning with the city's own decarbonisation and zero waste goals.

The plan was created through a successful and ongoing collaboration between London Councils, Greater London Authority, ReLondon, and the Ellen MacArthur Foundation. To spur the transition to a low carbon city, the Mayor of London set waste and resource targets in the London Environment Strategy to ensure that materials stay in use for as long as possible and that recycling is maximised. Textiles are identified as a priority area within this strategy due to their high environmental impact and economic value. Textiles are also a focus area for the London Councils' One World Living Climate Programme theme, which aims to reduce consumption emissions across the city.

The plan is listed as a best practice in this report as it combines an innovative research approach to understand the issues facing London, both in terms of municipal involvement and the business models in operation by fashion companies, as well as using a deep-rooted stakeholder engagement process throughout it's creation, and now implementation of the activities it listed as priorities.

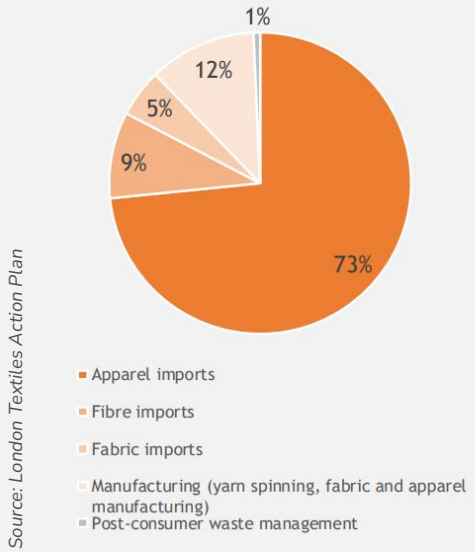
Context and current state

London is a global fashion capital with a textile industry contributing £11 billion in Gross Value Added (GVA) terms and supporting over 200,000 jobs. However, research done before the plan was finalised showcases how the industry has a substantial environmental footprint. This was achieved through a collaboration between ReLondon, University College London, and Circle Economy to trace the flows of clothing throughout London's fashion supply chain. The resulting London's fashion footprint report found that London's fashion value chain was responsible for the generation of over 2 million tonnes of carbon emissions in 2019 alone. However, the report also uncovered that it is possible to reduce annual emissions by over a third through reuse and repair, and the use of more sustainable fibres.

Other key findings:

- Londoners consumed 154,600 tonnes of new clothing in 2019 (approximately 48 items per person).
- Londoners discard about 44 unwanted clothing items per year.
- 92% of clothing consumed in London is manufactured elsewhere, with 87% of consumption-based emissions linked to imports.
- Of the 142,700 tonnes of clothing discarded by Londoners, over 40% ends up in waste bins, where 90% is then incinerated.
- A survey done by the London Councils in 2023 gave the feedback that over 70% of Londoners were willing to embrace changes to their behaviours related to fashion and textiles.

Consumption-based emissions across London's fashion supply chain



Source: London Textiles Action Plan

London (UK)

This research also identified two key levers that could reduce London's fashion-related emissions by over a third each year:

- **Shifting to lower emission fibers** - swapping 50% of existing cotton for more sustainably grown and processed cotton could reduce fashion-related emissions by 4%.
- **Extending the life of existing textiles** - displacing 25% of new clothing purchases with second-hand purchases and repairing 5% of clothing already in wardrobes could reduce emissions by 30%.

To help inform the development of this Action Plan and ensure a collaborative approach, a series of consultations were held from 2023 to 2024 with stakeholders from across London's fashion value chain to gather feedback, align with existing work, and identify opportunities to collaborate.

- 30 of London's boroughs (91%) have been consulted to identify local activities, assess needs, and develop opportunities for shared learnings and collaboration. This includes input from waste, communications and engagement, climate and sustainability, culture and creative industry, and procurement teams.
- Meetings have been held with over 70 stakeholders including representatives from trade bodies, academic institutions, brands and retailers, and London-based designers.
- An Advisory Committee composed of representatives from leading organisations across the UK fashion and textile industry has been established to help steer and govern the Action Plan's progress.

Vision and pillars

The Plan is structured around three key pillars:

1. **Make things well** by embedding circular design principles by the industry. This pillar aims to reduce waste through design and manufacturing, improve durability and recyclability, and increase the use of sustainable materials.
2. **Use textiles for as long as possible** by creating and enhancing opportunities for care and maintenance, repair, reuse, rental, swapping, and sharing models. This pillar aims to replace new purchases with second-hand, rental, and sharing options; increase circular business models; build awareness of sustainable consumption; and develop repair skills.
3. **Reuse and recycle non-rewearable textiles locally** through driving investment into collection, sorting, recycling, and reuse infrastructure locally. This pillar aims to reduce textiles going to incineration or landfill, improve sorting infrastructure, enhance domestic recycling opportunities, and reduce exports while improving transparency.

Priority activities

A long list of over 40 potential interventions was initially compiled which drew from international best practices and the London fashion footprint report, before being refined by London borough officers. Nine actions were ultimately selected for prioritisation after being assessed according to local needs, citizen receptivity, feasibility, and potential impact. These include:

1. Circular economy hubs for textiles

Industry | SMEs | Local authorities

Circular textile hubs hold the potential to reduce waste and support local supply chains. This activity aims to explore opportunities for London's boroughs to support the growth and development of local spaces that enable the recovery, remanufacture or reuse of textiles. This could also involve skill building and social inclusion opportunities. Initial funding has been secured through the UKRI's Future Fibres Network+ fund to conduct supporting research on unlocking post-consumer textiles as feedstock for reuse and recycling within London. Additional funding would be needed to conduct further research or to support the development of new hubs.

Lead: ReLondon	Pillar aims: 1 (iii), 2 (v), 3 (viii, x)	Potential impact: ●●●	Estimated cost: ●●●	Status: Partly funded

2. Repair voucher scheme

Citizens | Industry | SMEs | Local authorities

This action aims to increase the uptake of repair by subsidising the cost of professional services. This activity holds the potential to support local repair shops and change citizen behaviour, and may also provide co-benefits such as poverty alleviation, job safeguarding, high street revitalisation and community building. Funding has been secured through the London Councils' One World Living programme to explore the feasibility of a repair voucher scheme which will include assessing London's repair landscape and identifying potential delivery models. Note that plans to pilot or deliver a pan-London voucher scheme have not been established.

Lead: One World Living programme	Pillar aims: 2 (vi), 3 (viii)	Potential impact: ●●●	Estimated cost: ●●●	Status: Partly funded

Source: London Textiles Action Plan

London (UK)

1. **Circular Economy Hubs for textiles** - explore opportunities for local spaces enabling recovery, remanufacture, or reuse of textiles.
2. **Repair voucher scheme** - increase repair uptake by subsidising professional services, supporting local shops, and changing consumer behaviour.
3. **Educational programme for schools** - develop engagement strategies including educational resources, reuse mechanisms, and swap programmes.
4. **Small business support** - provide advice, connections, and grants for London-based circular businesses driving textile innovation.
5. **Textiles map/directory** - create an online resource identifying local assets like textile banks, repairers, and businesses promoting circular designs.
6. **Segregated textile collections** - connect local authorities and textile collectors to enable segregated clothing collection services across all 33 London boroughs.
7. **Procurement framework for the public sector** - encourage assessment of internal procurement policies related to textiles.
8. **Pan-London campaign** - work with boroughs, charities, businesses, and education sectors to encourage circular alternatives.
9. **Textile sorting and recycling infrastructure** - align with industry efforts to develop post-consumer sorting infrastructure.

To support delivery and potential scaling of these activities, a description, project status, estimated costs and impact, proposed stakeholder groups, and project leads have been outlined for each of the these priorities.

The influence of the city authority

When it comes to textile waste, quite often cities can feel helpless given their limited role and influence over the entire supply chain.

The table below was designed in the Action Plan to help articulate the level of influence that London as a region has on the production, consumption, and disposal of textiles by stakeholders across the lifecycle of clothing and textiles. It examines actions across three main categories of influence:

- **Indirect influence:** where actions are taken by another entity and potentially outside of London, this may result in limited or no potential influence.
- **Direct influence:** where actions are ultimately made by another entity but where there may be some potential opportunities to influence actions.
- **Direct control:** reflects internal functions or where decision-making and levers are readily available.

	Local authorities	Businesses	Citizens
Raw materials	Indirect influence	Indirect influence	Indirect influence
Textile production and manufacturing	Indirect influence	Indirect influence	Indirect influence
Purchase decision	Direct control	Indirect influence	Indirect influence
Access to maintenance and repair	Direct control	Direct influence	Direct influence
Collection services	Direct control	Direct control	Direct control
Redistribution opportunities	Direct influence	Direct influence	Direct influence
Recycling infrastructure	Direct influence	Indirect influence	Direct influence

Source: London Textiles Action Plan

Amsterdam (the Netherlands) How to work across the whole supply chain

The textile sector represents a significant economic interest in the Amsterdam Metropolitan Area (MRA), with a turnover of more than 0.5% of the Netherland's gross domestic product in 2019 and a strong increase in jobs in recent years. The MRA is a forerunner in the field of fashion and technology - about a quarter of the Dutch textile industry has its home in the city. Together, these companies provide some 10,000 direct jobs and another 10,000 indirect jobs. Yet the MRA has also recognised that the sector has an enormous socio-ecological footprint with many negative effects elsewhere in the world and also directly in the city.

Textile flows of the municipality of Amsterdam

As part of the Horizon 2020 Reflow programme, in 2019 a pioneering environmental impact of the textile sector was done for the municipality of Amsterdam (not the entire region) to better understand the current situation and issues facing the city. The assessment focused specifically on textile use by households in Amsterdam, and presented some fascinating insights and worrying data on the impact of textiles consumption.

The study showcased that households consume the majority of textiles in the city (65% percent in 2019, which is equivalent to 18.6 kilotons). Other key facts found through this analysis include:

Local consumption, global supply

- Almost all textiles consumed in Amsterdam (98%) are produced outside the Netherlands.
- On average, the garments travel more than 10,000 km by ship and 600 km by truck to Amsterdam.

Collection and sorting

- In Amsterdam, 69% of discarded textiles end up in residual waste collected by municipal waste collectors, 24% is collected via textile containers, and 7% is collected from companies
- At least 70% of discarded textiles in Amsterdam are incinerated and approximately a quarter are exported.
- Of the 70% of collected textiles that are now incinerated, 28% could be reused as clothing, 51% could be recycled as material, and the remaining 21% are incinerated.
- The degree of contamination of collected textiles via clothing containers is approximately 18% in Amsterdam. Of this, approximately 13% is contaminated or unaccepted textiles, and 5% is not textiles.
- Of the discarded textiles that are exported, 6% are reused in Eastern Europe in a high-quality way. Approximately 75% goes to Lithuania, the Czech Republic, and various African countries where it is reused or downcycled in a low-quality way. The purpose of the remaining export is unknown.

Opportunities missed by incinerating textiles

- Approximately 11 thousand tons of CO_2eq is emitted by the burning of textile waste in Amsterdam. In addition, 7.5 tons of particulate matter (PM2.5) is released into the environment, which contributes to local air pollution.
- By not burning reusable clothing, 2,500 tons of clothing could be brought back into use in Amsterdam, thereby reducing the use of primary raw materials.
- By not burning recyclable clothing, approximately 4,500 tons of textile material could be used instead of primary raw materials for new products.

Amsterdam (NL)

- If current reusable clothing and interior textiles were not incinerated, their sales as second-hand textile products could generate up to €10 million.
- If current recyclable clothing and interior textiles were not incinerated but recycled, their sales to textile recyclers could generate up to €1 million.

At the moment, two thirds of the city's discarded textiles end up in residual waste and are directly incinerated in the region - only 7% is applied circularly. This analysis led to the City embarking on a new vision for circular textile.

This vision had two main focus areas (spearheads) to accelerate drive progress:

1. **Establishment of the 'Circular Aesthetics' platform -** a platform that conveys an inspiring, circular fashion image, which entices designers and users to change their behaviour. The aim is to strengthen new and innovative companies that advocate circular aesthetics, to stimulate new business models, and to inspire users to embrace more circular consumption behaviours.
2. **Significant scaling up of high-quality recycling.** The amount of collected textiles, as well as the processing capacity within the city, will be increased. This includes a goal to increase the amount of separately collected textiles from 3.6 kg to 7 kg per inhabitant in the MRA. There is also a post-consumer recycled (PCR) textiles goal: to use 25% PCR textiles from the Netherlands within new textile products in the MRA. The city also identified a goal of reducing the price of PCR by increasing the volume of available PCR textiles, thus better aligning supply and demand. The MRA also wants to ensure that circular textiles comprise 50% of the overall purchasing made by local authorities by 2025.

This goes beyond the national targets set within the Dutch EPR system for textiles, that requires by 2025 (targets increase by 2030), 50% of textiles must be reused or recycled, with:

- At least 20% being reused.
- At least 10% is reused within the Netherlands.
- At least 25% of the recycling is fibre-to-fibre.

Achieving the mission of 70% circularity by 2030: nine focus areas

The MRA's mission is to achieve a major paradigm shift within the textile sector by fundamentally having a different way of thinking and approach. A broad coalition of frontrunners in the MRA aims to achieve a 70% circular textile sector within the region by 2030, and then wants to move on to a fully circular textile sector as quickly as possible.

By now jointly focusing on transparency, the use of data, innovation, financing, new production systems, and business models, the transition is seen as an opportunity for the frontrunners. A roadmap has been drawn up for both spearheads, in which ambitions and upcoming European and national policy are indicated. While a leading group has been formed for both spearheads, further collaboration has been sought and the city has an explicit intention to collaborate with frontrunners from other (inter)national regions.

Attempts to embed a circular fashion and textile sector in the MRA has led the region to pursue the following nine starting points:

- Design and manufacture **products to last** or be infinitely recycled.
- Use **post-consumer recycled materials** to stimulate demand for recycled materials and decouple demand for (finite) primary raw materials.
- Favour **demand-driven and local production** over global supply-driven (over-)production.

Amsterdam (NL)

- **Business models that preserve products at their highest value**, such as rental and resale, are the norm.
- Focus on a **safe sector in which no harmful substances are released to people and the environment** during the production, processing, and wearing of clothing.
- Prioritise **transparency in the value chain** and substantiate this with data-driven insights.
- **Production** (including inputs used during production and processing) is completely **decoupled** from the **consumption** of **finite resources**.
- **Landfilling and incineration (**also with energy recovery) **are not part** of a circular economy.
- **External costs**, such as negative effects on the environment, **are seen as an integral part** of the product price.

The Green Deal for Circular Textiles

The Green Deal Circular Textiles has resulted in ten initiatives in which more than 100 organisations collaborate on a specific theme. These initiatives have and continue to play an important role within the spearheads and the transition as a whole.

Some of the most inspiring and replicable initiatives within the Green Deal include:

The United Repair Centre
The United Repair Centre (URC) repairs clothing for various brands and provides employment opportunities for 100-150 refugees with a residence permit or people who otherwise would not easily find work. The URC officially opened its doors on 1 July, 2022 and repairs garments from Patagonia and others. In September 2022, the URC launched a training programme that trained 300 students to become certified textile repairers. They did this in partnership with House of Denim, a fellow Green Deal sub-initiative.

The URC provided B2B clothing repair and re-commerce solutions for clothing and accessories. Excitingly, this repair initiative has now become an independent business and is in the process of growing internationally. It has recruited 13 full-time employees, of which 7 were unemployed previously, with a total production capacity of 20,000 repairs per year.

The Denim Deal
The Denim Deal was a national government initiative, with most of the preparatory work done in Amsterdam. It focused on the use of recycled cotton fibers in new jeans and denim garments. The Denim Deal agreed that brands such as Scotch & Soda, Kuyichi, and MUD Jeans would together make 3 million denim garments containing at least 20% recycled textiles. In addition, all parties agreed to incorporate at least 5% recycled textiles in all denim garments as soon as possible.

The Circular Fashion Innovation Lab
Lastly, the Circular Fashion Innovation Lab was a collaboration between fashion brands, European yarn spinners and regional circular textile entrepreneurs—with the aim being to create new collections of yarns and fabrics from locally discarded, non-recyclable clothing.

The initiative boosted the adoption and production of circular yarns, building on existing collaborations between brands, sorters, multiple producers, and European spinners. In it, brands and producers worked together to develop new circular yarns for incorporation into the collections of participating brands. This made a substantial contribution to the ambition of having 70% circular textiles in circulation in the Amsterdam Metropolitan Area by 2030. The initiative continues to this day and is being developed within the Dutch Circular Textile Valley.

The example of Amsterdam and their approach to textiles showcases the importance of combining direct city-led initiatives (collection, reuse, recycling) with the local authority playing a convening and knowledge sharing role where it has indirect control. Europe's biggest cities have an especially unique role, given that they host many textile and fashion companies, despite the growing volume of online marketplaces offering cheap clothes.

The case of Amsterdam puts forward many innovative ways for a large city to convene partners and build new collaborations to tackle textile waste, going beyond just the post-consumption (waste management) phase which is the normal scope of European municipalities.

Catalonia (Spain)
How to engage and mobilise stakeholders

In regards to textile waste, the situation in Spain and Catalonia presents particular political concerns. Approximately 990,000 tonnes of textile products end up in Spanish landfills annually, with only 10-12% of post-consumer textile waste collected separately. In Catalonia, data suggests that each person discards between 21.5-26 kg of textile products yearly, contributing to over 147,000 tonnes of textile waste being incinerated or landfilled across the region.

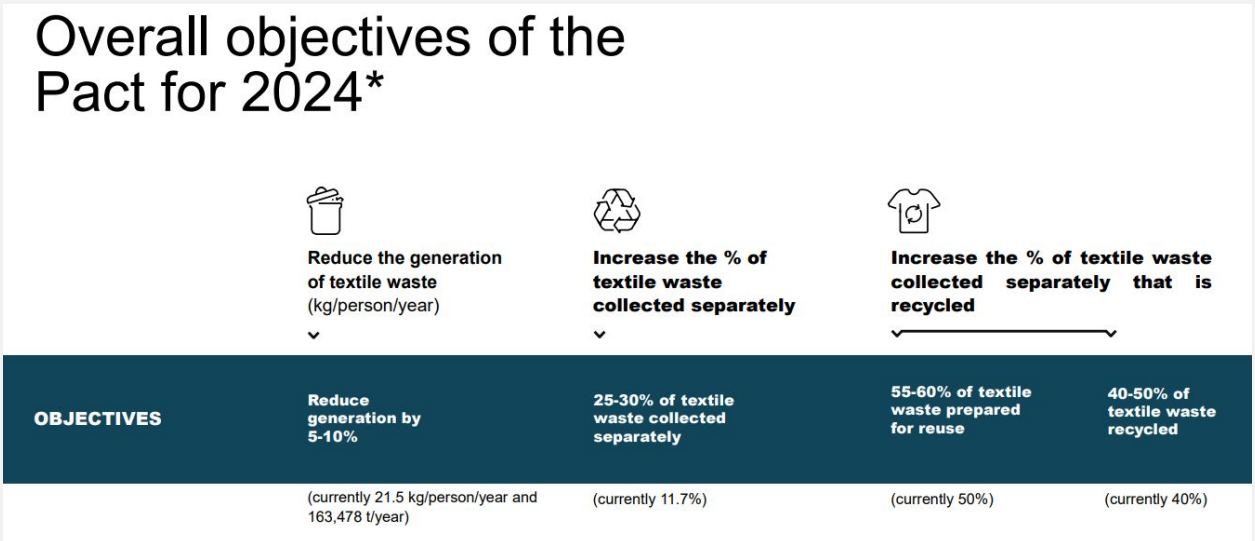
In most homes in Catalonia, like elsewhere in Spain, textile waste is thrown away with general household rubbish, and only clothing in good condition is separated. Only 12% of textile waste is collected separately in Catalonia, with decision-makers acknowledging that they do not have oversight on what social enterprises collecting textiles across the region do with clothing that cannot be reused.

The Catalan Circular Fashion Pact

Given all of this, the Catalan Government created the Circular Fashion Pact, initially emerging as a pilot initiative supported by the European Union's Interreg Europe CircE project (2017-2021). The Government of Catalonia introduced the Pact as a pilot scheme in 2019, with development continuing through 2020-2021 and the implementation phase starting in 2022. They recognised their unique position for this initiative, given Catalonia's history of hosting factories that incorporate recycled textile materials in their production processes.

The Pact is a voluntary agreement to promote and further the transition of the textile sector towards more circular models, bringing together stakeholders from across the entire textile value chain. Participants include manufacturers and textile industry representatives, distributors and retailers, waste managers, regional and local government bodies, universities, research and technology centres, environmental organisations, and civil society groups.

The Pact established ambitious targets to achieve by 2024, measured against a 2019 baseline. These included reducing textile waste generation by 5-10% from the current 21.5 kg per person annually; increasing separate collection of textile waste to 25-30% from the current 11.7%;



Source: Circular Fashion Pact

preparing 55-60% of separately collected textiles for reuse (up from 50%); and recycling 40-50% of textile waste compared to the current 40%.

Segment specific objectives and strategies

Furthermore, the Pact outlined tailored objectives for each segment of the value chain to ensure comprehensive transformation across the sector.

Producers and retailers focus on increasing product durability and recyclability while reducing or eliminating harmful substances. The strategy called for developing cleaner, more efficient production methods; reducing microfiber impacts; increasing recycled content in products; establishing textile waste collection at points of sale; and launching consumer awareness campaigns.

Waste managers were directed to prioritise local, national, and European reuse and recycling in that order of preference. The Pact encouraged processing textile waste locally within Catalonia, ensuring transparency in waste flows and destinations, and supporting the development of local recycling industries.

Local governments were tasked with increasing collection points and separate collection rates, raising public awareness, implementing circular textile procurement policies, and establishing regional collection systems that promote reuse.

The Catalan Government committed to developing supportive circular economy policies, providing institutional support for Pact initiatives, implementing circular textile procurement practices, co-funding Pact projects, and supporting local recycling industry development.

Universities and research centres were expected to promote circular design education and innovate in materials and technologies; **while environmental organisations were encouraged to participate in Pact initiatives**, publicise circularity actions, and encourage prevention, collection, and reuse among consumers.

Benefits of participation

The Pact offered multiple advantages to participants: it enabled a broad range of stakeholders to align their sustainability commitments, whilst also preparing them for the upcoming and existing regulatory requirements, including the future Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) scheme. Participants gained valuable networking opportunities with key stakeholders across the value chain and could actively contribute to developing innovative sector solutions.

The Circular Fashion Pact represents a pioneering collaborative approach to transforming the textile sector in Catalonia. By addressing urgent environmental challenges while creating economic opportunities through circular economy principles, it offers a model for driving positive change across the entire textile supply chain that could potentially be replicated in other regions and sectors.

Saku and Lääne-Harju (Estonia)
How to collect and use local data

While policy changes in the EU are slowly increasing the requirements on governments for better textile management, the lack of timely and useful data that provides key information remains one of the most significant obstacles to effective policy design and implementation locally. Establishing systems that can track basic textile flow information is vital if municipalities want to quickly identify structural problems, identify key issue areas, examine demographic and other contextual factors, and ultimately successfully introduce new policies locally.

The Estonian municipalities of **Saku and Lääne-Harju** have in recent years partnered with **TEXroad Foundation** to implement an ambitious new system for data collection and management to inform local policymaking for textiles. This model is now being replicated as part of Zero Waste Europe's STICT project.

The theory of change for this collaboration (and TEXroad's general approach with cities) is that when municipalities, collectors, and sorters have a common understanding of textile flows and infrastructure—achieved through accessible data visualisation of the current situation -, collaboration and decision-making becomes much easier.

Saku

Saku municipality demonstrates effective textile collection in a community with existing good waste separation habits. Textile collection in Saku has been effective since 2022 and Humana's textile collection container, located at the local Selver grocery store, has been among the organisation's top 5 highest-performing collection points across the country.

Reuse points serviced by the social enterprise Uuskasutuskeskus were installed at the end of 2021 and during 2023, further giving citizens an opportunity to find textiles and other items for reuse before collection. These are controlled access sites housed within shipping containers, and are becoming an important part of Saku's textile management infrastructure.

Waste management sites in and near the municipality also offer an alternative for separate collection of non-reusable items. Available figures for collected quantities are very limited and inconsistent; however, they do indicate an increase in textiles dropped off at these sites.

Because of the potential inconsistency in reporting, a baseline for separate collection at these sites carried out by the waste management company has not been set.

Infrastructure metrics from 2023:

- 66 people/square km.
- 5 collection points.
- 2251 people/collection point.
- 34 square km/collection point.

Infrastructure metrics provide context for an individual municipality to better understand changes in quantities collected over time, especially as population and collection points change. They can also help municipalities compare themselves to one another, making the exchange of ideas and best practices more focused and relevant.

The data gathered and experiences with Saku have provided a 'how-to' for measuring textile waste collection that can be effectively utilised by municipalities across Europe.

This includes textile data matters, highlighting four key aspects:

1. Adjusting infrastructure based on textiles in circulation;
2. Supporting Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) fee structures;
3. Identifying local collection opportunities and challenges;
4. Building citizen trust through transparency.

Saku and Lääne-Harju (EE)

A baseline established with 12 months of textile flow data serves as the foundation for all subsequent comparison and improvement.

The report provides detailed guidance on what should become the minimum data collection requirements for municipalities, which could be transposed into national EPR frameworks, including:

Data from collection containers
The process for data collection begins with the textile collector who empties the containers regularly. The frequency depends on the volume and speed at which the container becomes full, and several containers are emptied along a specific route. When the collection route is completed, the driver returns to the sorting facility to drop off the textiles, and the total amount is weighed on a scale. The total weight is reported to Saku on a regular basis and is measured in kilograms.

It's important that the container is clearly marked for separately collected textiles only, and that non-textile items (e.g. non-textile waste) are measured separately from clothing and other textile items during the sorting process.

Given this system, an average annual waste figure for the sorting facility that includes textiles that will go to waste and non-textile waste as separate line items can be provided to municipalities. This figure is an indicator of the quality of collected textiles, and it should be provided as a percentage of total collection from a specific geographic area whenever possible.

Key collection data to report:

- Location of container.
- Date of collection.
- Total kg collected per week.

Data from reuse (bring) points
These sites, often combined with recycling centres, begin with citizens being able to drop off and pick up (if possible) reusable items from the site. A regular collection is organised by the contracted partner of the items left behind.

In Saku, textiles are put into 150 l bags by the collector; the number of textile bags are counted separately from non-textile items collected. The number of bags is converted to kilograms, using a standard, simple average bag weight methodology. The total number of bags collected and total estimated weight for each time the collection partner completes a pick up is reported to Saku municipality.

Key indicators to report:

- Location of reuse point.
- Date of collection.
- Total number textile bags collected.
- Total estimated kg of textiles.

Lääne-Harju

Lääne-Harju is a municipality that covers a large area but with a small population. Being quite far away from densely populated areas means that the typical approaches to textile collection, such as fixed collection points, are not viable.

The case of Lääne-Harju showcases how rural areas with low population density (20 people/km^2) can develop alternative approaches when fixed collection points aren't economically viable. Their textile management strategy focuses on collection event days and a reuse room pilot for textiles and small household goods. Collection events in population centres grew from an average of 172 kg per location in 2022 to 283 kg in 2023, showing increasing citizen engagement.

Collection event days
Residents can bring their textiles and other household items to 3 locations during a 30-minute period on collection days. Two collection locations are in the main population centres of Paldiski and Laulasmaa, and a third is 25-30 km away from these locations in the less populated area of Vasalemma.

Saku and Lääne-Harju (EE)

2022 (baseline):

- 3 collection events.
- 1550 kg total.
- Average 517 kg per event.
- Average 172 kg per location per event.

2023:

- 2 collection events.
- 1700 kg total.
- Average 850 kg per event.
- Average 283 kg per location per event.

Feedback from local citizens show that these events are increasingly popular. Residents have requested collection events to also take place on weekends so that people who work during the week have more opportunities to bring their reusable items for separate collection.

Correct data measurements on collection event days begin by ensuring textile collection points and dates are decided and communicated to citizens well in advance. The collection is carried out using a large van, which stops at multiple locations in one day. Textiles are put into 150 l bags without other types of items; the number of textile bags are counted before being converted to kilograms using a standard, simple average bag weight.

The total weight of collected textiles are reported to Lääne-Harju, with data available for each collection site.

Key indicators to report:

- Number of collection events.
- Locations of collection events.
- Total number textile bags collected.
- Total estimated kg of textiles (day).

The Lääne-Harju environmental team has engaged fellow municipality colleagues by opening a room in their office building where textiles and household items can be dropped off and picked up for reuse. Items that are not exchanged are collected by local reuse organisation Uuskasutuskeskus.

TEXroad's partnership with Saku and Lääne-Harju has resulted in the creation of a minimum list of data that all municipalities should be collecting to best inform and optimise policy-making around the local textile waste system, including:

- Collection point details - location, type, collector.
- Textile quantities collected - preferably tracked per pickup.
- End destinations of collected materials - reuse within/outside country, recycling, waste (ideally broken down into different textile/clothing items).
- Partner information - legal names, registration numbers, activities.
- Contextual data, adding nuance to the local figures—total textiles in circulation, collection area size, population.

The report from TEXroad on their best practices also includes practical measurement methods for various collection scenarios, showing that even simple metrics are valuable starting points. Alternative measurement techniques using conversion factors (pieces/kg, bags/kg, boxes/kg) are provided for situations where scale weighing is impractical.

By focusing on consistent measurement, thoughtful analysis of the data, and collaborative approaches with stakeholders that are adapted to each context, local authorities can significantly improve textile circularity while creating transparent systems that build citizen trust and participation.

Fulfilling legislative targets

One of the key arguments in favour of adopting zero waste solutions, alongside the environmental and economic benefits, is the fact that, when done right, these initiatives are proven to get municipalities achieving and going beyond what is required of them in legislation - whether regional, national, or European.

This chapter takes a deep dive into the most relevant waste-related files, using examples from across Europe to demonstrate how zero waste solutions are helping municipalities fulfill their obligations.

Fulfilling legislative targets: implementing zero waste models to achieve EU and national objectives

In the current political climate and landscape, progressive environmental action is being deprioritised or pushed back against—despite the need for more ambitious action being more prevalent than ever.

In Europe, we see an increasing number of political parties include in their manifestos or mention in speeches their desire for halting any further new legislation on the environment - such as calls for reviewing the ban on combustion engine car sales. This is also at a time where we witness scepticism from some parts of society about the role that environmental NGOs play and our value in delivering impact with the support of public funds.

It would be irrevocably wrong not to pursue, with greater speed, progress towards more climate neutral and circular targets—while also being urgent getting more Member States up to speed to meet the existing EU legislative targets on waste. EEA research in 2023 highlighted the fact that 18 out of 27 Member States were not on track to meet the 2025 main recycling targets for municipal waste and packaging waste - and recycling well is only the foundation of what we need to do, building towards prevention and reuse/repair efforts.

The Zero Waste Cities model and the approach undertaken by Zero Waste Europe and MiZA, together with our members, have proven to deliver tangible results across a diverse range of contexts, helping cities and regions go above and beyond what they are required to achieve when it comes to municipal waste targets.

While Member States are responsible for achieving EU targets, municipalities and regions must ensure compliance with both EU regulations and any resulting national targets/requirements. Here are some clear examples of how zero waste models help municipalities go above and beyond what is asked from them, looking specifically at the requirements from the most relevant EU files:

Waste Framework Directive (WFD)

The 2018 revision of the WFD outlined key collection requirements on Member States, including bio-waste from the start of 2024 and textiles from the start of 2025. It also sets the guiding framework for recycling with a 55% target by 2025 and 60% by 2030 (and then 65% by 2035).

The waste management company **Contarina**, in the Treviso area of Veneto (Italy), has long been a prime example of how the zero waste approach delivers tangible results. Covering a total population of 555,000 inhabitants, Contarina implemented a door-to-door collection model, with Pay As You Throw (PAYT) for incentivising residual waste reduction and a vast community outreach/education programme. Consequently, across the region, it has a separate collection of 90%—compared to 76% in the Veneto region and 65% for Italy as a whole. **Across the serviced population, the average residual waste generated per person is just 41 kg** - compared to 114 kg in Veneto and 172 kg across Italy.

The approach applied in the Slovakian municipality of Partizanské towards bio-waste generation**, prioritising different models for food and garden waste collection alongside different schemes for collection from multi-apartment buildings and single-family households, is at the core of our zero waste cities model.** By offering more frequent and separate bins for collecting food waste only from apartments, alongside home composting for separate households, this municipality of 22,000 inhabitants achieved impressive results. Residual waste decreased by 118 kg per person (a 36% drop) in the last 8 years, whilst delivering cost savings for the municipality.

A helpful overview of some of Europe's best performing bio-waste models implemented by municipalities can be found in this overview as part of our LIFE BIOBEST project.

Fulfilling legislative targets

Single-Use Plastics Directive (SUPD)
Member States are only now really beginning to truly implement the measures that they have transposed under the 2019 agreed SUPD. The Directive provided for the first time a bold set of requirements on Member States to ban several single-use plastic items, separately collect 90% of PET bottles and establish Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) schemes for different types of plastic.

Through the support of, and participation in, our ERIC project, the Catalan municipalities of **Viladecans and Torreles de Llobregat** have passed ambitious plastic prevention strategies that go beyond SUPD requirements. The 200-page plans for each municipality include several initiatives that also go beyond just single-use plastics—such as making use of surplus food using reusable packaging, reducing disposable diapers and menstrual products, and creating a rental service for reusable crockery and glasses.

In the municipality of **Viladecans**, the campaign '*Fes un pas, porta l'envàs*' ('*Take a step, bring your container*') was launched as an initiative to reduce the use of plastics in food purchases by promoting reusable alternatives. Promoted by the Viladecans Town Council's Environment and Sustainability Department, the initiative encouraged citizens to shop at local retailers by refilling their own reusable containers, contributing to reducing disposable plastics.

Lasting for 3 months, the campaign achieved:

- 82 participant shops.
- 115 enrolled families.
- 3,807 purchases made with at least one reusable item.
- 8,504 disposable items avoided, including:
  - 2,856 disposable plastic containers.
  - 5,510 disposable bags.
  - 138 disposable egg cups.

This campaign is an inspiring example of how collaboration between local authorities, businesses and citizens can drive sustainable practices. Participants experienced both environmental benefits and satisfaction from reducing plastic use. Given the high level of satisfaction shown by the participating businesses and citizens, Viladecans Town Council is considering similar future actions within the framework of the municipality's Climate Pact. Viladecans continues to work to consolidate its position as a leader in waste prevention with the active involvement of citizens and local businesses.

"We have to join many wills of citizens and cities to move forward with this type of project and get plastics out of the mountains, rivers, and seas", said Encarni Garcia, Deputy Mayor of the Environment and Sustainability Department of Viladecans Town Council, also emphasising that adopting a Plastic Prevention Plan is crucial to understand and address the volume of plastic waste generated daily in European municipalities.

Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation (PPWR)

Finalised in early 2025, the revised PPWR introduces waste reduction targets for the first time: 5% by 2030, 10% by 2035, and 15% by 2040 compared to a 2018 baseline. In this useful guide prepared by Zero Waste Europe alongside partners within the Rethink Plastic Alliance, local authorities can find clear guidance on PPWR requirements for Member States, as well as actions that cities can take to fulfill these obligations.

The Estonian capital, **Tallinn**, has now become a zero waste frontrunner with the recent commitment to become a Zero Waste Candidate City. This builds on their existing leadership in this field given their mandate for reusable tableware at all city-wide events, which came into force in 2023 and, subsequently, helped rolling out the same policy across Estonia the following year.

Estonia is one of very few EU Member States that have successfully reduced packaging waste generated between 2018 and 2022 - alongside France, Luxembourg, and Germany. It's worth noting that France and Luxembourg also have similar requirements for reuse at public events.

> **Less plastic in the environment means better health for people and for the life of our ecosystems. The Plastic Prevention Programme allows us to advance in an orderly manner in reducing single-use plastics.**
>
> **Encarni Garcia, Deputy Mayor of the Environment and Sustainability Area, Viladecans City Council**

Fulfilling legislative targets

Tallinn's mandate for reusable tableware only follows other cities in Europe that have introduced similar initiatives, but it is particularly impressive given its 92% return rate for reusables; consequently, it has seen waste generation per participant decrease by two thirds between 2023 and 2019.

This kind of measure will play a crucial role in helping municipalities (and countries) reach their required packaging waste reduction targets in the coming years. The costs for such initiatives could be covered by the required funds that Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) and Deposit Return Systems (DRS) must finance for prevention and reuse initiatives.

Furthermore, a great example of local waste prevention and encouraging reuse can be seen with the waste management company "Komunala Škofja Loka" based in Škofja Loka (Slovenia). They have invested in a rental and washing service for reusable cups as part of their strategy to drastically reduce single-use plastic waste at local events.

In January 2024, Komunala Škofja Loka purchased a set of reusable cups, funding 85% of the cost through regional sources**. The cup rental service for events was then officially launched in March 2024. T**hey have accordingly updated the technical rules and guidelines for event organisers in the municipalities of Škofja Loka and Železniki, including mandatory waste separation, waste disposal, and mandatory rental of reusable cups. Both municipalities have been part of the Zero Waste Cities network since 2021 and have been very actively working on waste prevention strategies. **The rented reusable cups have already avoided 23,000 single-use cups, marking a significant step toward reducing plastic waste.**

For the hospitality sector, the PPWR introduces an obligation (Article 33) to offer take-away food and drinks in packaging within a system for reuse, so that consumers have the option of choosing reuse when buying their goods. The reusable option should be implemented by February 2028 at the latest, and it should be provided at no higher costs and in no less favourable conditions than the single-use alternative. **The PPWR indicates that establishments should aim for 10% of their products to be sold in reusable packaging by 2030.**

The Zero Waste Europe-coordinated ReuSe Vanguard Project (RSVP) works with 7 European cities - Aarhus, Barcelona, Berlin, Gent, Leuven, Paris and Rotterdam - to implement city-wide reuse systems for take-away food and beverage packaging. These systems aim to support cities in partnering with local businesses to meet PPWR requirements, while significantly reducing packaging waste without endangering the economic survival of local businesses.

One of the most ambitious projects in Europe today is the Rotake Reusable project in Aarhus targeting single-use beverage packaging. Our local partner Plastic Change has been monitoring the environmental and economic benefits of the Aarhus project, showcasing what effective city solutions to cut down waste at its source could look like:

- Since its inception in January 2024, the city has seen a noticeable reduction in waste from disposable cups on its streets.
- The project involves 57 partner establishments in the hospitality sector, including cafés, bars, pubs, restaurants, and street food markets, supported by a system of 30 Reverse Vending Machines (RVMs).
- This reusable take-away system allows customers to enjoy beverages in reusable cups for a 5 DKK deposit (€0.43), very conveniently refundable upon return at the RVMs across the city.
- These machines registered over 500,000 cup returns - an overall 85% return rate in less than 8 months.
- A municipal waste sampling of 2,000 kg found fewer than 10 reusable cups, highlighting the system's success in encouraging returns and reducing waste.

These are just a few examples showing why the zero waste work done by Zero Waste Europe and its partners across Europe is so important and helpful for local authorities in meeting their national and EU requirements.

Conclusion

"When a crisis occurs, the actions that are taken depend on the ideas that are lying around at that time." - Milton Freidman, American economist

Our planet today faces the threat from three officially recognised global crises—climate change, biodiversity loss, and toxic pollution. As we continue fighting to get policy-makers to recognise the urgency of tackling each of these three crises, it is absolutely critical that the solutions and ideas to overcome these issues are widely known, increasingly accepted, and ready to be scaled up.

This is what we are trying to achieve with our zero waste cities work. **We want this report to be a dossier of hope and a bank of evidence. It's our most comprehensive overview of the many examples of communities taking bold action on waste prevention and recycling, and of the benefits brought about by these activities and policies.**

Of course, this transition will not (and is proving not to) be easy, or at the pace we need it to be. The barriers preventing quicker and better progress remain extremely stubborn—from a lack of accessible finance to the fact that our current economy (and the way our society is more broadly designed) still favours business models that embed single-use, take-make-throw materials and systems.

As we continue to navigate these tumultuous times, Zero Waste Europe's implementation work will continue to implement a 'disrupt and display' strategy:

- Disrupt the *status quo* of waste management and local policy-making today to change how we think, design, and implement community-led material preservation strategies in Europe's municipalities.
- Display how to implement zero waste policies effectively; the benefits they bring; and the required steps for their success.

The State of Zero Waste Municipalities Report is a great example of how we cannot act alone when fighting for change. Our impact becomes stronger and our challenges become smaller if we join forces. We see this on a daily basis with our zero waste cities work, where support or advice from one entity or city to another is the key to helping unlock challenges or concerns.

As we come to the end of this fifth edition, we are more confident than ever in the power of stories to change the world. After reading the stories in this report, we hope you're inspired to begin writing your own.

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ZERO WASTE EUROPE

Zero Waste Europe (ZWE) is the European network of communities, local leaders, experts, and change agents working towards a better use of resources and the elimination of waste in our society. We advocate for sustainable systems; for the redesign of our relationship with resources; and for a global shift towards environmental justice, accelerating a just transition towards zero waste for the benefit of people and the planet. www.zerowasteeurope.eu

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