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ZELENA AKCIJA
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Krk's journey to zero waste

December 2025

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Welcome to Krk

Krk is a Croatian paradise in the Adriatic. Although it has fewer than 20,000 residents throughout the year, the island comes alive in summer, welcoming around 120,000 people each day, as tourists and weekend visitors flock to its beaches, villages, and cultural sites. In 2024 alone, the island welcomed over 914,000 arrivals, with five million overnight stays.

Spanning roughly 406 km² and made up of seven municipalities – Krk city, Baška, Dobrinj, Malinska-Dubašnica, Omišalj, Punat, and Vrbnik – the island balances its dynamic tourism sector with traditional activities like viticulture, olive growing, livestock farming and fishing, while construction and services continue to develop outside the tourist season.

Managing waste in such a dynamic environment is a challenge, but Ponikve eko otok Krk d.o.o. – the public waste management company owned by all seven municipalities – has been leading the charge. Working closely with local authorities, businesses, tourist boards, and even farmers who compost olive residues, Krk has turned its seasonal challenges into an opportunity to innovate. In October 2024, the island was awarded the prestigious Zero Waste certification in recognition of its outstanding achievements in sustainable waste management, becoming the first in Croatia – and only the second in the world – to achieve full certification as a Zero Waste island.

But what makes Krk's waste strategy stand out? What concrete changes have been implemented over the past years, and what results have they achieved? And more specifically, what best practices stand out that could be replicated in other touristic destinations across the EU?

Figure 1: Tourists on Krk Island. Photo by Chiara Mazzetta on Unsplash.

Turning ambition into action: the Making of Krk's Zero Waste Plan

Krk's journey toward zero waste began in 2020, when the island's public waste management company, Ponikve eko otok Krk d.o.o, representing all seven municipalities on the island, decided to partner with the civil society organisation Zelena akcija to analyse the gaps in the existing waste management system and identify concrete opportunities for improvement.

At the start of 2021, Ponikve joined the project "*Transitioning to a Zero Waste Europe, one community at a time,*" implemented across eleven European countries by Zero Waste Europe. Through this project, collaboration with Zelena Akcija continued, focusing on preparing and implementing concrete zero waste measures for Krk.

Building on this groundwork, in July 2021, Ponikve formally signed the Zero Waste commitment, marking Krk's official candidacy for the Mission Zero Academy (MiZA) Zero Waste Cities Certification. On this occasion, a press conference was organised, attended by representatives of Krk local authorities, Zelena akcija, as well as representatives from the Ministry of Environmental Protection and the national association of Cities and Municipalities.

Figure 2: Zero Waste Cities awards ceremony.

As with every candidate for MiZA Zero Waste Certification, one of Krk Island's first steps was to define its goals in a multi-year Zero Waste Plan, fully aligned with the certification's criteria. With support from experts at Zelena akcija, Zero Waste Europe, and the Mission Zero Academy (MiZA), the island refined and formalised a set of ambitious yet achievable targets, laying the foundation for the next phase of its waste prevention and management strategy.

The process of drafting the Zero Waste Plan has been highly collaborative, involving representatives from all seven municipalities as well as a diverse group of stakeholders: tourist boards, local farmers, small craft businesses, schools, and educational institutions. This broad participation ensured that the plan reflected the island's real conditions, its specific challenges, and the needs voiced by residents. Political differences among municipalities have not posed obstacles as all measures were discussed collaboratively, with careful cost-benefit analysis guiding decisions.

Thanks to this participatory and inclusive process, the pursuit of zero waste certification faced no resistance. For both the municipalities and the public company, it represented a **natural step forward in building a sustainable, future-proof waste management system.**

Indeed, the motivation to seek certification was closely tied to Krk's ambition to become a **future-proof zero waste island** - one that ensures a **high quality of life while protecting local ecosystems.** This vision is now being realised through high-performance separate collection, composting initiatives, and prevention measures aimed at reducing waste before it is even generated.

Through these continuous efforts, Krk aims to be recognised across the EU as a **leading example of waste management in a tourism-intensive context.**

From vision to metrics - Krk's zero waste targets & actions

The main objectives and targets of the adopted Zero Waste Plan were:

- **Increase diversion of municipal waste:**
  - Short-term (within 5 years): Achieve over **70% diversion of municipal waste** (including bulky waste) from harmful disposal methods such as landfilling and incineration, toward priority measures like reuse, recycling, and composting.
  - Long-term (target date to be defined): Reach a **90% diversion rate of municipal waste** from harmful disposal methods toward priority measures.
- **Reduce residual waste per capita**:
  - Reduce residual waste per resident (including the equivalent population from tourism) by approximately 35% compared to 2019 levels (235 kg per capita), reaching **150 kg per capita** per year by **2027.**

To support these goals, Krk island municipalities committed to **key principles:**

- Gradually reduce the total amount of municipal waste sent to landfills and incineration.
- Avoid building new or expanding existing waste incineration and landfill facilities.
- Promote sustainable alternatives to unsustainable waste disposal methods.

In the short term, several **key measures** were identified to achieve these objectives:

- **Analyse mixed municipal waste:** Conduct an audit to identify the most problematic waste streams and determine steps to divert them from residual waste.
- **Introduce a "Pay-As-You-Throw" (PAYT) system:** Encourage better waste separation and reduce the generation of residual waste.
- **Promote prevention and reuse:** Continue efforts to reduce waste through initiatives such as the future establishment of a reuse centre, reducing single-use plastics in public institutions, and promoting packaging-free products through municipal campaigns.

Other priority initiatives included:

- Establishing a professional **Zero Waste Management Council,** comprising representatives from the municipal company, municipalities, Zelena Akcija, and the local community.
- Conducting a study on the impact of tourism on the waste management system to better understand seasonal effects.
- Promoting home composting through the distribution of composters and educational activities.

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What's the role & purpose of Krk's "Zero Waste Management Council"?

Participatory governance is essential to any zero waste strategy. That's why the Zero Waste Cities Certification requires municipalities to create a Zero Waste Advisory Board - or similar body - which aims to bring together all relevant local stakeholders - civil society, businesses, institutions residents - to help shape and oversee the zero waste plan. Its role is simple but powerful: support the development, implementation, and monitoring of the zero waste strategy, while ensuring that measures are practical, fair, and aligned with community needs.

On Krk, this took the form of the Zero Waste Management Council. Its mandate:

- Agree on actions to further reduce mixed municipal waste,
- Monitor progress toward zero waste goals, Keep all key stakeholders actively involved in decision-making.

The council meets at least once a year, but stakeholders remain in contact to consult on various technical matters throughout the year.

Laying the foundations: early waste management challenges & solutions

Before 2005, Krk Island faced a common challenge: much of its waste was improperly managed and ended up in open landfills. Authorities decided to begin rectifying the situation in June 2005 - with the introduction of a new waste separate collection system called Eko otok Krk ("Eco Island Krk"). This involved the creation of bring stations across the island - public collection points equipped with approximately 1,400 street bins, situated no more than 50-70m from residential areas - allowing residents and visitors to sort their waste into five categories: biowaste, paper, PET, glass, and mixed waste.

Despite early improvements, local authorities were not fully satisfied with the results of the system. While collection rates had increased compared to the past, there was still room for improvement. To address this, a door-to-door (D-t-D) waste collection system was introduced for households in 2014, providing residents with bins for separate waste fractions and establishing a regular collection schedule.

How does the new waste management system work?

The following waste streams are collected separately once a week through the D-t-D system: *mixed waste, paper and cardboard, plastics and metals, glass, biowaste, and nappies.* Residual waste is collected 1–2 times per week, depending on the settlement and time of year.

The implementation of the D-t-D system took place in two phases:

- Phase 1 (2014–2016) ensured that every household received a 23-litre brown bin for bio-waste and 35-litre green bin for residual waste.
- Phase 2 (up to 2020) expanded the system, providing households with additional 120-litre bins: yellow for plastics and metals, blue for paper and cardboard, and grey for glass.

To ensure convenience and high participation, every household has been provided with various bins (20–240 L) for proper waste sorting, along with a calendar detailing the collection days for each fraction. Bags for additional waste or occasional collection are also distributed. These bags serve multiple purposes:

- To accommodate extra quantities of separately collected waste when the bin capacity is exceeded;
- To collect fractions that are not placed in bins at all (e.g. diapers, textiles during occasional collection campaigns);
- To provide a practical solution for seasonal users who do not have a permanent bin.

D-t-D collection is supplemented by additional **eco-islands** that were set up across the island to handle extra volumes and give residents and tourists more options for sorting the five key waste fractions. Semi-underground containers with capacities of 3 m^3 to 5 m^3 are located at high-traffic areas, including town centres, residential blocks, and commercial zones.

In addition, Krk began building **seven recycling centres in 2005**, which continue to be expanded and upgraded to this day. . These centres allow residents to bring materials for recycling that are not collected through door-to-door services or street containers - such as textiles, bulky waste, batteries, WEEE (waste electrical and electronic equipment), and hazardous waste (e.g batteries and accumulators, waste oils, medicines, chemical residues, paints and varnishes, pressurised containers [such as sprays and deodorants], and light bulbs [including fluorescent tubes and energy-saving bulbs].

The vehicle fleet has also been modernised and expanded. For example, in 2010 the waste management fleet on the island consisted of 24 collection vehicles, while in 2024 there were 26 collection vehicles, 3 vehicles equipped with cranes for emptying semi-underground containers, and an additional 3 vehicles for transporting green and bulky waste.

Figure 3: A recycling centre on Krk Island.

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Krk's bio-waste collection and treatment

Bio-waste, comprising kitchen and garden waste, is a key fraction of municipal solid waste (if not the most important one) as kitchen scraps often account for a third of residual waste. Ensuring that a high proportion of kitchen waste is collected separately is therefore essential to reduce residual waste generation and achieve Krk's diversion targets.

The design of Krk's bio-waste separate collection system followed that logic, in order to ensure the highest capture possible.

- Bio-waste is therefore collected D-t-D in special containers of 20–240L. Every household was distributed with a free small 20-litre kitchen caddy as well as posters available in four different languages containing key information on how to sort properly.
- During the hot summer months, when the number of tourists is higher and the amount of kitchen waste generated increases - collection happens twice a week. Outside the tourist season, during colder months, bio-waste is collected once a week.

Biowaste is processed at the island's composting facility (which is undergoing modernisation in 2025 to make the process faster and more efficient) producing high-quality compost that is then distributed to residents and sold on the market. This along with certain amounts of biogas used in the waste management system.

Data from 2023 shows that 2,000 t of biowaste was processed annually, producing approximately 1,000 t of compost and 250 t of biogas.

[More info HERE]

🔍 Zoom In

Fresh solutions for used nappies!

Starting in 2025, all households in the door-to-door system can separately collect used nappies, which are placed in new bags made from RECYCLASS-certified 100% recycled material. The new nappy bags make collection more practical and prevents unpleasant odours that would occur if the nappies were placed in mixed-waste bins. While the nappies are still sent to the regional centre for disposal or recovery, the sealed bags significantly improve hygiene and user comfort. Additionally, as the municipality plans to implement a drying process for mixed waste to reduce weight and treatment costs, the odor-reducing effect of the bags will help maintain better air quality in the bio-drying halls.

How PAYT drives recycling on Krk

The introduction of a Pay-As-You-Throw (PAYT) system was a key step in Krk's waste reduction efforts, linking residual waste generation directly to user fees and encouraging responsible disposal.

The system combines a fixed fee for basic municipal services with a variable component tied to the amount of residual waste generated.

RFID-equipped bins in households and semi-underground containers with volume-measuring meters ensure precise tracking, efficient collection, and fair billing:

- Household fees for D-t-D collection are calculated based on mixed-waste bin volume and collection frequency
- Mixed-wasted containers at eco-islands are equipped with volume-measuring meters activated by user cards, with each opening recorded so that monthly charges accurately reflect the actual amount of residual waste generated.

Incentives, such as discounts for increased recycling, further motivate residents. Public education and regular inspections reinforce compliance, helping Krk maintain high participation and reduce illegal dumping.

From bills to benefits

The economics of Krk's waste management system are shaped by multiple factors, including evolving disposal costs, investments in local infrastructure, and modernisation of the collection system.

Financing the system: The cost of waste collection and disposal is primarily financed by revenue from monthly bills. This is supplemented by municipal budgets and the public waste management company Ponikve own resources, particularly given the rising disposal costs of certain fractions, such as plastics. Investments in infrastructure and system upgrades are partially funded by European and national programs, with additional support from municipal budgets.

National context and incentives: Understanding these costs requires considering Croatia's Waste Management Act of Croatia and related regulations, which mandate separate collection and reduction of mixed waste. Fees for delivering mixed waste to regional centres are gradually increasing, creating an incentive for some local authorities to implement separate collection and reduction measures. Municipalities that fail to meet mixed waste reduction targets are subject to an additional "eco-rent" yearly fee, though this penalty is generally too low to drive major improvements. However, many municipalities still rely on local landfills - which remain the cheapest option - especially since not all planned regional centres are operational (see explanation below). As of 2024, the average cost of sending mixed waste to the regional centre for processing or disposal ranges from €150 to €200 per ton, and this cost continues to rise annually to encourage better diversion practices.

Figure 4: A recycling centre on Krk Island.

🔍 How do Croatia's regional centres reflect current waste management issues, and how do these affect Krk?

In Croatia, mixed municipal waste is meant to be delivered to regional centres for proper management. Although national plans from 2005 envisioned the creation of ten centres, only four are currently operational, highlighting the slow development of the system and explaining why many municipalities still rely heavily on landfills in the country. Delays are attributed to corruption among centre managers, misappropriation of funds, and manipulated procurement favoring certain companies.

The technologies used in these centres vary. The first two centres, including Mariščina, which receives Krk's waste, use mechanical biological treatment technology This is where recyclables are partially extracted, but most waste is converted into refuse-derived fuel and burned in nearby cement factories or incinerators. While newer centres employ slightly improved sorting methods, significant portions of waste are still transformed into fuel for incineration. Environmental organisations such as Zelena Akcija advocate for mechanical biological treatment with refined treatment technology (MRBT) to improve recovery rates and environmental outcomes.

For Krk, all mixed waste is sent to Mariščina, meaning the island's waste is largely treated with outdated, inadequate technology. Therefore, reducing mixed waste at the source is the most efficient way to directly decrease the amount of improperly treated waste, and mitigate the impact of the Ministry's refusal to modernise the centre.

Moreover, Croatian legislation mandates Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR), where producers pay fees for products such as packaging, electronics, and batteries. These funds are intended to compensate municipalities for separate collection costs. However, in practice, the compensation system has not yet been implemented, leaving municipal companies to absorb significant operational expenses, especially for high-cost fractions like plastics and textiles

Krk's local approach and pioneering role: Collected residual municipal waste is transported to the regional waste management centre Marišćina, near the city of Rijeka, for further processing - in accordance with national legislation. While the municipal company Ponikve manages collection on the island, the regional centre handles processing and disposal. The separation of responsibilities highlights one of the key cost drivers in Krk's waste system: sending residual waste to a regional centre is more expensive than local disposal. This reinforces the importance of local waste reduction measures, door-to-door collection, and recycling initiatives to mitigate costs, while generating revenue from the sale of some secondary raw materials.

Metals, plastics, paper, and cardboard collected separately are sent to specialised recycling plants across Croatia and abroad, depending on market conditions. Revenue from these sales grew approximately 33% between 2010 and 2024, from €265,240 to €352,164 per year. The system has also created local employment and generated indirect economic benefits, such as increased tourism appeal and opportunities for local businesses.

In a challenging national context where economic incentives for waste reduction are limited, Krk demonstrates that proactive, local zero waste strategies can overcome systemic constraints. Through investments in infrastructure, modern collection systems, and rigorous diversion practices, the island achieves higher recycling and waste diversion rates than most municipalities, setting a replicable example for others across Croatia.

Awareness raising & engagement – how to build a zero waste mindset

Education, awareness raising and good communication are cornerstones of any credible zero waste strategy and central aspects of the certification criteria. On Krk, those are delivered through a range of project activities and local initiatives. These include workshops in primary and secondary schools, public lectures, citizen forums, clean-up actions, and more. A few concrete examples are given below:

- An annual campaign promotes proper sorting behaviour and encourages active citizen engagement with the waste management system, typically focusing on one waste fraction each year.

- Child-focused activities are held in spring, followed by broader public communications in early autumn. In 2019, for example, the campaign targeted biowaste.

- To complement these campaigns, informational leaflets are delivered annually to households along with monthly bills to make sure that residents are properly and timely informed about any changes occurring in the system. **Over 50,000 leaflets, translated into eight languages, are delivered each year** to apartments, agencies, camping sites, and hotels, providing detailed guidance on waste separation practices.

- The public waste management company Ponikve has also introduced **eco-patrols** (green educators), who travel across the island to check household bins, provide advice, and educate users about proper waste separation. They document sorting errors with photos and can issue fines when necessary.

- Tourists are engaged through the island's tourist boards and service providers, while entrepreneurs and other stakeholders receive direct communication from the municipal company and local authorities. Information reaches everyone via local media, the Krčki list magazine, social media, websites, and leaflets. Tourism service providers are trained in separate waste collection, the use of recycling yards, and guidance on purchasing eco-friendly products for guests. They are also instructed on communicating sustainable practices through labels, brochures, and signage.

One of the island's standout best practices is the annual free compost distribution, rewarding residents for separate biowaste collection. Each spring, Ponikve organizes this campaign at the Treskavac composting plant. Residents can collect a free 50-liter bag of compost by presenting a coupon delivered with their regular monthly bills.For example, during 2023, four free compost distributions were organised, during which over 5,000 bags of eco-compost were given to residents. Citizens can also take a tour of the plant and receive explanations about the composting process. This initiative is part of a strategy to educate the community about the importance of composting and raise awareness about proper bio-waste management, aiming to encourage participation in the system. The company claims that every year citizen participation in the event increases.

Figure 5: Getting bags of compost ready for distribution.

Tracking the impact of Krk's zero waste strategy: First results and insights

METRICS	2006	2019	2024
Total MSW generation	689kg/cap	546 kg/cap	612 kg/cap.
Residual waste generation	563 kg/cap	235 kg/cap	263 kg/cap (22% less than the national average)
Separate collection rate (of all MSW)	18,2%	52%	57%
Bio-waste separate collection	9%	60%	70% (less than 5% contamination)

Data from 2019 highlights the significant impact of the introduction of waste management key changes in Krk: residual waste generation decreased by 58.24% following the introduction of the D-t-D system, while the separate collection rate for bio-waste increased by 50%, with an additional 10% growth in recent years.

However, data shows that in 2024, a total of 25,768.69 tons of municipal waste was collected on Krk, representing a 12% increase compared to 2019. While this increase may seem counterintuitive at first, it is primarily due to two factors:

1. **Slight growth in tourism**: Tourist arrivals increased by approximately 3.4% between 2019 and 2024. In 2024, Krk recorded 914,484 tourist arrivals and 5,008,972 overnight stays, compared to 884,276 arrivals and 4,988,545 overnight stays in 2019.

2. **Changes in calculation methodology**: In 2023, the Croatian Ministry of Environment revised the way municipal waste is reported. Under this new methodology, total municipal waste now includes mixed waste collected from industries, hospitality, and other commercial sources, while separately collected waste from these sectors is excluded. Public waste companies are responsible for collecting residual waste from all business sectors, but recyclables from commercial sources are sold to private companies and are not counted in the public waste statistics. This approach distorts the actual performance of municipal waste collection, as externally generated waste is included in totals, while the recycled and separately collected volumes from the same entities are not reflected.

It is therefore important to note that without a full commitment to zero waste, this increase would have likely been much higher.

Qualitatively speaking, the system's effectiveness is further supported by strong community engagement. A June 2024 survey revealed that 95.1% of residents recognize the quality and importance of Ponikve's services, and most also support new initiatives, such as the planned Reuse Centre.

Other important results include:

- **Job creation:** According to available data, the number of employees at the municipal company Ponikve Eko Otok Krk has increased significantly over the past ten years - from 96 employees in 2014 to 138 in 2024 - an increase of over 40%. One of the reasons is certainly the expansion of operations in the waste management sector. For example, in 2013, the sorting facility was modernised by increasing the line's capacity to 5 tons per hour, which led to the hiring of new workers for the sorting line.

- **Recognition achieved:**
    - Krk's pioneering efforts have garnered national and international recognition. The island increasingly hosts study visits from other municipal companies seeking to learn from its best practices, and Krk's waste management model is regularly presented at national conferences. Inspired by Krk, other Croatian islands have begun developing similar infrastructure and programs - for example, Cres opened a recycling yard in 2020, with plans for a composting facility, while Rab has introduced a door-to-door separate waste collection system. Numerous municipalities on the mainland have also followed some of the steps that Krk has taken, after they were convinced of the success of their system.
    - The zero waste strategy has positively influenced Krk's tourism branding, reinforcing the island's reputation for cleanliness, sustainability, and quality of life. These factors contribute additional economic benefits to municipal budgets.

- **Reduction of illegal dumping:** Last but not least, the introduction of the new waste management system (D-t-D + PAYT) has contributed to a reduction in illegal dumping sites on the island. Although exact figures are unavailable, cost reductions provide a clear indicator: in the city of Krk, expenditures for clearing illegal dumpsites fell from approximately €10,030 in 2012 to €3,980 in 2023, a reduction of nearly 60%.

Stopping waste before it's made: Krk's prevention strategy in key actions

Waste prevention is often the most challenging aspect to implement, as it is deeply tied to how we produce and consume goods, making it both highly personal and closely linked to social behaviours and values. For this reason, waste prevention is a central pillar of Krk's Zero Waste Plan. Ponikve works closely with island stakeholders, including associations, schools, camps, tourist boards, and local businesses, to implement and expand initiatives that actively reduce waste generation..

Single-use plastic (SUP) waste has been identified as one of the most challenging materials to prevent, as their leakage into the environment poses a significant threat to the island's coastline and marine ecosystems - both vital to its tourism and local livelihoods. To address this huge challenge, the municipal waste company has joined several EU projects such as In-No-Plastic and Elevating Reuse in Cities - which aim to curb plastic use and related pollution.

Bulky waste is another significant challenge on the island, with collection volumes rising steadily; in 2024, 22.5% more bulky waste was collected compared to the previous year. Currently, bulky waste is handled by authorised contractors at a cost of approximately €260 per ton, posing a considerable financial burden. To mitigate this, a repair and reuse centre is planned to open in the near future.

Figure 6: A recycling centre on Krk Island.

Key prevention activities targeting SUP, bulky waste and beyond – include:

- **Reducing single-use plastics and promoting reuse via public procurement:**
  - Single-use bottles and cups in municipal institutions and Ponikve facilities have been replaced with water jugs.
  - Some bulky waste has been refurbished into functional items.
  - Green public procurement principles have been adopted across public companies and institutions, prioritising recyclable products, paper over plastic packaging, and energy-efficient equipment.
- **Plastic transformation and beach-cleaning initiatives:**
  - Plastic collected from beaches is transformed into useful items such as bins, benches, and trash cans.
  - Ponikve organises beach-cleaning initiatives, producing the "Blue Bag" from 100% recycled plastic. Blue Bags are distributed to tourists by local tourist boards and hospitality businesses, who can win prizes by participating in clean-ups.
- **Infrastructure for reuse and repair:**
  - Bicycle repair stations installed across the island.
  - Designated areas in recycling yards for repair and reuse of goods.
  - Clothing swaps and second-hand markets promote circular consumption.
  - Efforts to minimise single-use materials at island events are carried out in collaboration with tourist boards, including educational campaigns, online outreach, and the introduction of reusable cups at events such as the Krk Music Fest. A Zero Waste Council proposal to provide reusable cups for all island events was approved.
- **Partnerships with local associations:**
  - NGO Rukotvorine Krk runs reuse workshops, transforming waste textiles and beach-collected materials into new products.
  - NGO Žene za otok (Women for the Island) produces felt balls from waste wool for various uses, including car diffusers ("Blue Sheep").
  - Individuals with special needs at the Rehabilitation Centre transform old clothing into rags, which are then used in workshops and field operations by the company Ponivke.
- **Community engagement through art and campaigns:**
  - Ponikve organizes an annual art competition inviting participants to create ecological stories, songs, videos, or artworks from waste.
  - Campaigns and workshops promote reusable materials, including reusable wraps and clothing swaps.

Next steps & lessons learned

Zero waste is a journey, not a destination, and Krk continues to make progress on this path.

In October 2024, the seven municipalities on Krk Island were awarded the prestigious Zero Waste certification, after a careful audit of their waste management and prevention activities and results, conducted by an independent third party.

Leading up to the first audit and certification, Krk faced several operational and data-related challenges:

- **Monitoring and documentation:** Certification criteria related to tracking progress were the hardest to meet due to limited statistics, making it difficult to measure the impact of waste prevention and reuse initiatives compared to pre-implementation levels.
- **Per capita calculations:** Accurately assessing waste generation per capita is complicated by high seasonal tourist influx and numerous unregistered visitors.
- **Stakeholder involvement:** While Ponikve manages the operational aspects of the waste system, engaging local authorities proved challenging due to limited resources.

Krk has achieved the first of five tiers in the Zero Waste Certification, marking an important milestone while highlighting the need to continue implementing measures to reach the targets outlined in the Zero Waste Plan.
Recognising that zero waste is a journey rather than a destination, several next steps have been identified to further enhance the island's performance. To achieve its goals, the Zero Waste Plan has been updated to incorporate new measures focused on waste reduction, operational efficiency, and strengthened collaboration across the island. Key initiatives includes:

- **Modernisation of facilities:**
    - The composting facility will be upgraded to increase capacity and improve efficiency, addressing needs identified several years ago.
    - Similarly, the sorting facility for separately collected waste will be modernised to optimise operations and handle growing volumes of separately collected waste. The technology will also be upgraded - through the installation of robotic arms (automation of the sorting process), a new dynamic screen, and a dust-extraction filter
- **Eco Innovation Center Adriatic:** The "Eco Innovation Center Adriatic," funded by EU resources, will open to enhance the municipality's capacity for modernisation and digitalisation, supporting more efficient waste management practice and data collection.
- **Tourism impact study:** A detailed study is planned to understand the correlation between tourist activity and waste generation, guiding targeted future measures.
- **Repair and reuse centre**: To address the increase in bulky waste, a repair and reuse centre will open. This initiative will prevent waste generation and reduce disposal costs.

- **Zero waste public events:** The elimination of single-use plastics at public events organised or co-financed by the municipalities.
- **Collaboration with hotels and restaurants:** Given the high concentration of tourism facilities, the plan includes expanding cooperation with hotels and restaurants through the implementation of MiZA Zero Waste Business Certification. This initiative will help reduce waste generation while enhancing service quality for guests.
- **Packaging-free stores**: Promotion of bulk shopping will be supported through the development of co-funding programs. Under this initiative, municipalities will be able to co-finance the start-up of small shops that offer local products without single-use packaging, encouraging zero-packaging consumption among residents and guests.
- **Food waste reduction campaign**: In 2026, a campaign will be launched in collaboration with schools, restaurants, hotels, households, and other stakeholders to reduce food waste. Waste composition analyses have shown that significant quantities of food are still being discarded, so the campaign will focus on minimising this trend and diverting food from bio-waste and mixed waste streams.

Figure 7: An event discussing waste strategy on Krk.

Lessons learned

Krk's experience demonstrates that effective waste management is achievable even in tourism-intensive areas, provided:

- Comprehensive zero waste measures are implemented, including door-to-door separate collection, Pay-As-You-Throw systems, prevention and reuse initiatives, and local infrastructure development.
- Collaboration with stakeholders - tourism operators, educational institutions, associations, and the broader community - is continuously nurtured through education and engagement - in order to guarantee their support, trust and contributions to the process.

Remaining challenges include:

- Tourist pressure: Seasonal influx directly impacts waste quantities.
- Human resources: Recruiting personnel for municipal waste management remains difficult.
- Financial pressures: Rising costs for separate collection and recycling, coupled with unstable markets for recyclables, create economic strain.

Conclusion

The case of Krk shows that even in tourism-intensive contexts, proactive strategies, stakeholder involvement, and continuous public education can overcome operational, economic, and regulatory challenges. Achieving the first tier of the Zero Waste Certification underscores the island's success while highlighting the importance of ongoing efforts to reach long-term targets. Krk now stands as an inspiring model for other municipalities, illustrating that with strategic planning, local innovation, and community participation, zero waste is not just a goal - it is a realistic and achievable journey.

"The example of Krk shows that it is possible to achieve excellent results, even in municipalities heavily impacted by tourism. The key to success the implementation of numerous Zero Waste measures, as well as strong collaboration between different stakeholders. We are proud of our cooperation with Ponikve and municipalities on Krk island, and continue to take bold steps toward even better results."

Marko Košak, Vice President of Zelena akcija (Friends Of The Earth Croatia) and mentor for Zero Waste municipalities in Croatia.

Contact

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.

Mission Zero Academy (MiZA) is the capacity – building hub for local decision-makers, SMEs, and other organisations wanting to take a step forward in their zero waste strategies and circular economy implementation. With a focus on evidence-based and expert-approved methods, MiZA supports public and private sector professionals.

Zelena akcija (Friends of the Earth Croatia) is an environmental NGO working towards improved environmental protection systems at a local, national, and global level. The goal of our activities is to support our transition towards a low-carbon society, guided by the principles of social justice and systematic change.

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