



Fork to Farm - ZERO – Associação Sistema Terrestre Sustentável factsheet

zero.

Organisation:

ZERO – Associação Sistema Terrestre Sustentável – Portugal

Written by Ismael Casotti Rienda

The municipalities we have worked with:

- **Castelo Branco:** host city for the [first Iberian Compost Congress](#) and new [Zero Waste Candidate City](#) in 2025.
- **Corvo island** (Azores).
- **Fornos de Algodres,** featured as a national best practice site for its multi-stream door-to-door (d2d) collection system and community composting.
- **Silves:** where a pilot of full door-to-door collection system was implemented, first in the region.
- **Guimarães:** highlighted as a national leader in bio-waste collection.
- **Ourique:** Zero Waste Candidate City, where a waste composition analysis was accomplished with an innovative addition, the screening of the food waste share in mixed waste organics.
- **São João da Madeira:** leading municipality and case study for bio-waste collection, and the site for a technical workshop.
- **Seixal:** national leader and best practice example in bio-waste collection.
- **AMCAL** (5 municipalities of the AMCAL intermunicipal system).

Other partners we have collaborated with:

- **Resiaçores:** the regional waste management company in Azores.
- **Novamont:** a company that provided biopolymers to produce bio bags for bio-waste collection.
- **Mancomunidad de Tentudia:** an intermunicipal system in Spain.
- **Municipalities of Albergaria-a-Velha and Alenquer** (Mainland Portugal): targeted for capacity-building workshops.
- **Alcanena** (local association of farmers): who were visited during the workshop as they receive stabilised compost for agricultural purposes.
- **Casa Pia de Lisboa:** A school implementing a Zero Waste plan and composting units, who were also invited to our workshop.





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CHALLENGES AND BARRIERS

The major challenges faced by ZERO and the municipalities we have worked with in this project involve a combination of **bureaucratic, financial, and political hurdles**.

At the local level, while municipalities are generally willing to explore new bio-waste models, they are often deterred by the administrative bureaucracy required to implement changes. Unlocking the necessary funding for new infrastructure, such as fleets, bins, and communication campaigns, remains a significant barrier, often "scaring" local leaders out of more ambitious projects.

At the national level, the context is hostile due to **Portugal's heavy reliance on landfills and a lack of sector-specific methane reduction targets**. This absence of clear guidance from national agencies makes data-driven advocacy difficult. Furthermore, ZERO faces **strong opposition from powerful industry lobbies** that influence government policy. These groups have successfully pressured decision-makers to favour incineration/energy recovery as a solution to the landfill capacity crisis, undermining ZERO's efforts to promote circular solutions like Material Recovery and Biological Treatment (MRBT) and separate collection of bio-waste.

SUCCESSSES AND VICTORIES

- **Changing the paradigm for local models**
The project successfully transitioned municipalities from merely "listening" to actively committing to high-efficiency models. A major victory was convincing partners (specifically the 5 municipalities of AMCAL and Corvo Island) to **adopt the "right model" for bio-waste**, choosing separate door-to-door collection and specific treatment solutions, despite significant bureaucratic and funding fears. The successful negotiation of the AMCAL pilot project (following the [Spanish study tour](#)) stands out as a concrete result of this influence.
- **Challenging national policy & the "incineration narrative"**
At a national advocacy level, ZERO successfully challenged the government's landfill emergency plans (specifically the ["TERRA Plan"](#) and the ["Cell E" licensing at ALGAR](#)). By providing technical alternatives, **ZERO inserted the concept of MRBT (Material Recovery and Biological Treatment) and pre-treatment into the public debate**, positioning it as a viable, circular alternative to the government's push for incineration.
- **Influencing policy-makers and various stakeholders (including private) on national best practices**
As a consequence of the effort in promoting best practices (including study tours, workshops and our analysis of bio-waste collection data), we were able to deliver the examples of Guimarães, São João da Madeira, Fornos de Algodres and Seixal. These municipalities stand as strong examples and are now recognised by policy-makers as leading cases of good practice. In addition, private-sector actors, such as suppliers of bins, bags, and related services, are increasingly attentive to this type of communication, especially when municipalities are their clients.





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CORVO (AZORES)

Population size: **~430 (2021)** | Type: **Rural (Remote Island)**

Focus:

- Implementation of a **door-to-door collection system** for dry recyclables, organics, and mixed waste.
- Community composting and decentralised composting training.
- Installation of street bins for tourist spots.

Engagement local community:

- Organised the "**III Jornadas Ambientais Corvo**" (environmental days) to engage the population.
- Conducted training and capacity building on decentralised composting.
- Pressured the regional waste management company (Resiaçores) to repair the waste centre scale to ensure accurate data.
- We supported the city council in the preparation of the public tender for the EU funds call Açores 2030 (FEDER and FSE+); ZERO designed the waste management/collection model to follow (d2d, delocalised composting, small eco centre for other waste streams, etc), prepared the texts for submission and provided the general context for supporting the fund request of around 200,000€. The approval of the regional call came with 6 month of delay, the the Corvo file was the first to be released and all items were selected for co-financing (except for the bio shredder, since it was not electric). Between June and October materials and services were purchased and delivered, and ZERO accompanied the council in the [launch of the door-to-door campaign](#) in late november, with the new major who is now embracing the project inherited by the previous one.



Launch of the new waste collection and management system in Corvo island (Azores 19-20/11/2025).





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OURIQUE

Population size: **~4,800 inhabitants** (2021) | Type: **Rural**

Focus:

- Technical research and data generation.
- Production of a [Technical Report](#) on the Zero Waste approach.
- Conducted a [waste composition study](#).

The waste composition study revealed that bio-waste remains the predominant component of residual waste. The report demonstrated that strengthening separate collection and preventing food waste are the most effective measures to reduce landfill dependency and improve recycling performance.

Engagement local community: Conducted a study revealing that bio-waste was the predominant component of residual waste, using this data to advocate for separate collection and food waste prevention.



Manual sorting process carried out using personal protective equipment and identifying the different categories of waste on the work table.





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SÃO JOÃO DA MADEIRA

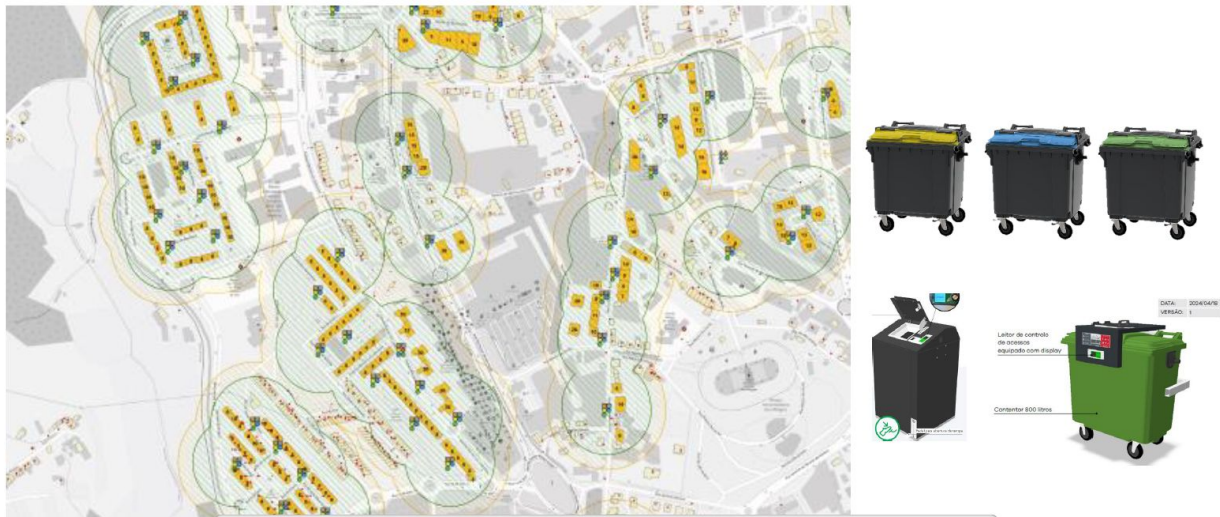
Population size: **-22,100 inhabitants** (2021) | Type: **Urban** (high density)

Focus:

- Capacity building and technical training.
- Hosted a **technical workshop** titled "[Bio-waste: separate collection and local treatment](#)".
- Highlighted as a national leader in the field.

ZERO organised a workshop bringing together municipal technicians, executives, intermunicipal communities, and waste management entities. Sessions covered best practices in bio-waste collection, treatment, and compost quality, with case studies from São João da Madeira, Fornos de Algodres, and Maiambiente, plus an interactive exercise on collection models. The event supported municipalities in implementing Pay-As-You-Throw (PAYT) schemes and meeting EU recycling objectives. São João da Madeira's work [has also been showcased as good practice](#) in various national forums.

The municipality has been preparing the rollo-out of the complementary system for the 50% of the population that won't be covered by the door-to-door, mostly in dense apartment-building contexts, through the implementation of controlled access to bio-waste and mixed waste bins.



Engagement local community: Facilitated a workshop for technicians and decision-makers to share technical knowledge on bio-waste management.





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FORNOS DE ALGODRES

Population size: ~4,403 inhabitants | Type: Rural

Focus:

- Served as a demonstration site and "best practice" example for study visits.
- Implementation of a multi-stream door-to-door collection system.
- [Community composting pilot project](#) (funded by ZWE-Gaia) in the village of Muxagata.

Engagement local community:

- Demonstrated live door-to-door collection and bin identification systems to visitors from other municipalities.
- Implemented behavioural change trigger methodologies.
- The performance of Fornos is being used as an example to replicate the implementation of Zero Waste practices in other regional contexts.



Study visit to Fornos de Algodres.





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Data collection on impact

Municipality	Year	Population	Population covered by d2d	Bio collected		Total mixed waste
				Total tonnes	kg/person	kg/person
Corvo	2022	384	0	-	0	526*
	2025	384	384 (only in Dec 2025)	-	Not reported yet	250
Fornos de Algodres	2022	4,403	0 (0%)	0	0	345
	2024	4,383	1,656 (38%)	90.5	55	339
Guimarães	2022	156,830	D2D for non-domestic users mostly	1,077	-	360
	2024**	156,830	75,914	1,164	56	NR***
	2024	156,830	45,930	6,608	145	NR***
Ourique	2022	4,819	0 (0%)	198.8	41	578
	2024	4,829	780 (16%)	184.5	109	554
São João da Madeira	2022	22,162	2,554 (12%)	19.3	8	381
	2024	22,789	4,423 (19%)	1,207.0	127	342

(*) estimated data

(**) this is the only data we have about kerbside (non d2d system).

Total mixed waste refers to the total population (average of municipality) - destination is landfill (not incineration), for the municipalities in the table. Remaining data are from d2d collection systems (households and small businesses, commingled).

(***) data for non-D2D only





Zero Waste Europe Factsheet

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[Zero Waste Europe](#) is the European network of communities, local leaders, experts, and change agents working towards the prevention and 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.

zero.

[ZERO – Associação Sistema Terrestre Sustentável \(ZERO\)](#) is a non-profit, non-governmental environmental organisation of national public utility. It operates with complete independence from political parties, companies, for-profit entities, religious organisations, and the government. It was created at the end of 2015, stemming from the shared interest of about one hundred people in defending the values of sustainability.



The campaign forms one part of our broader work within the [European Methane Matters Coalition \(MMC\)](#). The coalition aims to ramp up ambition at the European Union level and within key European countries to reduce methane emissions across the energy, agriculture, and waste sectors by 2030.

**FORK
TO FARM**

In 2024, [#ForkToFarm campaign](#) made impressive advances, especially at the local level. The campaign empowered 541,366 people across six European countries with better bio-waste solutions, from separate collection to community composting.

