



Waste recycling in Austria: analysis of the success



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Austria is among EU champion countries for waste recycling. Analysis of this success by the Austrian minister of the environment, Mr. Berlakovich Nikolaus.

Austria is among EU champion countries for waste recycling*, the proportion of which to other treatment methods is 69.8%. Can you explain the reasons of such performance?

*(*Report of the European Commission of August 7th, 2012)*

In Austria we started in the early 1990s to implement an environmentally sound waste management. Based on the Federal Waste Management Act several waste streams have been regulated since then (like packaging waste, ELV, WEEE, construction and demolition waste, biogenic waste, waste wood) and the requirements for different waste treatment options have been prescribed (landfill ordinance, waste incineration ordinance, waste treatment obligation ordinance). The considerable increase of the recycling and recovery rates could be realized mainly because of the landfill ban on certain waste types. Landfilling of waste with a TOC of more than 5 % has been prohibited since 2004 (exemptions expired in 2008).

Additionally the remediation contribution, to be paid above all in case of landfilling or incineration of waste, provides an economic incentive for recycling and recovery.

Electronic data management in the field of waste management was further developed in the last

decade. Accurate information on waste streams constitutes the pre-requisite and basis for optimised waste management planning. Furthermore the transparency of waste management is increased and control is facilitated. Since 2009 waste collectors and treaters have been obliged to fulfill their record-keeping obligations electronically. The introduction of the waste balance sheet accounting and of the electronic record-keeping obligation is intended to improve the traceability of waste streams and to ensure greater transparency of appropriate waste collection and treatment.

Additionally public awareness raising and information campaigns are indispensable to motivate consumers to collect and dispose their waste correctly.

What are the keys, concretely, to the success of recycling in Austria?

The regulatory framework prescribing the requirements for a sustainable waste treatment, the implementation of economic incentives (producer responsibilities and landfill / incineration tax), regular waste controls and monitoring systems and last but not least education and training programmes as well as comprehensive information campaigns have been crucial for the successful development of the Austrian waste management.



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A sustainable waste management shall also focus on the preservation of natural resources and therefore waste should be used efficiently in order to substitute primary resources, unless the waste quality is inadequate. In Austria we pursue the strategy of a sustainable recycling management, fulfilling the precautionary principle, with the following preconditions:

- Prevention of dissipation of pollutants (e.g. in new products)
- Guarantee of recycling products with high quality (no downcycling)

What are the perspectives and the main projects in your country in the field of waste treatment?

Currently the following issues are the main topics to be handled and thus a further contribution for an increase resource efficiency should be realized:

Waste Prevention Programme:

Published in 2011, it is a plan that encompasses active measures to support the prevention of waste. Based on a vision of how the Austrian waste management sector should operate in 2020, the measures were derived from targets and action fields (food waste, re-use, construction and demolition waste).

Food waste initiatives:

The long-term aim of these initiatives is to reduce the accumulation of discarded foodstuffs in Austria. All relevant players, including producers, consumers and society at large, should contribute and sets of measures are described for each target group.

Re-Use initiatives:

Re-using products rather than replacing them with new products results in an increased conservation of raw material and energy, as well as a reduction of waste quantities. Supporting measures for the creation of the re-use sector and establishment of regional re-use networks are necessary. Furthermore measures are described to improve market penetration of re-use products and to improve the quality of re-use products and services.

Construction and demolition waste:

The aim is to promote techniques and technologies to extend the use and service life of buildings, to avoid the use of hazardous substances and ultimately to reduce the amount of waste from construction. A specific ordinance is in preparation.

Austrian ministry of environment website:
www.lebensministerium.at

