

# ZERO WASTE IN EUROPE CREATING LOCAL JOBS AND RECOVERING RESOURCES

by Kim Assaël

The European [Zero Waste](#) approach is involving more and more countries, environmental organizations, and citizenship associations, all strategically grouped together to deal with the whole issue of wastes in our society. In Europe as for other regions of the world the Zero Waste movement aims at achieving much higher levels of recycling and to minimise the extraction of additional natural resources.



We are generating more wastes than ever before, due to life style changes and new consumptions, or nuclear households.

According the [International Solid Waste Association](#) ISWA - the world association that brings together the operators of the treatment and waste disposal sectors -, about 4 billion tons of waste are currently produced every year around the world. The half is represented by municipal waste (those produced by households), while the other half concerns the so-called special waste, coming from industrial activity and production.



The EU waste policy challenge is to ensure that all kind of waste is used wherever possible as raw material to make new products. This the main strategy that will cut down on the amount of material needed from the natural environment and recycling also saving energy: recycling an aluminium can, for example, saves around 95% of the energy needed to make a new one from raw material.



The European Zero waste members also act in support of the policies to move up the waste hierarchy for a correct disposal that can support prevention, preparation for re-use, recycling etc. The benefits of good waste management start from the role of individuals, at households level, in a circular process. In any step of the *circular economy* the individual role has its own importance but worth of attention is especially the economic value of recycling, which can be shared collectively for the sustainability of the territories where people live. Businesses and local and national governments have a big role to play too that shall be maximised.



In addition wastes are the only good that do not require a payment, but are a possible income. If well managed the waste cycle can therefore be a valuable mean of richness for local administrations, also avoiding all expenses for waste dismissing in other places.

The economic opportunity of solid-waste management and

recycling industries currently have a turnover of around €137 billion which is just over 1.1% of the EU's Gross Domestic Product. Together, these areas create over 2 million jobs. Overall, municipal waste recycling increased from 19% to 38% between 1998 and 2007. If Member States recycled 70% of their waste, it could create at least half a million new jobs across Europe.

Waste European Framework Directives and legislations incorporate rules on a number of issues such as the management of hazardous waste and waste oils, packaging standards, Incineration Directives, Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE), sewage sludge, batteries, etc. Best and successful practices in waste prevention and waste strategies are increasingly operating across the EU helping to reduce Europe's environmental impact and improve its resource efficiency.

The EU zero waste strategy is also sponsored by many organisations and municipalities managing and monitoring the network of Zero Waste local groups and engaging with companies and decision-makers above all to lay the necessary ground for innovation in the use of resources and materials, so that toxics are minimized and the technical cycle (recycling) is separated from the biological cycle (composting).

The goal of the board of the [Zero Waste International Alliance](#) is reducing the waste landfilled and incinerated. In Europe still 60% of the waste goes to landfill (37%) and incineration (23%). The Alliance promotes strategies allowing effectively phasing out waste, save energy, creating new jobs and sustainable business opportunities, avoiding the paradox of today concerning a society that pays when exporting wastes/resources. All the experiences of Zero Waste municipalities and those of the [Grassroots recycling networks](#) around the world are a living proves of it.

### To know more

<http://www.zerowasteurope.eu/>

<http://www.iswa.org/>

<http://ec.europa.eu/environment/waste/legislation/index.htm>

<http://ec.europa.eu/environment/waste/prevention/practices.htm>

<http://www.wrap.org.uk>

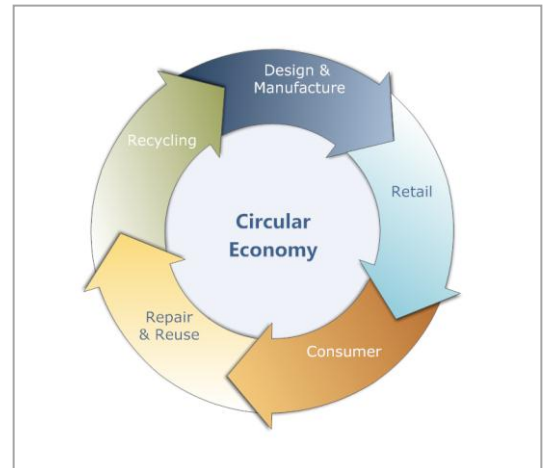
<http://www.lipor.pt>

<http://www.developpement-durable.gouv.fr/Stop-pub-moins-de-prospectus-dans.html>

<https://www.wien.gv.at/english/environment/protection/eco/>

<http://www.nisp.org.uk>

<http://zwia.org>





<http://www.grn.org/>

[Love Food Hate Waste \(UK\)](#)

[Menu Dose Certa \(Portugal\)](#)

[Stop Pub \(France\)](#)

[National Industry Symbiosis Programme \(UK\)](#)

[Capannori zero waste \(Italy\)](#)

<http://zerowasteitaly.blogspot.it/>

<http://www.zwallianceuk.org/students-create-free-shops-to-cut-out-waste/>

