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Press Release

To be released immediately

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The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on municipal waste management systems

ACR+ is launching a report to show the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on municipal waste management systems. Although, the COVID-19 pandemic continues to hit Europe to this date, the report focuses on the first “wave” that goes from February to June 2020. The report is the continuation of an initiative started in March 2020, in the first hours of the pandemic, mapping how public authorities in Europe and beyond reacted and adapted their waste management systems to the urgency of the situation.

Brussels, Belgium – The pandemic proved very challenging for local authorities to keep the municipal waste services available to the inhabitants. ACR+ monitored and analysed how the measures taken in the wake of the COVID-19 outbreak impacted waste collection services, waste generation, and sorting performance. In March 2020, replying to requests from its members, ACR+ started collecting data on the changes brought to municipal waste management in various parts of Europe, both regarding the changes in regulation and guidelines proposed by national and regional authorities, and the local practices implemented by waste authorities and companies. The result of this initiative, including an infographic summarizing the observed trends in March, is available on the [ACR+ website](#).

In July 2020, ACR+ launched an online survey in the framework of the COLLECTORS project to better understand the measures taken at local level and the evolution of generated and sorted quantities of municipal waste during the “first wave” of the pandemic. 16 respondents from 10 different countries provided detailed answers; the panel encompasses very different territories in terms of typology, size, or tourism intensity.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on municipal waste management systems report discloses the main information and trends coming out of this survey. It also provides an overview of the measures taken by local authorities to tackle the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic and the lockdown measures during the first. Local data were collected to analyse the impact of municipal waste generation and sorting performances. Besides, several illustrations of good practices addressing key challenges are also highlighted.

The analysis of the survey’s responses and of the different guidelines and reports identified allowed listing several key recommendations that were already presented in the COLLECTORS [Guidelines for implementation](#):

- **Flexibility** is key to ensure the continuation of priority collection services, and the territories that could maintain good collection were the ones that could re-allocate resources among the different collection schemes;
- **Keeping civic amenity sites open** with adequate measure can be recommended, possibly with online booking.



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- **Define priority levels** for collection services, focusing on collection modes limiting the interactions with inhabitants, or on specific waste fractions. Keeping selective collection services running proves to be essential to maintain sorting performances.
- **Give priority to online communication** to reach inhabitants, provide clear information and simple, coordinated messages, and explaining the reasons behind changes.
- **Establish a consistent and continuous reporting** of the evolution of quantities.
- **Tackle illegal practices** such as fly-tipping by setting a closer monitoring, the enforcement of the regulation, an adequate communication.
- **Take advantage of guidance**, support systems and networks, to identify good practices and recommendations.
- **Follow UNEP recommendations** regarding the management of waste from COVID-positive households.

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Contact:

ACR+ Secretariat – Jean-Benoît Bel

E-mail: jbb@acrplus.org

Tel: +32 2 234 65 08

*The **Association of Cities and Regions for sustainable Resource management (ACR+)** is an international network of cities and regions sharing the aim of promoting sustainable resource management and accelerating the transition towards a circular economy on their territories and beyond. Gathering over 100 members, the network is open to other key players in the field of material resource management, such as NGOs, academic institutions, consultancies, or private organisations. Members' needs and priorities define the network's activities, which include facilitating the exchange of experiences between members and the sharing of technical and policy information. To strengthen the knowledge and capacities of the network and promote innovation in the field of material resource management, ACR+ is also involved in several projects at the European level and in the Mediterranean region, in cooperation with its members.*

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