

Press release

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Regions for Recycling delivered its tools to help local and regional authorities improve their recycling strategies

After three years of successful implementation, the Regions for Recycling project (R4R) reached its objectives: defining a common methodology that allows true comparison between European cities and territories' waste performances, identifying and sharing selective collection and recycling good practices, and developing an efficient monitoring and benchmarking online tool that gathers all those instruments.

Civic amenity sites allowing to sort 40 different material fractions, a combination of economic instruments like variable charges ("pay-as-you-throw") and taxes, selective collection at the source of valuable material fractions or comprehensive communication campaigns... those are some of the successful practices implemented by the R4R partners that enabled for instance the Province of Styria and the Flemish region to send respectively 75% and 64% of their collected municipal waste to recycling.

In the EU28, 492 kg of municipal waste was generated per person in 2012, with only 42% of it being recycled or composted (with a current objective of 50% recycling to achieve by 2020). **Large differences exist between territories, not only among Member States, but also between cities and regions within the same country.** Those differences might be related to different elements (calculation methods, level of development of treatment facilities, different use of legal, technical, economic or communication instruments) and/or specific constraints (e.g. densely populated areas, , geographical or climatic conditions, etc.). Good experiences might therefore not be easily transferable from one territory to another. **The first step is to have a common ground for comparison, in order to find territories with similar situations and constraints but different performances.**

The [R4R project](#) developed a methodology highlighting waste quantities that are really aimed at being sent to recycling (dubbed [DREC](#), for "Destination RECYcling") thus providing a more accurate basis for comparison between European territories. The DREC methodology is compatible with Eurostat and EEA requirements in terms of reporting and clarifies some calculation issues: for the time being, four calculation methods are allowed by the European Commission to report MSW recycling rates, making any real comparison impossible, are under discussion in the framework of the new "circular economy package" proposed by the Commission. The DREC methodology is therefore an answer to this issue by offering a single harmonized calculation method to public authorities.

Such a comparison and benchmarking is facilitated thanks to the [R4R online tool](#) which allows local and regional authorities to:

- **Compare data** with territories having similar characteristics (density, climate, socio-economic framework, etc.) following the same methodology,
- **Access good practices** that helped to achieve significant results regarding recycling,
- **Follow results** over time in order to assess evolution and trends.

About 40 [good practices](#) have been identified, analysed and shared by the R4R partners. The wide **diversity of the R4R good practices** includes **legal instruments** (for instance framing landfill and incineration policy), **economic instruments** (in particular taxes or pay per weight or volume systems), **technical tools** (for example the use of regular or mobile civic amenity sites or selective collection of specific fractions like bio-waste, packaging or hazardous waste), and **communication campaigns** addressing all citizens or targeted audiences (for instance children at school).

The project's results were showcased during the project's final conference in Sofia on 23 October. And the project has already induced **concrete changes in the project partners' strategies and instruments**. In particular, the project partners developed implementation plans to prepare the change of their waste management strategies by including the DREC methodology or some R4R good practices. For instance, the cities of Lisbon, Tallinn and Sofia are considering a first development or an update of their waste management plans by including for instance new selective collection schemes or the opportunity to use economic instruments. The Flemish and Catalan Waste Agencies will include the DREC in the set of indicators used to monitor recycling performance in their regions. The South Waste Region of Ireland even managed to convince the other Irish regions to use the DREC methodology as well, expanding the concept outside of the R4R partnership!

Regions for Recycling (R4R) is a 3-year European project coming to an end in December 2014 and aiming at improving its partners' recycling performances through consistent comparisons and an exchange of good practices. R4R involves [13 European partners](#) and is co-funded by the INTERREG IVC programme.

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