



THE EU CAPITAL CITIES WASTE MANAGEMENT BENCHMARK



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*The Association of Cities and Regions for Recycling and sustainable Resource management (ACR+) is an international network of members who share the common aim of **promoting the sustainable consumption of resources and management of waste through prevention at source, reuse and recycling**. ACR+ currently has more than 90 members, mainly local and regional authorities as well as national networks of local authorities representing around 750 municipalities. ACR+ also welcomes other key players in the sustainable resource-product-waste management, such as NGOs, academic institutions or private organisations, as partner members.*

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Executive summary

Improved waste management is an essential element in efforts to make Europe more resource efficient. If a city is to generate greater economic returns at lower costs to the environment then it must find ways to extract more value from the resources that it takes from nature, while cutting the burden of emissions and waste. One key means of achieving that is by shifting waste management up the waste hierarchy focusing on waste prevention, reuse and recycling.

→ Key findings

The total amount of **waste generated by capital cities varies considerably** and no clear pattern can be found when comparing the city rates with national ones. The assumption that waste generation rates in urbanized areas are higher than national waste generation levels cannot be confirmed.

Very few capital cities (1 out of 3) have **distinctive data on household waste and assimilated waste**.

In general, capital cities have displayed substantial increases in the proportion of Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) recycled. In this 7 years period all capital cities - for which 2005 and 2012 data were available - have increased their recycling rates. This clearly indicates significant improvements in their recycling performances, even if the numbers display widespread differences among the cities' performance.

Progress in enhancing recycling rates is **primarily due to trends in recycling of materials, with bio-waste performing less well**.

Nearly half of the cities do **not make any distinction between municipal waste selectively collected and recycling rates**. Nevertheless, recycling rates rarely correspond to the selective collection rates and therefore

Effective implementation of the European Union (EU) waste policies demands an understanding of what has been achieved so far and progress towards future targets. The present report responds to that need, reviewing the current performances of EU capital cities regarding municipal waste management in their territories.

the Destination to Recycling principle (DREC) (see definition on page 3) should be widely introduced and applied by cities when reporting on recycling.

Interestingly, there is **no direct link between recycling rates in the capital cities as compared to country recycling performances**. EU and national targets are the overall drivers of prompting better municipal waste management and regional and local implementation is crucial for achieving these targets.

The generally accepted statement "**the higher the economic development and rate of urbanization, the greater the amount of solid waste produced**" cannot be confirmed. Besides economic development, MSW generation rates are influenced by population density, unemployment rate, geographical location, public habits, and local climate.

On the whole, the analysis of municipal waste management is undermined by **uncertainties in the comparability of data**. Capital cities do not have a common definition of 'Municipal Solid Waste'. Correspondingly, further efforts are needed with regard to harmonizing common reporting methodologies, especially concerning the waste fractions when referring to municipal solid waste.

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