

Awareness-raising

In a nutshell

[illegible]

In addition to the common environmental performance indicators presented in the best practice Common environmental performance indicators, the most appropriate indicators to assess the successful implementation of this BEMP are:

- budget spent on awareness-raising per resident per year (EUR/capita/year);
- share of total MSW management budget spent on awareness-raising (%);
- share of population in the waste management catchment area having received awareness-raising messages over a given time period (e.g. % of population per month).

Benchmark of excellence

Awareness campaigns are systematically implemented for different types of target groups (e.g. pupils, general public, users of civic amenity sites) and the annual budget devoted to awareness-raising activities is at least EUR 5 per resident.

Description

Background

Effective communication between waste management organisations and citizens is integral to the efficient operation of waste management services. For instance, WRAP (2015a) cites research that found unwanted or broken waste electronic or electrical equipment (WEEE) items are commonly stored at home because citizens are often unsure of how to dispose of them. Citizens need to know what services are available to them, and the schedule and requirements of that service, in order for those services to be efficiently used. Citizens are also more likely to undertake waste sorting and recycling activities if they know what happens to waste that is sent for recycling, and the associated environmental benefits (Zero Waste Scotland, 2012). Thus, a key component of this BEMP is influencing large-scale behaviour change among citizens not yet fully engaged in good waste management practice.

Zero Waste Scotland (2012) identified two major barriers to recycling that may be overcome by awareness-raising:

- lack of knowledge: not knowing which materials to put in which container, or not understanding the local recycling scheme (e.g. collection days);
- attitudes and perceptions: not accepting that there is a need to recycle, or being insufficiently motivated to sort waste and recycle.

A particularly effective way to improve attitudes towards waste reuse and recycling is to embed waste management education into the school curriculum, teaching children about the causes and consequences of waste disposal and the importance of waste prevention and recycling through fun activities (e.g. R4R, 2014a). Local authorities and/or waste management organisations can facilitate this by undertaking outreach activities, sending representatives to local schools or inviting schoolchildren to facility tours or open days, etc.

Awareness campaigns for citizens may be delivered directly by the waste management organisation, by professional agencies on their behalf, or by partner organisations (e.g. R4R, 2014b). Paying for professional assistance, especially during the development of communication strategies, can significantly improve the effectiveness and “payback” of communication campaigns. The establishment of networks across key stakeholders can help to achieve a critical mass, reach a wider audience, and reinforce messages through repetition and validation.

Producers may also contribute to awareness-raising, directly in relation to responsible storage, use and disposal of their own products, and collaboratively with waste management organisations, including via “producer responsibility organisations” (PROs). PROs (see also best practice on best incentives by PROs) are collective entities set up by producers or through legislation with responsibility for meeting the recovery and recycling obligations of the individual producers.

Best practice measures

Best practice in awareness-raising is to effectively encourage waste prevention, reuse and recycling behaviour across citizens within the respective municipality or waste collection catchment. Ultimately, this should translate into improved performance across key waste generation and separation indicators. Particular emphasis is placed on reaching all stakeholders, including non-native speakers via multilingual or pictorial communication and via school activities. Additionally, awareness-raising activities/campaigns/meetings could integrate the aspect of collecting feedback and possibly complaints from residents on the waste management system in place. Waste advisers (see best practice on waste advisers) could be useful to this aim, since they could directly answer the comment or report the issue to the local authority/waste management company. Such inputs, when useful, could then be considered for the revision of the waste management strategy, waste collection system, etc.

The following critical elements of effective awareness-raising should be embedded in all awareness-raising campaigns (Zero Waste Scotland, 2012):

- ensure continuity, consistency, complementarity and clarity of all communications with well-defined aims and objectives;
- create clear messages appropriate to, and directed at, well-defined target audiences;
- ensure efficient delivery through the integration of activities and clear lines of responsibility.

Best practice involves the use of a wide range of communication methods deployed through appropriate communication channels tailored to the target audience and to the message to be delivered, as indicated below in Table 1.

Table 1. Communication channels appropriate to various methods of awareness-raising

Methods	Communication channels
Advertising	Radio, printed press, TV, outdoor billboards, mobile, online, cinema spots.
Public relations	Media relations via radio, press, TV and online.
Direct marketing	Door-to-door canvassing, leaflet/information distribution, exhibitions and events.
Community engagement	Outreach to schools, support for local community groups, collaboration with third-sector organisations (see examples of the best practice Schemes fostering the reuse of products and the preparation for reuse of waste). Also roadshows, seminars and door-to-door campaigns.
Online engagement	Local authority, waste management organisation, public agency or third-sector websites. Online calculators, interactive activities and videos, and apps, e.g. providing information on nearest collection points.
Social media	Social media is an effective way for citizens to access real-time or location-specific information, and provides a convenient and flexible form of communication. Social media channels include YouTube, Facebook, Twitter. See some examples below: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PZEA63TPYT0 (DE, video) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jo-nPS3VWvw (GB, video) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q3deji0AGys (GB, video) https://twitter.com/ACRplus (EU, Twitter) https://twitter.com/2EWWR (EU, Twitter) https://twitter.com/LetsCleanUpEU (EU, Twitter)
Product labelling	Producers may engage with other stakeholders, especially waste management organisations, to communicate with consumers via all of the above pathways within extended producer responsibility schemes. In addition, producers may clarify use-by dates, storage instructions and recycling options on packaging to minimise consumer waste.

Table 1. Communication channels appropriate to various methods of awareness-raising

Methods	Communication channels
Internal communication	Waste management organisations may inform their staff of the latest initiatives and plans via: staff magazines, intranet, information folders, activity reports, events, competitions (slogans, etc.), suggestions for improvements. ZeroWastePro have produced a training manual for staff of waste management companies http://www.zerowastepro.eu/publications/ .

Source: Zero Waste Scotland (2012), Vienna City Council (2013), R4R (2014a), (EC 2014), own elaboration.

Awareness-raising campaigns, thanks to the use of a wide range of communication methods, go through four different progressive steps of residents' engagement, i.e. the number of people reached by the awareness-raising campaign (e.g. who received a leaflet), the number of people that read it, the number of people that understood it and the number of people who took action. The ultimate aim of any awareness-raising campaign is when people addressed decide to take action (in relation to the message of the campaign).

Examples of how some awareness-raising actions have been implemented using different channels are provided under Operational data and Reference organisations below.

Environmental benefits

Effective awareness-raising should achieve significant environmental benefits through reductions in resource extraction and final waste disposal. However, it is often difficult to attribute changes in the rate of reuse or recycling to specific communication campaigns.

The Ecological Recycling Society in Attiki, Greece, ran a door-to-door information campaign to promote recycling of packaging, biowaste, batteries and WEEE between 2007 and 2009 within the municipality of Elefsina (R4R, 2014b). Data recorded for the total weight of packaging recycled in the locality showed a 72 % increase in the second year of the campaign, compared with the beginning of the campaign (Figure 1).

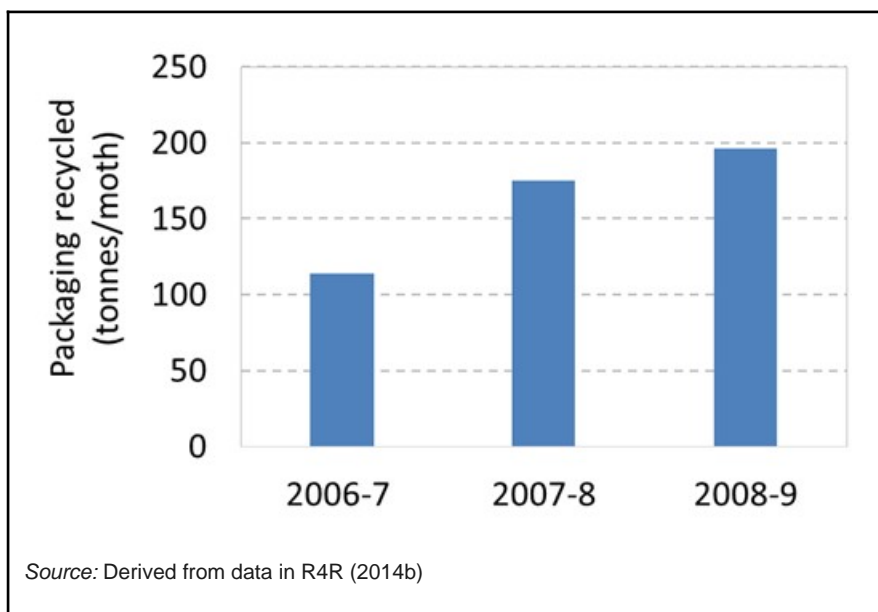


Figure 1. Total packaging recycling in the Elefsina municipality of Attiki, Greece, before (2006–2007) and during a door-to-door information campaign

Vienna City Council (2013) reported significant reductions in litter within the city for the time period from 2008 to 2012, following the principles of a provocative and humorous anti-littering advertising campaign: illegal dumping of white goods and shopping trolleys fell 68 % and 38 %, respectively, and cigarette butt littering dropped by 31 %. They also reported that 1 100 tonnes of dog poo is collected every year in disposable bags provided from street dispensers.

Side effects

Information campaigns may involve transport and the production (and ultimately disposal) of paper-based advertising materials, or energy and material consumption, e.g. energy use for online media (Greenpeace, 2014). The magnitude of resultant environmental burdens will vary considerably depending on the type of campaign but should be significantly exceeded by the benefits associated with even small increases in waste prevention or recycling rates.

Applicability

All waste management organisations can employ communication to raise awareness about their services at some level.

Economics

Citizens

It is estimated that households in the UK throw away EUR 635 worth of food every year on average (WRAP, 2015b). Possible financial savings provide a strong motivation for waste prevention across all types of product category, and represent a useful focal point for information campaigns to encourage waste prevention actions, and leverage-related recycling actions.

Waste management organisations

Awareness-raising is an integral operational cost for all waste management organisations. Indeed, for private service providers it may be largely accounted for within the advertising budget.

Typical costs for a standard communication campaign are between GBP 1 and GBP 2 per household, where the average household size in Scotland is about 2.2 residents (Zero Waste Scotland, 2012). Therefore, communication costs for awareness-raising campaigns can be estimated as about EUR 1 per resident.

School activities and events may be paid out of national, regional or local government education budgets.

Producer responsibility organisations (PROs)

Most EPR schemes at least partly cover administrative, reporting and communication costs relative to the operation of collective schemes. According to EC (2014), this includes public information and awareness-raising (in addition to a PRO's own communication initiatives), to ensure participation of consumers within the scheme (i.e. through separate collection), and surveillance of the EPR system. The degree of "full cost coverage" by the producers in EPR schemes varies, depending on the distribution of responsibilities between stakeholders (EC, 2014). In Portugal, regulation requires that 5 % of PRO budgets must be dedicated to communication and awareness-raising activities (EC, 2014).

LIPOR's PLG+ programme incurs relatively small direct costs for communication (EUR 3 000), but incurs significant personnel costs, with five technicians promoting and supporting the project (Lopes, 2015).

Driving forces for implementation

The main driving force for this technique, as with most others referred to in this document, is to reduce waste generation and increase waste recycling, driven by regulations and/or financial considerations.

Economic factors are particularly important for this technique: improving the uptake of existing waste management services almost always improves economic performance.

Reference organisations

- BSR, Berlin, Germany, is a reference organisation for implementation of the *Trenntstadt* campaign that aims to engage younger and trend-conscious citizens in recycling efforts.
- Câmara Municipal de Lisboa, Portugal, is a reference organisation for efforts in educating schoolchildren in waste prevention and recycling through school campaigns (R4R, 2014c; Câmara Municipal de Lisboa, 2015).
- The Ecological Recycling Society in Attiki, Greece, ran a successful recycling campaign to reduce of packaging, biowaste, batteries and WEEE.
- SYBERT, France, has an extensive campaign educating citizens on waste management using various media, including theatre and videos.
- Tallinn City Council, Estonia, promotes waste awareness among children and adults with interactive outreach activities, including a touring trailer.
- Vienna City Council, Austria, uses a wide range of communication channels to raise awareness, ranging from humorous anti-litter campaigns to online apps displaying the nearest waste collection points.
- WRAP, UK, supports local authorities in the development of a wide range of communication activities, from online apps to workshops, and has developed a number of effective advertising campaigns including “Love food, hate waste”.
- Zero Waste Scotland, UK, similarly supports local authorities in engagement activities, and has directly developed a number of online tools to inform and engage citizens.
- Scania, a region in the south of Sweden, has a programme named 'cut the crap 2020' which implements measures for waste minimisation by changing attitudes of residents and providing methodological support to individuals.

Literature

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