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Cross-analysis of 'Pay-As-You-Throw' schemes in selected EU municipalities



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Efforts to develop and enhance prevention, prepare for reuse and recycling have improved in the past decade, but still have not managed to stabilise or even reduce waste levels. Increased consumption and accompanying levels of waste have led to an interest in reinforcing policies and strategies addressing the top of the waste hierarchy. One such strategy for household waste is to apply the Polluter Pays Principle through the implementation of a variable fee structure, or Pay-As-You-Throw (PAYT), as studied in this publication. This policy targets household waste at its very source and makes households responsible for the quantity of waste discarded and thus creates an incentive for increased recycling, composting, and ideally a reduction in waste generation.

This report looks at the application of PAYT in the European Union (EU) through several case studies: seven municipalities from seven different countries are examined and compared for their strategies with regard to PAYT. The territories covered are: Interza (Belgium), Maastricht Municipality (the Netherlands), Umeå Municipality (Sweden), Zollernalbkreis (Germany), Treviso (Italy), Besançon (France) and Innsbruck municipality (Austria). This report aims to clarify the potential benefits and challenges when introducing PAYT. The study focuses on household waste.

Results show that PAYT has the potential to adapt well to local conditions, to encourage (residual) waste reductions, to increase considerable recycling and (home) composting and to be well-received by stakeholders. The report also demonstrates how PAYT systems vary greatly in detail, coverage, objectives, time horizons, targets, indicators, monitoring systems, measures, and policy instruments and results.

KEY FINDINGS

The following key-findings can be drawn from this research:

- A single policy measure can rarely achieve the stated policy goals. Policy measures have the best results when they are applied in a mix. The mix of policy measures should fit other measures. However, there is no one-size-fits-all approach in different countries/municipalities and for different waste streams. Moreover, PAYT is not a stand-alone policy measure. PAYT should always be incorporated in a mix of environmental policy measures such as prevention/ recycling targets, EPR, bans/ taxes and public information campaigns.
- If backed by sufficient recycling infrastructure PAYT has a strong potential to reduce waste and increase recycling.
- It is often recommended to launch PAYT with Door-to-Door collection schemes to maximise the accessibility of diversion.
- The design of the fee structure, or mix of fixed and variable fees, is critical to fully incentivise changes in waste behaviour.
- The fee structure should correctly reflect the costs of the waste services for the municipality, but also hold the proper balance of fixed and variable parts to encourage reductions. This means the municipalities need to have a solid understanding of the costs involved with their waste collection infrastructure.
- PAYT schemes appear to be most effective when the fees payable by households are at levels high enough to encourage reflection by householders on their waste generation behaviour.
- There are arguments for not making the charges so high in order to avoid providing a strong incentive for illegal dumping.
- Potential barriers to success are viewed as lack of diversion goals, lack of corresponding recycling infrastructure expansions, limited outreach to customers about how to change purchasing habits, and charging of a separate fee for recycling.
- With regards to waste prevention, weight-based systems are most successful, followed by combined volume and frequency-based/sack-based systems, and then volume-based systems (i.e. schemes where households simply choose a specific size of container). Care should be taken for PAYT and producer responsibility schemes to be complementary.
- Additionally, the largest reductions in waste appear to come from the diversion of food waste, meriting adequate attention to this waste stream.
- General waste surveys by the municipalities show satisfaction with the system, and the waste planners reported that users have a perceived high level of acceptance for the waste services and billing system.
- The general advantages for the policy listed by the municipalities are that it is “fair,” offers a strong incentive for waste reductions and increased sorting, and that it delivers high quality waste data.
- During the take-off and acceleration phases, when the policy is first implemented, and users are adjusting to the fee, the municipality can monitor closely, stay in close contact to its citizens through educational materials, and carefully monitor waste outcomes and revenue to adjust the fee accordingly.



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 1100 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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