



THE STATE OF ZERO WASTE MUNICIPALITIES REPORT 2023



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BIKE SWAP

BOTTLE DEPOSIT SYSTEM



Foreword

Peter Torkar

Mayor of Gorje, Slovenia

Through the audit by the Mission Zero Academy (MiZA), the municipality of Gorje became one of the first European Certified Zero Waste municipalities in 2022. I took that as a great compliment and, at the same time, proof that, as a municipality, we are not only following all measures to reduce mixed waste, but that our work is actually successful.

Implementing the concept of zero waste is not an easy task, but it is feasible with the appropriate commitment, flexibility, and cooperation between the local community, businesses, residents, and other stakeholders. It is important to remember that this is a long-term goal that requires a gradual introduction and adaptation. As the mayor of citizens who live in the most beautiful municipality below Triglav, I am very proud that the citizens are well aware of what it means for us to reduce environmental impacts, promote sustainable management, and preserve our resources.

The municipality of Gorje and its surroundings is also an area with high-quality and clean water. We are particularly proud of this because, with our water source, we not only provide quality drinking water to our citizens, but also to the residents of the municipalities of Žirovnica, Radovljica, and Bled. **For us, being able to pour drinking water from the tap is a great privilege that should not be taken for granted, so we will continue to preserve it to the greatest extent possible.** Our municipality is also home to many natural sights and beauties, including the Vintgar gorge, the Pokljuka gorge and the Radovna valley.

Our ancestors lived in close harmony with nature and often depended on its balance for survival. Throughout history, they learned different ways to care for the natural environment that provided them with the basic goods of life. We, on the other hand, live in an era of rapid

progress and capitalism with which we have achieved a high level of comfort and technological development.

However, too many times this was done at the cost of destroying the planet, so it is important to be aware of our responsibility towards the environment and future generations.

Many times I ask myself out loud "Has the world gone wild?". I believe that only a self-critical response will allow us to make more thoughtful decisions. Perhaps that's why, in the future, we'll spend more time thinking about how to proceed. Together, with positive thoughts, we will strive for a cleaner environment and protect our planet, in which we love to live, and must preserve, for future generations.

We congratulate ZWE and its members for this report, and the many municipalities in Europe who, like Gorje, are on their own journey towards becoming zero waste.



Introduction

Welcome to the fourth edition of the **State of Zero Waste Municipalities Report**.

As with each edition, we aim to provide the most comprehensive overview of the work happening with municipalities to help them become zero waste, not only in Europe but also with a global perspective via our colleagues at GAIA.

The fourth edition of this report looks back at 2023. As usual, we provide an update from the local leaders and pioneers in Europe where we are working with municipalities. **In this report, we shine our best practice spotlight on the local initiatives that are innovatively bringing together positive impacts for the environment and the local community, through greater job creation, skills provision and opportunities to connect as neighbours.**

Four years after we first started this initiative, we still know that stories have the power to change the world. If anything, they are more needed than they ever have been. In previous years, we have written that the challenges we face are more complex and urgent than ever before.

Sadly, we can say exactly the same as we enter 2024. 2023 has been confirmed as the hottest on record, as the planet continues spiralling towards climate disaster. Whilst this provides many reasons for despair, this report aims to showcase the reasons for hope in today's world.

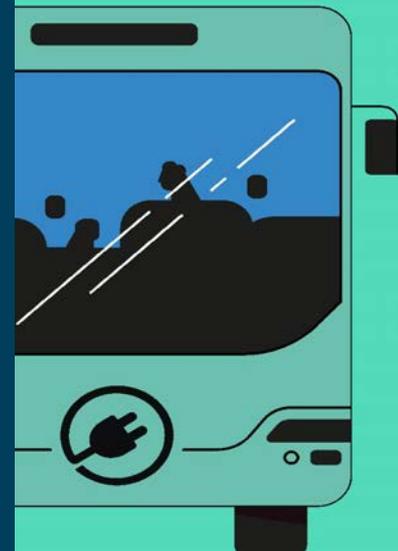
This is the story of zero waste cities across Europe: what they are and the path they have shown towards a better, fairer and resilient future. It's a celebration of their impact and recognition for the tireless work of leaders who are behind each local success story.

We hope you enjoy reading the report and find it a useful tool in your own journey towards becoming zero waste.

Jack McQuibban

Head of Local Zero Waste Implementation at Zero Waste Europe

Overview of 2023



Context

2023 was another significant year for the zero waste movement, with many local successes and exciting growth in new areas to note, which are highlighted in this report. Municipalities in Europe, and globally, are increasingly making the transition towards implementing more zero waste solutions - seen by the increase in both the number of Zero Waste Certified and Candidate Cities we have, as well as the growth in the wider pool of municipalities who are working on zero waste solutions in specific projects or isolated measures.

On waste generation specifically, the latest figures from Eurostat show that within the EU, total waste generation has only slightly decreased in recent years. In 2022, this stood at 513kgs per capita, down from 521kgs per capita in 2020 and 527kgs in 2021. Despite a 2020 EU target for recycling 50% of municipal solid waste (MSW), 2022 figures state that across the EU the average recycling rate was estimated at 48% - down from 2021 - [with only 8 countries achieving the minimum 2020 target of 50%](#).

Yet when we zoom out a bit to look at the wider context, 2023 was the year that many challenges and issues, which had long been on the periphery, made it into the mainstream. Whether it was the huge and ethically questionable lobbying efforts from industry groups during the negotiations for the EU Packaging & Packaging Waste Regulation (PPWR), which has led the European [Parliament to launch an investigation on lobbying groups methods](#), or the 'green' agenda being used by populist politicians as the next 'culture war' to push back against. Whilst the debate behind why and

how this has happened are for a separate space, it's important to highlight within the context of this report that the landscape and environment that we find ourselves working within today is as challenging as it has ever been since we began writing this report.

At the city level, whilst budgetary pressures may have eased slightly due to inflation having hit its peak, there still remains huge challenges on officials wanting to transition their city away from the status quo of waste management. The lack of proper accessible finance earmarked for the green transition, ongoing struggles around internal capacity in administrations and a changing political landscape towards one less favourable of sustainability and positive climate actions - despite the mounting evidence of the nearing ecological and climate collapse...

In parallel, the rise of extreme right narrative and politics, the anti-EU populism, the rising criticism of the Green Deal, and general polarisation of the political debates are leading us towards a situation where municipalities are de-prioritising key environmental and social measures.

Yet paradoxically, we are seeing a pushback against sustainable measures and yet they are not having their desired effect, especially in the field of waste and the circular economy. Simply put, we are far from reversing the trends of resource consumption. The European Commission's Joint Research Centre [in its 2023 report on EU consumption concludes](#) that *"The environmental impact of the consumption of an average EU citizen is outside the safe operating space for humanity."*

Overview of 2023

Lowering this impact is of paramount importance for the EU and national governments in the coming years to avert the triple planetary crisis (climate, pollution, and biodiversity loss). The shift from a linear to a circular economy has been promoted as the solution to the overconsumption of natural resources for years. However, gains brought about by circularity (recycling, reuse) and net-zero (renewable energy) [are vastly outpaced by the growth in material use and energy consumption](#) and they fail to address the fairness and ethical challenges brought by our current economy.

Even with the most ambitious strategies we will overstep planetary boundaries such as GHG emissions, water use, or biodiversity loss among others, ultimately reducing our individual and collective wellbeing. Our [2022 research](#) shows that circularity and the net-zero agendas have serious limitations when it comes to challenging the current business-as-usual approach. They remain optimisation strategies when what is needed is to radically reduce material use whilst increasing sufficiency.

Unless we manage to shift the framing to address the root causes of the problem, it will be impossible to achieve substantial change to allow us to live within the geophysical planetary boundaries and counter the negative social impacts of our current models.

In this changing context, the role of cities is becoming increasingly critical. Where political polarisation and social disconnect are on the rise, it falls on municipalities to develop actions and communities which bring people together and reduce our negative impact on the environment.

An overview of 2023's ZWE local level work

Together with our sister organisation, the Mission Zero Academy (MiZA), **there are currently 13 Zero Waste Certified Cities in Europe** who have undergone a full, independent audit to verify their zero waste performance. **We also have a further 29 Zero Waste Candidate Cities** who have made their commitments to become a Certified city and are now preparing before their first audit in the years to come.

We do not expect to have a vast surge in uptake from cities, this is not part of our business model or future vision. The Certification is designed to be robust and not something where the rewards can be achieved overnight. It requires commitment and hard work year after year, which we accept is not desirable for every municipality. Through the Certification, we want to make sure we are supporting **any city** which wants to improve and is willing to put the work in to do so.

Yet without this commitment, it is difficult to meaningfully utilise the full benefits on offer from implementing a zero waste strategy. With the Certification, through keeping the framework robust and ambitious, we are building a group of pioneer European local authorities who are going beyond the status quo of waste management today, recognising the need to change and are reaping the benefits of doing so .

Outside of the Certification, ZWE works with a wider pool of partner cities in our projects - ones which focus solely on implementing a zero waste solution rather than the wider holistic strategy that the Certification provides. For example, in our RSVP project we support cities such as Berlin and Paris to implement city-wide reuse systems for takeaway food and beverage packaging. Our projects currently include:

- [Reuse Vanguard Project \(RSVP\)](#)
- [Elevating Reuse in Cities \(ERIC\)](#)
- [LIFE Biobest](#)
- [#ForkToFarm](#)

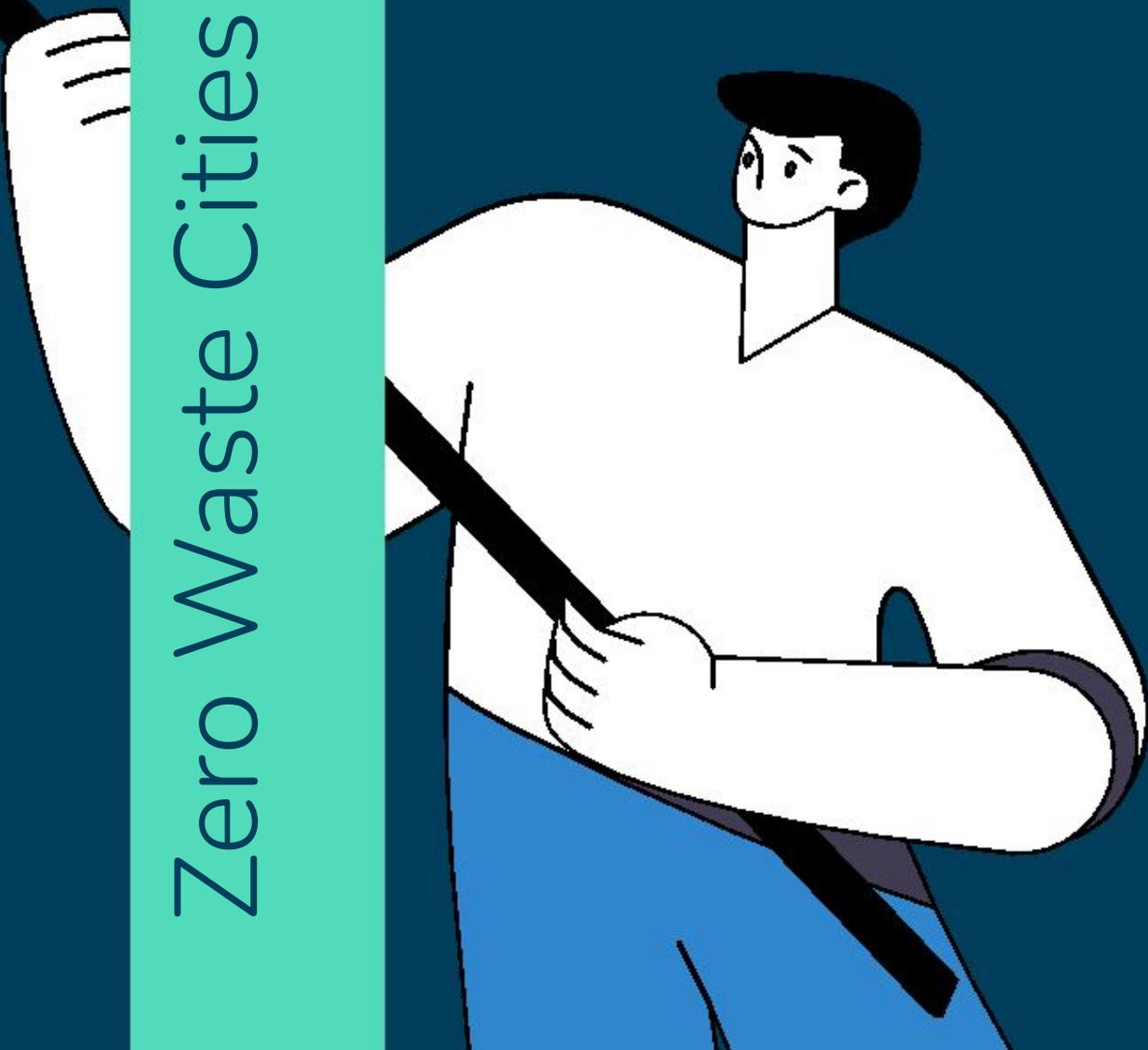
Collectively, through these 4 projects and the cities committed within MiZA's Cities Certification, our support to municipalities covers a population of just over 16 million in Europe today.



Zero Waste Cities around the world

As with every edition, the State of Zero Waste Municipalities Report aims to shine a light on the global work happening with municipalities, coordinated with other regions as part of [GAIA](#).

In this chapter, we have updates from each of the regional leads working on zero waste at the local level. It includes some inspiring stories and successes, from California reducing its incineration capacity to 43 local authorities in the Asia-Pacific region agreeing to reduce their 70% of methane emissions from the waste sector by 2030.



Africa

Written by Desmond Alugnoa,
Africa Programme Manager

Number of Zero Waste Cities
in region: 4

In 2023, the zero waste work in Africa has expanded from seven big and small municipalities in 2022 to thirteen in total now, with three of those projects scaling up simultaneously in Cape Town, Uyo, and Dakar.

The zero waste work in Africa for the last year operated within the following pillars:

- **Movement building for structural changes to catalyse zero waste models implementation:** including various workshops and capacity building initiatives for municipal officers, informal waste pickers, waste management companies, and several other stakeholders. This was particularly notable and impactful in Douala (Cameroon), Kivu (DR Congo), and Kampala (Uganda);
- **The implementation of zero waste models, such as waste separation at source.** We have also witnessed the implementation of zero waste models in multiple municipalities throughout Accra, Kampala, Dakar, Dar Es Salaam, and many others;
- **Policy shifts** - in the past 12 months, GAIA Africa's team and members took centre stage in Nigeria where a zero waste alliance was formed and supported the government with critical knowledge on plastics management. Our members in Ghana also served on the Ministry of Science's policy task force for circular waste management.
- **In February 2023, we also established the GAIA/BFFP Africa Plastics Policy Working Group,** which currently comprises 40 members across 15 African Countries, and engages with governments to strengthen existing national laws and policies, corporate accountability, and waste picker organising across the various cities.

We see the expansion of our organics management portfolio to be one of the key victories of 2023. Thanks to support from the Climate and Clean Air Coalition (CCAC), with methane and air pollution avoiding goals at its core, this portfolio of work now reaches 11 more countries (namely the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Morocco, Nigeria Rwanda, Senegal, Uganda, and Zimbabwe).

We were also proud of all the exchange opportunities between members that we facilitated. Over the past year, the team has organised exchange meetings in Ghana where the zero waste Accra model was showcased to GAIA members. The waste pickers exchange among projects within the lifecycle family of the UMI fund brought together waste pickers from Africa and Asia in Ghana and formed global allies. There was also the GAIA Africa gathering in Tanzania, where members got to interact with wastepicker and observe compost-making in the town of Bonyokwa.

Data from our work in Dar es Salaam and Arusha showcase the impact and importance of the work on organics. For example, a total of 55 new permanent jobs were created with over 30 tonnes of bio-waste being successfully diverted from landfills across both pilot projects.

Taking a look at some of our membership's victories, **the Zero Waste Academy in Tanzania gathered 84 participants from all over Africa** (in-person and online) to learn more about zero waste concepts, methodologies, and practices, as well as first-hand experiences on waste diversion at the source, assessments and brand audits. In Uganda, our member End Plastic Pollution secured land for a Materials Recovery Facility and helped with waste pickers' organising. And, in Nigeria, SRADeV successfully facilitated the development of the National Environmental Regulations 2023 on plastic waste control to include zero waste practices.

But we're obviously not stopping here. In 2024, our ambitions include:

- Establishing a zero waste model in the city of Zanzibar.
- Leading the GAIA youth group
- Our methane work (which includes Global Methane Hub- and Clean Air Funds-related projects)
- Data collection on waste and open burning/dumping incidents
- Our work with the Climate and Clean Air Coalition
- The ongoing negotiations on a UN Global Plastics Treaty.

Asia-Pacific

Number of Zero Waste Cities
in region: 35+

Written by Ambily Adithyan,
Regional Zero Waste Cities Lead at GAIA Asia-Pacific

2023 was the first time the Zero Waste Month became an international celebration, with members across different parts of the Asia Pacific region holding more than 200 events to mainstream zero waste in their cities and communities. The event was highly engaging - not just for our members, but also for local/city governments, allies, youth, and media.

GAIA Asia Pacific developed the *Hoi An Strategic Plan 2024-2028*, which will guide our network of 125 members in 25 countries for the next 5 years to achieve zero waste, taking into account our diversity of mandates, areas of expertise, and resources. The *Hoi An Strategy* was the result of a 10-month, extensive consultative process drawing on lessons and recommendations from implementation moments, evaluations, member consultations, and allies' strategic planning sessions, including industry and intergovernmental discussions.

One of our biggest successes of 2023 was definitely the *International Zero Waste Cities Conference 2023: Zero Waste to Zero Emissions*, held in Manila (Philippines) as part of the International Zero Waste Month. [The event gathered over 500 participants](#) who joined in-person or virtually. Apart from expert sessions on various topics, the conference also marked:

- **The launch of the Zero Waste Cities Network in Asia Pacific**, which brings together 91 cities and city representatives from the Philippines, India, Indonesia, Nepal, and Vietnam.
- **The uptake of the Cities Methane Pledge by 43 local governments within the Zero Waste Cities Network**, committing to reduce 70% of their methane emissions from waste by 2030.

[The baton of the International Zero Waste Cities Conference is now in GAIA Africa's hands](#), which will be holding the conference in 2024.

Among other important victories, our members in Indonesia successfully got the provincial government of West Java to release a governor directive banning organic waste dumping in the Sarimukti Landfill. Still in Indonesia, Diet Plastik Indonesia implemented the Reuse Protocol at the Jakarta Music Festival. Attended by more than 1800 people,

the Festival prevented more than 3300 single-use plastic items from going into landfills and achieved a return rate of 98%.

Across the Celebes Sea, and during Zero Waste Month in January, the Mother Earth Foundation (Philippines) held the Organics Fair and Launch of the 3 R's (Refill, Reuse, Repair) Programme in Quezon City. With twenty-to micro, small, and medium enterprises exhibiting their organic products, the Fair also showcased various techniques, technologies, and best practices in organics management, with demonstration segments for interaction with visitors.

Keeping up with our 2023 successes, we have high ambitions for 2024, including:

- **The Regional Organic Congress**, which will take place in India in the second half of the year to showcase best practices; develop a deeper understanding of organics prevention and management; and explore opportunities for cross-collaboration to create an enabling environment for building a movement for organic and climate in the region. The congress will see participation of members, academia, policy makers and practitioners from fields, including across waste management, agriculture, livelihoods and climate.
- **The work of the Asia Reuse Consortium**, comprising GAIA members, local governments, and social enterprises. GAIA AP will provide coordination support to help cities and countries advocate for reuse systems and policies.
- **GAIA AP's side event during CoP29 to demonstrate the connection between organics management and climate**; and to highlight the Cities Methane Pledge initiative and its progress.

Number of Zero Waste Cities
in region: **not yet measured**



Latin America and the Caribbean

Written by **Mariela Pino**,
Member and Technical Support Officer at
GAIA Latin America & the Caribbean

In 2023, we had 16 projects in 8 countries to implement several aspects of the zero waste cities model. Additionally, there are 11 projects in 6 countries specifically dealing with organic residues, giving them a second life under soil amendments or fertilisers in home gardens, agroecology, community orchards, and public gardens.

Many GAIA members in the region are running advocacy and awareness raising activities to fight against the pyrolysis of plastics, a false solution being pushed as a new trend of “circular economy” plans and “sustainable” cities, besides the strong push for incineration plants. Furthermore, grassroots organisations in the region are showing pioneering examples of implementing reuse systems and bulk (packaging-free) business models, demonstrating the feasibility, methods, and implications of these measures.

In 2023, we also confirmed the reality of the global waste trade - not only when it comes to the illegal sales of plastics, but also in the field of fast fashion, in which waste is not only illegally dumped, but also burnt in the Chilean desert.

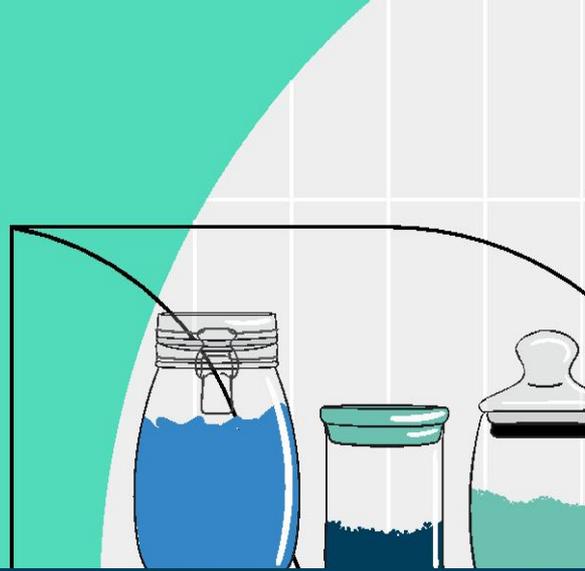
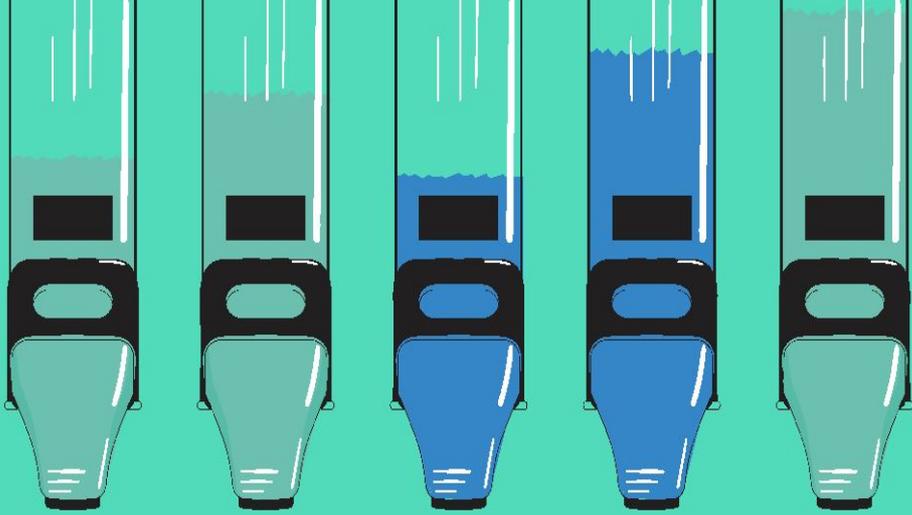
The biggest victory in the region over the past 12 months was the progress made by wastepickers in dealing with organic waste in cities, signalling this practice’s multiple benefits and exciting new opportunities. Many 2023 initiatives focused on empowering the informal sector to gain skills and adopt new environmental protection and municipal solid waste management roles. When considering the need for a just transition worldwide, relying on the “informal sector” plays a significant role. These experiences help us understand the impact, difficulties, and diverse “business models” experienced in the region. This progress is aligned with the

[Environmental Justice values and principles that arose from GAIA’s global work](#), a set of principles through which we expect to influence climate policy, decision-makers, and financing.

Amongst the **biggest success stories from our members**, we must highlight RADA’s 6-year-long fight against the [Waste to Energy project](#) in Chile, which celebrated a key victory in 2023. Across the region, [Sao Paulo Composta y Cultiva](#)’s project in Brazil was able to scale up its activities to the whole country (and, on a similar note, a [composting network](#) was launched in Ecuador). We also concluded our collective 3-year-long studies and research on [Waste Trade](#), which includes plenty of material from the Latin America & Caribbean region and its global connections.

In 2024, we plan to:

- Expand our work to include health and hospitals;
- Strengthen the involvement of youth in our work;
- Bring knowledge and lessons learnt around zero waste cities knowledge and lessons learnt to international discussions, with a specific focus on financial institutions.



US/Canada

Number of Zero Waste Cities
in region: not yet measured

Written by Marcel R. Howard,
Zero Waste Programme Manager GAIA US & Canada

Throughout 2023, the US/CAN zero waste programme focused on various existing and new workstreams. We initiated our work on the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), working with partners (Friends of the Earth US and Ironbound Community Corp) to encourage the Treasury Department not to classify incineration as a “zero emissions” technology, which would open up billions of dollars in subsidies and incentives for the incinerator industry (45Y Tax Credit).

We have also begun shifting our focus to tackle climate through a methane lens, specifically with a focus on diverting organic waste from landfills and incinerators. In addition, we’ve since expanded our work throughout Canada as we work with allies and members pushing back on a recent pro-incineration/waste-to-energy report that the Canadian Federal government published.

We expanded our work at the state level, with a specific focus on the development of a statewide anti-incineration coalition within the State of Florida. We also provided comments on a variety of federal strategies and rule-making processes covering everything from the National Plastics Strategy to the FTC Green Guides. Throughout all these activities, we have continued creating space for our grassroots members and allies by providing technical assistance and education, along with creating space for them to engage directly with legislators on various zero waste and anti-incineration initiatives.

Our biggest success of the past year was supporting our members and allies in California (East Yard for Communities for Environmental Justice, Valley Improvement Projects, Californians Against Waste, ...) on the law AB 1857 (2022), which stripped away the “diversion credit” that incentivised local jurisdictions to send their waste to incinerators. This

credit was a crucial source of revenue for the incinerator industry in California. Due to AB 1857, and continued pressure by grassroots organisers, the waste management company Covanta officially announced an end of its contract with the City of Long Beach for its Southeast Resource Recovery Facility (SERRF). This marked the beginning of the official closure of one of the two remaining incinerators in the state of California.

Grassroots organisers are now engaging with local officials on a detailed closure plan emphasising embracing zero waste initiatives after the facility is shut down. This same work is set to be replicated in Stanislaus County for the last remaining incinerator in the state, as Covanta has recently announced they are in serious financial trouble and are likely to close down the incinerator in 2024.

Our member organisations also achieved remarkable victories in 2023, including:

- **HERC Incinerator closure announcement** - thanks to the hard work of the Minnesota Environmental Justice Table (MNEJT) and CURE, the Hennepin Energy Recovery Center (HERC) located in downtown Minneapolis has announced it will be shutting down. MNEJT and CURE worked tirelessly at the state level to change the law to say that energy generated by the facility can no longer be treated as

renewable energy, thus causing the incinerator to lose the renewable energy credits (RECs) it relies on for revenue purposes. MNEJT and CURE are now working to ensure all incinerators in the State of Minnesota [lose their ability to earn tax credits/subsidies](#), along with developing a zero waste plan for Minneapolis following the proper closure of the HERC facility.

- [Breathe Free Detroit & Mother Earth Foundation collaboration](#) - an incredible example of GAIA network and movement building across borders, for over two years the Mother Earth Foundation (Philippines) has been mentoring Breathe Free Detroit (USA) on building decentralised zero waste systems in their communities. While coming from very different parts of the world, the two communities have a lot to learn from each other, having both long been the dumping ground for waste from more affluent areas, fighting back and creating community solutions that provide a more just and dignified way of life.

In 2023, MEF and BFD were finally able to meet in person in the Philippines after a year of virtual mentoring and skill-sharing. In addition, MEF travelled to Detroit to visit the city and see the work of BFD first-hand. This has laid the groundwork for an amazing partnership between the two organisations and is set to be an example of future partnerships GAIA hopes to foster among members across regions.

In 2024, we will continue to prioritise and centre grassroots and environmental justice voices to make zero waste the default waste management approach throughout the United States and Canada.

More specifically, we plan to:

- **Continue supporting GAIA members and their engagement with local, state/provincial, and federal policymakers** with a focus on pushing back on false solutions, and developing policies, financing mechanisms, and infrastructure to support zero waste systems.
- **Emphasise the connection between climate and zero waste as a 'low-hanging fruit' climate mitigation strategy**, especially in relation to reducing methane emissions through organics prevention, diversion, and recycling.
- **Highlight and uplift zero waste successes from across the region**, and address how to embrace zero waste after an incinerator has left a community.
- **Develop a more prominent force supporting real zero waste systems** among grassroots, allied organisations, and other sectors; and work to increase community engagement and public support for zero waste.



Zero Waste Cities in Europe

Through this part of the report, we now look in more depth at the local work that ZWE members have undertaken across the continent. Each chapter has been written by the individuals who have been most actively involved in this work.

We highlight the actions and impact where our work is most active and where we subsequently have the most engagement from local municipalities.



Austria

Written by Christa Birmili and Evelyn Rath,
Verein westwinkel (Zero Waste Austria)



Zero Waste Austria continues to work with the municipality of St. Valentin to encourage the implementation of zero waste strategies.

In 2023, a reusable cup system for coffee-to-go was introduced in cooperation with St. Valentine's cafes and restaurants. In September 2023, a mobile dishwasher (trailer with two commercial dishwashers and dishes for events with up to 1,000 people) was purchased to avoid single-use items, making it available to hire in the entire region and surrounding communities. The first results were very positive: at the opening of a primary school in St. Valentin with around 750 guests, 25 litres of organic waste were collected, no single-use crockery was utilised, but rather only reusable tableware.

The mobile dishwasher was also in use at the traditional Christmas market with around 2,000 visitors. The stand operators served their beverages exclusively in the branded reusable cups, which were washed on site in the dishwashing mobile. The exhibitors were free to serve food on reusable dishes, and some of them took advantage of this opportunity.

The EU-wide ban on disposable items, such as cutlery or drinking straws, as part of the EU Single-Use Plastics Directive, made it easier to implement reusable systems, and citizens are more keen on accepting to find and use reusable tableware/cups at events.

In 2024, the priority for Zero Waste Austria is to keep reducing waste at local events, by promoting the existing facilities and fostering collaborations and best practices among local communities. We will utilise the growing knowledge and data from other city initiatives on preventing waste in public events and spaces, such as through the ERIC project organised by ZWE.



Belgium

Written by Pauline Talbot,
Coordinator at Zero Waste Belgium



Municipalities participating in ZWE projects: 2 (Jette and Brussels)

As part of the ERIC project, we are working with 2 municipalities within the region of Brussels - Jette and the city of Brussels. The main focus for both concerns mostly the transition to reusable cups and plates in all public events, whilst in Jette they have also a ban on all single used items inside the municipality. However in the coming months we also hope to expand our work within the ERIC project to new cities, specifically Charleroi and Namur, both based in Wallonia. This has been helped by the recent legislation from the Walloon region, published in September 2023, which bans single-use cups from all events in Wallonia.

In Jette and Brussels City, we are working with the municipalities to develop Plastic Prevention Plans (PPPs) or embed plastic prevention measures within existing strategies, as is the case for Brussels City. Several challenges have emerged, including the lack of clearly defined quantifiable objectives, monitoring indicators, and a concrete action plan. Moreover, the considerable size of Brussels, presents a significant logistical hurdle in coordinating meetings across departments, demanding substantial time and effort and leading to generally slow response times. Furthermore, the approaching elections are causing a shift in the cities' focus and introducing uncertainties to the implementation of the plan.

The priorities for us in the upcoming months are:

- Starting concrete work with the City of Brussels
- Involve the cities of Namur and Charleroi in the ERIC project

Eco-crèches in Brussels

As part of the ERIC project, Zero Waste Belgium has also been supporting the City of Brussels (one municipality within the wider Brussels-Capital-Region) [on a reusable nappy initiative](#). The aim of the municipality is to roll out washable nappies across all its 40 public kindergartens by 2026, reaching 1700 children each year.

The project is introducing around 4,000 washable nappies into circulation to cover the 1,500,000 changes per year, and each of these diapers can be washed and reused up to 300 to 500 times. The nappies that have been chosen are

made in France in cotton or hemp 100% from organic farming. With the estimated lifespan of a washable diaper at between 4 and 6 years, there will be between 6 million and 9 million disposable diapers that will not be thrown away thanks to the use of the 4000 washable diapers in circulation over the same period.

In 2019, the municipal council gave the green light to the launch of a public service contract relating to the organisation and execution of the rental of diapers, the rental of transport bags for clean and dirty diapers, the recovery of dirty diapers, their cleaning and sterilisation, maintenance and redistribution of these in nurseries. The pilot began in December 2020, beginning with 2 eco-crèches with a total of 124 children. During the pilot phase, in 2021, in the two eco-crèches concerned, nearly 100,000 disposable diapers were avoided from being thrown into the residual trash.

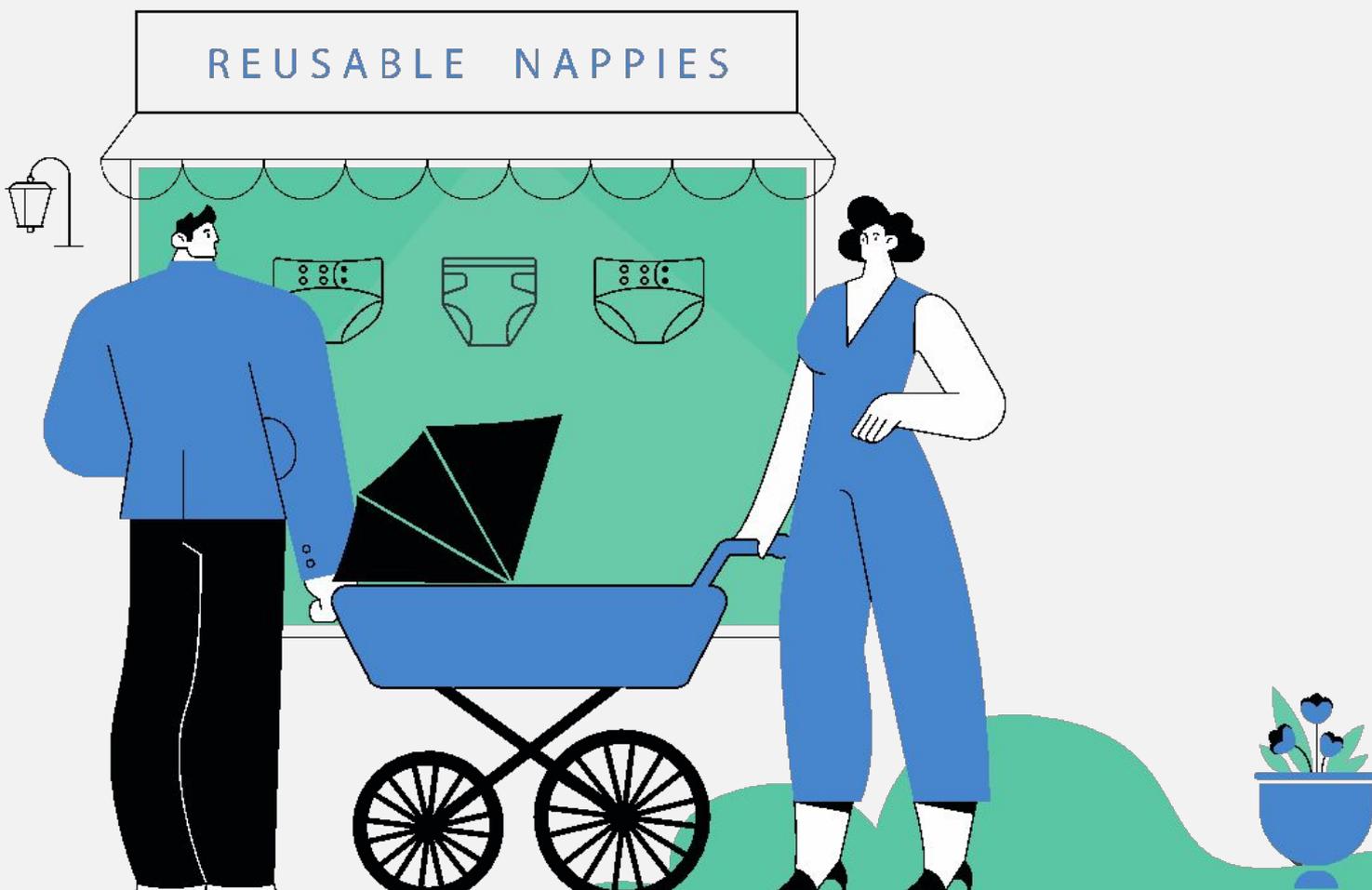
In July 2022, given the success of the experience, a new 12-month contract was awarded for 2023 concerning the first 2 crèches and the gradual arrival of another 7 into the project. For the future, the idea is to gradually move to reusable diapers in 20 nurseries in 2024, 30 in 2025 and finally 40 in 2026. Findings from the project so far indicate a reduced use of diaper cream and less irritation of babies' skin from using washable nappies instead of single-use ones.

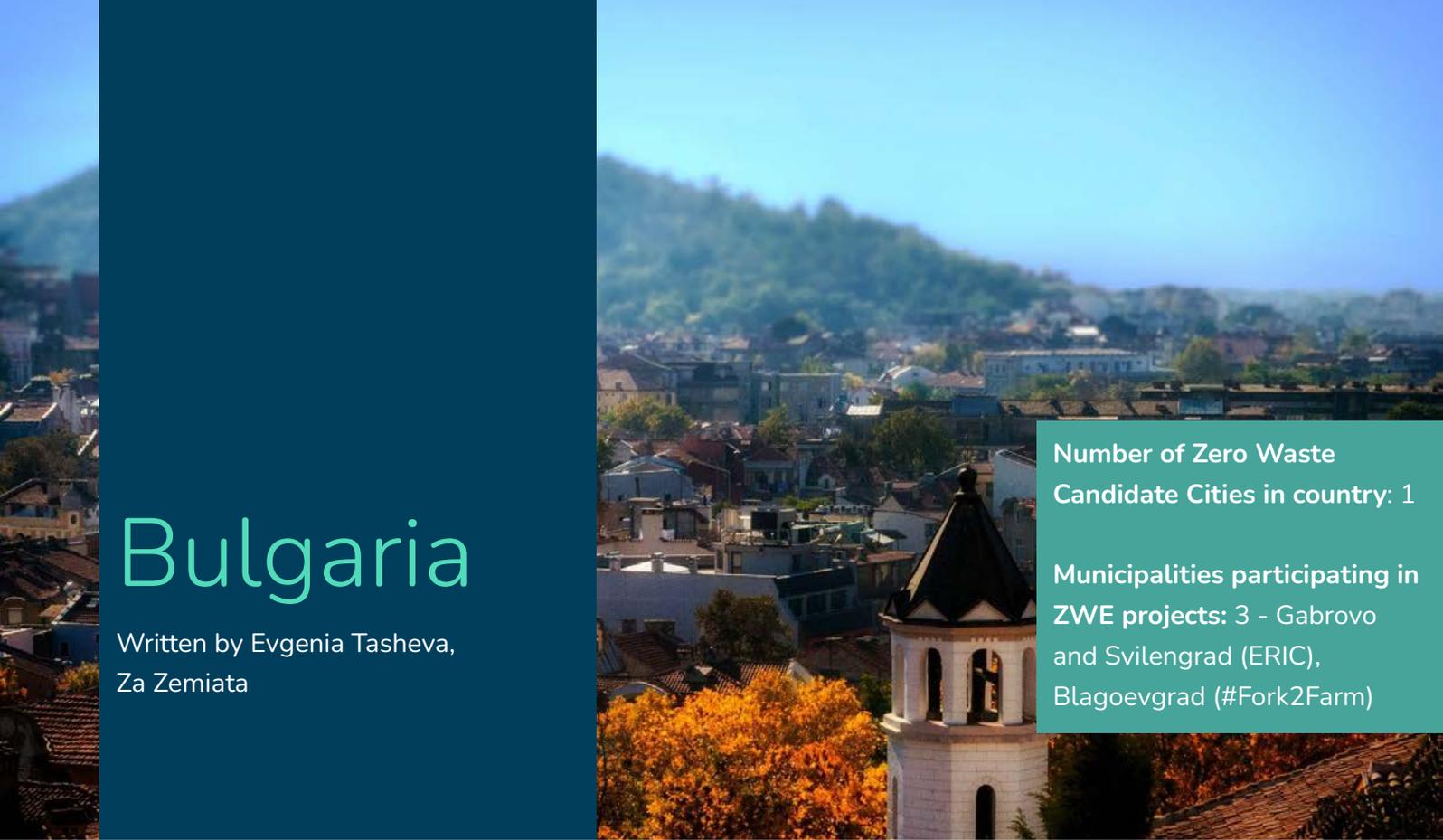
Belgium

The project has a net cost of 40,000 EUR each year to the City of Brussels, with all expenses included. Switching to washable and reusable nappies would make it possible to avoid the cost of collecting residual waste estimated at +/- €80,000 for all nurseries per year.

The implementation of simple and efficient logistics was a factor of success: it is a Brussels company (Snappies) which offers rental (collection and delivery) and cleaning of diapers for the 9 participating nurseries in 2023. Logistics for the system [are managed by cargo bike](#).

Other success factors include the fact that there is no change in logistics for parents when switching to washable diapers, given that the disposable diapers used until then were already provided by the crèche at cost price to parents. There was no financial impact either, with the flat rate of 88 euros cents per day remaining unchanged after the switch to washable and reusable nappies.





Bulgaria

Written by Evgenia Tasheva,
Za Zemiata

Number of Zero Waste
Candidate Cities in country: 1

Municipalities participating in
ZWE projects: 3 - Gabrovo
and Svilengrad (ERIC),
Blagoevgrad (#Fork2Farm)

Besides the work with our zero waste cities and municipalities, we are also working to influence the new local government of Sofia Municipality to steer away from incineration and towards drastic improvement of separate collection.

In 2023, Svilengrad was the first municipality in Bulgaria to pilot a Pay-as-you-throw (PAYT) waste charging model in pilot areas with single-family and multi-family buildings, testing out both volume and weight-based measurement and identifying individual generators. A public information portal allows residents to check their data. The results of the pilot project expectedly showed a reduction in the amount of landfilled household waste and more separate collection of bulky and oversized waste and packaging waste.

Furthermore, Svilengrad has installed individual 240-litre waste containers for 250 households in the Roma neighbourhood, a great improvement over previously used public containers that had become small dumpsites. An intensive information campaign was carried out in villages about proper disposal, as well as the separate collection of packaging, and then construction and demolition waste. Using video surveillance cameras has helped Svilengrad limit the illegal disposal of waste.

Nationally, after ten years of delaying and postponing, the PAYT principle for charging for waste services is due to be implemented by local authorities starting on 01 January 2025. Related to this is the obligation to collect bio-waste separately from 01 January 2024. Many municipalities are working on pilot projects to test both bio-waste collection and / or PAYT charging. This is an opportunity for us to propose models based on best practices from the Zero Waste Europe community of city officials, scientific experts and experienced practitioners. At the same

time, the same old calculation for the 10% landfill cap is still in circulation, namely, “We need to recycle and compost 50/65% of the waste, we are allowed to landfill just 10%, therefore, the remaining 25% need to be burned”. This clearly calls for a visible and credible alternative vision – we are working on it, in the form of a concept / proposal to the Ministry of environment and local authorities.

Our organisation’s biggest success/victory over the past 12 months is that the Bulgarian courts [ruled out the proposal for a waste incinerator plant in Sofia](#), due to unassessed health risks and lack of public consultation. After eight years of litigation, Sofia’s Administrative Court overturned the environmental impact assessment (EIA) for a waste incineration plant in the Bulgarian capital. Expected to burn processed waste in the form of refuse-derived fuel (RDF), the plant would have put the health of Sofia’s residents at risk, polluted the air, generated toxic ash and created additional traffic, the court ruled. According to the court decision, the authorities failed to ensure proper public participation and did not assess the health risks for the population directly affected by the project.

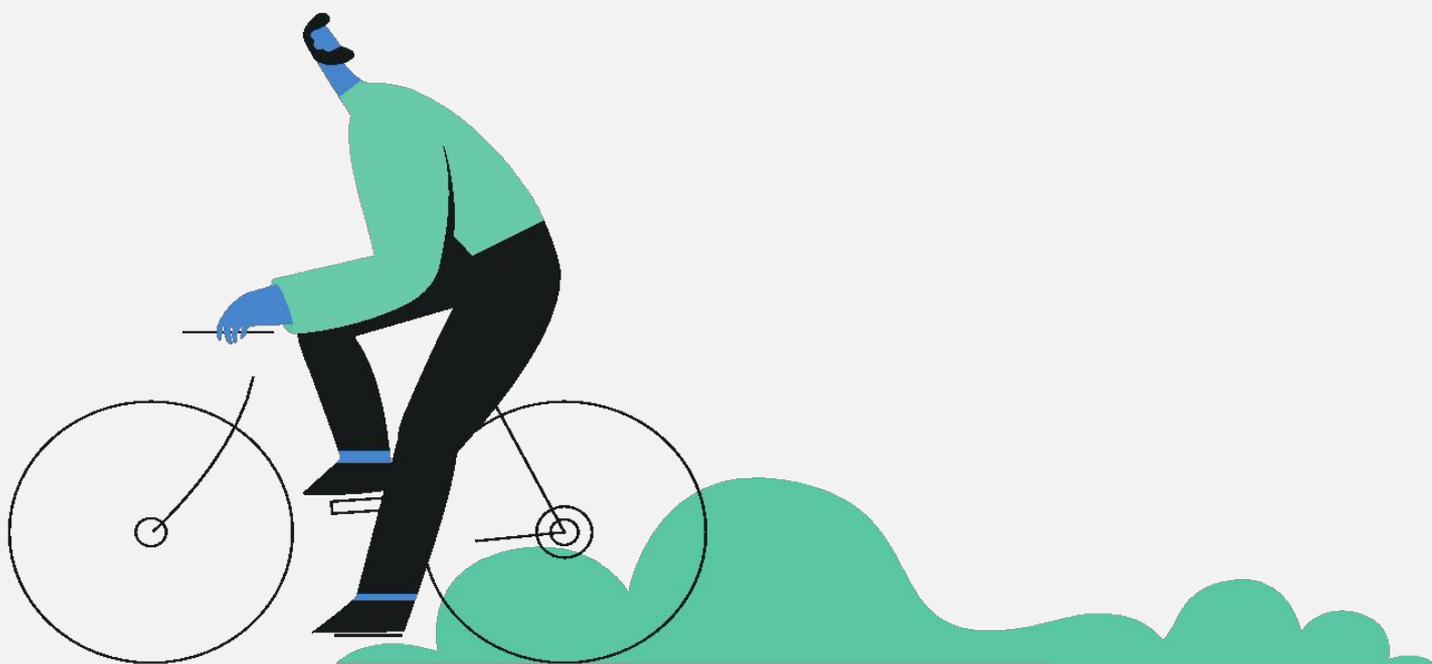
For the next 12 months, our priorities are:

- Supporting the municipality of Blagoevgrad to introduce separate collection of biowaste from households;
- Drafting and implementing plastic prevention plans in Svilengrad and Gabrovo municipalities;
- Making 'Bring Your Own' container a legal option for food and drinks;
- Prevent new waste incineration projects by tracking investment proposals and working with lawyers and local communities.

Waste generation and collection in Svilengrad, Bulgaria

Year	Total MSW generation (per capita, kgs)	Separate collection rate (%)	Residual waste generation (per capita, kgs)
2022	319	22.67%	246.78
2023	536*	54.37%	244.4

* 2023 saw a big rise in construction waste due to a number of large projects being started. Svilengrad also receives large numbers of tourists from Turkey which is geographically next door, which increases the total waste generation figures but are not counted within the per capita disaggregation due to the fact these individuals consume waste as visitors not permanent residents.



Croatia

Written by Marko Kosak,
Zelena Akcija



Number of Zero Waste
Candidate Cities in country: 7
(Krk island)

Municipalities participating in
ZWE projects: 8 - Krk island
(7) and Zagreb

Our work in Croatia focuses on the three main areas (Prelog, Krk and Zagreb), as well as developments of new national legislation which has presented some critical challenges to our local work.

Prelog

In 2023 we have continued our work with the first 12 Croatian zero waste municipalities (Prelog, Belica, Donja Dubrava, Donji Vidovec, Sveta Marija, Goričan, Donji Kraljevec, Kotoriba, Dekanovec, Domašinec, Martijanec, Podturen), which are all operated by the waste management company [PRE-KOM](#). Last year, two new municipalities joined PRE-KOM's system - Jalžabet and Pribislavec - and they already show great improvements in their results within 6 months, with separate collection rates increasing from 21% and 26% to 50% and 66% respectively.

In 2023, these municipalities have achieved new impressive results and continued improvements of their system, based on our recommendations. They are the best performers in separate waste collection within all of Croatia, **with the average rate of 67% in 12 municipalities (data for 2022), which is a significant jump in comparison to 57.25% in 2019**. 11 municipalities had more than 65% of separately collected waste. It's especially important to highlight that the biggest city of Prelog is close to 70% separate collection, and municipality of Belica already achieved a 75% rate, which are notably impressive and due to their commitment to key zero waste principles. The waste company has set itself a goal across the 14 municipalities of 75% of separate waste collection by 2025.

Results in separate collection in these 12 municipalities are **also far better than the national average of just 46% of separate waste collection**. The recycling rate in these 12 municipalities in 2022 was 65%, which is also much better than the national average of 34%.

Results in PRE-KOM's municipalities would be even better except for a change in the national calculation methodology.

The latest Croatian Waste act obliges cities/ public waste companies to collect residual waste from all the business sector, while its commercial recyclables are sold to private companies and those amounts do not count as their result at all. Without commercial waste they would have much better results in percentage of separate collection and a reduction of landfilling.

These results are even more impressive when we look at the wider context and history. For example, in 2015, when Zelena Akcija started cooperation **with PRE-KOM, the average in the first 7 municipalities operated by PRE-KOM was only 22%**.

Good results can be seen also in waste prevention. **Across PRE-KOM's 14 municipalities, an average of just 66kgs per capita of mixed municipal waste was generated in 2022**, and some municipalities have already even lower than that. The national average, for comparison, was 258kgs per capita of mixed municipal waste in 2022. PRE-KOM has set itself the ambitious goal of generating 50kgs of residual waste per capita by 2025.

In the past year PRE-KOM also continued with many good practices related to composting, reuse and PAYT, and they also made some new investments in the infrastructure – such as the modernisation and increased capacity of the compost plant with new electric vehicles. This will help contribute to even better results in the coming years.

Krk

Lots of our activities with cities in the past year were with the 7 municipalities (Krk, Omišalj, Vrbnik, Baška, Dobrinj, Punat, Malinska - Dubašnica) on the island of Krk, operated by the waste management company [PONIKVE](#). We had meetings, made residual waste analysis and adapted a zero waste plan for improvements towards zero waste goals they want to achieve in the coming years. Also, they implemented many plastic prevention measures and started working on a plastic prevention plan that we developed within the ERIC project. Also, they have started with the implementation of the PAYT system which will increase separate collection rates in the coming period.

Despite the very high touristic seasonality, they are already among the top performers in separate waste collection with an average rate of 53,3% in 7 municipalities in 2022. It's important to mention that these results would be higher, by around 10%, if our ministry didn't change the methodology and if we take out the mixed waste from the industry that is calculated within these percentages. These good results on the island of Krk are a result of a well-established door to door system. Krk wants to go beyond that and also make more efforts in waste prevention and reuse.

Their ambitious goals for the next years are 70% of separate waste collection in 2025 and 150kg of residuals per capita (including tourists) in 2025 (in comparison to 235 kg in 2019). To achieve these goals, PONIKVE will improve separate waste collection, PAYT, promote home composting, open the re-use centre and introduce other various models for reducing the volume of waste generated on the island of Krk. All proposed measures and goals are realistic and it is expected that in 2024 they will achieve criteria for the full zero waste cities certification.

Zagreb

In 2023, [we worked with the capital city of Zagreb](#) and already have had some successes in the improvement of the local waste management system. Within the Waste Management Committee in the city of Zagreb we had many meetings in person with the Mayor of Zagreb and his Deputy, the Waste Management company from Zagreb and the City's Department for Environment.

We discussed the implementation of the new Decision for waste collection and payment system in Zagreb, based on zero waste principles – door to door collection, home composting and PAYT. The new legislation was implemented from September 2022 and already results with great improvements on the ground. For example, **the amount of landfill waste was reduced by 25% in only 6 months** after implementation of some elements of the new D2D separate waste collection system.

Also, we discussed the possibilities for Zagreb to join the zero waste cities certification system and the changes of the city's new Waste Management Plan for the next 5 years. We also proposed new potential facilities to help accelerate their progress towards zero waste - such as a MRBT plant, sorting plant, compost plant, reuse centre, that are planned to be built in the coming period.

Within the ERIC project, we also worked on the plastic waste prevention plan and hopefully the plan will be finished soon and the implementation will start in 2024. We also had a common campaign during the Plastic Free July and promoted reusable solutions.

National legislation barriers

Croatia's national legislation is not ambitious enough and in some parts also prevents improvements in the waste management systems in municipalities, due to obligations that municipalities need to fulfil. Also, the recycling system in the country is not developed as it should be, and this results in big costs for municipalities which are successful in separate collection, because often they need to pay a lot to the recyclers to take over and recycle separated waste.

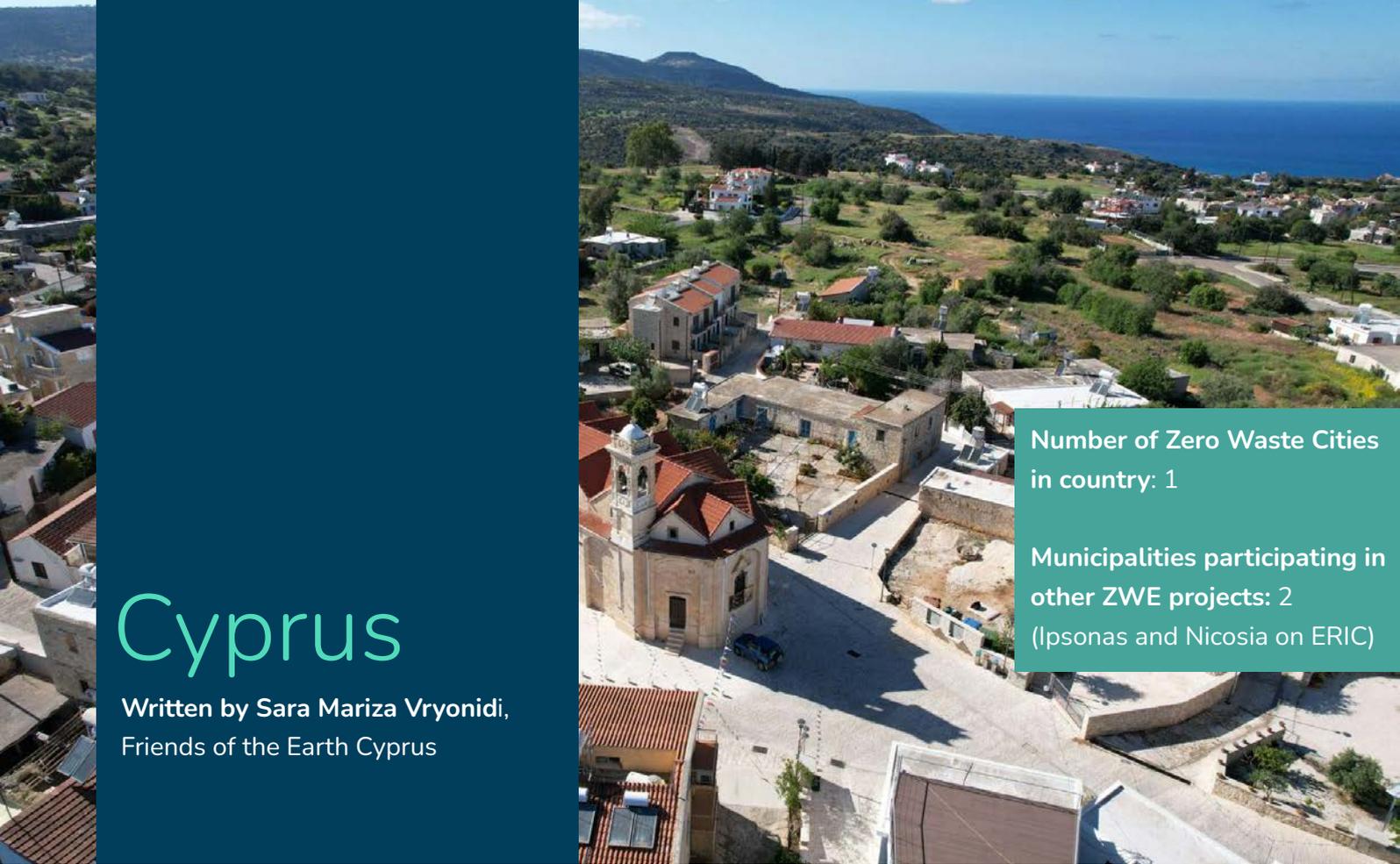
Also, there is lack of funding from the Ministry for important infrastructure for sorting, composting and for reuse centres. This prevents municipalities from being even more successful and ambitious, and many of them don't want to improve their systems until they build this infrastructure.

One big problem that we have is national statistics. As said before, the new calculation method is unfair towards municipalities and puts them at disadvantage with the rest of the European countries when it comes to separate collection rates.



Separate waste collection 2017- 2021 in PRE-KOM municipalities, Croatia (in %)

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Prelog	55,88	62,79	66,69	68,98	67,40	67,40
Belica	51,17	68,86	66,16	79,97	80,90	74,3
Goričan	52,68	53,44	61,09	64,67	63,40	70,5
Domašinec	18,84	55,01	59,84	62,50	66,20	69,3
Podturen	18,00	34,92	52,27	62,88	62,50	70,2
Sv. Marija	46,10	55,88	56,61	59,92	61,30	67,90
Martijanec	1,01	34,81	56,35	61,02	61,60	68,60
D. Dubrava	53,92	58,31	56,88	58,21	61,30	66,6
Dekanovec	38,45	54,60	56,19	65,34	66,90	69,9
D. Kraljevec	52,21	47,34	54,34	60,26	53,10	62,9
Kotoriba	41,48	48,32	50,89	55,52	59,30	59,50
D. Vidovec	41,93	47,99	49,70	59,28	59,10	67,2
Jalžabet					26,30	49,80
Pribislavec					21,30	66,20



Cyprus

Written by Sara Mariza Vryonidi,
Friends of the Earth Cyprus

Number of Zero Waste Cities
in country: 1

Municipalities participating in
other ZWE projects: 2
(Ipsonas and Nicosia on ERIC)

In Cyprus, Ipsonas Municipality has demonstrated its commitment to waste reduction by proactively initiating a Pay-As-You-Throw (PAYT) pilot program earlier than the rest of the municipalities in Cyprus. Another innovative waste management solution in Ipsonas is an alternative to the state plan "Pay as I throw". Through a Reward Recycling program, estimated to cost between 120-140 euros for waste collection compared to the state plan's 200 euros, the municipality aims to provide a more cost-effective option for citizens by giving discount vouchers for local stores to those who properly sort and recycle well.

Additionally, this initiative allows the municipality to continue its social policy by supporting vulnerable groups, such as large families and third children, who may face higher costs under the state plan. Meanwhile, Nicosia Municipality has embarked on a comprehensive communication campaign aimed at raising awareness among citizens about PAYT and the importance of separate waste collection. By engaging the community in discussions and preparations for these initiatives, Nicosia showcases its commitment to fostering a culture of waste reduction and responsible resource management. Also Nicosia has a Plastic Prevention Plan (PPP) in their hands though the ERIC project with ZWE, and its short term measures will be implemented in 2024.

Over the past 12 months in Cyprus, the broader national context for waste management has been marked by significant developments, both challenging and promising. One notable change has been the ongoing reform of municipalities, presenting both opportunities and obstacles for our work. While this process is vital for enhancing local governance structures, it has also moved attention and resources away from waste management initiatives, as municipalities prioritise urgent administrative tasks associated with the reform and upcoming local elections.

However, there have been positive advancements at the national level, particularly regarding the implementation of PAYT systems, as they are expected to be implemented across the island in 2024 with very high potential in waste reduction. Moreover, the introduction of PAYT has catalysed efforts to compile comprehensive studies on waste generation, as municipalities prepare for its implementation. These studies are crucial for informing strategic waste management plans and ensuring the effectiveness of PAYT initiatives.

Limited financial resources and time constraints on government consultants conducting relevant studies, such as the Local Action Plan, hinder ideal policy conditions. Moreover, preliminary indications suggest that the new system may entail higher costs for taxpayers compared to the current setup. While the final pricing details are pending, the likelihood of additional expenses for prepaid bags alongside existing fixed charges raises concerns. FOE Cyprus have been focusing a lot of efforts on the necessity of proactive measures in waste management, countering misinformation (eg. increased risks of fly-tipping) with factual evidence, and presenting PAYT as a proactive step towards sustainable waste practices are viable communication strategies.

Over the past 12 months, our organisation's most significant success has been the expansion and impact of our carnival waste campaign (focusing on silly string sprays and foam sprays). We have been advocating for waste prevention during carnival celebrations since 2017 by collecting data, publishing relevant research briefings, preparing social media posts and articles in the press, engaging with key stakeholders, including the Environment Commissioner, Ministries and MPs through official letters, urging action on the issue.

We leveraged various communication channels to amplify our message, fostering a broader understanding of the environmental harm caused by sprays and waste generated during carnival festivities and were able to create a network of allies committed to addressing carnival waste. This year, our efforts started to have a concrete impact, since we finally managed to bring the issue to the national Parliament for discussion and policy action. This concerted effort resulted in heightened awareness among citizens and policymakers alike, and we hope that a healthier and cleaner carnival will be possible in the years to come. .

A second major success over the past 12 months has been advocating for PAYT systems island-wide. Through advocacy and collaboration, we've secured commitments for PAYT implementation in 2024, a crucial step in reducing waste and boosting recycling. We've also facilitated partnerships with municipalities through initiatives like the ERIC project, empowering municipalities like Nicosia and Ipsonas to develop Plastic Prevention Plans (PPPs) and pilot waste reduction strategies. Through these collaborations, we aim to inspire more municipalities in Cyprus to become zero waste.

Over the next 12 months, our organisation's priorities revolve around advancing waste prevention and management practices in collaboration with municipalities across Cyprus. A priority for us is also to make our collaboration with municipalities stronger, particularly focusing on opportunities presented by Limassol's participation in the Net Zero Cities mission. We aim to integrate best practices from our ERIC project and experiences from zero waste cities into the so-called "Climate City Contract" of Limassol municipality. By embedding measures such as reuse systems, repair shops, bans on single-use items, and green procurements into the contract, we can support Limassol in achieving its goal of carbon neutrality by 2030.

In 2024 and beyond, we want to continue our campaigns aimed at advocating for the enforcement of legislation regarding EPR, chemical substances and labelling of products used extensively during carnival celebrations and eventually push for a ban on the import of these products (silly string and foam spray). Preventing single-use items and the promotion of reuse alternatives are also very high on our agenda.

Additionally, we are dedicated to addressing the significant challenge of organic waste management by advocating for a legislative framework around food donation and enhancing our existing food donation platform. We aim to stop the misconception surrounding food donation, portraying it not only as a means to support those in need but also as an environmentally and economically beneficial practice. Furthermore, we will explore solutions such as composting and hosting zero-waste dinners with leftover food to tackle the organic waste issue effectively.

Another crucial focus area involves the promotion of zero waste events, giving guidance to municipalities for their implementation, and advocating for green procurement practices. Additionally, we aim to promote repair shops/cafes and establish connections with other areas of our organisation's focus, such as sustainable mobility, by supporting initiatives like bike repair shops.



Estonia

Written by Raivo Videvik,
Let's Do It Foundation (LDIF)



Let's Do It Foundation (LDIF) is consulting with several Estonian municipalities to encourage the implementation of zero waste strategies. This work is driven by our national Zero Waste Ambassadors, who have been advising cities new waste plans and circular economy goals for the past year.

Since autumn 2022, LDIF is officially registered as an adult education provider in Estonia. In 2023, around 250 learners took part in Let's Do It Foundation courses. The majority of them were from the Estonian public sector (municipalities but also ministries and other governmental institutions), as well as businesses, consultants and educators. More info on our Zero Waste Ambassador and Zero Waste Trainer programs can be found [here](#). Over the past 12 months, we have trained 60 Zero Waste Ambassadors, 48 of whom were issued with a certificate. We also trained 33 Zero Waste trainers, 31 of whom were issued with a certificate.

Nationally, our work on waste prevention has been helped by the introduction of new legislation. For example, from the start of 2024, [only reusable containers and cutlery may be used for serving food and drink at public events throughout Estonia](#). Estonia's capital, Tallinn, decided to implement this measure ahead of the national regulation and has begun enforcing reuse in all its public events.

One of our biggest successes in 2023 was the second Estonian Zero Waste conference with 4 interactive workshops (recognition of greenwashing, a successful separate collection system, actors and roles in the textile cycle and the importance of data in zero waste management). It was organised in Pärnu, who we hope will become a Zero Waste Candidate City soon, on 4.10.2023 with almost 100 participants. We have also focused a lot of efforts on advocacy and ensuring governments properly implement the Single Use Plastic (SUP) Directive, supporting measures that prioritise reuse.

A final success of ours in 2023 was that Estonian University of Life Sciences [set itself the goal in March of becoming zero waste](#).

For 2024, our biggest priorities are:

- The delivery of a Zero Waste Ambassadors training programme in at least 5 new municipalities.
- Encourage at least one municipality to become a zero waste candidate city with MiZA.
- Organise a 3rd Estonian Zero Waste Conference (2-day, international) in autumn 2024 (early October).





France

Written by Marine Bonavita,
Zero Waste France

Any municipalities
participating in ZWE
projects: 3 - Bordeaux, Lyon,
and Nantes (ERIC)

One of the key strategies of Zero Waste France is to support local players such as local authorities, to improve their waste management. Alongside our advocacy work, legal action, mobilisation of local group activists and communication to the general public, our goal is to promote good practices in reducing waste at source in town halls, inter-municipalities and metropolises (regions centred around large cities).

In 2015, we launched our “[programme territoire](#)” to disseminate good practices by local authorities. These practices include implementing deposit systems, enhancing bio-waste sorting, and advocating for increased utilisation of local recycling facilities. In 2023, for example, we organised a webinar on reducing single-use plastic with 60 participants, alongside publishing [a dedicated article on our website to the topic](#).

In the past couple of years, considering the environmental crisis but also in view of the new regulatory obligations in France (in particular the AGEC law), we recognised that one of our main roles is to empower citizens of our local groups. Our aim is to equip them to both support and hold their municipalities accountable for fulfilling their basic duties as local public authorities ([see some examples here](#)).

On the theme of plastic reduction, we are in contact with French municipalities that have already adopted prevention plans to combat single-use plastic, in order to gather their feedback and then share it with other local authorities.

We were particularly impressed by the zero-plastic actions that the Rouen Normandy Metropolitan Area has been able to put in place across its territory. The Metropole has an ambitious plan to reduce the use of plastics, with initiatives such as a charter and actions involving all the players: organisers, exhibitors, caterers, boats and partners, water fountains, ashtrays for voting, litter bins in the city, and a trial of a deposit service for food containers at a pilot food court. As a result, they have successfully eliminated over 40 kilos of packaging through the use of 3,370 deposits. Additionally, their water fountains dispensed 114,948 litres of water, saving 4,827kg of plastic.

Germany

Written by Zero Waste Europe

Number of Zero Waste Certified Cities in the country: 1 (Kiel)

Number of Zero Waste Candidate Cities in the country: 2 (Munich, Leipzig)

In February 2023, the city of Kiel became the first Zero Waste Certified City in Germany. This marked a significant milestone in the growth of the Zero Waste Cities work in Europe, with Kiel showcasing how, with the right ambition and support, a city can make real progress towards its zero waste goals in just the space of a few years.

For example, it had only made its original commitment to become a zero waste city a few years earlier.

The city has undertaken an impressive amount of work to educate and engage the local community in its zero waste plan, and has reusable packaging alternatives embedded within one of the city's biggest events of the year, the '[Kieler Woche](#).'

The success of Kiel can be visibly seen by the attention it has got from outlets such as the [World Economic Forum](#) and [The Guardian](#) during 2023.

Importantly, the city is not resting on its current situation. It continues to expand its zero waste work across the city (e.g. hosting a federal repair conference in May 2024) whilst also making zero waste more visible on the global stage, by embedding the strategy's impact within the city's pioneering 'Voluntary Local Review' as part of the [UN's official annual review](#) of progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals.

Early 2024 also saw the city of Leipzig make its commitment to become a Zero Waste Candidate City. Many activities within its strategy have already begun within the city, with an excellent overview found online on [their dedicated zero waste website](#).

The city has an ambitious goal to be recycling 90% of all municipal waste by 2030, as well as prioritising the prevention of waste primarily through key measures such as a repair bonus, the creation of a second-hand mall and the introduction of reusable takeaway packaging across the city.

The national alliance, Zero Waste Germany, and its members continues to be active across many cities and topics within the country, fighting hard on key issues such as the proper implementation of Germany's national law that transposed the EU Single-Use Plastics Directive Whilst our member Zero Waste Kiel has excitingly [been focusing on training individuals to become Zero Waste Ambassadors](#) in a project involving partners from the entire Baltic Sea region.

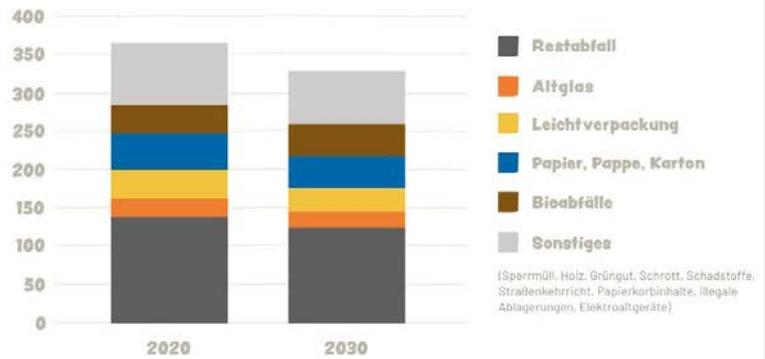
Currently, MiZA is working with all German cities committed and interested in the Certification to finalise the exact process & procedures that are best within the German context. This may or may not affect the future partnership between these cities and MiZA as the Certification holder. More information will be shared online once there is clarity.

Goals

The city council set clear goals for 2030:

- 10 percent less residual waste,
- continue to maintain a consistently high level of waste separation,
- supporting businesses to reduce residual waste,
- and a 90 percent recycling rate of municipal waste.

Abfallmengen in kg / Einwohner*Jahr



A translated version of Leipzig's zero waste goals.



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CITIES AND URBANIZATION

How Kiel became a pioneering Zero Waste City, and what it can teach the rest of the world

World Economic Forum's article about Kiel as pioneering Zero Waste City.



Italy

Written by: **Laura Lo Presti**,
Zero Waste Italy

Number of Zero Waste Certified Cities in the country: 1 (Capannori)

Number of Zero Waste Candidate Cities in the country: 1 (Codevilla)

Number of Zero Waste Cities in the Italian national network: 331

Municipalities participating in ZWE projects: 3 -
Carmignano, Viareggio and Calatafimi Segesta (ERIC)

In Italy, according to the latest ISPRA report of 2022 (Higher Institute for Environmental Protection and Research - Public Research Body), there has been a significant increase in urban waste recycling, accompanied by a reduction in both production and landfill disposal volumes.

While waste production is decreasing, separate waste collection is growing, reaching an average of 65.2% (with the northern region at 71.8%, the centre at 61.5% and the south at 57.5%). ISPRA indicates that waste sent for material recovery represents more than 50%, but the recycling and reuse rate stops at 49.2%.

Although this marks a positive progression, it remains below the European Union's objectives of 50% in 2020, 55% by 2025, 60% by 2030 and 65% by 2035. Achieving these targets will necessitate a focus on door-to-door collection methods to guarantee the production of clean and high-quality waste streams, accompanied by effective policies to establish suitable plant management systems, thereby minimising material wastage.

Again quoting the latest ISPRA report, the Italian province with the best results for separate waste collection and recycling is Treviso with an excellent 88.7% - which is host to 50 zero waste municipalities within our national network.

[The community of Italian Zero Waste municipalities continues to grow with 331 participating local authorities currently involved.](#) Zero Waste Italy is developing projects, organised regionally and coordinated nationally, aimed at providing comprehensive support to zero waste municipalities to best disseminate and emphasise their good practices, while addressing the unavoidable challenges they may face.

A fine example of collaboration to confront shared challenges is evident in Tuscany, where nearly all the region's zero waste municipalities and communities have united to form an Alliance to oppose the incineration projects and enhance their commitment to implementing the necessary steps towards zero waste.

Of notable importance is the result obtained by the 31 zero waste municipalities on the Tuscan coast, which managed to promote a technical table together with the environmental manager to convert the mechanical biological treatment plants (MBT) from plants that produce RDF for incinerators, to instead plants that aim to recover further recyclable materials, helping remove many before they end up in incinerators or landfills.

In the Marche Region, a notable success came through a series of meetings involving 17 zero waste municipalities and the "Marche Rifiuti Zero" association, culminating in the adoption of the zero waste resolution by the municipality of Pesaro. Elected "Capital of Italian culture" for 2024, the city is expected to emphasise the Zero Waste Project during the initiatives organised throughout the year.

In the context of Southern Italy, both Sicily and Sardinia regions have achieved remarkable results in waste management. In Sicily, the province of Trapani stands out with an impressive 77% separate waste collection rate, showcasing the capacity for effectively applying circular economy principles.

Meanwhile, in Sardinia, the region boasts a 75.9% separate waste collection rate, with three provinces surpassing 80% and eight designated zero waste municipalities, underscoring the commitment to sustainable waste practices across the region.

These results would not have been achieved without the decisive contribution of the Zero Waste Observatories, whose task is to monitor and connect the actions of municipalities and waste managers with local communities. There are currently about 150 Zero Waste Observatories and considering that at least three Zero Waste representatives participate in each Observatory, it means we can count on an active network of about 450 people with whom Zero Waste Italy interacts and provides support.

Below is a photo of officials from the Sicilian municipality of Calatafimi Segesta that participated in the Italy-Tunisia cross-border European project "RE-NÉ". Read more about the impressive results of Calatafimi Segesta [in our case study](#).





Portugal

Written by **Ismael Casotti Rienda**,
ZERO – Associação Sistema Terrestre
Sustentável

**Number of Zero Waste
Candidate Cities in the country:**
5 (Guimarães, São João da
Madeira, Vila de Rei,
Albergaria-a-Velha, Corovo)

**Municipalities participating in
other ZWE projects:** 3

2023 has brought about interesting milestones for the zero waste cities and municipalities in Portugal. In particular, Guimarães has extended its biowaste collection circuit to a larger area, reaching around 55,000 inhabitants. It includes the core part of its city centre (the historical part with plenty of HORECA businesses) and the densely populated area surrounding it. They reached a record quantity of 6.300 tons of biowaste collected!

In addition to this, the first three Portuguese Zero Waste Candidate Cities candidate cities are working at different levels. Guimarães is planning to recover historical kiosks (which are currently abandoned) and rent them out to small businesses to repair small items. São João da Madeira has recently prepared its prevention and reuse strategy by including a set of measures in the procurement process, based on the experience of Hernani and Usurbil in the Basque country. The municipality will be able to start the purchase and assignment of contracts with the right providers once its budget allows it. Last but not least, Vila de Rei now has a reuse corner in a cafe located in its central urban area.

In parallel with these exciting developments, ZERO's work has been tightly dependent on preparing the municipal strategic plans for 2030 (named PAPERSU), due by the end of the year, even if the deadline was postponed to March 2024. Municipalities must choose (or have already chosen) their implementation strategy to comply with the national waste management plans (PERSU 2030) and, consequently, with the EU goals. As such, our work focused on influencing municipalities to include focal points (i.e. door-to-door collection, community composting) in their respective plans.

As one of the key victories of 2023 in the context of zero waste cities, the island-municipality of Corvo committed to becoming a Zero Waste Candidate City through the MiZA Certification. This commitment is extremely important both

for our organisation but also at a bigger strategic level. Located in double-insularity conditions (in the Azores archipelago, and on its smallest island at that), Corvo is the smallest municipality in Portugal and also part of a biosphere reserve. The municipality has faced multiple problems in waste management related to poor infrastructure and frequent adverse weather conditions. Establishing a high-efficiency collection system focusing on community composting will avoid ferrying more than 100 tons of co-mingled bio-waste per year, also relieving the operations of the triage centre on Corvo's neighbouring island (Flores). The implementation of reuse and prevention measures as a complement to door-to-door collection and community composting is expected to trigger deep changes in the whole inter-island logistic systems.

In 2024, we want to continue expanding the impact of zero waste initiatives in Portuguese municipalities by:

- Finalising the commitments of the municipalities who have an ongoing process to join the MiZA Zero Waste Cities Certification.
- Maintaining contacts with municipalities to present the Zero Waste Strategy approach and get more municipalities to enrol.
- Analyse the Municipal Action Plans (PAPERSU) - 2-3 of them per waste management district - to assess whether they were prepared in accordance with the EU recycling targets that Portugal is committed to.

Portugal

- Being proactive regarding the 2024 legislative and European elections, focusing our advocacy work on the political choices to be made in several environmental areas that are fundamental to overcoming barriers that prevent circular strategies at the local level.
- Promoting and accompanying reuse-prevention-repair (RRR) initiatives that share the goals of the already committed municipalities, i.e. demonstrating the technical and financial feasibility of RRR measures.
- Assessing the technical choices, investment plans, and mid-term planning choices together with the current budget expenditure of public funds and the results obtained so far.
- Assessing the technical/financial feasibility of high-efficiency waste collection options (i.e. door-to-door) based on the results obtained by our Candidate (or pre-Candidate) municipalities.
- Advocating and finding partners to co-create finance outcome-based projects allowing municipalities to achieve higher (qualitative and quantitative) results in separate collection and biowaste management, including composting units.

Below is a photo from the Distributing bio baskets in the Portuguese town of Muxagata.





Slovenia

Written by Jaka Kranjc,
Ekologi brez meja

Number of Zero Waste Certified Cities in the country: 5 (Bled, Gorje, Brovnica, Vrhnika, Log-Dragomer)

Number of other Zero Waste Cities in the country: 11 (Ljubljana, Žalec, Slovenske Konjice, Jezersko, Radovljica, Naklo, Preddvor, Kranj, Šenčur, Železniki, Škofja Loka)

Slovenia keeps expanding the number of zero waste cities in the country and deepening their commitment. In addition to the five Certified Cities in the country, there are three more municipalities well on their way to becoming Zero Waste Candidates, with others becoming more interested in following in these footsteps.

Despite the growing interest from local authorities, the national progress on waste prevention, reduction, and management has had its ups and downs in 2023. On the one hand, we have had the Slovenian Constitutional Court relegating key articles on the Extended Producer Responsibility crisis to the EU Court of Justice; and Deposit Return Schemes and other similar legislation pieces have been delayed due to ministerial reorganisation. On the other hand, we witnessed the implementation of better waste data collection at the national level; and 2023 was the first year since last decade's economic crisis where Slovenia had disjointed GDP and waste generation trends. It was also the first time in several years that the amount of municipal solid waste *per capita* decreased nationally.

Nevertheless, the work, efforts, and impact at local level continue. In 2023, EBM carried out the [second phase of a pilot project for less food waste](#) in collaboration with the municipality of Škofja Loka, focusing on three key stakeholders in the local environment – public institutions, economic entities, and households. The project's objective was to identify the causes of large amounts of wasted food and how to reduce these amounts. The measurements were repeated in the two participating public institutions, showing effective measures: one reduced food waste by 21%, the other by 10%. As an interesting finding from this project, the rural municipality of Jezersko - unlike most other places in Slovenia - does not have door-to-door collection of waste. Its inhabitants have to bring their waste to a proper collection centre, meaning they have extensive separation options. Contrary to expectations,

they reached extremely good results through this approach - which is unique to their rural context.

Perhaps the biggest single success in 2023 was our big international conference focused on pushing repair forward, which was held together with the annual Zero Waste Cities Network meeting. Our work on tourism brought about many individual successes, with significantly more establishments and events implementing impactful measures - **for instance, a hotel reducing its waste per night by roughly 40% within a year, and all events we supported (14 in total) producing on average well below 100g of municipal solid waste per visitor.**

We want to continue this upward and inspiring trend in 2024, and expand our work with municipalities by:

- Getting new municipalities into the network and the MiZA certification scheme.
- Organise another yearly network meeting and take this occasion to also celebrate the network's 10th anniversary.
- Working with the existing network on practical measures and improved performance.
- Encouraging further regional cooperation.

Spain

Written by Alba Cabrera,
Rezero



Number of Zero Waste Certified Cities in the country: 4 (Hernani; Astigarraga; Usurbil and Torrelles de Llobregat)

Number of Zero Waste Candidate Cities in the country: 1 (Viladecans)

Number of other Zero Waste Cities in the country: 60 under the [Catalan Zero Waste Strategy](#) since 2011

Municipalities participating in other ZWE projects: 4 - Viladecans, Torrelles and Manacor (ERIC); Barcelona (RSVP)

In 2023 Rezero collaborated with 15 municipalities and 5 “supra-municipal” local representative bodies from Catalonia and Balearic Islands which are implementing zero waste strategies.

In 2023 there were municipal, regional, and general elections in Spain. The political situation has forced Rezero to wait until city councils were constituted and the mayors elected to assess the new situation and target the municipalities more willing to implement zero waste policies and strategies. At the same time, waste prevention measures stemming from the 2022 Spanish Waste Law and the Packaging & Packaging Waste Act came into force, which was a good moment for us to promote and implement zero waste actions that go above and beyond the current regulation.

One of the biggest success stories of Rezero in 2023 was the organisation of the [Zero Waste Festival](#), a space to share knowledge and establish synergies to accelerate the changes towards a zero waste society. This dynamic event welcomed leading experts and inspiring voices who are promoting ecosocial transformation in the scientific, social, economic, institutional and political spheres.

Over the past year, Rezero has done many activities regarding zero waste for menstrual items. We conducted educational and awareness raising workshops with more than 10 municipalities to promote a sustainable and zero waste menstruation, including the distribution of reusable and safe menstrual products in some cases. A total of 750 “menstruation friendly toilets” have been identified and labelled in public facilities - these spaces enable women and people who menstruate to carry out their menstrual hygiene habits and promote the use of toxic-free, accessible, and reusable menstrual products.

Other awareness-raising and interactive campaigns included the a practical [demonstration of the deposit and return scheme of beverage containers in Formentera](#); the [Remenja'mmm](#) waste prevention campaign for consumers and the hospitality industry in the Balearic Islands; and the [Genera Coco](#) online training on conscious consumption and waste prevention.



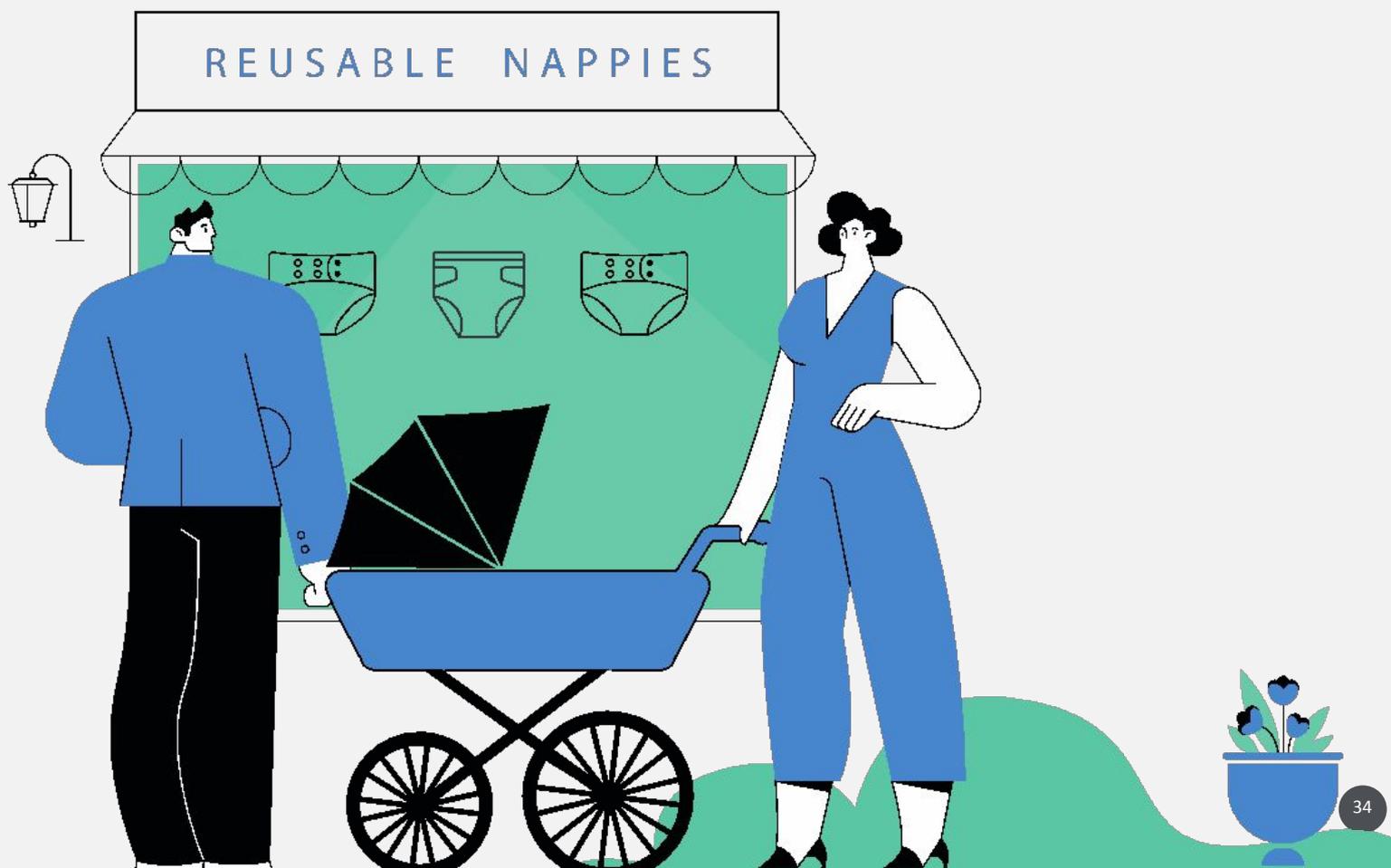
The aim of the campaign is to raise-awareness among consumers and the restaurant and hotel industry to prevent food waste while offering alternative solutions and actions to reduce it.

To better help different municipalities move towards zero waste, we launched the [RezeroLab Data](#), a free digital tool with practical and visual indicators.

We also want to celebrate the progress and results of the “library of things” concept. The first library of things in Spain (Biblioteca de les Coses de Sant Martí), a temporary rental space for objects of occasional use, promoted by Rezero and Nusos, opened doors four years ago in Barcelona. Since then, and inspired by this initiative, 7 similar projects have emerged in Catalonia. The 2023 impact indicators from the Biblioteca de les Coses de Sant Martí show that almost 1,500 kilos of waste have been avoided through the year’s 412 loans. This also resulted in 6,000 kilos of avoided CO₂ equivalent emissions and 2,000,000 litres of water saved.

We will keep on enabling cities and municipalities on their zero waste journey by focusing in the following priorities for the year ahead:

- Promote the interest and enrollment of more municipalities in the Zero Waste Cities Certification process.
- Develop menstrual equity and climate plans, and educational and awareness-raising actions, to promote reusable menstrual products with municipalities.
- Help and advise local governments and community projects in the implementation of Library of Things in their municipalities, with the end goal of creating and extending a dedicated network in the whole Catalanian territory.
- Campaigns to make conscious consumption accessible through the creation of conscious consumer communities; and among the retail sector through Rezero’s “Green Commerce” certification.
- Accompany municipalities on the development of municipal ordinances and regulatory instruments from a zero waste perspective.



Ukraine

Written by Sofia Sydorenko,
Zero Waste Alliance Ukraine

Number of Zero Waste
Candidate Cities
in the country: 2 (Lviv and
Liubotyn)

In 2023, Zero Waste Alliance Ukraine continued to support its two Zero Waste Candidate Cities - Lviv and Liubotyn - as well as the implementation of zero waste strategies in the municipalities of Lutsk, Kherson, Pokrovsk, and Khmelnytskyi.

Given that, understandably, the main priority for most municipalities in Ukraine last year was to support the actions connected to the Russian war in Ukraine, most of the work on Zero Waste Cities was mostly implemented by ZWAU ourselves.

One of the most important initiatives in 2023 was the [opening of the Circular Construction Yard \(CC Yard\)](#). CC Yard is intended for the collection of materials and items that will be used for the reconstruction of accommodation in the Dergachi community (Kharkiv region), which was destroyed or severely damaged as a result of the Russian invasion. The items accepted and then handed over to Dergachi residents to rebuild their homes after the shelling include building materials, doors, windows, remnants of roofing materials, sanitary ware (bathtubs, toilets, faucets, etc.), wallpapers and floor coverings, boards, and furniture, among others.

We also want to highlight the reopening of the [Zero Waste Yard \(formerly EcoHub\) in Kharkiv](#). In 2022, EcoHub's building was severely damaged due to the city bombing, so it closed down. Nevertheless, in 2023, Kharkiv Zero Waste's team managed to not only reopen it but even scale it up. Apart from the previous recycling, reuse, and repair sections of the Yard, there is now a new section for collecting demolition waste that can be used in future reconstruction efforts.

ZWAU and its member organisations (together with municipalities) developed an [online instrument](#) dedicated to zero waste cities in Ukraine.

This platform provides all the needed information on improving waste management systems for the use of municipalities representatives, policy makers on national, and local level, as well as for the activists and community members. This instrument also allows local stakeholders to check the municipalities' waste conditions via an online test, whose results then give an overview of the next steps to become a Zero Waste City Candidate.



Efforts at the Circular Construction Yard in the Kharkiv region.

Other important victories of 2023 for ZWAU members include:

- Following the destruction of the Kakhova Dam in the Russian invasion, EcoNews Kherson implemented a water filtration system in one of the communities of the Kherson region, so that they are not dependent on transported bottled water. Likewise, Zero Waste Lviv purchased canisters and tanks of different sizes for internally displaced people living in the flooded areas of the Dnipropetrovsk region to help citizens save water and avoid the accumulation of single-use plastic and subsequent pollution of the environment.
- Zero Waste Lviv's report on the results of the "Composting in cities as way to reduce greenhouse gas emissions" study, showing the possibilities of reducing GHG emissions through organic waste composting and the role that cities play in climate policy through both composting and waste management.
- Zero Waste Lviv's "The collectors" film, based on interviews of waste pickers, intended to ensure their voices are heard and to provide Lviv authorities with data to be used in the city's waste policies.

In 2023, the Ukrainian government presented drafts of bylaws for public discussion - for example, the Bylaw on Packaging and Packaging Waste, the Bylaw on EPR, etc. ZWAU's advocacy experts have been engaged in the process of preparing and advocating recommendations to improve these policies, with a focus on including reuse and other prevention measures.

Municipalities have the power to make their own waste management decisions and priorities - a good thing considering that national prevention policies aren't ambitious enough. We want to keep pushing decentralised zero waste systems as the best solutions for municipalities and as a primary solution for waste issues.

Furthermore, due to the lack of human resources in many municipalities, we want to keep presenting zero waste as a way for civil society representatives to provide support, implementing new approaches in the municipalities' work.

With all of this in mind, in 2024 ZWAU's work will focus on:

- Engaging 2-3 municipalities on becoming Zero Waste Candidate Cities.
- Create a support system for the interested municipalities, providing them with expert recommendations and guidance.
- Grow stakeholders' knowledge base through project implementation, research, case development, and others.

Despite the continuation of, and the big uncertainty brought by, the Russian invasion of Ukraine, ZWAU's mission to reform the Ukrainian waste management system with a focus on zero waste cities remains as strong as ever.



On the left: Composters in the city of Lyubotin. On the right: wastepicking efforts in the city of Lviv.



Zero waste best practices

At ZWE, we recognise that fighting issues purely from an environmental basis does not recognise the true nature of these challenges. Inequalities and exclusion from society are often exacerbated because of environmental degradation, whilst a lack of social integration can also lead to greater damage to our environment. This is why we are taking a greater look at initiatives which bring together circular economy performance with a clear prioritisation of social inclusion and cohesion.

This chapter highlights just a few examples of how cities have done this across Europe. Our continued aim is to create many more of these examples, showcasing how cities can apply a social justice lens within their waste and circular economy agendas.



REPAIRED
ITEMS

Accounting for 14% of the EU GDP, public procurement can have a decisive role in enhancing social inclusion and cohesion through the integration of social economy actors such as reuse, repair, and recycling social enterprises.

For municipalities in Europe, partnering with such social enterprises not only helps promote circular purchases and reduces waste, but also contributes towards greater job and skill creation for groups traditionally distant from the labour market.

The four examples in this chapter provide just a top level assessment of a few best practices on how to integrate social wellbeing and inclusion within zero waste initiatives. It includes a national example (from Spain) as well as three city-wide initiatives, as the national example can still be used as inspiration for local replication using the same guiding principles. This is a small, but inspiring, taste of what kinds of actions are possible to help inspire your own thinking and policy ideas within your communities.

The photo below is from the distribution of bio baskets in the Slovak city of Partizánske.



Madrid's public procurement for work integration social enterprises (WISEs)

Within the city's aim of a sustainable waste collection and management system, Madrid (Spain) also includes a dedicated focus on the promotion of increased employment opportunities for people that are far from labour markets and at risk of social exclusion.

[This can be seen most notably within its approach to textiles collection and management.](#) This policy was embedded within the city's 'Strategy of Waste Prevention and Management' 2018-2022, whose objectives included acting as a lever for increasing local employment, including amongst people at risk of social exclusion.

Acknowledging the role of 'work integration social enterprises' (WISEs) as ways to increase employment among such groups of people, the city of Madrid launched a procedure for the awarding of a contract for the collection of second-hand clothes and textile waste management - which foresaw the placement of 1,150 containers for textile collection throughout the city.

The contract had three lots, each of which covering different districts of the city (366, 419, and 365 containers, respectively), with the city reserving specifically one lot for WISEs to operate. Lot 3, which covers the Southern districts, is reserved for work integration social enterprises because of the socio-economic characteristics of the area (which has a lower-than-average income level). The total contract value was €5,472,852.50, whilst the value of Lot 3 specifically was €232,687.50.

Before the publication of the tender, WISEs had the chance to work with the contracting authority through open consultations to determine some key factors within the contract (e.g. the right level of capacity required, the levies to be applied for the placement of containers on public space, etc.). In this regard, the municipality reached out to local umbrella organisations that shared the information among their members. This brought about benefits for both parties even before the procurement process formally began, for instance the greater awareness and connection between administrative officials and local social enterprises.

The procurement contract also included social considerations as conditions for the performance of the work - for example, an obligation to comply with applicable work and social

regulations, including criteria on accessibility and compliance with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Contractors also had to guarantee that the largest possible share of textiles and fabric can be reused, as well as an additional requirement that all communication and promotion materials associated with the performance of the service are gender-neutral.

The persons employed within Lot 3 had to be referred by the public social services of the city of Madrid. The target groups eligible were diverse, ranging from long-term unemployed persons, migrants, ethnic minorities, single mothers at risk of poverty, or victims of violence against women.

In order to promote social inclusion objectives as well as the sustainability of the work, beneficiaries of the work inclusion programme followed a personalised integration pathway. Together with their employment contracts, employees signed an individual integration agreement with a job counsellor that established specific actions that they committed to undertake in order to improve their employability. These specific actions have a bigger focus placed on work-related actions, including basic qualifications - such as a driver or forklift licence; language skills; soft skills; and also on social inclusion aspects such as housing, leisure, health, and other forms of support to the individual and their household.

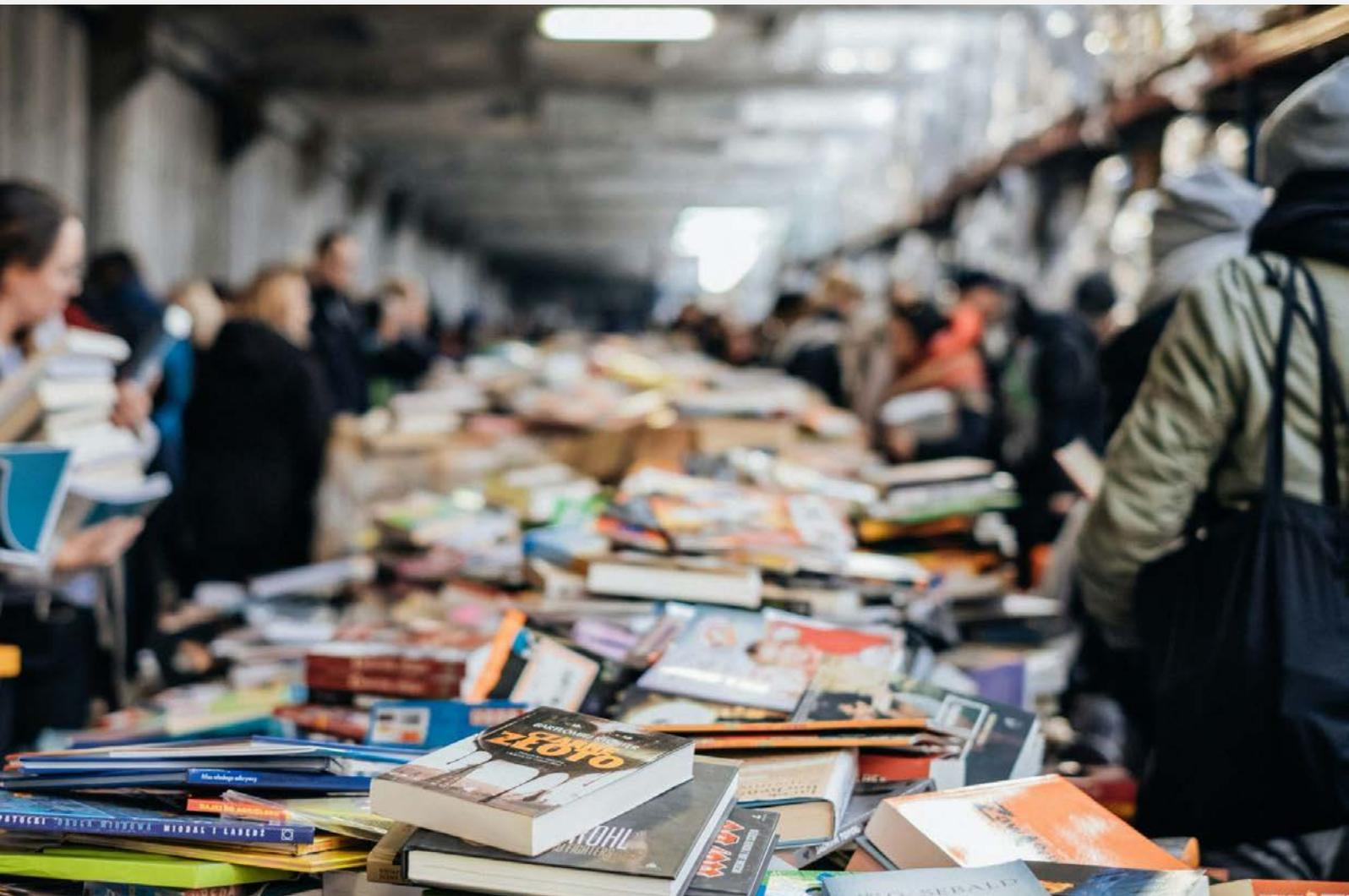
Social impact

As a result of this contract, six new full-time jobs were created for people with low employability. Employees are, in some cases, residents in the city districts where the collection of clothes is performed, therefore promoting social cohesion in the area. This also helped the city to save costs - as a result of these individuals being employed, they were no longer recipients of unemployment or social welfare funds. Instead, they became contributors to the public budget as taxpayers.

Lessons learned and future challenges

The pre-market consultation phase was key to making the contracting authority aware of the capacity of WISEs, so that they could adapt the characteristics of the procedure to enable meaningful access to public procurement markets from such organisations. The process also promoted greater collaboration within the city. For example, the winning tender was put forward by a consortium formed by two WISEs, Recumadrid and Solidanza, who joined forces to meet the necessary technical and economic requirements of the contract.

This process had many positive results for the city of Madrid and its social fabric - and for any other cities across Europe who wish to replicate this model. However, a big challenge remains: cities still need to fully acknowledge and support the professional work carried out by WISEs. Public authorities should further support social economy enterprises within new tenders for circular economy and waste management services (such as for collecting secondhand clothes and textile waste management). The best way to do this will be through offering full reserved contracts to these organisations, rather than single lots within a bigger tender.



Rzgów's reserved tender procedures for socially marginalised groups

In November 2017, the Polish Municipality of Rzgów announced a tender for the collection and management of municipal waste from households. A reserved tender procedure was used to award the contract, in order to create new employment opportunities for people that are currently not able to access the labour market.

The tender was unique as it combined a two-fold objective - to fulfil key environmental requirements for the management of municipal waste whilst also increasing the engagement of marginalised groups within the job market. For example, it included required levels of recycling, preparation for reuse, and reducing the weight of biodegradable municipal waste in line with the waste management plan for the region. On the social side of things, the winning contractor was required to employ people from marginalised groups.

The tender was specifically reserved for contractors who jointly:

- Had the status of a sheltered workplace or their activity included the social and professional integration of persons from socially marginalised groups.
- Had **at least 50%** of the employees considered to be from socially marginalised groups.

[In this case, socially marginalised groups are understood as](#)

(with each group specifically defined in respective EU and national legislation):

- Certain disabled persons;
- Unemployed persons;
- Persons deprived of liberty or released from prisons experiencing difficulties with integration into society;
- Persons with mental disorders;
- Homeless persons;
- Persons granted by the Republic of Poland a refugee status or subsidiary protection;
- Persons up to 30 years of age and persons over 50 years of age, with a job-seeker status and unemployed;
- Persons belonging to disadvantaged minorities.

The total contract value was 378,000 złoty PLN (equivalent to €89,559.45) for a period of six months. The winning bidder was Komunalka Rzgów, a local social cooperative that currently

employs eleven people, including long-term unemployed and people with disabilities. Komunalka Rzgów's main activity is the collection of mixed and separated waste from residents of Rzgów.

The use of a reserved tender for social enterprises employing marginalised groups for municipal waste management was considered a success by the municipality. Komunalka Rzgów smoothly carried out the activities set out in the contract and offered employment to the groups targeted by the municipality, thus achieving the public procurement twofold objective.

Rzgów has since repeated this practice with other tenders concerning waste management. In the future, this municipality aims to make a more frequent use of these types of contracts and expand them to different sectors.

Vorarlberg's textile collection scheme for social enterprises

In the Western Austrian province of Vorarlberg, comprising 96 municipalities, a decision was taken committing themselves to working exclusively with social enterprises to collect textiles. Not only has this resulted in greater social inclusion, the province now has the highest per capita collection rate compared to other provinces in Austria.

In Vorarlberg, [data from previous years](#) shows that around 3,528 tonnes of old clothes and shoes were collected in the municipalities, which corresponds to a value of 8.98 kg per inhabitant, the highest in Austria. Collection is managed through a combination of clearly branded clothing containers found usually in existing hubs/areas of waste collection, as well as five shops found in some of the biggest towns in the province - Altach, Bludenz, Dornbirn, Feldkirch and Bregenz.

Not only has this decision resulted in the greatest quantity of textiles collected in Austria, but it has also facilitated many more jobs and skills for people previously unemployed in the community. The chosen social enterprise to deliver the contract for textiles collection and sorting provides temporary jobs, professional and personal qualifications and a wide range of social work services, with the aim of reducing barriers to placement and employment.



Spain's waste management public procurement for social enterprises

Spain's newly-enacted legislation in 2022 is a great example of a model that should be replicated. The new Spanish Law on Waste and Contaminated Soil for the Circular Economy ([Ley 7/2022, de 8 de abril, de residuos y suelos contaminados para una economía circular](#)) envisages obligations to tender the collection, transport, and treatment of second-hand goods (primarily textile and furniture) - preferentially via reserved contracts. Above all, the law requires that at least 50% of these contracts are awarded to social enterprises licensed for waste management.

[In a context where the Moda re- network estimates social enterprises to manage approximately 60% of the textiles collected in Spain](#), such legislation protects their historical contribution to a circular economy while ensuring Spain complies with upcoming mandatory EU rules to separate textile collection by 2025.

Leveraging the potential of social enterprises for waste treatment comes within a context where, in Spain, only 12% of textiles were estimated to be separately collected in 2021. Simultaneously, by empowering social enterprises via reservations in procurement, public bodies guarantee renewed jobs and training opportunities for vulnerable groups. To this end, the organisation [RREUSE estimates that its network of social enterprises accounts, on average, for creating 70 jobs per 1,000 tonnes of material collected for reuse purposes](#).

This Spanish legislation is exciting - not only because it embeds the value of social enterprises within society, but because of its important zero waste aspects, such as prohibiting the destruction of non-perishable unsold goods, including textiles, electric and electronic products, and toys. To help prevent such materials being burnt or landfilled, unsold surplus production donated to non-profit organisations will be exempt from VAT. This measure is expected to encourage donations to non-profit organisations and extend the lifespan of products. For the first time, this law importantly embeds key by-product and end-of-waste criteria status, and the requirement of textile separate collection from 2025 onwards.

Conclusion

This fourth edition of our State of Zero Waste Municipalities Report celebrated several stories of hope and success within its pages. These are but small reminders of the daily tireless work that individuals and communities are doing together to improve the health of the environment and of their fellow local citizens.

Yet, this report also highlighted several common challenges and barriers that continue to prevent us from making the progress we need in Europe. From the increased intensity of corporate lobbying to the unavailability of finance for the right solutions, the challenges facing those of us wishing to transition to a circular economy are complex, stubborn, and embedded in our social and economic models.

What does this all mean for our local work? We face a paradox: our work as Zero Waste Europe and the Mission Zero Academy is improving in scale and impact (more cities & businesses working on zero waste solutions with tangible results in these communities); but the broader problems of waste generation, pollution, and biological degradation continue to worsen at the macro level. **As great as all the work that cities could do can be, unless there are stronger policies to regulate the type of materials on the market, we will never begin to truly turn the tide away from our linear economy.**

The imbalance between the zero waste efforts at local level and the lack of political ambition at higher levels is the reason why it's so saddening to see key recent pieces of European Union legislation be so limited in its scope and ambition. Most notably, the Waste Framework Directive (which sets food waste reduction targets below what the EU previously signed up to as part of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, which was 50% by 2030); and the Packaging & Packaging Waste Regulation (PPWR), which removed or reduced key targets on the reuse of certain packaging items e.g. food & beverage takeaway containers.

In a context where policy-makers in Brussels are held back by political reluctance to take the bold steps we

need, responsibility falls on local and regional authorities to lead and showcase a path of how things can be different. Fortunately, hundreds already have been doing this over the past decade - but **we want to (and importantly, believe it's politically in favour of cities to do so) see more measures being taken that form the backbone of a proper zero waste strategy:**

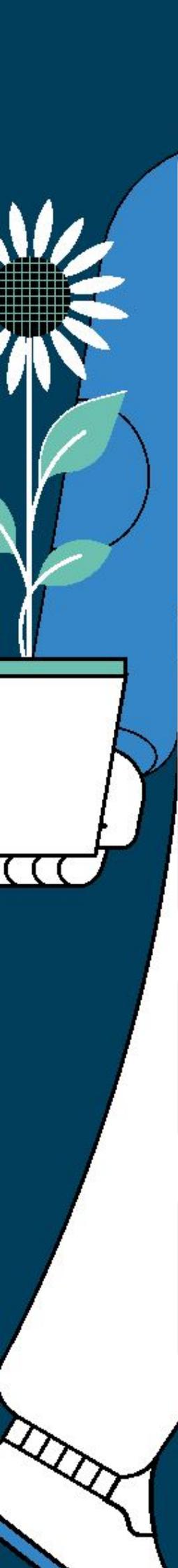
- Restricting residual waste treatment capacity to incentivise prevention & recycling;
- Greater focus on prevention measures rather than just collection & recycling;
- Ensuring that environmental goals are in harmony with social ones, helping create local jobs and provide skills to the community.

This will continue to be our *modus operandi* in the following years. **As we navigate tumultuous times, we will continue to implement a 'disrupt and display' strategy:**

- **Disrupt** the *status quo* of waste management and local policy-making today to change how we think, design, and implement community-led material preservation strategies in Europe's municipalities.
- **Display** how to implement zero waste policies effectively; the benefits they bring; and the required steps to enable their success.

None of these will be easy, and they will take time to happen. But as the stories from this report show, **with continued perseverance and the proper support in place, local communities can work together to bring about real change** - from less waste being burnt or landfilled to digital technologies empowering new forms of reusable packaging; and the acquisition of key skills by individuals who were previously unemployed or come from marginalised groups.

Four years after we first started this initiative, we are surer than ever that stories have the power to change the world. After reading the stories in this report, we hope you're inspired to begin writing your own.



Acknowledgements:

This report would not have been possible again without the support of numerous people. These include Zero Waste Europe members who co-wrote the chapters from their specific countries, or those zero waste practitioners who shared data and information about their own initiatives. This report and the Zero Waste Cities programme would not exist without the dedication and leadership shown by these individuals, for which we are extremely grateful for.

Furthermore, we would like to acknowledge the support received from colleagues at GAIA, as well as representatives from several municipalities and companies who have shared their data to be included in this report. We thank you for your support and continued leadership on this issue.

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Zero Waste Europe is the European network of communities, local leaders, experts, and change agents working towards the elimination of waste in our society.

We advocate for sustainable systems and the redesign of our relationship with resources, to accelerate a just transition towards zero waste for the benefit of people and the planet.



Zero Waste Europe gratefully acknowledges financial assistance from the European Union. The sole responsibility for the content of this event materials lies with Zero Waste Europe. It does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the funder mentioned above. The funder cannot be held responsible for any use that may be made of the information contained therein.