

ZEROWASTE PROGRAMMES IN THE FRAME OF CIRCULAR ECONOMY

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Abstract

Previously considered by some as an unrealistic slogan (a consideration which mistakenly focuses on the number, and not on the engagement to move towards it), Zero Waste has lately been recognised as a working principle, and *a precious toolkit to turn the vision of the Circular Economy into operational reality.*

The first version of the EU Circular Economy package, issued in July 2014, was sub-titled “a Zero Waste programme for Europe”, which showed the tight linkage between the CE agenda, as the general roadmap for the EU in the management of resources, and ZW as the methodological approach to make it real.

A Zero Waste commitment has already been adopted by hundreds Municipalities across Europe, which keeps them engaged on continuous improvement in the management of materials and discards, while delivering impressive achievements not only in terms of maximised recycling levels and minimised disposal, but also in terms of created jobs and economic benefits to taxpayers and local economy.

Zero Waste is typically described by people and experts involved in ZW programmes, as “more the journey, than the destination”. Its key principle is to reduce, reuse and recycle as much as possible, and assess, afterwards, what materials are left behind in residual waste, so as to have them redesigned for better durability, reparability, reusability, recyclability.

The working method has already delivered impressive results in terms of minimisation of residual waste (with hundreds Municipalities and even large areas around and below 50 kg/person residual waste, and still dwindling) cost-optimisation of schemes for the management of MSW, and influence on industrial responsibility to have those materials that are not currently recyclable, duly redesigned for better end-of-life management in the near future.

The strategy has been adopted also in densely populated cities and areas, similarly allowing important achievements well above the EU long-term targets, and well before related deadlines.

The presentation will elaborate on:

- the background rationale for Zero Waste programmes, in the frame of Circular Economy,
- the ongoing initiatives to have the concept codified and operationally implemented,
- the operational schemes for communities that have committed to ZW programmes,
- it will also report on the achievements in terms of improved waste management, related economic optimisation and occupational implications.

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