Waste Prevention

Recommendations on enhancing knowledge exchange

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In association with

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The aim of this document is to propose practical methods of enhancing exchange of waste prevention knowledge at European level, across Member States.

The technical description of this sub-task by the European Commission is: “based on the experience gained in the project, the contractor shall propose, in the final report, practical methods of enhancing exchange of knowledge across Member States, including for example exchange visits or exchange workshops”.

A draft document on this topic was sent to the EC on October 8th and submitted to stakeholders participating at the workshop before the event on October 19th. This document has been revised to reflect the feedback received during and after the workshop. A key question raised at the workshop was how a possible network for information-sharing would be co-ordinated, managed and funded, and perhaps this could be clarified further by the European Commission.

To enhance the exchange of waste prevention knowledge across Member States this document proposes a two-pronged approach:

- **The sharing of relevant knowledge amongst the waste policy specialists of national authorities (the primary stakeholders of the Waste Framework Directive); and, at the same time and equally importantly**

- **The integration of waste prevention knowledge into other policy areas at the national level, including both environmental and non-environmental areas (horizontal integration), as well as the establishment of a link/interface to relevant knowledge at the level of sub-national and regional/local authorities (vertical integration)**

To this end, the following two main methods of enhancing waste prevention knowledge are proposed:

1. The development and operation of a web-based “knowledge platform”: in this respect options for the further development of the present “prevention website” hosted by Europa web portal are presented.

2. The establishment and operation of networks: a thematic network of national authorities’ waste policy specialists; and a thematic “network of networks” for the integration of the aspects of waste prevention into other policy areas, the dissemination of relevant knowledge and to connect policy-makers with relevance to waste prevention at the national level as well as amongst the levels of governance (national, sub-national, regional and local).

Further to outlining the proposed two main methods of enhancing exchange of knowledge amongst Member States, the document makes reference to the relevance in the context of waste prevention of including other networks and European bodies such as the European Environment Agency (EEA), the Joint Research Centre (JRC) and Eurostat.

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1. A WEB-BASED “KNOWLEDGE PLATFORM”

1.1. CONTEXT: THE EXISTING WEBSITE

In the framework of the “Waste Prevention Guidelines project, a website has been designed and can be consulted here: [http://ec.europa.eu/environment/waste/prevention/index.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/waste/prevention/index.htm).

Further to the objective of presenting the results of this project (the selection of best practices, the guidelines on waste prevention, the study on indicators) and the description of the relevant EU policy framework, it is envisaged by the European Commission that this website “will act as a ‘hub’ for the exchange of best practice in the future, enabling further exchange meetings and workshops, as necessary”.

1.2. POSSIBLE DEVELOPMENTS TO CREATE A PLATFORM

1.2.1. EXAMPLES OF PUBLICATIONS AND WEB PAGES WHICH COULD FOSTER THE EXCHANGE OF WASTE PREVENTION INFORMATION AND KNOWLEDGE

In addition to the above described content and in order to enhance the exchange of information and knowledge amongst Member States as well as to foster related capacity building, the present “prevention website” is proposed to be further developed and host a range of other publications and/or type of information in the long run. Below are a few examples of other publications or publication series and web pages which could actively serve the purpose of information exchange.

Policy Brief

A policy brief is a document which outlines the rationale for choosing a particular policy alternative or course of action in a current policy debate.

A series of policy briefs outlining policy options for waste prevention and targeted at policy-makers both at the national and regional/local levels could be prepared and published.

Factsheets

A factsheet is a presentation of data, information and knowledge in a particular subject in a concise way, focusing on key points of interest or concern.

A series of factsheets could be prepared and published on specific subjects with high relevance to waste prevention, including, inter alia:

- the explanation of relevant concepts and tools (such as “eco-design”, “product-service systems”, “waste audit”, “life-cycle costing” etc.) for capacity building purposes
• the explanation of the relevance of waste prevention to already existing policies (such as EMAS, GPP etc.) to strengthen the integration of waste prevention into other related policy areas

• indicator factsheets, i.e. the presentation of trends in waste prevention indicators or other highly related indicators, to back policy-making with information about related environmental, technical-technological and social-economic trends

Country profiles

A country profile is a document presenting structured information about national policy on a topic. Besides good practices it is envisaged that structured (and thus comparable) information about national policies and other initiatives in place, e.g. relevant strategic policy objectives, policy instruments, institutional responsibilities and coordination mechanisms etc. would also be very useful information to share. This type of information includes the briefs or the full translation of national waste prevention programmes.

Series of short papers / studies

Besides factsheets and policy briefs, which are usually concise documents in the range of one to five pages, the waste prevention stakeholders may find it useful to have a series of short studies conducted on waste prevention topics of specific interest. Examples of topics for such short papers / studies include the institutionalisation of waste prevention and related coordination mechanisms, cross-country comparison of waste criteria in use in the context of national eco-labels and/or green procurement etc.

Gateway to research

A web page dedicated to the presentation of research results (including both EU funded research, e.g. the Seventh Framework Programme and other research programmes, e.g. national programmes) with relevance to waste prevention is expected to be a useful source of information to policy makers. Both briefs on research results and links to related research projects could be presented2.

Newsletter

A newsletter is a publication distributed (more and more often electronically) to voluntary subscribers.

DG Environment already hosts and manages periodical newsletters in several related topics. Examples include: ECAP, EMAS, ETAP, GPP etc. A new series of newsletters could be launched dedicated to the subject of waste prevention (covering the full spectrum of relevant policy areas).

At the same time, however, either as an alternative or in parallel with the launch of a new series of newsletters, highlighting / mainstreaming the topic of waste prevention in the existing series of newsletters on ECAP, EMAS, ETAP and GPP is also to be considered.

**Frequently asked questions (FAQ) and links**

A FAQ is a glossary of terms and related links.

The FAQ could be a useful tool towards the uniform use of waste prevention related terms among stakeholders and would thus foster capacity building in the subject (note the relevance of the glossary to the factsheets). A web page listing relevant links (e.g. to the related website, other EU institutions and EU stakeholder organisations in this context) is a usual component of thematic websites.

**Thought pieces**

A thought piece is a short paper addressing a subject in a personalised and analytical way that can stimulate brainstorming. Thought pieces could thus encourage research, reflection and debate on innovative topics such as shifting away from the culture of over-consumption and monitoring waste prevention.

1.2.2. **Examples of potential interactive/collaborative functions which could be provided by the web platform**

To be engaging, users appreciate and ask more and more for interactive and collaborative functions. An appropriate web portal could include:

**Forum**

A forum is a webpage allowing members to post messages, without having to be online simultaneously. The online tool CIRCA could play this role if a direct link is put on the website.

**Search function**

It is expected that the enabling of users to search the content of the knowledge platform (i.e. potentially, the policy briefs, fact sheets, newsletters etc.) by types of policies, by type of waste stream/product and the level of administrative level (national, sub-national and regional/local) would significantly increase the value of the platform and ease the access to information/knowledge.
Webcasts and webinars

A webcast is a downloadable file on a website used to broadcast live or delayed audio and/or video transmissions, much like traditional television and radio broadcasts. A webinar is short for Web-based seminar, a presentation, lecture, workshop or seminar that is transmitted over the Internet.

It is proposed that the knowledge platform may host webcasts and collaborative webinars in subjects with high relevance to waste prevention.

1.3. HORIZONTAL AND VERTICAL INTEGRATION OF WASTE PREVENTION KNOWLEDGE AND ITS RELEVANCE TO THE KNOWLEDGE PORTAL

It is proposed that during the realisation of the knowledge platform special emphasis is to be put on the crosscutting nature of waste prevention and thus its connection to other relevant EU policies and initiatives are to be duly considered.

The interrelation of different policies and initiatives at the EU and national, sub-national and regional/local levels with focus on how to address gaps, opportunities in order to create synergies and ensure coherence in policy-making is illustrated in Figure 1, below (please see also the chapter on the integration of existing policies in the draft Waste Prevention Handbook for EU Member States).

Figure 1: Waste prevention as a cross-cutting policy area: focus on gaps, opportunities, synergies and coherence in the exchange of relevant knowledge

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relevant policies, policy processes and initiatives at the EU level</th>
<th>Policies and initiatives at the national and sub-national and regional/local level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Environmental domains</td>
<td>Charges and taxes</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Voluntary agreements</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Campaigns on waste prevention (life styles)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Reuse and repair</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Public procurement guidelines</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IPP, EU SDS and EU SCP action plan</td>
<td>Economic and spatial planning policies</td>
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<tr>
<td>ETAP</td>
<td>Consumer policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GPP</td>
<td>Cohesion policy</td>
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<tr>
<td>EMAS</td>
<td>Competitiveness and innovation policy</td>
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<tr>
<td>ECAP</td>
<td>R&amp;D policy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lead Market Initiative</td>
<td>Etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU Ecolabel</td>
<td>Etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Etc.</td>
<td>Primarily non-environmental domains</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Practical approaches to ensure the integration of waste prevention knowledge into other relevant policy areas as well as amongst the different levels of governance include, inter alia:

- Whenever possible, links to other EU policies and initiatives are to be made and properly communicated: it is to be ensured that the knowledge portal is fully integrated into the system of relevant websites hosted by the Europa web portal, particularly those managed by DG Environment (GPP, EMAS, EU Ecolabel, ETAP), but including the websites managed by other DGs (Lead Market Initiative for Europe, non-energy materials, consumer policy), as well as to the related websites of the EEA, JRC and Eurostat.

- Whenever possible, the competencies in the subject of waste prevention of the European Commission, Member States and their sub-national and regional/local authorities as well as of relevant information and knowledge are to be clearly distinguished and these differences are to be duly communicated (e.g. in the case of compilation of good practice series).

- The realisation of any of the potential publications etc. listed above may be influenced by the above approaches, e.g. in the case of newsletters the publication of both dedicated newsletters and the highlighting/mainstreaming of the topic of waste prevention in other relevant newsletters could be important.
2. WASTE PREVENTION NETWORKS

Besides the knowledge platform as proposed above, one of the main methods of knowledge exchange is expected to be the establishment and operation of one or several networks.

The ultimate objective of such networks might be defined as collaboration and the exchange of knowledge with a view to preparing national waste prevention programmes (later the monitoring of the implementation of national programmes) and the coordination of relevant activities at national level (i.e. coordination with other relevant departments, ministries and experts in regional/local authorities).

2.1. NETWORK OF NATIONAL AUTHORITIES’ WASTE POLICY SPECIALISTS

It is expected that this network would consist of the waste policy specialists of national environment ministries (or their equivalent) as well as of the specialists of national environment protection agencies.

The feasibility of extending this network with the specialists of sub-national/regional environmental ministries and environment protection agencies (or the establishment of a sub-network for this purpose) is to be explored. By default it is expected that the national experts involved in the work of the thematic waste prevention network are to serve as knowledge brokers between the different levels of administration (coordination and integration function).

Regular meetings

It is envisaged the thematic waste prevention network would meet twice each year to discuss actual policy topics as well as relevant experience and lessons learned concerning the planning and implementation of waste prevention policies at the national level, with the specific aim to support the preparation of national waste prevention programmes.

It is proposed that the feasibility of extending the invitation to these regular meetings to other stakeholders, including civil society, business, academia and international organisations, is to be explored.

Ad hoc workshops and seminars

The European Commission and the thematic waste prevention network may wish to organise ad hoc workshops and seminars involving a larger group of experts than the regular meetings as outlined above. Examples of the topics of such ad hoc workshops and seminars include new environmental policy developments at the EU level (E.g. update of the Eco-design Directive with waste related provisions), topics of special interest such as waste stream / product-specific workshops and seminars etc.
Small group meetings, study visits and expert visits

Should stakeholders and the European Commission find it relevant, the preparation of national waste prevention programmes might also be fostered between two parties, e.g. two countries, or the European Commission and a country or small group meetings, as well as by the organisation of study visits (e.g. a group of countries visiting a forerunner country) or expert visits.

Peers review of national waste prevention strategies/programmes

In order to enhance mutual learning and to utilise already available knowledge to the maximum extent possible, the European Commission and stakeholders may agree to set up a peer review mechanism for the review and expected improvement of the quality of national waste prevention programmes.

2.2. NETWORK OF EXPERT NETWORKS WITH RELEVANCE TO WASTE PREVENTION

In line with the principle that the integration of waste prevention knowledge into other policy areas is of key importance towards the success of related knowledge exchange, it is proposed that beyond the establishment of thematic network of national authorities’ waste policy specialists a “network of networks” involving and engaging the specialists of other highly relevant networks is also established\(^3\). Examples of methods of exchange of knowledge in this dimension include, inter alia:

Reinforcement / mainstreaming of the topic of waste prevention in the activities of relevant expert / working groups

It is proposed that relevant expert and working groups consider launching specific activities and cooperation dedicated to the topic of waste prevention.

Joint expert meetings and seminars for the cross-fertilisation of the relevant topics and to connect policy-makers with relevance to waste prevention

It is proposed that joint expert meetings, seminars could be held in order to cross-fertilise relevant topics with high relevance to waste prevention and to connect relevant policy-makers.

These events may be organised with the involvement of a relatively large number of relevant experts with the aim of discovering opportunities for the enhancement of waste prevention policy-making in general (i.e. gaps, opportunities and potential synergies). Alternatively, such cross-cutting events

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\(^3\) Examples of highly relevant and already existing networks include, inter alia:
- the IPP Regular Meetings (http://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regexpert/detail.cfm?ref=470&l=all);
- the ETAP High Level Working Group (http://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regexpert/detail.cfm?ref=469&l=E);
- the GPP Expert Group (http://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regexpert/detail.cfm?ref=453&l=all);
- the Development and Implementation of EMAS Working Group (http://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regexpert/detail.cfm?ref=452&l=all) and
- the European Union Eco-labelling Board (http://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regexpert/detail.cfm?ref=374&l=all)
may be held between two (e.g. waste prevention and EMAS) or amongst a few (e.g. waste prevention, GPP and ETAP) groups of specialised experts.

Dissemination of the publications and other results of the knowledge platform amongst the experts of other highly relevant policy areas
For this purpose the establishment of a database of relevant experts in Member States would be necessary.

2.3. A BROADER NETWORK OF STAKEHOLDERS

A broader type of network could bring together other important stakeholders (and experts), from a wider range of disciplines: academia, business, and practitioners (e.g. social marketers, voluntary and community sector and NGOs).

This could stimulate innovation in policy development, research, and implementation, resulting in buy-in to policies that result in behaviour change. However, it might be complicated to build and manage such a network that goes beyond the first objective of exchanging knowledge and practices between Member States.
3. THE RELEVANCE TO THIS INITIATIVE OF OTHER NETWORKS AND INSTITUTIONS

Together with DG Environment, the EEA, JRC and Eurostat form the so-called group of 4 (Go4), the objective of which is to set up and manage ten Environmental Data Centres. The activities and initiatives by these EU bodies are highly relevant in the context of waste prevention knowledge sharing and go beyond the management of Data Centres.

It is therefore proposed that during the development of a concept for the exchange of waste prevention knowledge across Member States, these other EU bodies are duly consulted and strong links to their related activities are created.

Examples of activities and initiatives which go beyond the establishment and management of Data Centres and which have high relevance to the exchange of waste prevention knowledge are mentioned in the following sections.

3.1. The EEA and its European Topic Centre on Sustainable Consumption and Production (ETC/SCP)

EEA themes: “household consumption” and “waste and materials” and related indicators

EEA themes “household consumption” (www.eea.europa.eu/themes/households) and “waste and materials” (www.eea.europa.eu/themes/waste) provide useful background information to policymakers as well as to the general public with high relevance to waste prevention, including the publication of the trends of selected indicator values.

The EEA’s European Environment Information and Observation Network (Eionet)

The Eionet (www.eionet.europa.eu/about) aims to provide timely and quality-assured data, information and expertise for assessing the state of the environment in Europe and the pressures acting upon it. This enables policy-makers to decide on appropriate measures for protecting the environment at national and European level and to monitor the effectiveness of policies and measures implemented.

WasteBase


Country Fact Sheets on waste management in EU countries

4 For more information about the Data Centres please visit: epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/about_eurostat/activities/environmental_data_centres. The most important Data Centres in the context of waste prevention are the ones on waste, natural resources, products and climate change. However, the other six Centres are also relevant.
The fact sheets [http://scp.eionet.europa.eu/publications/factsheet] present general information on the legislative waste framework and waste management plans for each country. They also present more specific information on legislation, policies, instruments and data for the waste streams of municipal waste, biodegradable waste and tyres. Updated versions of the factsheets with information on waste prevention policies in particular are expected to be published soon.

3.2. The JRC and its institutions, particularly the Institute for Prospective Technological Studies (IPTS) and the Institute for Environment and Sustainability (IES)

Sustainable Production and Consumption (SUSPROC) action

The SUSPROC action of IPTS [http://susproc.jrc.ec.europa.eu/activities/waste/index.html] is to support the implementation and further development of the EU Strategy for Sustainable Development, the EU Environmental Action Plan as well as the integration of environmental concerns in other European policy areas. To this end, it provides objective, quality-controlled socio-economic analyses and technical support regarding key aspects of sustainable consumption and production. Amongst other things in the context of waste prevention, the JRC/IPTS has carried out a scientific analysis of the different waste streams and it has developed a methodology for determining end of waste criteria, based in a number of case studies.

European Platform on Life Cycle Assessment


3.3. Eurostat

The main objective of Eurostat is to provide statistics, indicators and meta-information on environmental pressures and the state of the environment to support the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of Community environmental policy, in particular the Sixth Environment Action Programme (6th EAP). Data and information provided by Eurostat not just directly on the topics of the use of natural resources and waste (beyond the Data Centres), but also contextual data on e.g. technological and socio-economic trends, have high relevance to the exchange of waste prevention knowledge amongst Member States.

3.4. The European Shared Environmental Information System (SEIS)

The Shared Environmental Information System (SEIS) [http://ec.europa.eu/environment/seis/what.htm] is a collaborative initiative of the European Commission and the EEA to establish together with the Member States an integrated and shared EU-
wide environmental information system. It is envisaged that SEIS would tie in better all existing data gathering and information flows related to EU environmental policies and legislation and be based on technologies such as the Internet and satellite systems and thus make environmental information more readily available and easier to understand for policy makers and the public.

It is proposed that the relevance of SEIS to the activities of the European Commission regarding the enhancement of the exchange of waste prevention knowledge across Member States is to be explored and specified.

3.5. The need for data

Stakeholders reported during the workshop and in a study recently published by Defra that they need more evidence on waste prevention. Their needs are two-fold:

Statistical data

Data on the impact and/or potential of waste prevention activities – including impacts of campaigns, relative benefits of different options, guidance on actions to prioritise, and LCA/carbon benefits for different options.

Guidance on accepted methods

Guidance on techniques for measuring waste prevention – including techniques, standardised benchmarks for measuring performance, and how to deal with issues such as attribution and displacement effects.

Evidence from analysed successful best practices

Successful campaigns, effective messages, and key concepts of behavioural change on the one hand, and robust evidence on the impact of ecodesign and at-source prevention, and cost benefit analysis of waste prevention versus recycling on the other hand, help to “make the case” for prevention to local authorities.

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