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Best Environmental Management Practices for the Waste Management Sector

Type of support / service available

JRC develops the EMAS Sectoral Reference Documents (SRDs) on Best Environmental Management Practices (BEMPs) for eleven priority sectors¹. One of the priority sectors is Waste Management where the identified BEMPs focus on how to help waste management companies and waste authorities improve their environmental performance, by adopting practical initiatives, measures, techniques and actions implemented by the best performing (frontrunner) organisations within the sector.

The BEMPs also include environmental performance indicators that allow companies and waste authorities to monitor the performance of their environmental management; and benchmarks of excellence, which provide an indication of the levels achieved by the frontrunners and can be taken as inspiration (but are not set as targets to reach).

Organisations responsible for waste management who wish to improve their performance can refer to the Best Practice report for this sector, which compiles detailed information on how to implement the BEMPs. The Sectoral Reference Document is a shorter legal text which summarises all the BEMPs and presents the environmental performance indicators as well as benchmarks of excellence.

JRC identifies the BEMPs based on a deep analysis of existing publications and through close collaboration with expert stakeholders from the sector, such as waste authorities, waste advisers, NGOs etc.

Relevance for regional authorities

Household waste and similar commercial, industrial and institutional waste, is one of the most problematic categories of waste and among those with the highest potential for environmental improvement through better management. Throughout the EU, the management of this waste is typically a responsibility of regional/local government and needs support from citizens, for whom it is often a very visible aspect of sub-central government action.

The Best environmental management practices on Waste management addresses issues such as integrated waste management plans, prevention, re-use, collection and treatment of waste, with a focus on municipal solid waste, construction and demolition waste, and healthcare waste. It is mainly targeted towards waste authorities and waste managers/ contractors at the level of municipalities, cities, counties or regions.

Policy context

The work on identifying BEMPs is part of the implementation of the EMAS (Eco Management and Audit Scheme) Regulation, a voluntary framework for organisations to evaluate, report and improve their environmental performance. As such, the EMAS Sectoral Reference Document for the waste management sector is published as a Commission Decision and needs to be taken into account by EMAS-registered organisations from the sector.

However, the Document (and the Best Practice report with a more in-depth description of BEMPs) is not only relevant for EMAS-verified organisations, but is rather intended to be a useful and inspirational reference document for any relevant organisation of the sector. It presents comprehensive best practices that can be broadly applied by companies and local / regional authorities dealing with waste management that wish to improve their environmental performance.

1. The 11 priority sectors are: Retail, Tourism, Construction, Public Administration, Agriculture, Food and Beverage manufacturing, Electrical and Electronic Equipment manufacturing, Car manufacturing, Waste management, Telecommunication and ICT services and Fabricated Metal Products.

How to use

Local and regional authorities (as well as waste management companies) are the key target group for the Best Environmental Management Practices for the waste management sector. Organisations that wish to improve their environmental performance or their environmental management system will find in the BEMPs a relevant updated source of information to achieve these goals.

BEMPs for the sector include three key elements: detailed information on how to implement best practices and address key environmental aspects; environmental performance indicators to monitor their environmental performance through time, or even to compare performance between different sites or organisations; and benchmarks of excellence to provide aspirational references.

In particular, environmental performance indicators will enable local authorities to monitor and assess the performance of their municipal solid waste management. The document presents methodological approaches and practical steps that authorities can use to better understand and start improving the waste flows managed on their territories.

In addition, specific BEMPs describe in detail the steps to be put in place to implement best practice.

The JRC webpage on BEMPS for the waste management sector² gathers all the background information regarding the development of the EMAS Sectoral Reference Document on BEMPs for the Waste Management Sector. In particular, users will find available online the background report that supports the implementation of this work, the state-of-play of the work and other related background information. When the legal process is finalised, the final Best Practice report and Sectoral Reference document will also be published. In addition users will find contact details³ and how to get involved.

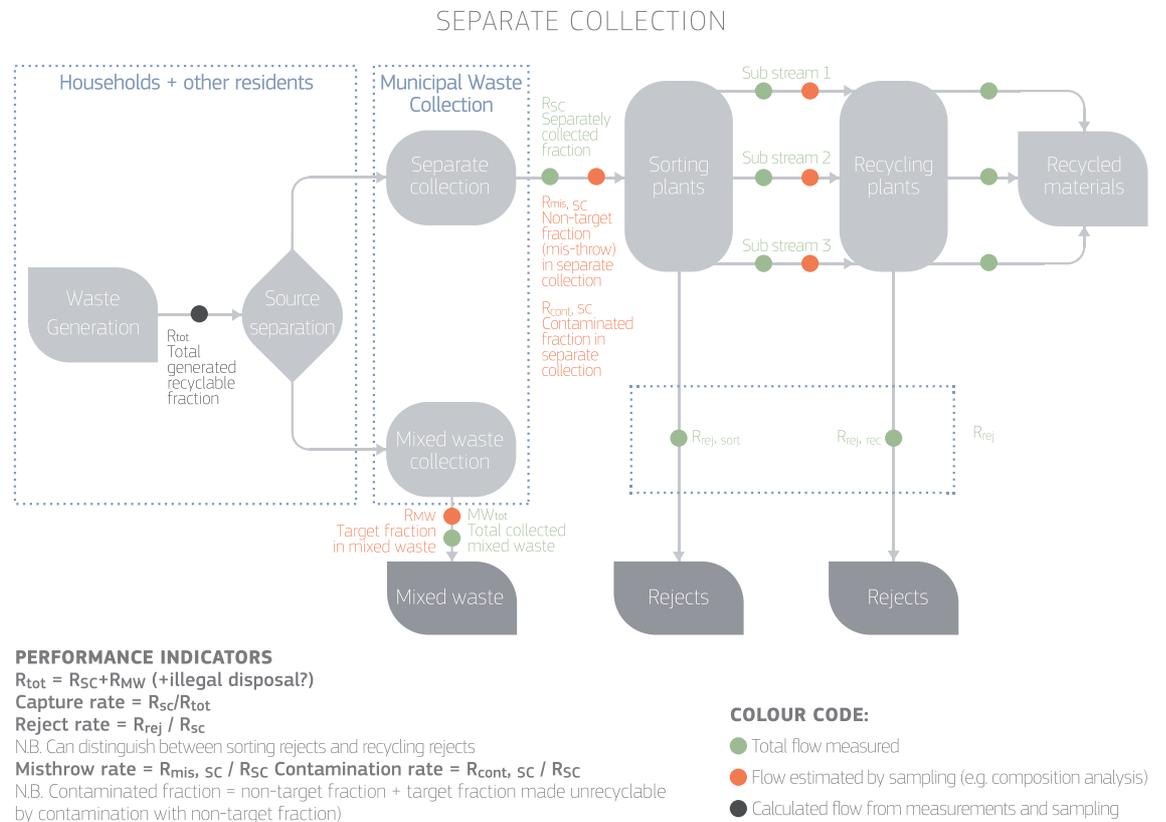


Diagram illustrating how monitoring principles can be used to produce relevant indicators.

2. http://susproc.jrc.ec.europa.eu/activities/emas/waste_mgmt.html
 3. JRC-EMAS-SRD@ec.europa.eu

Impact

Waste management is a key sector in terms of resource efficiency where broader uptake of best practice, going beyond regulatory requirements, facilitates reaping large environmental and societal benefits.

The reference document on best environmental management practice for the waste management sector⁴ is well aligned with the principles of the circular economy package and aims at helping regional and local authorities to improve their municipal waste management and recycling performance. Exchanging and disseminating these good practices will contribute to the European efforts of bringing all EU regions and municipalities to comparably high waste management and recycling standards.

Regional and local authorities, regardless of their starting point in terms of the environmental performance of their waste management, can benefit from using the BEMPs. These will help them better understand the current hotspots in their environmental impact, monitor more accurately and then improve their performance, by offering concrete solutions tailored to their situation.

⁴ The reference document on best environmental management practice for the waste management sector will be officially adopted by the Commission in the course of the year 2018. Once adopted, it will be available at: http://susproc.jrc.ec.europa.eu/activities/emas/waste_mgmt.html