



Summary - Climate Chance Talk 6

"Waste"

Speakers:

- **Sven Saura**, Deputy director of Recycling and Plastics, Veolia
- **Françoise Bonnet**, Secretary General, ACR+
- **Dominique Traineau**, Coordinator of the report "Territoires pionniers de la prévention des déchets" (Pioneer territories in the prevention of waste), Ademe (French Environment and Energy Management Agency)

Moderated by Antoine Gillod, Research officer, Climate Chance Observatory

The **Global Synthesis Report on Climate Action by Sector Report** was released in the first week of December and is available in both [English](#) and [French](#). A series of "**Climate Chance Talks**" dedicated to the key trends of each sector took place from December 1st – 4th 2020, all the recordings are available to watch [here](#).

Please find the pages related to the Waste Sector at page 177.

Key points highlighted by speakers:

- The **Climate Chance Observatory** shows that the pandemic has increased the production of household and medical waste and has delayed the planned ban on single-use plastics in some cities. In addition, plastic recycling suffers from the drop in the price of virgin plastic and the lack of local outlets in Northern countries. Companies involved in this sector favour circular approaches to waste reduction at source. Recycling should rather be seen as a complement to waste prevention and sobriety strategies.
- **Sven Saura** (Véolia) recalled the added value of recycling in environmental and climate issues, and presented Véolia's initiatives to develop these sectors.
- **François Bonnet** (ACR+) presents the effects of the pandemic on the sector and the reactions of the actors. According to her, mechanisms such as Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) or the pay-as-you-throw incentive pricing system appear unavoidable in view of the results of the best territories in terms of waste prevention.
- **Dominique Traineau** (Ademe) presented a study by Ademe that provides a better understanding of the co-benefits of waste reduction and the mechanisms that work for prevention at the local level.



Summary

Key takeaways from the Waste section, introduced by Antoine Gillod, Climate Chance Observatory



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- 1** The Covid-19 pandemic has led to increased production of household and medical waste, posing difficulties for collection systems in cities like Seoul. In the United States, where 92% of waste is not recycled, the pandemic and pressure from manufacturers have delayed announcements to ban single-use plastics anticipated by some cities and states. In addition, the 15 million informal refuse pickers operating in the world are exposed to an increased risk of contamination and social distress due to a drop in activity.
- 2** Single-use plastics are caught in a crossfire: on the one side, hindered by the extension of prohibition laws (in the Caribbean, Asia and in particular Africa), and on the other, promoted by the petrochemical industry looking for outlets in developing countries, where they encourage the expansion of urban waste management services to counter plastic prohibitions. Plummeting crude oil prices have brought down the cost of virgin plastic, at the expense of recycled plastic in a context of economic recession where manufacturers seek out the cheapest options in the absence of any obligation. Disposable medical equipment, used widely during the pandemic, now litters natural areas.
- 3** The disruption of the international recycled waste market caused by the Chinese National Sword Policy has boosted illegal trafficking of waste from countries in the North to East Asia. Various states (USA, Japan, Australia, the EU, etc.) have reinforced legislation to encourage domestic recycling, while Chinese companies cut off from their supplies have started to invest abroad to get closer to the resources required for their activities.
- 4** While consumer goods companies that made commitments in recent years have improved their transparency, few have engaged in an approach to reduce waste at source, opting for a circular approach based on recycling rather than re-use and reparability. The legal absence of extended producer responsibility (ERP) in numerous countries appears to aggravate this situation.
- 5** The ERP reforms in some Canadian provinces and new container deposit schemes in Australian provinces see local governments react to the crisis by focusing on multi-actor governance of waste collection and sorting systems. Few consolidated data provide an overview of the action carried out by cities and regions, yet they continue to explore solutions, such as pneumatic waste collection, pay-as-you-go, and more complex circular economy systems.



Discussion:

- **Sven Saura, Veolia**

Question: In a context where it is becoming increasingly difficult to export recyclable waste abroad, how can we develop localised recycling channels and improve sorting performance in our territories?

First of all, a look back at the impact of the crisis: Veolia also notes the impact of the crisis on the price of raw materials, which has had a negative impact on recycling. There is a lack of sources of materials to be recycled, and the economic slowdown in certain sectors (such as the automotive industry) is reducing the sources of materials to be recycled.

Secondly, the "Chinese Ban" (National Sword Policy) has greatly disrupted cross-border movements and is encouraging the relocation of recycling channels at home, for example in the plastics recycling sector, which has a high demand for recycled plastics. Veolia wants to double its activity in this field.

The plastic to be recycled is always local at Véolia, and comes from the very country where the recycling plant is located. In order to promote local employment, companies must commit to buying these recycled materials. If these buyers are local, then the sector will develop locally.

- **Françoise Bonnet, Secretary General, ACR+**

Question: Waste and Covid-19: What can we make of the first results of the survey conducted by ACR+ on the waste production of cities and regions in Europe since the epidemic?

The issue at hand is: "How can we ensure public service, and can we be contaminated by touching waste paper/plastic? ». Findings :

- Garbage collectors are well protected, but in the first wave there was a tendency to collect only the residues and space out the recyclables.
- Quality of the household waste deposit? Data is still lacking to assess the production of single-use waste, but there seems to be a direct increase in packaging waste and single-use products. And it would appear that the increase in household waste has been offset by an overall decrease in municipal waste. Restaurants, for example, have reduced their waste, but take-away sales generate their own types of waste.
- Waste collection performance has continued to perform well, but in some cities container parks have had to close. Cities have also seen a proliferation of masks, often discarded out in nature.
- Communication: it was important to communicate with citizens about changes in collection.
- Increase in medical waste during the first wave: Brussels had to quickly adapt local regulations because the requirements are stricter for this type of waste.
- Mechanical-biological waste treatment techniques were bypassed in favour of landfilling residual waste without pre-treatment.

- **Dominique Traineau, Ademe**

Question: What are the most effective waste prevention practices identified on French territory by the report published by Ademe?

Ademe has been developing waste prevention programmes since 2009. In the report "Territoires pionniers de la prévention des déchets", it does not evaluate programmes, but rather looks at which territories were the most efficient in order to try to identify the factors of success.



Results of the study :

- Territory more resilient when there is less waste production
- The 58 territories produced half as much residual household waste and assimilated waste as the national average. Efforts on the reduction of larger SMOs.
- Mainly rural territories. 7 best conurbations also selected to represent cities: Pays de la Loire, Burgundy and Franche-Comté. They are all in rural and mixed areas.
- Incentive pricing is definitely unavoidable, but with complementary measures: reduction in the frequency of residual waste, limits on the number of visits to waste disposal sites, and awareness-raising and proximity actions.
- For the best of them, we would like to highlight the innovative collection methods: elimination of door-to-door collection, replaced by collections at voluntary drop-off points.

- **Françoise Bonnet, ACR+**

Question: In this 2020 Report, we identify some good practices with notable results abroad. At European level, which cities/regions are doing well in collecting, transporting and sorting waste?

Let's recall that in Europe, we have a rather important legislative framework since the 90s, which gives obligations to municipalities and has led to good results.

Good practices must be contextualised because they do not have the same socio-cultural contexts and territorial configurations.

Selective collection through EPR (Extended Producer Responsibility) is effective for everything from paper and cardboard to plastic and aluminium. As far as the wet fraction or bio-waste is concerned, Milan has a high collection rate. Treviso and Ljubljana are also good examples.

Flanders has a good policy in terms of container parks and public policy for reuse. Best practice is when municipalities can reduce waste per inhabitant.

In Europe, the best performance in terms of collection in plastic bottles is with deposit systems, whether local or national. Helping the quantity or quality of the collected stream.

Pay-as-you-throw: the reward given for depositing waste for recycling undoubtedly works. Equivalent to incentive pricing. Best rates in terms of capture, it is always worth putting them in place.

We saw with the virgin plastic rate, we pushed for a mandatory "minimum recycling content", because the market is as it is at the moment and there needs to be an incentive for a secondary market and outlets for recycled plastic. This could be the case for other streams.

- **Sven Saura, Veolia**

Question: How does Veolia, an operator of urban waste treatment services, work in France and abroad with local authorities to support waste reduction at source?

I often hear that recycling is a pretext for getting rid of our consumption. But:

- 1) Recycling contributes to sobriety, it reduces the demand for fossil fuels.



2) Recycling waste to make raw material consumes less energy than extracting virgin materials, and reduces the overall CO2 impact of our activities.

But of course, recycling alone is not enough. Véolia is leading several projects in this direction, such as Recyclim: a new form of waste collection centre, adding innovations to modernise it, setting up a public reception shop (training people in waste recycling, such as books, reusing waste, refurbishing objects, creations), a space for depositing used objects such as books. Finally, a space to host SSE associations that refurbish objects that they can sell. Véolia tries to promote this type of partnership, bringing these actions together in the same place.

Higher recycling rates in these Recyclim: 40% to 60% recycling rate -> synergies between the two activities.

- **Dominique Traineau, Ademe**

Question: How to question one's needs and meet them with more sobriety without risking rebound effects (such as the expansion of individual wardrobes due to the success of the second-hand clothing market)?

Sobriety, what is it all about? Ademe has published a Panorama on the notion of sobriety in 2019. It's a notion that has not quite stabilised, this Panorama allows us to identify all the sources and references, starting from philosophical and spiritual roots...

Another work carried out by Ademe, *Penser la sobriété matérielle* (2019), proposes a state of the art research on the notion. The definition that emerges from our work is as follows:

"In a context where natural resources are limited, sobriety consists in questioning our needs and satisfying them while limiting our impact on the environment. It must lead us to change our production and consumption patterns, and more generally our lifestyles on an individual and collective scale."

This must be done without any rebound effect. But today we have the tools for that: Ademe has made available the tool "Nos gestes climat" (Our climate gestures), which allows you to calculate your individual carbon balance. We know that the Paris agreement encourages us to reduce our carbon footprint (from 11 to 2 tCO₂ per person in 2050). It is now a matter of inventing our low-carbon lives. For example, the association Résistance Climatique has developed a game that proposes actions to develop a whole range of things atrophied by our hyperactive lives: working less and spending less, walking, running, gardening, planting trees?