



PRESS RELEASE

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Public thematic report

PREVENTION, COLLECTION AND TREATMENT OF HOUSEHOLD WASTE: AN AMBITION TO BE REALISED

The health crisis has recently reminded us that waste management, and in particular the public waste management service (SPGD), is an essential service provided by municipalities or their groupings. The wide variety of materials and objects that make up the 39 million tonnes of household and similar waste (HSW) produced in France makes its collection and treatment both more complex and more costly than that of other waste - even though the volume of other waste is larger. With annual expenditure on HSW management of €10.9 billion, i.e. 61.5% of total waste management expenditure, the financial stakes are high. Ten years after the publication of a previous report that pointed out shortcomings, the financial courts felt it would be useful to re-examine the relevance and efficiency of the HSW prevention and management policy. The report published today is based on a national and international analysis by the Court of Accounts and 51 audits by the Regional and Territorial Chambers of Accounts.

Waste reduction hampered by insufficient management

Although the volume of household waste produced per capita in France has tended to stabilise over the last decade, it remains at a high level, both in terms of its overall quantity (583 kg of HSW per capita in 2019), and its unsorted portion - representing 249 kg of residual household waste (RHW) per capita. With regard to the main indicators (quantity of waste produced, recycling, disposal), France is slightly below the European average and even further behind the most advanced countries (Germany, Austria, the Netherlands and Scandinavian countries). However, 80% of RHW collected in France could be recovered according to its type if it were sorted by users and directed towards its specific treatment stream, in particular organic waste and waste covered by an extended producer responsibility (EPR) scheme. As the financial courts already pointed out in 2011, waste prevention and management require first and foremost the collection and presentation of relevant data in order to guide public action. However, the current regulatory indicators, of which there are too many and which are published too late by Ademe on the basis of incomplete local data, are not able to assume this role. In order to mobilise citizens, businesses, and local and regional authorities around shared priorities and to accelerate the implementation of national objectives, the indicators should be refocused on summary management charts bringing together the main useful data. Although it accounts for

12% of all waste produced in France, HSW accounts for 61.5% of expenditure, which has increased by 4.3% per year over the last 20 years. As regards the portion financed by the user, the financial courts consider that the portion made up by the incentive-based charge is insufficient. While it was supposed to cover 15 million people in 2020, it now only reaches 6 million. The local authorities responsible for implementing this incentive-based charge - which has nonetheless shown its effectiveness in reducing the tonnage collected and management costs - criticise it for being complex, costly to manage and unsuited to the objectives pursued.

The operational mechanism: a transformation to be accelerated towards the circular economy

Prevention remains marginal in the actions of eco-organisations [not-for-profit waste collection and management entities] and local authorities - the two main stakeholders responsible for waste management. As the first to be affected, businesses cannot be exempted from this responsibility by their financial contribution alone: they must also reduce the materials placed on the market (less packaging, better eco-design of products, reduction of volumes). On the part of local authorities, the actions - often limited to raising citizens' awareness of sorting practices - affect too small a part of the population. However, the range of more operational local prevention actions could be broadened, including concrete forms of exemplary waste reduction such as combatting food waste. With investments in modernisation and upgrading to comply with standards, the continuous increase in expenditure on treatment (40% of total public service expenditure) will continue. In addition, plastic waste, which has a significant negative impact on the environment, poses particular treatment challenges. Only three quarters of the planned roll out for its collection in yellow bins has been achieved in 2022. To reduce its environmental impact, many funding programmes rolled out by central government since 2021 (including the recovery plan) aim to strengthen the recycling sector. The financial courts consider that, in order to make all these actions coherent, the national plan should include a section devoted to priority industrial issues, in particular plastics processing and energy recovery. Energy recovery from non-recycled waste, through the modernisation of facilities, is the most credible alternative to landfill. Although this is declining, it still accounts for too large a proportion (21% of waste treatment) compared to the most efficient European countries in terms of recycling.

[Read the report](#)

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