



3R Portfolio **- Good Practices to Promote the 3Rs -**

Country: FRANCE.

Major Activities

Waste prevention has gradually come to the fore as a political priority: on 4 June 2003 in the Council of Ministers the Environment Ministry declared prevention to be a major priority of waste policy, and set the goal of stabilising waste production by 2008; at the 7th National Waste Convention organised by regional environmental authorities in La Baule in September 2003, two leading measures were announced: distribution of a "Stop Pub" ("Halt to Advertising") sticker (an Environment Ministry initiative), and steps to incite retail distributors to undertake a programme to cut back on carrier bags. The high point of this communication campaign was the presentation of the National Plan for the Prevention of Waste Production at the first Waste Prevention Meetings held in February 2004. The success encountered by this colloquium organised by Ademe and the Environment Ministry demonstrates the significant stakes of waste prevention and growing public awareness: all the actors involved have a share of responsibility and are urged to take action; a steering committee has been set up to oversee implementation of the Plan.

NATIONAL PLAN TO PREVENT WASTE PRODUCTION - FEBRUARY 2004

To stabilise waste production by 2008, "it is not enough to pronounce prevention by decree, people must be convinced", and all the actors involved must be convinced that prevention is everyone's responsibility. The National Waste Prevention Plan is thus above all aimed at providing "a framework in which all stakeholders can take part", local authorities, industrial companies, citizen-consumers, not-for-profit organisations, the State, etc.

Three levels of action are announced: some examples are given below, without being an exhaustive list. (The full text of the plan is available on the Environment Ministry's website).

1. Emblematic campaigns are launched to mobilise stakeholders: elaboration of a system, effectively respected, allowing residents to refuse unsolicited advertising flyers in their letter boxes; reducing the number of carrier bags; and the launching of a major national mass communication campaign that Ademe is working on for autumn 2005.
2. Long-term action: to increase consumer awareness of the consequences of purchases, guidelines for responsible consumption, focusing on waste, are being written by the Prevention working group of the National Waste Council; new categories of products covered by environmental quality labels will be created, and to take qualitative prevention into account thresholds for the use of heavy metals will be enacted via regulations governing production design and manufacture, as is already the case of batteries, for example.

Targeting businesses, programmes to promote environmental management for SMEs will be launched, as well as two calls for proposals for research and development projects to

develop environmental design and industrial processes that generate less waste.

The **State** must also set a good example, by reducing its consumption of paper for instance (a goal has been set to recycle 60% of white paper by 2009) and it must elaborate environmentally responsible procurement policies with local authorities and government agencies, by including environmental performance in the list of criteria to be considered when selecting bids.

As for **local authorities**, they must be given training enabling them to comprehend the scope and implications of waste prevention, so as to develop job deployment via an economy based on social solidarity, develop home composting and better manage hazardous waste streams.

A special waste fee will make **users** more responsible by billing public waste management services more fairly, and thereby rewarding waste reduction.

3. Monitoring action: a progress chart and statistical tools will be used to obtain more accurate knowledge of annual waste production, in particular household waste, in order to track prevention efforts.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PLAN

The main campaigns implemented under the plan are the following:

- the "Stop Pub" (unsolicited advertising) and "Réduction des sacs de caisse" (carrier bags) campaigns initiated by the Environment Ministry. One year after the launching of the carrier bags campaign on 17 November 2003, a 15% reduction has been achieved in the number of carrier bags distributed annually according to the Fédération du Commerce et de la Distribution (Trade and Retail Distribution Federation). This amounts to more than two billion plastic bags that have not been distributed, in part replaced by reusable bags. The "Stop Pub" campaign aimed at reducing unsolicited advertisement flyers in letter boxes has been relayed by Ademe, distributing three million stickers printed by the Environment Ministry with the message "Please spare my letter box" to municipalities, local authorities and volunteer organisations. One out of every two inhabitants of France lives in a municipality that has made these stickers available.
- The CND Prevention working group has drawn up guidelines for responsible consumption in the form of information sheets on prevention for general audiences (ex.: *Moving house, Hosting guests, On holidays, With the baby, etc.*) and for professional audiences (*Moving the office, Managing paper at the office, etc.*). These information sheets are available on line at the Environment Ministry website and also through environmental groups.
- a mass communication campaign will be conducted by Ademe in the second half of 2005: this campaign will aim to make audiences aware that each of us is partly responsible for the growing amounts of waste, and will propose simple preventive measures, along the lines of the Energy campaign on the theme "Faisons vite, ça chauffe" ("Saving energy—let's act now, the heat is on"). This campaign is being planned with professionals, using input from consumer panels, environmental and consumer organisations, and professional members of the CND working group. For instance it has been remarked that the expression "waste prevention" is very obscure for opinion panels drawn from the general public, and that it will be more effective to use concepts such as "too much waste" or "less

waste" which are much clearer.

- In 2004 Ademe launched a call for R&D projects pertaining to environmental design: one hundred or so proposals were submitted, and 16 projects were selected for total aid amounting to 925 000 €. In 2005 Ademe will launch a call for R&D projects pertaining to industrial processes that generate little waste or low-toxicity waste.
- The operation "10% less waste" that Ademe launched about a year ago is a programme to assist, free of charge, 100 pilot businesses (out of 300 candidate companies) who have made a two-year commitment to conduct a waste audit and implement measures to generate less waste, or to recover value from their waste stream.
- Ademe is setting up a joint work space on its website to pool experience and feedback on projects conducted by local authorities.
- A campaign to characterise household waste is planned. Before it is launched a preliminary study will be carried out to validate the sampling and characterisation methodology. Indicators for assessing prevention efforts will be integrated into this study, laying the groundwork for a waste prevention tracking office.

Nearly one year on from adoption, the Waste Prevention Plan is already showing positive results, judging by the broad support among public and private-sector actors for the action undertaken: businesses ("10% less waste, environmental design R&D), retailers (carrier bags), local authorities (Stop Pub). New specific commitments from separate stakeholders also show that a wide-reaching movement is beginning to take shape: for example, retailers have decided on measures to raise public awareness, the City of Paris held an event on waste prevention directed at general audiences in October 2004. At stake in the next few months is acceptance by the general public, which must necessarily be better informed of the economic and environmental outcomes of waste management if significant and long-lasting changes in behaviour are to be induced. The awareness campaign planned for 2005 will be a key element in the Plan's success, on the condition that it be carried through on the long term by fundamental measures to educate the public and school children about environmental issues. An initial assessment of all the measures projected under the Plan is already scheduled for the second National Waste Prevention Meetings to be organised by Ademe and the Environment Ministry on 19 and 20 October 2005.

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