



PRESS RELEASE

Professional conference: Changing People's Waste Management Habits

Ljubljana (Slovenia), 29 November 2019 – Wishing to shed light on the importance of correct waste (primarily e-waste) management and to present the challenges of the modern times and examples of good practices of informing individuals about waste management in the local as well as the international environment, the company [ZEOS, d.o.o.](#) organised yesterday at the European Union House a professional conference with the title »Changing People's Waste Management Habits«. The event was held as a part of the Life project [E-waste management](#) under the slogan E-cikliraj! (E-Cycle!) and moderated by the ambassador of the project and a successful journalist and TV presenter Mojca Mavec.

At the conference, the organisers highlighted and paid particular attention to examples of good practices of awareness raising and tools in the field of proper e-waste management both locally and abroad. They stressed the importance of proper waste management and pointed out the main motivators for changing one's behaviour.

In **the first part of the conference**, various awareness-raising environmental projects underway in Slovenia were presented.

At the beginning, Director of the company [ZEOS, d.o.o.](#) **Emil Šehić** presented the operations of the company and their current results shown in various Life project and other activities, in the annual growth of collected waste and in more effective organisation of waste collection processes. At the event, he stressed the following: *»E-waste is one of the fastest growing category of waste, with a 10-15 percent increase per year; sales of e-equipment are growing faster than its post-use collection, and the length of service life of certain products is decreasing significantly. We at the company ZEOS, d.o.o. expect that in the next year, the threshold of 10,000 tons of collected e-waste will be exceeded for the first time.«*



Branka Biček Bizant, assistant project manager from the company **ZEOS, d.o.o.** presented the past and future activities of the current Life **E-waste governance** project. The project is coming to an end in a year, so she focused on its impact, on the established process of proper e-waste management, and on the significance of the project's permanence. She expressed their great satisfaction with their wide e-waste collection network across Slovenia, including street containers: *»Four years ago, we started setting up street containers across Slovenia. Up until today, we have set up 666 containers and collected 800 tons of waste small domestic appliances and waste batteries. Looking at the collected quantities per each street container and the number of days of being set up, we can see that this figure has been increasing over the years.«*

Jasmina Butara from **Komunala Brežice, d.o.o.** presented a similar view of changing people's habits, but in another field - in the field of waste oil management in the local environment. She presented the project **»Olje nekoliko drugače«** which was carried out in the territory of all six municipalities of LAS Posavje: Sevnica, Brežice, Krško, Radeče, Kostanjevica na Krki and Bistrica ob Sotli. Two years ago, waste oil collection containers were distributed to households, special street containers for this type of waste were set up, and various awareness-raising events were organised for all residents of municipalities. She concluded her presentation with the following words: *»Our key mission is to raise people's awareness of the importance of clean environment. I am pleased that with each project, we successfully implement the set goals with results visible everywhere. Together we need to spread awareness that green nature is of great importance for us and future generations. Projects and activities come to an end, but our work is far from over, so we keep upgrading them with new projects or activities. And may examples of good practices continue in the future.«*



Antonija Božič Cerar, assistant project manager for the MOVECO project and independent consultant of the [Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia](#) was the next speaker. She presented an interesting project coordinated by the Chamber. **MOVECO** project: Promotion of transition from linear to circular economy (with the project motto: "Your trash is my treasure") is financed within the EU Danube Transnational Programme (Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Moldova, Germany, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia, and Serbia). MOVECO promotes the transition to circular economy among companies, public and research institutions, economic development institutions, and citizens. Twelve project partners and four strategic partners from ten Danube region countries have cooperated since December 2016 in promoting the knowledge on circular economy and basic conditions for circular products and business models in the Danube region. At the event, she explained, *»In the project, we have focused on household waste, as the inhabitants of Slovenia still remain around the average mark in terms of municipal waste per inhabitant. Within the project, we elaborated a strategy for the transition to circular economy; we organised an extensive international exhibition of innovative products; and we offered assistance to those companies that experience problems in their transition to other markets due to a different manufacturer's responsibility.«*

Aleš Mihelič, head of pre-development of R&D Laundry Care Competence Centre at [Gorenje, d.o.o.](#) presented the development of home appliances in the light of circular economy. He focused on the opportunities of circular economy for companies, the companies' challenges in introducing circular products, and the advantages of circular economy. Namely, manufacturing of products directly affects the environment, supply of resources and raw materials, and waste generation. To ensure sustainable development, we must use our resources prudently; nowadays, it has become clear that the existing linear model of economic growth "buy-use-discard", which we relied upon in the past, is no longer suitable for modern societies in a globalised world. We are entering another level of European commitment - towards circular economy. This means recycling all our electronic waste if such waste cannot be avoided, and otherwise, it means prevention of such waste from being generated in the first place. EEE is an important source of rare raw materials that can be found in individual components. He stressed the following: *»The most important phase in the development department is the first one, as up to 80 percent of environmental impacts of the product are defined already in this phase - the planning phase.«* He continued, *»The consumers expect from the materials integrated in the appliances to be more easily recyclable, but are more expensive, so we, the manufacturers, do not have a financial interest in integrating recycled materials. However, circular economy projects facilitate business interest of manufacturers; a good example is our ReCiPSS project where the customer only buys a service rather than the appliance itself.*

Alenka Mauko Pranjić from the [Slovenian National Building and Civil Engineering Institute](#) offered, through one of their EIT RawMaterials projects - [BusiSource](#), an

interesting view of company waste as a secondary raw material. It is the responsibility of all of us to make sure waste ends up in the right place, regardless whether at home or at work. Many times, there is talk of where we can dispose of household waste and what are awareness-raising activities for the end consumer; however, waste generated in companies is often forgotten. The speaker therefore presented the situation of waste management in companies in Slovenia and in other EU member countries. She stressed the following: *»During the project, we wished to deliver an important message that recyclable e-equipment can also be found in companies. We were therefore pointing out the greater value of this equipment, including by organising events and exchanging examples of good practices. We experienced the greatest challenges in legislations and in developing internal procedures for better management of this type of e-equipment.«*

The last speaker in the first part, **Mojca Poberžnik** from [Inštitut za okoljevarstvo in senzorje d.o.o.](#), presented textile and metal recycling projects. In the past, textiles were natural and quite valuable materials, but today they are composed of various fibres and chemicals, and their recycling has been rather limited until recently. In the [Resyntex](#) project, it has been proven that chemical recycling of textiles is also possible and successful. She pointed out the following: *»Textile waste can turn into a resource for chemical and textile industry. In the course of the project, we collected waste textiles of lowest quality which were no longer usable and would have been incinerated or landfilled. For example, by using special procedures, extraction of proteins from textiles can provide raw material for the manufacture of plywood where the derived substance replaces more harmful materials.«* She added, *»The main advantage of chemical recycling is it can be repeated indefinitely, while mechanic recycling can be done only up to three times.«*

The purpose of the **second part of the conference** was to transfer from the international environment some good practices in the field of waste separation and circular economy.

The first speaker, **Daniel Šafář** from the company [ASEKOL a.s.](#) from the **Czech Republic** presented good practices in the field of awareness raising and e-waste collection, focusing on the approaches to changing the habits of individuals in e-waste management and the development towards circular economy. The company ASEKOL was established in 2005 by the leading representatives of the electronics market in the Czech Republic. In the past 14 years, the scheme has collected the total of 204,057 tons of waste electric and electronic equipment. In the year 2018 only, they collected 18,460 tons of such equipment. They have the leading position in e-waste recycling and a rich experience in managing the collection network and actual disposal and recycling of this type of waste. He presented their experience: *»We have around 12,000 e-waste collection containers set up across the country, and we have found it very important that the consumers have them within their reach. Of course, merely*



setting up the containers is not enough, so we implement various awareness-raising approaches: every year, we seek new ideas that are attractive to people and interesting for the media: school campaigns (reward points for collected appliances to buy school supplies), donations for each kilogram of collected waste, concerts with special entry tickets - an old mobile phone, artistic installations made of appliances, graffiti on collection containers, etc.» He added, »If we have good ideas, they need support and sufficient time in order for campaigns to grow to large-scale dimensions and reach a great number of people.«

Following was the presentation of the company **ECOTIC** from **Romania**. It was presented by **Dragos Calugaru** and **Marius Ungurean**. They focused on the activities for raising public awareness regarding correct handling of e-waste in Romania, in the framework of their already concluded **ECOTIC LIFE+ Caravan** project. ECOTIC is the first collective scheme of manufacturers and importers of EEE in Romania. It was established in 2006 and its objective is to achieve greater efficiency, uniformity and homogeneity in fulfilling their environmental obligations. It brings together more than 600 manufacturers and importers of EEE. In addition to the ongoing development of the infrastructure for collection, recycling, and treatment of e-waste, they also keep the Romanian public aware of the necessity to collect and recycle e-waste and waste batteries. At the event, Dragos Calugaru explained, *»Before the beginning of the Life project, the people's awareness in the country was poor, the level of collected e-waste was low and the public was not interested in this issue. By following the example of the first Life project carried out by the company ZEOS, d.o.o., we successfully applied at the Life contest and within our project, by using our educational vehicle, and in cooperation with schools, we carried out a successful awareness-raising campaign which has resulted in larger quantities of collected e-waste.«* Marius Ungurean pointed out, *»To change consumer behaviour, different stakeholders need to be brought together and the message must be reinforced periodically.«*

Elina Pohjalainen from the organisation **VTT Technical Research Centre** situated in **Finland**, presented the AWARE project. VTT Technical Research Centre of Finland Ltd is the leading research and technology company (2000 employees) in the Nordic countries. It uses high-level technology to develop scientific solutions for sustainable development and creation of new business opportunities. VTT has deep expertise and years of experience in the field of development of systems and technologies for collection and management of waste and valuable metals in waste, including experimental work. The research area covers the entire value chain, from characterisation, collection, sorting and identification, upgrading and processing, to the use of finished products and replacing critical raw materials in electronics. Elina presented the project **AWARE: Raising public awareness on electronic waste as a source of valuable materials**, in which the company ZEOS, d.o.o. is also involved as a partner. It is aimed at educating teachers and schoolchildren about e-waste and circular economy, valuable raw materials contained in e-waste, and the importance of



recycling. The project creates interesting educational contents and organises campaigns and other events for school classes. Through schoolchildren, the message is conveyed to families and the society in general, and the overall ambition of the project is to increase the level of e-waste collection. Elina said, *»Our challenge is how to recover precious metals contained in old appliances and return them for reuse. This information should reach people, especially children, who are very impressionable for such contents, and keeping in mind that they come across smart devices very early, it is important that we start educating them on the matter at an early stage of childhood,«* and continued, *»We also wish to educate teachers and students (future ambassadors of the project) and they will then pass on this information to the pupils.«*

The last speaker at the conference was **Jennie Olofsson** from the [Faculty of Social Sciences of the University of Ljubljana](#) and [Mid Sweden University from Östersund](#) in **Sweden**. She focused on e-waste and circular economy, and presented her sociological view of the topic. Within the EU mobility scheme “Marie Skłodowska-Curie fellowship for senior researcher”, she received a “Seal of Excellence”, which allows her to carry out a two-year research project entitled Electronic Waste - Risk Assessment. The project is financed by a national research agency. It is based on findings of social studies on science and technologies relating to the issues of social regulation of electronic waste, as it is growing faster than any other type of waste. The project is aimed at exploring the motives of different groups of social actors regarding risk assessment and social regulation of electronic waste, review of existing national legislations in the field both in Sweden and in Slovenia, and discovering points of origin between normative and practical level of perception of this complex social and ecological issue. Among other things, she said, *»Sociological comprehension of waste allows us to investigate waste conditioned by factors such as time, society, geographic location, and political regime, as well as investigate the intimate connection between our understanding of waste and waste management practices,«* and she added, *»Although the level of e-waste recycling is high in Sweden, this is not necessarily positive information in the sociological (and consequently environmental) point of view, as it can mean that the more we recycle, the more new appliances we buy.«*

Conclusion

At the conclusion of the conference, an interesting discussion was held with all foreign guests; the topic of discussion was how to shape environmental policy in order to improve correct e-waste management and how to exchange good practices in an even better manner.





The lobby in front of the conference hall was the venue of the Awareness-Raising Projects Bazaar. The bazaar was intended for connecting and strengthening relations, and the visitors could see and receive additional information about some interesting awareness-raising projects presented by the conference speakers.

The conference was an opportunity for connecting and cooperation between different stakeholders of the process of managing WEEE and other types of waste, for familiarisation with various methods of effective awareness raising, and for transfer of good practices which can deliver better results as early as today. The organisers concluded the event with positive thoughts about the future which still has good chances of becoming and staying green in the true sense of the word. However, in order to achieve it, a great responsibility is on all of us to use our channels and continuously spread the word on our activities in accordance with our project goals.

Attachment: photographs

Additional information

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About the project

In 2016, the company [ZEOS, d.o.o.](http://zeos.si) started to implement a **five-year awareness-raising project** in the field of proper management of e-waste and waste batteries with the title LIFE [E-waste governance](http://zeos.si) and the motto **E-cikliraj! (E-Cycle!)**. The project is co-financed by the **European Commission** and the **Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning of RS**. Within the project, they are establishing a consumer-friendly network for collecting e-waste and waste batteries: setting up of **street containers** at waste bin areas and other locations **across Slovenia** and **green corners** in **larger shopping malls**, and **mobile collection** of this type of waste in **rural areas**. They organise various supporting events to familiarise the citizens with new opportunities for disposal of e-waste and waste batteries, and to inform them why correct disposal of such waste is important for the environment.