



CLEAN EUROPE STRATEGY

SEVEN KEY ELEMENTS
OF AN INTEGRATED LITTER PREVENTION STRATEGY
TO KEEP OUR COUNTRIES CLEAN AND TIDY
& PROTECT OUR BIODIVERSITY

*Experience, good practice and know-how brought
together by the Clean Europe Network*



FROM POLICY TO STRATEGY TOGETHER

Since 2018 a **CLEAR EU POLICY** exists on litter and the prevention of littering*

Based on **SHARED RESPONSIBILITY**

Governments are required to **IMPLEMENT** this, working with all stakeholders

Our common goal: **MAKE LITTERING SOCIALLY UNACCEPTABLE**

The key to success is **BEHAVIOUR CHANGE**

We need an **INTEGRATED APPROACH** to make this happen

The **CLEAN EUROPE STRATEGY** addresses this need

* Established in the 2018 Revised Waste Framework Directive and the 2019 Single Use Products Directive



BEHAVIOUR CHANGE CONCERNS EVERYONE:

- **Governments** developing and implementing territorial litter prevention strategies and implementing action plans
- **Producers** ensuring adequate financial means to fund truly effective, cross-sectorial litter prevention organisations
- **Companies** designing products or services to cut the risk of litter
- **Local authorities** putting resource into litter-related infrastructure
- **Enforcement authorities** acting to create a real deterrent
- **Teachers/monitors** educating pupils/club members not to litter
- **Parents** bringing up children not to litter
- **Citizens** everywhere using the public rubbish bins...
- ...or taking used items to a place (home, school, workplace) where they can be put into the recycling system or valorised in other ways

END OBJECTIVE:

WE NO LONGER DELIBERATELY, CARELESSLY OR ACCIDENTALLY LITTER ITEMS IN NATURE OR PUBLIC SPACES, BECAUSE IT IS SOCIALLY UNACCEPTABLE TO DO SO





IDENTIFY THE NATURE OF THE LITTER CHALLENGE AND SET TARGETS

THE CHALLENGE:

- at the outset, measure & monitor litter & littering in all habitats where litter is a problem (i.e. in urban, rural and aquatic environments)
 - to characterise the challenge accurately (both local & macro)
 - to understand the nature of and reasons for littering
 - to be able to set targets
 - and to identify/apply appropriate prevention programmes and remedial actions
- continue to measure & monitor during prevention and mitigation programmes
 - to assess the relative success of strategies
 - to determine if programmes are effective and meeting targets
- periodically, benchmark progress and take informed decisions to maintain, adjust or overhaul strategies, programmes and measures to optimise performance

ASSESS THE IMPACT AND EFFECTIVENESS OF LITTER STRATEGY & PROGRAMMES AND ADAPT

WHO PLAYS A ROLE:

- National government (to provide a national data structure as required by the Waste and Single Use Products Directives)
- Local government (to assess and understand local litter issues)
- Authorities with special territorial responsibilities (as above)
- Solution providers (including litter prevention organisations and cleansing companies)



**REDUCE
RISK**

TAKE ACTION TO REDUCE/MITIGATE THE RISK OF LITTERING AT SOURCE

THE CHALLENGE:

- product design requirements to reduce propensity to be littered
- account for the risk of littering in product Life Cycle Assessments
- identify the risk of littering in service environmental footprints
- legislative restrictions on problematic products/consumption habits
- regulate specific contexts where the littering risk is high

WHO PLAYS A ROLE:

- **European institutions** (e.g. measures under the Circular Economy Action Plan 2.0 & EU waste legislation)
- **National government** (in framing policy, potentially incl. economic instruments)
- **Local government** (in implementing local measures)
- **Business** (by product and service innovation, incl. reuse solutions)
- **R&D bodies** (by identifying new ways of doing things)



**PROVIDE
INFRASTRUCTURE**

ENSURE THE RIGHT WASTE MANAGEMENT INFRASTRUCTURE AND RELATED SYSTEMS ARE IN PLACE

THE CHALLENGE:

- effective waste disposal infrastructure in public places to collect used items safely and efficiently
- well-adapted waste collection and management systems for items discarded in public rubbish bins
- smart, effective cleaning of litter in public spaces
- sort and recycle appropriate collected litter items

WHO PLAYS A ROLE:

- EU institutions (e.g. EU structural funds, R&D funds, Circular Economy Action Plan 2.0)
- National government (in supervising Extended Producer Responsibility for litter)
- Local government (in implementing local measures)
- Authorities with special territorial responsibilities (e.g. for highways, forests, waterways)
- Extended producer responsibility schemes (required by the SUP Directive)
- Cleansing companies: public & private sector (to innovate)
- Waste management companies: public & private sector (to innovate)
- Manufacturers of collection infrastructure (to innovate)



**NURTURE
NEIGHBOURHOODS**

LOOK AFTER THE MATERIAL ENVIRONMENT OF EVERY NEIGHBOURHOOD

THE CHALLENGE:

- ensure that, as well as regular cleansing, neighbourhoods are well-maintained in general so as to boost civic pride and make littering socially unacceptable
- place/renew street furniture
- repair/renew street landscape (e.g. surfaces of roads/footpaths)
- avoid dereliction
- promote more clean green areas

WHO PLAYS A ROLE:

- **European institutions** (e.g. structural funds)
- **National government** (in framing policy, potentially incl. economic support)
- **Local government** (in maintaining their territory, penalties for dereliction)
- **Local business** (maintaining premises and surroundings)
- **Civil society groups** (to help promote civic pride)



SANCTION & PUNISH

SET CLEAR, VISIBLE AND DISSUASIVE SANCTIONS AGAINST OFFENDERS WITH ENFORCEMENT

THE CHALLENGE:

- ensure that, at both national and local level, a strong legal framework exists to criminally sanction those who deliberately or carelessly drop/dump litter (required by the EU Waste Directive)
- set truly punitive and dissuasive sanctions (notably meaningful fines)
- enforce the law firmly and effectively, ideally immediately on-the-spot
- publicise enforcement action to deter offenders

WHO PLAYS A ROLE:

- European institutions (by ensuring implementation of EU waste legislation)
- National/local government (makes the law, sets dissuasive fines)
- Local police and local government (implementation and enforcement)
- Judiciary (in sanctioning effectively if cases come to court; ideally sanctions should be applied on-the-spot)





COMMUNICATE & EDUCATE

CONTINUOUS EDUCATION, AWARENESS-RAISING AND BEHAVIOUR CHANGE COMMUNICATION

THE CHALLENGE:

- create and financially support dedicated cross-sectorial litter prevention organisations with expert teams to:
 - design, implement and sustain education, awareness raising and litter prevention communication programmes
 - focus on promoting behaviour change
 - target different segments of society susceptible to littering
 - use the right approaches, messages and means of delivery for the different audiences and risk contexts
 - renew or adapt, as needed
- ensure all producers of products susceptible to littering contribute their pro rata share in the costs

WHO PLAYS A ROLE:

- EU institutions (in ensuring EU legal requirements are implemented)
- National government (in supervising Extended Producer Responsibility for this task)
- Dedicated expert litter prevention organisations (specialised in behaviour change communication)
- Local government and authorities with special territorial responsibilities (cooperating with the key actors to adapt programmes to local needs)
- Families (bringing up children not to litter)
- Schools and other educational establishments (key vectors for reaching young people)
- Civil society groups (key vectors for reaching target audiences, notably youth)





ENGAGE IN COMMUNITY WORK & CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT AND PARTICIPATION

THE CHALLENGE:

- promote civic pride
- work to make littering socially unacceptable
- engage citizens and citizen groups in community activities to raise awareness of:
 - the desirability of clean public spaces
 - the negative environmental and social impact of littering
- target overall betterment of neighbourhoods
- target general voluntary clean-up actions

WHO PLAYS A ROLE:

- Local government (to work with local actors to access key audiences)
- Local business (to take care of surroundings, encourage customers and employees to take care what they do with waste items)
- Families (bringing up children not to litter)
- Schools & other educational establishments (to give a good example)
- Civil society groups (to reach key target audiences) including
 - youth organisations
 - environmental NGOs
 - community groups
 - local sports clubs



EU INSTITUTIONS

Litter and littering are international phenomena. **Litter crosses borders every day virtually everywhere.** So there is an important role for the governing, executive and administrative institutions of the European Union. In the first line, their focus is the litter challenges within the European Union.

In 2018, the European Union revised its general directive on waste. This included for the first time a **comprehensive EU policy on litter and the prevention of littering**, based on the principle of shared responsibility between all the different parts of society.

The EU Commission, the EU Council of Ministers and the European Parliament must **ensure that the provisions of this litter policy for Europe are properly implemented.** Because of the way the EU works, **the main responsibility for this lies with the governments of the different European countries.** But the Commission and the Parliament **must take action to ensure that the member states respect their obligations.** They can also help by **making EU funding available to support litter prevention investments and programmes.**

In addition, the European Commission is also explicitly charged by the general waste directive to **promote information exchange and good practice** between stakeholders.

The EU also has a role on the world stage – in building consensus with partner countries and near neighbours like the European Economic Area countries and the countries of the Mediterranean basin and Baltic Sea region. It should also **set an example to the rest of the world about how to go about preventing litter** including effective approaches to changing the behaviour that results in littering.

The **European Environment Agency** and the **Joint Research Centre** have important roles to play in supporting collection of EU-wide information about litter and littering.



NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

Governments must **set the tone and take the lead** in making cleaner environments a national priority. **Stopping littering is a basic start point.**

National governments have a clear legal responsibility to implement the common European law that they have adopted in concertation with their EU partner countries, with the European Parliament and the Commission.

Since 2020, EU law requires governments to **integrate strategies for litter and the prevention of littering in the national/territorial Waste Management Plans** that they are required to submit periodically to the European Commission. **A wide range of government departments** must be involved in developing and implementing **effective cross-cutting strategies and action plans**, such as:

- environmental affairs
- education and children
- regional/territorial management and local government
- internal affairs/justice
- consumer affairs

Related government bodies can also play a role:

- environment agencies (notably data/statistics/good practice)
- waste management institutes

Huge areas of our countries are overseen, managed and maintained by **special, dedicated territorial services**. These authorities deal with highways, airports, sea ports, railway stations and related infrastructure, rail passenger services, parks, forests, waterways, and others. They have a vital job to do in tackling litter and the prevention of littering. National governments have an important role to play in **ensuring that the mandates given to these authorities make the litter-related responsibilities clear and binding.**



LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Local authorities **generally account for the majority of the territorial oversight and management responsibility**. They have a critical role in setting, coordinating and executing litter prevention strategy and action where we live, learn, work and play. Much like national governments, **local authorities can set the tone**. So-called “**zero tolerance**” for littering is a good example. Likewise, local governments have a vital role to play in looking after the material environment of every neighbourhood because **well-maintained neighbourhoods stay cleaner longer** than poorly-maintained, rundown or derelict zones.

First and foremost, local authorities take the lead on **assessing and understanding local litter issues** and in addressing appropriate solutions that work in their context. Being so close to the local people through all the services they supply (especially cleansing and education) it is clear that local authorities have a huge role to play in **raising awareness, providing information and helping to change behaviour**. However, for the instances where bad behaviour persists, they must also **set and apply sanctions and penalties**, like truly dissuasive fines, on those who drop or dump litter or those who allow unchecked dereliction to occur.

As well as regular cleansing, it is important that local authorities ensure that all the neighbourhoods they are responsible for are well-maintained in general so as to **boost civic pride**, thereby helping **make the act of littering socially unacceptable**. This includes placing/ renewing street furniture; repairing/renewing the street landscape (e.g. surfaces of roads/ footpaths); avoiding dereliction; and promoting more clean green areas.

A range of different municipal services are relevant, responsible for local:

- cleansing service & infrastructure
- water treatment
- police liaison
- educational establishments
- healthcare installations
- sports facilities
- parks and gardens
- local tourist attractions
- planning



SPECIAL MANAGEMENT AUTHORITIES

Huge areas of our countries are overseen, managed and maintained by special, dedicated territorial services. For example:

- highway authorities
- transport authorities (airports, sea ports, railway stations and related infrastructure, sea and rail passenger services)
- park authorities
- forest managers
- waterway authorities
- marina managers
- other

All of these authorities are responsible for **facilities or services that are used or visited by the citizenry**. They inevitably have a key role to play in tackling litter and the prevention of littering (e.g. at the roadside and in service areas; in trains and stations; in and around rivers, lakes and canals; etc.). This starts with **assessing and understanding the litter challenge** on their lands/properties/premises and **developing strategies and plans to tackle it** (ideally working with litter prevention organisations skilled in behaviour change to do so).

National governments have an important role to play in ensuring that the mandates given to these authorities make the litter-related responsibilities clear and binding. Because of **geographical proximity (indeed, often geographical overlap) between the specialist and local authorities**, it will often be important to establish close working relationships in the fight against litter.

Like local authorities, these specialised authorities have a role to play in **setting the tone vis-à-vis their “users”** and this includes ensuring that their facilities (where appropriate) are **properly equipped with infrastructure to collect used items and that these are emptied regularly**; are cleaned regularly; and, in general, are well-maintained, as this has been shown to discourage littering.



POLICE & JUDICIARY

Experience shows that **litter prevention policy aspirations without deterrence result in lack of progress**. The risk of being caught and the penalties that go with being caught must be real (or, just as important, perceived to be real). Today it is sadly the case that many people who drop or dump litter feel they can get away with it and, even if they are caught, that there will be no real punishment.

It is a criminal offence in many countries to drop or dump litter. Since summer 2020, **the EU's general waste directive has put an obligation on all EU member states to make littering an offence and to apply sanctions**. More effort in this would pay dividends when combined with other aspects of an integrated approach to litter prevention.

Enforcement authorities therefore have a crucial role to play in underpinning the overall prevention effort. These include:

- police services
- local authority agents (including privatised enforcement agents)
- park and forest wardens
- the court system

Immediate sanctions have most impact and are, therefore, preferable by far. Unfortunately, the court system all over Europe has a heavy workload. Because of the heavy workload, applying sanctions through the courts for littering often drags on for a long time or even fails to materialise entirely.

The most effective remedies are those which are imposed on the spot – in the form of **substantial, dissuasive fines** – by enforcement officers. It is vital that both the police and other enforcement agents are given this power everywhere by national and local governments and that they use it.



PRODUCERS

In a circular economy, producers are responsible for cutting and/or optimising use of resources through prevention and/or recycling and taking steps to avoid littering. **This producer responsibility includes designing products and services that reduce the risk of littering and taking responsibility for the end-of-life stage when used products are most at risk of being littered.**

This means **informing and educating consumers** to do the right thing with used items and , where the law requires, **contributing to the cost of effective infrastructure and efficient litter cleansing activities.** Typically, producers can be classified as follows:

- **Companies making products that get littered**, such as:
 - **on-the-go packaging producers:** such as for food (snacks, confectionary, quick service meals); beverages; tobacco
 - **producers of single use items:** such as tobacco products; chewing gum; personal hygiene products (incl. handkerchiefs, wipes, sanitary items)
- **Companies selling/supplying products that get littered**, such as:
 - **retailers:** incl. grocery retailers, convenience food stores; filling stations
 - **foodservice establishments:** branded food and beverage service chains and their franchisees; independent outlets; food truck operators
- **Non-commercial entities selling/supplying products that get littered**, such as:
 - **education establishments:** schools, colleges, universities & others
 - **sporting establishments or promoters:** local sports clubs, major sports promoters, stadium managers
 - **cultural establishments or promoters:** theatres, concert halls, festival organisers

Major producers are in a better position to engage in prevention **campaigns at a national level.** Local companies can support **local community engagement initiatives**, working with local authorities, and promote locally the messages of the national campaigns.



LITTER PREVENTION ORGANISATIONS



EU law (2018 general directive on waste & 2019 single use products directive) now requires **producers to pay for litter prevention communication, awareness raising and education efforts**, notably through extended producer responsibility organisations (PROs). It is essential that **governments all across Europe ensure that this obligation is executed in practice, adequately resourced by producers and properly organised.**

Governments must ensure that litter prevention communication, awareness raising and education efforts are **developed and coordinated by professional behaviour change experts with experience.** Uncoordinated, sectorial efforts that are product-specific will end in disparate messaging and consumer confusion. Every country (or appropriate devolved territory) should therefore have a **dedicated litter prevention organisation** to lead the behaviour change effort, which must be flexible and sustained over time.

To be effective, **national behaviour change communication programmes should target the litterer and the contexts where littering occurs** through a general programme that can, where relevant, be supplemented by product-specific campaigns. Behaviour change programmes work best **as part of an integrated litter prevention strategy and programme.**

The trend today is to make producers pay for litter infrastructure in public places and associated waste management services and to cover the cost of cleansing public spaces of litter. **Producers have a vested interest in changing consumer behaviour** – working with expert prevention organisations to do so – because less litter means lower clean-up costs.

PROs for **packaging** (often littered) are well-established. Governments must ensure that equivalent bodies are set up to finance participation in prevention communication by other commonly littered items, such as **cigarette ends; chewing gum; personal protective equipment** and other **sanitary items; commercial communications;** and others.



SOLUTION PROVIDERS



Various economic actors can step up their game to help society be more effective and efficient in tackling litter or facilitating litter-free living. They should work with other actors to promote a step change in performance.

In many countries, **waste management and cleansing companies, both public sector and private sector**, need to invest in **better infrastructure and systems**, both for emptying rubbish bins in public places and for cleaning litter once it is there. This will be done in cooperation with local authorities and with producer responsibility organisations for litter (for products covered by the EU single use products directive) that will now be required to share in the costs of infrastructure and related cleansing services.

There is scope for **innovation** – whether this is by **manufacturers of collection infrastructure** or more widespread use of **re-use systems for serving food and beverages for on-the-go consumption** (which would help cut the number of single use packs that are the major constituent of litter, encouraging a **re-use rather than a disposal culture**).

There will always be a role for **research & development bodies** to bring new solutions.



CIVIL SOCIETY GROUPS

Civil society groups play a **vital role in helping engage communities in promoting civic pride about clean, safe neighbourhoods and the importance of preventing litter.**

These include, for example:

- Schools and colleges; universities & other educational establishments
- Youth organisations
- Local sports clubs
- Environmental NGOs
- Community groups

In many countries, different civil society groups already engage with local people to promote a litter prevention message or to engage in litter-related activities such as voluntary clean-up projects, which themselves play an important role in raising awareness. Such outreach could be greatly expanded.

For best effect it is important to have a **mechanism for coordinating outreach**, for ensuring **coherent messaging** and for providing **material support** – a role which could be played by **dedicated national (or territorial) litter prevention organisations** working with **local authorities** or other **special management authorities**.





CITIZENS

The vast majority of people do not drop litter and recognise the damage it causes. A relatively small minority are responsible for the problem. People litter for a variety of reasons such as a lack of appropriate education, insufficient awareness or little or no social control.

Local authorities and producers play a central role in fighting litter, but **the most important responsibility lies with each citizen in taking care never to deliberately, carelessly or accidentally litter.**

All parts of society (business, local authorities, schools, etc.) have a role to play in the **shared responsibility for preventing litter.** Yet every individual also needs to do the right thing by:

- bringing used items home or to the workplace, club, school etc., so they can be put in the recycling stream; or,
- **placing used items in the designated rubbish bins** in the public space.

In addition, every individual can make it clear in his/her own surroundings that **littering is unacceptable and will not be tolerated** because of the environmental, social and economic damage it causes. There are plenty of **contexts** in which citizens can set an example, notably:

- **parents & family members** towards other family members
- **young people** towards their friends, parents and family members
- **teachers and community leaders** towards the young people in their charge
- **celebrities and opinion leaders** towards their fans or followers
- **business leaders** in the way they orient their business activities and mobilise their staff
- **politicians** to the whole population





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