

NGO: Zelena Akcija (Friends of the Earth Croatia) Country: Croatia

Project: Vrbovec Waste Project

SAICM GPA activity numbers: 69, 72, 73, 262



Shredding garden waste for separation in Croatia
Photo: Tihana Tarandek Galović



After learning that safe waste management practices in the city of Vrbovec, Croatia were almost non-existent and that toxic waste was ending up landfilled in municipal waste sites or in nature, Zelena Akcija, together with its local partner Vrbovecka Udruga Mladih, decided to develop and promote a waste collection system based on best environmental practices in the town of Vrbovec and the surrounding districts. Their aims were to increase the capacity for separate waste collection, so that toxic waste collection is significantly improved. The system they promoted fulfilled separate collection requirements of the revised Waste Framework Directive of the EC, where collection is to be organized for (at minimum) plastics, glass, paper and metals, although Zelena Akcija also enabled home composting of biodegradable waste.

To do this, Zelena Akcija and Vrbovecka Udruga Mladih planned, implemented, and monitored a separate waste collection system on one specific street in Vrbovec. Each of the 23 households on the street received one composting bin, a set of trash bags in 2 colors, and an instruction leaflet and composting booklet in order to inform and educate citizens about the activity, which is not only beneficial in terms of reducing waste production and methane production in landfills, but also in creating high quality soil fertilizers. Citizens were required to separate waste in their houses into 3 parts and to avoid dumping of organic waste by composting it in their gardens. Trained activists provided support, with special attention given to wastes such as paints, varnishes, pesticides, batteries and WEEE.

Monthly, Zelena Akcija collected data about the waste and defined the key issues to be solved in order to improve the waste management system. They shared the data with the public and organized follow-up training workshops to improve the quality and quantity of waste recycled. Additionally, waste management lectures were delivered in the local high school, and a survey was carried out with the community four months after the project began in order to examine their feelings about and expectations of the project. From the results of the survey and the waste data collected, Zelena Akcija carried out a social-economic analysis with recommendations for the expansion of the project to the whole Vrbovec area. Results were presented to the Croatian national media via a press conference and press release. News of the project reached a NGO in Serbia, who in turn sent an invitation to Zelena Akcija to hold a seminar and workshop about waste management. Zelena Akcija representatives participated for 2 days in Belgrade, managing the workshop, and spreading the good news about the successful project in Vrbovec.