

1. Has waste management been classed as an essential service in your country?

Yes, in Portugal waste management was considered an essential service.

2. How many workers are affected by the current situation / are you operating with a reduced workforce?

In Portugal, there was no significant reduction in the workforce. However, the services were reorganized to face these new challenges. Adjustments to collection schedule and teams, as well as to the frequency of cleaning public bins and surrounding areas were made. Biowaste separate collection was suspended, as was the collection of bulky and green waste.

a. What special measures have you taken to enable operations to continue with a reduced workforce?

Workforce was not reduced but reorganized. Mirror teams were created, and workers released from suspended tasks were reallocated. Services that were considered as non-essential, like gardening and collection of greens and bulky waste, were also suspended.

b. What extra health and safety precautions have you taken to ensure the safety and wellbeing of your waste workforce?

The use of Individual Protection Equipment (IPE) and its disinfection was reinforced and all determinations of the National Health Administration were applied. Surgical masks are not used: Instead, FFP2 and FFP3 masks were recommended and replaced every day or 2-days. Special recommendations have also been issued for gloves, disinfection of surfaces and equipment. All specific equipment and materials are approved by the National Health Administration. Collection vehicles are now more frequently disinfected (in and outside). Some systems created separate collection and deposit routines in buildings with COVID 19 infected residents. Additionally, specific quarantine times were created for wastes collected separately or mixed.

c. Have you / will you, scale back your waste collection frequency?

Once the situation is normalized, the previous waste collection schedule will be resumed.

3. How is your system coping with the increase in face masks and other PPE in household waste?

- a. Do face masks continue to go into residual waste, or have you introduced any special measures for the separate collection of face masks?**

A communication campaign informed the population that face masks, disposable gloves and paper tissues should enter the mixed waste stream.

- b. Have you made any special communications to the general public, for example, do you ask them to make fewer trips to the recycling stations, or to avoid trips to the tips/drop-off centres to get rid of bulky waste items?**

Specific directives were issued for bulky waste and green waste. Visits to eco centers were reduced. An education campaign regarding disposal of face masks, disposable gloves and paper tissues was developed.

- c. Are people being given special instructions on how to deal with possibly contaminated waste?**

The National Regulatory Agency for waste and water (ERSAR), together with the Environmental Protection Agency (APA), issued recommendations for the general population, on how to deal with contaminated waste at home. Recommendations were also issued for companies, hotels and other lodging. In some regions separate collection and deposit systems were also defined.

4. Do recycling centres remain open to the general public?

Yes. However, there are limitations on the number of people remaining at the same time in recycling centres.

5. Have the international travel restrictions caused any interruptions with waste for processing overseas, importing/exporting waste? How are you managing the waste you cannot ship overseas?

Until now there has been no adverse effect on exports, and a higher demand for some materials (Example: PET and Cardboard) from abroad was noticed.

The following Interview was prepared by ISWA and completed by ISWA's National Member in Portugal: APESB – Portuguese Association for Sanitary and Environmental Engineering



6. Are you incinerating (if capacity exists) more MSW than previously?

APA (Portuguese environmental agency) recommended that mixed waste should be incinerated without any pre-treatment, especially in the greater areas of Porto and Lisbon, or confined to landfill when incineration is not an option. In areas of low epidemic intensity, the biological treatment may be used, assuming workers safety is ensured. Co-incineration plants were instructed to devise contingency plans to accept hospital or urban waste in case of need. The areas not covered with incineration alternatives, use Mechanic and Biological Treatment (MBT) whose operations are suspended if cases of COVID 19 exist in the area, for workers safety.

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Useful links regarding COVID-19 and Waste Management in Portugal:

ERSAR: <http://www.ersar.pt/pt/site-comunicacao/site-noticias/Paginas/Orientações-Recomendacoes-para-gestao-de-residuos-pandemia-COVID-19.aspx>

APA: <https://apambiente.pt/ajaxpages/destaque.php?id=1385>

EGF: <http://www.egf.pt/pt/media/covid-19/>

LIPOR: <http://m.lipor.pt/pt/novos-cuidados-a-ter-na-gestao-de-residuos-covid-19/>

TRATOLIXO: http://www.tratolixo.pt/index.php?noticias/noticia_detalle/253

RESÍDUOS DO NORDESTE: <https://www.residuosdonordeste.pt>

MAI AMBIENTE: <https://www.maiambiente.pt/?banner=50A91020-69E2-11EA-9E0F-005056BCDE60>

GESAMB: <http://www.gesamb.pt/Not%C3%ADcias/Not%C3%ADcia/newsId/148/PlanodeContingenciaGesamb-COVID19>

PLANALTO BEIRÃO: <https://www.noticiasaoiminuto.com/economia/1465246/covid-19-na-rota-do-lixo-contaminado-na-regiao-do-planalto-beirao>

SPV: <https://www.ambientemagazine.com/campanha-da-spv-aplaude-bons-habitos-de-reciclagem-dos-portugueses-em-tempo-de-isolamento-social/>