

*Question #1: In Portugal we still have few PAYT, and they are "experimental", it's not a town or a village, just few neighbourhoods. Do you think this should be a priority on the waste sector, even at this economical context?*

I think that declaring PAYT as a priority for waste management just to give it a trial is not the right approach. We definitely have two priorities in the waste sector which are to break with the thoughtless style of consumption and wastage of resources, and to increase resource efficiency through a continued use of materials for secondary purposes. To cope with these two challenges won't be achieved through technologies and more intelligent processes alone, you also need to get a change in everyday's behaviour and the people to take their share in recycling and considerate consumption. PAYT as an instrument which helps people through economical signals to get aware of the way in which they are wasting materials is certainly an important element to get such strategy work out more efficiently. To believe a sustainable change could be made just by applying PAYT as a standalone measure and to selected cases would be a mistake, however. Still this is the situation that we are currently facing in Europe. Therefore I think that it is right when the European Commission considers a wider use of economic instruments as a means to improve waste law implementation, and highlights PAYT as one of the possible options. As to my impression there is not much of a controversy in the countries of the EU that the milestones mentioned in the EU's Roadmap to a Resource Efficient Europe to 'setting appropriate price signals for a sustainable consumption' and 'managing waste as a resource' are indeed important ones and that PAYT has proven its potential to support such goals.

As the ranking of PAYT in the ladder of priorities is concerned this has to be also determined from the perspective where the waste management system in general stands in a country. A positive effect of PAYT will hardly unfold if there aren't other mechanisms of individual responsibility for waste generation, such as producer responsibility schemes, enforced, where recycling systems are insufficiently developed and waste collection is still in its infancy.

Under the current economic situation (financial crisis) in Europe, I see in PAYT a potential rather than a threat. Municipalities face huge fiscal constraints, and the difficult decision of what to still finance out of their scarce budget resources. This also puts a pressure on them to review their traditional mechanisms of financing municipal services. Such a situation can be helping to create the political will which is crucial to shift towards a new model of financing waste management but usually missing under normal circumstances. If a proper concept for PAYT is adopted, municipalities must not fear to lose money, rather they have a chance for optimizing their services and revenues.

For the citizens, PAYT must not also mean an additional burden although the price signal must be given in such a way that they understand wasting resources and polluting the environment has a (higher) cost. By being a considerate consumer and using intensively the means of recycling, a well designed PAYT would be giving them the chance to benefit from financial savings which is a possibility they won't have under a conventional, flat rate or property tax-financed system.

*Question #2: The cost of it should be paid by the citizens?*

First of all, implementing PAYT must not necessarily be very expensive but it requires of course a good deal of engagement and effort to go some new ways in the administration of waste services. Secondly, the actual costs of introducing a functional PAYT depend on many factors and these can be the basis to come to cost-sharing arrangements.

Tendering procedures for waste services can for example be used to require the successful service provider to have the collection trucks equipped with identification devices and data storage units. For housing associations it can be beneficial to invest in intelligent container or specially protected service sites in order to let the individual household indeed benefit from PAYT incentives and thus make their property interesting for apartment seekers. Adopting an intelligent concept can have a great impact on minimizing the costs for introducing PAYT.

There is, on the other hand, the polluter pays principle behind the PAYT approach which means that the costs for waste management should be borne from the waste generators and recipients of the corresponding services. Through that certain costs of the PAYT system must become part of the pricing of services and in this way paid by the citizens who are their users.

However, implementing PAYT should also have an effect on the municipality's costs for disposing of waste via waste disposal facilities and on the revenues made from the sale of recyclable materials. Normally an effect of saved costs from lower amounts that must be sent to landfills and higher proceeds made from sold recyclables is reported. Under a real PAYT citizens must also benefit from these positive cost effects in that they will be considered as compensation for the investment and incremental costs of PAYT and become also part of the calculation of the service price.

*Question #3: What are the advantages and disadvantages of this system?*

What are the advantages and disadvantages of the system depends largely on the perspective adopted and on how the implemented PAYT scheme is working out on the ground. Places that operate successfully with PAYT name a lot of advantages, others that have failed to implement a functional scheme speak of many disadvantages whereas in both cases the relation with PAYT is not always absolutely evident. The shift towards PAYT as a mechanism to charge for waste services definitely offers many potentials but also includes a number of risks and dangers. A great advantage of PAYT lies in the power this instrument can unfold through its economic incentives on the waste separation and disposal behaviour of households, or in other words, in its importance for individual waste generation and material flow management. The recycling society and higher resource efficiency that we aim to in Europe will never reach the level which we desire and need without pushing everyone to make a personal effort in it. To engage in the source separation of waste, an activity that certain recycling routes definitely require, is just one simple example. Such effort can be induced by PAYT. A motivation to bypass the regular waste management system, to engage in littering or illegal dumping might be also derived from the implementation of user charges. This potential disadvantage can be effectively addressed and well controlled, like the issue of rising costs and financial burdens to families and socially weak groups too, by way of an intelligent system design, planning and accompanying framework. This appropriately taken into account will allow to really profit from PAYT. For the engaged citizens this comes to bear in form of a fairer treatment with regard to the individual contributions they are asked to make to a clean environment and the welfare of society, occasionally even through lower financial burdens. Municipalities have learnt to cherish this instrument as a vehicle to attain a higher transparency in the provision of waste services and to come to optimized results in the collection of waste and service revenues as well as to keep waste-related costs under control.