



TOPIC: More incentives or more sanctions and stricter controls to increase separate waste collection?

The current municipal waste management system is highly deficient due to the high disposal rate, the low recycling rate and the strong interest of criminals in the waste business.

An optimal and efficient management of municipal waste certainly starts with separate collection. Recycling is designed for environmental purposes, but it also creates value for the community by producing work for a long chain. The waste cycle will be truly integrated, virtuous and sustainable if those who put potentially waste-generating products on the market, national and local institutions and, above all, citizens act in synergy. The institutions that are closest to the needs of citizens are the municipalities. So, what should they do to raise awareness among citizens? In order to increase separate waste collection, it is necessary to increase sense of civic duty and ecological culture, but how can this be achieved?

**PRO THESIS:** In order to increase separate waste collection, it is better to encourage citizens to sort their waste correctly than to penalize those who do not sort or who sort incorrectly.

**AGAINST THESIS:** In order to increase separate waste collection, it is better to penalize citizens who do not behave correctly than to reward those who already do it correctly.

#### Current situation and context.

Is separate waste collection a duty for citizens? And if it is a duty, are there penalties for those who dispose of their waste incorrectly? Yes, there are penalties in some municipalities: in Milan, Amsa (Environmental Services Company in Milan) carried out 231 inspections for illegal dumping from May 2019 to May 2020 and, in the six-month period from November 2019 to May 2020, there were 21 administrative fines for dumping black bags with urban waste. On the other hand, other administrations consider fines to be an unfeasible option, but would like to focus on a policy of culture, instilling awareness and sense of civic duty in citizens. According to the latest Ispra (Higher Institute for Environmental Protection and Research) report, 30 million tonnes of urban waste will be produced in Italy in 2020. In 2019, 50% of waste collected separately will be sent to recovery plants. By 31 December 2012, Italy should have reached 65% separate waste collection. In 2018, in Italy, separately collected municipal waste accounted for 58% of the total, a far cry from the target that should have been reached six years ago. These figures highlight the need for a greater effort in terms of both legislation and public awareness. It is not always possible to impose penalties on those who do not sort their waste correctly: for this to happen, very personalised mechanisms are needed, such as door-to-door collection or the inclusion of microchips in waste bags, which would allow individuals to be fined.

#### Pro arguments:

- Fines for incorrect waste collection are often difficult to enforce throughout Italy.
- We need real, practical and direct incentives to spread a deep-rooted ecological culture among citizens.

#### Against arguments:

- Not all citizens are civic duty-minded enough to comply with the separate waste collection rule. Only appropriate penalties could lead to a change in their behaviour;
- Regardless of the penalties, Italy still disposes of less than half of its municipal waste (44%).

#### Further Insights:

- ISPRA: [Waste management report 2020](#)
- Ministry of the Ecological Transition: [Waste and Pollution](#)
- European Commission: [UN warns of looming surge in e-waste](#)
- UNEP: [Guidelines for National Waste Management Strategies](#)