

CRNI Response To Feasibility of Transitioning Ireland's Waste Collection Market

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CRNI (Community Resources Network Ireland) is the representative body for this community-based reuse, repair and recycling network in Ireland. Through its active and committed membership of around 50 social enterprises and other community-centred organisations and businesses it serves the unique and valuable role of developing resource efficiency and circular economy initiatives via information sharing, member opportunities, and sector development and advocacy.

Our vision is an Ireland where the word 'Waste' doesn't exist and where our entire community benefits from the social, environmental and economic value of all reusable resources. Our mission is to promote community based, sustainable management of reusable resources as a practical and effective way of tackling Ireland's growing waste problem.

This response makes specific reference to the consultation questions regarding Recycling rates. It does not address questions regarding Municipal Waste Collection Services or a Franchise Tendering system.

Municipal recycling falls within Ireland's policy landscape that includes the Whole of Government Circular Economy Strategy, the Circular Economy Programme, the Circular Economy Act 2022, and the Climate Action Plan among others. Together these define deliverable measures for the waste sector. Ireland has been largely compliant with European Union waste limits and targets, but the State is in danger of failing to meet municipal waste recycling and plastic packaging recycling rates¹. Recycling rates for municipal solid waste for the past 5 years have stagnated at around 40% (compared to EU recycling targets of 55% by 2025) and waste generation has been increasing since the recovery from the 2008 economic crisis².

Cities drive overall household waste in Ireland due to their high concentration of the population. Dublin and Cork alone account for 18% of all household waste; and the top 5 local authorities contribute 37%. Over one-third of Ireland's adult population considered climate change the most urgent environmental issue, followed by waste management and water quality³.

Disparities are evident between local authorities in the levels of waste collected from households and per bin type. This can be attributed to:

- Differences in waste collection services and infrastructure
- Differences in the share of the population using authorised waste collection services

¹ RWMPO (2023), National Waste Management Plan for a Circular Economy

² OECD (2022), *The circular economy in Ireland*

³ EPA (2019), *2018 in Review*

- Behavioural factors⁴.

Ireland's recycling infrastructure has a bearing on the market for recycling services: the State recycles glass, wood and small amounts of plastic domestically but does not produce sufficient material to support a viable recycling industry for paper, steel or aluminium⁵, with heavy reliance on exporting recyclables to overseas facilities. However with nascent technologies and sectors, combined with EU-wide challenges such as the textiles crisis⁶ there may be opportunity to invest in domestic infrastructure and scalable innovations.

Ireland's focus needs to extend beyond recycling and recovery to prioritise higher levels of the waste hierarchy, ie material repair and reuse.

Across Europe there are several instances of best practice for waste management, for instance [Social Cooperative Insieme - Management Of Municipal Waste Collection Centres](#). The long-term profitability of initiatives like this illustrate that value for money should be considered alongside social impact drivers.

⁴ EPA (2021), *National Waste Statistics*

⁵ DECC (2020), *Waste Action Plan for a Circular Economy*

⁶ RREUSE (2025) Urgent action needed to address the EU's textile crisis. Accessed: https://cdn.nimbu.io/s/zx3wipv/channelentries/w2ez4ot/files/1748416529546/2025_05_reuse-open-letter_urgent-action-needed-to-address-the-eu_s-textile-crisis.pdf?t53f12s