

Where does the garbage of Xàbia go?

An urban legend has it that Xàbia does not recycle, but that the garbage is mixed up in a non-ecological way. Xàbia's Agenda21 has responded to this concern and has decided to find out what the truth actually is.

To shed some light on the fate of solid waste, (something that has recently aroused controversy among politicians because of the increase in rates for the rubbish collection service), information was requested from the relevant department. The coordinator of services, Matilde Briz, and the councillor responsible, Doris Courcelles, referred to the data and explained that the town does recycle, but only 15%. They said that if the containers for packaging, glass and cardboard were better and more widely used, a lot of money could be saved in the management of this service.



In Xàbia there are several types of container to separate the waste. These range from packaging and organic refuse to used cooking oil. The garbage is then transported to transfer plants and / or treatment plants in order for it to be processed and reintroduced into the consumer market, i.e. recycled.

So, let's explain how the different materials and debris are processed.

Imagine that this Christmas you were given a bottle of cologne. You remove the gift-wrap paper to reveal a cardboard box wrapped in cellophane. It contains a glass bottle with the perfume inside. Suppose you are civically minded and have a concern for the environment. You throw the cellophane into the yellow container for packaging, the box into to the blue container for paper and cardboard, the bottle (once the perfume is used up) goes into the green, igloo-shaped container for glass, and the gift wrap paper you keep to re-use if possible.

Under Spanish law, urban solid waste belongs to the municipality that generates it, so the Town Hall is responsible for its collection and correct disposal. At the same time, the state and provincial authority are responsible for coordinating the regional transfer and recycling plants.

Glass

"Ecovidrio" is a non-profit making association responsible for managing the recycling of glass all over Spain. Ecovidrio is represented in all sectors relating to the recycling of glass: packers and bottlers, collectors and manufacturers. In order to recycle all the glass on the market, a cycle of seven stages needs to be completed. This is what is called the "chain of glass recycling". This Integrated Management System (symbolized on the containers for glass with a circle made up of two arrows) begins and ends at the same point: the disposal of jars and bottles by responsible consumers in the containers installed by the roadside.

Glass is collected from the green igloos by a glass collecting company, which in Valencia, Murcia and Castilla La Mancha is "Camacho Recycling, SLU", and is taken to a treatment plant where it is cleaned and converted into cullet (sorted and crushed). The cullet is transferred to a bottle making factory, where it once again becomes a bottle, with the advantage that it requires a lower melting temperature than the original material. The new bottle is taken to a bottling plant, then to the shops and ends up once again in the hands of the consumer, in a process that can be repeated indefinitely because glass does not degrade.

The council does not receive or pay anything for recycling glass. That is, the cost is 0€;. However, due to the weight of glass, it becomes very expensive if it is disposed of badly, for example if it is thrown into the organic garbage container.

Xàbia has recycled glass since 2002.

www.ecovidrio.es www.camachorecycling.com

Packaging

Ecoembalajes España SA (Ecoembes) is a nonprofit-making organisation whose purpose is the design and organization of an Integrated Management System aimed at the selective collection and recovery of packaging for further treatment, recycling and recovery.

Similar to glass, the process begins with the yellow containers, into which are placed three types of packages: plastic (for example bottles of soft drinks, mineral water, detergent, fabric softeners, plastic shopping bags, expanded polystyrene trays, yogurt pots ...), metal (tins and cans of soft drinks, beer, preserves, aluminum trays, ...) and "Brik" packages (milk, juices, soups ..., and other foods such as sugar, pulses ...); but no pottery or porcelain.

If you have any doubt on how to recycle an item, you can use your browser to find out via the Ecoembes website and its page of interactive games for children. See: www.ecoembes.com. The municipalities of the two Marinas (Alta and Baixa) belong to the Zonal Plan No 15, and must transport their own packaging rubbish to a modern plant in Benidorm. This is the responsibility of the Comunidad Valenciana, which has a framework agreement with Ecoembes for the integrated management of such waste.

Xàbia has recycled packaging since 2003.

The Comunidad Valenciana is the sixth in the country in the recycling of packages, and it still has a long way to go as far as an adequate recycling of these wastes is concerned. The public can help by cleaning containers before disposing of them, and crushing plastic bottles to use up less space in the container. In the case of packaging, there is a certain cost to the purchaser. However, purchases often do not need so much wrapping. If we are well informed, we could end up demanding less packaging on our purchases.

Paper and cardboard

Ecoembes is also in charge of paper and cardboard. This is folded and flattened then inserted into the blue containers. In Xàbia the rubbish collection contractor, Cespa, takes them to the Benidorm plant. The Town Hall receives money to deliver this type of waste, but it costs a lot more to transport it. Again, more money is saved by proper disposing of paper and cardboard, than when it is thrown into the organic waste container.

Xàbia has recycled paper and cardboard since 2002.

Organic waste

The grey containers are used for organic debris and other trash. As of January 1st 2009, the contents are taken to the transfer plant which the Sociedad de Reciclaje de la Marina Alta has in Denia, and then transported to the above-mentioned treatment plant in Campello. This is managed by the FCC, who charge a fee to each municipality of 56 € per tonne. This is why all the municipalities in the region have had to increase the fees for garbage collection.

Before this January, the garbage was compacted in Denia, where the best price was negotiated for carrying garbage to landfills in Villena, Aspe or Xixona. This is the origin of the aforementioned urban legend. As for this "organic garbage" of Xàbia and the Marina Alta; there are still many people who have not yet acquired the habit of recycling, and instead they dump everything: packaging, paper, bottles and leftover food, all together in the containers for organic waste. Of course, this wasn't recycled and ended up in landfills instead. As from the beginning of January all municipalities in Zone 15 of the Marina Alta must transport their waste via the Denia plant to Campello for treatment.

Still, contrary to the popular belief of those who excuse their own bad and unsustainable habits through blaming the idleness of the administration, the recycling of glass, packaging and paper has actually been going on for the past 6 or 7 years.

Green recycling points, ecoparks, and the recycling of other waste:

Xàbia is in the long administrative process of creating its own ecopark, a plant for the transfer of non-organic municipal waste. It has 14 "Punts Verds", or Green recycling points, throughout the municipality, where the residents have access to special containers for garden refuse, household goods, used cooking oil and unwanted clothing, in addition to being able to dispose of the garbage mentioned above.

· Garden refuse:

The garden refuse container is for use by individuals, while companies engaged in this sector must take the cuttings to Ramblars, where they pay a company to shred them to make compost. However, use of this waste still leaves much to be desired in the Valencian region. Getting rid of its 80 million cubic meters of garden refuse shredded a year (one of the largest amounts in the province), is a real nightmare for the municipality of Xàbia. At the same time gardening companies complain of the intrusion of illegal workers who dump garden refuse in the containers, thus saving the cost of taking it to Ramblars, or worse, dumping the stuff in the containers for organic refuse, increasing the number of tons being taken to Campello, and thus increasing the cost of the municipal waste collection service. Garden refuse should not be disposed of in plastic bags and the ideal is that individuals should recycle it themselves, making their own compost at home in a special containers.

· Household items:

Despite the fact that there is still not an Integrated Management Service to recycle old appliances etc., the Town Hall has some special containers, and Cespa is responsible for disposing of these remains in

the best possible way. Rubble should not be disposed of in these containers, for which there are specialized companies such as Contenedores Mata. There is also a municipal collection of household goods for those who cannot go to a green recycling point (tel: 900 102 149).

· Mineral and vegetable oil:

The disposal of oils costs the Town Hall 0€.

Through Sepiva, (www.sepiva.es) the Valencian authorities collect mineral oil used in garages and workshops. Recently, containers for the disposal of used cooking oil have been distributed in Xàbia, in the green recycling points as well as in the three urban centres. Cooking oil should be disposed of in tightly capped plastic bottles. For several years, the Town Hall has been responsible for the collection of oil from restaurants and bars.

· Clothing and footwear:

The NGO "Humana" is responsible for the collection of clothing and footwear and its transport to sorting stations. The items should be put in tightly closed plastic bags and deposited in the brown containers. The best quality items are sent to the Humana second hand shops for sale, and the resulting money sent to Africa. The unserviceable clothes are used for industrial recycling, while those which are in better condition are given to the needy. www.humana-spain.org

We can also recycle:

· Batteries:

Coin or button batteries are disposed of in the shops which sell them, since these contain very toxic substances. There is also a disposal bin in the municipal Services office on the Principe de Asturias (opposite the bottom of the reconstructed town "wall"- open Mon-Fri 9.00am until 2.00pm). The Town Hall is responsible for collecting this waste. Other normal batteries manufactured in the EU or which do not contain cadmium or mercury can be thrown together with organic waste. Rechargeable batteries: These batteries are usually nickel-cadmium (nicad), lithium ion, or nickel-metal-hydride (NiMH). The Cadmium in NiCads is toxic and all nicad batteries should be recycled. Nickel-metal-hydride (NiMH) and lithium-ion rechargeable batteries are less toxic, but it is still recommended that they be recycled.

Note: Any batteries manufactured in Asia are not guaranteed to be non-toxic.

· Fluorescent tubes:

Fluorescent light tubes are discarded at the store where purchased.

· Expired medications and X-rays:

Pharmacies are responsible for getting rid of medicines properly, as well as x-rays.

· Spectacles:

Certain opticians, such as Natural Óptics in the Arenal, have taken the responsibility for collecting old spectacles.

· IT Consumables:

"Green" Computer stores, such as Computer Xàbia, collect consumables and antiquated or broken

hardware to get rid of them properly.

Conclusion: recycling is ecological, sustainable and saves money

In 2008 Xàbia produced about 20 thousand tons of garbage, of which 85% was deposited in the grey containers for organic refuse and transported to landfills for compaction. Only 15% was recycled through the use of the containers for glass, paper, and packaging, while in fact, less than 50% of garbage from households is organic.

From the beginning of January, the waste deposited in Xàbia's grey organic containers, and the entire Marina Alta (Zone 15), will also be partially recycled through the plant at Campello, for which the City Council must pay 56 € per tonne. This is the reason why so many municipalities in the region have increased the garbage collection rates. Still, in Xàbia this will cover only 40% of the service. If households recycled more, this would considerably decrease the amount, and above all, the weight of organic waste and debris, so less garbage would go to Campello. This would save enough money for the municipal coffers so that it would not be necessary to increase the rates.

www.xabianeta.com

Department of "Servicios" of the Municipality of Xàbia
http://www.ajxabia.com/apartado.php?sapa_id=293&idi=e