

Comingled Paper Collection in the UK, can we ‘recover’? (The impact of comingled collections on the European Paper Industry)

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Abstract

The map of Europe shows that a wide range of collections systems has developed which the majority of EU countries share. A notable exception is ‘Comingled Collections’ which is used extensively in the UK yet quite rarely in continental European Countries. What might be expedient for Local Authorities to achieve ‘Recycling Targets’ might well be disastrous for the paper recycling industry (including the Paper Mills turning the recovered material into new products). Several studies in different countries have concluded that there are serious potential quality issues with material recovered through comingled collection systems, yet the European Commission has recently confirmed that comingled collections will only be allowed (after 2015) where the same quality as segregated collections can be achieved. Moreover, recent experiences from paper mills in the US – which had to face the transition from source separated to comingled collection – are disturbing reading.

Europe cannot afford to waste its resources; therefore, the EU Waste Directive demands collection of High Quality Papers and Boards for Recycling – providing feasibility. Surely, what is feasible in most countries should also be feasible in all countries.

Keywords

Paper recycling, INGEDE, waste collection, paper collection, paper for recycling.