

Interview with Javier Ferrer Roig-manager of the Ecovitrum project:

The phone interview was done on 29/03/2012 over the phone.

At the beginning he explains that: in Spain the obligation of management of urban waste it's a local obligation, it's a local responsibility. The provincial government of Valencia represents 266 towns and we help the local authorities to manage with the best way the urban waste. In case of e-waste, we decided that the CRT was kept in a landfill because here we didn't have any market exit for this specific glass. What we are trying to do with this project is to avoid that this glass goes to the landfill and try to transform this waste into a resource as a raw material.

So it was the Council which took the initiative to propose the project...

Yes.

And it's also the main coordinator of the project?

Yes.

Which do you think were the most important reasons which drove the Council to initiate a project like this? Is it economic reasons-to avoid the economic burden of dealing with WEEE management, is it environmental reasons-in order to reduce the environmental impact of e-waste, social reasons like creating new jobs...which do you think is the most important reason?

We are a public administration and this means that we are not thinking in economic terms, we are now involved in environmental reasons, this means that we are trying to avoid that all this glass goes to landfill because we have to use landfills for the things that don't have exit to the market. In this project we have different parts, we try to involve all the stakeholders, because in this project we have 7 partners, we have tiles production, we have a take-back system, one Spanish and one Hungarian, we have an institute of construction material is called AIDICO, we have a local government-Cullera Council, we have one company for the treatment of WEEE that it's in Valencia, it's called Recytech. Of course the private companies that are involved in this project are thinking the economic part of the results. We as the beneficiaries of the project, we try to look for the environmental solution.

Which do you think were the most important reasons for creating the partnership? Why did the Council wanted to do that, couldn't the Council manage the project by itself? What are the reasons for creating this partnership?

The principal reason is because if you want to get European funds in the Life+ programme, you have to create a consortium because you have to involve all the stakeholders in everything. In terms of WEEE management, they (EU) want that you involve all the important parts because when the European fund finishes, this project continues in the future and for this reason they think that you have to involve all the persons that everyday are involved in the management of WEEE.

So it's a matter of European guidelines...

Yes.

If there were no European guidelines, would you be able to manage the project by yourselves, I mean the Council or you still need the resources of the private sector like knowledge, infrastructure?

Our obligation in that case is not the management of WEEE, we are doing this because we find that these products go to the landfill, but it is not our responsibility. What we are trying to do with this project is to put in contact all the parts that they didn't have any contact and for this reason they don't use this glass and today they are using the glass as a raw material. But in the future they will continue using the glass until the glass finishes, but they don't need our coordination. The important thing is that we put in contact all the parts involved in the waste management and for example one company is called Esmalglass, it uses raw material for their production and they didn't know that they can use CRT glass and thanks to this project they are using it.

So we could say that this is an innovative aspect of the project...

Yes of course, because this company has this knowledge now to use this glass, because it is not easy they have to mix several parts of the CRT glass, they need to mix them properly in order to use it as a raw material.

Which one of the partners provided Esmalglass with this knowledge, is it AIDICO?

AIDICO was the beginner, it's an institute for the construction material and they were the ones who studied at the beginning that it was possible to use in a laboratory scale the use of glass in the production. But later Esmalglass made its own studies in the laboratories of the company and they finally found that it was possible to use the glass. But at the beginning it was AIDICO who found the use of glass.

So there is a research done regarding the quality of the materials. It's not that they produce the materials without any research before...

Yes, of course, Esmalglass is an international company and they are not going to get involved in a project if they didn't know that it works, but this was before the beginning of the project.

Now the project is in the phase that materials are produced, right?

Yes.

And they are already distributed in the market?

Yes.

Is it in the internal or external market?

International market.

Does it work? Is it successful?

Yes of course.

What will happen when there are not going to be any CRT monitors in the future? What will happen with the project?

The project is going to have a natural death. The project uses the CRT glass as raw materials and when this material finishes, the final end is to use all these material and avoid that these materials go to the landfill, and use these material and avoid the use of raw material.

And when do you think that this is going to happen? Within how many years?

Maybe six years more. Because we have these figures that in Europe, or maybe in Spain, the last year that market sold CRT TVs and monitors was in 2009 and these products have more or less 10 or 15 years of lifespan.

You only recycle the monitors that you find just in Valencia or from all over Spain?

No, from all over Spain.

Would you accept monitors coming from other European countries, like France or Italy...

At the moment we are not accepting, because with the monitors that we receive from all over Spain, we have enough.

Maybe in the future, if they won't be any left, you can maybe also think this perspective as well...

Yes, of course, because it's the same monitor that comes from France or Italy or England. There more legal barriers, administrative barriers than technical barriers.

Now, I am going to ask you some questions about the partnership. First of all, what is the role of the Fundación Comunidad Valenciana-Región Europea?

This is a regional office, they help organisations from Valencia which want to prepare or present a project in Brussels.

So they have helped you with the technicalities, or how to present the project to the EU...

Yes, they help in administrative stuff, and dissemination of the tasks and in case you don't have a European partner they can help you to find it.

Which is your European partner?

We have a European partner, it's called Electro-coord, it's a Hungarian partner and it's a take-back system.

How is the partnership managed? Do you have meetings, how are decision taken within the partnership?

We have coordination meetings, we have to send a report to the EC telling how the project is progressing, if we have undertaken the activities that we proposed in the initial proposal, if we are spending the budget as it was justified in the original proposal.

So you have mentioned before that the private partners wanted to participate in the project for economic reasons...

Yes.

Do you think that the private partners mostly care about the economic part of the project and not at all about the environmental aspects? How do you see it?

No, they are not only involved for economic reasons, because of course they are not making money with the project. But they are involved for economic reasons, of course if they are going to lose money, they are not going to get involved in a project, but in the same time they are as well interested in the dissemination activities. It's a way to advertise a company and of course have an environmental dissemination and how they seem. You know everybody wants to improve the image of the company.

Do you think that these different interests that each partner has could raise any conflicts among the partners?

No. Not in our project. Each partner has different objectives, for example, we, as a public administration, wanted to give another solution for our waste, but we wanted to get in the dissemination of the project and let the people of Valencia know that the public administration is working in order to get solutions for everybody. Everybody (in the project) has different main options.

The Council was also mostly interested in providing a better public service to the citizens....

Of course.

What kind of advantages do you think that this partnership has brought to the partners? For example I was checking the literature about partnerships and it is written that a partnership can bring advantages like efficient resource management, like each partner is responsible for a specific thing that he's more capable of doing, like for example the Esmalglass is dealing with the production, the Council is dealing with the coordination...do you think that this is happening as well with the Ecovitrum project? Do you see this efficient management or resources?

Yes of course. One of the guarantees of the success of the project is the consortium, because each partner has an important part in the project. We cannot develop this project without the participation of the take-back system, or without a treatment plant like Recytech, of course if we don't have the technical control of AIDICO it is impossible to develop the project. And in the end if we don't have a company like Esmalglass that can use this glass, we can do a study but we can't justify that this a real project. Now we can justify that it's a real project, that is a demonstrated project and that we are using the products and producing with this waste new products.

Do you see any other advantages like less project risk, reduction of the project costs...

Yes, one of the benefits for example in the case of Esmalglass. Esmalglass is an international company, they know how to produce the raw material for tiles and if we don't have this partner we can demonstrate in a laboratory level but not in an industrial level. This is an advantage.

Do you see any kind of disadvantages like lack of common goals among the partners, different interests...

The disadvantage maybe is that for example, when you have a European partner is the lack of communication, maybe the lack of coordination because they are in Hungary and we are in Spain, they have different legal framework in the case of waste, maybe they implement the WEEE Directive in another way from Spain. The main object of this project is to do a project that serves the main objectives as the Life+ programme and later this project can be transferred to another European country. This is the reason they want a European partner, in order to solve local problems but on a European level.

What is the role of the Hungarian partner in the project?

We want to know how they organise the collection from TVs and monitors in Hungary. Later with the take-back system that is Eco-raees, they do a European good practice code in order to manage correctly the CRT TVs and monitors. We are working on that line.

So you exchange ideas on the issue, it's more like that?

Yes, we exchange ideas, we analyse how for example...I am going to give you an example. They collect small WEEE in the big commercial areas and we have another point to collect that it's called green point. They have green points but only in the big cities and we have green points in the small towns and of course in the big cities, it's a different way to collect.

Now some questions about the society, what kind of benefits do you believe that the project has brought to the community of Valencia?

One of the biggest advantage of this project is the that at the end of the project we will built a pilot plant in order to take all kind of TVs and monitors and this is going to be thanks to the European funds. Of course we are avoiding the use of landfill here in the province of Valencia because we are giving a solution. It is important to know that there is this solution because in the province of Castellon, that is 60km from Valencia, we have one of the biggest accumulation of tiles industries. We are producing just in the province of Castellon the 90% of all tiles production of Spain. Just for the logistical advantages, finally we get that the tiles production is going to be a solution for the use of this glass.

Have these activities in the area created new job positions?

I don't think so. Not really, because they are not changing too much the way of work.

What is the reaction of the citizens to the project, are they satisfied, are they happy with the project? Or do you receive any complaints about the project?

One important thing of the project is the dissemination and education in recycling WEEE. In Spain people don't have any idea of what is WEEE and why it is important to recycle WEEE. In 2011 we started a campaign for the education of the citizens in recycling WEEE. We started focusing on schools students. We are developing a campaign, we go to the schools, of course we have company specialised in education for students and they make special lessons in order to explain why it is important to recycle WEEE and what can we do with WEEE and at the same time we explain about the project, the results of the project etc and at the end of the activities, in the town we do like a public fair where people can know more about the project and at the same time we exchange WEEE products for presents. And we do this in order to explain to people how important is to recycle the WEEE and the ways to recycle the WEEE is by using the green points.

Do people react positively to these activities?

Yes, for example in the city of Cullera, one Saturday morning, we gathered 2000 kg of small WEEE equipment.

Is it easy for the people to have access to information regarding the project?

It's easy because we are trying to have all the information on the website, at the same time we are using facebook that it's called Ecovitrum Trc and it's about informing about all the dissemination campaigns and the fairs and things like that.

What do you think about the current WEEE directive, I don't know if you are familiar with the directive?

I am more with the current proposals for the recast.

Do you think that it should be more specific about the role that local and regional authorities in WEEE management? Because the current directive doesn't specify the role that they should have, do you think that it should be more specific?

I don't know because for example in Spain, it is a local obligation and this is related to the national law. I don't know that it is necessary that this idea goes in the directive because in case of Spain it's related to the national law and in the national law of urban waste, they talk about that this is a local obligation.

In the directive it is stated very clearly that producers should have the entire responsibility for managing e-waste and there is nothing mentioned for the LRAs, that is why I am asking you this question , to see your perspective....in general and according to your experience so far from working with the project, what do you think should be the role of LRAs in WEEE management in order to succeed a sustainable way of treating WEEE? Do you think that they should have an active role like the Council of Valencia does, or should they let the producers having the entire responsibility? Which one do you think that it works better?

In my opinion, it is important to mix both systems. For example, from my experience, for small WEEE materials, in Spain, if you buy a new electric appliance, you are not going to let the old one in the shop, but you are allowed to do it. What is important to do is to mix,

because if I am going to change my refrigerator, of course if they bring a new one, I am going to leave my old one. But for the small WEEE it is important the collaboration, or the participation of people. In Spain, in order to use the green points (municipal collection points). And the municipal collection points are an important tool in order to organise all the system. We are the responsible for these municipal collection points and for this case the local authorities have a very important responsibility and very important task in the case of WEEE.

So you believe that the best solution is a mix of both public and private sector...

Yes.

Are there any costs for the Council for developing this project? Any kind of costs, not only economic, but also time, administrative...

Yes, of course. This kind of project has a lot of administrative cost, because you know we are a local administration and we have to present the project and the politicians have to approve the project and later we have to approve the budget, we have to approve a project with seven partners, with the Hungarian partner, we have to design a common provision (?) to coordinate all the administrative tasks, to coordinate the obligation of partners and all these require a lot of administrative work.

What is the role of Cullera town in the project?

Cullera has a big municipality collection point. The company Recytech receives a lot of TVs and monitors broken. And this was because in the collection points, we have problems with vandalism and robberies. They try to take the copper of TVs and monitors and they brake the part of glass and this is a problem because if we mix the front glass with the other glass the company Esmalglass cannot recycle this glass, they cannot analyse how much has less, the proportion etc... and one important thing is how the green points are working, for example we developed a new closed container and with different parts in order to avoid the robberies of TVs and monitors.

So this happened in collaboration with Cullera Council?

Yes.

Could you tell me your exact position in the Council?

I am an environmental technician and I am the coordinator of the Ecovitrum project.

How many years have you been working in the Council?

5 years

Would it be easy to provide me with some contact details from the other partners?

Yes, but not everybody speaks English! And for example the Fundaci3n Comunitat Valenciana-Regi3n Europea is not involved in the project anymore because they have

economic problems and they had to leave the project, and for the rest of the partners, I can give you some contact details.