



LIFE CYCLE OF PAPER AND PAPER BASED PACKAGING

Diana Gregor Svetec¹, Graziano Elegir²

¹ University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Natural Sciences and Engineering, Aškerčeva 12,
Ljubljana, Slovenia

² INNOVHUB, Paper Research Division, Via Meravigli 9/b, Milano, Italy

Keywords: *paper, recyclability, project EcoPaperLoop, recycling strategy*

Paper can be recycled up to seven times, the only drawback being a progressive mechanical damaging of cellulose fibres through processing, which reduces the strength of the resulting paper. To ensure a constant recycled paper quality the cycle of paper is an open cycle, which has a continuous input of virgin pulp containing long cellulose fibres. When paper is made from 100% recycled fibres, paper for recycling used must be of higher quality to be a good enough substitute for virgin fibres. Paper for recycling is collected from industrial sources, commercial sources, small businesses and households applying different collection systems. Some countries collect old newspapers and magazines from households separately from paper and board packaging, others collect all sorts of paper together, while some have comingled collection systems, where paper is collected separately from food and residual waste, but together with other recyclable materials. The WFD encourages EU Member States "to promote high quality recycling and, to this end, set up separate collection of paper, where technically, environmentally, and economically practicable and appropriate".

In Central Europe regions paper for recycling is a major resource, but the paper recycling rate is still highly inhomogeneous between the countries of Central Europe. Since paper is not only recycled in the country where it has been produced and consumed, some essential features such as eco-design and eco-collection concepts must be developed at transnational level to increase the sustainability of the paper loop. Improper collection systems can drastically reduce the amount of paper being recovered for recycling; and improper design of a graphic or packaging product can make it useless or even harmful for the recycling process. The project EcoPaperLoop addresses these needs of the regions related to paper recycling by creating a clear picture on participating region's status, by enhancing the awareness about recyclability issues as well as by improving and sharing the collective knowledge base on available technologies and practices. To put paper recycling – in terms of yield and quality – into optimum practice all across Europe, however, appropriate paper recycling strategies are of utmost importance.

Corresponding address:

Diana GREGOR SVETEC
Faculty of Natural Sciences and Engineering
University of Ljubljana
Aškerčeva 12
SI-1000 Ljubljana
Slovenia
Tel: +38612003272 e-mail: diana.gregor@ntf.uni-lj.si