

Collectors

My name is Miftar Sebin, I am 23 years old, I have 3 kids and a wife. I live in tents, barracks. It's been like that all my life, since I was 10 years old.

I search for bottles in garbage containers, collect paper and gather bottles in order to buy some bread.

This kind of life is very hard. If somebody else was living this kind of life, they wouldn't want to live it.

As we live it, all of these families here, there 50 families without houses, without anything at all.

We've been living in tents all of our lives.

In winter in summer, whether it rains or not, we are here.

We have nowhere to go.

With our kids our families. Where should we go? There is nowhere to go

That's it.

In Macedonia recycling mostly happens through the informal litter gatherers, and the other part is left to the business sector, which uses part of the raw materials for business purposes.

The informal sector participates with 80-85% from overall quantities of litter gathered from packaging which means that the formal system has proved to be inefficient and is still mostly based on the work of the informal litter gatherers, which at the end only get the crumbs and represent a vulnerable social category in Macedonia, i.e. marginalized citizens.

Sebin, man, you have 132 kilos. Alright.

Times 3-How much is that?

Times 4-No.3

3denars? Give me a calculator, do you have one? No.

For 100 kilos you get 300 denars. Here you have 30kilos times 3. = 390. -400denars

400 denars

I have been torturing myself for 3 days for 400 denars

What could we do man? That's life. Come on.

Regarding the price. The ones who buy it, they give us the price.

Paper is worth 2,5-3 denars

The bottles are 200-220 per sack.

Some people come and want to take them for 180 denars, they say the price has dropped.

You have to give them in order to buy some bread, diapers and milk.

Citizens have the legal obligation to select the waste and to put it in a suitable container. That selected waste belongs to the waste management company and the company has the obligation to deliver it to the recycling companies. It is not supposed to reach the local landfills at any circumstances.

Informal gatherers meaning to gather the most raw materials they could, sometimes damage the system in which a lot of resources were invested. These resources were gathered based on the Packaging law and the packaging waste.

So, the manufacturers themselves, and at the end of the day, the citizens themselves pay for it because it is calculated in every product's price, it is what we pay as eco-tax in order to be able to build the infrastructure.

Somehow we have to find a way to solve the problem with the informal gatherers. We want to include the informal gatherers in the waste management system, whether in primary selection: to go to the homes, everyone in their own district, or in secondary: where they should select and bale the waste they gathered. We consider that having in mind the material the informal gatherers gather, the value it has together with the added value of a small profit, they could earn the average Macedonian wage. So, it's not some low wage it is at least the average Macedonian wage, and also they will have health and pension insurance.

New European studies showed that with 10000 tons of waste, and having in mind that in Macedonia we get around 700000 tons of waste, 280 jobs would be opened..

One could see the additional capacity for new job openings in Macedonia.

I will go and work if there is work to be done.

I'm very interested for working, everything that I could. And I don't refuse anything, if they put me to work in a toilet, I'd do it. For my kids.

It is necessary to work on peoples education, on raising awareness about the importance of waste management.

But on the other side, people who are aware and who select, don't have the option to get rid of that waste.

The state could do two things: one is to provide the citizens with the system, an infrastructure where they could select the waste.

The second one is to implement the existing legal regulations which instruct citizens to select their waste. But for the time being everybody likes this situation because, obviously if there is no infrastructure, this means that citizens don't have to select waste.

A feeling should be created with the citizens, so one would feel literally unpleasant to throw away the plastic or glass bottle in the garbage container for general waste that will end in a landfill, instead one should look for the nearest bin and put it for recycling.

So you have to achieve a feeling like, let's say that most people have for brushing their teeth at night, hand ect.

The selection should become a habit, and not something you do in order to get some benefit, to expect to get one denar back, ect. To literally understand that you are doing it for common benefit and for your own good, and that with little effort you could contribute to something bigger.