

Waste Processing: The good student of the European Union

Rising incomes and economic growth favouring consumption are both factors likely to increase waste. For some twenty years industrialised countries have been collapsing under the weight of these outward signs of wealth, which they seek to dispose of cleanly as best they can. In the early 1990s France was one of the first European countries to take the management of its waste seriously. After ten years experience the picture is generally encouraging.

CATHERINE ALEMU

FOUR billion tonnes is the amount of waste produced by the OECD countries (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) in the 1990s. The prize goes to the United States with 870 kg per person each year, or 2.5 kg a day. In 1997,

about 64% of municipal waste was put into landfill sites, 18% incinerated and 18% recycled. Although the productive use of waste has increased in industrialised countries, it is still not sufficient to reverse the trend of rising volumes to be disposed of. The OECD forecasts go even further, showing that production of municipal waste, an

estimated 540 million tonnes in 1997, will increase by 43% between now and 2020.

In an attempt to slow down this development, the European Community has issued a plethora of directives designed to encourage the productive use of waste of all kinds: from the largest, with vehicles at the end of their lives and electrical



and electronic products, to the smallest, such as batteries and packaging. These last have been longest in the hot seat, with the 1994 directive on packaging and waste packaging. From July 2, 2002, in each member state, 50% of the total weight of waste packaging must be put to good use, including 15% recycled, in other words reintroduced into the cycle of production by replacing all or some use of virgin raw material.

French waste in good hands

Have the French become exemplary ecocitizens? If you believe a survey conducted by the Solres survey institute in Spring 2000, 80% of them say they are quite prepared to sort their household waste. More generally, the same proportion thinks that environmental problems are really worrying. According to the latest statistics from IFEN (the French Institute for the Environment), the production of waste (excluding waste soil and rock) in France is estimated at 600 million tonnes, most of it consisting of agricultural waste (350 million tonnes) and building site waste (110 million tonnes).

Every French person throws away an average of more than a kilo of waste material each day. Nonetheless, we can be sure that our household waste is in good hands. The proof is that France lies in second place in the sorting hit parade among European countries, behind Germany. With 37 million sorters in 2000 and 44 million expected in 2001, France processes 1.7 million tonnes of household packaging each year in 250 approved sorting centres, through the household packaging waste management body, Eco-Emballages. This officially approved company was founded in 1993 in response to the 1992 law. It has set itself the target of recycling 65% of household packaging by 2002. Used as energy through incineration is an estimated 25% of packaging material.

Pushed by the European directive to set up industries making productive use of profitable packaging,

the French system now has its emulators, especially in Spain and Portugal, whose systems function on the same principles.

Nonetheless, it is still true that over the whole of French territory, the household waste "managed" by Eco-Emballages represents only a minute proportion of this category. According to Ademe (French Environment and Energy Management Agency), about 50 million tonnes of household and allied waste were processed in 1998. Of this, the majority (58%) was dumped on tips while 22% underwent energy treatment and 6% biological processing. There is still a long way to go before we can reduce the use of garbage dumps...

Recycling: a fully independent industry

The production of general industrial waste in France is estimated at 95 million tonnes a year. The product of production waste or used industrial packaging, this non hazardous and non inert waste consists of wood, paper, various metals, plastics, glass, textiles, etc. The producing businesses are responsible for its disposal, forced to send it to appropriate waste development facilities.

This measure has given birth in France to a genuine recycling industry. Thus in 1999, according to FeDeRec (Federation of Recycling Trades), 30.5 million tonnes of industrial waste were processed by 4,100 specialist businesses. Put back on the market, these secondary raw materials supply French industry with more than 40% of its needs. All of which considerably reduces the costs and damaging effects of the pollution associated with the production of virgin raw materials. The challenge is considerable, since the aim of this measure is to achieve a satisfactory ecological balance. The complementary nature of recycling and energy development, fairly well developed in France, is undoubtedly contributing to the levels of performance being recorded at the present time.

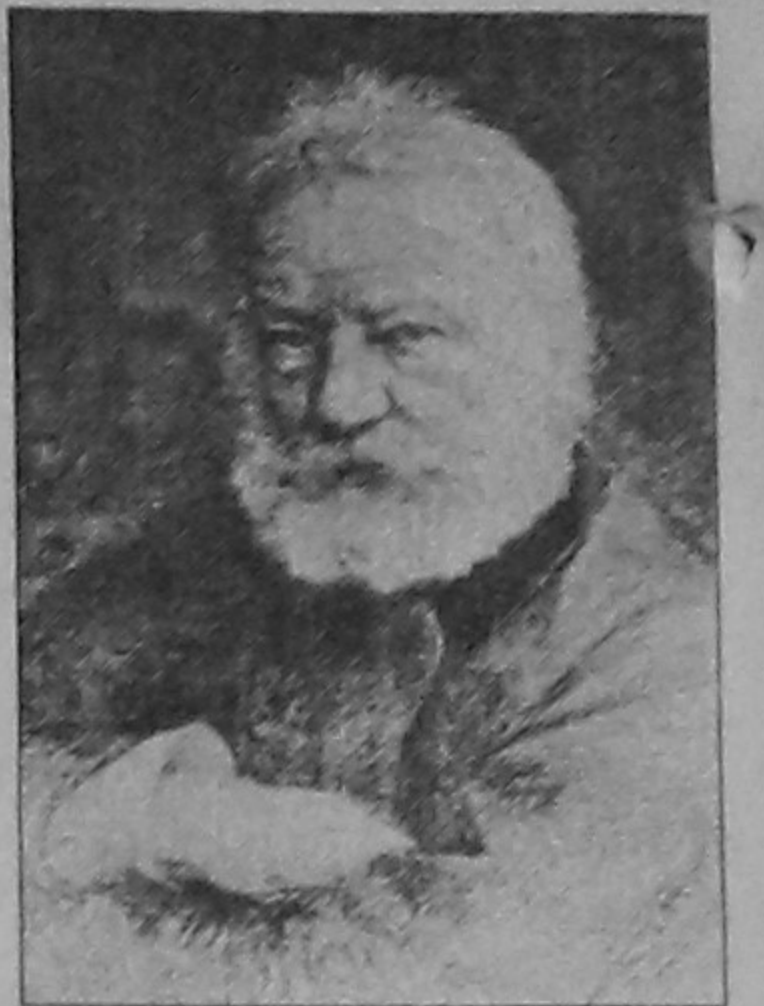
Bicentenary of Victor Hugo's birth

2002 marks the bicentenary of the birth of Victor Hugo. This great French writer was also a talented politician. France will enjoy paying homage to this "great man" all year long. Various events, commemorations, exhibitions and performances of his works will be held to celebrate the author of the *Legende des Siècles*.

SOPHIE BAROVSKI

A symbolical widescale initiative set the start for this year of commemorations for the bicentenary of the birth of Victor Hugo. The French Education Minister, Jack Lang, requested that, in all classes and whatever the subject taught, the first hour of lessons in the new year should begin with a

reading of a text by Victor Hugo. It could be a way of getting students to read or reread *Ruy Blas*, *Les Misérables* or *Notre-Dame de Paris* (the Hunchback of Notre-Dame). Teachers are invited to surf on the www.victorhugo.education.fr site where a lot of information is given on this writer and politician whose fame has spread far beyond the



Victor Hugo 1882-2002

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Creative holidays

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speciality is glass containing small trapped air-bubbles, you will be able to make your own goblet. While you are there, you will be able to admire the magical sight of glass-blowers in action, in the big hall.

A passion for perfume: Less of a manual art but extremely refined, the creation of a personal perfume, unlike any other, is a dream. Here, in the land of lavender and mimosa, Grasse the perfume capital, in Provence, offers to make your dream come true. The 'Nose' in particular of the famous Galimard perfumery will explain the architecture of a good perfume, after a visit to the perfume factory, the history of this industry and a presentation of the basic products and techniques to harmonise them. The Molinard

perfumery, which is also in Grasse, offers a perfume creation workshop in a beautiful 1900 setting (that of the Villa Habanita, next to the perfumery), with theoretical and practical work. Each participant will be awarded a diploma and take his or her perfume away with them. Moreover, he will always be able to order some more of it as the formula is kept secret. Close by, Michèle Funel, a master-perfumer, has created a perfume workshop in Cagnes, producing all kinds of products of natural origin. She runs courses offering an introduction to perfume-making, during which she will enthusiastically present her profession and will help you to create your own personal perfume. You will be able to give free rein to your imagination.

France at war against AIDS

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times higher -- and to help them insist that partners whose HIV status is unknown use a condom.

To physiological factors are added cultural and social factors that contribute to contamination (inequality between men and women, the latter still all too often expected to take responsibility for preventing the risk of AIDS, as they are for preventing pregnancy, violence, financial insecurity and social exclusion). Amongst other social groups targeted are practicing homosexual men, injecting drug users, migrants, people with little access to information and the young.

To permit diagnosis and care of people before the symptoms of the disease appear is one of the priorities of the Ministry of Health. One person in two discovers they are HIV positive either when AIDS is diagnosed or when they consult a doctor about an opportunistic illness.

Yet it is now possible to establish a biological diagnosis of infection within two weeks after a risk has been taken (unprotected sexual intercourse, a split condom, injury from a blood-soiled object, sharing syringes when injecting, which permits early care. Preventive treatment (one month's multiple antiretroviral treatment) can also be offered within forty-eight hours following exposure to the risk, in an attempt to prevent contamination.

Since 1988, to make access to screening easier, the government has set up in each French Département, anonymous and free screening centres staffed by multidisciplinary teams (doctors, nurses, psychologists, social workers) where information and advice is also given.

Progress in the fight against the disease, both in terms of the health, psychological and social care of sufferers and their families and friends, and of research, could however, never have been achieved without the extreme mobilisation of civil society and the tenacity of organisations such as Act-Up, Aides, Arcat-Sida, Ensemble contre le sida (All Against AIDS) (run by sufferers themselves) and Médecins du monde. These organisations have also changed the way victims of HIV are perceived, especially by fighting the discrimination to which they were subject as well as actively involving them in the patient-carer relationship.

Société Française d'Équipement Hospitalier

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