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# Buy-Back of Recyclables - Informal Collection

## 1 Introduction

The world is facing a global plastic waste crisis. It harms people and the environment equally. In many places there is a lack of adequate waste management infrastructure and financing of collection activities. This results in a multitude of environmental, social, and economic challenges. With no alternative systems in place, in most low- and middle-income countries, the collection and processing of plastic waste therefore depends almost entirely on the informal sector. However, despite their significant contribution, waste workers are amongst society's most marginalized groups with no recognition of their valuable services, often being deprived of access to sustainable income sources and basic social services.

## 2 Buy-Back Process

This information sheet of EcoPontes provides orientation on which steps should be taken to integrate the informal sector when receiving material. This process is structured in a way to foster positive impact for both sides, the collector and the receiver of the material as it enhances efficiency and sustainable cooperation.

### 2.1 Trainings

To increase the efficacy and efficiency of the local recycling value chain active participation and continuous interaction between the actors involved is significant. Trainings play an important role to ensure that specific challenges and opportunities in the local waste management sector and value chain are addressed. Service providers should make sure that trainings are organized and are appropriate and relevant to the target group. Working with the informal sector puts a special emphasize on accessibility when conveying the content which may include:

- Operative processes at EcoPontes collection points
  - Description of delivery to collection point
  - Description of billing mode
  - Registration of collectors, handing out badges
- Types of material and requirements regarding quality and means of identifying different types of material, e.g.
  - PET
  - PP
  - LDPE
- Occupational health and risk in solid waste collection



## 2.2 Registration of collector

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After the trainings the waste collectors should have the opportunity to be registered as a material deliverer. This can be done analog e.g., through book-keeping and/or digitally in tools like Excel or material tracking apps. The registration is important to document the collection and the payment for their delivery. Handing out personalized badges is also a form of recognition for their environmental services and can deepen the relationship between informal collectors and EcoPontes operator.

In addition, the use of digital material tracking tools can help document compliance with social and environmental norms and standards thereby giving access to buyers of recyclables that are willing to pay higher prices for material collected under fair conditions.

## 2.3 Weighing the material

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As soon as the material is received, it is weighed on a scale. The weight is recorded as gross weight.

Then the material is checked for quality. Indicators for the control are material type, quality, and purity in each bag. Material which does not correspond to the parameters is to be separated.

Once this check is complete, the remaining material is weighed again, and recorded as net weight on the weighing control sheet. Additional information to be documented are:

- weighing date
- the supplier's name
- telephone number
- operator
- material type
- quantity obtained

## 2.4 Quality control

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The material has to be inspected and checked if the quality requirements are met. It is important to include the quality requirements in trainings. The requirements are determined by the buyer and may include the following:

- Interfering substances/impurities as paper components (labels), metals and contaminants (e.g. sand)
- Separated into different polymer types
- Separated into different colors
- Form of delivery (rice bags, big bags,...)

## 2.5 Payment

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Including informal collectors requires special engagement from the side of the EcoPontes operator to pay directly upon delivery of the material and document each transaction of payments. The documentation of payments can be done in various ways (analog, via banking receipts, use of mobile money, use of digital solution which registers collected material and have mobile money function integrated) best done in consultation with the involved informal collectors.



## About Us

**Rodiek & Co GmbH** is a consulting company in the field of waste management, recycling and circular solutions.

It is our Mission to support the development of a functioning circular economy by providing experience and operational knowhow.

Our target regions are low- and middle-income countries, where waste management and recycling is still in its early stages. Our solutions are tailored to the specific local requirements and needs.

We provide services along the complete value chain from collection over sorting, to treatment and preparation for recycling.

We provide technical support for facilities, including vehicles, machinery as well as material flow management.

We also offer the development of sustainable recycling and energy concepts for local communities, businesses and industries.

As a 100% daughter company of Nehlsen Group, one of the largest German waste management and recycling companies, we can access the operational knowhow and practical expertise from 99 years of waste management and recycling business in Germany.

## GET IN TOUCH

+49 421 89820-455 

info@nehlsen-rodiek.com 

www.nehlsen-rodiek.com 

Rodiek & Co. GmbH  
Konsul-Smidt-Str. 50-52  
28217 Bremen   
Germany