



TransWaste

Formalisation of informal sector activities in collection and transboundary shipment of wastes in and to CEE

Deliverable 3.3.1

Status of waste collectors

4th period of the project TransWaste

Funded by CENTRAL EUROPE

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This project is implemented through the CENTRAL EUROPE Programme co-financed by the ERDF



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1 Introduction

The status of waste collectors and their income from waste picking (in comparison to the mean income in their home countries) were investigated in work package 3.

Investigations were carried out during the field visits within work package 3.

2 Austrian waste collectors

It was determined that 19 % of the waste collectors collecting in Austria are living in Austria too. It mostly concerns foreigners, like from the Western Balkan countries, but also Austrians. Former collect all kinds of goods and bring them to their home countries. They either sell it or support their families in their home countries. Latter often concerns retired persons which collect valuable or special items to pass the time. Others are junk dealers called "Trödler" collecting all kinds of antiques or hobbyists collecting electronic goods and use them as spare parts. Other regional collectors (often from the same municipality) collect firewood (untreated wood) for their heating at home.

The relation between Austrian waste collectors and staff at waste collection centres is different. At field visits it was observed that Austrian collectors with foreign origin are disliked at waste collection centres. Other Austrian collectors, like junk dealers, were accepted by the staff and were allowed to be inside the collection centre too. These people are often from the region and know therefore the staff personally. That is why they have most of time better access to the items. In other waste collection centres on the contrary it was observed that they even were not allowed to go inside of the centre. The staff dislikes the behaviour of such Austrian collectors saying "this is our waste, that is why I can take whatever I want." This is not true, because as soon as the waste is inside of the collection centre it belongs to the owner of the centre, the municipality or the waste management association.

The relation between Austrian collectors and other collectors, like Hungarians, was also asked and observed at field visits. It was reported at one centre that the Austrian collectors don't obey the rules among the collectors and therefore conflicts occur. In another case one Austrian collector reported that he had a conflict with a Slovakian collector. The consequence was that the Slovakian collectors were banned from the collection centre. Conflicts were also reported when metals are involved.

The social status of the Austrian collectors was hard to evaluate. It concerns both very poor people but also middle-income people, like retired persons. One woman collecting items complained that she is very poor. Her neighbours observe her with disrespect because her garden is piled with used items. Her son is unsatisfied with the collected items and refuses to wear used clothes.



Table 2.1: Fact file Austria (Source: Statistik Austria)

Indicators	2009
GDP per capita	EUR 32,800
Unemployment rate	4,8 %
Unemployment benefits	EUR 26.88 per day
Number of persons obtaining the state of emergency benefits	91,211 (1.1 % of the total population)
State of emergency benefits	EUR 20,13 per day
Number of persons obtaining a pension	2,182,581 (26 % of the total population)
Average pension	EUR 1,100 per month
Average disablement pension	EUR 926 per month
Average widow pension	EUR 645 per month
Average widower pension	EUR 288 per month
Mean income, gross	EUR 23.400 per year

3 Hungarian waste collectors

Waste collectors coming from Hungary appear all over Central Europe, like in Austria, Germany and Slovakia. Yet, also within Hungary waste collection activities take place.

Hungarian waste collectors were observed within Austria and also within Hungary. The Austrian investigations resulted in 61 interviews with Hungarian collectors. **Fehler! Verweisquelle konnte nicht gefunden werden.** shows the occupation of those collectors. 29 % stated that the waste collecting activities are the only source of income for them; other 3 % stated that they only get additional support from family members. One fourth of the collectors was retired persons and obtained a pension from the state. 2 % obtained disability pension. 7 % stated that they live from temporary work and 23 % said that they have also another occupation. From 11 % of the interviews the occupation couldn't be determined.



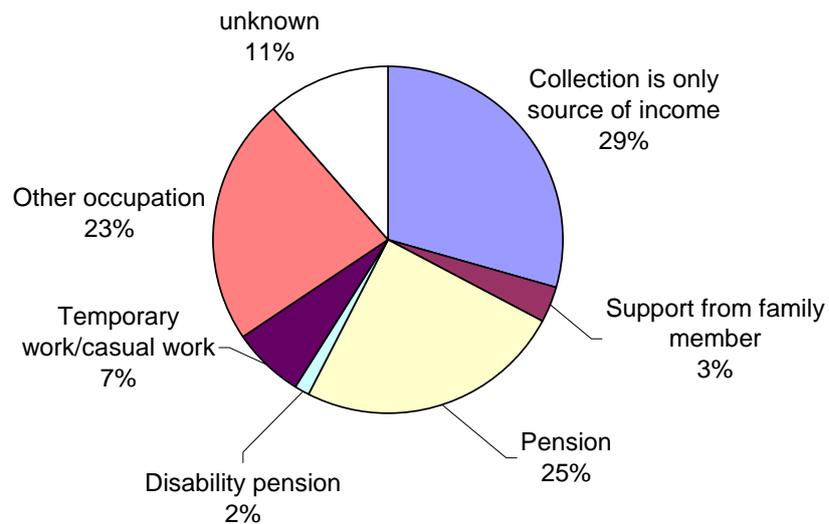


Figure 3.1: Occupation of Hungarian waste collectors collecting in Austria (interviews with 61 collector groups)

The income of the waste collectors was hard to determine, because questions on that issues were very sensitive. Not every waste collector was therefore asked about their income. But still some of them gave answers, if the activities are profitable. The results though are not sufficient for a statistical analysis. Therefore no average amounts can be determined. Only single statements can be considered to give a hint in which range the collector's income is. Three persons stated that the activities are not always profitable. Twelve people approved the profitability of the activity and declared an income of HUF 20.000 to 300.000 (EUR 70 to 1.100) per month at which the upper limit is rather an exception. Most of them stated that their profit is **EUR 100 per month** or less (6 people). Some stated the profit of one trailer, which is around EUR 20. Another one stated that HUF 40.000 (EUR 148) is the limit to be profitable, but nearly half of it is taken for fuel.

Table 3.1: Fact file Hungary **(it is in average amount because it is calculated from previously worked hours and type of job)*

Indicators	2009
GDP per capita	EUR 9,300 (Source: Eurostat 2009)
Unemployment rate	10,0 % (Source: Eurostat 2009)
Unemployment benefits	EUR 165 per month (www.munka.hu)*
Number of persons obtaining the state of emergency benefits	213,436 (KSH 2009)
State of emergency benefits	EUR 98 per months (www.munka.hu)
Number of persons obtaining a pension	2,989,000 (29,8 % of the total population) (KSH 2009)
Average pension	EUR 303 per month (KSH 2009)
Average disablement pension	EUR 108 per month (www.munka.hu)
Average widower pension	EUR 243 per month (www.munka.hu)
Mean income, gross	8,700 EUR per year (KSH 2009)

From the Hungarian investigation we received the information that most of the Hungarian bulky waste collectors (Iomis) collect the goods from private houses and in front of junkyards in abroad once or more a week. Regarding the destination for bulky waste collection the frequent provinces are marked on the map below. One Iomis travels for goods to Nederland; there he seeks the used items markets.



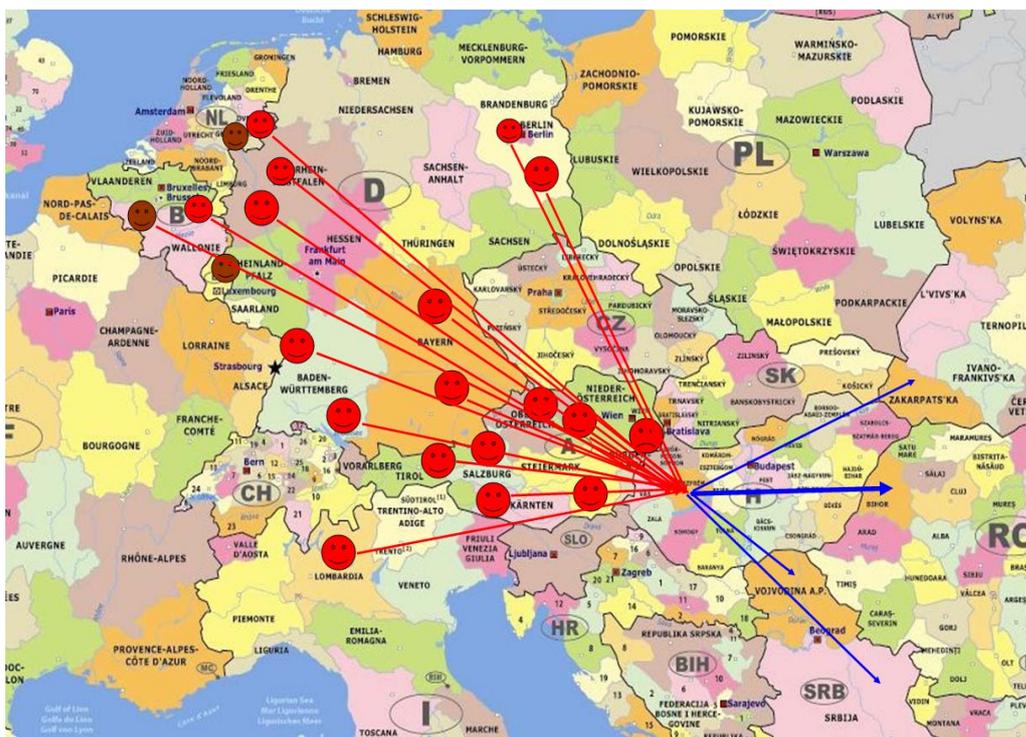


Figure 3.2: Destination for bulky waste collection

Based on the answers, the poorer bulky waste collectors go to the nearest provinces of Austria, while the better exchequer bulky waste collectors go further (Germany, Nederland...), but the number of these people is less. The brown points show the destination for furniture. A number of persons, who go to Austria, noticed that forceful sanction was in Burgenland provinces against Hungarian lomises recently. For example: waste management companies (Firman Ltd., etc.) forbid the lomi act, prohibited collection in front of junkyards and private houses (in this case, the Austrian residents have to pay fine: about 500€).

Many of lomises go to given address for the goods, in front of fixed junkyards or private houses. Along the way, if they have luck, they are able to find other goods or addresses. They don't give anybody their own address list.

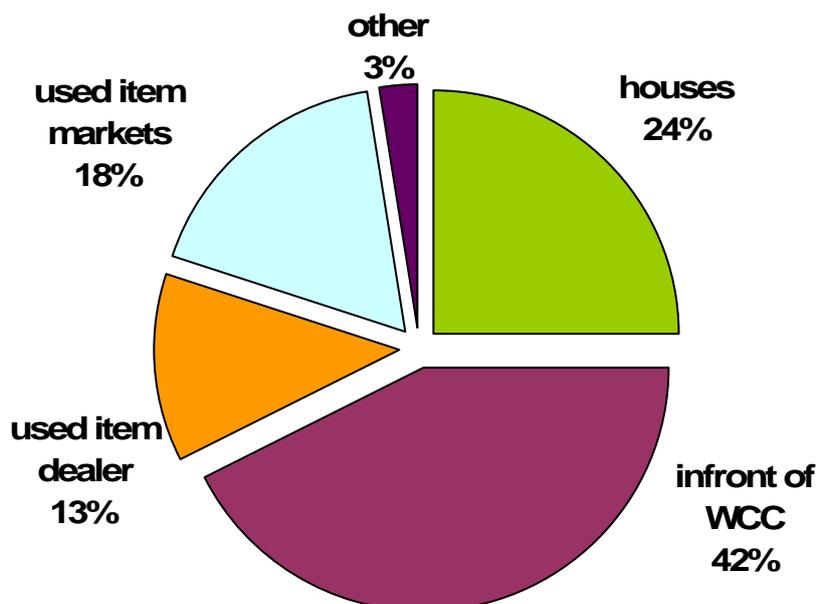


Figure 3.3: Place of bulky waste collection in Austria

We met the following possibilities for getting information:

- The lomises (in this case 2 people) ask certain items from residents by leaflets
- Advertisement (2 lomises)
- Information from Internet
- Getting an own address list
- Questioning
- Austrian acquaintance helps them (3 lomises)

10 out of 26 people can speak German well. The rest know only the bases of the necessary words.

Those lomises, who go to private house or junkyard for goods, ask the citizens of find them themselves when they want to get in contact with them.

In average they have been doing this work for 6,6 years.

The age group of the people that have been asked was mixed. It covers the whole scale of earning residents. Some people from the senior lomises do this act for more than 20 years. In case of more families the work is inherited from generation to generation.

The big parts of lomises go to abroad for goods once or more per week. Some of them come back right away; some of them – who live further – stay there even a week or two.

Greater part of lomises transport by van (they called it “bus”). 5 people of respondents rent a van or trailer per way (the trailer rental fee: 9€/day without bill). Some people lease the van.

More and more people have to buy the goods from used item dealers, markets or private houses. In some cases, they have to bargain with the owner. 2 people answered that they pay money to employees, who helps them or drives the car.

The fuel cost/way to Austria: 150-220€; to Germany: twice this amount, plus 180€ goods buying/way. (Every time they have to spare money for the accidental fine of police.)

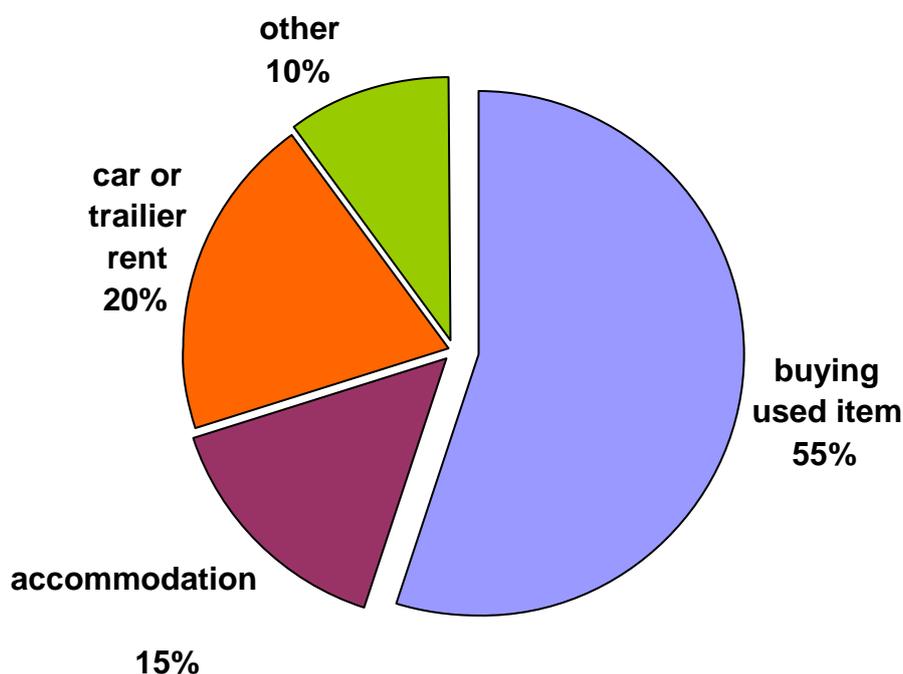


Figure 3.4: Spent money by bulky waste collection

Most of the vendors in Devecser (centre of lomi activity) haven't got own shops, except 2 people. They rent a part of the hutment, which is the market area and it is also what the lomies use for storage and shop. In most cases the lomies people check the collected goods only at home. At this time they find out whether the electronic equipment works or not. Some people check the goods in Austria, because they don't want to bring wrong equipment. Many of them sell their items only in Devecser. The other markets are in Észak-Dunántúl (North -Transdanubium): in Celldömölk, Pápa, Veszprém, Ajka, Tapolca city and some people travel to the Alföld (Great Plain). The lomies sell different kind of goods or some lomies specialized only on certain items. In many cases the electric/electronic goods (TV, computer, hi-fi, etc.) are broken. The most common goods are: lawnmower, bicycle, clothes, tyre, chairs, skating, ski things, toys, etc.

10 lomies out of 26 stated that they don't bring in any waste. Some of them don't bring broken items from Austria; the other part gives their unmarketable things to the beggars or patrol services. According to lomies, from every van (11m³) 1m³ of goods will be waste. Usually the simpler goods are repaired (bicycle, maybe lawnmower) by lomies (in most cases). They rarely pay for the repair, because this amount would be higher than the sale price. In their opinion the Austrian residents don't get their things repaired due to the high repair costs and the favourable prices of new products. On the other hand, the German people are saving more; they use their things for a longer period and give up theirs more difficultly. Most of them, 15 out 26 transport the waste to the right places. Many of them know only MÉH (waste collector firm) as a selective collecting point. The vendors of Devecser earn money from this activity. Usually they don't find job in their profession or they inherit this life-style. Some lomies work under trading concern (they have licences and give bill after the shopping), many lomies work to survive their every-day-life (they are selling the goods in exchange for any goods (vegetable, potato, flour, etc. - barter). They good contact with other bulky waste collectors, if it is necessary they help each other, and they only sometimes have conflicts with each

other. In general there was no conflict. The most significant is the family collaboration, see on the 2nd figure.

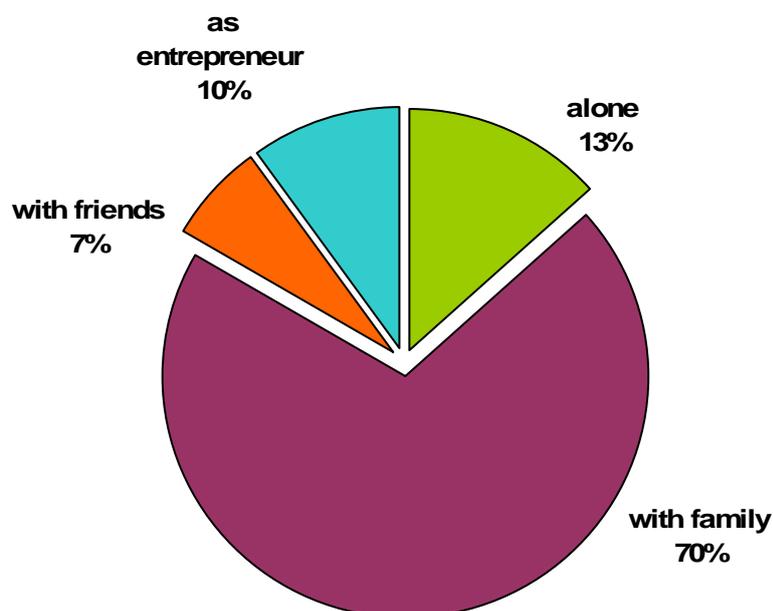


Figure 3.5: Cooperation between bulky waste collectors

Most of the vendors already met resellers, who sell in Devecser or come from the East part of Hungary or from eastern countries. Calculation of the amount of these goods is very difficult, which is according to the lomis about 20%.

From the neighbouring settlements, from the Balaton and from Keszthely, Dombóvár, Székesfehérvár From Hungary: Pécs, Szeged, Siófok, Nyíregyháza, Kecskemét, Budapest, Alföld. From abroad: Romania, Ukraine, Serbia, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Germany, Netherland and Austria. Austrians often purchase goods to their residencies at the lake Balaton and to the neighbouring settlements. Most often Romanian and Ukrainian customers were indicated.

While the tax agency keeps random controls in Hungary every year, in Austria the police control. The number of positive answers indicates how serious the problem is. Some mentioned that he is being stopped by every fifth route. Fines can be from a few hundred even up to 1200 Euros. The main reasons are overloaded vehicles, engineering problems, speeding, banned collection of wastes, etc.

By their opinion there are some things what should be done to improve their activity

- to stop being blamed for theft in Austria
- know sources for goods
- reducing control by the Austrian police
- reducing the number of lomis
- to have a common central facility, but some see it as a new source of problems and conflicts in the lomis community.
- to have a licence to do this activity in the future.

4 German waste collectors

In Germany two different surveys were accomplished to determine the distribution of the origin of the waste picker. On the one hand staff of waste collection centres and on the other hand responsible persons from the waste management organizations was asked. Over 95 percent of the pickers were detected of being from Eastern Europe originally. Around 5 percent were made out as German waste pickers. The following table gives information about this issue.

Table 4.1: Origin of waste collectors

Origin of Waste pickers	Phone survey	Email survey
Czech Republic	29 %	14 %
Poland	24 %	27 %
Hungary	13 %	9 %
Slovakia	6 %	8 %
Romania	13 %	15 %
Germany	5 %	2 %
Lithuania	0 %	0 %
Ukraine	2 %	0 %
Latvia	0 %	3 %
Others	8 %	8 %
Not known	0 %	15 %

According to interviews German Waste pickers are interested mostly in spare parts but also items, which are sellable at second – hand – shops or at flea markets, which are organized in some cities or communes at Sundays. Some of the delivered waste rather items at recycling centers are in such good condition that waste organizations offer a self operated flea market, where German citizens are allowed to collect stuff. In this case it is hard to divide between waste picker, rummage trader or private person and thereof between the social statuses. The reason that only German citizens have the opportunity to use the service of the recycling center markets is based on their payment for the expenditures the waste management organization has, because the recycling centers respectively the recycling center flea markets are cross financed through the official waste fees. Moreover it depends on the recycling centre if the collection of things through Germans is allowed. Some of them are more generous while others have strict rules not to let anyone collect at the recycling centre. Nevertheless it was reported that also Germans were searching for some electronic and electrical spare parts like inductors of PCs.

A more structured waste picker system could be watched in Berlin. Those pickers were situated with a transporter with a German license tag in front of recycling centers and promote their willingness to take old electrical stuff through a sign, on that was written “hi-fi systems, fridges, washing machines etc. Out of 11 detected transporters, three were found to have a German number plate. The German waste pickers weren’t willing to give information about their background. This could be explained through former measurements which were undertaken through the waste management organisation, to prevent such collection actions. Nevertheless one of the asked persons of one German Transporter did have had an Eastern European background. Therefore it is not sure that the number plate shows the origin of the owner/picker.

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Table 4.2: Fact file Germany (Arbeitsagentur, Destatis, Deutsche Rentenversicherung)

Indicators	2009
GDP per capita	40.873,27 US\$
Unemployment rate	ca. 9 %
Unemployment benefits	60 % of gross pay (general earned rate of Out-of-work-benefits)
Number of persons obtaining the state of emergency benefits	1.140.982 people (Out-of-work-benefits I) 4.907.759 people (Out-of-work-benefits II)
State of emergency benefits	359 Euro per month (Out-of-work-benefits II)
Number of persons obtaining a pension	24.932.492 people (general pension and miners' insurance)
Average pension	2.520 Euro per month (west) 2.135 Euro per month (east)
Average disablement pension	671 Euro
Average widow pension	ca. 560 Euro (general pension)
Average widower pension	ca. 250 Euro (general pension)
Mean income, gross	42.560 US\$ per capita



5 Polish waste collectors

Table 5.1: Fact file Poland

Indicators	Eurostat	Central Statistical Office 2009
GDP per capita	EUR 9 500 (2008) 61% (EU-27 = 100) (2009)	8 366 EUR (2008) 8 804 EUR (2009)
Unemployment rate	9,7% (Feb. 2011)*	12,1% (31.12.2009)* 13,2% (Feb.2011)
Unemployment benefits		basic rate: EUR 186 monthly for 3 months, then - EUR 146 per month
Number of persons obtaining the state of emergency benefits		2.082.800 = 5,5% of population
State of emergency benefits		EUR 900 mln = EUR 430 per beneficiary
Number of persons obtaining a pension		9.332.274 (pensions & retirement pensions) = (24,5% of the total population) in which 7.906.500 ZUS (Social Insurance Institution)
Average pension		EUR 412 per month - ZUS
Average disablement pension		EUR 296 per month - ZUS
Average widow pension		EUR 348 per month – ZUS
Average widower pension		
Mean income, gross		EUR 9 305 per year

*

persons age 15–74 who are not working, have looked for work in the last 4 weeks, and ready to start work within 2 weeks

$$\text{Unemployment rate by Eurostat} = \frac{\text{total labour force}}{\text{persons age 15–74 who are not working, have looked for work in the last 4 weeks, and ready to start work within 2 weeks}}$$


$$*Unemployment\ rate\ by\ CSO = \frac{registered\ unemployed\ persons}{total\ labour\ force}$$

(total labour force = people employed plus unemployed)

In Poland, pensions for farmers provides **Agricultural Social Insurance Fund (KRUS)**:

- Average pension – EUR 228 per month
- Average disablement pension - EUR 180 per month
- Average widow/widower pension - EUR 239 per month

6 Slovakian waste collectors

Waste collectors in Slovakia has been observed and interviewed in region of south and west of Slovakia. Information provided in this survey gives a picture about standard of living group of informal waste collectors and has been divided in several categories: By origin, age, source of income and income level.

Origin of waste collectors

Within the core region of survey of informal waste-collecting activities in Slovakia (south area of Slovakia, Slovak-Hungarian and Slovak-Austrian crossborder region), questioned waste collectors were almost exclusively of Slovak and Hungarian origin.

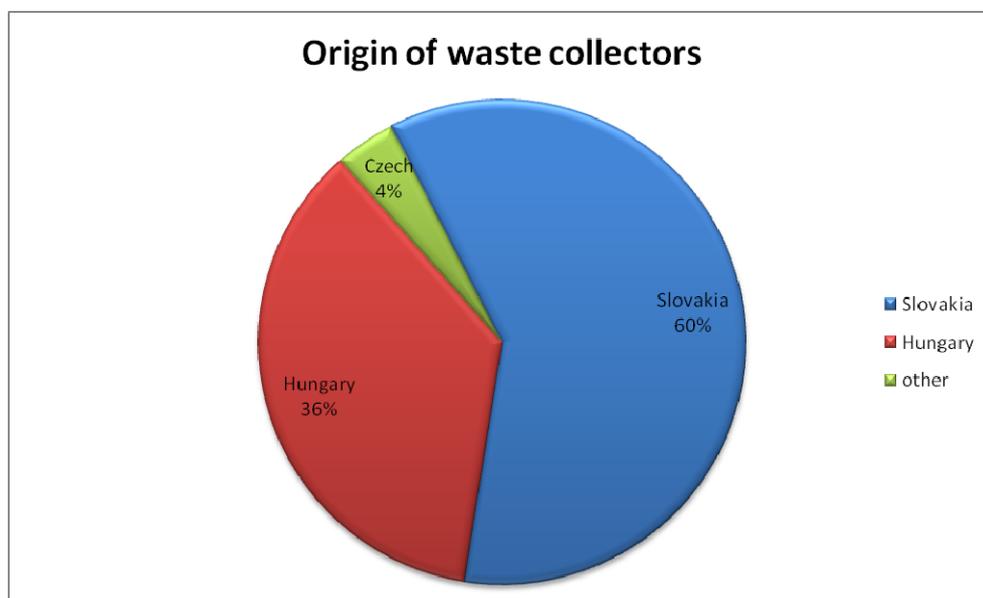


Figure 6.1: Origin of waste collectors in SK

Meeting waste collectors of other nationalities was expected, mainly people of Polish, Ukrainian and Romanian origin, as these have been met in other countries. The only collector met during the survey who were not of Slovak or Hungarian origin was Czech.

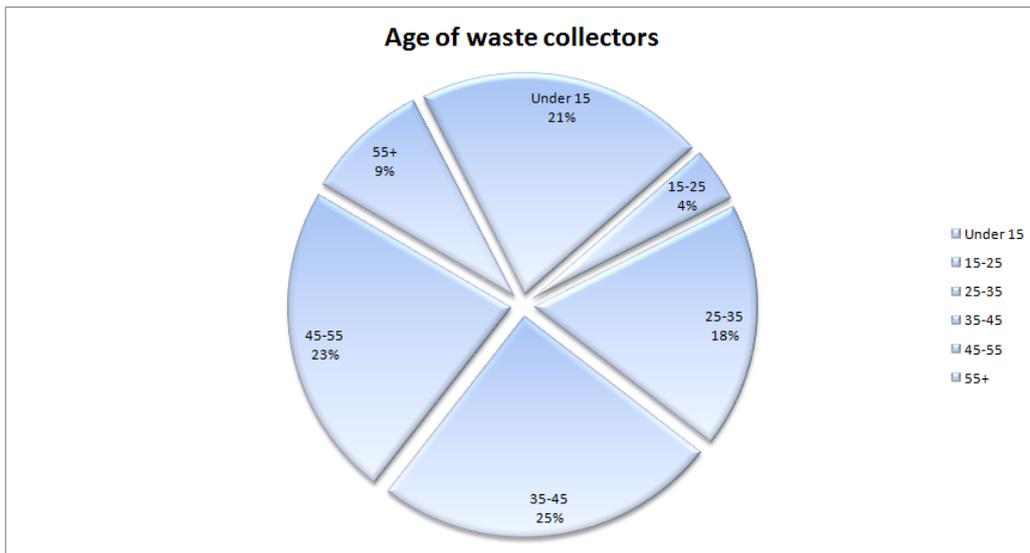


Figure 6.2: Age of waste collectors in SK

Divided by age, the majority of waste collectors are from 35 to 55 years old, sometimes they are accompanied by their children. Children under age of 15 who pick WEEE have been seen by themselves by WEEE collecting occasions organised by municipalities, probably sent by their parents.

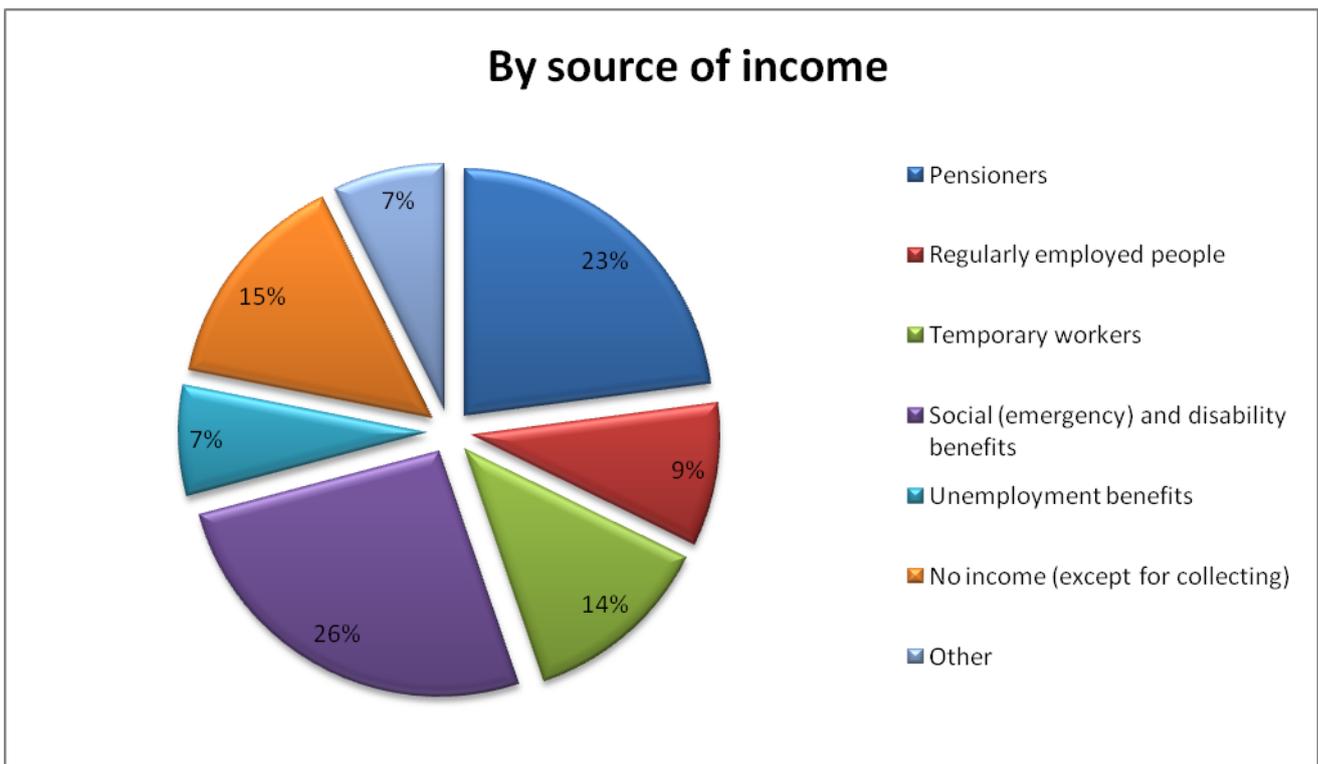


Figure 6.3: Source of income of waste collectors in SK

In general, in this category we can distinguish 3 basic groups of waste collectors.

1. The poorest group of waste collectors includes mostly individual waste pickers. Members of this group are usually people with no official income or people with income which doesn't cover their elementary needs, e.g. social benefits etc. Waste collecting is sometimes the only non-illegal source of income for members of this group, they make a everyday living off it. They search more-less randomly for any items of possible sell or use and the logical consequence is they get the lowest quality of waste. The majority of these people are of Roma origin, there are also common problems with homelessness, alcohol and addictions. Social exclusion is very common for this group of people. Sometimes whole families belong to this group, usually many-member families whose income only consists of social benefits of parents. In comparison with other two groups they have no car at disposal and many of the items they find they use for their own needs. Items of interest: metals, WEE, clothes, bicycles, furniture, wood for heating, anything else that can be sold for cash.

2. Organized informal waste collector groups

Waste collecting is a kind of informal "employment" for this group of people, they usually work in pairs or groups. This is the key group of waste-pickers who deal with international waste transport.

These people either operate outside recycling and collection centers or at local waste-collecting occasions arranged by municipalities. They are very well informed about times and places of waste-collecting occasions, such as door to door bulky waste collections and WEE collections and bulky waste collections arranged by municipalities. They are equipped either with a car and trailer or with a van. As the municipality needs to advertise dates and times of collection, informal this very group use to visit households and ask for waste. Sometimes they collect sellable waste and leave, but more often they only pick the most valuable pieces and leave the uninteresting parts behind for official company to pick up. Of course, in case they meet with official company employees, there often occur conflicts among informal and formal collectors, mainly because citizens mistake informal collectors for employees of official company and use to complain to real waste collector about mess and items left behind. Main items of interest are metals and WEE.

3. The third group consists of people with regular income, who have an extra income of informal waste collecting:

3. a) pensioners

3. b) employed people, resp. people living off temporary work, often close to average pay level or even slightly above.

Members of this group don't usually search in mixed waste containers, but take waste for example from small houses and private properties reconstruction etc. They usually have a car at disposal, either their own or borrowed. Their income doesn't only come from selling collected items and materials, they also collect a fee for taking the waste away, gasoline money or such. If there is a large amount of unprofitable waste (building material waste, etc.) it is a more-less common practice not to bring it to a landfill, as they would have to pay the fee, but to dump it to a forest or simply by the road. In case they get rid of unsellable waste in illegal way it is more difficult to prove it.

Items of interest: mainly metals and WEE.



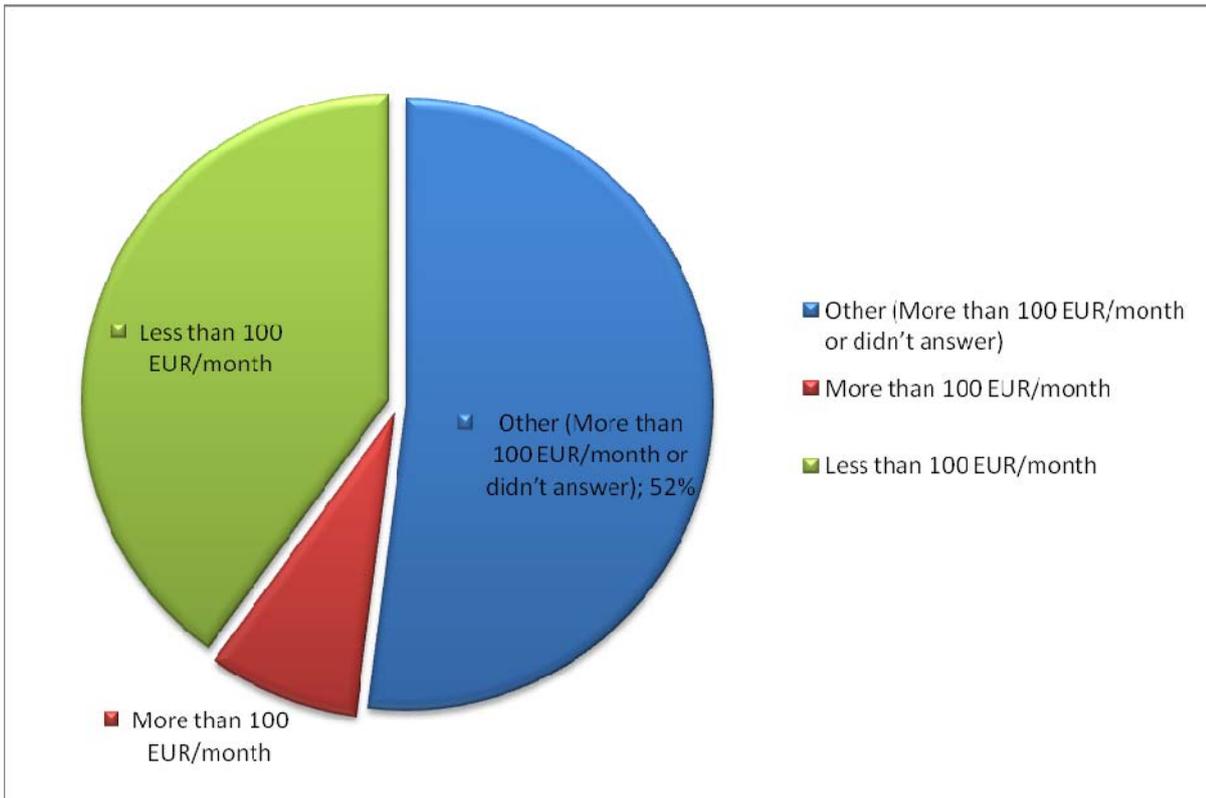


Figure 6.4: Income level of waste collectors in SK

This has been the most difficult category to survey, as many of the questioned weren't willing to answer. According to interviews approximately 40% of asked waste collectors stated they earn less than 100 EUR/month. 2 people (8%) of 25 interviewed stated they might earn more than 100 EUR a month, but didn't want to give closer numbers. With large probability this percentage would be higher, but there are no bases how to determine the number. The remaining 52% either refused to answer or tried to avoid direct answer, or even terminated the conversation.

Table 6.1: Fact file Slovakia

Indicators	2009 ¹
GDP per capita	EUR 5418 (Source: www.statistics.sk)
Unemployment rate	12,1 (Source: www.statistics.sk)
Unemployment benefits	EUR 248 per month (Source: www.socpoist.sk)
Number of persons obtaining the state of emergency benefits	164706 ² (Source: www.upswar.sk)
State of emergency benefits	EUR 136,48 per months (source: MPVSR, www.employment.gov.sk)
Number of persons obtaining a pension	1,568,000 (Source: www.statistics.sk)
Average pension	EUR 238,32 per month (Source: www.statistics.sk)
Average disablement pension	EUR 249,43 per month (Source: www.statistics.sk)
Average widower pension	EUR 157,86 per month (Source: www.statistics.sk)
Mean income, gross	8934 EUR per year (Source: www.statistics.sk)

7 Summary

Austria and Germany are among the partner countries counted to Western European countries with higher mean incomes and consequently higher pensions or unemployment benefits. Eastern European countries, like Slovakia, Poland and Hungary, show far less mean incomes. For example in 2009 the mean income in Hungary and also in Poland was around 2.5 times less than the mean income in Austria and even around 3 to 3.5 times less than in Germany. Consequently differences in the unemployed benefits are also high. As an example an unemployed person in Hungary receives EUR 165 per month on average (KSH Hungarian Central Statistical Office), in Austria EUR 772 per month on average (Statistik Austria) based on year 2009. The difference is therefore enormous regarding the fact that living costs are also increasing in Eastern European countries. Many collectors from Hungary stated that they receive retirement pension or disablement pension, but they can't live out of it. The retirement pension in Hungary is EUR 303 per month and the disablement pension is even EUR 108 per month compared to the pensions in Austria and Germany which range from EUR 1.100 (Statistik Austria) to EUR 2.520 (Deutsche Rentenversicherung) per month respectively.

¹ Source: http://www.statistics.sk/pls/elisw/casovy_Rad.procDlq, if not stated otherwise

² http://www.upswar.sk/statistiky/socialne-davky-statistiky/2009.html?page_id=10828



Unemployment rates are also differing from country to country. Yet, it can't be generally said that Western countries have lower unemployment rates than Eastern countries. In 2009 Germany had an unemployment rate of 7.8%, Austria 4.8%, Hungary 10%, Poland 8.2% and Slovakia 12%. Collectors coming from Hungary stated in 2009 that they recently got unemployed and instead of sitting at home they started such informal collection activities.

Regarding GDP (Gross Domestic Product) Austria and Germany are above Europeans average and Slovakia, Hungary and Poland below. The purchasing power parity of people at-risk-of-poverty-threshold is in Austria and Germany 2.2 to 2.8 times higher than in Slovakia, Poland and Hungary. Considering these indicators it is reproducible that people in Eastern European countries still use goods which are no use for people from Western European countries anymore.

Table 7.1: Fact file, all countries in comparison (Eurostat)

Indicators	Austria	Poland	Germany	Slovakia	Hungary
Data based on 2008					
Expenditure on pensions, % GDP	13,9	11,6	12,2 (Provisional value)	7,1 (Provisional value)	10,9
Public expenditure on labour market policy supports- Out-of-work income maintenance and support, Million EUR	2717	522	26008 (Estimated value)	69	391
GDP per capita in Purchasing Power Standards (PPS) (EU-27 = 100)	124	56	116	72	64
Nominal Gross Domestic Product per capita, EUR per inhabitant	34 000	9 500	30 200	12 000	10 600
Social protection benefits, EUR per inhabitant (at constant 2000 prices)	398	27	387	52	60
Data based on 2009					
At-risk-of-poverty threshold (Source: SILC) in PPS	11318	4427	10775	4713	4103



Short Description: The threshold is set at 60 % of the national median equivalised disposable income (after social transfers). It is expressed in Purchase Parity Standards (PPS) in order to take into account differences in cost of living across EU Member States.

The purchasing power parity of people at-risk-of-poverty-threshold is in Austria and Germany 2.2 to 2.8 times higher than in Slovakia, Poland and Hungary.

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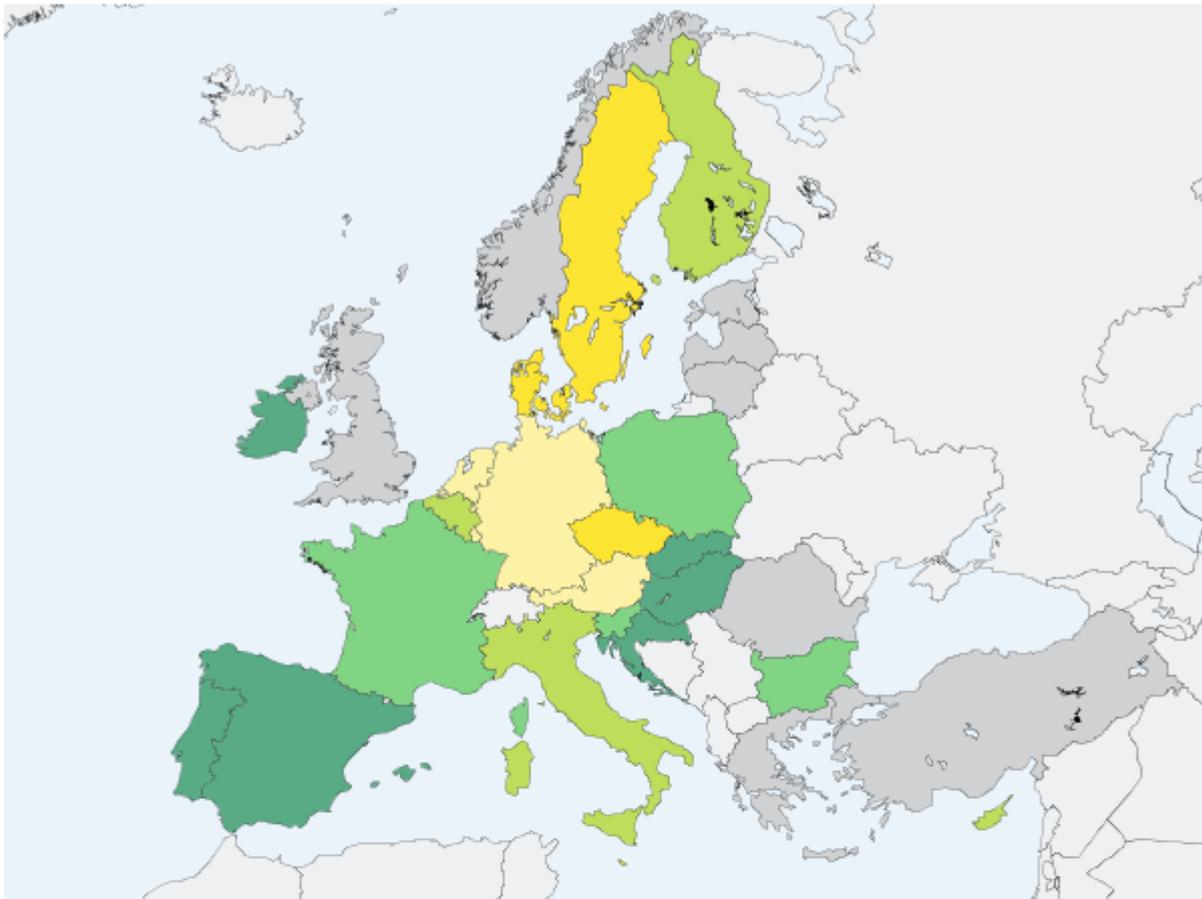


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Harmonised unemployment rate by gender - total

% (SA) - 2011M04

Total



Legend

4.2 - 6.1

6.1 - 7.4

7.4 - 8.1

8.1 - 11.4

11.4 - 20.7

N/A

Minimum value:4.2 Maximum value:20.7 eu15:9.3

Source of Data:: Eurostat

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Hyperlink to the map: <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/mapToolClosed.do?tab=map&init=1&plugin=1&language=en&pcode=teilm020&toolbox=legend>

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Short Description: The unemployment rate represents unemployed persons as a percentage of the labour force based on International Labour Office (ILO) definition. The labour force is the total number of people employed and unemployed. Unemployed persons comprise persons aged 15 to 74 who:

- are without work during the reference week;
- are available to start work within the next two weeks;
- and have been actively seeking work in the past four weeks or had already found a job to start within the next three months.

Data are presented in seasonally adjusted form.

Code: teilm020