



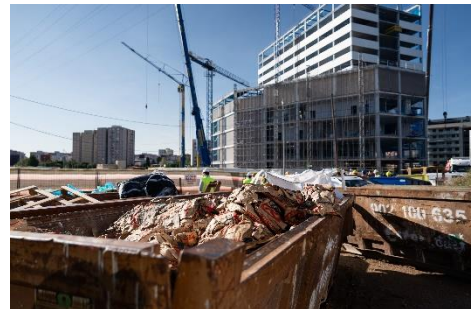
Developing paper sack circularity in the construction sector

Paris/Stockholm, 5 December 2024: EUROSAC and CEPI Eurokraft recently joined the Paper Sacks Go Circular Spain alliance. The alliance unites about 50 European companies from the whole value chain. They share the common interest to promote efficient industrial waste management and achieve a circular economy in recycling paper sacks and other construction waste. Among others, they have established a well-functioning process for the collection and recycling of paper sacks.

In Spain, about 29,000 tonnes of paper sacks for building materials such as cement, mortar and plaster are placed on the market each year. The used sacks are a valuable raw material for recycling but are mostly not recycled today. Also, they only make up a very small proportion of the waste generated at construction sites. Other construction waste, such as insulation materials, plasterboard and other packaging waste, which is produced in much higher proportions, has also mostly ended up in landfill so far.

Organising a sorting system at the construction site

“Used paper sacks accounted for about 1% of all waste generated during the course of one year,” explains Marc Vaquer, Site Manager at Calaf Constructora. The Barcelona-based construction company is one of the pioneers who joined the alliance and installed a sorting process for waste material on their construction site for a private hospital of the Vithas Group in Barcelona. The workers separate and collect all waste in big bags. “Establishing this system for sorting the waste involved a lot of explanation and education for our workers in the beginning, but it is worth the effort,” says Vaquer. “It does not only bring value for the environment but also for our company: we reduce our environmental impact; we meet our investor’s green building targets and improve our image, and we reduce costs. Instead of paying for the disposal of the mixed waste, thanks to separation, we now valorise our waste by selling it to waste management companies.” With the upcoming EPR schemes in Spain, new possibilities will arise with the goal to incentivise recycling further.



Paper sacks and other waste materials are collected in separate containers at the Calaf construction site. Copyright: EUROSAC



The paper sacks are prepared for recycling and stored before they are transported to the recycler. Copyright: EUROSAC



Waste consolidation and preparation

The sorted waste is picked up by a collector of construction and demolition waste and transported to a waste management company. At the waste treatment plant, the paper sacks are further processed and prepared according to the specifications from the recycling companies. This can include cleaning in a mechanical process with shredding and sifting the residues from the used sacks. The cleaned and shredded paper is then pressed into bales and stored until it is transported to the recyclers. “Receiving the used paper sacks already separated from other construction waste makes it much easier for us to prepare them for recycling,” explains Tatiana Vilella, CEO at Ramon Vilella. The company specialises in the responsible management of different industrial waste materials.

Recycling and paper production at the paper mill

When the raw material arrives at the recycling plant, it enters the pulper where the paper is separated from any polyethylene or residue materials from the used paper sacks. The polyethylene enters the washing and extrusion sections and is processed into a granular material, which is sold on the market. The pulp is passed into the paper mill where it is made into recycled paper. Before the recycled paper is sold to converters, the quality of the paper is thoroughly tested at the mill’s laboratory. “Sack kraft paper is a very valuable raw material for us,” explains Matias Cowper Coles, Sales Manager at the paper recycler and producer Alier. “Being part of the alliance not only guarantees that we will continue to receive high-quality raw material for our production. It also brings benefits to the whole industry which profits from the combined forces and shared logistics and to the community and the environment as less material ends up in landfills.”



The first step of the recycling process of Alier is the pulping of the used paper sack material. Copyright: EUROSAC

Going circular throughout Europe

Today, 170 construction sites in Spain are already participating in the Paper Sacks Go Circular Spain alliance. It seeks synergies with other construction waste streams to increase volumes and attain economies of scale. Calaf, Ramon Vilella and Alier are good examples of how the alliance already contributes to improving the recycling rates and recovery process for used paper sacks and other construction waste materials. Bringing all value chain partners together in an alliance was key to creating solutions for the challenges arising. “I am positive that we can achieve a well-functioning circular economy with the Paper Sacks Go Circular Spain alliance,” says Catherine Plitzko-Kerninon, General Delegate EUROSAC. “Recovering and valorising waste that was previously lost in landfills opens up benefits for all involved parties, for society and for the climate.” Paper Sacks Go Circular Spain has gained a wealth of experience, insights and best practices for recycling paper sacks efficiently and economically.



It sets out to provide orientation for emerging paper sack recycling initiatives in other sectors and in other European countries. All sector companies, as well as associations and entities interested in joining the alliance are warmly invited. For contact details visit <https://www.eurosac.org/go-circular>.

Join our webinar on Paper Sacks Go Circular Spain

On 13 December 2024 from 11.00–12.00 CET, EUROSAC and CEPI Eurokraft will host a webinar on Paper Sacks Go Circular Spain. Everyone interested is invited to discuss the legislative framework for recycling, and to hear about the progress, challenges and learnings from the alliance in Spain, and from other paper sack recycling examples in Europe such as the long-established Repasack system in Germany.

More info and registration: <https://www.eurosac.org/about-us/events/webinars-2024/>

For more insights, please contact Catherine Plitzko-Kerninon: +33 (0)147 237 558, email: info@eurosac.org.

Further information: www.eurosac.org

Paper Sacks Go Circular Spain is an alliance of more than 50 European companies. It arose from a common interest in achieving full circularity in recycling paper sacks and other materials used in construction, promoting efficient industrial waste management. The alliance will work on implementing better transparency, traceability and efficiency along the value chain. It seeks synergies with other construction waste streams to increase volumes and achieve economies of scale. EUROSAC and CEPI Eurokraft support and mainly finance the alliance. www.eurosac.org/go-circular

EUROSAC is the European Federation of Multiwall Paper Sack Manufacturers. The federation represents over 80% of European paper sack manufacturers. Its members operate in 20 different countries. They produce some 5 billion paper sacks per year, representing 630,000 tonnes of paper converted in 55 plants. Sack manufacturers from all continents and bag manufacturers also contribute to the federation as corresponding members, and more than 30 suppliers (paper, film, machine or glue manufacturers) are registered as associate members. www.eurosac.org

CEPI Eurokraft is the European Association for Producers of Sack Kraft Paper for the Paper Sack Industry and Kraft Paper for the Packaging Industry. It has ten member companies representing a volume of 3 million tonnes of paper produced in eleven countries. www.cepi-eurokraft.org

