

Swiss are champions in waste management

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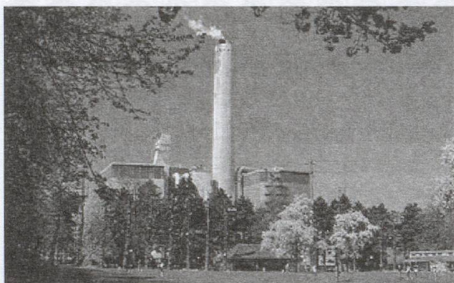
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Swiss are champions in waste management

The situation in Naples – rubbish has been uncollected in the Italian city for several weeks – has shown what can happen when a waste disposal system breaks down. Switzerland itself generally has a successful waste management policy. But although the Swiss are great recyclers, they are among the worst offenders in terms of the quantity of rubbish produced.



Kehrichtverbrennungsanlage in Zürich

Poor waste disposal infrastructure and the rubbish tax have been blamed for the situation in Naples, as has the low recycling rate. There has also been interference by the Camorra, the Neapolitan version of the Mafia, which has a hand in the waste business. Naples has therefore resorted to reopening old landfill sites and exporting rubbish to other regions of Italy and to Germany. Swiss waste incineration

companies are also in talks with Naples.

The principles for best managing waste to ensure a low impact on health and the environment have long been recognised. The European Union has set out four Rs: reduce, reuse, recycle and recover.

Switzerland, although not a member of the EU, is considered a model in waste disposal. More than five million tons of urban refuse was produced in the country in 2006, of which around half was recycled. Most of the rest was incinerated.

The more than 50 per cent recycling rate makes Switzerland among the greenest in Europe. For some materials, such as glass, the rate rises to 95 per cent.

To help encourage recycling, many local communities have introduced a rubbish bag tax. Rubbish bags have to carry a sign – a sticker or printed on the bag – that the tax has been paid. Recycling is generally free.

According to the federal office, 3.65 million tons of refuse went through the country's 29 incineration plants in 2006, of which 417,000 tons came from neighbouring countries.

More security for nuclear plants

The owners of Switzerland's nuclear power plants are preparing to increase security around their reactors, with a new type of armed patrol.

By next autumn, armed guards will be working outside the closed perimeter of all the country's nuclear facilities.

Until two months ago, patrols with weapons were only conducted within the fenced off area of a power plant, even though federal legislation has allowed surveillance beyond that zone since 2006. Since December, private security agents

have been carrying out this type of patrol around the Gösgen reactor in canton Solothurn. They are allowed to search people and vehicles, use force if necessary and shoot if there is a threat against the power plant or other people.

The cantonal police and the owners of the nuclear facilities decide together what the patrol perimeters should be, but this information is kept confidential. The aim, according to the government's nuclear security division, is to avoid sabotage attempts.

swissinfo

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