

Speaking Wise Words

Kate Hornsby, developer of the WISE programme of training courses, explains what it's all about and why Majorca is its next destination

Communities throughout the world are looking for environmentally sound solutions to manage their solid waste without relying on landfills; to ensure that sewage and wastewater do not contaminate their environment; to increase the use of renewable energy; to decrease the generation of greenhouse gases; and to promote sustainable development and an enhanced quality of life. Waste, and how to deal with it, is taking over a central role as one of the most serious issues in modern society with alarmingly increasing impacts on the environment, natural resources and on society as a whole.

Waste management is a central issue at all levels of government – local, national and European – and is a growing industry that impacts on research and employment patterns. All the countries in the European Union are having to deal with stricter laws, higher targets and are grappling with the problem of how to deal with the “human factor” across such a complex and diverse range of cultures, all having to deal with the same European laws. Technology is part of the answer, but

even this field is changing rapidly and not all types of technology are suitable for each location and culture. We need to train our young researchers and waste managers in the best possible way so they can understand how to approach these issues and to have the chance to view what has been tried and tested – what worked and what didn't – within a rapidly changing environment. Current thinking suggests that only an inter-disciplinary, multinational and hands-on approach can provide this specialist training.

I developed the Waste In a Social Environment (WISE) programme of sustainable waste management training courses in co-operation with the IAR of RWTH Aachen University, Germany. Funded by the European Commission, WISE began in January 2007 and will conclude in January 2010 having delivered six training events at different European locations with input from leading academics, waste managers and industrialists where problems are defined and sustainable solutions can be analysed. WISE has now entered its third phase, with

the fifth event having taken place in May in Linz, Austria, and the sixth to take place in Majorca this September.

Any waste manager now working out in the field will confirm that an academic background is helpful but, in many ways, has nothing to do with the reality of working on the job... priorities change, but the issues of sustainability and environmental protection remain the same. So how can we deal with a seemingly impossible situation? The WISE courses were developed in response to this challenge and the previous events have provided the participants with the chance to understand the complexities of different approaches to waste within different cultures and climatic conditions. The aim is to significantly increase knowledge and awareness of the complexities of waste management, as well as inform the participants about new advanced technologies and management practises within the background of EU legislation.

Getting Involved

WISE'S INTEGRATED programme of training courses in sustainable waste management bring top young international university researchers with the leading professionals from around the world under one umbrella in order to explore advanced waste management strategies and techniques. The EU provides up to 100 percent funding for eligible participants, namely those participants who are at least at Masters level or those doing their PhD. There are also limited places for post-Docs who normally work in the role of team leader. All the participants are put into teams with different focuses depending on their background and the case study linked to the event. Transfer of knowledge and experience therefore also takes place within the teams during the team discussions, often with breakaway teaching groups.

All events cover a five-day period starting on Monday and ending Friday of that week. There is a mixture of invited international experts who give lectures around the modules for that event and also from the local experts working within the case study. There are at least two technical visits within the programme giving the participants the

chance to talk to the operating waste managers with on-site presentations. All participants are expected to take part in a dynamic way, so giving presentations of their and the teams' ideas are an integral part of the course. The course language is English. Extra modules such as presentation skills, technical English etc are also part of the courses. As these courses are fully funded by the EU, registration on the course indicates that the participant understands that they have signed up to a five-day event and they must attend the full event.

All courses are developed through an inter-disciplinary approach, not only in terms of selection of course modules but also in terms of backgrounds and disciplines of participants. The inclusion of local waste managers and stakeholders will ensure challenging and relevant courses giving a professional requirement when undertaking the training. All participants will be required to consider social, environmental and economic impacts and assessments during the courses within the framework of current and future EU directives and legislation. Every attempt will be made to provide up-to-date and relevant information regarding key EU legislation and key decision papers.

A central part of the courses will be to determine and understand how to achieve local implementation of sustainable waste management practises and the students will be expected to put their ideas together for ways to increase uptake by the general public to adopt new methods and new technologies.

The benefits of attending a WISE event include having the opportunity to work alongside other participants from all over the world, to network with international and local experts in their field, to see facilities first-hand that are normally closed to the public, to have direct access to leading waste managers and operators, and a chance to share ideas on new research and project ideas with your peers. So what does the Majorca event, with its key theme of “human: producer of waste and decision-maker for recycling systems”, specifically have to offer?

Majorca, as an insular community, represents an extreme case of the limited availability of resources, fragile eco-systems, high transportation costs and large fluctuations in numbers of

tourists with high levels of waste. The course will examine what has been done on the island to deal with the local problems and how successful these measures have been.

About Majorca

TIRME, A waste treatment group specialising in facility design, construction and management, is owned by two national Spanish construction companies and one energy company and has a 35-year waste management contract with the Consell de Mallorca.

Apart from the installations at the different plants and transference centres found throughout the island, it is at the Majorca Environmental Technologies Park where the installations, handling the largest and most complex recycling and recuperation of materials and energy, are concentrated.

The park is divided into three large areas: at Ses Veles, in the town of Bunyola, is situated the business park of the same name, and it is from here that companies whose principal activity is the recycling of waste, will operate. The plant for the treatment of construction and demolition waste, bulky materials and end-of-life tyres is also situated here. At Son Reus, in Palma de Mallorca, are the waste to energy plant, the slag treatment plant and the safety dump. And finally, at Can Canut, in Marratxí, there is the small container selection plant, the methane production plant, the compost-making plant and the environmental education building for training activities and visitor reception, from where the train that takes visitors around the different installations departs. The course will also examine the public participation programme, which is one of the outstanding examples of public involvement.

The Park represents an outstanding example of how the disadvantage of so-called “dirty” processes can be turned round and used as a benefit. Throughout the year groups of tourists, as well as locals, come to see one of the most modern waste processing plants in Europe. [CIWM](#)

For more information on WISE, the Majorca event or establishing your eligibility to take part, email Kate Hornsby at hornsby@ifa.rwth-aachen.de