

*Expert Group III: Illicit trafficking of waste: an international emergency*

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“The state of national and transnational illicit trafficking of waste”  
(Abstract translated from Italian language)

The problem of illicit international trafficking of waste is increasing worldwide, also due to the common attitude that problems have to be solved elsewhere - “not in my backyard” (NIMBY). This causes harm for the environment, for the citizens’ health and it may get to strong market distortions.

A study carried out by PolieCo highlights the **new global geography** of waste:

- Asia is the catalyst for import-flows of plastic waste;
- Within Asia, the main role is played by China and Hong Kong, even if India is significantly advancing and it is competing directly against China;
- Notwithstanding these highly influencing actors, some other Asiatic countries are now in the competition for the purchasing of plastic waste, with the possible goal of “re-addressing” the flows towards China;
- Europe is confirmed to be an important area in the marketing sector of plastic waste, with particular emphasis on internal movements flows of waste and consequent export to East-Asia;
- Within Europe, those countries which have been historically active in this field are losing out to countries that are either emerging countries or that are marginal in this field;
- The phenomenon of reallocation of internal roles within different geographical regions is particularly important in Northern Europe, where Sweden is increasing its capacities of detection;
- The Eastern-European countries recently entered into this market, but nonetheless they are competing as new destination countries for the import flows coming from other European regions as well as redirecting points toward Asia;
- Another dynamic area is the African one, in particular Northern Africa: although the estimates are still quite low, the tendency to purchase plastic waste is extensively increasing;
- Morocco is also gaining a specific role that however is not drawing other countries in the same area;
- The market value of plastic waste can not justify the increasing of export flows towards Asia.

However, even the Asian countries, in particular China, are improving their legal system in view of limiting the illicit entrance of such products.