

Woldemar d'Ambrieres: After 30 years there will be more plastic in the ocean than fish

Hristo Nikolov

- Mr. d'Ambrieres, **you are part** of the development, innovation & market department in the group Veolia. **Tell us which are hit innovations at the moment?**

- As you probably know, Veolia is present at the water, energy market and in the field of waste management. In Paris we have a special department that is dedicated to the innovations in the field of what we call "Circular economy". We have innovations mostly in the field of recycling, new technologies for sorting waste that can be recycled. We introduce a bigger automatization in the sorting.

- What waster, is there different kinds of waste?

- I mean all kinds of waste. We work with plastic, out of use electronic equipment, everyday waste, metal and also with dangerous waste materials. In these activities, we work to make sure that we manage the processes in the most secure way and that nature is recovered.

- We are sure that you know the last project of EU directive which is forbidding plastic products for single use. What do you think about it?

- European commission is implementing strong pressure in EU about the way we manage plastic garbage. Few years ago was adopted a directive limiting the usage of plastic bag. But still the question is not in the restriction because there not effective every time. The actual situation makes us to recycle these wastes more and more, which means increasing the size of the recycled waste.

The recycling has a lot more benefits for community comparing to the restriction especially the complete one. The plastic itself bring benefits to the community because of its produced less fuel and other resources is needed comparing to other alternative products and also this production has smaller volume of waste than others materials. The problem with the plastic is whit the end of its life cycle and also what we do whit it after it's usage. So we work on this.

- How exactly? The plastic by my opinion is everlasting.

Yes, this is exactly the problem – it is durable. That's why it needs to be recycled and to be used again. For that reason it has to be collected separately. For example there has been a lot of test and experiments for the usage of biodegradable plastic. For the time being the use of the plastic can not be well industrial life which means to be produced like other products with competitive price. That's why we believe in the recycled plastic **more than in** the biodegradable one.

- So it is still very expensive.

- Yes, the problem with the price is significant. If regulating body force all the producer to replace the one plastic with the other this immediately will charge the consumers with the expenses and this is not reasonable.

- What kind of plastic waste we still can not manage in our everyday life and create the biggest risk of pollution?

These, which are use permanently – for example bottles for lights drinks and mineral water. The problem is more with the organization for collecting and using of these packages. Obviously there are activates from the European commission for creation of suitable conditions for collecting of the wastes in a way to be recycled.

If the plastic is managed well in the end of its life cycle it will not harm the environment. It will not be in the world ocean. Now the biggest problem with the environment is in the water. In the world ocean in the moment there is so big quantity of plastic that if we continue in the same way in 2050 in the oceans there will be more plastic than fish.

Even now the volume of plastic in the water is with the size of Australia.

“Yes but the plastic has no legs.” How did it reach the sea?

You are right, but you live in Europe. In some parts of the world in Southeast Asia, there are a lot of unregulated depots which are open dumb yards and the plastic wastes are going directly in the river ant than in the ocean.

I have been there and I have a lot of projects in these countries ant the region. This is a totally different environments, the infrastructure is not the same like here. There are huge challenges in the saving of the environment.

Let’s take China for example. It has dynamic economic growth, but also very big problems with the environment. In the same time it’s true that they are working hard to solve these problems.

Do you have interesting innovations in Veolia concerning the purifying of waters and in general in the area of the Water Supply Networks?

We are working on this at the moment - this is the most popular tendency in the area, creation of intelligence water network in the cities. This network helps the municipalities and the citizens to have a permanent overview of the situation in the network and to follow the operations.

This reduces the loss of water because it gives an information in real time and if there is a leak of water for example.

You are here only for a few days what is your impression. Do we have a stability in the managing of the resources?

- I have the impression that there is separation of the collecting of waste at a lot of places. Bulgaria is really in the transition in this area, but it is in the right way. The country is following the model of the policy of the EU. This transition has time, but the decisions are already taken.

Woldemar d'Ambrieres is Strategic Projects Director at the Veolia headquarters in Paris

He has been working for the company for 10 years

He graduated from **Ecole Polytechnique in France** and the London School of Economics