

# IKEA – home waste management



## 1. The Company

IKEA is a Swedish furniture retailer, the world's largest, registered in the Netherlands that designs and sells ready-to-assemble furniture such as beds, chairs and desks, appliances, and home accessories.

## 2. Sustainability Innovation

The segregation kit, as well as the other solutions on waste, enables the customers to create a complex and well-adjusted system of waste management in-line with legal requirements, and to choose sustainable solutions in their households, helping to lower costs and reducing the impact on the environment. The solutions - products and the way of using them - are presented in the stores and in communication materials, therefore the consumers can be inspired and instructed on how to adopt them in their households.

Segregation bins built from recycled materials, constitute a part of the wider offer of sustainable living, encouraging and helping consumers to live healthier and at lower costs. The overall concept of sustainable living presented by IKEA encourages the customers to a holistic approach to their well-being. The offer includes LED lighting, as well as inciting people to design the eco-lightning in their apartments. This is accompanied by a book full of recipes for healthy meals and ideas on 'managing leftovers', as well as stickers specially designed and manufactured only in Poland.

### **Sustainability Impact:**

- The segregation containers are made from recycled materials, and encourage responsible waste management on an individual level - presented in a way that is inspiring to the customers;
- The design of the segregation kit under sink, enriched with explanatory stickers, helps in reducing food waste and encourages the customers to responsible waste management;
- Awareness building about pro-ecological solutions and sustainable lifestyle (stickers, publications, adverts showing sustainability solutions in small kitchens).

### **3. Engagement of End Users and Other Stakeholders**

The user driven process of innovation (UDI) is based mainly on an **on-going process of home visits** by IKEA employees both globally and in Poland. Starting from 2010, IKEA has visited more than 5,000 households in Poland, asking families on their exact needs and expectations in regards to housing conditions, specifically concerning waste management/organizing solutions and sustainable living. Its aim is to gain knowledge on local habits as well as to help organize functional solutions for waste segregation in households, and share knowledge on sustainable waste management.

Information that is collected during the visits helps in designing and adjusting a whole range of products and practical kits (for kitchen, terrace, and stairways) that can meet the exact needs of different users. The process is on-going and is being continuously expanded into more sustainable living issues and solutions such as: energy saving lights, water saving possibilities, eco-furniture (biodegradable and recycled materials).

Stakeholder collaboration inside-and-out:

**External research company:** was responsible for preparing the representative sample of a typical Polish household living in a small flat (the questionnaire designed by IKEA's Marketing Intelligence Manager).

**IKEA's teams:** there are 3 types of teams participate in the home visits:

1. IKEA's employees from different departments (to get inspired how to reorganize range presentation in a particular showroom);
2. IKEA's top management including the directors: Sales Department, Decoration Department, Communication and Interior Design Department (to decide which products should be sold in Poland);
3. Global IKEA's top-management (to get to know the Polish specificity and to get inspired on products solutions tailored for small flats or for children). The conclusions from visits are used by the global R&D.

On the visits there is usually a four-person team, the aim is to design a qualitative study, asking about quality of life. The decorators ask questions not about specific solutions, rather general things: life at home, habits, or the number of people sleeping in a particular room. IKEA is an educator in the showroom, not during the visits.

Afterwards, the data gathered during the home visits, are analyzed within the team of the employees from various departments (the teams are analyzing on *how to reorganize the range and solutions in a showroom*):

- Sales Department
- Decoration Department
- Communication and Interior Design Department
- Marketing Department
- Sustainability Manager

Regarding to the IKEA's top management, analyzed issues are focused on: *what products should be chosen from a global range onto a local market; and what products might be produced just for a Polish market.*

#### **4. Internal Democratic Atmosphere and the Attitude to Consumers**

For managers the user-driven innovation (UDI) is in line with the staff approach towards customer, and originates from the company' mission and its organizational culture. In comparison with other companies in the field, IKEA is seen by its employees as a pioneer in innovation. Meeting the clients at home is very inspiring for the employees, who can thus properly understand peoples' needs. The sample should be designed well.

In IKEA managers' opinion various store employees, such as for example kitchen consumer staff, bedroom consumer staff, children's room staff etc. should take part in the home visits process, which would help them tailor the interior design presented in the showroom even closer to the customer's needs, and will also allow them to obtain even larger amount of knowledge from the customer. According to the employees, the organizational culture of IKEA is very open and dynamic, democratic, based on equality and it is customer-oriented. An environmental-friendly approach of the company can be associated with the country where the company headquarters are located - Sweden.