

Sharing the benefits of water treatment // Spain

Clean and accessible water cannot be taken for granted and, along with its neighbours and stakeholders, Smurfit Kappa has a common interest in good water stewardship. Achieving good-quality water discharge from our operations is a vital part of our water management strategy.

Paper mills use a huge amount of water, which is recirculated many times during the paper manufacturing process. Eventually, the water quality becomes too poor, so it needs to be treated and returned to nature. Over 90% of water is returned – the rest is either bound to the product or evaporated.

Smurfit Kappa Nervión works closely with the municipality water treatment facility – so closely that the municipality water treatment plant is right next to the paper mill, and Nervión sends its pre-treated water effluent directly to it.

“Before releasing water to nature, it is usually treated biologically,” explains Pilar Veiga, Quality and Environmental Manager of SK Nervión. “This means that bacteria are used in the water treatment plant. These bacteria are chosen based on the impurities that need to be removed from the water, which supply some of their nutrient needs.

“However, our paper mill effluent naturally has all the other nutrients the bacteria need. Therefore, our effluent helps the municipality water treatment work better and more cost-efficiently,” says Pilar.

As water treatment is a finely-balanced biological process which we all benefit from, it is important to find these synergies with neighbours. “While we have this collaboration with our municipality, it means that we also talk a lot with them and that enhances the relationship as well,” Pilar says. “It’s a win-win for everybody.”

A similar collaboration with the municipal water treatment facility takes place at SK Nettingsdorf, in Austria.

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Quality and Environmental Manager
SK Nervión

