

# Study Tour Colombia 2026

## Report



## 1. Overview

From April 20<sup>th</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup>, members of PROMAR were in Medellín, Colombia, to participate in a Study Tour organized by adelphi and SOCYA, a former project partner of PROMAR. The delegation gathered 21 participants representing the British Virgin Islands, Suriname, Guyana, Trinidad & Tobago, and St. Kitts and Nevis, alongside colleagues from adelphi. The program included an Annual Meeting of the PROMAR project on the first day, followed by dialogues with representatives from Colombia's Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development, and visits to companies and organizations active in the field of circular economy in Colombia.

The Study Tour provided a valuable forum for exchange among the countries participating in PROMAR Phase II, enabling participants to identify shared challenges, explore avenues for collaboration, and draw lessons from the Colombian experience.

## 2. Agenda

### 2.1. Monday, 20 April 2026

The Study Tour opened with an **Annual Meeting** of the PROMAR project, which brought together all Phase II partners to share progress updates on their respective work. Each partner delivered a presentation outlining the advancement of PROMAR's goals within their country, and highlighting key milestones achieved across the four Work Packages.



Image 1: Annual Meeting of PROMAR partners at SOCYA's office

Following the partner presentations, SOCYA delivered a session on Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) in Colombia, offering participants an insight into the organization's ongoing work in this area and the broader policy landscape in which it operates.

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## 2.2. Tuesday, 21 April 2026

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On Tuesday, the Study Tour participants gathered at SOCYA's office for an exchange with an expert from the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development in Colombia with strong experience in Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR). The discussion created an important space for peer learning and helped connecting lessons from the Colombian experience with the realities and challenges faced in the PROMAR project countries.

The program continued with visits to two plastic recyclers (Plastisol and Plasticos Ambientales) and one recycling center that cooperates with informal recyclers (Coprofercol).



*Image 2: Visit to Plastisol*

These site visits highlighted how recycling in Colombia is structured around the work and integration of the informal sector.

For many participants, this offered an important practical perspective on how waste management systems can function when informal recyclers are recognized as a core part of the recycling value chain.



Image 3: Visit to Plásticos Ambientales



Image 4: Visit to Coprofercol

### 2.3. Wednesday, 22 April 2026

On Wednesday, participants visited Metalrec, a metal recycling company that also works with informal recyclers and carries out different stages of metal sorting and processing. This offered valuable insights into how metal recyclable materials are collected, separated and channeled back into productive use in Colombia.



Image 5: Visit to Metalrec

Later that day, the group visited Empacor, where recycled paper and cardboard are transformed into new boxes and industrial paper products. The visit illustrated another important material stream within Colombia’s recycling system and helped participants better understand the different recovery and reuse pathways for recyclable paper waste. The facility was a highly professional paper mill and vast in scale.



*Image 6: Visit to Empacor*

A highlight of the day was the visit to Fundacion Botellas de Amor, an initiative that collects plastic bottles filled with flexible packaging and uses this material to produce furniture and even

houses, based on what is known as plastic wood. The founder presented a house built entirely from this recycled material and explained that many similar houses were already constructed, including on behalf of the Colombian government. This was a particularly valuable experience for the participants, as partners in the BVI have



*Image 7: Visit to Fundacion Botellas de Amor*

already begun testing similar approaches with plastic wood and see strong potential for future cooperation.

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## 2.4. Thursday, 23 April 2026

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On Thursday, the Study Tour participants visited Aguas Nacionales, a modern wastewater treatment plant in Medellín. The visit provided a practical overview of the full wastewater treatment process, from the arrival of contaminated water to its treatment and safe release back into the environment. Participants also learned that considerable amounts of plastic are removed from the wastewater stream during this process. This is a highly important contribution to protecting groundwater, ecosystems and ultimately human health.



*Image 8: Visit to Aguas Nacionales*

The visit was particularly relevant for participants from island states, where wastewater treatment infrastructure is in some cases still limited and untreated wastewater may enter the sea directly. This creates additional risks of marine pollution, including plastic and microplastic leakage. Seeing the treatment process in Medellín therefore offered valuable insights into the environmental and public health benefits of functioning wastewater systems.

In the afternoon, the group visited a construction materials recycler, Indural. Participants learned how demolition waste from roadworks and building construction can be processed and reused. The visit highlighted the potential of circular approaches in the construction sector and

showed how the reuse of such materials can reduce emissions, especially given the high carbon intensity of cement production.



*Image 9: Visit to Indural*

### 3. Evaluation

To assess participants' perceptions of the Study Tour, a survey was conducted following the event. Participants were asked to evaluate each of the visits carried out during the Study Tour, as well as the choice of Medellín as the host city, the organization and reception by adelphi and SOCYA, and the overall event.

The results indicated that participants expressed a high level of satisfaction with the Study Tour overall, with a mean final rating of 4.5 out of five. Highlights included the choice of Medellín as the host city, praised for the wealth of good practices available for direct observation; the site visits related to extended producer responsibility, with Fundación Botellas de Amor receiving the highest rating among all visits; and the exchange of knowledge between PROMAR partners and Colombian stakeholders. The organizing teams from adelphi and SOCYA were also commended for their support throughout the event.

Regarding areas for improvement, participants pointed to the language barrier as a key challenge and expressed a preference for shorter, more interactive presentations during the visits.

## 4. Conclusion

The Study Tour offered a valuable opportunity for participants to observe different material streams in practice and to draw on the Colombian experience across the waste management value chain. The site visits deepened participants' understanding of how recycling and recovery systems function, and how these approaches could inform policy and practice in their respective countries. Discussions held during the visits also helped identify potential pilot initiatives to support the continued implementation of PROMAR at national level.

A central theme throughout the tour was the implementation of extended producer responsibility (EPR) in Colombia, a subject that featured at nearly every institution visited. Colombia's EPR framework, built up over years and strengthened through the partnership with SOCYA, offers a concrete reference point for the legislative and policy processes that PROMAR partner countries seek to advance.

Beyond the content, participants highlighted the quality of South-to-South learning as a defining feature of the Study Tour. Partners shared challenges, opportunities and experiences with one another and with Colombian stakeholders, reflecting the cooperation that underpins PROMAR project. Post-event evaluation results reinforced this, with participants highly rating the Study Tour's contribution to knowledge exchange and partner integration.

The Study Tour thus stands as a valuable event for knowledge exchange, learning and networking among PROMAR partners. It is expected to contribute to the achievement of the project's objectives and to support the development and continuation of strategies implemented by partner countries to address plastic pollution.