

Modernized, climate-friendly solid waste and recycling management in Albania

Context

Having been granted EU candidate status in 2014, Albania is on the path to EU integration and is actively working to align environmental standards with those of the EU. Towards this goal, as of 2020, Albania has reached mid-level transposition progress of 48% for Chapter 27 Environment, of the EU acquis.

Although substantial progress has been made in transposition, actual implementation of standards and legislation lags behind while capacities to meet them catch up. Strengthening administrative capacities is a key measure required to gradually enable the transposition and implementation of the environmental and climate change legislation. While at the national level progress towards the transposition of the EU acquis is making important headway, it is at the local level that capacity and resources are most required to implement and deliver the services to the citizens.

The sustainable use of natural resources in Albania is challenging, highlighted by the limited effective control of waste disposal. To overcome this challenge, there is a need to enhance administrative skills; clearly define roles, responsibilities and accountability; and improve data collection and analysis of waste quantities and composition that improve planning and informs decision making. This also includes the need for regulatory and administrative capacity, financial resources, and physical infrastructure.

According to INSTAT in 2019, Albania managed approximately 1 million tonnes of household waste. Some 78% was treated in landfills and disposed with varying degrees of environmental control, while about 19% was segregated for recycling. Regarding climate change, organic waste which represents approximately 50% of the composition of disposed waste, contributes substantially to the generation of methane, a potent greenhouse gas. Landfill gases and leachate pollute water, soil endangering agriculture and drinking water supplies as well as the climate.

The current practice of waste management in Albania continues to be dominated by a linear approach of collect and dispose rather than adopting any integrated sustainable waste management approaches. The recently adopted National Waste Management Strategy (2020 – 2035), establishes the roadmap towards integrating the principles of Circular Economy and Extended Producer Responsibility.

The concept of the polluter-pays principle is not currently well developed and recovering the cost of providing a basic minimum standard of service from waste producers is a reality in just a few cities. Due to lack of resources and competing demands, many municipalities report being overwhelmed by the need to modernise their services. Low recycling rates and inadequate regulation of packaging and single-use products also leads to unnecessarily high consumption of primary raw material with associated climate change pollutants released during production cycles.

Project name	Modernized, Climate-friendly solid waste and recycling management in Albania
Commissioned by	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)
Project region	Albania
Lead executing agency	Ministry of Tourism and Environment
Duration	March 2020 – February 2023

Our approach

The objective of the 'Modernized, climate-friendly solid waste and recycling management' project is to systematically pursue the adoption of the waste hierarchy and principles of circular economy at all levels to double material recovery rates in the partner cities



in the long term. In pursuit of EU environmental standards and corresponding legal provisions, the project assists partner municipalities to increase the proportion of waste resources used in a circular manner. Sound integrated waste management protects people's health, the environment and our global climate and will sustainably improve the structural framework conditions in the sector.

The project contributes to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) in the environmental area and to the implementation of the European Green Deal. In addition, it contributes to the BMZ 2030 Agenda in the field of sustainable urban development and in accordance with concept for transition partners of the Western Balkans.

What is the project all about

At the national level, the project supports the Ministry of Tourism and Environment (MoTE) in implementing the updated National Strategy for Integrated Waste Management. The improved data management system serves the national environmental state report released by MoTE and the National Environmental Agency (NEA) based on verified data on municipal waste and potential to reduce greenhouse gases.

Furthermore, the project assists NEA to improve licensing of service providers/operators via Information Technology (IT) systems, strengthen inspection and regulation according to agreed performance indicators and standard contracts, as well as sanctionable violations of environmental standards.

At the local level, the project collaborates closely six partner cities (Himara, Peqin, Belsh, Cerrik, Roskovec and Saranda) to introduce climate sensitive waste management practices. The focus here is on recovery, increased recycling, waste separation at the source, and the introduction of composting alongside professionalization of municipal services and broad-based sensitization campaigns.

By 2022, five partner municipalities will have facilities for the recovery and trading of secondary resources and treatment of special wastes. It is also the intent that 8.000 households in six partner municipalities are separating wet from dry waste to facilitate composting and recycling of materials.

In addition, the project assists upgrade/rehabilitate six existing waste disposal sites, from open dumpsites to transitional landfills with temporary operation permits to act as a stop gap measure while infrastructure and budgetary improvements are made to enable adherence with regional waste management plans. The operational standards that will be developed for these sites will serve as best practise for the operation of other existing municipal landfills.

The benefits

By contributing to a climate-friendly environment and a resource-efficient and economically viable municipal waste management service, health risks and environmental pollution are reduced in the medium term. By reducing greenhouse gases through diverting green waste from landfill to composting and by recycling secondary resources and saving energy, resources are saved, jobs are created in the resource recovery sector and a contribution is made to the European Green Deal.

The project also contributes to a strong cross-sectoral impact in the area of good governance at the municipal administrative level. By professionalising the municipal services in the area of planning and operation waste collection, recycling, recovery and disposal, Albania is approaching the EU environmental standards.

Furthermore, the reduction of marine litter and pollutant input into the Adriatic, as well as the propagation of controlled waste disposal, contributes substantially to reducing litter being washed into the sea.

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