

REPORT

Benchmarking on Solid Waste Management in South-east Europe, 2015

This Report has been prepared by the members of the Task Force on Solid Waste and Water Management (TF SWWM) of the Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South East Europe (NALAS). It is the second issue and presents the progress in solid waste management of the countries in South East Europe (SEE) for 2015, comparing it to the baseline year of 2014.

The Report helps NALAS members – local government associations in the countries of SEE region to gain an independent perspective of how well the SWM is performed compared to other countries and municipalities. It clearly identifies specific areas of opportunity, prioritizes areas of improvement, sets performance expectations and monitors change at the level of SEE region. Ultimately, it is about managing solid waste in a socially, environmentally and financially responsible manner.

THE REPORT IN BRIEF:

The purpose of the 2015 Solid Waste Management Benchmarking Report was to give insight in the current situation with solid waste management at the national and local level in the SEE countries that are at the same time members of NALAS network. It also served to assess progress at both national and local levels towards the establishment of an integrated solid waste management system compared to the baseline year of 2014.

The main conclusions of this Report are as follows:

- The situation in the region concerning legal and institutional aspects of waste management did not change very much compared to 2014. Only few countries experienced legal changes that were aimed to harmonise their laws with those of the EU. Other countries have insufficient legislation or legislation that is only partially harmonised with that of the EU. In those countries that have a solid legislative basis, implementation is progressing slowly mainly due to the lack of human and financial capacities.
- Average municipal solid waste generation in SEE countries is 0.87 kg/cap/day, which is lower than the EU28 average. This is clearly a result of the poor economic situation and lower purchasing power in the SEE countries as confirmed by the average GNI of the SEE countries, which is only 15% of the average GNI of the EU28.
- Most countries were not even able to report on their recycling rate, given the lack of data. Those countries that do have data, reported relatively low recycling rates, i.e. less than 40%. This is related to the fact that countries predominantly landfill their waste, and that large amounts of waste go to illegal dumpsites, which lowers the possibility of recycling. Countries are currently showing interest to lower their illegal dumping and increase recycling; however, national targets will be hard to achieve.
- Due to the lack of adequate infrastructure, landfilling remains the only viable option currently, and thus, it is a preferred option for the countries in the region. Countries are striving towards regional landfilling; however, they are taking small steps to achieving the final goal.
- Data on local indicators are still difficult to find. Municipalities do not have any legal obligation, or a prescribed methodology for determination of waste quantity and composition, which is a large obstacle to appropriate planning of the integrated waste management system.
- The correlation between waste production and the % of population living in urban or rural areas can be established. The higher the urbanisation and number of inhabitants in urban areas, the higher the waste production.
- Waste collection service coverage in urban areas is satisfactory (in some municipalities reaching even 100%), while in rural areas it is still low.
- Up to 70% of the waste is composed of biodegradable and garden waste. Less than 10% is separated and reused/recycled. Waste is mainly disposed on landfills. The high percentage of biodegradable and garden waste and low quantities of recyclable waste indicate opportunities for waste utilisation instead of waste disposal at landfills. Some of the options include composting and production of refuse derived fuel (RDF).
- The tariff calculation system based on weight or volume is not employed in the region. Fee collection rates range from 18% to 98%.
- Informal waste pickers are present in the region. They usually collect metal and PET waste; however, the quantities are not known. They are usually not recognized by local governments, neither is their status regulated by law. The informal sector's involvement in the overall waste collection scheme is considered insignificant.
- Municipalities mainly dispose their waste at non-compliant municipal landfills. 9 out of 19 municipalities dispose their waste on regional sanitary landfills. Information on illegal dumpsites is usually not available, but estimations are that this number is very high.