



**Position Letter on the Management of  
Waste**

During the program: "Strengthening the Albanian Civil Society for an Improved Environment", "Mileskonditë International aims to stimulate cooperation among key stakeholders, through several activities addressed in national and local level. We do think and believe that civil society can have a great impact in the environment quality, not as intervening actor, then actively participating in policy and decision making for environmental issues."

This position paper is compiled by working group on Waste, with the participation of experts of the field, NGO members, and representatives of local government or institutions. This working group was supported and mandated from the Albanian environmental NGOs, during their annual Strategy Meeting, offering at the same time input and expertise in each respective fields of Water, Waste, Air and Public Participation. The position paper is prepared in the frame of the program: "Strengthening the Albanian Civil Society for an Improved Environment", financially supported by the Royal Netherlands

## **Introduction**

This position paper is addressed to the local decision-makers: the Heads of the local Councils and governmental units and it expresses the opinion and the will of the environmental NGOs to contribute to the improvement of the urban waste management.

The environmental NGO sector in Albania identifies as a necessity the improvement of the solid waste situation in the municipalities and communes countrywide. Through this letter, the sector offers an alternative opinion for improving the management of the solid urban waste, which is in any case, the competency of the local government.

The suggested recommendations help not only with the improvement of the current situation, but also with the enforcement of the legal obligations stipulated in the national legal framework for the communes and municipalities.

The national legal obligations are a logical aftermath of the obligations Albania needs to meet in the framework of the stability and Association with EU. By utilizing the expertise in the field, the environmental NGOs are not only offering an alternative solution to the waste problem, but they are also expressing their readiness to assist in meeting the standards required in the framework of EU integration.

In the December 2006<sup>4</sup> meeting of the environmental NGOs, was identified as a priority of the sector the request and support to local government in fulfilling the legal obligations concerning waste management.

As a follow-up to this initiative, during the National Meeting of 2008, the NGOs mandated a working group, which plays the role of the Secretariat of the environmental NGOs. This Secretariat, consisting of specialists in the field, who have the good will to contribute to the strengthening of the environmental sector at the local level, managed to:

- Analyze the existing urban waste;
- Consult legal framework applicable to the urban waste management;
- Analyze the obligations to be met in the framework of integration in EU.

The meetings of the Secretariat have been facilitated by Milieukontakt and information on best European practices has been utilized, information which has been obtained through contacts with the respective networks of NGOs.

The position paper shall act as an action platform for drafting campaigns for environmental NGOs, which aim at improving the urban waste situation. At the local level the campaigns will be conceptualized in such a way that they will establish cooperation with the local government bodies.

#### **Current situation and situation analysis**

The country is facing an increase in the production of waste at a time when this is accompanied by a low waste management.

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<sup>4</sup> 6<sup>th</sup> National Meeting of the Albanian Environmental NGOs

While the collection and transport operate partially, the other elements of the management system of wastes such as reuse, recycling, classified division, composting, special treatment of hazardous wastes and the ones related to health care and the safe treatment, are not developed yet or are inexistent. This causes dangerous risks for the health of the people and for the further degradation of the environment.

The country produces about 722 000 tons of waste annually, with an average rate of production of about 250 kg per inhabitant annually in the urban areas and 170 kg per habitant in the rural areas.<sup>2</sup> The municipalities and communes have the legal responsibility, among other obligations, to collect, transport and treat the solid waste, a public service which is extremely important for increasing the quality of life and preserving the environment.

Among other main issues related to the management of the solid urban waste we can mention:

#### Generation

The municipalities and communes are not equipped with the necessary means and mechanisms to group and monitor urban waste. The technical knowledge, the content of waste, the national registry of waste, and also its proper monitoring are lacking. This makes the policy drafting process for the urban waste management or the adoption of central policies and their adjustment to the local level difficult.

#### Collection and transportation

The collection and transportation service is conducted through: commissioning of private operators or by the local enterprises. However in no instance does the service cover the whole administrative area under the jurisdiction of the local governmental unit and moreover in some areas it is completely lacking.

The lack of standards in providing urban waste collection, transportation, and disposal services has influenced for this service not to be in harmony with hygienic requirements of the environment. At the same time by moving from the center of a city to the suburbs or by comparing different municipalities or communes, it is noticed that the service is not offered with the same quality.

The monitoring infrastructure for this service rendered by the commissioned companies leaves much to be desired. At the same time, a similar performance is identified in the cases of the service provision by the municipal enterprises.

#### Minimization, reuse and recycling

The environmental policies that promote the support of environmentally friendly businesses and policies that assess and tax businesses that have high packaging rates are lacking. Producers, importers and other in the spectrum of producers do not hold responsibility on the influence that their products and packing have on the environment.

Although various initiatives and individuals have been identified, who collect and process a certain percentage of the urban waste, we can conclude that these activities are chaotic and not oriented or supported by appropriate policies.

Similarly, policies on separation of waste at the source are lacking.

What is necessary is a coherent, sensible, well-designed system which stimulates the prevention, reuse, recycle, composting, and other forms of evaluation.

Within the urban waste management process the informal sector is clearly identified, which consists of all the groups of population that make their living through activities that revolve around urban waste. The "collectors" of the recyclable portion of the waste exercise their "scouting" activity, both at the collection points spread out throughout the city and also in the landfills where the waste is deposited without observing any criteria. Oftentimes especially in the cities, as a result of the waste spreading around the collection points, is noticed a great viewing, environmental on people's health. There is an urgent need to work with the collectors on improving the working conditions, their legitimacy as recyclers and their access on loans and technical information in order to improve the environmental performance of the collection, without removing to these people their traditional tools of living.

#### Disposal of waste

The municipalities and communes are obliged by law to treat and dispose of the urban wastes, however, with the exception of some particular cases for hospital waste no treatment method is applied for the final disposal of the waste.

The waste is simply deposited into open fields and burned, and often times it turns into a source of infection and various diseases. Furthermore, the disposal of all types of waste (including here the hazardous waste) increases the risk even more.

Civil awareness

A quick survey on the individual perception on the scale of environmental awareness of the citizens immediately identifies the low level of environmental education in general and their behavior related to wastes in particular.

This unfavorable situation comes as a consequence of lack of treatment towards the environment, as an important component of the functions of the local government by one side and the reduction of the existing values of the community and school on the other side.

The citizens are not ready to offer their contribution on reducing the quantity of the produced wastes and are not willing to undertake the process for the waste division and recycling. Very often we face the fact of throwing the wastes without any criteria by creating big and small "islands" of wastes in all the territory of the Republic. Most of the population is not aware of their obligations and this is clearly seen because a great part of them do not pay the cleaning fee. In most of the municipalities this is accompanied with the usage of legal mechanisms for the collection of these obligations, while at the commune level in most of the cases, there is no fee for the cleaning and collection of wastes.



Local government has very limited human and financial capacities to address properly the dissemination of information to the public and the raising of the public awareness.

There is a low participation of interest groups in drafting urban waste management plans (the process of drafting participatory plans is lacking);

#### **Recommendations**

- To draft the local regulatory framework on the standards of service provision.
- To ensure the strengthening of capacities for the local public officials.
- To calculate the total cost for well-administration for each element of the waste cycle and to use this cost as a basis for the determination of cleaning fee.
- To adopt new concept for a differentiated system of fees for the businesses that practice reduction, reuse and recycle of wastes by taking into consideration that the "Polluter pays".
- To have more consumers paying the fee when getting this service before increasing the level of the fee.
- Every increase in the fee should be accompanied by an increase to the level of services.
- - To conduct the transparency of the service, the cost, and its subsidy;
- To develop suitable models, policies and plans for the local level on the reduction, reuse and recycling with the involvement of the key actors;

- Creation of a coherent, sensible, well-designed system which stimulates the prevention, reuse, recycle, composting, and other forms of evaluation
- To facilitate the participation of recycling small, medium and large enterprises and informal ones that offers these services.
- To make the formalization of the collecting sector on improving the working conditions, the legitimacy as recycles and their access on loans and technical information in order to improve the environmental performance of the collection, without removing to these people their traditional tools of living.
- While compiling the contracts, in those cases when the service is contracted by a private sector, to stimulate the cooperation win-win schemes among the parties. Part of the contract should be elements of rising of public awareness.
- To complete the urban waste management system in all the elements of the chain by including here their trainings, an element that is lacking in all the local units.
- To eliminate the non-legal mechanisms for the collection of fees and to replace them with all inclusive and sustainable mechanisms until we reach full citizen awareness.
- To create sustainable partnerships among the NGO-s and local unit in order to inform and raise the awareness of the public.
- To create positive examples by creating the proper infrastructure for the collection and division of wastes in the schools, though projects that stimulate environmental education.



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