CREATING FUTURE TOGETHER
NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Thematic analysis/diagnosis:
Waste management

Executive Summary

Waste must be managed in an integrated manner by preventing its generation, processing for reuse, recycling, its treatment and disposal (disposal) at landfills, in accordance with the Hierarchy of waste management. The transition to an integrated waste management system, its processing and reuse and efficient disposal is complex and time consuming, and also requires major investments in equipment, plants, landfill remediation, etc. Greater involvement of the academia, business sector, experts and civil society organizations in the decision-making process is needed, but at the same time, work needs to be done on raising awareness for the implementation of sustainable solutions among all stakeholders.

The absence of reliable data limits the accuracy and reliability of any planning process. Furthermore, since many investments in waste management are of relatively long-term nature, it is necessary to develop credible projections for future waste generation. Although the recycling of packaging waste generated in the Republic of North Macedonia is rising, most of this waste is not recycled. The EU circular economy package has set new targets for packaging waste, but they are unlikely to be achieved quickly and longer deadlines will be negotiated as part of the country's accession talks.

The trends in Europe and worldwide are moving towards less waste generation, maximizing its reuse after treatment as source of energy or raw material, up to incineration and disposal of waste in a landfill. Waste in Germany is fully processed: 45 percent is recycled, 38 percent is incinerated, and 17 percent is composted. [9]. Almost half, or over 46 percent of municipal waste is recycled in the EU. Germany holds the record for recycling. More than half of the waste generated in Europe is also recycled in Austria, Belgium, the Netherlands, Slovenia and Switzerland. The worst country in this regard in the EU is Malta, where less than 7% of waste is recycled, and the other countries below a 20% rate are Greece, Cyprus and Romania [9].

Another problem arises from non-standard communal landfills and waste dumps, which pose risks of air, soil, surface water and groundwater pollution, as well as potential risks to the biodiversity, agricultural land and human health as consequence of mixed hazardous and non-hazardous waste disposal.

The active landfills (around 1000) are categorized according to their environmental risk assessment: 16 landfills are ranked as high-risk landfills, 16 as medium-risk and 19 as having low environmental risk. Four of the high-risk landfills are classified as special high-risk cases and need to be closed or rehabilitated in a short period of time [7].

Potential difficulties in implementing the policy are the following: frequent changes of the government and municipal employees, lack of adequate road infrastructure for waste collection, lack of basic data for monitoring trends, measurement and analysis, unprofitable operation of the public enterprises for waste disposal, old vehicle fleet, illegal landfills and garbage dumps and low awareness among citizens.