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COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT

The early warning report for Lithuania

Accompanying the document

Report from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions

identifying Member States at risk of not meeting the 2025 preparing for re-use and recycling target for municipal waste, the 2025 recycling target for packaging waste and the 2035 municipal waste landfilling reduction target.

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1. Introduction

The early warning report aims to assist Member States at risk of failing to meet: (i) the 2025 target of 55% for the preparing for re-use and the recycling of their municipal waste (this target is set out in Article 11(2)(c) of Directive 2008/98/EC); and (ii) the 2025 target of 65% for the recycling of their packaging waste (this target is set out in Article 6(1)(f) of Directive 1994/62/EC). It also provides an update on how Member States are performing against the 2035 target to send no more than 10% of their municipal waste to landfill (this target is set out in Article 5(5) Directive 1999/31/EC).

This report builds on previous support provided by the Commission to help Member States comply with EU law on municipal waste management, including, where relevant, the early warning report from 2018.

The assessment underpinning the early warning report identified 18 Member States at risk of missing the 2025 preparing for re-use and recycling target for municipal waste, 10 of which are also at risk of missing the 2025 recycling target for all packaging waste.

This assessment is based on a collaborative and transparent process involving the Member States concerned, the European Environment Agency¹, and an in-depth analysis of the most recent policy developments in the Member States. This process also involved extensive consultation with the Member State authorities in charge of waste management. The possible actions identified during this process are based on existing best practices and aim to help Member States meet the 2025 targets, and as such they focus on policy measures which can be taken in the short term. These actions should be seen as complementary to those recommended in the roadmaps which were drawn up as part of preceding compliance-promotion activities and to those recommended in the Environmental Implementation Review².

2. Key findings

Based on an analysis of collected data and existing policies in the area of waste management, Lithuania is considered to be at risk of missing (i) the 2025 target of 55 % for the preparing for re-use and the recycling of its municipal waste and (ii) the 2025 target to recycle 65% of its packaging waste. Lithuania is likely to meet the target of landfilling no more than 10% of its municipal waste in 2035 as there has been a significant decrease in landfilling in recent years. Lithuania's municipal waste recycling rate has slightly decreased in recent years, falling from 48% in 2016 to 45.2% in 2020. However, the use of the new calculation rules³ for 2020 data might have played a role in this decrease. The landfilling rate in 2020 was 16.3%, and the significant recent increase in incineration capacity is expected to further reduce the distance to the landfill target.

The total recycling rate for packaging waste in 2019 was 61.9%, which is reasonably close to the 2025 target of 65%. However, the upcoming application of the EU's new calculation rules⁴ for packaging-waste recycling might result in a lower recycling rate (in 2020 the recycling rate for all packaging waste was 61.8%). Furthermore, Lithuania is also considered to be at risk of not meeting its 2025 target for the glass packaging waste stream.

¹ EEA and ETC/CE (2022). Early Warning Assessment Related to the 2025 Targets for Municipal and Packaging Waste (<https://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/country-profiles-early-warning-assessments>)

² European Commission (2022). Environmental Implementation Review 2022. COM/2022/438 final. (https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=comnat%3ACOM_2022_0438_FIN)

³ New calculation rules applying to the 2025 target according to the Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2019/1004.

⁴ Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2019/665.

Some of the main challenges facing waste management in the country include:

- low capture rates of recyclable waste in the separate collection system (41% for bio-waste, 27% for plastics and 5% for textiles);
- the lack of a quality-management system to ensure the production of high-quality compost/digestate;
- the lack of sufficient infrastructure for separate collection and treatment of bio-waste.

3. Key recommendations

Among the measures deemed necessary to support Lithuania's efforts to improve its performance in waste management, three main recommendations are listed below.

1. Support preparing for re-use of municipal waste and re-use systems for packaging.
2. Further develop waste treatment infrastructure associated with the higher steps of the waste hierarchy, in particular to improve performance in separate collection and increase the treatment capacity for bio-waste and food waste, and set up a quality-management system for compost/digestate from bio-waste.
3. Consider making municipalities responsible for meeting specific mandatory targets on the separate collection of waste. This could be complemented with a system of financial awards and penalties dependant on the performance on such targets by the municipalities.
4. Develop and promote awareness-raising campaigns specifically tailored to different target groups to increase participation in separate collection.

The table below lists all possible actions to support Lithuania's efforts to improve its performance in waste management.

4. Good practices

The following measures implemented by Lithuania are considered good practices that could be replicated and that could help Member States to achieve the above-mentioned targets.

- Promoting home composting – Lithuania has improved bio-waste collection and treatment capacities by providing financial aid for home composters. Between 2021 and 2024, more than 66 000 home composters will be provided to individual houses. The home composters are financed by both EU and national funds.
- An ambitious target for reducing the percentage of waste sent to landfill – Lithuania has set a national target that no more than 5% of its municipal waste should be sent to landfill by 2030, thus going beyond the target set by the EU that no more than 10% of municipal waste should be landfilled by 2035⁵.
- A national threshold for incineration capacity – Lithuania's national waste-prevention and management plan for 2021-2027 includes a threshold ceiling for incineration: by 2027, incinerated municipal waste must not exceed 429 000 tonnes per year⁶.

⁵ Article 26, Waste Management Law, Official Gazette 1998, No 61-1726, i.e. 0981010ISTAVIII-787, New wording of the law as of 1.1.2003: No. IX-1004, 1.7.2002, Žin., 2002, No. 72-3016 (17.7.2002).

⁶ Article 271, National Waste Prevention and Management Plan for 2021-2027 (Decree No 573 of 1 June 2022, amending Decree 519 of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania of 12 April 2022).

OVERVIEW OF POSSIBLE ACTIONS TO IMPROVE PERFORMANCE

Governance

- 1) Set mandatory objectives or indicators for separate waste collection at the level of the bodies in charge of collecting municipal waste (e.g. municipalities) in order to monitor, enforce and achieve higher capture rates. This could be complemented with a system of financial rewards and penalties dependant on the achievement of such targets by municipalities. Information on the performance of municipalities could also be made available to the general public to raise awareness (e.g. by publishing on a website).

Prevention

- 2) Take measures to increase re-use and to prevent the generation of non-recyclable municipal waste.
- 3) Foster coordination between the central and the local government to achieve the EU's waste-prevention objectives. Properly monitor the implementation of waste prevention measures.

Separate collection

- 4) Swiftly improve performance in separately collecting waste (especially food waste). Although a national system for the separate collection of food waste is being implemented, accelerating implementation could help to meet recycling targets. Furthermore, consideration should be given to improving the convenience of separate collection in areas with less than 2 000 inhabitants.

Waste treatment

- 5) Support preparing for re-use of municipal waste and develop waste-treatment infrastructure in a way that focuses on the higher steps of the waste hierarchy. Firm plans and concrete actions are needed, such as supplementing centralised biowaste treatment with decentralised composting solutions such as home composting and community composting.
- 6) Further increase bio-waste treatment capacities. This is to ensure that the planned increase in separately collected food waste can be appropriately treated and sent for recycling. A process of extending bio-waste treatment plants has already started.
- 7) Compost and digestate from bio-waste treatment plants should be used for land improvement and as fertiliser. This is already possible for some compost/digestate under Lithuanian law. However, developing a quality management system could promote the greater use of compost/digestate.

Communication and awareness raising

- 8) Carry out awareness-raising activities as stated in the national waste-prevention and management plan for 2021-2027. The activities should include the creation of communication materials addressed to different target groups (e.g. households, commercial-waste generators, schoolteachers, and students) with clear and consistent messages. These materials should be used as part of awareness-raising activities, in leaflets, on social media, on the internet and at civic amenity sites.

Extended producer responsibility and economic instruments

- 9)** Expand the application of the pay-as-you-throw system for both businesses and households to both attain higher capture rates for recyclable fractions and reduce residual waste. Local authorities could be supported through guidance on how to design incentive mechanisms and how to introduce or learn from pilot projects.
- 10)** Consider extending the existing deposit-refund scheme to other beverage containers made of glass and plastic, which are currently not covered by the scheme.
- 11)** Stepping up efforts to establish reuse systems for packaging will bring environmental benefits and help Member States in complying with the EU packaging recycling targets.