

Enlarge EU Newsletter MAY 2008 Edition

New plastics recycling industry in Macedonia - Truth or Dare?

The production and use of plastics today is 20 times greater than that of 50 years ago and is expected to increase, driven by its potential for innovation and energy saving, positive contribution to climate protection. However, plastics usage has many disadvantages, like the non-degradable nature, whose disposal creates a solid waste problem. EU policy on Waste Management as implemented in the Framework Directive on waste as amended by Directive 91/156/EEC obliges member states to encourage the reduction of waste and its harmfulness. They also must encourage the recovery of waste and prohibit uncontrolled dumping. The revised Packaging Waste Directive EU directive sets targets for recycling and recovery min. 55% and min. 60 % respectively, with end year of achievement December, 2008.

Macedonia lags well behind with the lack of modern technology and managerial expertise on waste management practices, and is currently undergoing an intensive period of legislative development concerning this issue. What are the present conditions of the plastics recycling industry in Macedonia? ***Can the private sector involvement in the waste management reach greater efficiency than the public enterprises regarding waste recovery and recycling?***

Challenging conditions

The capacity for recycling, reuse and recovery of plastic packaging is very limited, with rate of recycling only 0.01%. According to the newly adopted Waste Management Strategy of the Republic of Macedonia (2008-2020) the recovery of many types of potentially recyclable materials (metals, paper, plastics, car batteries and accumulators, waste oils etc.) is not financially viable under the prevailing conditions: lower waste volumes, lower waste fees, higher costs of operating on relatively smaller scale and limited local markets for recyclables that contribute for an increased costs of export for recyclables. These unfavorable conditions are an obstacle for preparation and implementation of the integrated and cost-effective waste management system, regarding waste management recovery and recycling.

In need of encouragement

Data show that mostly the informal sector and private companies deal with collection and recycling of plastics. The cost-effective studies give green light on the private sector for its involvement in the part of managing waste treatment, recovery and recycling. This sector has taken over the resources belonging to the recycling network of former Yugoslavia, and still is not used efficiently due to the costly collection system. However, the implementation of \$1.2 million USAID sponsored Plastic Recycling Project in partnership with the municipalities of Karpos, Gostivar, Kocani and Strumica, as well as public and private waste management companies and NGOs has brought progress in the raw waste management area. The recycling facts for the period 2005-2007 speak for themselves: collection of plastic bottles from start up point of 341 tones in 2005 have increased to 1500 tones in 2006 and in 2007 is estimated to be 3000 tones, and generated exports from bailed and/or processed plastic bottles reached approximately \$1.6 million in 2007. (Source: USAID Plastic Recycling Project)

The potential of the new recycling activities exists, but is facing problems such as: insufficient financial support for vehicles, equipment operation and maintenance costs, difficulties in obtaining appropriate licenses and permits, resolving the issue on unfair competition resulting from illegal collectors, weak public awareness and marketing campaigns, as well as missing support from local authorities for organizing plastic waste collection schemes.

Waste created per inhabitant: 313 kg/inhabitant

Commercial waste: 154.543 t/year (27% of the community solid waste)

Household waste: 417.838 t/year (73% of the community solid waste)

Waste from packaging: 13% from household waste and 30% from commercial waste in total 97.305t/year (17% of the community solid waste)

Total plastic (PET) wastes from packaging (including landfill disposed): 10.748t

Recycled PET waste from packaging: 0.2t

Source: MoEPP, R. Macedonia (2004/05)

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