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## **The action "Citizens Empowerment in the Republic of Moldova"**

### **Position Document**

*of civil society organizations on solid waste management in the Republic of Moldova*

June 2021

#### **National context**

Waste is one of the main sources of environmental pollution, also contributing to climate change, which affects the health and quality of the peoples' life. Insufficient development of a functional waste management system is also an impediment to the communities' economic development.

On the other hand, an integrated waste management system offers new investment opportunities, job creation, quality of life and environmental improvement. To achieve this goal, it is very important to understand holistically what an integrated waste management system means, the factors of influence on the waste formation, the economic mechanisms that would provide the system financial and operational sustainability.

In the period from January to March, 2021, the civil society organisations (CSO), as part of the regional networks created within the framework of the "Citizens Empowerment in the Republic of Moldova" Action, funded by the European Union and implemented by the German Development Cooperation through GIZ, in co-ordination with the Project 'Modernization of Local Public Services in the Republic of Moldova', have held a number of regional events on the current situation related to waste management in the Republic of Moldova. Participants of these regional events discussed the role of the civil society in facilitating the creation and implementation of the service for the solid waste management (SWM), and came up with several conclusions and recommendations, emerging from current challenges.

The participants of the regional events represented key actors in the field of SWM from the South, Centre, North and ATU Gagauzia regions: members of civil society organizations, beneficiaries of the Local Grants Programme funded by the EU and implemented by the GIZ, mayors, employees of municipal enterprises providing services in the field, media representatives.

Discussions at the events have been focused on:

- State of affairs in urban and rural localities: degree of development of the sanitation/waste collection service, status and management practices of waste collection and storage, state of sorting practices, and degree of involvement of CSOs and residents in the SWM-related activities;
- Identification of the challenges in the sector and the solutions and recommendations to improve the SWM situation in the development regions from the perspective of key actors, as well as specific role of civil society in this process.

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## Challenges

The challenges stated by the participants mostly referred to some basic categories or areas for the creation and sustainability of a waste management service in the represented localities:

- I. The level of knowledge, understanding and application of the National Strategy for the waste management in the Republic of Moldova in the period 2013 - 2027 by the important actors in the field of SWM:
  - the national regulatory framework in the field of waste management is still under development;
  - feasibility studies for the development of municipal waste management system at the level of waste management regions (WMR) are not yet developed for all areas;
  - insufficient national and local expertise in waste management;
  - the recyclable waste collection network is not developed at the national level, so that waste collected separately in various localities of the country can be handed over without great difficulties;
  - lack of financial mechanisms to stimulate separate waste collection;
  - coercive mechanisms for implementing waste management legislation are ineffective;
  - citizens do not know about the prospects of the National Waste Management System or about the roles of the actors involved in its establishment.
  
- II. Creation and development of sanitation services from the perspective of local public administration and municipal enterprises (ME);
  - municipalities and ME do not have knowledge and capabilities regarding the creation and operation of the waste management system;
  - insufficient investment funds for the creation or upgrading of appropriate infrastructure (equipment, access roads, etc.) for adequate waste management;
  - weak inter-community cooperation to deliver cost-effective waste management services;
  - difficulties in delimiting land for single local dumpsites;
  - absence of a centralized waste collection system in most rural localities;
  - local authorities cannot fully fulfil their duties as a finding agent in the field of waste management;
  - fees for waste disposal are small and are not applied evenly;
  - weak mechanisms to incentivise citizens to comply with waste disposal requirements in permitted places or to penalise waste disposal in non-permitted places (including around the landfills);
  - insufficient communication with citizens on how to manage waste;
  - poor promotion and uptake of the positive CSOs practices, working with citizens to improve the situation in the field of SWM.

- III. Storage of waste and the arrangement of local landfills, including liquidation of the spontaneous ones:
- management, including landfill at local level is unclear until the system is created at the regional level;
  - waste disposed of in non-permitted places and the creation of spontaneous dumpsites;
  - lack of the local waste disposal standards on the territory of households, especially in smaller localities.
- IV. Involvement of the civil society organisations in the SWM activities:
- the number of CSOs active and involved in working with citizens is insufficient;
  - residents do not notice violations in the field of waste management;
  - limited access to information on waste management, especially for older persons;
  - insufficient information of children and young people about waste management principles in the family, school or kindergarten;
- V. Participation of citizens as customers in the creation and maintenance of the waste management system, including through payment for the services provided (sanitation fee or tariff for the service provision):
- residents do not consider centralized waste collection a local, regional, or even national priority, and are not aware of environmental damage;
  - misunderstanding of the concept and importance of the separate waste collection;
  - the reluctance of citizens to contribute financially to the maintenance of the SWM service.

## Recommendations

The conclusions of the regional events were reiterated in the national event, which took place on June 3, 2021, in which the following recommendations were formulated and addressed to:

a) Central public authorities:

- expedite the process of drafting and adopting the regulatory framework for the implementation of waste legislation;
- improving coercive measures for non-compliance with national waste management legislation;
- temporary authorisation of dumpsites at the local level until creation of the waste management system at the WMR level;
- evaluation of the implementation of the action plan of the National Waste Management Strategy in the Republic of Moldova for the years 2013-2027 and its adjustment in realistic timelines;
- dedicated and punctual evaluation of the results of the citizens information campaign, foreseen in the first phases of implementation of the strategy, in order to identify the need for its re-planning and rethinking;

- establishing the National pollution tax, applicable to all citizens and directed to local budgets;
- development of an explicit, clear and feasible guide for LPA level I, in the context of the implementation of the strategy and the creation of waste management systems;
- Organization of fairs for processors of various types of waste, in order to facilitate LPA access to them;
- increase the attention given to information and education of children at pre-school and school level on Waste Management and its impact on the environment.

b) Local public authorities:

- include the priority "Waste Management" in the strategic documents for the development of localities and monitor it regularly, every six months, with citizens' involvement;
- development and approval of the local plans and local waste management legislation aimed at reducing and recycling the waste, with the participation of citizens and CSOs;
- direct communication with residents at all stages of creating and managing the SWM services – approval of the corresponding local normative acts, testing the perception of the readiness to contribute financially, communication of the schedule and rules of garbage storage, simple explanation of the expenses associated with the service and the financing mechanism, sorting prospects and experiments, etc.;
- conducting intensive information campaigns for residents, with the help of CSOs and on the basis of the local waste management plan;
- capacity development of the staff responsible for waste management at the local level;
- setting tariffs/fees to ensure the financial sustainability of the waste management services;
- creation of mechanisms for compensation of payments for waste management services for vulnerable people;
- increase the level of cooperation with civil society organisations and other actors with the aim of improving the waste management situation;
- promotion of a co-financing mechanism in the area of the creation or upgrading of the infrastructure of the SWM System (contributions from residents and local budget);
- creation and approval of the local funds to support the civic initiatives in the field of waste management (participatory budgeting);
- installation and management of video monitoring systems for local warehouses and public places vulnerable from sanitation perspective;
- creating platforms for complex reporting of the problems related to waste management (households not covered by service, spontaneous dumpsites, violation of rules etc.).

c) Civil society organisations:

- raising awareness among the population and economic agents on the importance of environmental protection by reducing the amount of waste and separate waste collection;

- carrying out information campaigns, in partnership with LPAs, on the risks caused by improperly stored waste and the benefits of a waste management system based on sorting at source;
  - actively engaging in public consultation and involving citizens in the public consultation processes when the Waste Management Process/Service undergoes any change at the local level;
  - providing assistance to older people and other disadvantaged groups to be informed about waste management principles at the local and national level;
  - identification, in partnership with LPAs, of the relevant SWM topics for communication with citizens in the locality;
  - active participation in the process of monitoring the implementation of National Waste Management legislation;
  - developing partnerships with various actors to implement waste management projects, to accelerate the recovery process.
- d) Residents of the Republic of Moldova:
- participation in decision-making in the creation and management of waste management services at both national and local level;
  - request from the authorities to set up the waste management service where it does not exist, including separate waste collection;
  - regular subscription and payment of waste management services;
  - collection and disposal of waste separately, by category, according to the scheme offered by the local public authority;
  - rational and responsible consumption of resources, also considering the needs of future generations.

## **Conclusions and proposals**

It is very important that the issue of waste management becomes a national, regional, and local priority in the Republic of Moldova. At all three levels there must be clear plans to address the current negative impacts and to prepare for the establishment of a high-performance and sustainable waste management system. The approval of rules and laws itself is not enough, because a viable system is based equally and simultaneously on three pillars: information, infrastructure, and management.

Based on the above-mentioned directions, it is necessary to mobilize all categories of the actors involved, according to the following model:

*Central public authorities* shall address the issue of waste management as one of the most important and shall identify the most appropriate country solution, based on the real situation in the localities and a constructive dialogue with local public authorities, CSOs and citizens. The mechanisms that will be part of the solution must be understood and accepted by those who are going to apply them, with vertical and horizontal information. Likewise, central authorities must not ignore the existing negative effects of waste mismanagement and must come up with current solutions to reduce the amount of waste that is stored on the territory of localities, especially the rural ones.

*Local public authorities* shall clarify their role in the process of solving the problem. Based on the clarifications, they shall develop local waste management plans with CSOs and active citizens, as well as systematically monitor their implementation. The plans shall include informing citizens about all the aspects mentioned in this document, with a special focus on creating the skills of residents to contribute financially to the waste collection service (sanitation). Thus, people will be prepared to be at the base of a sustainable waste management system, which shall spring from the conviction and contribution of people. The local public authorities shall also show their maturity and collaborate to identify the best solutions for temporary storage of waste and to ensure a quality local/regional service.

*Civil society organizations* shall involve residents in the widest range of activities aimed at increasing their contribution to the waste management system. Active citizens should help people and, where appropriate, local public administration, to understand the importance of the following:

- the need to store waste in safe places that would not have negative effects on the environment and human health;
- the usefulness and convenience of waste collection services, as well as their financial sustainability, which can only be ensured by financial contributions (fee or tariff);
- the emergence of waste sorting at source and simple procedures worth to be followed;
- informing the authorities in case of violation of the rules of landfill;
- evaluation of the work of the central and local authorities, based on the results in the field of waste management, according to the monitoring of the implementation of local plans and the national solution.

*Media* should continue its mission to inform people fairly and impartially about the real problems of society. Thus, to help the actors involved identify the best solutions, the mass media should introduce and keep on the public agenda the issue of waste management, national constraints, and local critical situations. Also, publicizing good practices in communities that have developed a waste management system and where citizens pay for the service, shall motivate and encourage people in localities where the creation of the SWM system is only beginning.

Only prioritizing the SWM problem at the national level and mobilizing all the actors involved is the way to healthy and sustainable future.

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