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The early warning report for Cyprus

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[1].

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 Agency2, 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 Review[3].

2. Key findings

Based on the analysis of collected data and existing policies in the area of waste management, Cyprus is considered to be at risk of missing the 2025 target of 55% for the preparing for re-use and the recycling of municipal waste; it is also at risk of missing the 2025 target to recycle 65% of packaging waste. The distance to the 2035 target to landfill 10% of municipal waste is also of concern.

In 2019, municipal waste generation in Cyprus (648 kg/person) was well above the EU average (502 kg/person), which might be due to the high to touristic activity. On the other hand, packaging waste generated in 2019 was about half the EU average (92 kg/person vs 177 kg/person). This seemingly low figure may indicate that significant quantities of packaging placed on the market, which is used for the amount of generated packaging waste, are not reported. In addition, a significant share of generated municipal waste remains unaccounted for in terms of treatment (17% in 2019). This is primarily due to temporary storage and losses during mechanical biological treatment processes. However, this might also indicate some direct landfilling in irregular or substandard facilities[4].

In 2020, the municipal waste recycling rate reported by Cyprus was 16.8% (which is over 38 percentage points below the 2025 target of 55%), and the landfill rate was 67.0% (about three times the EU average). General

[1] An early warning report was issued for Cyprus in 2018 (SWD(2018) 415 final). In total, 13 recommendations were drafted within the assessment. According to Cypriot authorities, 3 of those recommendations are considered to be implemented, 5 partially implemented and 5 not implemented..

[2] 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)

[3] 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)

[4] See Waste management section of 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).

trends in waste management are also of concern: the recycling rate remained stagnant over 2016-2020 (approximately 16%), and the landfill rate only slightly decreased (by about 9 percentage points between 2016 and 2020).

Too low composting and digesting rates are considered a key reason for this performance. The current separate collection and treatment capacity for biowaste is insufficient for the total amount of biowaste generated in Cyprus. The amount of municipal waste sent to landfill also remains too high.

In 2019, the recycling rate for all packaging reached 66.8%, which is above the 2025 target (65%). However, there are issues with the quality of data on packaging. For instance, there is a notable discrepancy between the low recycling rate for municipal waste and the high recycling rates for packaging waste. The data sets on municipal waste and packaging waste appear to be inconsistent, given that a large share of packaging waste is generated by households and so it is part of municipal waste. In 2020 the recycling rate for all packaging waste decreased to 59.9%.

Cyprus has recently put in place measures to reverse the situation and achieve the above-mentioned targets. However, this has still not resulted in measurable effects, and efforts should be stepped up significantly in order to reach all 2025 targets. Significant improvements are needed to put waste management in Cyprus in line with the EU's waste hierarchy. Some of the main challenges facing waste management in the country include:

- excessive reliance on landfilling and the lack of a landfill tax;
- insufficient infrastructure and systems for the separate collection and treatment of biowaste, including low compost quality and no dedicated quality management system;
- data quality issues related to generated packaging waste.

3. Key recommendations

Among the measures deemed necessary to support Cyprus' 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. Roll out separate collection at source across the entire country (especially for biowaste) and improve public awareness on sorting waste and waste prevention. The country should implement economic instruments, such as pay-as-you-throw systems, and introduce a landfill tax to incentivise separate collection and minimise the amount of landfilled waste.
3. Further develop waste treatment infrastructure associated with the higher steps of the waste hierarchy (in particular by increasing capacity for treating biowaste and supporting home composting) and set national quality standards for compost/digestate from biowaste.
4. Cyprus should improve its data management system in order to present consistent and verifiable data sets (especially on packaging waste).

The table below lists a number of possible actions to support Cyprus' efforts to improve its performance in waste management.

4. Good practices

The following measures implemented by Cyprus are considered good practices contributing to the improvement of its recycling performance.

- National plan to promote the use of compost from biowaste – This programme gives major financial support to farmers applying a certain minimum amount of biowaste-derived compost on their land (EUR 1 600/hectare for grain, and EUR 1 200/hectare for other crops). Potential beneficiaries include all owners of agricultural holdings larger than 0.3 hectares. The programme is funded under the country's 2023-2027 common agricultural policy strategic plan.
- Waste reduction programme for the tourism industry – 'Municipal waste reduction programme for coastal hotel and related tourism infrastructure in Limassol and Paphos' is a project aimed at local authorities that have coastal hotels and tourist infrastructure. It aims to set up a system for sorting waste at source and the separate collection of recyclable and organic waste from large waste producers (such as hotels, tourist complexes, restaurants, leisure centres and institutions).

OVERVIEW OF POSSIBLE ACTIONS TO IMPROVE PERFORMANCE
Governance
1) Address data quality issues, especially those related to generated and recycled quantities of packaging waste.
2) Set national standards for compost and digestate produced in biowaste treatment plants; this should help create a strong demand for those products used for fertilising purposes. The standards should be developed in close dialogue with the farming community.
3) Set up a coordinating body at government level that gives clear direction and the necessary technical support to municipalities. The body should provide up-to-date guidance on the separate collection of recyclable and reusable materials and biowaste. In particular, the guidance should focus on the following: a. waste prevention; b. choosing collection services; c. procuring services; d. managing services; e. communication campaigns. This guidance should also share ideas and best practices to improve cost efficiency and performance.
4) Set mandatory indicators and targets for separate waste collection to be achieved by the bodies in charge of the collection of 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 performance of the bodies against the targets. Information on the performance of those bodies could also be made available to the general public to raise awareness (e.g. on a website).
Prevention
5) Take measures to increase re-use and to prevent the generation of non-recyclable municipal waste
6) Swiftly adopt the waste prevention programme. The country should properly monitor implementation of waste prevention measures and ensure sufficient budget is allocated to them. Cyprus should also foster coordination between the central and the local government to achieve EU waste prevention objectives.
Separate collection
7) Consider a mandatory deposit-refund scheme for beverage packaging, including the promotion of multi-use packaging over single-use packaging.
Waste treatment
8) 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.

9) Develop waste treatment infrastructure associated with the higher steps of the waste hierarchy. Firm plans and concrete action are needed, such as supporting home composting and increasing capacity for treating biowaste to fully cover all generated biowaste.
Communication and awareness-raising
10) Step up awareness-raising activities specifically tailored to different target groups (e.g. households, commercial waste generators, schoolteachers, students and tourists) to increase participation in separate collection. A set of national communication materials should be developed for use at local level. The materials should have clear and consistent messages and have a particular focus on biowaste, home composting and sound management of waste (e.g. sorting). Communication material (e.g. leaflets) could be made available in English to help tourists contribute to sorting waste.
Extended producer responsibility and economic instruments
11) Quickly implement a pay-as-you-throw system for both businesses and households to 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 create pilot projects to test and refine them.
12) Implement economic instruments (e.g. landfill taxes of a sufficient magnitude) to incentivise waste management focused on the higher steps of the waste hierarchy. This should make reuse, preparation for reuse and recycling economically attractive and reduce dependency on landfilling. The economic incentive should be designed and sufficiently large to effectively steers trends in waste management up the waste hierarchy.
13) 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.