

LAUNCH EDITION: JUNE 2023

# LET'S FACE THE WASTE!

Regional Partnerships for  
Sustainable Waste Solutions

TRANSFORMING A  
CHALLENGE INTO  
AN OPPORTUNITY

⋮  
⋮  
⋮

TOGETHER  
TOWARDS  
TOMORROW

⋮  
⋮  
⋮

FIRST STEPS  
TOWARDS  
CHANGE

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**SUSTAINABLE  
MUNICIPAL  
WASTE  
MANAGEMENT  
SERVICES  
IN NORTH  
MACEDONIA**



*“This is an exciting time for the country, marked by significant changes in policy, regulation, and initiatives aimed at improving waste management practices.”*

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# 1

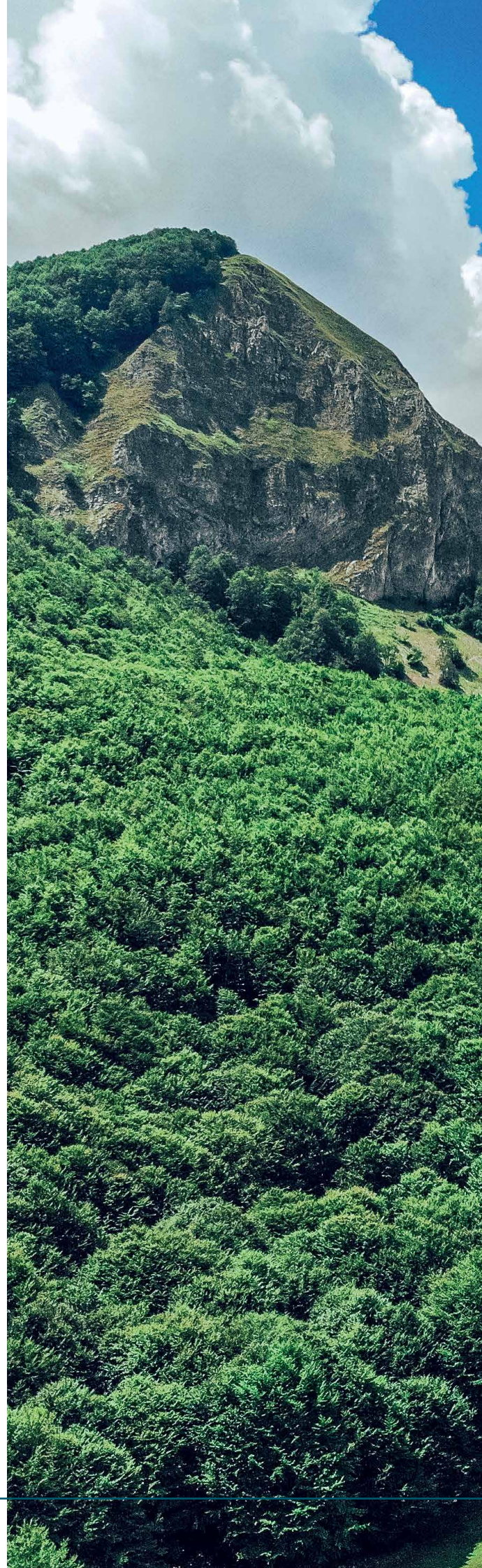
## TRANSFORMING A CHALLENGE INTO AN OPPORTUNITY: TAKING THE LEAD FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

**Sustainable waste management practices are no longer just an ideal; they are an essential part of maintaining the delicate balance of our ecosystems and mitigating the environmental crisis that our planet faces today.**

**Recognizing this urgency, efforts worldwide are focused on shifting from traditional, linear ‘take-make-dispose’ waste methods to more circular and environmentally friendly approaches, emphasizing waste reduction, recycling, and recovery.**

**In North Macedonia, this awareness is growing and becoming central to local and national development agendas. The country is rising to the occasion, seeing this environmental challenge as an opportunity to transform and innovate, to lay the foundation for a more sustainable future.**

**This is an exciting time for the country, marked by significant changes in policy, regulation, and initiatives aimed at improving waste management practices. Yet, this journey is not without challenges. It requires the commitment and combined efforts of various stakeholders, from policymakers and practitioners to every single citizen.**





# reduce, recycle & recover

*“Efforts worldwide are focused on shifting from traditional, linear waste methods to more circular and environmentally friendly approaches, emphasizing waste reduction, recycling, & recovery.”*

**RYAN KNOX,  
MANAGING DIRECTOR,  
SALAR INTERNATIONAL**



“The exponential growth of waste calls for cooperation, innovative ideas and changes in practices to ensure a more sustainable future. Visionary leadership and inclusive development processes can open new possibilities for local governments to tackle the change. Improved municipal performance in waste management will have tangible benefits in helping to create a clean and safe environment, and thus for the quality of life of people. Service to different ethnic communities, coverage of rural areas and the impact of higher tariffs on poor households are all important considerations in reforming the waste management system.

To support this change, SALAR International with financial support from the Swedish International Development Agency (Sida), has initiated the project “Sustainable Municipal Waste Management Service in North Macedonia”. Adopting a holistic approach, the project will work with different level of governance, i.e. local, regional and national level. At the local level, it will work with the municipal administrations, local public utility companies and citizens to enhance waste management planning as well as inclusive and sustainable service delivery. At regional level, promoting learnings and inter-municipal coordination, working with the local government association, ZELS, will support a wider group of municipalities to improve waste planning and performance and to apply gender mainstreaming practices in local service delivery. Finally, working with the Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning, the Ministry of Local Self-Government and other national and regional actors, it will seek to improve multi-level coordination and promote structured communication as well as coordination, thus improving the government’s capacity to support local authorities in implementing EU waste standards.

Finally, waste management is an important area for local democracy in North Macedonia. If municipalities fail to manage the shift to an inter-municipal system effectively, they may risk seeing their competences in this field diminished. Swedish municipalities have longstanding technical and organisational expertise in sustainable waste management that can support this change, in particular the establishment and operation of inter-municipal associations and companies.

Let’s jointly work for the change that we need!”

*“Improved municipal performance in waste management will have tangible benefits in helping to create a clean and safe environment, and thus for the quality of life of people.”*

*Ryan Knox, Managing Director,  
SALAR International*

**ANA KARANFILOVA,  
HEAD OF WASTE  
DEPARTMENT, MOEPP**



“Waste management is a critical issue for North Macedonia, deeply connected to our national environmental goals and strategies. The effective management of waste is more than just an environmental necessity - it’s a way of safeguarding our natural resources, protecting public health, and creating sustainable growth for our economy.

The Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning is at the forefront of improving waste management practices in North Macedonia. We establish and enforce regulations, develop and implement national strategies, and lead public awareness campaigns, all aimed at promoting efficient waste management.

These efforts coincide with the project led by SALAR International, which supports our mission and augments our efforts towards realizing our waste management goals.

As we work hand in hand with partners on this project, we learn from global best practices and apply innovative solutions at a local level. This collaboration enables us to bridge the gap between our national directives and their practical implementation across all municipalities, accelerating our journey towards a cleaner, healthier, and more sustainable future.”





# 2

## TOGETHER TOWARDS TOMORROW: A COLLABORATIVE PATH TO EU INTEGRATION

### FEATURING WORDS FROM

**ANDERS HENRIKSSON, PRESIDENT OF  
THE SWEDISH ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL  
AUTHORITIES AND REGIONS (SALAR)**



“It is my great pleasure to note that Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR), through its international arm - SALAR International, is extending its partnership with the Republic of North Macedonia in promoting local leadership for sustainable development. This is a great opportunity for both SALAR as well as our partners in the Republic of North Macedonia to promote local democracy, decentralisation and sustainable local development.

SALAR is a large organisation with a long history of supporting the Swedish municipalities to provide better and more efficient services to the citizens. Since the 1980s, through international development cooperation, SALAR has been transferring its knowledge and experiences globally. We firmly believe that the Swedish experience of municipalities and regions, being a distinctive feature of the Swedish political system for several decades, can contribute to democratic development, at the local and regional level, in countries where they have adopted to promote role of local self-governments for sustainable development.

Our joint partnership will inevitably contribute to the Republic of North Macedonia’s efforts towards EU integration goals. Promoting local capacities will increase local self-governments’ proactive engagement in the overall EU accession processes. The role of municipalities, as the closest level of government to the citizens, will ensure sufficient implementation of the legislations and policies developed at the national level, including those in response to the EU acquis. Strong capacities, resources, and most importantly, effective communication between the state as well as

the local self-governments will be success factors. The project will encompass a range of technical assistance, from capacity development in municipal planning, to protection of environment and nature, to local socio-economic development, incorporating human right-based and gender sensitive approaches.

The opportunity is here and I would urge our partners to take the lead and drive sustainable local development towards a global impact! Thank you!”

**MR. RISTO PENOV,  
THE MINISTER OF LOCAL  
SELF-GOVERNMENT**



“The Ministry of Local Self-Government advocates for reducing the development differences between municipalities and between planning regions through the implementation of active measures. This means equal services for all citizens, regardless of their place of residence, because every citizen has the right to equally access public services - quality infrastructure, drinking water, proper disposal of solid waste, social infrastructure.

Our strategic documents, the Strategy for Regional Development 2020-2030 and the Program for Sustainable Local Development and Decentralization 2021-2026, cover these priorities. We are also working on continuous strengthening of the capacities of the municipalities and the Centers for the Development of the Planning Regions. The goal is to raise the quality of services in accordance with the standards of European legislation.

Solid waste management is a major challenge for local authorities because it requires significant financial resources and technical know-how.

Through the support provided by the project, municipalities and public enterprises are expected to strengthen their capacities for a more efficient, sustainable approach to solid waste management in accordance with European Union standards.”

## FEATURING WORDS FROM



### **MS. KAJA SHUKOVA, THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND PHYSICAL PLANNING**

“As North Macedonia strives to join the European Union, our country needs to align its policies and practices with the EU’s environmental standards, which are laid out in Chapter 27 of the accession negotiations.

The Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning is committed to bringing North Macedonia’s environmental standards in line with the EU’s stringent environmental requirements and the “Sustainable

Municipal Waste Management Services” project plays a significant role in our strategy.

It offers a systematic and integrated approach to waste management, fostering capacity building at all levels, and promoting compliance with EU standards.

We firmly believe that this project will help us to strengthen environmental governance and improve waste management systems across the country. This endeavor is not just about meeting EU benchmarks; it’s about driving sustainable development, protecting our natural resources, and enhancing the quality of life for our citizens.

Through this project, we are sending a clear signal to the European Union about our seriousness and commitment to adhere to their environmental norms. We understand the magnitude of the task, but we are confident that with joint efforts, and the continued support from our international partners, we will make considerable strides towards EU accession.

In terms of the Sustainable Development Goals, our strategies directly support goals like Sustainable Cities and Communities (SDG 11), Responsible Consumption and Production (SDG 12), and Climate Action (SDG 13). By addressing waste management effectively, we are contributing to the global efforts to create a more sustainable world.”

### **MS. DUSHICA PERISHIKJ, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF ZELS**



“As collaboration is at the heart of this project, ZELS will play a bridging role between the national and local stakeholders and our sister organization, SALAR International. This role is pivotal in ensuring a smooth flow of communication, sharing of expertise, and overall coordination of activities.

One of our primary responsibilities is to facilitate knowledge sharing and exchange of best practices among the partner municipalities. We organize workshops, seminars, and training sessions to help local authorities understand the importance of sustainable waste management, learn from the successes of other communities, and adopt effective practices that can be tailored to their specific contexts.

In addition to sharing lessons learned, ZELS is committed to promoting gender equality and social inclusion in local waste management policy and planning. We recognize that sustainable waste management requires the involvement of all community members, regardless of their gender, age, or social background.

To this end, we work closely with local authorities to identify potential gender-specific challenges and opportunities in waste management and to ensure that the needs of both men and women are adequately addressed in policy development and decision-making processes. By integrating the gender perspective, we aim to create more inclusive, equitable, and effective waste management practices that benefit everyone in our communities. Our engagement with the national ministries is particularly significant. Their strategic guidance and support are integral to the success of the project. We work closely with them to ensure that the project activities align with national priorities and policies, particularly in relation to waste management, environment, and EU accession goals.

At the same time, our collaboration with local self-government units is of utmost importance. Local governments are at the frontline of service delivery, directly interacting with our communities and have a deep understanding of the local context and challenges. We believe that their active participation and contribution are key to developing and implementing effective and sustainable waste management solutions. Our goal is to strengthen their capacities, promote exchange of experiences and enable them to play a proactive role in the waste management sector. This collaboration with municipalities not only empowers them but also ensures that our project outcomes are tailored to the specific needs and conditions of our local communities.”

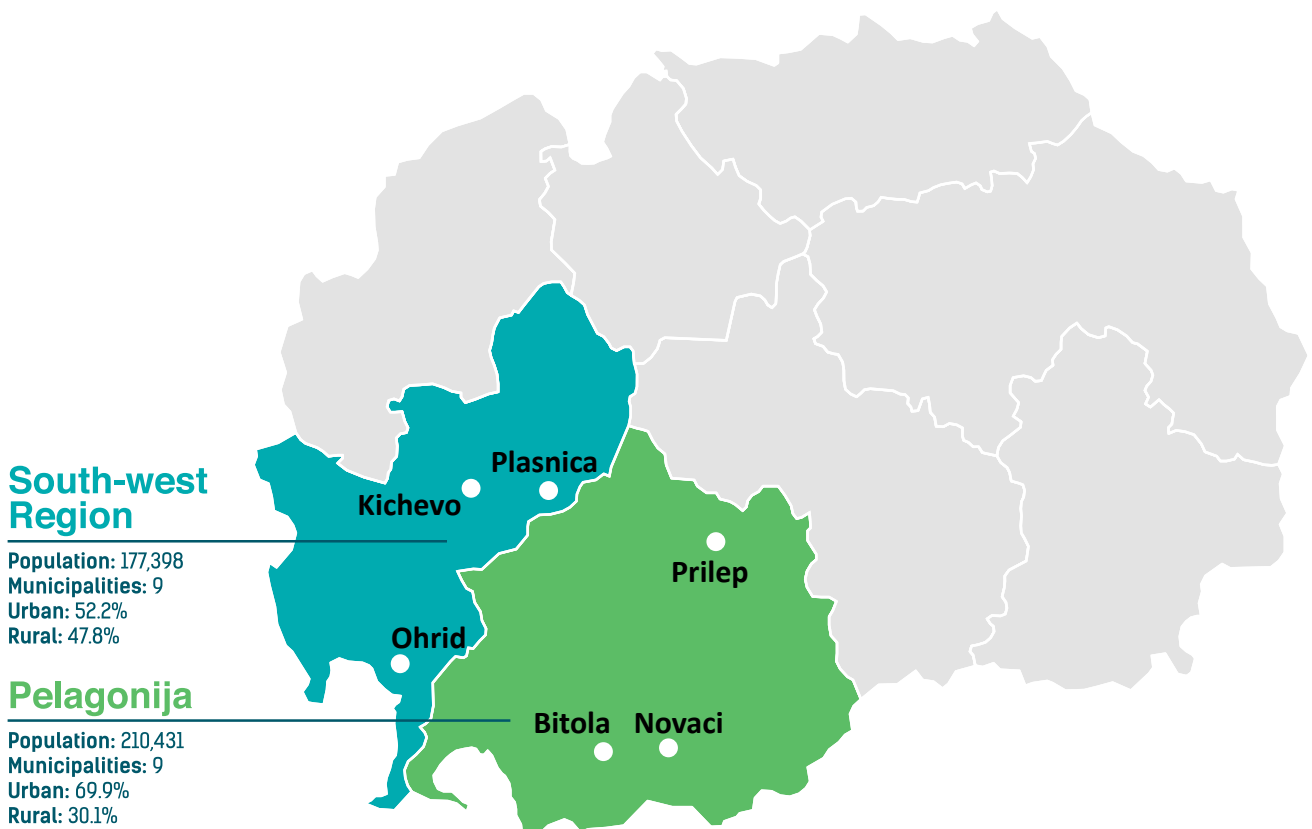
# 3

## OUR GREEN CHAMPIONS: SPOTLIGHT ON PILOT MUNICIPALITIES

Welcome to our network of green champions – the pilot municipalities leading the way in sustainable waste management. These municipalities are the heart of the project, each with its unique challenges and strengths, together painting a diverse landscape of waste management in North Macedonia.

Each municipality is grappling with a unique set of challenges in waste management. From managing increasing amounts of waste with limited resources, to dealing with the complexities of efficient waste management planning, these municipalities are on the front lines of the waste management battle. The project will support the process through resources and expertise, turning their challenges into opportunities.

*Map of municipalities*



Source: Census 2021

## CHALLENGE

## APPROACH

## RESULT

|   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| <i>Lack of strategic approach in waste management services</i>  | <i>Development of Local Action Plans in accordance with the Operational Regional Waste Management Plan</i>   | <i>Streamlined and efficient waste management operations through the successful development and implementation of LAPs and activities from the ORWMP</i> |
| <i>Inadequate data management to make informed decisions and effective waste management practices</i>   | <i>Development of comprehensive analyses and studies and identification of best waste management practices</i>   | <i>Informed decision-making and efficient execution of waste management services</i>   |
| <i>Limited consideration of gender and vulnerable groups perspectives in waste management practices</i> | <i>Intro of gender intergrating to waste management planning, use of gender-disaggregated data for informed decision making, whilst ensuring active participation of vulnerable groups</i> | <i>More inclusive and equitable waste management service delivery that meets the distinctive needs of all</i>  |
| <i>Limited financial, human, and technical resources</i>  | <i>Exploring mechanisms for better resource allocation, utilization, and mobilization for waste-related initiatives</i>  | <i>More efficient use of resources and improved access to funding opportunities for waste-related initiatives and projects</i>                           |
| <i>Lack of coordination and cooperation among different municipalities</i>                              | <i>Promote inter-municipal cooperation in waste management area</i>  | <i>Efficient waste management practices and services through resource sharing and collaborative approach</i>   |
| <i>Limited exposure to innovative and successful waste management practices</i>                         | <i>Organization of regional and international study visits for the exchange of ideas and best practices in sustainable waste management</i>  | <i>Enhanced understanding and adoption of successful international waste management practices</i>  |

## FEATURING WORDS FROM



**STEVČE STEVANOVSKI,  
MAYOR OF NOVACI**

“As the Mayor of Municipality of Novaci, I express sincere gratitude for our inclusion in the Sustainable Municipal Waste Management Service project. This initiative promises significant enhancement in our waste management planning and capacity development, marking a vital step towards a sustainable and cleaner environment.

We anticipate substantial improvements in the provision of waste management services, extending

these more efficiently to all of our citizens. In actively participating in this project, we are not merely addressing the issue of waste but transforming it into a resource, marking a significant shift with far-reaching environmental and economic implications.

One crucial aspect of this project is its focus on bolstering the capacities of the soon-to-be-formed Regional Public Utility Company, envisaged to manage the regional landfill in the Municipality of Novaci. The project’s support in enhancing the utility company’s capacities is invaluable, promoting efficient waste management practices that adhere to EU standards and reinforcing our commitment to regional cooperation and sustainable development”

# 4

## FIRST STEPS TOWARDS CHANGE: INITIAL RESULTS & INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS

### LANDFILL ANALYSIS & ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

In light of the forthcoming regional landfill for Pelagonija and South-west regions and recognizing the necessity of a holistic approach, the project carried out a detailed landfill analysis including mapping of 16 municipal landfilling sites and ranking them based on their potential environmental impact. Constructing a sanitary landfill is a complex challenge that requires closer consideration of environmental, social, and socio-economic aspects, all while remaining compliant with policy and legal requirements. Despite the numerous efforts made at a policy level in this area, municipal landfills in the country still lag far behind in meeting the basic requirements. The Landfill analysis revealed a potential for using new and innovative solutions (GIS and Lidar technologies) for establishing the quantities of landfilled waste over periods of time and the importance of having thorough and scientific approach to selecting the most appropriate location for a landfill and the environmental risks associated with it.

The results of the analysis include detailed 2D and 3D maps of all 16 municipal sites, presentation of changes in their area and volume over time (2009-2021) and an estimate of costs for remediation and closure. It also provided a ranking of the landfill sites based on the risk they present to their environment. Eleven restrictive factors such as proximity to water sources, protected areas, agricultural zones, and human settlements were put on a map and stacked on top of each other exposing areas suitable for location of landfills.

#### Changes in landfill area



2009



2017



2021

Throughout the project's inception phase, the pursuit of a comprehensive understanding of the existing waste management landscape led to the development of foundational works, equipped with incisive insights and based on innovative solutions, serve as the navigational compass guiding the project mission.

The Landfill Analysis sheds light on the current condition of waste disposal sites across the regions, thus providing an essential perspective on the areas of focus.

The Baseline Study sets the stage for understanding the current waste management practices, identifying gaps and possibilities for improvement.

Simultaneously, the Operational Regional Waste Management Plan, marks the road to a better, more sustainable future by outlining detailed, practical steps for municipalities to achieve their strategic waste management objectives.

The resulting classification revealed that 14 of the existing landfills are located in zones that pose potential risks to public health and only four of the locations meet the basic environmental and legal criteria with Meglenci being the safest location. The landfill analysis was a proof of concept that shows how having a methodical and meticulous approach to waste management creates opportunities for informed decision making and inclusive dialogue with the wider community. This approach underlines our country's commitment to protecting the environment and will be a go-to method for designing and delivering project activities.

#### Classification of risk

| PLACE           | POINTS |
|-----------------|--------|
| Meglenci        | 6.62   |
| Makedonski Brod | 5.86   |
| Omec            | 5.81   |
| Kichevo         | 3.65   |

\*Higher score indicates lower risk

## BASELINE STUDY FINDINGS & PUBLIC SURVEY INSIGHTS

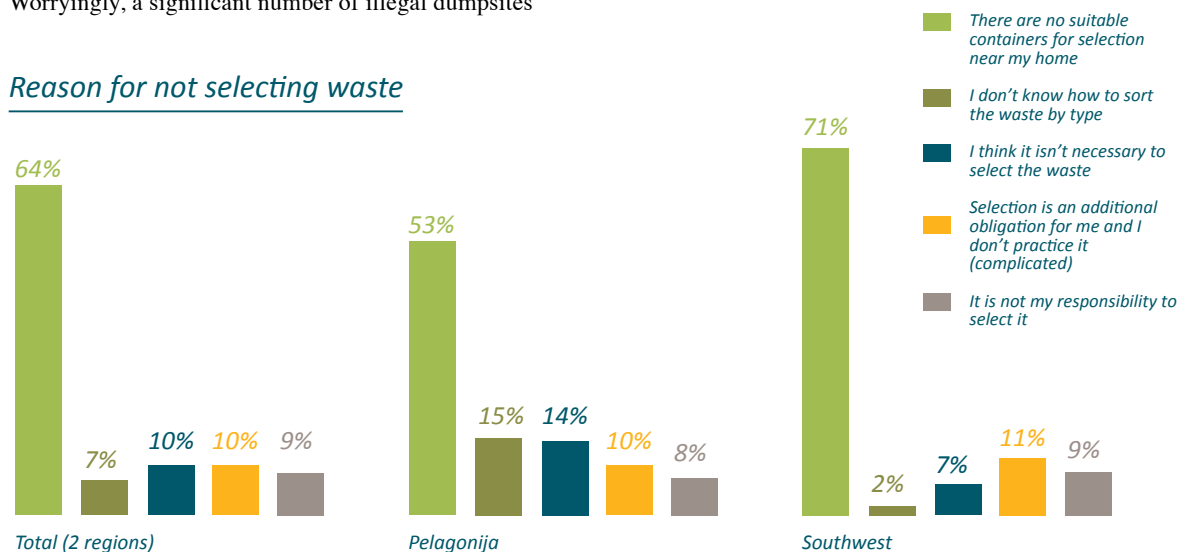
The Baseline Study provides a detailed perspective on the state of waste management, revealing institutional challenges in policy implementation and shedding light on municipal waste services and public perceptions in Pelagonija and South-west regions.

Despite 82% of the population in Pelagonija and South-west regions receiving waste collection services, coverage falters in rural areas. A notable gap exists between the estimated waste generation and the actual waste collected. Worryingly, a significant number of illegal dumpsites

scatter these regions, with 109 in Pelagonija and 85 in South-west, contributing to environmental concerns.

The public opinion survey reveals an awareness of waste's immediate environmental effects, yet waste management doesn't rank highly among preferred local service improvements. Lack of convenient selection containers proves a barrier to waste sorting participation, yet a considerable majority is willing to engage if prompted by their utility provider.

### Reason for not selecting waste

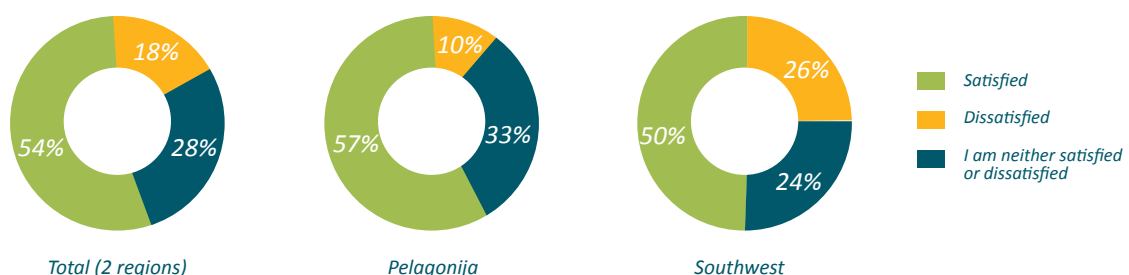


Satisfaction with waste collection services is at a relative high of 54%, surpassing the nationwide satisfaction rate for all municipal services. However, rural areas tell a different story, with dissatisfaction linked primarily to inadequate waste collection service.

The Baseline Study also highlighted a number of crucial areas that need bolstering in order for us to achieve an optimal standard of waste management within the country. These range from institutional rather than functional decentralization, irregular and inconsistent waste data management, to an absence of efficient coordination between national and local initiatives. To elevate service delivery, we should focus on bolstering planning effectiveness, systematically identifying and sharing best practices, and localizing waste management policies more proficiently.

With these insights at our disposal, now is the moment to act. Prioritizing efficient waste management planning, curtailing the growth of illegal dumpsites, and advocating for waste segregation, we can reinvent waste management. These findings will serve as the cornerstone of our project's mission, driving us to fortify sustainability and inspire local communities to be proactive. Together, we are not only shaping efficient waste management, but we are also building a cleaner, greener North Macedonia.

### Satisfaction with municipal waste services



# DEVELOPMENT OF OPERATIONAL REGIONAL WASTE MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR PELAGONIA AND SOUTH-WEST REGIONS

## VISION

A waste management region that, with sustainable, effective waste management and efficient use of resources, stimulates the economy, enables rapid development and quality life for all.

### Key Objectives

1

#### **Provision of services (collecting and transportation of waste) to as many users as possible**

*Helping the citizens exercise the right to universal service by increasing the coverage with waste collection and transportation services.*



2

#### **Introduction of a system for waste selection and collection of specific waste streams**

*Helping to meet the national targets for selected and recycled waste and bringing the country closer to the circular economy model.*



3

#### **Reduction of the quantities of organic waste that ends up on the landfill**

*Helping to remove the organic waste from the landfills, thus reducing the methane emissions and use organic waste as a resource for farming and gardening.*



4

#### **Construction of a landfill in accordance with the EU standards**

*Building a regional landfill to create economy of scale in waste management and establishing a regional utility company to operate it.*



5

#### **Closure and remediation of dumpsites**

*Closing dumpsites and creating clean and nourishing environment people can enjoy and be proud of.*



6

#### **Providing incomes that would fully cover the waste management costs**

*Creating sustainable waste management system where utility companies are financially independent and can provide full coverage with waste management services.*



To read and download the documents please scan the QR code.



## FEATURING WORDS FROM



**DARKO BELEVSKI,  
HEAD OF LED  
DEPARTMENT  
IN MUNICIPALITY  
OF KICHEVO**

“Our involvement in the “Sustainable Municipal Waste Management Services in North Macedonia” project saw us

collaboratively shaping the Operational Regional Waste Management Plan. Participating in numerous workshops, we openly communicated with municipalities from the two plan regions. The plan encompasses a robust SWOT analysis of the waste situation, and its dedicated implementation is primed to enhance practices and foster economic efficiency within municipalities and utility companies.

It is important to recognize that all measures form the ORWMP have their equal significance and interdependence. During the ORWMP implementation each municipality should consistently strive, independently or cooperatively, to increase awareness about proper waste sorting and disposal, and actualize this on the ground. This effort should keep the broader picture in mind – contributing actively to the Regional Public Utility Company and the integrated waste management system at the regional level.”

## FEATURING WORDS FROM



**VERA RAUNIK,  
HEAD OF THE WASTE  
MANAGEMENT AND  
REGIONAL LANDFILLS  
DEPARTMENT AT  
MUNICIPALITY OF OHRID**

“A comprehensively developed waste management plan holds the key to understanding the varieties and volumes of waste generated. Such plan not only

directs the strategies for preventing waste creation but also highlights the potential for its reuse and methods to minimize the quantities destined for disposal.

In this regard, the Operational Regional Waste Management Plan emerges as a beacon, outlining clear guidelines that will steer us towards achieving sustainable waste management in the region. It becomes an essential instrument in realizing our shared vision, demonstrating the collective commitment to a more sustainable future. With the implementation of the ORPWM, municipalities can systematically enhance the existing waste management system. This advancement will include boosting administrative abilities, technical infrastructure, and public awareness about their legal responsibilities, as well as the long-term benefits of proper waste management.”



# 5

## EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES: FOSTERING INCLUSION, PARTICIPATION AND GENDER EQUALITY

In the path to sustainable waste management, empowering communities to embrace inclusion, participation, and gender equality is fundamental. These principles serve to transform waste management systems into tools of equity and efficiency. Equal service to women, men, girls and boys is an important part of the improvement of service delivery. Women’s and men’s needs, priorities and wishes should have an equal impact on the distribution of resources. Integrating a gender perspective in planning and service delivery will boost the efficacy of waste management efforts.

Similarly, the aspect of social inclusion, particularly targeting vulnerable groups, takes center stage in fostering community empowerment. Acknowledging the unique challenges these groups face and ensuring their needs are met, gives waste management strategies a holistic approach. This is the essence of community empowerment – when every community member is engaged, waste management is no longer just a challenge, but a powerful opportunity for growth and development.

### FEATURING WORDS FROM



**ASIB ZEKIR,  
REDI RECYCLING**

“Our company, REDI Recycling, operates on a social enterprise business model, with a mission to structure and legitimize the role of informal waste collectors. We aim to establish a system for primary waste selection, specifically for plastic and paper. These informal collectors have long played an invaluable part in environmental conservation and the enhancement of waste management practices.

Unofficial research suggests there may be as many as 5000 such collectors in our country, who actively participate in the collection, selection, and transport of secondary raw materials. The REDI Recycling model demonstrates how these collectors’ activities can intersect with our daily consumption and packaging waste habits. If this model is systematically implemented, and if REDI’s instances of support for vulnerable citizens are further replicated, I’m confident that we can significantly elevate the participation of this underrepresented and marginalized group in the society.”

## FEATURING WORDS FROM



**MARIJA RISTESKA,  
GENDER EXPERT**

“Waste management, though often seen as gender-neutral, is predominantly influenced by male perspectives, as they form the majority of the workforce and decision-makers. However, integrating a gender perspective is crucial for effective waste management, as women play

distinct roles in waste generation, selection, recycling, and disposal.

Understanding gender roles in local communities is vital. As women navigate diverse responsibilities, their interactions with waste management services take on distinct dimensions, often bringing into focus critical issues of safety and accessibility. In this context, their active involvement is essential not just in segregating waste at source, but also in advocating for a safe and accessible recycling infrastructure, a provision which is an indispensable duty of local governments.

Gender dynamics in waste management also impact societal views about waste and recycling habits. In North Macedonia particularly, engaging women in waste sorting and recycling can boost household income. Companies with female involvement in waste management decision-making often demonstrate enhanced financial outcomes, efficiency, and innovation.

Hence, sustainable waste management strategies should incorporate a gender lens, analyzing roles, needs, and interests of men and women, and facilitating female participation. This can lead to a fairer society and more efficient local waste management.”

## FEATURING WORDS FROM



**BORCHE KUZMANOVSKI,  
GO GREEN CSO**

“Civil society organizations play an indispensable role in enhancing waste management services, focusing on fostering public awareness, advocating policy improvements, facilitating community actions, synergizing with stakeholders, and auditing processes. Our ongoing education campaigns underscore the importance of waste reduction, recycling, and responsible disposal.

We persistently champion the design and execution of waste management legislation, collaborating with both national and local authorities. Through active involvement in crafting programs, plans, and strategies for waste management, we prompt community engagement.

As mediators between citizens and institutions, we keep citizens informed and involved in institutional activities while reminding institutions of their legal obligations. By engaging in issue mapping, testing solutions, and heightening awareness, we provide value. However, to manifest long-term, visible results, this demands reinforced and systematic collaboration.”

# 6

## CELEBRATING PROGRESS: SUCCESS STORIES FROM SWEDEN, SERBIA AND NORTH MACEDONIA

### FEATURING WORDS FROM

**PER-OLOF HALLBERG,  
MUNICIPAL WASTE MANAGEMENT  
EXPERT, SWEDEN**



“Navigating the stringent waste management legislation introduced in the early 1990s presented a daunting challenge for small to medium-sized municipalities in Sweden. The tasks involved – drafting comprehensive waste management plans, optimizing logistics and collections, managing landfills, and reporting to the government – required more resources and expertise than what was individually available. This pressing need for a collaborative approach to effectively tackle these challenges led to

the establishment of regional cooperative systems. Gästrike Återvinnare, or Gästrike Recyclers in English, is a shining example of such a cooperative system, having been formed in 2001 to cater to these exact needs.

Gästrike Återvinnare comprises five distinct municipalities, ranging from 5,000 to 100,000 inhabitants. Cooperation was essential, especially for smaller municipalities, to cope with the evolving waste management standards. By uniting under Gästrike Återvinnare, the municipalities could pool their resources, share knowledge and investment costs, thereby transforming waste from a burden into a resource.

To implement this paradigm shift, the association employed specialists across various fields, including communication, logistics, environment, customer service, and environmental education. Gästrike Återvinnare then set about revamping the waste management system. A common fee system was established, predicated on the idea: ‘the better you sort, the less you pay’. This policy incentivized residents and businesses to sort waste effectively and responsibly. Furthermore, collaborative efforts were initiated to create ‘environmental rooms’ for packaging collection from apartments and

businesses, establish a hazardous waste collection system, and start food waste collection.

Over the past 20 years, Gästrike Återvinnare has made significant strides in waste management. Without cooperation, the municipalities would not have achieved the current level of success.

#### **Key accomplishments include:**

- Broad-ranging food waste collection across the region, benefiting households, companies, restaurants, and hotels, with high-quality composting (98%) as a result of comprehensive communication initiatives.
- Ownership and operation of a biogas plant producing vehicle fuel and biofertilizer.
- Investment in new garbage vehicles and efficient collection systems for various waste types.
- Maintenance of a sustainable, region-wide fee system covering operational costs.
- Eleven recycling yards for collection of bulky waste, hazardous waste, electronic waste, and reusables.
- A well-developed educational program for citizens and schools, led by two environmental educators.

Current efforts are aimed at establishing curb-side collection for each house in the region, an ambitious project that would have been implausible without the robust inter-municipal cooperation. This improved service, partly funded by producers, is expected to incur no additional costs for customers.

The Gästrike Återvinnare case study underlines the power of regional cooperation in tackling complex challenges such as waste management. By pooling resources, sharing knowledge, and promoting mutual benefits, municipalities can transform their waste management systems, improve service delivery, and move towards a sustainable future.”

**Working jointly  
for the change  
we want to see**



## FEATURING WORDS FROM



**RUBIN ABRASHOSKI,  
DIRECTOR OF THE PUBLIC  
ENTERPRISE IN PRILEP**

“Our public utility company, “Komunalec” Prilep, is a key advocate for effective waste management and environmental stewardship, driving sustainable development in our community. We align our activities with international agreements and

legislation, fostering a culture of responsible waste handling among citizens. In 2008, we started a project focusing on the segregation of useful waste materials. We began with a modest 40 containers, eventually evolving into a comprehensive door-to-door waste selection model. We equipped our system with the necessary infrastructure and specific vehicles for waste collection, adopting a two-bin model for easy dry and wet fraction sorting.

Our system now includes over 23,000 bins for mixed and selected waste, 48 containers for glass, and 30 for construction rubble. We also offer an additional line for the collection of oversized waste, preventing the creation of illegal dumpsites. Our efficient infrastructure and employee expertise, combined with citizens’ engagement in waste segregation, have allowed us to achieve a significant waste selection rate. Annually, we collect about 2,000 tons of selected waste, with 1,000-1,200 tons sold. Our current challenge is the completion of the Waste Management Center’s construction. The financial resources required for this project, vital for our community, are currently unavailable. However, it promises an increase in selected waste, easier target achievement, and enhanced environmental protection. We also plan to introduce a third bin exclusively for pure biodegradable waste and build a small-scale composting plant. Furthermore, we’re working to extend waste collection to remote areas and address resistance to waste segregation among certain communities. Our achievements so far were possible due to a commitment to innovation and persistence, even when facing the most challenging circumstances. We believe in direct communication with citizens, educational campaigns, and media collaboration. Our journey towards sustainable waste management is akin to creating a mosaic, with our citizens playing a pivotal role. Despite challenges, we persevere, driven by the vision of a better environment and quality of life. We invite everyone to join us in this endeavor and bravely implement decisions for a sustainable future.”

## FEATURING WORDS FROM



**SRĐJAN PANTOVIĆ,  
DIRECTOR OF "ZLATIBOR"  
PUBLIC ENTERPRISE,  
MUNICIPALITY OF  
ČAJETINA, SERBIA**

“Before the start of the “Support to Local Self-Governments in Serbia on the Road to EU Accession – Environmental Protection” project, the municipality had

a clear vision to become the first ecological municipality in Serbia, but there were areas of knowledge that needed enhancement. The local plan was nearing its expiration, and it was not widely understood because consultants had created it. Although the existing waste management system functioned well, there was no primary waste selection at the point of generation, which was already a legal obligation. Attempts to introduce primary waste selection through the use of containers in public areas were unsuccessful due to difficulties in establishing control over the selection process.

To address these challenges, it was crucial to bring all stakeholders together at the same table. A working group was formed, comprising representatives from the municipal administration, the utility company, regional landfill, community inspectors, school representatives, and members of associations for people with disabilities. Over time, the group gained a better understanding of each other’s perspectives and started to brainstorm ways to enhance the system for everyone’s benefit.

An important step was to start having discussions with each group separately, explaining the legal regulations, and how they envisioned the new waste management system to operate, which included waste separation at the point of origin. The input and involvement of citizens in drafting strategic documents were invaluable in preventing unforeseen errors. The preparation of planning documents took about a year, involving a larger number of people and organizations. The local waste management plan was adopted in 2019, after which we started the defined activities to implement the new system. In addition to strengthening technical and human capacities, we also reorganized certain departments and hired young people. Currently, we successfully collect primarily sorted waste from households in the Čajetina area, which is the



administrative center of our municipality. We have also started distributing waste bins to households in Zlatibor, a significant tourist center. We take pride in the fact that a large number of households are very good at waste selection. The dry waste coming from the blue bins is 95-97% clean, which indicates good quality for further recycling.

Key factors in the success of sustainable waste management included good communication and understanding between local government and the utility company. It was necessary for decision-makers and executors to work together to prepare and adopt effective planning documentation, provide funds for the purchase of vehicles and equipment, and construct infrastructure facilities while adhering to the adopted plan. Also critical was the good organization within the utility company and a control system for both employees and users.

Moreover, maintaining open communication with users, running effective campaigns, and directly involving a number of users in the process proved to be crucial. Every citizen or entrepreneur involved during the preparation became an advocate and educator in their circles. As a result, almost every resident in the municipality is now informed about the home waste separation system. The key role played by experienced and technically adept consultants in preparing the planning documentation further underscores the importance of expertise and experience in implementing and improving waste management systems.”

# 7

## THE DAWN OF A NEW ERA: PROJECTED OUTCOMES AND THE FUTURE VISION

**The Sustainable Municipal Waste Management Services Project promises to usher in a new era of improved living conditions for residents in partner municipalities.**

**Let's explore how this brighter and more sustainable future will unfold as the project progresses:**

### **GREENER LIVING SPACES**

Advanced waste management strategies will result in cleaner and more attractive neighborhoods, creating a pleasant and healthy environment for families and individuals alike.

### **INCLUSIVE SERVICES FOR EVERYONE**

By focusing on the needs of all community members, the project will ensure that waste management services are accessible and beneficial for everyone, regardless of their gender, age, or background.

### **EFFECTIVE COLLABORATION FOR BETTER RESULTS**

As various stakeholders come together and cooperate more efficiently, the waste management sector will see enhanced implementation of policies and regulations. This will lead to a more robust and responsive system that can adapt to the evolving needs of the community.



# Improved quality of life

*“In this envisioned future, partner municipalities will reap the rewards of sustainable waste management practices, a cleaner and healthier living environment, and an overall improved quality of life for all residents.”*



## JOIN THE REVOLUTION: LET'S WORK TOGETHER FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE!

### FEATURING WORDS FROM



**BOJANA STANOJEVSKA PECUROVSKA,  
WASTE MANAGEMENT EXPERT**

“The waste management scene in our country stands as a formidable challenge in our journey towards environmental sustainability. It’s true, we’ve seen an alarming increase in waste volumes, while our management capacities haven’t kept pace. But we don’t view this as a crisis, rather as a call-to-action, beckoning us towards collective change.

At the core of effective and sustainable waste management lie informed citizens, involved institutions, and proactive local governments. It is vital that every individual realizes their role in shaping the waste management landscape.

Maintaining an open dialogue with communities is crucial. By involving citizens in waste management processes, we ensure that they understand the correct waste handling methods and the impact of their actions. Regularly held public campaigns by our local government can significantly foster this understanding.

Collective schemes play an essential part in assisting municipalities on their waste management journey. They are a significant asset to the process of raising awareness and enhancing collective responsibility. Institutional efforts should complement these schemes, by engaging in field visits, responding to the community’s waste management issues, and maintaining regular communication.

Raising awareness is an ongoing journey, filled with continuous improvement and novel approaches. This includes leveraging social media, traditional media, clean-up actions, and promotional materials. But the most effective way of raising awareness is through direct, meaningful interactions and robust collaboration with our citizens.

That is why this project is more than just an initiative; it’s a revolution for sustainable living. However, this revolution needs the power of collective action, it needs You. Each one of us, from community members to businesses, and local government units, holds the key to creating a transformative impact on our environment.”

*“That is why this project is more than just an initiative; it’s a revolution for sustainable living. However, this revolution needs the power of collective action, it needs You.”*

# THANK YOU

Our deepest appreciation goes out to everyone who plays a pivotal role in this transformative project. The remarkable progress we have made so far is a direct result of the unwavering dedication and collective efforts of a diverse network of stakeholders.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to our donors, partners, local governments, environmental professionals, and the many devoted individuals who work diligently behind the scenes. Your commitment to fostering environmental sustainability and empowering communities is the backbone of this initiative.

Moreover, we want to acknowledge the invaluable contributions of the communities and individuals who have joined us in this endeavor. Your eagerness to participate, learn, and take action is a powerful testament to the impact of collective responsibility.

Thank you for joining us on this journey. Your contributions are shaping a more sustainable, cleaner, and greener future for all.



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*Let's walk  
this path  
together.  
Join the  
revolution,  
and let's  
make a  
difference!*

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