

Albania – the First Balkan Country with an Incineration Plant

Lulzim Baumann

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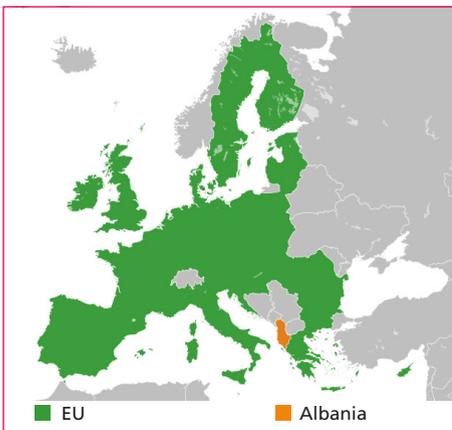


Figure 1: Albania and the EU in Europa

Source: Wikipedia (2019)

1. About the country

Since June 2014, the Republic of Albania is an EU candidate country. It is located in Southeast Europe and has 2.8 million inhabitants. Currently, Albania is receiving 649.4 million EUR development assistance from the EU to fulfil the conditions for EU accession (under IPA 2, 2014–2020) with a focus on the ongoing justice reform, rule of law, minority rights and environmental challenges. Albania is preparing to start the EU negotiations, including Chapter 27 of the Aquis Communautaire on Environment.

2. Current situation

The major determinants of waste management in Albania currently are the EU targets and its directives. In summer/autumn 2019, the Government is planning to approve the new National Waste Management Strategy, which is currently being developed and will set the frame for the future of Albania's waste management. Thereby, targets for waste management in Albanian laws and national strategies are guided by EU requirements: It is planned that, until 2020, 55 % of municipal waste shall be recycled and composted. Furthermore, until 2025, 15 % of municipal waste shall be used for energy generation and the waste that goes into landfills shall be reduced by 90 %. Another target is the increase of the minimum collection percentages for batteries, accumulators and their waste at national level from 25 % in 2015 to 65 % by 2025 (based on the Decision of the Council of Ministers (DCM) No. 866 *On batteries, accumulators and their waste*, dated 04/12/2012).

Waste collection services have significantly improved in many municipalities of Albania, but remain very far from reaching EU standards. In 2017, around 70 % of the population in Albania benefited from waste collection services, which is an increase of 19 % as compared to the year 2013 (Figure 2).

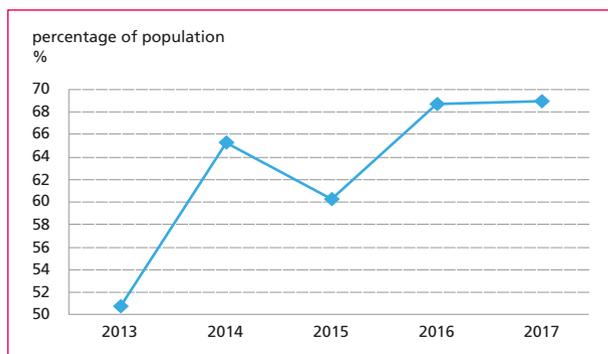


Figure 2:

Percentage of population covered by urban waste services

Source: INSTAT 2017

The share of waste deposited in landfills accounted for 77.7 % in 2016 and slightly decreased to 77.5 % in 2017. For energy generation purposes, 1.1 % of the total amount of waste was incinerated in 2016, whereas this percentage slightly increased to 1.8 % in 2017.

The potential for better recycling is undoubtedly high. Interestingly, data on the amount of recycled waste vary significantly though (see Table 1):

Table 1: Comparative data on the amount of recycled waste in Albania

Year	Source of information	Amount of the waste recycled	Amount of the waste recycled
		tons per year	%
2016	INSTAT (Albanian National Statistical Office)	224,592	17
2016	Albanian Recycling Association	133,592	10

Source: Albanian Ministry of Tourism and Environment (2018)

Recycling in Albania has not seen improvement at least in terms of quantity – even if the more positive data from INSTAT are taken as a reference data system: The percentage of recycled waste in 2017 and 2016 had even significantly decreased compared with the years before (see Table 2).

Against this background it is not surprising that the EU states in its Report for Albania 2018: *The national strategy on waste management (covering 2010–2025) is being revised but implementation remains at an early stage. Work done on waste landfills has brought waste treatment facilities closer to the EU standards. Further efforts are needed to close the [...] non-compliant landfills, increase the separate collection of different waste streams and reduce bio-waste. Economic instruments to promote recycling and prevent waste generation remain limited.*

In terms of landfills, it is interesting to know, that there exist only three active landfills that comply with minimum standards – Bajkaj (Saranda), Bushat (Shkodra), and Sharra (Tirana). Furthermore, there are still 199 landfills that do not comply with any minimum standards – most of them illegal – according to a counting in 2018 done by the Ministry of Tourism and Environment.

Table 2: Urban waste treatment in Albania

Year	Incineration for energy generation		Incineration for elimination		Recycling		Deposits in landfills		Deposit in illegal dumpsites	
	tons	%	tons	%	tons	%	tons	%	tons	%
2013	940	0.1	82,734	8.8	225,638	24.0	475,721	50.6	155,127	16.6
2014	6,144	0.5	38,095	3.1	265,439	21.6	779,112	63.4	140,093	11.4
2015	21,706	1.5	35,875	2.5	357,548	25.3	970,157	68.6	970,157	2.0
2016	9,001	0.69	40,783	3.14	224,155	17.2	1,010,335	77.7	16,103	1.24
2017	22,864	1.8	19,816	1.6	218,181	17.4	791,572	77.5	21,480	1.7

Source: INSTAT (2017)

Privatization in waste management is slightly on the increase (see Figure 2): While, for example, in 2016, still 52.7 % of waste was managed by public enterprises established under the local government structure, this share decreased rapidly to 47.0 % in 2017 – with 49 % being managed by private companies and 4 % by private persons.

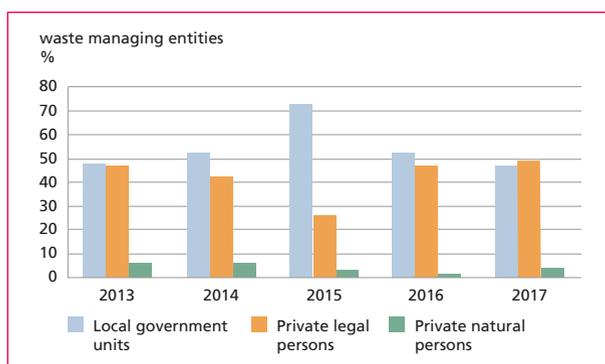


Figure 2:

Waste managing entities in Albania

Source: Albanian Ministry of Tourism and Environment (2018)

The average waste management service fee was 12.4 EUR/family/year in 2016. Thereby, the fee collection rate at municipal level amounted to 63 % of households. Therewith, however, only 34 % of the operation and maintenance costs could be covered. To cover the entire collection and maintenance costs, it would be necessary to increase the fee collection rate to 90 % and at the same time to increase the service fee from 12.4 EUR/family/year to 23 EUR/family/year (Albanian Ministry of Tourism and Environment, 2018). Between 2014 and 2016 the budget of the municipalities has almost doubled but remains at a low level (Figure 3).

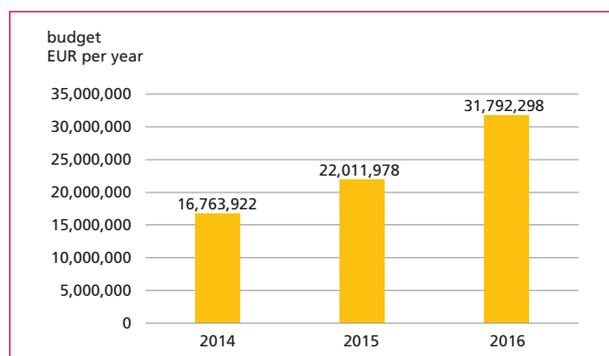


Figure 3:

Budget for integrated waste management at local government level, 2014 to 2016

Source: Albanian Ministry of Tourism and Environment (2018)

The informal sector in Albania plays a very important role in supplying the recycling industries with waste. Based on the National Environmental Agency (NEA 2013), the informal waste sector in Albania comprises around 12,000 individuals, mostly from the Roma minority, that collect waste all around the country. The waste is thereby mostly collected directly from rubbish bins and landfills under bad health and safety conditions.

3. Legislation and mandates

Law No.10 463, dated 22.09.2011, *On the integrated management of waste* is drafted based on the EU Waste Framework Directive (Directive 2008/98/EC of the European Parliament and of the European Council in 19/11/2008). Article 12, point 2 of this law constitutes a legal obligation for every municipality in Albania to draft a local plan for the waste management in the territory under their jurisdiction, in accordance with the Integrated Waste National Plan. This has been specified further under Law 139/2015 *On Local Self-Government*, which conveys the full authority of establishing an integrated waste management to the local governments.

Accordingly, Albanian municipalities

- must ensure the collection, transport, storage and treatment of municipal solid waste (Article 23, point 10);
- need to set a fee that covers service costs (Article 9, point C/b);
- are supposed to set the standards at the same level or higher than the national level (Article 22, points 2 and 3), while the national government should subsidize them when the national standard is financially unachievable by the municipalities.

Cooperation among municipalities to create joint solution for the waste management of their region is encouraged in Law 139/2015, Chapter V.

Waste separation at source in at least in four different types, as well as waste collection until 31 December 2018 were made obligatory with DCM No. 418, dated 25.06.2014, *On the differentiated collection of solid waste*. This obligation, however, was not met by the municipalities: While the majority of municipalities so far did not show any effort on the waste separation at source, serious efforts by Tirana Municipality in cooperation with the Italian city of Verona were undertaken in terms of waste separation but eventually failed, due to lack of awareness raising in citizens and lack of maintenance.

The role and responsibilities of municipalities to gather and report waste data are specified particularly in Council of Ministers Decision No. 687/2015 *On the Implementation of Rules for Keeping, Updating and Publishing Waste Statistics*, which has entered into effect on 1 January 2019.

Responsibilities in terms of waste management are not only given to the municipalities, but also to the following institutions:

- Albanian Ministry of Tourism and Environment (MoTE) is responsible for waste politics, laws and implementation of the national waste strategy. Together with the National Environmental Agency (NEA) and the State Environmental Inspectorate (SEI), MoTE has to monitor the implementation of the waste management system at regional and local level.
- NEA is responsible to collect data from the municipalities and aggregate them to national statistics. They also have the mandate to issue environmental permissions and to decide on landfills for municipal waste.
- SEI is responsible for controlling the implementation of legal provisions for the protection of the environment. It has the authority to give punishments and to object to and stop activities of companies.
- The Integrated Waste Management Committee (IWMC) was created based on Law No. 967 in 2013 *On the Organization and Functioning of the Committee of Integrated Waste Management* is headed by the Deputy Minister of Environment. IWMC has very broad responsibilities. The impact of this organism, however, is very low which may also be due to lack of financing. It so far has not been involved in any important waste management decision or activity.
- The Ministry of Infrastructure and Energy (MoIE), based on Law No. 10,463 for Integrated Waste Management and DCM No. 504 dated 13/09/2017 *On Defining the Scope of State Responsibility of the Ministry of Infrastructure and Energy*, is responsible for territorial planning and national waste infrastructure.
- The National Agency for Water, Wastewater and Waste Infrastructure was created in 2018 under the MoIE according to DCM No. 431, dated 11/07/2018. The responsibility of the agency in the field of waste is territorial planning, waste infrastructure and the technical support of the policies of MoIE.

- Ministry of Health, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Defense and Ministry of Finance are responsible for the treatment of the waste produced in their respective facilities.
- The National Committee on Waste Management (NCWM) as well as a National Waste Management Authority (NWMA) have been set up based on DCM No. 967, dated 25/02/2013, *On how to Organize and Operate the Integrated Waste Management Committee*. They are supposed to gain an increasingly important role in the future. The NCWM was set up as an independent advisory body which should ensure that the national waste management strategy, policies, and projects are strictly respected and implemented in accordance with national and EU legislation. The NWMA is responsible for coordination among ministries, municipalities and other actors in the establishment and implementation of strategic policies. It has also the duty to provide technical support and advice to all actors involved in the waste management process and to design, implement and direct awareness-raising and education campaigns as well as to promote the initiatives of international cooperation.

In terms of calculating costs and imposing fees for the provision of waste management services, there is no approved methodology in Albania. According to Law 139/2015 and Law 78/2017 *On Local Government Finances*, municipalities are individually responsible for calculating the costs and setting the fees for waste management.

4. Incinerator construction – a sudden and highly disputed development in Albania

Between 2014 and 2017, the Albanian Government issued the concessions for the construction of Albania's first incineration plants, located in the districts of Elbasan, Fier and Tirana. The Albanian Government committed 178 million EUR for the construction of these three incinerators – the biggest investment by the Albanian Government so far in the waste sector. All three incinerators have been permitted and been granted financing by the Albanian Government under Law No. 125/2013 *About Concessions and Private Public Partnership*.

Albania's first waste incinerator has been built in Elbasan. In December 2014, financing was granted. The winning company was Albtek Energy, which constructed the incinerator with a processing capacity of around 51,100 tons/year and an electricity generation capacity of 2.9 MWh per year. Project costs amounted to roughly 22 million EUR (excluding VAT). In 2016, the construction works were finalized, and the incinerator is since then in operation. The energy produced by the incinerator was supposed to supply the Albanian energy grid. However, the Albanian Electricity Distribution Operator did not answer four formal requests of Albania's most important waste-related NGO Alliance AKIP (Alliance against the Import of Waste) on the amount of energy produced – creating doubt about whether the incinerator is actually producing energy for supply at all.

For the second urban waste incinerator for Fier district, the Albanian Ministry of Tourism and Environment of Albania (MoTE) issued the concession in 2016. This plant is currently under construction by the company *Integrated Technology Waste Cleaning Fier*, a consortium consisting of the two companies *Integrated Technology Services sh.p.k.* and *Energy 2 Srl*. The concession was given to the consortium without a tender process.

Public participation was a major matter of criticism: The Municipality of Fier had not given any information nor opportunity for public participation in the planning stage. In fact, the inhabitants of Verria, a village close to Fier, found out about the incinerator in their village only when the construction works started in March 2017. After citizens' protests, the consortium together with the National Environmental Agency (NEA) and Fier Municipality offered information to the citizens about the incinerator, including a two days activity for *public consultation*. This delayed offer was rejected by the citizens of Verria, who insisted on their right of being involved since the planning stage and getting informed and involved continuously and comprehensively throughout the entire decision-making process by the Municipality of Fier – as requested by national and international legislation. Furthermore, within the frame of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) the construction coordinates given have been incorrect.

In spring 2018, the citizens of Verria – supported by the Albanian NGO Alliance *Alliance Against Waste Import (AKIP)*, the Swiss Embassy and international waste experts – have presented an alternative to the incinerator. This alternative, which entailed an integrated waste management approach with a focus on recycling and a cooperation with the incinerator in Elbasan, however, was not further considered by the Albanian Ministry of Tourism and Environment. Thus, the citizens of Verria launched a prosecution in court. The next meeting on the Administrative Court will be held on May 17th, 2019. Despite the trial, the construction works of the incinerator in Fier are ongoing.

For the third incinerator to be built in the capital city of Tirana, the concession was issued in 2017. The construction works have not yet started, also due to criticism from EU, World Bank and Environmental NGOs. The final construction permission is still pending. Public participation activities have been limited: Only a very limited number of environmental NGOs and private individuals have taken part and expressed their opposition to the project.

Financing for the incinerators in Elbasan and Fier was ensured via the Public Private Partnership (PPP) scheme; construction and operation costs will be covered by state budget for the first six years, while a specialized private company will be responsible for the operation. Afterwards, the incinerators will be owned and operated by the respective municipalities, which are supposed to pay around 25 to 30 EUR per ton for the incineration. The incinerator in Tirana will be funded by a concession scheme for 30 years and shall cost 122 million EUR.

The capacity of the three incinerators as well as the quantity and composition of the solid waste in the respective regions is listed in Table 3. The three incinerators altogether have the capacity to burn about 45 % of the total municipal solid waste generated in one year in Albania – including also e.g. recyclables and biowaste.

There is no need for three incinerators in Albania though: If the EU target to recycle 60 % by 2020 is respected, only 10 % of waste will have to be sent to landfills and less than 30 % will have to be incinerated. Therewith, the over-capacity of the three incinerators would account for 74 %. In other words: If recyclables, biowaste and other wastes, that cannot or should not be burned (e.g. hospital wastes, stones, e-waste) were disposed of adequately, the remaining waste would fill only 26 % of the capacity of the three incinerators.

Table 3: Incinerator capacity, quantity and composition of waste in Albania

Incinerator	Capital investment cost	Incinerator capacity	Incinerator capacity	Total municipal solid waste in the area	60 % of waste the most could be recycled	30 % of waste the most should be incinerated	Overcapacity of incinerators
	million EUR	tons per day		tons per year			%
Elbasan	22	140	51,100	113,690	23,000	34,106	33
Fier	25	240	87,600	130,172	17,712	39,051	70
Tirana	122	920	331,200	268,278	54,247	80,483	70
Total	169	1,300	469,900	512,140	94,960	122,944	74

Source: Albanian Ministry of Tourism and Environment (2018)

The three incinerators in Albania face strong resistance and distrust – not only by active environmental NGOs and experts, but also by many citizens. While inhabitants of the areas of construction mostly fear toxic ashes, pollution of soils and air, further reasons for resistance include the fact that tendering procedures seem to be either non-existent or not transparent, and that it is difficult to get further information on the origin and experience of the companies that receive the concession. At the same time, the construction of incinerators in Albania – at least at this point in time – is not in line with the National Waste Management Strategy, according to which the EU goals on reduction, reuse and recycling have to be met, before investments in the construction of one or two incinerators are undertaken. Accordingly, the EU Report for Albania 2018 states that *the construction of an incinerator in Elbasan which started to operate last year and plans for further investment in incinerators pose concerns in terms of compliance with EU principles since disposal and incineration are the least preferred waste management options.*

5. Other major disputes in the waste sector of Albania

The waste policies of the Albanian Government have caused a large number of civil society protests over the last years. Aside from the construction of incinerators (see point 4), the two most discussed developments are presented here:

5.1. Chemical weapons import from Syria for dismantling in Albania

In 2013, one of the biggest and first protests for environmental protection in Albania took place. The protests were against the treatment of an estimated 1,000 tons arsenal in Albania, which included mustard gas and sarin chemical weapons from Syria. When, on 15 November 2013, the Albanian Government refused the treatment of the chemical weapons, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons was left without a country to host the destruction of Syria's weapons waste. A large number of protests, including a blockage at the harbor of Durres and a 24 hours protest of around 2,000 citizens outside the Prime Minister's Office, helped to convince the Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama to eventually refuse to waste imports from Syria.

5.2. Waste import draft law

In 2013, the newly appointed Prime Minister Edi Rama (Socialist Party) kept his election campaign commitment to prohibit the import of all types of waste. Albanian environmentalists and citizens reacted with a sigh of relief. All the greater was the surprise when, in July 2016, three members of parliament proposed Draft Law No. 92/2016 which aimed at allowing the import of certain types of waste into Albania. When shortly thereafter the Albanian Prime Minister declared himself in favor of this draft law, waves of protests emerged instantly.

Positive about the import of waste to Albania according to Draft Law No. 92/2016 was that

- the import of hazardous waste in general, as well as the import of non-hazardous waste for purposes of storage, disposal, and incineration, would have remained prohibited.
- the Council of Ministers was supposed to control and approve the rules and procedures of waste imports.
- waste imports would have been allowed only at three customs points.
- the types of wastes allowed to be imported would have been restricted to wastes from the *Green List*.

Negative about the import of waste to Albania according to Draft Law No. 92/2016 was that many other provisions implied high risks:

- Penalties were set far too low to effectively discourage organized crime.
- Too much authority would have been concentrated in the hands of the Minister of Tourism and Environment and the Minister of Finance (decisions on licensing, monitoring, authorizations of controls, bylaws, etc.).
- The system of control and monitoring would have left too much room for abuse and corruption; it would not have included the control of all shipments.

- The draft law might have weakened national recycling endeavors, as it did not contain any incentives for national recycling.

In the beginning of 2018, the approval of the draft law was dismissed from the agenda of the Parliament. Therewith, waste imports to Albania remain prohibited.

6. National strategy for integrated waste management

In June 2006, Albania and the EU signed the Stabilization and Association Agreement, obliging Albania to gradually align its legislation with EU *Acquis Communautaire*, including Chapter 27 on the Environment with its contents on integrated waste management.

In 2010 finally, for the first time, Albania has drafted its first National Strategy for Integrated Waste Management. The latest draft was open for discussion and consultations in January 2018 and covers the period between 2018 and 2033. The overall vision is to establish a strategic and regulatory framework in Albania to reduce the amount of waste and to manage the waste produced in the country in an integrated manner and in line with EU Directives (Table 4).

Table 4: Alignment of waste management legislation in Albania with EU Directives

European Union	Albania
Framework Directive 2008/98 EC on Waste (19/11/2008)	Law 10463/2011 <i>On Integrated Waste Management</i> Sub-legal Acts for the Differentiated Collection of Waste at Source (DCM No. 408, 25/06/2008) National Waste Management Plan 2010 - 2025
Directive 94/62 / EC on Packaging (20/12/1994)	DCM No. 177/2012 on Packaging and Waste Disposal
Directive 99/31 / EC on Waste Landfills (20/04/1999)	DCM No. 452/2012 on Waste Landfills
Directive 2000/76 / EC on Incineration of Waste (04/12/2000)	DCM No. 178/2012 on Waste Incineration

Source: Albanian Ministry of Tourism and Environment (2018)

Quality legislation on waste management is sufficient in Albania. However, the main challenges lie in the implementation, the development of sustainable institutional and operational plans, the lack of financial means and a clear definition and division of mandates between the responsible central and local institutions.

7. Main donors

Donor engagement in the waste sector in Albania has significantly increased according to the increasing interest of the Albanian Government, particularly since 2016.

Germany is one of the main donors to Albania in the sector of waste management – particularly via its implementing agency, the German KfW Development Bank. In 2016, the Albanian Government appointed Germany as a *lead donor* for the waste

sector, which means that Germany has the mandate to prepare the agenda of donor meetings and to support the Albanian Government in coordinating donor programs in the waste sector.

In August 2018, with support of the KfW Development Bank, the Albanian Ministry of Infrastructure and Energy published the jointly prepared *Sector Study for Investment Demand in Integrated Solid Waste Management (ISWM) in Albania – Final Sector Study Report* (Albanian Ministry of Infrastructure and Energy, 2018). The document comprised an investment plan, and determined adequate technology, costs, and tariffs. A three phases plan was entailed from 2018 to 2032. For each of the phases, the specific need for regional facilities is pointed out, the average operation costs are estimated, and concrete projects are suggested.

With support of the German KfW Development Bank, the rehabilitation of Volloder Waste Dump in Saranda is currently in planning, as well as the construction of a sanitary landfill for the region of Gjirokaster.

Since 2016, the GIZ (Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit), the second implementing agency of the German Government, furthermore has an ongoing project with three municipalities in Southern Albania (Himara, Peqin and Rrogozhina) with a focus on composting organic matter and increasing waste separation and recycling.

Since 2017, the Swiss Government is supporting Albania in setting up an urban solid waste management in the region of Berat with a grant of 2.2 million EUR.

Finally, the EU has made waste management a priority for its cooperation with Albania under IPA II. Thereby, it has set its focus on the alignment with EU law and standards and better treatment of water and waste.

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Contact Person



Lulzim Baumann

Wastecon AG

Expert: Environmental Engineer

Laubacher Weg 30

88416 Ochsenhausen

GERMANY

+ 49 157 71090615

lulzimbaumann@gmx.de

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