

Presentation given during the Conference BILLIONS FOR SUSTAINABILITY?  
– HOW CAN WE DO IT BETTER – LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE USE OF PRE-ACCESSION FUNDS  
Transparency and public participation in pre-accession funds  
Brussels, 25-26<sup>th</sup> November 2002

# Public participation in Vilnius Regional Waste Management Project

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## **I. Situation with landfills in Lithuania**

- ✓ Lithuanians still generate less waste per capita and will reach EU average of 387 kg per capita around 2015.
- ✓ There are about 900 waste dumping sites in Lithuania.
- ✓ There are about 260 formally functioning landfills, of which 11 serve large cities, 70 are used by district centres and 180 used by villages.
- ✓ None of these meet either Lithuanian or EU standards. Many of the existing landfills in Lithuania will be filled up and need to be closed, independently from the requirements of EU directives until 2005.
- ✓ The estimated investment needed to comply with Directive 1999/31/EC is about 300m € until 2010.
- ✓ By 2010, Lithuania plans to establish 10-12 new modern regional landfills and to close old ones.
- ✓ Projects will be financed from ISPA Environment, municipal and governmental contributions, and IFIs during 2000-2006 period.
- ✓ Projects under implementation: Siauliai, Alytus, Taurage regional projects.
- ✓ All ISPA projects on waste are focused on the set-up of regional waste management systems.

## **II. Situation with municipal waste in Vilnius**

~ 600 000 tonnes of waste are generated in Vilnius annually (including industry and construction works, sewage sludge).

Municipal waste makes about up 250 000 tonnes of this figure; 275 kg per capita/annually in average.

About 390 000 tonnes of waste were dumped in Vilnius regional landfills during 2000. Up to 85% of this amount came from the city of Vilnius.

All waste from the Vilnius region is stored in 125 landfills and dumping sites. None of these meets existing environmental requirements, most of them are small, with area covering less than two hectares.

The Kariotiskes dumping site, serving Vilnius, has almost reached its limits to store new amounts of waste.

It is located near Trakai Historical National Park in Trakai municipality, ~20 km away from Vilnius.

Non-compliance with environmental requirements, absence of expansion and modernisation opportunities together with negative environmental and social impacts caused permanent conflicts between Trakai municipality, local people and Vilnius municipality.

All municipalities of the Vilnius region cooperate on the strategy and plans concerning Vilnius regional waste

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management. The Vilnius Waste Management Centre was established in 2001.

### **III. Preparing the Vilnius waste management project for ISPA financing**

The Vilnius regional waste management project was prepared by Danish company *Ramboll* in cooperation with Lithuanian company *Baltic Consulting Group* and *Environmental Policy Center*. Project preparation was financed by the *Danish Environmental Agency* under *DANCEE* support programme.

Main objective: to install a new landfill site meeting Lithuanian and EU standards in a new location by 2005. A new municipal waste collection system should be established in all municipalities of the Vilnius region.

#### **Total costs of the investments is about 20,8m €**

- Closure and clean up of the small dumping sites: 4,0m €
- Closure of Kariotiskes dumping site and installing biogas collection system (for methane): 5,3m €;
- New waste collection system: 1,15m €;
- Infrastructure of the new landfill and first section of the waste storage: 7,8m €;

Project will be financed by ISPA (10,13m €), loans from international financial institutions (7,2m €) and state subsidies (3,47m €).

Investment project was prepared, approved and submitted to ISPA in June 2002.

#### **IV. Public participation**

- ✓ Lithuanian Green Movement (LGM) was approved as observer on the Project Monitoring Committee.
- ✓ Main focus of LGM was public participation during Environment Impact Assessment of the landfill site selection and means of the waste management.
- ✓ LGM objected against incineration as the most expensive and non-sustainable means of waste management.
- ✓ Project preparation team did careful analysis of least cost options of investments into various waste management options and proved that waste incineration would be the most expensive option.
- ✓ Selection of new landfill site passed EIA procedure at the end of project preparation.
- ✓ Two final sites were selected: an abandoned gravel pit in Kazokiskes and a “greenfield” site in Sirvintai municipality.
- ✓ Investment and financial analysis showed that both sites are more or less equal in terms of long term (20 years) exploitation.

#### **Advantages/disadvantages:**

- *Sirvintai site require higher investment costs as a “greenfield” both for landfill and infrastructure (roads, engineering communications).*

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- *It would cause devastation of a natural site, followed by clear-cutting of forest.*
  
- *A few farms and villages nearby would be negatively affected by proximity to the landfill.*
- *There were big protests by local people and NGOs due to the negative environmental and social impacts.*
  
- *Kazokiskes had more advantages because it already was a devastated industrial place.*
- *A new landfill would not cause any negative impacts on biodiversity.*
- *Negative social impacts could be minimised by technical means and other compensation.*
- *There were no social protests from local people around the Kazokiskes site.*
  
- ✓ EIA procedures and public involvement into decision making were done correctly for both sites by project preparation team.
  
- ✓ Final decision about the site selection was done by the involved municipalities, Vilnius regional administration and the Ministry of the Environment.
  
- ✓ The position of LGM and negative public opinion concerning Sirvintai site were important factors influencing final decision in favour of Kazokiskes site.

## **V. Conclusions**

- ✓ This is the first EU ISPA project in Lithuania which included NGO involvement on the Project Monitoring Committee (PMC).
- ✓ This case clearly demonstrates that NGOs can provide valuable input in the project preparation stage and can help increase project transparency.
- ✓ LGM contributed with meaningful arguments during the EIA procedure concerning the site selection, and shared its concerns on different methods of waste management.
- ✓ Involved NGOs can contribute to public awareness and public participation in decision making by sharing information about the project among their colleagues and the general public, thus increasing the general transparency of the project cycle.
- ✓ NGOs can learn a lot about project preparation cycle and the realities of EU pre-accession aid use.

### **Lesson learned:**

- ✓ Involvement in these projects requires many professional skills and specific knowledge about various aspects of project preparation (detailed understanding of waste management technologies, calculation of investments and analysis of least cost solutions, etc.).

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- ✓ NGOs might lack of some of these specific skills and this job is then left for the professionals, as it was in our case.

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- ✔ NGOs need to be aware about quick preparation activities, many open and hidden interests of authorities, municipalities and companies, complicated procedures of the decision making process and other factors.
- ✔ Both LGM and officials, as well as the professional project preparation team, learned from this involvement.
- ✔ If national and EU officials consider NGOs serious social partners (as they claim), they should encourage civil society groups to be involved in every possible project.
- ✔ NGOs as well as officials need to develop their skills and understanding about project cycle and public spending for the solutions of environmental problems in pre-accession period and later, when larger support from EU structural funds will become available.