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From: Secretary-General of the European Commission, signed by Ms Martine DEPREZ, Director

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To: Ms Thérèse BLANCHET, Secretary-General of the Council of the European Union

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Subject: COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT  
The early warning report for Latvia  
*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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Delegations will find attached document SWD(2023) 187 final.

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## COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT

### The early warning report for Latvia

#### *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<sup>1</sup>.

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 Agency, 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<sup>2</sup>.

## 2. Key findings

Based on the analysis of collected data and existing policies in the area of waste management, Latvia is considered to be at risk of missing: (i) the 2025 target of 55% for the preparing for re-use and the recycling of its municipal waste; and (ii) the specific 2025 target to recycle 50% of its plastic packaging waste. The distance between Latvia's current landfilling rate and its 2035 target of landfilling no more than 10% of its municipal waste is also of concern.

The recycling rate for municipal waste in Latvia has significantly increased in recent years, jumping from 25.2% in 2016 to 39.6% in 2020. This jump mainly resulted from including waste exported for recycling in the statistics for recycled waste. Although there was a significant decrease in the landfilling rate in recent years (falling from 64.3% in 2016 to 52.8% in 2020), Latvia continues to rely heavily on landfilling.

The total recycling rate for packaging waste rate in 2019 was 62.4%, which is very close to the 2025 target of 65%. The application of the new calculation rules<sup>3</sup> in the future for packaging waste recycling might also result in lower recycling rates (in 2020 the recycling rate for all packaging waste decreased to 61.4%). The recycling rates for specific waste materials has exceeded their respective targets for 2025, except plastic packaging, which is 14.1 percentage points below the 2025 targets (the 2025 recycling target is 50% for plastic).

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<sup>1</sup> An early warning report was issued for Latvia in 2018 (SWD(2018) 420 final). A total of 15 recommendations were provided. According to the Latvian authorities, 13 of the report's recommendations are considered as being implemented and 2 as partially implemented.

<sup>2</sup> 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](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=comnat%3ACOM_2022_0438_FIN)).

<sup>3</sup> Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2019/1004.

Low recycling rates are mainly due to:

- strong reliance on landfilling and limited capture rates for separately collected recyclables (20% for biowaste, 13% for plastics and 6% for metals)
- insufficient coverage of high-convenience collection services across the country, with such services unavailable to many Latvians
- Potential to provide more incentives for citizens to make a bigger effort in separating their waste at source.

However, Latvia is likely to make significant progress on municipal waste and packaging waste recycling in the future given the significant recent increase in: (i) the recycling rate for municipal waste; (ii) clearly defined responsibilities; (iii) enforcement actions; and (iv) support mechanisms. On the objective of reducing the percentage of waste sent to landfill, the distance to the 2035 target deserves further attention.

### **3. Key recommendations**

Among the measures considered necessary to support Latvia's efforts to improve its waste-management performance, three main recommendations are listed below.

1. Support preparing for re-use of municipal waste and re-use systems for packaging.
2. Improve performance in the separate collection of waste, as a large share of the population lacks access to high-convenience collection services (especially for biowaste). The combination of different collection modes with different collection areas (according to types of housing) and different types of waste stream should be taken into consideration when seeking to improve performance in this area.
3. Prioritise projects higher up in the waste hierarchy. It should channel the available funding into extending the treatment capacity for biowaste and supporting home composting.
4. Latvia should implement a pay-as-you-throw system to further incentivise the public to separate waste at source.

The table below lists some possible actions to support Latvia's efforts to improve its waste-management performance.

### **4. Good practices**

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

- Raising public awareness of sound waste management – Latvia set up a very user-friendly website<sup>4</sup> giving the general public free access to information on both the location of sorting facilities in the whole country and related sound practices for waste separation.
- Improving the system for the separate collection of waste – Latvia made use of the EU's LIFE programme to finance its 'Waste to resources IP<sup>5</sup>' project to boost regional sustainability and circularity. The project aims to implement the country's national waste-management plan for 2021-2028. This is a very wide-ranging project aimed at improving system for the separate collection of waste by piloting complex management approaches for priority waste streams (including the safe

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<sup>4</sup> [ASIS \(skiroviegli.lv\)](https://www.skiroviegli.lv).

<sup>5</sup> [LIFE \(lifeprogramma.lv\)](https://www.lifeprogramma.lv).

disposal of specific types of hazardous waste). The project also includes many activities to raise public awareness.

## OVERVIEW OF POSSIBLE ACTIONS TO IMPROVE PERFORMANCE

### Governance

- 1) To monitor, enforce and achieve higher capture rates, mandatory objectives or indicators for separate waste collection should be laid down at the level of the bodies in charge of collecting municipal waste (e.g. municipalities). This could be complemented with a system of financial rewards and penalties for entities involved, depending on whether they achieve the targets or not.

### Prevention

- 2) Take measures to increase re-use and to prevent the generation of non-recyclable municipal waste
- 3) Foster coordination between central government and local government to achieve the EU's waste-prevention objectives. It should also properly monitor the implementation of the waste-prevention measures.

### Separate collection

- 4) Improve performance in the separate collection of waste, including biowaste, as a large share of the population lacks access to high-convenience collection services. In order to ensure a high capture rate of recyclable wastes, Latvia should promote a combination of different collection modes with different collection areas and different waste streams (with due consideration of housing types and related challenges, such as large multi-apartment buildings with limited room for waste storage).

### Waste treatment

- 5) Support preparing for re-use of municipal waste and develop waste-treatment infrastructure that focuses on the higher steps of the waste hierarchy. Firm plans and concrete actions are needed, such as supporting home composting and stepping up treatment capacity for biowaste in order to fully cover the generated biowaste. A transition towards expanding the capacity of the treatment plants has already started/is planned.

### Communication and awareness raising

- 6) Maintain and strengthen awareness-raising activities specifically tailored to different target groups (e.g. households, commercial waste generators, schoolteachers and students) to increase participation in separate collection. A set of national communication materials should be developed that: (i) are addressed to citizens, farmers, and pupils for use at local level; (ii) have clear and consistent messages; and (iii) have a particular focus on biowaste, home composting and the sound management of waste (e.g. sorting).

### Extended producer responsibility and economic instruments

- 7) Set up a pay-as-you-throw system for businesses and households to both attain higher capture rates for recyclable fractions and reduce residual waste. Local authorities could be supported through guidance on how to design the incentive mechanisms and how to introduce – or learn from – pilot projects.

**8)** Latvia should use economic instruments (e.g. raising landfill taxes to a sufficient magnitude) to incentivise waste management focused on the higher steps of the waste hierarchy. This will help to make re-use, preparation for re-use, and recycling economically attractive and will reduce dependency on landfilling. The economic incentive should be designed and sufficiently large to create a 'steering effect'. Landfill taxes that increase over time in correlation to specific targets are considered the most effective.

**9)** Stepping up efforts to establish re-use systems for packaging will bring environmental benefits and help Member States in complying with the EU packaging recycling targets.