

It has been more than five years since the residents of Lilo village, near Tbilisi, cannot open their windows. The main reason which causes this problem is a garbage dump, which is situated next to the village.

Local residents say that it is practically impossible to ventilate their homes because of the smell that comes from the garbage dump. Besides, locals think that the polygon which is located next to the settlement causes a health related problems.

"We demand a landfill site to be moved or closed. Children had the stadium nearby and they don't go there to play anymore because of this terrible smell. Apart from the elders, we worry about next generation, will our grandchildren be healthy?" - a resident of Lilo Tsisana Gabadashvili says.

The Head of the Waste Management Department Zurab Gventsadze does not share the view of the residents. He told us that the polygon of Norio complies with the standards.

"The law obliges us to create a 500-meter fixed buffer zone from the settlement and the polygon of Norio is 1.5 kilometers away from the settlement of Didi Lilo. " - Zurab Gventsadze claims.

According to him , they are going to build landfill gas collecting systems and carry out other important works to improve recent circumstances at the polygon and solve the problem which troubles locals for many years.

Construction of Lilo landfill began in 2010, exploitation began in 2011. Landfill area covers 84 hectares. 100-120 garbage trucks enter the landfill on a daily basis and averagely 1000 tons of garbage is being recycled.

However, despite the leadership's claim that the landfill is operated in accordance with the standards, other nearby villages are complaining about the smell too, namely the residents of Nasaguri, Norio, TsinUbani and Airport Settlement. Their claim is the same - a terrible smell, insects and various diseases, including cancer.

According to State audit office's 2015 report "Municipal Solid Waste Management ", the garbage dump of Tbilisi violates international standards. International civil aviation standards implies that a landfill should be away from the airport at least by 13 kilometers but the distance from the Tbilisi state airport is only 7.5 kilometers.

"The birds, which are attracted to the dump, are dangerous for the planes and they might cause a damage or lead to a catastrophe", - the audit report reads.

Landfills in the region

There are 56 operating landfills in the country. The vast majority (except for the 3 newly opened landfills) is registered in the times of the Soviet Union. They do not meet international standards and exploitation date is overdue.

From 53 of 56 landfills are located in the municipalities of Georgia. Director of Solid Waste Management company George Shikhashvili states that in the coming years up to 30 landfills will be in compliance with European standards, the range of about 20 will be closed.

He said that Europe's existing and proven standards will gradually be introduced in the Eastern European countries, including Georgia. However, it is quite a difficult process both financially and in terms of public awareness.

"It is imperative that the waste useful for recycling be separated by the population themselves. Since 2019 municipalities are obliged to separate the waste", - says Giorgi Shikhashvili.

Another problem is construction waste, which is mainly dumped in ravines, river beds, etc. Almost in every settlement there is a disastrous landfill where construction waste is illegally placed.

According to the audit report, for example, in Batumi (Georgia's one of the main touristic city) construction waste dump is concentrated in the middle of the city at the ruined factories - at the area of the factories individuals can freely place construction waste.

Examples of the EU countries

European Union Association Agreement obliges Georgia to manage solid waste in accordance with European standards, which means that the landfill should not impair the population and their health as well as the environment. In addition, near a landfill there should not be the smell, noise and dust. Solid waste landfill must be equipped with a waterproof bottom, drainage system, water filtering system, ground water filtration system and with the device to scare off insects and birds.

In order to get closer to the EU standards Georgia will be assisted financially by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. EBRD will finance the project of solid waste management. For implementation of the project bank will allocate 10 million Euros as a loan and 2 million as a grant to Georgia. In terms of the project solid waste collection vehicles and containers will be purchased. Vehicles and containers destined for the country's 64 municipalities.

The EU member states are obliged to lower municipal waste sent to landfills by 50%, while construction waste with - 70% till the 2020. Regarding this, the best example is Sweden, which in 2010 reached 49% of the waste recycling and places only 1% of waste to the landfill.

According to the Eurostat data, in 2013, in 28 EU countries 156.9 kg of waste was generated per capita.

Some Interesting Facts

- Up to 60% of the rubbish that ends up in the dustbin could be recycled.
- The unreleased energy contained in the average dustbin each year could power a television for 5,000 hours.

- On average, 16% of the money you spend on a product pays for the packaging, which ultimately ends up as rubbish.
- As much as 50% of waste in the average dustbin could be composted.
- Up to 80% of a vehicle can be recycled.
- 9 out of 10 people would recycle more if it were made easier.
- The largest glass furnace produces over 1 million glass bottles and jars per day.
- Glass is 100% recyclable and can be used again and again.
- Glass that is thrown away and ends up in landfills will never decompose.
- Recycled paper produces 73% less air pollution than if it was made from raw materials.
- Most families throw away about 40kg of plastic per year, which could otherwise be recycled. (source: www.recycling-guide.org)