



October 2018
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Rural-Urban Governance Arrangements and Planning Instruments

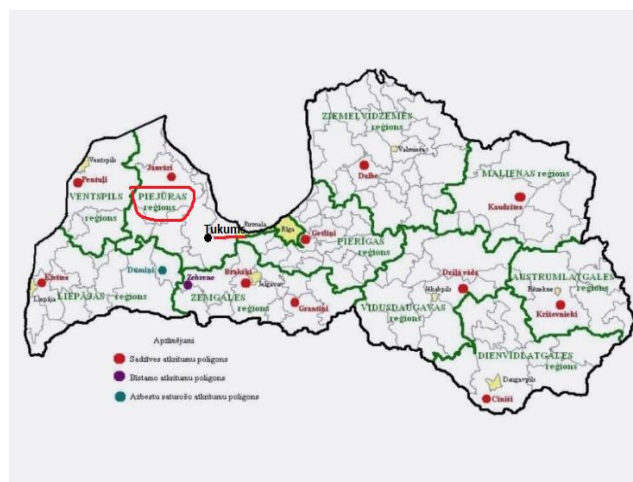
Interregional cooperation in waste management

Tukums, Latvia

1. Overview

Waste management in the Piejūra territory is an example of long-lasting inter-regional territorial cooperation between municipalities in waste management in a coastal region. The waste management territory Piejūra was established in the early 2000s with the aim of introducing a more effective waste management system in the specific administrative territory of 9 municipalities (3 before the administrative territorial reform of 2009), consisting of both urban and rural areas. The municipalities have signed cooperation agreements and have established a joint waste management company “Piejūra”, which provides a range of waste management services for the region’s residents, businesses and institutions: sorting, storage, transfer, preparation for storage or for regeneration, landfilling, and - since 2017 - also collection. The municipalities provide organisational and financial resources, and are in charge of the waste management process in their territories. In addition to setting up and improving the technical infrastructure and organisation of the waste management system all across the region, an important challenge is involving residents in the waste management system - sorting in particular.

Picture 1. Waste management Piejūra territory



Source: Bendere (2014)

Picture 2. Waste management station in Piejūra waste management region



Source: https://abc.lv/raksts/sadzives_atkritumu_apsaimniekosanas_projekts

2. Main Challenges

The central challenge is to develop a single regional waste management system that is environmentally friendly, and financially, economically and socially viable (e.g., easy-to-use for all the residents for an accessible price). The share of unsorted waste and landfilled waste remains high in Latvia. These practices lead to higher financial costs and have greater negative environmental impact than waste sorting and processing would. The technical infrastructure for waste sorting in the region is well developed and modern; there are designated places for depositing sorted waste all across the region and a couple of waste sorting and transfer stations have been constructed. The low share of sorted waste coming from households has made work with residents a strategic priority in order to raise residents' awareness of the benefits of sorting waste, educating them and developing their waste sorting skills (AAS Piejūra 2016). In addition, improvements in technical infrastructure for sorting waste are planned by means of introducing new routes for collecting sorted waste in those settlements where such routes are not yet in place. These are often either remote rural areas that produce little waste or urban settlements of private residences.

3. Main Insights

3.1. Insights related to the broad area of “network governance”

The governance structure for waste management in the Piejūra waste management territory and Tukums municipality consists of a range of public and private actors from the local, national and European level. As stated in the introduction, at the core of this governance arrangement is a collaborative partnership between several neighbouring municipalities which was established with the aim of improving the waste management system across administrative territories. A supra-regional waste management arrangement

was considered more effective and efficient. The jointly established company is an instrument for providing waste management services in the territory. Other actors involved in this governance arrangement are waste producers (residents, businesses and other organisations), waste collectors and processors, as well as various national and European (e.g. legislative, administrative, funding and control) institutions. In addition, a range of companies have been involved in constructing the technical infrastructure for waste management.

Recently, an effort has been made to actively involve waste producers (e.g. residents) in the waste management system in order to ensure a transition towards a circular economy more effectively. Informative and educative activities are carried out for this purpose. Residents have been consulted on waste management services also through designated opinion polls organized by the municipality and service providers. Results from these polls are used to improve waste management services.

3.2. Insights related to mechanisms of cross-sectoral coordination and cooperation

Improvement of the waste management system is a part of Tukums municipality's activities aimed at improving environmental conditions in the region by means of modernising environmental infrastructure and reducing the negative impacts of human activities on the environment by way of waste reduction, collection and recycling. Attempts to improve environmental quality are linked to a better quality of life for the residents and a well-maintained/preserved natural environment, including natural sites.

There is cross-sectoral cooperation developing between the waste management company Piejūra and NGOs, and companies and educational institutions in order to better engage residents in sustainable waste management. A range of initiatives have been organised, such as waste paper collection competitions, drawing competitions, and excursions to waste landfill and transfer stations. Trainings are organised in cooperation with the State Environmental Service for environmental experts in municipalities and companies on environmental governance and waste management. These cross-sectoral cooperation and coordination activities address both rural and urban areas, without making an explicit distinction between them.

3.3. Insights related to the role of (actual, potential) social, organizational, institutional innovations

The cooperation between the municipalities is seen as a good foundation for further (innovative) developments in waste management that support a circular economy. For instance, joint initiatives of Piejūra municipalities to find opportunities to supply alternative fuel sourced from waste.

4. Effectiveness Indicators

The cooperation between municipalities has made the regional waste management system in the entire Piejūra region more effective in terms of environmental, technological, social and economic performance. Strategic development of waste management in the region is outlined in regional waste management plans. In accordance with them, all the waste dumps in Piejūra region have been closed and recultivated, and the number of illegal waste dumps has been significantly reduced. A new landfill that conforms to contemporary environmental requirements and technological solutions for household waste has been built. 366 waste collections points have been created across the entire region, and four stations for waste sorting and transfer are operating in the region (Tukuma novada dome 2017). These measures have allowed to improve environmental quality in the region.

The inter-regional territorial approach in waste management has ensured that all the residents and businesses, regardless of where and how far they are located, can have access to a waste management service of comparable quality. This might be particularly relevant for rural residents, as waste management in rural areas may be less economically efficient because of lower total and per capita waste production and greater distance to regional centres (Tukuma novada dome 2017). Nonetheless, the share of sorted household waste remains low.

A shortcoming of this multi-actor governance arrangement turned out to be cooperation with a private company that collects waste. Clients have repeatedly reported quality issues; Piejūra waste management region points to poor exchange of information and data with the company, which limits transparency regarding the amount and flow of waste in the region. It has been decided to transfer waste collection from the private company to the Piejūra company.

5. Illustration and further information

Practical examples of governance and its effectiveness:

The introduction of sorted waste collection all across the region - in urban and rural areas (some rural settlements are not in the system yet). This has been done by installing waste skips, developing collection routes specifically for sorted waste, and constructing modern landfill and waste sorting stations. Public funds have been used to create this infrastructure.

The activities of Tukums municipality, the Piejūra waste management region and private companies aimed at residents (in particular young people and children, but also other waste producers) to better involve them in the waste management system. This educational and consultative work is carried out in cooperation with other businesses, NGOs, schools and public institutions.

Illustrative presentations on the development of the Piejūra waste management region (in Latvian):

- <https://www.slideserve.com/rimona/atkritumu-apsaimnieko-anas-sistemas-izveide-un-ievie-ana-piejuras-regiona>

- https://abc.lv/raksts/sadzives_atkritumu_apsaimniekosanas_projekts
- <https://piejuraatkritumi.lv/sabiedribas-izglitosana/ka-pareizi-skirot/apkart-zals-vidus/>

6. References

AAS Piejūra (2016) SIA "Atkritumu apsaimniekošanas sabiedrība "Piejūra"" vidējā termiņa darbības stratēģija 2016.-2020.gadam.

https://www.piejuraatkritumi.lv/files/uploads/SIA_Piejura_strategija_saisinata.pdf

Bendere, R. (2014) Pašvaldību loma un uzdevumi jaunajā atkritumu apsaimniekošanas plānošanas period (2013.-2020.g).

Tukuma novada dome (2017) Sēdes darba kārtība 2017. gada 23. jūnijā

<https://www.tukums.lv/images/stories/2017.gads/lepirkumi/fk5-17.pdf>

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