

Strengthening public participation in waste management in Greece

Abstract

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Recently, there is increasing attention to the role of citizens in waste management. In the siting and operation of waste management facilities, public opposition is a frequent occurrence worldwide. In many cases, this results from lack of community involvement in waste management policy making. Participation of citizens in all stages of the waste management process is therefore advisable. Actually, in the European Union, public consultation is considered a necessary part of such processes. The way it is done differs considerably, depending on the social context, culture and who organizes it.

Much has been written about waste management facilities, decision making and local communities in the environmental justice tradition (e.g. Agyeman et.al, 2003; Walker, 2012; Schlosberg, 2007), which indicates that procedural justice and relevant issues are very significant. The insights of this conceptual tradition are useful in designing an effective waste management process and system.

In Greece, public participation is limited, especially so in the first stages of the planning process. It is mostly conceived as part of the consultation procedure after the development of regional or national plans. This is a major weakness of the overall participation scheme and triggers strong opposition of citizens' groups against the adopted waste management plans.

A revision of the public participation procedures in Greece is required in order to promote a more active and creative role of citizens, from the first stages of the planning process. A process that enables citizens' effective contribution can promote the development of realistic, economically feasible, socially acceptable and environmentally safe management plans. It could lead to the cultivation of trust towards public authorities – a very significant shortcoming in the Greek context - and support of the selected waste management plans.

This presentation aims to introduce and discuss methods and tools that can be applied in Greece in order to strengthen the role of citizens in both the planning process and the implementation of waste management programs, as well as to present good practices in this area. These methods/tools can be an important part of the decision making process and are expected to contribute to consensus building for the benefit of the society and the environment.

Key words: waste management, public participation, consensus building

References

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