



WES-BCA Regional Activity C1_REG-1

Regional Webinar on Strengthening Regulatory Frameworks for Plastic Pollution and Circular Economy Alignment

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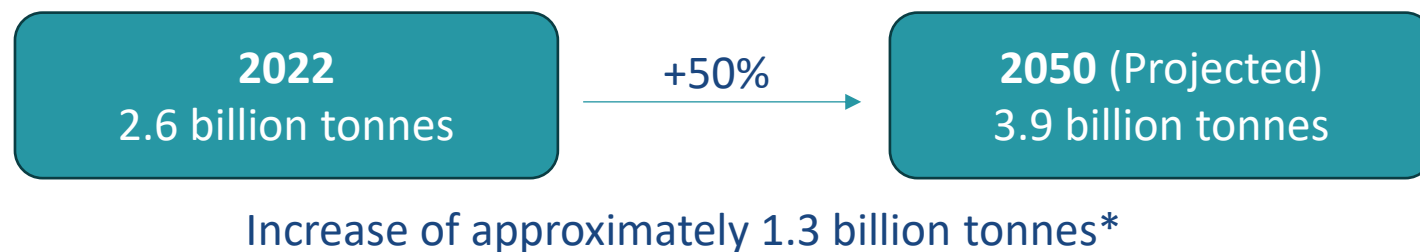
Regulatory and policy approaches addressing plastic pollution- MENA region perspectives

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The Growing Waste Challenge

- Around the world, the amount of waste we produce is increasing every year.
- Global Municipal Solid Waste Generation



- In the MENA region, increasing waste generation is accompanied by limited recycling capacity and a continued reliance on disposal.
- Nearly one-third of the world's municipal waste is still openly dumped or remains uncollected, leading to environmental degradation, public health risks, and economic losses)**

Technical and Operational Developments in SWM



- Sustainable waste management has become a strategic priority for environmental protection and economic resilience.
- Over the past decade, countries across the MENA region have made tangible progress in improving their technical capacities for solid waste management.
- Investments have focused on constructing sanitary landfills, rehabilitating uncontrolled dumpsites, introducing pilot composting facilities, and expanding separate collection systems.
- Recycling initiatives have gradually increased, while private sector participation has become more common in waste collection, treatment, and material recovery
- Stronger engagement of municipalities, civil society, academia and informal waste collectors integrated waste management systems.
- Nevertheless, landfilling remains the dominant disposal method throughout the region, with recycling, composting, and reuse accounting for only about 10% of waste treatment, demonstrating that significant progress is still needed to promote resource recovery.*

Key Policy Developments

- Policy frameworks have evolved considerably in the MENA Region as governments increasingly recognize waste management as a strategic component of sustainable development
- Several countries have developed national roadmaps, National Action Plans, and integrated Solid Waste Management strategies while progressively incorporating Circular Economy principles into national policies.
- These strategies contribute directly to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goals 6, 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15, by promoting sustainable resource management, environmental protection.
- The proposed strategies are aligned with key international and regional policy frameworks, including the UNEA resolutions initiating negotiations toward a Global Plastics Treaty, the Barcelona Convention and its Regional Plan on Marine Litter, the growing Mediterranean initiatives promoting the circular economy and sustainable consumption, and the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) 2030 Greener Med Agenda, which places circular economy, pollution prevention, and sustainable resource management at the core of the Mediterranean green transition.

Key Institutional and Governance Developments



- Institutional reforms have played an important role in strengthening waste governance across the region.
- Plastic governance is progressively becoming multi-actor, integrating environmental, industrial, health, trade and local government institutions.
- At the same time, municipalities have assumed greater responsibilities for service delivery and local implementation
- Expansion of Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) in collection, recycling and recovery
- Stronger cooperation with international organizations and regional initiatives
- Despite these improvements, coordination between national ministries, local authorities, and sectoral institutions remains insufficient in many countries, limiting the effectiveness of policy implementation and reducing overall system performance

Key Institutional and Governance Developments

- Creation or strengthening of dedicated national SWM institutions (waste agencies, regulatory authorities, specialized units), although mandates often remain fragmented and institutional capacities uneven.
 - **Lebanon** : SWMA (2025), Law 38/2026, expanded governance mandate
 - **Jordan** : Circular economy integrated into national strategy
 - **Egypt** : WMRA reforms, private investment, recycling
 - **Tunisia** : ANGEd (2005), Waste Framework Law (1996)
 - **Algeria** : AND established by Executive Decree No. 02-175 of 20 May 2002
- Establishment of inter-ministerial coordination mechanisms on circular economy and plastic pollution, but coordination across ministries and levels of government is still limited in many countries.
- Progressive decentralization of SWM responsibilities to municipalities and local authorities, while financial, technical and human resources often remain insufficient.
- Strengthened regional institutional cooperation yet greater alignment and convergence, knowledge sharing and monitoring are still needed to accelerate implementation.
- Emergence of Producer Responsibility Organisations (PROs) and EPR governance processes, although implementation, oversight and stakeholder engagement are still at an early stage.

Major Legal Developments

- Most MENA countries have established comprehensive legal frameworks governing solid waste management and have adopted national strategies aimed at improving waste collection services and promoting more sustainable resource management.
- Most MENA countries have Developed green fiscal instruments, including eco-taxes and environmental incentives.
- Several countries have also introduced or are considering Extended Producer Responsibility mechanisms for selected products
- Many programs are ongoing for the development of a national legal frameworks; progressive reduction of single-use plastics; design of an EPR system for single-use plastic products
- Rather than relying on isolated legal measures, countries are progressively developing coherent regulatory frameworks based on the principles of prevention, circular economy, extended producer responsibility, life-cycle management, and marine environmental protection.
- This legal transition reflects a shift from end-of-pipe waste control toward comprehensive governance of the entire plastics life cycle.

Proposed Policy Roadmap (2030)



Key Legal Concepts

Key legal developments throughout the region are guided by internationally recognized environmental principles:

- The Polluter Pays Principle seeks to ensure that those responsible for generating waste bear the costs of its management,
- while Extended Producer Responsibility expands producers' obligations throughout the life cycle of their products.
- Waste legislation also increasingly follows the waste hierarchy, prioritizing prevention, reuse, recycling, and recovery before disposal
- The circular economy aims to keep plastic materials in productive use for as long as possible through reuse, repair, remanufacturing, and recycling, while minimizing resource consumption, waste generation, and environmental impacts.

Opportunities

- The region possesses significant opportunities to accelerate its transition toward sustainable waste management and circular economy practices.
- Investments in recycling infrastructure, digital technologies, and resource recovery can improve service efficiency while generating new economic opportunities.
- Expanding circular economy activities would also create green jobs, strengthen local enterprises, and enhance the integration of informal waste workers.
- Furthermore, improving waste management would reduce environmental pollution and help preserve natural and coastal ecosystems, thereby supporting tourism development and improving the attractiveness of cities and coastal areas.
- Harnessing digital innovation, smart monitoring, and advanced recycling technologies offers significant opportunities to strengthen governance, enhance transparency, and accelerate the transition to a circular plastics economy.

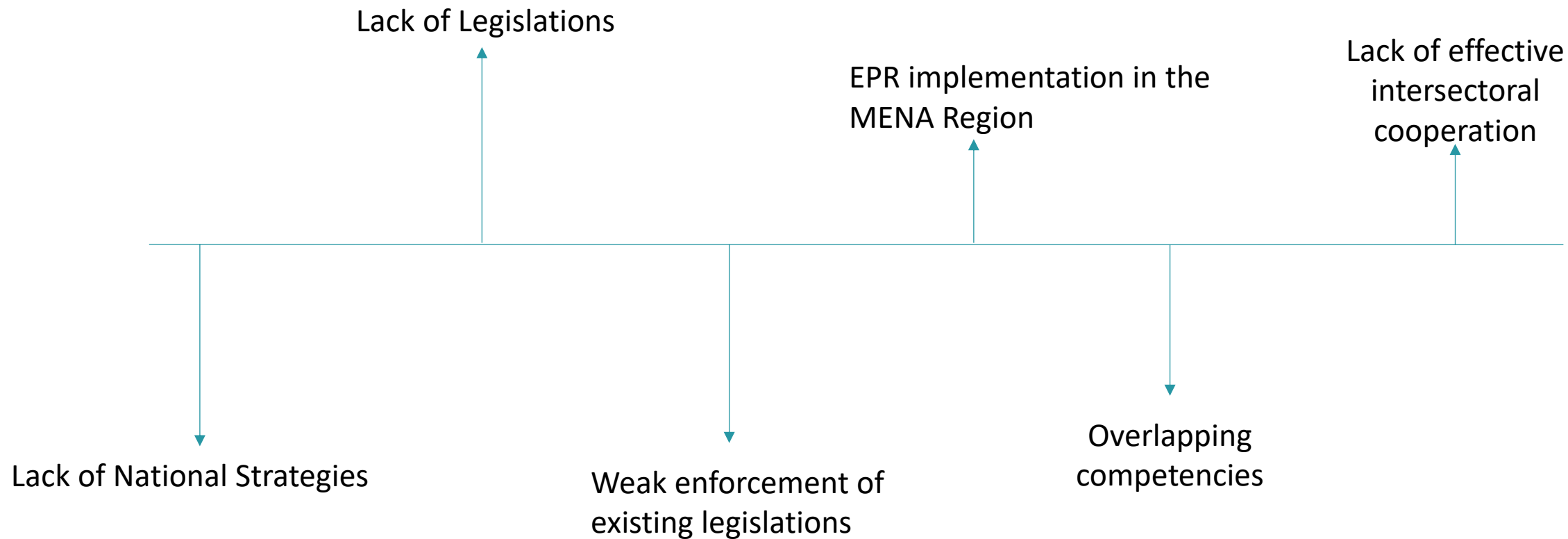
Opportunities

- From a regulatory perspective, ongoing legal reforms provide a unique opportunity to modernize waste governance by strengthening extended producer responsibility (EPR) schemes, improving legal traceability of waste flows, enhancing compliance and enforcement mechanisms, and promoting greater policy coherence across waste, chemicals, industrial and marine protection legislation.
- The current momentum generated by the negotiations of the Global Plastics Treaty also offers an opportunity for Mediterranean countries to progressively align national legislation with emerging international standards, strengthen regional cooperation under the Barcelona Convention, and integrate circular economy principles into future legal and policy frameworks.
- WES-BCA activities have further demonstrated the value of developing harmonized legal approaches, exchanging regulatory experiences among partner countries, and promoting evidence-based policymaking to support the transition towards sustainable plastics management.

Challenges

- Enforcement of environmental legislation remains weak in many countries due to limited institutional capacity, insufficient financial resources, and inadequate monitoring systems:
- Implementation is also constrained by:
 - fragmented institutional responsibilities;
 - limited monitoring and enforcement capacity;
 - insufficient environmental data and reporting systems.
 - diverging interests between manufacturers, retailers, recyclers and waste operators
- Economic challenges include limited financial resources, the persistence of informal plastic markets, and the high costs associated with the transition to circular production and consumption models.
- Emerging challenges arise from the rapid evolution of alternative materials and technologies, requiring adaptive regulatory frameworks based on sound scientific evidence.
- Strengthening institutions will be essential for effective implementation

Challenges



Common Misconceptions

Several persistent misconceptions continue to influence decision-making and slow legal reforms:

- Waste management is often perceived as being limited to collection and disposal, whereas modern systems emphasize waste prevention and resource recovery as well.
- Recycling is frequently viewed as the sole solution to the waste challenge, despite the importance of reducing waste generation and promoting reuse.
- Extended Producer Responsibility is also commonly regarded as a financing mechanism rather than a comprehensive policy instrument that encourages eco-design, waste prevention, and producer accountability
- Biodegradable and compostable plastics are often perceived as a universal alternative to conventional plastics, despite scientific and regulatory uncertainties regarding their environmental performance, appropriate disposal conditions and potential contribution to littering when not properly managed.
- Microplastics are frequently considered only as a marine pollution issue, whereas they originate from multiple sources throughout the plastics life cycle, requiring integrated regulatory responses addressing product design, industrial emissions, wastewater, waste management and monitoring.

Addressing these misconceptions is essential to support effective governance and encourage broader stakeholder participation.

Strategic Priorities for the MENA region

Looking ahead, MENA countries would benefit from concentrating their efforts on three strategic priorities:

- Strengthening institutional accountability by improving coordination among national authorities, municipalities and private stakeholders, while reinforcing compliance, monitoring, traceability and enforcement of plastics-related legislation.
- Securing sustainable financing mechanisms capable of supporting modern plastics waste infrastructure and long-term service delivery, while strengthening Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) schemes and ensuring their effective legal implementation and enforcement.
- Reducing plastic waste generation by promoting prevention, reuse, recycling and resource efficiency through coherent legal frameworks encouraging eco-design, regulating problematic plastic products and advancing circular economy principles.

Progressively align national plastics legislation with the future Global Plastics Treaty, the Barcelona Convention Regional Plan on Marine Litter, and circular economy policies, LAS and UfM agendas while addressing emerging regulatory challenges.



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Thank you for your attention!



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and keep up with our latest news!**

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