

CHALLENGES FACING MONTENEGRO¹

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Among the key challenges facing Montenegro's urban environments are:

- urban sprawl and its impact on the natural environment;
- a lack of wastewater treatment facilities and aging infrastructure;
- illegal waste dumping; and
- increasing traffic.

According to the most recent population census, 62 percent of Montenegrins reside in urban areas. The population distribution among urban settlements is in flux, with migration from northern regions to central parts, and constant population growth in the south. Podgorica, Nikšić, Herceg Novi, Budva and Bar are experiencing continuous growth, mainly at the expense of depopulation in their surrounding areas. Suburbanisation is becoming more pronounced, and owing to these settlements' single functionality, excessive use of space and low levels of infrastructure, there are substantial environmental impacts.

Illegal construction often occurs in the most attractive areas, for instance, along the sea coast and within protected natural areas. Often these are multi-million dollar investments that impact upon transport infrastructure while failing to respect technical, environmental, public-participation and other legal requirements. Construction often occurs in less populated areas where the thresholds for the provision of basic communal and other services are not met. This puts additional pressure on natural resources and the environment, causing groundwater contamination among other problems. New towns are emerging within suburban sprawl and it is already possible to envisage urban agglomerations along the highways connecting Podgorica, Danilovgrad, Tuzi and Golubovci; the corridor linking Herceg Novi, Tivat and Budva; and the axis between Petrovac, Sutomore, Bar and Ulcinj.

Within these urban settlements, only a small share of the population is served by municipal waste disposal and wastewater treatment services. Although connection to the sewerage network has risen to 56 percent on average in the coastal region, there is still a significant amount of wastewater that remains untreated across the country (see Case Study 17), including that from industrial plants. Although in the majority of areas the quality of drinking water is satisfactory, infrastructure facilities and water supply plants are in poor condition. Consequently large quantities of water are lost. Furthermore, of 89 wastewater pipes channelled into the open sea, only 11 extend the legally required 1,000 meters from the seashore. And of 26 pumping stations for sewage treatment within the coastal zone, at least six are in need of urgent repair. The only functional wastewater treatment plant is in the capital city of Podgorica; the Nikšić plant has been inoperative for years. Within municipalities in the central and northern regions, wastewater is either pumped into streams and rivers or passed directly into the ground through sumps. Elsewhere wastewater collection systems do not have functional treatment units, such as in Rijeka Crnojevića (Skadar Lake National Park).

Concerning solid waste disposal and management, industrial and municipal wastes are typically disposed of in landfills or illegal dumps across the country. An especially negative example is the coastal municipality of Bar where waste is tipped over the cliff face and incinerated at the seafront. The lack of a system for recycling and a deposit system for polyethylene terephthalate (PET) bottles and packing material contributes to this landscape degradation. Finally, as elsewhere within the west Balkan region, urban centres are faced with growing levels of motor traffic as well as industrial noise, increasing the stress upon the natural environment, as is demonstrated within Case Study 26.



¹ Map is available online at: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>