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The Vinča landfill is considered the largest unmanaged landfill in Europe.

Instituted in 1977, the open dump site receives 1,500 tons of household and 3,000 tons of construction waste each day.

Being one year away from nearing full capacity volume, an overflow in waste threatens to exacerbate existing levels of atmospheric and marine pollution, prompting Belgrade authorities in their decision to shut the site down. (In the past four decades, the landfill absorbed more than 10 million tons of waste.)

4 billion cubic metres of methane were released into the atmosphere from the Vinča landfill, according to data derived sourced from Belgrade's health authorities.

Methane generated by these excess tons of waste is generally flammable when exposed to oxygen. A desire to mitigate said fire hazard is another reason as to why the city administration seeks to shut the landfill down.

Environmental non-profits in Belgrade have long urged for this step to be taken.

Rehabilitation of the Vinča landfill is set to occur in 2023.

The new landfill, currently being constructed near the existing one, is funded by both Belgrade authorities as well as French-Japanese consortium Suez-Itochu in the form of a public-private partnership

The Belgrade project also entails the building of a waste-to-energy plant as well as an incinerator.

Within three years, existing mountains of waste (some towering as high as 70 m) are set to be transformed to green space, with gas emanating from toppling stacks set to be captured and utilised for electricity generation, should everything go to plan. Future waste will similarly form a heat and electricity resource.

Profit garnered from these ventures are supposed to offset investment expenditure relating to the construction and operation of the new site.

These plans have come under scrutiny by environmental groups who claim that the new incineration plant will prove a hindrance to Serbia in its efforts to reach EU recycling standards. Activists have pointed out that waste material consisting of paper and plastic is much better off being recycled than incinerated. City representatives conceded, promising that the plant would only treat waste that cannot be reused.

Belgrade is considered one of the worst European cities when it comes to air pollution, right

after the Bosnian capital of Sarajevo. Serbia, as a potential EU candidate, is required to enforce certain environmental standards to accede to the Union. Investments topping €15 billion will be needed to create such a sustainable municipal solid and liquid waste management system.

In Europe, landfills are responsible for over 3% of greenhouse gas emissions.

Source: Waste Management World