



A Nexus Roadmap for South-East Europe

In the framework of the project

“Promoting the Sustainable Management of Natural Resources in Southeastern Europe, through the use of the Nexus approach”

funded by the Austrian Development Agency (ADA),

implemented by the Global Water Partnership-Mediterranean (GWP-Med)
in partnership with the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)

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1. Background

The “Nexus Roadmap for South-East Europe” was developed in the framework of the “SEE Nexus Project”. It is based on the proceedings and findings of the Nexus Dialogue Process in South-East Europe (SEE) that took place from 2017 to 2022.

At SEE level, the use of a Nexus approach was promoted by the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) through the South-East Europe 2020 Strategy (SEE2020) adopted in 2013. One of the Key Strategy Actions in “Dimension Environment” under the “Sustainable Growth Pillar” of the SEE2020 Strategy was to “*Identify steps and measures necessary for advancing the water, energy and food nexus approach at national and transboundary levels*”. The key aim of the Regional Nexus Policy Dialogue in SEE was to support the above Action.

The Regional Dialogue was financially supported by:

- The **Austrian Development Agency (ADA)** in the framework of the project “*Promoting the Sustainable Management of Natural Resources in Southeastern Europe, through the use of the Nexus approach*” (SEE Nexus Project), implemented by GWP-Med in cooperation with the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE).
- The German Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety - Advisory Assistance Programme (AAP) for environmental protection, in the framework of the project “*Water-Food-Energy-Environment Nexus Policy Dialogue Process in South East Europe*”, supervised by the **German Federal Environment Agency (UBA)**
- The **Global Environment Facility (GEF)** through its Programme “International Waters: Learning Exchange and Resources Network (**IW:LEARN**)”, Activity 2.3: *Supporting Regional Cooperation on Shared Water Resources through Dialogue*

A set of activities were implemented as part of a Regional Dialogue, including:

- Four Regional Roundtables and Nexus Groups Meetings (meetings of Nexus-related Ministries representatives).
 - 1st Regional Roundtable, held on 20-22 June 2017 in Belgrade, Serbia
 - 2nd Regional Roundtable, held on 23-24 October 2018, in Skopje, North Macedonia
 - 3rd Regional Roundtable, held on 16-18 October 2019, in Tirana, Albania
 - 4th Regional Roundtable, held on 26 July 2022, in Tirana, Albania and online
- A Regional Nexus Mapping Study consisting of individual analyses for each of the 6 SEE Economies, as well as a Regional Synthesis. In brief, the Study:
 - Identified interlinkages and potential benefits, trade-offs and conflicts among Nexus sectors (water, energy, food and ecosystems)
 - Assessed the level of institutional, legislative and policy integration in the management of Nexus-related natural resources
 - Proposed pathways towards enhancing the Nexus approach in SEE

Through these activities, a Nexus Community of Practice for SEE was essentially established for the first time, and the Nexus Mapping Studies provided an instrument assisting the Economies to understand the level of policy and institutional integration and related interlinkages, also serving as a baseline against which progress can be compared.

The present “Nexus Roadmap for SEE” is based on the main findings and recommendations of the Nexus Dialogue Process.

Building up on the above Regional activities, the ADA-funded SEE Nexus Project (2017-2022) supported the implementation of Nexus Dialogue Processes in 3 focus areas in SEE:

- The transboundary basin of the Drin river
- The transboundary basin of the Drina river
- Albania at the national level

Each of these Dialogue Processes included:

- participatory consultation meetings engaging a broad range of Nexus stakeholders
- the development of analytical technical Nexus Assessments identifying cross-sectoral linkages/benefits/trade-offs and investigating in depth priority ones
- capacity development workshops targeting staff of institutions and utilities
- activities on mainstreaming gender considerations in policy-making
- the preparation in each focus area of 2 fully developed Project Documents on priority interventions, also exploring financing options

More information is available at: www.gwp.org/seenexus

2. Introduction

The Water-Energy-Food-Ecosystems (WEFE) Nexus approach starts from the realization that in a traditional fragmented approach, pursuing to achieve security of supply independently in the water, energy, and food sectors without addressing trade-offs with the other sectors can endanger their sustainability and security, while jeopardizing environmental and climate resilience objectives. The Nexus approach is essentially about moving beyond such a traditional sectoral thinking and adopting an integrated approach for the sectors, with a view to reconciling their potentially conflicting interests as they compete for the same scarce resources, while respecting environmental constraints, and exploring emerging opportunities for synergies among all actors, and increased efficiencies.

Towards such an approach, interlinkages among the relevant sectors are assessed aiming to identify solutions to address any trade-offs and capture synergies in terms of policy frameworks, institutional settings, management practices, infrastructure planning and resource mobilization. A Nexus approach is also an excellent tool towards the achievement of the SDGs and meeting the goals of building low carbon and climate resilient economies and societies.

The importance of the Nexus approach was underlined in the conclusions of the EU Council “Water in the EU's external action” (19 November 2021). It is also part of the list of “Water Dialogues” items towards the High-Level UN Water Conference to be held in 2023.

In SEE, despite significant advancements in the past decade -especially in terms of institutional settings- integrated and coordinated management of natural resources remains a substantial challenge. Further, with almost 90% of the area of SEE falling within shared river basins, increased cooperation for the management of shared natural resources, such as water, is of paramount importance for sustainable economic growth and human welfare. Currently, effective cooperation for the management of shared waters is being increasingly implemented but a lot remains to be achieved.

The application of a Nexus approach in SEE can lead to multiple and cross-sectoral benefits broadly impacting the societies, economies and politics in the Region:

- Economic benefits, such as increased mid- and long-term viability of economic activities, resilience in the face of climate change, reduced risks and associated costs from floods and droughts, greater value added in agriculture sector as well as tourism, increased efficiencies in the consumption of resources and use of infrastructure, optimized trade, innovation, etc.

- Social and environmental benefits, such as the promotion of the Sustainable Development Agenda 2030, improved public health, employment creation, improved water and sanitation services, improved conservation and recovery of ecosystems and habitats, etc.
- Regional cooperation and geopolitical benefits, such as enhanced cooperation in the management of shared resources also through the adoption of new cross-border agreements, common regulations and protocols, facilitation of compliance with requirements and targets relevant to EU accession, development of regional markets for goods, services and labour, increased cross-border investments, etc.

Through the Project's activities, a Nexus Community of Practice (CoP) for SEE was essentially established for the first time, and the Nexus Mapping Studies provided an instrument assisting the Economies to understand the level of policy and institutional integration and related interlinkages, also serving as a baseline against which progress can be compared. Key Objectives and related activities for the promotion of the Nexus approach in the Region were outlined in the "Nexus Roadmap for SEE".

3. A Nexus Roadmap for SEE

This document aims to assist towards policy integration and transboundary cooperation in order to maximise benefits across sectors and borders. In that regards, it provides a framework of Objectives and lines of action to facilitate a more integrated and coherent approach in the design and prioritisation of management practices, in policy and regulatory frameworks, in investment and infrastructure planning. It also provides suggestions for the scope and role for the future of the SEE Regional Nexus Dialogue.

It has not the intention to finalise the policy dialogue, but rather aims to open and facilitate it. In that regard it is a "living" document, simple in structure, to be further discussed, adjusted, enhanced.

It is structured around

- 3 overarching Components and related dimensions
- 5 sectoral objectives and suggested main lines of action to address considerations of other sectors and capturing related synergies
- 5 suggestions on how the Regional Nexus Dialogue can support/advance the implementation of the Roadmap

A NEXUS ROADMAP FOR SEE – OVERARCHING COMPONENTS

| COMPONENT | LINES OF ACTION |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| A. Enhance knowledge and capacities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Create and share knowledge on methodologies, technologies, innovations ❖ Develop in-depth quantitative Nexus Assessments for specific interlinkages at local and transboundary levels ❖ Ensure data harmonisation-availability-monitoring; facilitate data sharing across sectors and borders; promote use of appropriate indicators of cross-sectoral relevance ❖ Facilitate capacity building for decision makers, key stakeholders and staff - Promote vocational training in Nexus-related skills ❖ Enhanced role for Academia and Research institutions |
| B. Strengthen cross-sectoral governance & cooperation, and coherent policymaking | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Enhance role & capacities of Inter-ministerial Bodies ❖ Ensure harmonisation across sectoral “chapters” of benchmark national Strategies and Plans - avoid inconsistencies with sectoral planning ❖ Develop instruments, processes, requirements, guidelines for increasing cross-sectorality in policy-making ❖ Facilitate the engagement of local authorities & stakeholders |
| C. Enable planning and implementation of Nexus solutions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Coordinated strategic planning for infrastructure development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ capturing opportunities from international frameworks such as the Green Agenda for WBs, EU’s Instruments for Pre-Accession Assistance ❖ Leverage & facilitate financing for Nexus interventions ❖ Pilot no-regret interventions. Replicate/upscale success stories ❖ Appropriate enabling environment and market instruments ❖ Engagement of the private sector, support to entrepreneurship and SMEs |

A NEXUS ROADMAP FOR SEE – THEMATIC OBJECTIVES AND CROSS-SECTORAL CONSIDERATIONS

| SECTOR / OBJECTIVE | LINES OF ACTION FOR CROSS-SECTORAL CONSIDERATIONS |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>[Water Resources]</p> <p>1. Enhance water resources management addressing the needs of all uses</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Develop-finalise-adopt-implement-update River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs) ❖ Ensure consistency with parallel strategic planning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ (Climate Adaptation, Integrated Coastal Zones Management, Urban / Rural Development) ❖ Take into account expected impacts of climate change ❖ Enhance cooperation with neighbouring countries towards transboundary RBMPs |
| <p>[Water Supply and Sanitation]</p> <p>2. Expand and improve access to Water Supply and Sanitation services, capturing cross-sectoral synergies</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Energy efficiency in infrastructure & equipment – Reduce water loss ❖ Energy recovery & on-site renewables, as applicable ❖ Facilitate synergies with agriculture (treated water / sludge) ❖ Promote Nature-based Solutions for wastewater treatment in small settlements |
| <p>[Energy]</p> <p>3. Meeting Energy and Climate goals addressing the considerations of all sectors</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Diversify renewables away from hydro. Assess in detail (downscaled at basin level) scenarios on expected impacts of Climate Change on flows and hydro generation ❖ Spatial Planning for renewable energy projects, linked to EIA requirements ❖ Assess risks & benefits of small hydropower plants ❖ Multi-purpose use of HPP reservoirs (e.g flood management, irrigation, tourism) ❖ Assess potential conflicts among biofuels – food security - resource availability ❖ Promote energy efficiency & renewables in agriculture and WSS utilities ❖ Facilitate the engagement of local authorities & stakeholders |
| <p>[Agriculture]</p> <p>4. Improve and modernize irrigation and drainage services with cross-sectoral benefits</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Maximise efficiencies in water and energy use – minimise use of pesticides and impacts on soil and groundwater ❖ Capture opportunities for renewable energy in irrigation infrastructure ❖ Facilitate engagement & role of farmers’ associations; raise awareness and enhance capacities of farmers and stakeholders |
| <p>[Ecosystems]</p> <p>5. Enhance the protection of biodiversity & natural areas addressing cross-sectoral conflicts and pressures</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Improve & mainstream SEA / EIA processes for all infrastructure development as well as sectoral strategies ❖ Management Plans for all protected areas following international best practices & guidelines ❖ National/Regional Spatial Planning for renewable energy ❖ Update regulations on environmental flows for HPPs - Ensure sufficient water for Ecosystem services in all cases of water allocation and permitting ❖ Address land degradation – erosion – sedimentation using Nature-based Solutions ❖ Sustainable forest management and wood biomass harvesting |

A NEXUS ROADMAP FOR SEE

SCOPE AND ROLE OF THE SEE REGIONAL NEXUS DIALOGUE PROCESS

- A Forum for sharing information and debating priority issues
- A Platform to assess and monitor progress
- Exchanging and promoting best practices and lessons learned
- Supporting the implementation of pilot demonstration projects
- Identifying & leveraging sources and instruments of financing
- Linkages with Academia and Research