



Federal Ministry
for the Environment, Nature Conservation
and Nuclear Safety



3rd Regional Nexus Roundtable in South East Europe

***16-18 October 2019,
Tirana, Albania
Hilton Garden Inn Tirana***

Roundtable Report

Organized by:

**Global Water Partnership – Mediterranean
German Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety**

In support of the implementation of the
South East Europe 2020 Strategy, Dimension Environment

Contributing to the objectives of the
UfM Water Agenda 2030 and its Financial Strategy

Supported by:

**German Federal Environment Agency
GEF IW:LEARN
Austrian Development Agency**



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Background – Nexus in SEE and the Regional Nexus Policy Dialogue

Natural resources management in SEE area – the Nexus approach

Despite significant advancements especially in the past decade, integrated natural resources management remains a challenge in South East Europe (SEE). Unsustainable management of natural resources has been affecting directly and indirectly economic growth, human prosperity as well as the environment and ecosystems.

With almost 90% of the area of SEE falling within shared river basins, increased cooperation for the management of shared natural resources in SEE, 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 Region¹:

- *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.

¹ As per the outcomes of the 1st and 2nd Regional Nexus Roundtables in SEE

- *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.

In the SEE region, existing good practices of Nexus-related integration include:

- The establishment of inter-ministerial coordination bodies;
- Consultative bodies e.g. for rural development;
- The integration of water and biodiversity targets in agriculture and/or rural development plans;
- Nexus assessments and studies to identify priority synergies and trade-offs.

However, many policy and management areas to better address the Nexus still show significant gaps and potential for improvement. In general, the administrative system established foresees several authorities to share the competencies for the specific Nexus sectors, with one 'line' authority leading initiatives.

Currently, policy development via regulation, strategies or plans is often characterized by:

- Formal institutional cooperation, not necessarily translating into policy integration;
- Isolated efforts;
- Lack of common targets;
- Overlapping responsibilities and competing objectives among local and central governments.

The Regional Nexus Policy Dialogue and action in SEE

At the Regional level, the use of a Nexus approach is being promoted by the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) through the South East Europe 2020 Strategy (SEE2020) adopted in 2013. Global Water Partnership – Mediterranean (GWP-Med) provides technical assistance, being the organization responsible for coordinating action for Nexus and Water issues under the Dimension Environment of SEE2020's Sustainable Growth Pillar.

The latter is one of the SEE2020's 5 growth pillars, each of which contains a number of policy dimensions. Environment is one of the four Dimensions of the Sustainable Growth Pillar of SEE2020 and the Region's economies participate in the coordination of its implementation through the Regional Working Group on Environment (RWG-Env) which operates under the auspices of the RCC. One of the Key Strategy Actions in Dimension Environment is to *"Identify steps and measures necessary for advancing the water, energy and food nexus approach at national and transboundary levels and investigate opportunities for launching a political process under the RCC for the enhancement of cooperation in the SEE in the field of TWRM"*

The key aim of the Regional Nexus Policy Dialogue in SEE is to support the above Strategy Action.

The Regional Dialogue is financially supported by:

- The German Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety Advisory Assistance Programme (AAP) for environmental protection in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia and other countries neighbouring the European Union, 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*
- 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**).

A set of activities has been developed as part of a Regional Dialogue, including:

- Three Regional Roundtables and three back-to-back Nexus Groups Meetings (meetings of Nexus-related Ministries representatives).
 - The 1st Regional Roundtable was held on 20-22 June 2017 in Belgrade, Serbia and
 - the 2nd one on 23-24 October 2018, in Skopje, North Macedonia.

The key recommendations of these Roundtables are available in the Annex of the Concept Note for the 3rd Regional Nexus Roundtable

- A Regional Nexus Mapping Study to provide
 - a mapping of the level of institutional and policy integration in the Region's economies of the management of Nexus-related natural resources, and
 - an initial Identification of Nexus-related interlinkages and potential benefits, trade-offs and conflicts in the Region.

The Study was presented and discussed in the Skopje Roundtable (23-24 October 2018) and subsequently endorsed through a written process without any further comments by members of the RWG-Env. The Study is available here: http://bit.ly/SEE_NexusMapping .

Further, in the context of the ADA-funded SEE Nexus Project:

- Nexus Dialogue Processes will be implemented in the transboundary basins of the Drin and Drina rivers, and in Albania. Each of these 3 Dialogue Processes is structured around Transboundary and/or National Consultation Meetings and the development of analytical technical Nexus Assessments as per the methodology developed by UNECE. These Assessments will identify inter-sectoral linkages/benefits/trade-offs, investigate in depth priority ones, model future scenarios around the management of resources and suggest possible directions of synergic action.
- A Nexus-related capacity development workshop will be held in each of these two transboundary basins.
- For 4 of the priority issues to be identified in the context of the Policy Dialogues, respective Concept Notes and Project Documents will be developed, also exploring financing options by development partners and/or financing institutions.

The Regional Dialogue is operating in synergy with:

- The 'Petersberg Phase II / Athens Declaration Process'
- The UNECE Water Convention
- The Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) Water Agenda and its Financial Strategy

The 3rd Regional Nexus Roundtable

Objectives

The sessions of this Roundtable were structured in order to:

- Enhance capacities and increase awareness of participants, including through their engagement as players/stakeholders in the "Nexus Game", a training tool / policy exercise in the form of a "serious game";
- Share experiences from recent and ongoing Nexus-related Assessments and Policy Dialogue Processes in the SEE area and beyond;
- Discuss types and characteristics of solutions to address Nexus-related challenges appropriate for the SEE area, as well as challenges around their promotion;
- Discuss priorities and options for the financing and implementation of Nexus-related investments, from the perspective of both financing institutions and the region's economies;
- Explore preferred options, approaches, activities and settings for the advancement of Nexus perspectives and related cooperation at the regional and transboundary levels;

- Discuss challenges and opportunities for increased women empowerment and social cohesion under an integrated sustainable approach in the management of natural resources

Looking forward, a key objective of this Roundtable was **to reach a common understanding on how the Regional Dialogue Process can enable the adoption of the Nexus approach in the Region, and facilitate the achievement of the economic, social and transboundary benefits described above, in the SEE.**

This discussion was the focus of Session 5 of the Roundtable and of the closed Nexus Group Meeting right after the end of the Roundtable.

Participation of stakeholders in the Roundtable

The Roundtable, held at the Hilton Garden Inn Hoten in Tirana, was attended by 82 stakeholders from all 6 economies of SEE, including representatives of Ministries and institutions involved in water management, energy production, agriculture and environmental protection. It was also attended by representatives of international and regional organisations and the donor community. The List of Participants is available in Annex III of this Report.

Out of the 82 participants, 37 were female, a ratio of 45.1%. Regarding the speakers and panelists in the Roundtable, out of a total of 27, 16 were female, a ratio of 59.3%. Youth participants, below the age of 35, were also among part of the meeting.

Regarding the sectoral/institutional origin of the participants, 39 were from State Institutions, 14 from international organisations, 11 from NGOs, 5 from Research/Academia, 4 from utilities and 9 other/private.

Proceedings of the Roundtable

Wednesday 15 October – The Nexus Game

With the aim to enhance capacities and increase awareness of participants, GWP-Med with the financial support of the Austrian Development Agency (ADA) invited the Centre for Systems Solutions to adapt and organise the “Nexus Game” during the 3rd Regional Nexus Roundtable. In this social simulation, participants interact with each other in a shared, safe environment, which reflects key aspects of the real world, having an opportunity to face the problems related to complex interconnections between water, energy, food, and environment, to confront opposing views, and solve conflicts via negotiations and dialogue.

The participants of the workshop were divided into two parallel game sessions and took on the roles of the decision-makers from 3 different sectors (water, food, energy) in 3 bordering economies - Laurentia, Vespugia and Kenorland. With water inflows dependent on the variable seasonal patterns and additional spatial barriers (mountains), players had to learn how to strategically plan their next moves and wisely distribute their water. A purposeful element of “unfairness” embedded in the simulation (the upstream economies were given a key advantage over the rest of the territories when it comes to hydro energy production) created additional pressure and room for potential conflicts.

In both sessions, participants quickly got used to their roles and willingly cooperated within the borders, possibly thanks to effective leadership in all economies. What was more difficult was the transboundary cooperation. There was a natural tendency to focus on self-interests rather than cross-boundary benefits, which often led to some tension between stakeholders. As the time flew by, participants started noticing the need of transboundary cooperation in food and energy production. As a result, some participants took effort to introduce more integrated policies. They soon realized that each economy held different potentials, for example, Laurentia was at the forefront of hydro energy production, whereas Kenorland and Vespugia could boast successes in wind or geothermal energy production, respectively. Special attention was also given to the recultivation and protection of the wetland ecosystem and biodiversity. With the

natural capabilities to remove and purify pollution, wetland ecosystem protection served as a good long-term investment for the downstream economies.

The simulation was followed by a debriefing session, which also served as an occasion for the participants to share their thoughts and insights both relating to the session and to the daily work as nexus professionals. Among many benefits of the simulation that was listed by the participants was its potential to trigger *“(a) better understanding of transboundary cooperation and coordination”*. One of the participants stated in the post-workshop survey that the simulation inspired him *“to put emphasis on project management and implementation of the Nexus element in harmonizing them to keep a balance between energy, water and food and environment-biodiversity.”* There were also many voices that directly linked the experience from the Nexus Game to the Drin River situation, for example, participants expressed the need for Drin river commission, which could coordinate transboundary investments and projects.

Thursday 15 October

The day opened with a panel consisting of representatives of institutions and donors providing welcoming remarks. Among others, speakers noted:

Ms. Ornela Çuçi, Vice Minister of Tourism and Environment, Albania: *“Albania is committed to promoting the sustainable and integrated management of natural resources and to regional cooperation in that regard. Projects and meetings like this one provide much needed expertise and recommendations. The challenge lies in implementing them in policies and concrete actions, as well as in enhancing our national expertise and capacities.”*

Ms. Gerta Lubonja, General Director, Water Resources Management Agency (AMBU), Albania: *“The Nexus approach is a fundamental shift, from a single sectoral approach to solutions that embrace a cross-sectoral, coherent and integrated perspective. It challenges existing structures, policies and procedures at global, regional and (sub) national levels. It’s an approach which applies at all levels of society; from local competition over access to water for irrigation or livestock, to global connections between policy on biofuels, food and water security. Adopting the Nexus approach at the regional level allows for the benefits of transboundary cooperation strategies to be identified, drafted and implemented.”*

Mr. Almotaz Abadi, Managing Director, Environment and Water Division, Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) Secretariat (via video conference): *“The Balkan area is an integral part of the UfM efforts towards sustainable growth and for achieving our upmost objective of peace and stability through cooperation. The Water-Food-Energy-Ecosystem Nexus is the 1st Action of the UfM Water Policy Framework of Action 2030. The recommendations from this Nexus Roundtable in Tirana will be integrated in our UfM Water Agenda and its Financial Strategy. Let us show our contribution to the world, that this Mediterranean region is working together for best of its future.”*

Ms. Simone Ungersboeck, Head of Tirana Office, Austrian Development Agency (ADA): *“The Austrian Development Agency supports the Regional “Nexus Project” because we believe that by promoting and applying the Nexus approach we can better contribute to the achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, which are guiding all our interventions. We hope that the operationalization of the Nexus approach will facilitate the economies’ compliance with requirements and targets relevant for EU accession. It is a pleasure to be part of the Regional Nexus Roundtable which we consider a very important event that brings together regional stakeholders to tackle common challenges in the region and to identify and discuss ways and solutions to achieve sustainable development for all.”*

Mr. Radovan Nikčević , Expert on Connectivity, Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) Secretariat noted that the EU perspective is a guiding driver for the promotion of the sustainable management of natural resources in SEE. Economies in the Region aim to develop a Green Agenda for the Western Balkans, an initiative supported by the EU Commission.

Mr. Mish Hamid, Project Manager, Global Environment Facility, International Waters (GEF IW:LEARN): *“The South East Europe region is taking these Water-Energy-Food-Ecosystem Nexus considerations from theory to practice, moving from Nexus Assessments to figuring out the conditions and considerations in*

making Nexus-related investments bankable and interesting to investors or donors. From a global perspective, this is hugely important to learn from and replicate in other regions of the world.”

Mr. Vangelis Constantianos, Executive Secretary, Global Water Partnership – Mediterranean (GWP-Med): *“The Nexus approach can make a breakthrough in increasing stakeholders’ understanding and sector ownership of integrated natural resources management, while gaining further political support. South East Europe, with 90% of its water resources being transboundary, is in need of such coordinated approaches. GWP-Med assists economies through a structured Nexus Dialogue, transboundary and national assessments, and identification of investments. We are thankful to Germany, Austria and GEF IW:LEARN for their support and to the Regional Cooperation Council and Union for the Mediterranean for providing the Regional Framework.”*

Session 1 of the Roundtable included presentations on developments and outcomes of Nexus-related activities and initiatives in the SEE area and beyond.

Ms. Lucia De Strasser, Consultant, UNECE, presented UNECE’s experience on Nexus Assessments in transboundary basins, focusing on recent activities in Sava and Drina, as well as on ongoing ones in Drin, Drina and Albania at the national level, in the context of the ADA-funded SEE Nexus Project.

Mr. Vangelis Constantianos, Executive Secretary GWP-Med, presented the UfM’s Water Agenda, focusing on the activities under its Nexus Thematic Area, and the recently approved Nexus ‘Child Project’ under the UN Environment/MAP’s MedProgramme funded by the GEF. The presentation included suggestions for coordination and operational alignments also with the RCC agenda on the Nexus.

Session 2 was about the identification and promotion of Nexus-related solutions.

Mr. Artur Mustafaraj, Manager at KESH sh.a, Albania, noted the need to diversify the renewable energy mix beyond hydropower and underlined the potential for solutions in context of multi-purposing, noting the Skavica dam under planning which will also address flood management challenges, the installation of floating solar panels on dam reservoirs, the promotion of touristic activities etc.

Mr. Arben Mukaj, Irrigation and Drainage Programs and Administration, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Albania, noted that around 630 small reservoirs exist in Albania, mainly capturing seasonal streams, with most being quite old and badly maintained. Their rehabilitation could address issues of safety and security, enhance agricultural activities while at the same time providing potential for energy efficiency and renewable energy installations.

Ms. Elisabeta Poci, Deputy Executive Director, Water Supply and Sewerage Association, Albania, stressed that for water utilities, energy is the elephant in the room. It is used everywhere along the chain from abstraction to distribution and 30-40% of operational costs are energy costs. Old infrastructure, low efficiencies and a huge share of non-revenue water lead to very big financial problems for the utilities and the municipalities that own them. Solutions exist in terms of increasing efficiencies, utilizing biogas in wastewater treatment plants, installing renewables on-site, even in synergies with agriculture. Low-cost technologies need to be explored and relevant capacities strengthened.

Mr. Ulrich Eichelmann, CEO, Riverwatch, underlined that we need to listen to scientists and that more research is needed on the ecosystems of rivers in SEE, with new species being discovered by scientists. He stressed that hydro is no longer the default option as was the case decades ago, that if hydro has to be built, it should be built where there will be the least damage (a recent study investigated 82 thousand km of rivers in SEE suggesting exclusion zones for new hydro) and that small hydro should be especially avoided as the benefits are not worth the impacts. He also noted that people often feel not involved in the decision making process which typically lies outside of the discussion process.

Ms. Velimirka Perišić, Elektroprivreda Crne Gore, Montenegro, among others noted that the Energy Development Strategy is oriented to the promotion of renewable energy, also diversifying away from hydro, and that strong policies are in place for environmental considerations in the case of development of new hydro plants.

Session 3 was about how economies identify and prioritise Nexus-related solutions through cross-sectoral strategies and institutions, and about the relevant strategies and priorities of donors and financing institutions active in the region.

The first panel under the session consisted of:

- *Mr. Arduen Karagjozi, Director of Strategic Management, Water Resources Management Agency, Albania*
- *Ms. Miroslava Nenadić, Advisor, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Montenegro*
- *Mr. Baton Begolli, Water Policy Adviser, Inter-Ministerial Water Council, Kosovo**²
- *Ms. Melita Gocevska, Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning, North Macedonia*
- *Mr. Igor Jevtić, Senior Expert Associate, Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations of Bosnia and Herzegovina*

Representatives presented recent developments in the cross-sectoral institutional framework in SEE Economies and how it facilitates and prioritises investments relevant to a Nexus approach.

In the 2nd panel under the session, *Mr. Ervis Sulejmani, Directorate of EU Funds, NIPAC Support Office, Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, Albania*, gave an overview of the EU's Western Balkans Investment Framework (WBIF) and how the relevant national structures could take further advantage of it also promoting integrated solutions.

Ms. Etleva Martiri, Programme Manager, ADA Tirana Office, and *Ms. Merita Meksi, Deputy Manager, GIZ Office in Albania*, then gave an overview of the activities and strategies of their organisations in the Region.

In **Session 4**, the following representatives of gender-related institutions from the Region, discussed the importance of women's empowerment and engagement in the context of natural resources management and rural development, and the key barriers towards that:

- *Ms. Ljiljana Loncar, Adviser to the Deputy PM, Coordination Body for Gender Equality, Serbia*
- *Ms. Verica Trajkova, National Council for Gender Equality, North Macedonia*
- *Ms. Etleva Martiri, Programme Manager, Tirana Office, Austrian Development Agency*
- *Ms. Evis Gjebrea, Deputy Director, Tirana Water Utility*
- *Ms. Mirela Arqimandriti, Director, Gender Alliance for Development Centre, Albania*
- *Ms. Anila Aliaj, Gender and Institutional Adviser, CNVP Albania*

During the discussion, the following were noted among others:

- Promoting gender equality is not "just" a social issue; it can have strong positive impacts on economic development and employment
- Women are often affected by environmental impacts and suffer the consequences more than men are
- In rural areas many jobs (e.g. in forestry) are male dominated, the same applies to boards of associations and cooperatives
- Women's development is often prevented due to lack of information, awareness, capacities
- The key barrier is economic dependence, which takes many forms including inheritance issues, land being registered in men's names etc.
- There's an overarching need to increase capacities of women and involve them in every aspect of decision making, through a comprehensive approach from the central to local levels.
- There's a need to increase gender-related capacities not only in development organisations but also of external experts and practitioners and to include gender dimensions in their analytical work.

² This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

- Gender assessments should be encouraged in utilities to address among others issues around equal pay, recruitment & promotion, leadership, development etc and to identify response options such as mentoring programmes, flexible hours etc.
- A positive observation is that women are increasingly seen to lead environmental struggles

Overall, participants expressed strong wish to continue the dialogue on Nexus & Gender aspects, and the organisers commit for follow up activities within the running project and beyond.

Friday 15 October

The 3rd and last day of the Roundtable was dedicated to the Regional road ahead, the advancement of Nexus perspectives and related cooperation at the regional and transboundary levels.

Mr. Tassos Krommydas, Senior Programme Officer at GWP-Med first provided a recap of the first two days of the Roundtable and then opened the discussion with a presentation on the Regional Nexus Policy Dialogue in SEE. He provided a background on the 'Petersberg Phase II / Athens Declaration Process' going back to 2005 around the promotion of cooperation on transboundary water management in SEE, the SEE2020 Growth Strategy and its Environment Dimension also calling for Regional action on the Nexus, and then the current phase of the Regional Nexus Policy Dialogue in SEE and its activities, together with ongoing work under the ADA-funded SEE Nexus Project.

Regarding the Regional Nexus Roadmap, noting that a Roadmap serves as a bridge between a Strategy/Vision and an Action Plan, he presented the relevant suggestions of the Regional Nexus Mapping Study that was presented and discussed in last year's 2nd Roundtable in Skopje, and then the Workplan under the Nexus Chapter of UfM's Water Agenda, which had been discussed and adopted by all Mediterranean countries and the EU Commission.

Taking the experience of these documents, he presented the **suggested Components and key interventions of a Regional Nexus Roadmap for SEE** (as technically elaborated by GWP-Med):

- 1. Identify and prioritise Nexus-related challenges and solutions, at different levels**
 - Institutional, policy, economic and technical assessments
 - Multi-stakeholder policy dialogues
- 2. Enable planning and implementation of Nexus solutions**
 - Coordinated strategic planning for infrastructure development addressing Nexus considerations
 - Leverage and facilitate financing for Nexus interventions
 - Promote enabling environment, market instruments and entrepreneurship relevant to the Nexus approach
- 3. Enhance knowledge and capacities**
 - Create and share knowledge on Nexus methodologies and policies as well as on technologies and innovations
 - Harmonise data across sectors and borders
 - Facilitate capacity building for decision makers, key stakeholders and staff
 - Promote vocational training in Nexus-related skills
- 4. Design and implement pilot interventions with replication/upscaling potential**
 - Implement pilots, starting from no-regret, climate resilient ones
 - Replicate/upscale success stories, also engaging the private sector

In the discussion that followed, the following points were raised among others:

- With the necessary political commitment, the Nexus Roadmap can catalyse synergic and integrated action towards tangibles and therefore be of concrete service to the Economies in the Region, always tailored on and serving the related national priorities. Overall, it is recognised that there are several on-going/applied policy and technical lines related to Nexus, however not branded as such.
- The EU institutions have expressed interest on the Nexus and its promotion, including linked with WFD, Energy, Floods, Marine, and other related EU legislation and practices. It makes sense to advocate to the EU for the promotion of Nexus in SEE
- Synergies exist between the Nexus approach and the WFD which requires planning of resources 25 years ahead and accounting for water uses. Further, as RBMPs are provisioned for in the WFD, it would be of special interest to prepare a showcase project linking the Nexus approach with the development of RBMPs. On-going and upcoming Nexus Assessments work in Drin and Drina Basin may provide related opportunities.
- The dimensions of promoting entrepreneurship and vocational training were further underlined, and the employment potential of upscaled successful interventions was underlined.
- Synergies should also be explored with Academia and with local authorities
- Without proper awareness, the Nexus approach could be seen as constraining national options e.g. in energy planning. It needs to be stressed that Nexus is not an additional constraint but is essentially about capturing synergies in a coordinated manner and delivering benefits e.g. through multi-purpose use or reapplication of existing infrastructure
- There is no single solution for all cases, the specificities of each Economy always need to be taken to account
- For the promotion of the Nexus approach in cross-border cases, it is important to target and use existing relevant commissions and mandated structures
- More Roundtables at the Regional/Transboundary/National level are welcome to increase awareness and capacities and to enhance coordination
- Civil Society organisations can and should be part of the process, to raise awareness, act as whistle blowers, contribute in technical interventions while increasing their own implementation skills, even assist in monitoring and assessing the application of the Nexus approach.
- Dialogue on Nexus aspects is important for understanding the concept, advance it in interested Economies and building 'commons' at regional level

In the closing session, *Mr. Arduen Karagjozi, Director of Strategic Management, Water Resources Management Agency*, noted that resource challenges are highly interconnected, locally and regionally, and the need for joined-up approaches to policy and practice lies at the heart of Nexus thinking. Adopting the Nexus approach at the regional level allows for the benefits of transboundary cooperation strategies to be identified, drafted and implemented.

Mr. Mish Hamid, Project Manager, GEF IW:LEARN, noted that the adoption of a Nexus approach is not a discussion of if, but of how, and added that the GEF is expected to be requested to assist with the implementation of the Drin Strategic Action Programme, also addressing Nexus considerations.

Mr. Vangelis Constantianos, Executive Secretary, GWP-Med, closed noting that the Roundtable provided a clear message of optimism and a demand for solutions and tangibles.

The Nexus Group Meeting

Following the closing of the main proceedings of the Roundtable, participants representing Ministries from the Region continued discussions in a 1-hr long closed session.

Representatives noted, following on points raised at the Roundtable, that to some extent Nexus is already being integrated in institutional and policy frameworks, but without using the Nexus label per se; this is reasonable as the Nexus is not a label but rather a mindset for integrated and coordinated approaches. It was requested that such regional initiatives be made more interactive, with more active lines of communication, as a way to create ownership on the part of Economies, beyond just meeting once per year. Further, it was proposed that the forthcoming Ministerial meeting on Environment and Climate Action is briefed on the outcomes of the Roundtable.

GWP-Med said that they are exploring possibilities for having a (smaller) 4th Regional Roundtable in late 2020 with funding under ADA's SEE Nexus Project.

Ms. Çuçi, Vice Minister of Tourism and Environment, noted her commitment and of her staff in such regional processes and also suggested that projects need to foresee support for building and enhancing expertise in the Region, as what is needed is experts, not only politicians.

Representatives also briefly discussed the proposed action under the SEE2020 Growth Strategy for the commencement of activities for a Regional Integral Water Management Framework Agreement, and the consensus was that as little interest or engagement had been expressed in relevant meetings in the past years, there was little point in hurrying towards such an outcome.

Recommendations – Conclusions of the Roundtable and the Nexus Group Meeting

- 1) *The implementation of the Nexus Game was a successful, interesting and valuable awareness and capacity building exercise. Such “social simulations” are welcome to be implemented in relevant regional/transboundary/national meetings.*
- 2) *Regarding specific Nexus-related solutions and responses discussed:*
 - *The shift of the energy mix towards renewables should take into account the need to diversify beyond hydropower, as alternatives are increasingly becoming competitive*
 - *Solutions exist in the context of multi-purposing of existing infrastructure e.g. for flood management, installations of floating solar panels up to 20% of reservoirs surface.*
 - *Further research is welcome on the ecological importance of Balkan rivers and potential impacts of new hydropower development. New hydro plants should be built where impacts are minimised. In the case of small hydro it should be assessed whether the benefits outweigh the risks. Reservoirs should also be managed to address riparian erosion.*
 - *There is great potential for Nexus-related solutions in the Water Supply and Sanitation sector, in increasing energy efficiency, reducing losses and non-revenue water, utilisation of biogas and overall resource recovery, installing renewables on-site, exploring use of treated water and sludge in agriculture and forestry. Nature-based solutions of Nexus contents should be further considered*
- 3) *There is already Nexus-related progress in the Region in institutional reform and to some extent in policy coordination, but progress towards tangibles remains slow. It should not be expected that relevant progress is labelled as “Nexus”, as the Nexus is not a label but rather a mindset for integrated and coordinated approaches*

- 4) *Economies in the Region should make full use of available and emerging financing instruments, including the WBIF in the context of EU accession funds, international facilities such as the GCF and the GEF, individual developmental organisations etc. Donor coordination in that regard should be enhanced.*
- 5) *Increased focus should be given in mainstreaming gender considerations in the sustainable management of natural resources. Investing in women is investing in resilience. The key barrier towards women empowerment is their economic dependence. Awareness and capacities among women should be enhanced as well as for staff of institutions and organisations and their external experts. Gender assessments in the operations of private companies should be encouraged.*
- 6) *Given that EU accession is a key driver for sustainable development in the Region, Nexus-related synergies with key EU legislation such as the WFD should be explored, including through demo projects linking the Nexus approach with the development of RBMPs.*
- 7) *In cross-border cases, the promotion of the Nexus approach should be anchored to existing relevant commissions and structures*
- 8) *More Roundtables at the Regional/Transboundary/National level are welcome to increase awareness and capacities and to enhance coordination, assuming that more active lines of communication are established, also as a way to enhance ownership on the part of Economies.*
- 9) *The Roundtable welcomes the development of a Regional Nexus Roadmap and approvingly notes the outline presented. The Roadmap should be further developed and discussed in the RWG-Env.*
- 10) *Given the little interest or engagement expressed in relevant meetings in the past years, there is currently little point in hurrying towards the preparation of a Regional Integral Water Management Framework Agreement, as proposed under the SEE2020 Growth Strategy.*
- 11) *The SEE Ministerial Meeting on Environment and Climate Action in November should be briefed on the outcomes of the Roundtable. Similar should be done for upcoming UfM fora, including the Water Expert Group.*

Annexes

Annex I - Agenda of the Roundtable



Federal Ministry
for the Environment, Nature Conservation
and Nuclear Safety



3rd Regional Nexus Roundtable in South East Europe

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Final Agenda

Organized by:
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German Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety

In support of the implementation of the
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Union pour la Méditerranée
Union for the Mediterranean
الإتحاد من أجل المتوسط

Wednesday, 16 October 2019 – Day 1

The first day of the Roundtable, focuses on enhancing capacities and increasing awareness of participants. They will engage as players/stakeholders in a “serious game” simulating the interlinkages between water, energy, food, and environment in a transboundary context.

11.00 – 11.15 **Registration & Coffee**

11.15 - 11.30 **Welcoming - Outline and objectives of the Roundtable**
Tassos Krommydas, Senior Programme Officer, GWP-Med

11.30 – 13.30	The Nexus Game – Part I
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- **Introduction to the Nexus Game**, *Piotr Magnuszewski, Centre for Systems Solutions*

The Nexus Game is a laboratory for practicing strategy, collaboration and leadership in a complex environment such as a transboundary river basin. It is much more than a game; it is a social simulation that brings together stakeholders with diverse backgrounds and values. For a couple of hours, they will interact with each other in a shared, safe environment, which reflects the key aspects of the real world (Drin river basin). They will have an opportunity to face the problems related to complex interconnections between water, energy, food, and environment, to confront opposing views, and solve conflicts via negotiations and dialogue. The results of the simulation will be debriefed providing inspirations for tackling the real world challenges and ideas for new, integrated solutions.

13.30 – 14.30 **Lunch**

14.30 – 16.30	The Nexus Game – Part II
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The Nexus Game to resume after the lunch break

16.15 – 16.30 **Coffee break**

16.30 – 17.30 Debriefing on the outcomes of the Nexus Game

End of Day 1

19.30 **Evening reception dinner at the Hotel**

Thursday, 17 October 2019 – Day 2

08.30 – 09.00 **Registration & Coffee**

09.00 – 10.00	OPENING SESSION
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09.00 – 10.00 Welcoming Addresses

- Ms. Ornela Çuçi, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Tourism and Environment
- Ms. Gerta Lubonja, General Director, Water Resources Management Agency, Albania
- Ms. Simone Ungersboeck, Head of Tirana Office, Austrian Development Agency (ADA)
- Mr. Radovan Nikčević, Expert on Connectivity, Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) Secretariat
- Mr. Almotaz Abadi, Managing Director, Environment and Water Division, Union for the Mediterranean Secretariat (via video)
- Mr. Mish Hamid, Project Manager, GEF IW:LEARN & LME:LEARN
- Mr. Vangelis Constantianos, Executive Secretary, Global Water Partnership – Mediterranean (GWP-Med)

10.00 – 11.00	SESSION 1: Developments and outcomes of Nexus-related activities and initiatives in the SEE area and beyond
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The aim of the session is to share experiences from recent and ongoing Nexus-related Assessments and Policy Dialogue Processes in the SEE area and beyond.

10.00 – 10.30 Presentations by:

- Recent and planned Nexus Assessments in the Drin and Drina Basins, and in Albania – *Lucia De Strasser, Consultant, UNECE*
- Nexus in the Mediterranean: UfM and the UNEP/MAP GEF MedProgramme - *Vangelis Constantianos, Executive Secretary GWP-Med*

10.30 – 11.00 Discussion

11.00 – 11.15 **Coffee break**

11.15 – 13.00	SESSION 2: After the Assessments – Identifying, sharing and promoting Nexus solutions at the national and Transboundary levels
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Representatives of utilities and the the private sector, and civil society organisations from the SEE area will share experiences and insights on the types and characteristics of solutions to address Nexus-related challenges appropriate for the SEE area, on how to identify them and on challenges around their promotion.

11.15 – 12.30 Panel Discussion (Facilitator: Lucia De Strasser, UNECE)

- Mr. Arben Mukaj, Irrigation and Drainage Programs and Administration, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Albania
- Mr. Artur Mustafaraj, Manager, KESH sh.a, Albania
- Ms. Elisabeta Poci, Deputy Executive Director, Water Supply and Sewerage Association, Albania

- Mr. Ulrich Eichelmann, CEO, Riverwatch
- Ms. Velimirka Perišić, Elektroprivreda Crne Gore, Montenegro

12.30 – 13.00 Discussion

13.00 – 14.00 *Lunch break*

14.00 – 16.00	SESSION 3: Accelerating the financing and implementation of Nexus-related investments in the SEE area
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This session aims to present national initiatives for the prioritization and financing of Nexus-related solutions and investments through cross-sectoral strategies (including NDCs, NAPs, Country Programmes to the GCF), regional and sectoral strategies and priorities of donors and financing institutions active in the region, as well as available and emerging financing instruments and schemes.

14.00 – 15.30 Panel Discussion (*Facilitator: Tassos Krommydas, GWP-Med*)

Panel 1

- Mr. Arduen Karagjozi, Director of Strategic Management, Water Resources Management Agency, Albania
- Ms. Miroslava Nenadić, Advisor, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Montenegro
- Mr. Baton Begolli, Water Policy Adviser, Inter-Ministerial Water Council, Kosovo³
- Ms. Melita Gocevska, Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning, North Macedonia
- Mr. Igor Jevtić, Senior Expert Associate, Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations of Bosnia and Herzegovina

Panel 2

- Mr. Ervis Sulejmani, Directorate of EU Funds, NIPAC Support Office, Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, Albania
- Ms. Etleva Martiri, Programme Manager, Tirana Office, Austrian Development Agency
- Ms. Merita Meksi, Deputy Manager, GIZ Office in Albania

15.30 – 16.00 Discussion

16.00 – 16.15 *Coffee break*

16.15 – 18.00	SESSION 4: The dimension of gender and/or marginalized communities in advancing a Nexus approach
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This session aims to identify and discuss the main challenges around ensuring equitable access to services in the Nexus sectors, as well as opportunities for increased women empowerment and social cohesion under an integrated sustainable approach in the management of natural resources.

16.15 – 17.30 Panel Discussion (*Facilitator: Anthi Brouma, Deputy Regional Coordinator, GWP-Med*)

- Ms. Ljiljana Loncar, Adviser to the Deputy PM, Coordination Body for Gender Equality, Serbia

³ This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

- Ms. Verica Trajkova, National Council for Gender Equality, North Macedonia
- Ms. Etleva Martiri, Programme Manager, Tirana Office, Austrian Development Agency
- Ms. Evis Gjebrea, Deputy Director, Tirana Water Utility
- Ms. Mirela Arqimandriti, Director, Gender Alliance for Development Centre, Albania
- Ms. Anila Aliaj, Gender and Institutional Adviser, CNVP Albania

17.30 – 18.00 Discussion

End of Day 2

19.30 **Dinner**

Friday, 18 October 2019 – Day 3

08.30 – 09.00 **Registration & Coffee**

09.00 – 10.45 **SESSION 5: The road ahead – options and steps on how the promotion of the Nexus approach will contribute to regional and transboundary cooperation and related solutions in the SEE area**

This session consists of an open discussion among representatives of government institutions as well as other key stakeholders from the Region aiming to identify preferred options, approaches, activities and settings for the advancement of Nexus perspectives and related cooperation at the regional and transboundary levels. (For more information please refer to the Concept Note for the Roundtable).

09.00 – 09.30 Recap of the proceedings of the Roundtable and suggested outline of a Regional Nexus Roadmap – *Tassos Krommydas, Senior Programme Officer, GWP-Med*

09.30 – 11.00 Tour de table – Government representatives and other participants share insights in plenary

11.00 – 11.30 **CLOSING SESSION**

Concluding remarks by

- Mr. Arduen Karagjozi, Director of Strategic Management, Water Resources Management Agency, Albania
- Mr. Mish Hamid, Project Manager, GEF IW:LEARN & LME:LEARN
- Mr. Vangelis Constantianos, Executive Secretary, GWP-Med

End of the open sessions of the Regional Roundtable

Closed Session for representatives of Nexus-related Ministries in the SEE area

11.30 – 13.30	Nexus Group Meeting
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- Discussion: A Regional Nexus Roadmap to guide the achievement of the Nexus-related objectives of the SEE2020 Strategy - Dimension Environment

13.30 – 14.30 *Lunch*

Annex II - Concept Note of the Roundtable



Federal Ministry
for the Environment, Nature Conservation
and Nuclear Safety



Global Water
Partnership
Mediterranean

3rd Regional Nexus Roundtable in South East Europe

***16-18 October 2019,
Tirana, Albania
Hilton Garden Inn Tirana***

Concept Note

Organized by:

**Global Water Partnership – Mediterranean
German Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety**

In support of the implementation of the
South East Europe 2020 Strategy, Dimension Environment

Contributing to the objectives of the
UfM Water Agenda 2030 and its Financial Strategy

Supported by:

**German Federal Environment Agency
GEF IW:LEARN
Austrian Development Agency**



Background I – A brief on the Nexus Approach

Interlinkages between water-energy-food-environment

One of the major challenges that our societies face is how to deliver water, energy and food for all in a sustainable and equitable way, while preserving the health of natural systems that form the basis of any economic activity. Interlinkages between water, energy and food systems are manifold. Some generic illustrations of such interlinkages are presented below.

Water <-> Energy: Water plays a key role in energy production e.g. in hydroelectric plants, for cooling fossil-fuel and nuclear plants, in growing plants for biofuels. At the same time, energy is required to process and distribute water, to treat wastewater, to pump groundwater, to desalinate seawater.

Water <-> Food: Water is the keystone for the entire agro-food supply chain, while agricultural intensification impacts water quality.

Food <-> Energy: Energy is an essential input throughout the entire agro-food supply chain, from pumping to processing to transportation to refrigeration. Conflicts around land use could arise in the case of biofuels or extended solar installations.

Healthy ecosystems are an essential requirement for the sustainability of all the above and are negatively affected if water, energy or food are used in an unsustainable way.

Synergies and trade-offs

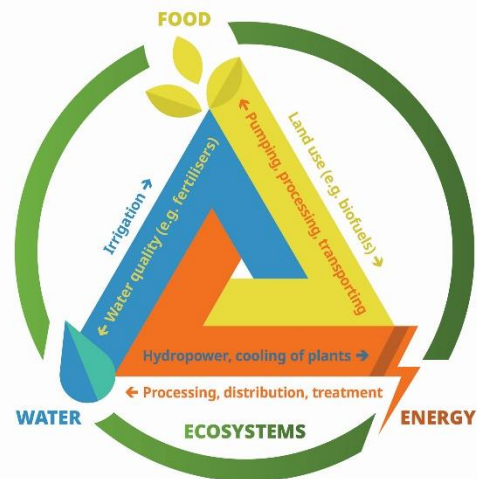
Such interlinkages between the water-food-energy-environment sectors mean that synergies and trade-offs are available. For example, a large hydropower plant provides benefits across sectors by producing electricity, providing water storage for irrigation and urban uses, mitigating flood effects. However, this can have negative effects for downstream ecosystems and the coastal zone, or require resettlements of communities. Similarly, using irrigation to grow bioenergy can help improve energy security but it may also result in competition with agriculture for land and water resources, therefore negatively impacting food security.

Significant opportunities for synergies can arise from such interlinkages. Typical examples include the potential of wastewater treatment plants to produce energy and make available treated water for agricultural or environmental uses; the potential for using renewable energy in desalination plants etc.

The Nexus approach

The Nexus approach starts from the realization that in a traditional fragmented approach, attempting to achieve the security independently in the water, energy, and food sectors without addressing trade-offs with the other two sectors will endanger their sustainability and security. 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 as well as human rights, and exploring emerging opportunities.

Under such an approach, interlinkages, synergies and trade-offs among the relevant sectors are assessed aiming to identify solutions to address these, fostering water-food-energy security and efficiency, while reducing impacts and risks on water-dependent ecosystems. 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 Nexus approach in a Transboundary context

The adoption of a Nexus approach in the case of Transboundary water bodies ensures benefits to various sectors in the whole river basin area and ensures that synergies are explored at both inter-sectoral and cross-country levels, improving coordination, cooperation and thus reducing conflicts and trade-offs. Mutual commitments to increasing resource efficiency and eliminating unnecessary waste of water resources benefit all riparians. A transboundary Nexus approach can also foster regional political cooperation and provide further economic benefits through the development of regional markets and increased & optimised trade.

The social dimension of a Nexus approach

An effective adoption of a Nexus approach is also a promising instrument for promoting considerations on social cross-cutting issues (such as gender empowerment, stakeholder engagement, human rights, combatting poverty etc.) by safeguarding the rights of the socially and economically vulnerable groups that are affected the most by resources insecurity, as they depend the most -and spend the largest share of their income- on basic needs in the form of water, food and energy.

Background II – Nexus in SEE and the Regional Nexus Policy Dialogue

Natural resources management in SEE area – the Nexus approach

Despite significant advancements especially in the past decade, integrated natural resources management remains a substantial challenge in South East Europe (SEE). Unsustainable management of natural resources has been affecting directly and indirectly economic growth, human prosperity as well as the environment and ecosystems.

With almost 90% of the area of SEE falling within shared river basins, increased cooperation for the management of shared natural resources in SEE, 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 following main Nexus-related conflicts and trade-offs have been broadly identified as common⁴ in SEE:

- water allocation between different users, in particular during drought events;
- increasing river flow regulation for electricity generation by hydropower;
- nature conservation areas being affected by hydropower developments;
- hydro-peaking and subsequent ecosystem deterioration by the operation of dams;
- downstream impacts of dam operations during floods;
- increasing energy needs for food production and water services and treatment;
- pollution of surface and groundwater by pesticides and nutrients, and their treatment;
- land-use intensification and loss of certain habitats/ecosystems;
- conflicts around water and land resources needed for biofuel production;
- deforestation and biodiversity loss due to unregulated cutting of fuelwood.

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 Region⁵:

⁴ Nexus Mapping Study in South East Europe (see below)

⁵ As per the outcomes of the 1st and 2nd Regional Nexus Roundtables in SEE (see below)

- 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.

The Nexus approach in SEE

In the SEE region, existing good practices of Nexus include:

- The establishment of inter-ministerial coordination bodies;
- Consultative bodies e.g. for rural development;
- The integration of water and biodiversity targets in agriculture and/or rural development plans;
- Nexus assessments and studies to identify priority synergies and trade-offs.

However, many policy and management areas to better address the Nexus still show significant gaps and potential for improvement. In general, the administrative system established foresees several authorities to share the competencies for the specific Nexus sectors, with one 'line' authority leading initiatives.

Currently, policy development via regulation, strategies or plans is often characterized by:

- Formal institutional cooperation, not necessarily translating into policy integration;
- Isolated efforts;
- Lack of common targets;
- Overlapping responsibilities and competing objectives among local and central governments.

The Regional Nexus Policy Dialogue and action in SEE

At the Regional level, the use of a Nexus approach is being promoted by the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) through the South East Europe 2020 Strategy (SEE2020) adopted in 2013. Global Water Partnership – Mediterranean provides technical assistance, being the organization responsible for coordinating action for Nexus and Water issues under the Dimension Environment of SEE2020's Sustainable Growth Pillar.

The latter is one of the SEE2020's 5 growth pillars, each of which contains a number of policy dimensions. Environment is one of the four Dimensions of the Sustainable Growth Pillar of SEE2020 and the Region's economies participate in the coordination of its implementation through the Regional Working Group on Environment (RWG-Env) which operates under the auspices of the RCC. One of the Key Strategy Actions in Dimension Environment is to *"Identify steps and measures necessary for advancing the water, energy and food nexus approach at national and transboundary levels and investigate opportunities for launching a political process under the RCC for the enhancement of cooperation in the SEE in the field of TWRM"*

The key aim of the Regional Nexus Policy Dialogue in SEE is to support the above Strategy Action.

The Regional Dialogue is financially supported by:

- The German Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety Advisory Assistance Programme (AAP) for environmental protection in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia and other countries neighbouring the European Union, 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*
- 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**).

A set of activities has been developed as part of a Regional Dialogue, including:

- Three Regional Roundtables and three back-to-back Nexus Groups Meetings (meetings of Nexus-related Ministries representatives).
 - The 1st Regional Roundtable was held on 20-22 June 2017 in Belgrade, Serbia and
 - the 2nd one on 23-24 October 2018, in Skopje, North Macedonia.
 The key recommendations of these Roundtables are available in the Annex of this Concept Note
- A Regional Nexus Mapping Study to provide
 - a mapping of the level of institutional and policy integration in the Region’s economies of the management of Nexus-related natural resources, and
 - an initial Identification of Nexus-related interlinkages and potential benefits, trade-offs and conflicts in the Region.

The Study was presented and discussed in the Skopje Roundtable (23-24 October 2018) and subsequently endorsed through a written process without any further comments by members of the RWG-Env. The Study is available here: http://bit.ly/SEE_NexusMapping

Further, in the context of the ADA-funded SEE Nexus Project:

- Nexus Dialogue Processes will be implemented in the transboundary basins of the Drin and Drina rivers, and in Albania. Each of these 3 Dialogue Processes is structured around Transboundary and/or National Consultation Meetings and the development of analytical technical Nexus Assessments as per the methodology developed by UNECE. These Assessments will identify inter-sectoral linkages/benefits/trade-offs, investigate in depth priority ones, model future scenarios around the management of resources and suggest possible directions of synergic action.
- A Nexus-related capacity development workshop will be held in each of these two transboundary basins.
- For 4 of the priority issues to be identified in the context of the Policy Dialogues, respective Concept Notes and Project Documents will be developed, also exploring financing options by development partners and/or financing institutions.

The Regional Dialogue is operating in synergy with:

- The ‘Petersberg Phase II / Athens Declaration Process’
- The UNECE Water Convention
- The Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) Water Agenda and its Financial Strategy

The 3rd Regional Nexus Roundtable – Objectives and the road ahead

The sessions of this Roundtable are structured in order to:

- Enhance capacities and increase awareness of participants, including through their engagement as players/stakeholders in the “Nexus Game”, a training tool / policy exercise in the form of a “serious game”;
- Share experiences from recent and ongoing Nexus-related Assessments and Policy Dialogue Processes in the SEE area and beyond;
- Discuss types and characteristics of solutions to address Nexus-related challenges appropriate for the SEE area, as well as challenges around their promotion;

- Discuss priorities and options for the financing and implementation of Nexus-related investments, from the perspective of both financing institutions and the region's economies;
- Explore preferred options, approaches, activities and settings for the advancement of Nexus perspectives and related cooperation at the regional and transboundary levels;
- Discuss challenges and opportunities for increased women empowerment and social cohesion under an integrated sustainable approach in the management of natural resources

Looking forward, a key objective of this Roundtable is **to reach a common understanding on how the Regional Dialogue Process can enable the adoption of the Nexus approach in the Region, and facilitate the achievement of the economic, social and transboundary benefits described above, in the SEE.**

This discussion will be the focus of Session 5 of the Roundtable and of the closed Nexus Group Meeting right after the end of the Roundtable.

Based on the recommendations of the endorsed Regional Nexus Mapping Study and the discussions during the 2nd Regional Nexus Roundtable and the Nexus Group Meeting in Skopje in 2018, the following pathways have been identified as possible suitable entry points for advancing the Nexus Approach in SEE; their further elaboration by the Roundtable and the representatives of the Economies could render them building blocks of the Nexus Roadmap, should there is a decision to develop one:

1. **Implement past recommendations**

Some Nexus-related initiatives, assessments and reports are already available relevant to the SEE. However, there is a major gap in implementing their recommendations (an overview of such recommendations is available in Table 17 of the Mapping Study). The Region's economies should

- facilitate the implementation of these recommendations
- identify and assess any barriers and difficulties that hinder their implementation
- identify relevant funding sources and instruments, or establish new ones
- facilitate regional exchange and monitoring on good practices and lessons learned

2. **Optimise planning**

Planning processes need to maximise cross-sectoral benefits while being resilient to climate change. However, currently, most planning processes in the Region remain without integrating objectives or identifying synergies. The Region's economies should

- foster early vertical (across political levels) and horizontal (across sectors) cooperation and planning
- coordinate and integrate the different timeframes and geographic scales while planning

3. **Underpin decision-making with improved data and capacities**

Access to Nexus-relevant sectoral information remains limited thereby undermining the capturing of synergies and implementation of solutions. Suggested actions:

- promote specific national and/or transboundary Nexus studies and assessments, also taking into account the expected effects of climate change on resource availability and demand;
- improve available monitoring, datasets, information;
- promote procedures and platforms for accessibility and understanding;
- support the harmonization of datasets across sectors and borders;
- develop related capacities of staff in institutions

4. **Develop pilots and learn from them**

Given the large list of possible "Nexus solutions", the early development of pilot projects is recommended under a step-wise learning-by-doing approach, steered at the Regional level:

- Implement pilot actions, prioritizing climate-resilient no-regret measures e.g. on alternative solutions or technologies or governance/management set-ups;
- Draw lessons learned and share and comparing experiences at regional level;
- Upscale implementation after the first learning cycle;

The potential role and contribution of the Regional Dialogue Process

The Regional Dialogue can support the implementation of these pathways, and the promotion of the Nexus approach overall by serving as a platform/forum to:

- assess how the economies progress in the implementation of past recommendations
- identify funding sources,
- exchange and monitor on good practices and lessons learned
- identify topics/issues and focus (technologies, governance) that would be of major interest for regional activities
- share knowledge, tools and experience
- promote the establishment of a Regional Nexus Research Centre as a hub for knowledge management and for providing assistance and capacity building, also engaging the scientific community.

The dimension of gender and/or marginalized communities in advancing a Nexus approach

This Roundtable also includes a dedicated session on the dimension of gender and marginalized communities, aiming to discuss the main challenges around ensuring equitable access to services in the Nexus sectors, as well as opportunities for increased women empowerment and social cohesion under an integrated sustainable approach in the management of natural resources.

Equal access and use rights to natural resources, especially for marginalised and vulnerable population groups, including women, are indispensable for an inclusive and sustainable development.

Although all economies in the Region have committed to international legal instruments on gender equality, a real gender approach is still missing in most sectors' policies and strategies related to the Nexus, with exceptions typically in the field of rural development strategies.

The participation of representatives of gender organisations and women groups in this Roundtable will give them the opportunity to directly follow up on Nexus-related regional developments, processes and initiatives and actively contribute to the debates.

Moreover, they will have the opportunity to share and exchange experiences with a range of different stakeholders and raise awareness on challenges in ensuring equitable access to services in the Nexus sectors, as well as opportunities for increased women empowerment and social cohesion under an integrated sustainable approach in the management of natural resources.

Annex – Recommendations and conclusions from the previous Roundtables

1st Regional Nexus Roundtable in SEE (Belgrade, 20-22 June 2017) - Recommendations & conclusions

- 12) *There are on-going efforts at the governmental level for the coordination of actions across Water, Food, Energy and Environment sectors and the achievement of integration at the level of planning and implementation of actions. The Nexus approach is a suitable tool to support these efforts at the level of governments. Further, it is a suitable tool to support integration of sectors across borders hence, promoting transboundary basin cooperation.*
- 13) *There is a need for these efforts to be supported by information exchange among sectors at the level of ministries as well as at the level of academia, research organizations, institutions and local authorities. Existing commissions for the management of the shared basins or existing efforts to enhance cooperation for the management of shared basins should put effort to enable the exchange of information among riparian parties. Information Management Systems, where data can be stored and processed to support decision making, can be of immense benefit in this regard. Effort should be put to have such systems in place and be accessed as well as fed with information by different ministries.*
- 14) *Management norms and schemes that are used by any of the Nexus sectors should adapt to the emerging realities that are shaped by the EU legislative framework that governs other Nexus Sectors as well as by the natural phenomena. The EU Framework Directives affect -at different level- all Nexus Sectors. The same is true for Climate Change.*
- 15) *Bodies to enable integration are of great value. At the level of governments, inter-ministerial water committees and councils of sustainable development exist in many of the SEE2020 economies. Mechanisms to monitor the implementation of the decisions taken, linked with the Parliaments of the countries could improve integration and coordination. At the level of transboundary basins, basin Commissions can play this role.*
- 16) *Strategies to enable integration among sectors are of great importance. Such strategies are in place in some of the SEE2020 economies. The National Sectorial Programme of Albania and the National Strategy for Sustainable Development of Montenegro are such examples. Spatial plans could also play this role. These Strategies should be accompanied by adequate financial means and action plans to enable their implementation.*
- 17) *The Nexus approach can be of great assistance in prioritizing the issues to be addressed as well as prioritizing related actions.*
- 18) *Existing legislative frameworks such as the Water Framework Directive can function as coordination instruments and as “triggers” of integration in planning. Nevertheless, in this specific example the energy and agricultural sectors are only indirectly dealt with, being water users.*
- 19) *Better alignment of policy timelines and related planning cycles among different sectors would assist in the interests and priorities of each other to be taken into consideration by all sectors.*
- 20) *Nexus related efforts at transboundary level can have synergistic effects that go beyond the Nexus sectors, such as floods management.*
- 21) *The representatives of the institutions from the SEE2020 economies, including the representatives of the SEE2020 economies in the RWG Env that participate in the event, appreciate the actions for the achievement of the Nexus related objectives under the SEE2020 Strategy. Montenegro, Kosovo* and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia have indicated interest to be the focus of the Nexus Policy dialogues and accompanying activities under the SEE2020.*
- 22) *Energy producers and dam operators have expressed interest in using the Nexus Approach related tools as means to streamline energy planning with environment and water resources management planning, with the aim of co-optimization of results for all four Nexus sectors.*

- 23) *The Nexus Approach related information as well as analytical tools that can be used to address the integration related needs, should come at the disposal of the SEE2020 economies.*
- 24) *With these in mind, the Nexus Policy Dialogue at the SEE2020 level under the RCC and with the assistance of the GWP-Med and REC and the support of ADA, the BMU and GEF IW:LEArN is beneficial and the institutions from the SEE2020 economies participating in the event, welcome its initiation. Actions in this regard should continue.*
- 25) *The meeting concludes that the definition of concrete steps and actions in the form of a regional Nexus Strategy that would allow the SEE2020 economies to identify and pursue the benefits from the use of the Nexus approach is most welcome.*

2nd Regional Nexus Roundtable in SEE (Skopje, 20-22 June 2017) - Recommendations & conclusions

- 26) *Representatives of institutions from the SEE2020 economies participating in the event reaffirmed the beneficial role of the Nexus Policy Dialogue at the SEE2020 in promoting coordination among economies and integration among sectors. They consider that activities in this regard should continue.*
- 27) *Participants in the Roundtable affirmed that the value and benefits of a Nexus approach are manifold and spread beyond the relevant sectors, including:*
- *For the economy:*
 - *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 resulting to reduced overall costs*
 - *For the environment:*
 - *Improved conservation and recovery of ecosystems and habitats*
 - *For the Society:*
 - *Generation of a common vision, and a sense of perspective and direction*
 - *Improved public health*
 - *Improved water-sanitation services*
 - *Employment opportunities*
 - *For Regional cooperation and politics*
 - *Enhanced cooperation in the management of shared resources also through the adoption of new cross-border agreements, common regulations and protocols*
 - *Development of regional markets*
 - *Increased and optimized trade*
 - *Facilitation of compliance with requirements and targets relevant to EU accession*
- 28) *Suggested Nexus-related solutions include:*
- a) *Multipurpose use of the existing and planned infrastructure*
 - b) *Optimisation of flow regulation e.g. improved cooperation in operation of hydro plants, etc.*
 - c) *Promotion of efficiency in the production and use of energy and resources; increased integration of renewables sources beyond hydropower*
 - d) *Further integration of the energy and agriculture sectors in the River Basin Management planning and implementation process*
 - e) *Ensuring the sharing of and access to up-to-date data, in a user-friendly and manageable manner*
 - f) *Improvement of the interface between science and policy-making*

- g) Introduction of economic valuation of ecosystems and their services including in relation to erosion, floods, water quality*
- h) Exploration of further potential economic synergies e.g. ecotourism, sustainable agriculture, rural development*
- i) Capturing synergies from wastewater treatment – energy production – agriculture*
- j) Improvement of capacities, raising awareness*

29) Management norms and schemes that are used by any of the Nexus sectors should adapt to a Nexus approach in order for benefits and synergies to be fully captured.

30) In the case of hydro plants operated by different entities in one river, especially in a transboundary context, official agreement on a well-regulated coordination system is needed to optimise shared benefits on energy production, flood control, minimum ecological flows. Individual operators that may face costs under an overall optimisation approach could be offered bonus and/or compensation schemes.

31) A successful implementation of institutional and policy integration under the Nexus could stimulate the adoption of similar integrated approaches into other sectors or challenges e.g. in climate policy, waste management, disaster risk reduction, forests etc.

32) Suggested way ahead to capture the benefits of an efficient Nexus approach, include:

a) Optimisation of planning:

- Foster early vertical and inter-sectoral coordination and cooperation within governmental authorities; Coordinate/integrate the different timeframes and geographic scales for planning in different sectors; integrate the Nexus approach into strategic documents and local plans.*

b) Prioritise resilience:

- Develop planning based on projections of resource availability and demand*
- Promote climate-resilient and no-regret measures including resource efficiency and nature-based solutions*

c) Better data and tools for better decision making:

- Improve available monitoring, datasets, information*
- Promote procedures and platforms for accessibility and understanding of data*
- Develop fit for purpose Nexus analytical tools*
- Establish regional early warning systems*

33) It is important to foster actions for the adoption of the Nexus Approach. Potential options can include the following:

- a) Establish a Forum for sharing knowledge, experience & information and debate priority issues.*
- b) Establish a Nexus Research Centre in the SEE2020 Region to act as a hub for knowledge management and for providing assistance and capacity building to the Region's economies, also engaging the scientific community.*
- c) Promote the harmonization of data and indicators across sectors and economies.*
- d) Develop of pilot projects.*
- e) Identify existing financing sources and establishment of innovative ones, also engaging the private sector.*
- f) Implement Nexus Dialogues and develop Nexus assessments to cover as many basins and economies as possible.*

Annex III - List of Participants to the Roundtable

3rd Regional Nexus Roundtable in South East Europe 16-18 October 2019, Tirana, Albania				
Attendance list				
Gender	Name	Surname	Organisation	Economy
M	Kasim	Agovic	Nature and Environmental Protection Agency	Montenegro
F	Anila	Aliaj	CNVP	Albania
F	Mirela	Arqimandriti	Gender Alliance for Development Centre	Albania
M	Baton	Begolli	Inter-Ministerial Water Council	Kosovo*
M	Dimitris	Bogiatzis	GWP-Med	International
F	Valmira	Bozgo	UNEP	Albania
F	Anthi	Brouma	GWP-Med	International
M	Vangelis	Constantianos	GWP-Med	International
F	Holta	Copani	National Agency of Protected Areas	Albania
F	Ornela	Çuçi	Ministry of Tourism and Environment	Albania
F	Magdalena	Daskalova	Ministry of economy	North Macedonia
F	Lucia	de Strasser	UNECE	Switzerland
F	Etleva	Demiri	Water Regulatory Authority	Albania
F	Makfirete	Dibrani	Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning	Kosovo*
M	Bledi	Dimo	National Teritorial Planning Agency	Albania
F	Frances	Dixon	GWP-Med	International
M	Aleksandar	Dragisic	Institute for Nature Conservation of Serbia	Serbia
M	Pavle	Đurašković	Institute of Hydrometeorology and Seismology	Montenegro
M	Bojan	Durnev	Ministry of agriculture, forestry and water economy	North Macedonia
M	Ulrich	Eichelmann	Riverwatch	Austria
M	Singer	Gabriel	IGB Berlin	Austria
F	Evis	Gjebrea	Tirana Water and Wastewater Utility	Albania
F	Melita	Gocevaska	Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning	North Macedonia
F	Valbena	Gogu	Ministry of Tourism and Environment	Albania
M	Hubert	Grandjean	EU Delegation	Albania
M	Mish	Hamid	GEF IW:Learn	International

F	Aida	Haracic	Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations	Bosnia & Herzegovina
M	Ismet	Jakupi	Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning	North Macedonia
F	Alma	Jauka	Freelancer	Albania
M	Igor	Jevtic	Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations	Bosnia & Herzegovina
M	Alexandros	Kandarakis	GWP-Med	International
M	Arduen	Karagjozi	Water Resources Management Agency	Albania
F	Erjola	Keci	GWP-Med	Albania
M	Lulzim	Korenica	Ministry of Economic Development	Kosovo*
M	Sokol	Kraja	Water Regulatory of Albania	Albania
M	Tassos	Krommydas	GWP-Med	International
F	Michalina	Kulakowska	Centre for Systems Solutions	Poland
F	Besacta	Leka	Ministry of Tourism and Environment	Albania
M	Bali	Lestrani	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development	Kosovo*
F	Ljiljana	Loncar	Coordination body for Gender Equality	Serbia
F	Gerta	Lubonja	Water Resources Management Agency	Albania
M	Piotr	Magnuszewski	Centre for Systems Solutions	Poland
M	Srdjan	Marjanović	Republic Hydrometeorological Service of Serbia (RHMSS)	Serbia
F	Iva	Markovic	Save the Blue Heart of Europe Campaign	Serbia
F	Etleva	Martiri	Austrian Development Agency	Albania
F	Merita	Meksi	GIZ	Albania
F	Rexhina	Merkohitaj	Ministry of Tourism and Environment	Albania
M	Mehmet	Metaj	Alba Forest	Albania
F	Rovena	Metoja	Water Resources Management Agency	Albania
M	Nikos	Michopoulos	GWP-Med	International
M	Vukasin	Miladinovic	Ministry of Economy	Montenegro
M	Massimiliano	Monetti	Rina Consulting	Italy
F	Myvedete	Muja	Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning	Kosovo*
M	Arben	Mukaj	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development	Albania
M	Artur	Mustafaraj	KESH	Albania
F	Miroslava	Nenadić	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development	Montenegro

M	Olsi	Nika	EcoAlbania	Albania
M	Radovan	Nikčević	Regional Cooperation Council	International
M	Drini	Nushi	Urban Research Institute	Albania
M	Dejan	Panovski	GWP-Med	North Macedonia
M	Roberto	Pedone	Rina Consulting	Italy
F	Velimirka	Perišić	Montenegrin Electric Enterprise AD Nikšić	Montenegro
F	Elisabeta	Poci	Water Supply and Sewerage Association	Albania
F	Anisa	Qorri	Ministry of Tourism and Environment	Albania
F	Biljana	Rajic	Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations	Bosnia & Herzegovina
F	Maria Desamparados	Samper Hiraldo	Institute of GeoSciences, Energy, Water & Environment	Albania
M	Saša	Savičić	Ministry of Energy and Mining / Republic of Srpska	Bosnia & Herzegovina
M	Elbasan	Shala	Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning	Kosovo*
M	Erlet	Shaqe	Albania Energy Association	Albania
M	Agim	Shimaj	Nexus expert	Albania
F	Valentina	Stardelova	Ministry of economy	North Macedonia
M	Mevis	Struga		Albania
M	Ervis	Sulejmani	Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs	Albania
M	Voislav	Todorov	CNVP	North Macedonia
F	Verica	Trajkova	National Council for Gender Equality	North Macedonia
F	Simone	Ungersboeck	Austrian Development Agency (ADA)	Austria
M	Danco	Uzunov	PointPro Consulting	North Macedonia
F	Zana	Vokopola	Urban Research Institute	Albania
M	Zdravko	Vuksanovic	Ministry of Economy	Montenegro
M	Urim	Xharavina	Let's do it Kosovo	Kosovo*
M	Klodian	Zaimi	IGEW	Albania
M	Besim	Zogu	Kosovo Forest Agency	Kosovo*

** This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.*

Annex IV - List of Participants to the Nexus Group Meeting

3rd Regional Nexus Roundtable in South East Europe - Nexus Group Meeting (Friday 18 October 2019)				
Attendance list				
Gender	Name	Surname	Organisation	Economy
M	Baton	Begolli	Inter-Ministerial Water Council	Kosovo*
M	Vangelis	Constantianos	GWP-Med	International
F	Ornela	Çuçi	Ministry of Tourism and Environment	Albania
F	Magdalena	Daskalova	Ministry of Economy	N. Macedonia
F	Lucia	de Strasser	UNECE	Switzerland
F	Makfirete	Dibrani	Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning	Kosovo*
M	Bojan	Durnev	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy	N. Macedonia
F	Melita	Gocevaska	Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning	N. Macedonia
M	Mish	Hamid	GEF IW:Learn	International
F	Aida	Haracic	Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations	Bosnia & Herzegovina
M	Ismet	Jakupi	Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning	N. Macedonia
M	Igor	Jevtic	Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations	Bosnia & Herzegovina
M	Arduen	Karagjozi	Water Resources Management Agency	Albania
M	Lulzim	Korenica	Ministry of Economic Development	Kosovo*
M	Tassos	Krommydas	GWP-Med	International
M	Bali	Lestrani	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development	Kosovo*
F	Ljiljana	Loncar	Coordination body for Gender Equality	Serbia
F	Rexhina	Merkohitaj	Ministry of Tourism and Environment	Albania
F	Rovena	Metoja	Water Resources Management Agency	Albania
M	Vukasin	Miladinovic	Ministry of Economy	Montenegro
F	Myvedete	Muja	Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning	Kosovo*
M	Arben	Mukaj	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development	Albania
F	Miroslava	Nenadić	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development	Montenegro
F	Biljana	Rajic	Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations	Bosnia & Herzegovina
M	Saša	Savičić	Ministry of Energy and Mining / Republic of Srpska	Bosnia & Herzegovina
M	Elbasan	Shala	Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning	Kosovo*
F	Valentina	Stardelova	Ministry of economy	N. Macedonia
M	Zdravko	Vuksanovic	Ministry of Economy	Montenegro

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.