

Working Meeting on “Water, Food, Energy and Environment Nexus in Southeastern Europe” (SEE Nexus Directors Meeting)

***Zagreb, Croatia
11 December 2014***

Information Note

Organized and supported jointly by:
**Regional Cooperation Council
Global Water Partnership – Mediterranean
Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe**

In the framework of:
South East Europe 2020 Strategy

Background

The South East Europe 2020 Strategy

The “The South East Europe 2020 (SEE 2020) Strategy – Jobs and Prosperity in European Perspective” is a regional growth strategy developed under the coordination of the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) Secretariat, upon the request of the governments of the South East Europe Cooperation Process (SEECP) as well as the European Commission.

The main goal of the SEE 2020 Strategy is to help boost competitiveness and job creation, and to underscore the European perspective of the region’s future. The success of the Strategy depends on achieving high and sustained economic growth as well as making progress in catching up with the EU. In this respect, by 2020, the region plans on achieving 11 ambitious headline targets under the 5 main growth pillars of the Strategy: integrated, smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, underpinned by good governance.

Following the adoption of the SEE 2020 Strategy by the Governments, the ministers in charge of the economy of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Kosovo¹, Montenegro and Serbia have endorsed the Strategy in Sarajevo in November 2013, entrusting the RCC with a role of coordinating and monitoring its implementation. In this regard, the RCC has initiated activities for the development of regional action plans in all of the policy dimensions of SEE 2020 to convert the recommendations and measures contained therein into actionable items.

Dimension “Environment”

Environment is one of the four dimensions of the Sustainable Growth Pillar of the SEE 2020 Strategy and measures progress towards environmental sustainability, including resource efficiency and climate change adaptation. Its main tasks are to develop and put in place measures: (i) to increase volume of annual forestation; (ii) for advancing the Water, Energy and Food nexus approach at national and trans-boundary levels and investigate opportunities of launching a political process under the RCC for the enhancement of cooperation in the SEE in the field of Transboundary Water Resources Management (TWRM); (iii) to expand the level of SEE’s understanding of the enabling environment for private sector participation in financing water infrastructure and identify key bottlenecks and prospects in the process; (iv) to develop and put in place measures necessary for commencement of the Regional Integral Water Management Framework Agreement implementation; (v) to increase adaptive capacity through awareness raising and education on climate change adaptation and to develop and put in place measures to increase the share of irrigated agriculture land.

Each of the Policy Dimensions contained in the SEE 2020 Strategy has a Regional Dimension Coordinator (RDC). The Environment Dimension is being coordinated by the Regional Environmental Centre for Central and Eastern Europe (REC) in cooperation with the Global Water Partnership–Mediterranean (GWP-Med), and the Standing Working Group (SWG) on Regional Rural Development.

Taking into consideration the complexity of the environmental dimension, the governments taking part in SEE 2020 implementation will establish a Working Group on Environment (WGE) operating under the auspices of the RCC to provide guidance to the RCC and the regional dimension coordinators (REC, GWP-Med and SWG).

¹ 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.

Further to the Regional Action Plan prepared by the coordinators of the dimension environment and in cooperation with the RCC, the dimension coordinators are working, on the development and implementation of a Regional Programme.

The Nexus approach

The Water-Energy-Food Nexus (Nexus) approach was introduced in the global natural resources management agenda to facilitate the enhancement of water, energy and food security, while preserving ecosystems and their functions, including under conditions of climate variability and change, by increasing efficiency and productivity of resources, reducing trade-offs, shifting towards more sustainable consumption patterns and improving demand management, building synergies and improving governance across sectors.

The Nexus Conference, November 2011, in Bonn, organized by the German government, made a boost in introducing the agenda at the international context, just before the Rio Summit 2012.

With some differences from previous integrated approaches, the Nexus approach starts from a balanced cross-sectoral perspective considering the biophysical, economic and institutional dimensions of natural resource management, analyzing the 'flow' of these resources through different sectors, and detects entry points for reducing inefficiencies and exploiting synergies between sectors. It is often that the Nexus addresses only parts of the Water-Energy-Food 'triangle'; for example, it can be Water-Energy, Water-Food, Energy-Food, as well as their linkages with Environment, Climate, Land, Waste, etc. In a nutshell, the Nexus approach targets to 'integrate the integrated' towards better cross-sectoral policy and decision making.

Among others, the Nexus approach is seen as a way to enhance Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) assisting, for example, in the water sector policies, strategies and actions to harmonize with these of water-using sectors. Resulting from a long term investment on building background and methodology that are widely recognized and reflected in policies, strategies and applications, IWRM is widely accepted and understood being, in a way, 'institutionalized'. However, IWRM implementation remains challenging. In all cases, it is considered that IWRM and the Nexus approaches are fully complementary.

Currently, there is a Nexus 'lead' by the water community that should, however, equally become owned by the energy and food sectors, particularly since the latter sectors hold much stronger roles in the development agenda.

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The *SEE Nexus Directors Meeting* is organized and supported by RCC, GWP-Med and REC in the framework of the South East Europe 2020 Strategy. Additional financial support for the meeting is provided within the Environment and Security Initiative (ENVSEC) from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland and the Austrian Development Agency (ADA), the operational unit of Austrian Development Cooperation.

The Meeting will be organized back to back with the International Multi-stakeholders Roundtable on “Water, Food, Energy and Environment Nexus in Southeastern Europe” that will take place in Zagreb, 9-10 December 2014.

The *SEE Nexus Directors Meeting* aims to establish a guidance process under the SEE 2020 Strategy to introduce the Water, Energy, Food and Ecosystems Nexus approach and catalyze action for its adoption and implementation in the SEE as means to enhance integrated and sustainable management of natural resources and assist towards climate change adaptation.

The meeting will bring together representatives of Ministries from South East Europe responsible for Water, Food, Energy and Environment as well as key regional and international stakeholders to discuss the:

- i. Outcomes of the International Multi-stakeholders Roundtable on “Water, Food, Energy and Environment Nexus in Southeastern Europe”;
- ii. The Regional Programme under the Dimension Environment and more specifically the possible development of a SEE Roadmap on the Nexus describing orientations, partners, capacities and steps for the introduction of Nexus approach considerations in the basin/aquifer management frameworks as means towards sustainable management of water, land, energy and environment including for meeting climate change related objectives;

Furthermore the meeting may result in the identification of candidates for conducting pilot National Nexus Dialogues, and transboundary basins to conduct pilot Nexus Transboundary assessments and Dialogues.

The organizers

The Regional Cooperation Council

The Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) was officially launched at the meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the South-East European Cooperation Process (SEEC) in Sofia, on 27 February 2008, as the successor of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe. Through a regionally owned and led framework, the RCC focuses on promotion and enhancement of regional cooperation in South East Europe (SEE) and supports European and Euro-Atlantic integration of the region. The RCC provides operational capacities to and works under the political guidance of the SEEC.

In line with its Statute and guided by the principles of all-inclusiveness, the main tasks of the RCC are to represent the region, assist the SEEC, monitor regional activities, exert leadership in regional cooperation, provide a regional perspective in donor assistance – and support increased involvement of civil society in regional activities. The RCC functions as a focal point for regional cooperation in SEE and its key role is to generate and coordinate developmental projects of a wider, regional character, to the benefit of each individual participant, and create an appropriate political climate susceptible to their implementation.

Global Water Partnership - Mediterranean

GWP-Med, established in 2002, is the Mediterranean partnership of the Global Water Partnership (GWP). Aiming for a water-secured Mediterranean, GWP-Med promotes action, demo application and knowledge exchange on Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) and sustainable use of water resources in the region.

GWP-Med facilitates a multi-stakeholder platform that brings together 10 major regional networks of different water disciplines (government, river basins, local authorities, professionals, NGOs, research institutes, irrigators, etc) and over 80 other institutions and organisations from non-EU countries and EU countries.

Working at regional, national, local and transboundary level, GWP-Med provides technical support to policy making; facilitates dialogue on water security and IWRM issues; and, implements demonstration actions. Themes addressed include a range of aspects of governance for IWRM; water financing including private sector participation; adaptation to climate vulnerability and change; river basin/transboundary water management; joint IWRM/Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) planning; non-conventional water resources management including at urban level; water demand management; water-food-energy-environment nexus; integrated groundwater management; stakeholders participation; education; capacity building; and, networking of targeted groups including decision makers, parliamentarians and the media. Furthermore, GWP-Med addresses gender, equity, youth and poverty as cross-cutting issues.

The GWP-Med Secretariat extends its human resources in Athens, Beirut and Tunis. For more information, please visit: www.gwpmed.org

Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe

The Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe (REC) is an international organisation with a mission to assist in addressing environmental issues. The REC fulfils this mission by promoting cooperation among governments, non-governmental organisations, businesses and other environmental stakeholders, and by supporting the free exchange of information and public participation in environmental decision making.

Established in 1990 by the United States, the European Commission and Hungary today, the REC is legally based on a charter with over 30 signatories and operates via office network in 17 countries.² The REC actively participates in key global, regional and local processes and contributes to environmental and sustainability solutions within and beyond its country office network, transferring transitional knowledge and experience to countries and regions.

The REC carries out project activities in specialized Topic Areas³, that make use of the expertise available at all organisational levels of the REC (REC HQ and COs). The REC's topic area system provides a flexible framework for putting the knowledge and skills of our international organisation into practice across borders and disciplines. Our aim is to take a proactive approach in serving our regions and the beneficiary and donor communities.

REC is one of the six partner organisations of the Environment and Security Initiative (ENVSEC)-partnership of OSCE, UNDP, UNECE, UNEP and NATO as an associated partner. Initiative provides an integrated response to environment and security challenges. By hosting the ENVSEC Regional Desk Office for South-Eastern Europe REC contributes to the transformation of environment and security risks into regional cooperation, coordinates activities of the ENVSEC Initiative in the region and technical assistance and expertise to various ENVSEC projects in line with identified priorities of beneficiary and donor countries. Main ones are on: combating illegal logging; facilitation of transboundary water management; contribution to climate change adaptation in SEE; support and capacity building regarding Aarhus Convention and PRTR Protocol.

More on REC and ENVSEC Initiative you can find on www.rec.org and www.envsec.org

² Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Turkey. The Head Office is located in Szentendre, Hungary.

³ Biodiversity; Climate Change and Clean Energy; Educational Tools; Environmental Financing; Environmental Management; Health and Environment; Law Development, Enforcement and Compliance; Local Governance; Participatory Governance; Smart Cities and Mobility; Sustainable Development Academy; Water Management