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A NEXUS ROADMAP FOR THE DRINA RIVER BASIN

TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES IN THE DRINA
RIVER BASIN THROUGH ENHANCED COOPERATION ACROSS SECTORS

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BACKGROUND

The present document was developed within the framework of the SEE Nexus Project (“*Promoting the Sustainable Management of Natural Resources in Southeastern Europe, through the use of Nexus approach*”), funded by the Austrian Development Agency (ADA) and implemented by Global Water Partnership – Mediterranean (GWP-Med) in partnership with the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE). It is a result of a participatory process, which included consultations with representatives of relevant national authorities of the Drina riparian countries, as well as the International Sava River Basin Commission (ISRBC).

The Roadmap reflects the different perspectives on its possible use and appropriate means of implementation, which emerged during consultations. It is therefore broad in scope and simple in structure, and it is proposed as a “living” document that the countries can adjust as needed, by discussing it among themselves, and agreeing upon detailed actions, timeframe, and budget, as they consider appropriate.

The document aims to facilitate progress towards sustainable and climate resilient management of natural resources in the Drina River Basin by identifying lines of action and modalities for effective and coherent cross-sectoral coordination at institutional, policy and management levels in the Nexus-related sectors (water resources, energy, land/agriculture, environment).

Stemming from the situation analysis summarised in *Phase II Drina Nexus Assessment Report*¹ and drawing upon the preceding Phase I², its Follow-Up Project³, as well as the studies conducted within the framework of the Phase II Assessment⁴ the Roadmap specifies 10 objectives and suggests main actions to be taken to achieve them.

The first four objectives are of general nature, being common for all types of ‘Nexus issues’, whereas the other six pertain to specific Nexus issues identified during the Nexus Assessment process in the Drina Basin.

The Roadmap includes both Drina-specific actions, as well as other more strategic and/or overarching ones that should be taken at country-level or at broader transboundary- or regional-level as appropriate, also leveraging the outcomes of related (finalised and ongoing) projects in the Basin.

1. See Chapter 2 of the “Phase II Drina Nexus Assessment Report” (GWP-Med and UNECE, 2022).

2. See the “Assessment of the water-food-energy-ecosystem Nexus and benefits of transboundary cooperation in the Drina River Basin” (UNECE, 2017), <https://unece.org/environment-policy/publications/assessment-water-food-energy-ecosystem-Nexus-and-benefits>.

3. See the “Scoping Study on Erosion and Sedimentation in the Drina River Basin” (2019) and the “Desk Study on Environmental Flows and Flow Regulation in the Drina River Basin” (2019), both available on the UNECE website: <https://unece.org/environment-policy/water/areas-work-convention/water-food-energy-ecosystem-Nexus>.

4. See Chapters 3 and 4 (on Sustainable Energy Development and Flow Regulation, respectively) of the “Phase II Nexus Assessment for the Drina River Basin” (GWP-Med and UNECE, 2022).



OBJECTIVES OF THE ROADMAP, AND PROPOSED ACTIONS

I STRENGTHEN CROSS-SECTORAL COOPERATION IN THE TRANSBOUNDARY DRINA RIVER BASIN

Action	Remark
1. Plan and implement Nexus activities through the coordination framework described in the following section ("Implementation of the Roadmap").	1. Link with the Green Agenda [1], SEE 2030 [3], and outcomes and activities of related finalised and ongoing projects in the Basin, e.g. SDIP [9].
2. Develop agreements between the countries, related to the management of natural / water resources (bilateral or multilateral, as appropriate).	2. Possible link with actions 6, 7, 13, 15, 17, and 33.

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II IMPROVE CROSS-SECTORAL GOVERNANCE IN THE DRINA RIVER BASIN

Action	Remark
3. Improve coordination between sectors in each Basin country.	3. Link with the <i>Green Agenda</i> and the <i>SEE 2030</i> .
4. Improve monitoring, and data and information sharing in the Basin.	4. Respective actions are listed under Objective 5 of the plan.
5. Broaden the stakeholder involvement by using the tools developed by ISRBC (or ICPDR, as applicable).	5. Link with outcomes and activities of related finalised and ongoing projects in the Basin.
6. Consider ways to strengthen compliance with agreements across sectors.	6. Link with Action 2.

III IMPROVE CROSS-SECTORAL POLICY COHERENCE IN THE DRINA RIVER BASIN

Action	Remark
7. Develop stronger and more coherent national policies.	7. Link with Action 2.
8. Strengthen multi-sector (and transboundary) planning.	8. Link with the RBM planning process coordinated by ISRBC. Link with outcomes and activities of related finalised and ongoing projects in the Basin.

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IV BOOST SUSTAINABLE INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENTS IN THE DRINA RIVER BASIN

Action	Remark
9. Draft a Basin Strategy for green investments.	9. Link with the <i>Green Agenda</i> , <i>SEE 2030</i> , and outcomes and activities of related finalised and ongoing projects in the Basin.
10. Agree upon and implement the green investment strategy.	10. Link with the <i>Green Agenda</i> , <i>SEE 2030</i> , and outcomes and activities of related finalised and ongoing projects in the Basin.

V IMPROVE MONITORING, AND DATA AND INFORMATION EXCHANGE IN THE DRINA RIVER BASIN

Action	Remark
11. Further improve the exchange of the water quantity data and information in the Basin.	11. Links with the Drina SAP [2], the <i>Green Agenda</i> , and outcomes and activities of related finalised and ongoing projects in the Basin.
12. Enhance monitoring of the water quality and the water status in the Basin.	12. Links with the <i>Drina SAP</i> and the <i>Green Agenda</i> .
13. Establish a long-term, harmonised programme of monitoring the quality and status of water in the Basin.	13. Link with Action 2. Links with the <i>Drina SAP</i> and the <i>Green Agenda</i> .
14. Develop a comprehensive water information system for the Basin.	14. Links with the <i>Drina SAP</i> and the <i>Green Agenda</i> .



VII IMPROVE MANAGEMENT OF WASTEWATER AND SOLID WASTE AS PRESSURES ON WATER QUALITY IN THE DRINA RIVER BASIN

Action	Remark
19. Strengthen transboundary cooperation on wastewater and solid waste management in the Basin.	19. Link with the RBM planning process coordinated by ISRBC
20. Improve the governance for wastewater and solid waste management in the Basin.	20. Link with the <i>Drina SAP</i>
21. Improve the policy framework for wastewater and solid waste management in the Basin.	21. Link with the <i>Drina SAP</i>
22. Improve the wastewater and solid waste management infrastructure.	22. Link with the RBM planning process coordinated by ISRBC. Links with the <i>Green Agenda</i> and the <i>Drina SAP</i>



VI ADVANCE THE COORDINATION AND CO-OPTIMISATION OF FLOW REGULATION IN THE DRINA RIVER BASIN

Action	Remark
15. Develop and adopt a harmonised methodological approach for determining environmental flows.	15. Links with Actions 2 and 11. Link with the RBM planning process coordinated by ISRBC. Link with the <i>Drina SAP</i> and outcomes and activities of related finalised and ongoing projects in the Basin.
16. Establish a dialogue between power companies and authorities regarding operational rules for hydropower plants.	17. Links with Actions 2 and 11.
17. Develop an agreement on coordination of the operation of hydropower plants and flow regulation, including e-flows, in the Basin.	
18. Implement the agreement.	



VIII

REDUCE THE PRESSURES ON WATER QUALITY, ASSOCIATED WITH EROSION AND SEDIMENTATION IN THE DRINA RIVER BASIN

Action	Remark
23. Develop and update erosion maps to guide action.	A Project Document for an intervention on improving sediment management in the Drina Basin is being prepared in the context of the SEE Nexus Project, thus assisting the implementation of the Sediment Management Plan for the Sava River Basin, with regard to its Drina Sub-basin.
24. Apply and monitor appropriate erosion control measures.	
25. Raise awareness, promote, and exchange good practices.	
26. Establish a sediment monitoring system in the Basin.	Link with the RBM and FRM planning processes coordinated by ISRBC, and upgrades of Sava GIS. Link with the sediment monitoring system development, coordinated by ISRBC.



X

STIMULATE AGRICULTURAL RURAL, AND ECO-TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN THE DRINA RIVER BASIN

Action	Remark
33. Strengthen transboundary cooperation to support agricultural, rural, and eco-tourism development in the Basin.	33. Link with Action 2. Links with RRD SWG, the <i>Green Agenda, SEE 2030</i> , and outcomes and activities of related finalised and ongoing projects in the Basin. Link with the ISRBC activities related to sustainable river tourism.
34. Improve governance to foster agricultural, rural, and eco-tourism development in the Basin.	34. Links with Actions 3, 7, and 28. Links with RRD SWG, the <i>Green Agenda, SEE 2030</i> , and outcomes and activities of related finalised and ongoing projects in the Basin.
35. Improve the policy framework for agricultural, rural, and eco-tourism development in the Basin.	35. Links with RRD SWG, the <i>Green Agenda, SEE 2030</i> , and outcomes and activities of related finalised and ongoing projects in the Basin.
36. Invest in infrastructure that supports sustainable rural development	36. Links with RRD SWG, the <i>Green Agenda, SEE 2030</i> , and outcomes and activities of related finalised and ongoing projects in the Basin.



IX

FOSTER SUSTAINABLE RENEWABLE ENERGY DEVELOPMENT IN THE DRINA RIVER BASIN

Action	Remark
27. Support the renewable energy (RE) development in the Basin through transboundary cooperation.	27. Links with the Energy Community, the <i>Green Agenda, SEE 2030</i> , and outcomes and activities of related finalised and ongoing projects in the Basin.
28. Improve governance to ensure sustainability of the RE deployment in the Basin.	28. Links with Actions 3 and 7. Links with the Energy Community, the <i>Green Agenda</i> , and <i>SEE 2030</i> .
29. Improve national RE policies to address trade-offs and facilitate synergies.	29. Links with the Energy Community, the <i>Green Agenda</i> , and <i>SEE 2030</i> .
30. Improve coordinated planning of RE projects to foster the infrastructure investments in the Basin.	30. Link with Action 9. Links with the Energy Community, the <i>Green Agenda</i> , and <i>SEE 2030</i> .
31. Accelerate the sustainable energy transition through a multi-stakeholder, cross-sectoral dialogue.	31. Links with the Energy Community, the <i>Green Agenda</i> , and <i>SEE 2030</i> .
32. Enhance sustainability of the biomass value chain.	32. Links with the Energy Community, the <i>Green Agenda</i> , and <i>SEE 2030</i> .

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ROADMAP

The key principle behind the Roadmap is to propose a framework that would enable planning and coordination of Nexus activities – i.e. activities implemented across sectors – in the Drina Basin in an efficient, effective, and financially sustainable way, by maximising the use of existing cooperation platforms and the countries' (human and financial) resources already allocated for the implementation of related activities in the Basin.

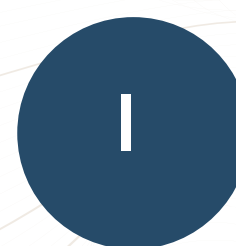
Such a framework could be based on:

- Use of the ISRBC Institutional Framework, taking into consideration its mandate, tasks and responsibilities, as well as ISRBC's involvement in relevant ongoing projects and activities within the Sava River Basin
- Establishment of a project-based (or a process-based) cross-sectoral Drina Group (e.g., through a follow-up of the *Phase II Drina Nexus Assessment*), consisting of experts and officials from the sectors of water, energy, food, and environment, for technical coordination of Nexus activities
- Use of the ISRBC Expert Groups as activity/theme specific platforms for addressing Nexus issues and even implementation of some Nexus activities, to the degree possible, engaging with specific sectors as appropriate
- Link to the processes coordinated by RCC – the implementation of *Action Plan for the Implementation of the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans* [4] and *SEE 2030 Strategy* [3], and the exploration of related opportunities (e.g., those in connection with the SEE Regional Project Facility, planned to be created under the *SEE 2030 Strategy* with the aim of financing SDG-related projects at regional, sub-regional, national, and local level)
- Link to other relevant cooperation mechanisms (the Energy Community, ICPDR, RRD SWG), and the exploration of possibilities for synergies with the processes coordinated by them

The implementation of a project focused on coordinated climate action at the Basin level could provide a good basis for the functioning of this framework towards the implementation and financing of the proposed actions, and the achievement of the Roadmap objectives.

The Roadmap presented in this section, provides strategic orientation for the Drina countries towards the achievement of objectives presented in the table above, as well as a more detailed explanation of the actions, derived from the participatory processes of the Drina Nexus projects implemented so far, that are suggested to be taken to achieve the objectives.

OBJECTIVES:



STRENGTHEN CROSS-SECTORAL COOPERATION IN THE TRANSBOUNDARY DRINA RIVER BASIN

As emphasised in Annex 1, Section 1.1 of the *Phase II Drina Nexus Assessment Report*, transboundary cooperation is among the key success factors in the implementation of Nexus solutions. Strengthening cross-sectoral cooperation at transboundary level has the potential to foster the achievement of all other objectives of the Roadmap, which in turn support achievement of broader objectives such as regional integration and EU accession, climate action and the Agenda 2030.

The cross-sectoral cooperation in the transboundary Drina Basin is expected to be strengthened through the implementation of two activities or processes proposed in the table above. One of them is the **planning and implementation of Nexus activities through the coordination framework** described in the introductory part of this section (Action 1 from the table above). The process will provide a platform for regular consideration of Nexus issues by the Basin countries and the Nexus-relevant sectors from those countries, their discussion and reaching agreements on further steps, which is among the key factors of strengthening the cooperation. This is a continuous activity that can start as soon as the coordination framework has been created (i.e., in 2022).

On the other hand, the **development of agreements between the countries** related to the management of natural / water resources (bilateral or multilateral, as appropriate) will be necessary to further strengthen the basis for cross-sectoral cooperation on Nexus issues at regional level and facilitate the implementation of Nexus approach in the Basin. This activity (Action 2 from the table above) is proposed to be performed in parallel to operations of the coordination framework, as another important activity that may contribute to the achievement of Objective 1. Action 2 should be coordinated with related actions foreseen under other objectives of the Roadmap (Actions 6, 7, 13, 15, 16, and 31), to ensure complementarity and avoid duplication. It is expected that the development of such agreements could also be facilitated considerably through the coordination platform. Therefore, Action 2 should also start as soon as the coordination platform has been put in place.

2

IMPROVE CROSS-SECTORAL GOVERNANCE IN THE DRINA RIVER BASIN

As explained in Annex 1, Section 1.2 of the *Phase II Drina Nexus Assessment Report*, the following improvements in cross-sectoral governance are needed to enhance the management of resources in the Drina Basin:

- Improved coordination between sectors within each country
- Improved monitoring, and data and information sharing in the Basin
- Broader engagement of stakeholders, and
- Greater focus on compliance with international legal instruments

In general, improvements in cross-sectoral governance are to be related to the riparian countries' activities in accordance with standards and rules accepted by them under multilateral environmental and climate agreements, and their EU accession-related commitments, described in Annex 1, Section 1.2 of the *Phase II Drina Nexus Assessment Report*.

The improvement of all aspects of governance listed above could positively be affected by the strengthening of cross-sectoral cooperation on transboundary level. Therefore, it is expected that joint work by the Drina riparian countries under the coordination framework described in the introduction to this section, would facilitate cross-sectoral governance improvements significantly. In addition, there are various possibilities that can be applied at national level, to further improve these aspects

For example, several possibilities for the **improvement of inter-sectoral coordination** (Action 3 from the table above) are proposed for the countries' consideration:

- Extend the inter-sectoral dialogue to share experiences, and potentially agree on further actions in the management of Basin resources, by using existing cooperation mechanisms, such as the Energy Community, ICPDR, ISRBC, RCC, and RRD SWG,
- Use the arrangements for monitoring and reporting on progress towards the SDGs or on climate change,
- Develop the practice of applying tools such as EIA and SEA, particularly in a transboundary context, thus ensuring, not only the assessment of environmental impacts of proposed activities / policies, but also adequate public participation,
- Use national-level assessments of inter-sectoral coordination to ascertain further opportunities for improvement.

The EU accession processes and funding may well be used in implementing the actions listed above.

The actions, aiming to **further improve monitoring, and data and information sharing** (Action 4), are proposed under another objective (Objective 5, Actions 11-14), as this issue was repeatedly addressed during the Drina Nexus process as a specific Nexus issue.

To **ensure broader engagement of stakeholders** in performing Nexus actions in the Drina River Basin (Action 5), tools developed and implemented by

ICPDR and ISRBC for the involvement of stakeholders at three levels (provision of information to the public, consultation with, and active involvement of stakeholders), could well be used in implementing this action. These include, primarily, consultation processes on draft Basin plans (RBM, flood risk management, sediment management plans) and strategies (e.g., on climate change adaptation). However, the use of ISRBC's publications and website for the provision of information to the broader public, as well as the Sava Water Council for consultation/ active involvement of a broad range of stakeholders from various sectors, may also be considered as possibilities. The Drina countries' efforts towards a broader involvement of stakeholders would certainly benefit from the operations of the coordination framework presented above.

Finally, strengthening compliance can contribute to a better cross-sectoral governance in the Basin. Therefore, **ways to strengthen compliance** should also be considered by the countries (Action 6), in coordination with Action 2 (i.e., development of agreements between the countries).

All actions, proposed with the aim of achieving Objective 2, have a continuous character and should be initiated at the earliest opportunity. However, it would be particularly important to achieve progress in implementing Actions 3 and 5 by 2023, to enable the efficient realisation of other actions foreseen in the document.

IMPROVE CROSS-SECTORAL POLICY INSTRUMENTS IN THE DRINA RIVER BASIN

As explained in Annex 1, Section 1.3 of the *Phase II Drina Nexus Assessment Report*, the following actions may help meet cross-sectoral policy-related prerequisites for advancing the implementation of the Nexus approach in the Drina River Basin:

- Development of stronger and more coherent national policies, notably across the areas of energy development, water, agriculture and land management, and tourism,
- Strengthening of multi-sector (and transboundary) planning, and
- Development of new bilateral (and multilateral) agreements concerning the Nexus-related issues (Action 2, explained above).

Development of stronger and more coherent national policies (Action 7) could be achieved by developing recommendations for increasing the integration of cross-sectorality in policy- and decision-making through specific instruments (such as SEA, EIA, integrated permitting, public participation requirements, or rules for inter-sectoral coordination and consultation), and by integrating the Nexus approach into strategic documents and local/ regional development plans. These actions could well be implemented by using the EU accession/

approximation processes and funding. Action 7 should particularly be coordinated with Action 2.

Strengthening of multi-sector (and transboundary) planning (Action 8) could be achieved through the improvement of the RBM planning process (in accordance with the EU WFD), by strengthening the involvement of the energy and agriculture sectors in the process. The use of the ISRBC framework for this purpose could provide a valuable contribution.

The Drina Group can play an important role in implementing Actions 7 and 8, either through coordination or the provision of support to the countries. Therefore, both actions are recommended to start as soon as the coordination platform starts operating.



4 BOOST SUSTAINABLE INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENTS IN THE DRINA RIVER BASIN

As indicated in Annex 1, Section 1.4 of the *Phase II Drina Nexus Assessment Report*, implementation of the Nexus approach could help boost infrastructure investments in the Drina River Basin, by:

- providing for coordination, evaluation of alternatives by taking different needs into account, as well as consultation, and
- seeking multipurpose, integrated, and transboundary investments, aiming to yield benefits for multiple sectors.

While positive effects, in this context, can be achieved through gradual **improvements in cross-sectoral governance and policy frameworks** (actions under Objectives 2 and 3), additional benefits could be provided by creating a framework by the riparian countries for the mutual prioritisation of green projects and investments, which may facilitate the countries' fundraising efforts. Such a framework could be provided by **developing a Basin strategy for green investments**, that would enable coordination of these investments across the Basin and sectors, and would complement and add value to regional frameworks, notably the *Green Agenda for the Western Balkans*.

The strategy should include a financing component, which can be prepared by making the following steps (Action 9):

- Exploring all possible sources of funding (e.g., user charges, local taxes, national budgets, EU funding, donor funding, climate funding),
- Developing a methodology for assessing and ranking specific infrastructure projects and investments in terms of Nexus-related performance, i.e., benefits across sectors, no significant harm and e.g. in the light of EU taxonomy for sustainable financing,
- Screening and evaluating Nexus-related project proposals being prepared in the basin (to harmonise initiatives and streamline green investments), and
- Compiling a portfolio of green priority projects.

In exploring possible funding sources, particular attention should be paid to the opportunities that may arise from the implementation of the *Green Agenda for the Western Balkans* and the SEE Regional Project Facility, to be created under the SEE 2030 Strategy.

Once the green investment strategy has been drafted, the following actions are proposed to be taken (Action 10):

- Undertaking a consultation process on the draft strategy (by using the tools developed by ISRBC and ICPDR),
- Agreeing upon the investment strategy,
- Undertaking fundraising activities and implementing the strategy, and
- Maintaining the portfolio of green projects and updating the strategy regularly.

The Drina Group can make an important contribution to the implementation of these actions, by coordinating the development of the strategy and supporting further steps towards its implementation. Accordingly, both actions are recommended to be launched as soon as the coordination platform has been created, with the aim of having the strategy in place in 2023.

5 IMPROVE MONITORING, AND DATA AND INFORMATION EXCHANGE IN THE DRINA RIVER BASIN

As indicated in the *Phase II Drina Nexus Assessment Report* (Annex 1, Section 1.5), there is a strong need for the improvement of monitoring of, and the data and information exchange on water quantity and quality in the Drina River Basin, which was emphasised frequently throughout the Drina Nexus process and the objective was therefore integrated in the *Drina SAP* [2].

To improve data and information sharing in the basin in general, better use of the systems already operating under ISRBC (Sava GIS, Sava HIS, Sava FFWS, together with hydrologic and hydraulic models pertaining to the Drina Basin) and ICPDR (MONERIS, a water quality model) should be made, as it was recognized on many occasions during the Drina Nexus process since 2016. All these systems cover the entire Drina Basin, their use and regular upgrades are supported at both political and expert level, and there is a network of institutions in all Drina countries, using the systems. Also, the policies on the exchange of GIS and hydrometeorological data, developed under ISRBC, involve institutions from all Drina countries.

As far as the exchange of **water quantity data and information** in the Basin is concerned, room for improvement (Action 11) is linked to the fact that institutions from the energy sector do not yet participate in data exchange on a continuous basis. As important data providers and users from the Drina Basin, these institutions from all countries of the Sava River Basin, including all Drina countries,

have been put on the list of preferred signatories to the hydrometeorological data exchange policy of ISRBC. However, although the power companies got involved in some activities within the framework of this policy (e.g., they provided the data necessary for the development of models under the coordination of ISRBC), they have not yet signed the policy. So, an effort should be invested to ensure that these institutions formally sign the data exchange policies and/or get actively and systematically involved in the data exchange in the region.

In addition, it would be important to assess the needs for, and the feasibility of, extending the existing (meteorological and hydrological) observation network in the Basin and agree upon further steps in this regard. This activity should also be implemented in close coordination with ISRBC. So, in terms of the implementation timeline, Action 11 needs to be aligned with the respective plan of ISRBC.

As for the **improvement of water quality monitoring**, the proposed actions are divided into those that might help improve monitoring in a relatively short period of time, and those aiming to facilitate the establishment of a long-term monitoring program in the Drina Basin.

Actions targeting short-term improvements (Action 12), to be implemented preferably within a year of the creation of the cross-sectoral/Nexus coordination framework, should include:

- Improvement of data regarding water quality and ensuring their comparability across borders, extending the coverage across the entire basin. This action should be implemented in cooperation with authorities in all three countries. The interaction between surface and groundwater should be tackled. Expanding the current studies to cover a broader area, preferably one representative of the whole basin, should be considered.
- Strengthening of mechanisms for inter-agency cooperation, including agencies responsible for water quality monitoring. Existing studies of pressures and risks could be used to screen substances for identification of priority indicators for specific locations and river sections.
- Further harmonisation of monitoring and assessment methods, particularly concerning water quality in surface waters (e.g., by building on the experience of the ICPDR Transnational Monitoring Network).
- Ensuring regular participation in proficiency testing exercises for measuring, sampling, and laboratory/ analytical quality control in the existing cooperation frameworks (ISRBC and ICPDR). Type-specific class boundaries of biological quality elements and physico-chemical parameters which support certain ecological status should be defined to facilitate hydrobiological monitoring.

- Establishing transboundary monitoring at jointly agreed priority locations. For joint priority setting and establishing monitoring mechanisms, international good practices, including guidance under the *UNECE Water Convention*, should be applied.

In addition to helping improve monitoring relatively shortly, this action will facilitate the establishment of a long-term monitoring programme, proposed as Action 13.

Actions aimed at establishing a long-term, harmonised programme of monitoring of the water quality and the water status in the Basin (Action 13), foreseen in the *Drina SAP* [2] and proposed to be implemented by 2027, should include:

- Identifying and registering pollution sources, identifying hotspots for different pollutants, and quantifying the impact on water quality (developing registers of environmentally significant releases and transfers of pollutants, emission registration by companies (e.g., by linking to water or operating licences), completing data on the production of hazardous substances in industry, and data on the consumption of products used in agriculture, such as pesticides and/or herbicides; particular attention should be paid to hazardous substances).

- Establishing a list of monitoring parameters and agreeing priorities for transboundary monitoring and assessment (creating the list based on the significant water management issues and key pressure sources; to that end, conducting a bilateral investigative monitoring of surface and groundwater, including monitoring for the definition of reference conditions, assessing the need to monitor certain heavy metals (where these occur due to wastewater discharges, mining and metal industry) or substances occurring in leachates downstream from non-sanitary landfills).
- Discussing and agreeing upon key elements of the monitoring program (defining monitoring network (measurement/sampling sites), sampling methods and schedule, methods for sample analysis, and data processing and analysis, including the physical, chemical, and biological indicators of water quality, and measurement units).
- Defining ways for the transboundary exchange of data and sharing of experience (possibilities of using the systems and tools already developed within the frameworks of ISRBC and ICPDR should be investigated).

- Developing respective protocols or integrating the agreed points into bilateral agreements to be developed under Action 2.

Regular meetings under the coordination of the Drina Group should be established to help ensure the exchange and harmonisation of results of the activities listed above.

Finally, the **development of a comprehensive water information system for the Basin** (Action 14), as an overarching platform providing the data and information on both water quantity and quality, is proposed in accordance with *Drina SAP* [2], through the implementation of the following actions by 2030:

- Discussing and agreeing upon key elements and features of the system.
- Developing and adopting a strategy for the implementation of the system (the strategy should be planned in a modular way, in phases, for flexibility; for consultation on the draft strategy, the tools developed by ISRBC and ICPDR should be used).

6

ADVANCE THE COORDINATION AND CO-OPTIMISATION OF FLOW REGULATION IN THE DRINA BASIN

Since the beginning of the Drina Nexus process, the issue of flow regulation has been considered as one of the key topics for several reasons that are summarised in Annex 1, Section 1.6 of the Phase II Drina Nexus Assessment Report. The actions, proposed in the Roadmap, follow the recommendations supported by high-level representatives of the riparian countries in October 2019 [5]. The focus of these actions is placed on:

- Developing and adopting a harmonised methodological approach to determining environmental flows.
- Conducting a dialogue between the power companies and authorities about operational rules for hydropower plants.
- Developing an agreement on coordination of the operation of hydropower plants and the flow regulation, including e-flows, in the Drina Basin, and
- Implementing the agreement.

The following activities are proposed to develop and adopt a harmonised methodological approach to determining environmental flows (Action 15):

- Assess the e-flow calculation possibilities in the Basin, based on current monitoring capabilities and legal requirements at national level.

- Review the legal aspects of methods for calculation of e-flows, determine the scope of e-flows, and select reference methods.
- Formulate a strategy for the selection of an e-flow method according to the degree of conflict, urgency in time and costs.
- Validate methods through selected pilot studies.
- Evaluate the role and potential for the use of e-flows in achieving the EU WFD-related environmental objectives (consider implementing this action in the context of preparation of the 2nd Sava RBM Plan, as appropriate).
- Develop common standard for e-flows.
- Adopt a harmonised approach to determining e-flows and upgrade the legal and regulatory basis accordingly.
- Develop respective protocols or integrate the agreed points into bilateral agreements, to be developed under Action 2.

In implementing the actions listed above, the best use of the systems and models developed under the ISRBC Framework (Sava GIS, Sava HIS, Sava FFWS, hydrologic and hydraulic models), as well as the outcomes of Action 11, should be made.

The following actions are proposed to establish a dialogue between power companies and authorities about operational rules for hydropower plants (Action 16):

- Support the dialogue by providing the necessary studies and data.
- Start discussing about developing harmonised or coordinated operational rules for all major HPPs to reflect relevant issues, water uses and functions.
- Promote transparency about the operational rules and regimes.
- Identify critical flow issues and related needs per river section. Consider, for example: flooding, sediment management, water shortage (including in relation to other/future uses), environmental flows, recreational uses, etc.
- Determine the role of flow control for riverbed deformation, floating solid waste, and pressures on water quality.
- Evaluate the relevance of selected international experiences on flow regulation for the Drina for an informed dialogue between the power sector and water management authorities. Consider flow regulation aspects formalised elsewhere (agreements, protocols, permit

conditions, contractual or other legal/institutional arrangements), e.g., conditions for spare reservoir capacity as a flood protection measure, compensating energy generation losses caused by deviations from the agreed discharge regime, specifying flow requirements according to hydrological conditions (e.g., precipitation as a threshold), determining flow releases to meet the ecosystem needs, trading of electricity and balancing services, coordinated sediment wash out, etc.

- Estimate the implications of the flow regulation adjustments on electricity generation to facilitate an informed dialogue between the power sector and water management authorities.

For the development of an agreement on coordination of the operation of hydropower plants and flow regulation, including e-flows, in the Basin (Action 17):

- Explore the possibilities of improving cooperation in the operation of hydropower plants in the case of floods and extreme weather events through better emergency preparedness and response planning.
- Define information-sharing methods between energy producers of the three Drina countries at operational level. Make the best use of the systems / models

operating in the ISRBC Framework (Sava GIS, Sava HIS, Sava FFWS, hydrologic and hydraulic models), and coordinate this action with Action 11.

- Define ways to improve inter-sectoral communication (both at national and transboundary level) for the operation and development of hydropower plants.

Actions 15-17 should be implemented by the end of 2023, so that the implementation of the agreement (Action 18) can start in 2024. It is proposed that the activities are conducted under the coordination of the Drina Group (with contributions from the Drina Expert Group on Flow Regulation and Environmental Flows, if applicable, depending on the agreed coordination framework).



7 ADVANCE THE COORDINATION AND CO-OPTIMIZATION OF FLOW REGULATION IN THE DRINA BASIN

As explained in Annex 1, Section 1.9 of the Phase II Drina Nexus Assessment Report, the need for improved management of wastewater and solid waste, both of which compromise water quality in the Drina River Basin, is obvious. Various solutions to this problem have been outlined, including strengthening of the transboundary cooperation, the improvement of governance and the institutional and policy framework, as well as the improvement of infrastructure, concerning the wastewater and solid waste management in the Basin. The following actions are proposed for the achievement of Objective 7.

To strengthen transboundary cooperation on the wastewater and solid waste management in the Basin (Action 19):

- Promote the harmonisation of legislation to better integrate the work among all relevant sectors (i.e., make use of the EU accession processes and funding in implementing the action).
- Make transboundary cooperation on wastewater management and solid waste management a core priority in transboundary cooperation. Ensure commitment and involve the respective sectors and

stakeholders. Coordinate the action with the RBM planning process, implemented under the ISRBC Framework.

To improve the governance for wastewater and solid waste management in the Basin (Action 20):

- Strengthen mechanisms for inter-agency cooperation including agencies responsible for water quality monitoring and departments responsible for each sector. Involve municipalities, as well as researchers and stakeholders in mechanisms for the coordination of monitoring.
- Continue to improve regular and systematic monitoring and analysis of water quantity and quality, particularly regarding pollution sources and impacts (the action will be implemented under Objective 5).
- Further develop data and information sharing, building on the RBM planning process and existing ISRBC database (the action will be implemented under Objective 5).
- Apply sustainable practices of agriculture and industry and mining regarding technology and maintenance.

- Apply the EU waste hierarchy – separate waste at source and ensure that waste reaches landfills or receives appropriate treatment.
- Engage stakeholders and run education campaigns to ensure community involvement in efforts to reduce waste and prevent pollution.

To improve the policy framework for wastewater and solid waste management in the Basin (Action 21):

- Develop legislation approximating the EU Directive 1999/31/EC on waste for transformation into sanitary landfills and a plan for implementation.
- Establish a stronger liability regime related to wastewater and solid waste to apply the 'polluter pays' principle, and develop plans for enforcement.
- Improve cooperation on issuing permits for the necessary infrastructure (wastewater treatment plants and landfills). Address the fragmentation of jurisdiction over water.
- Identify different remediation actions for already polluted areas and preventive actions to be taken in areas of possible future contaminations.

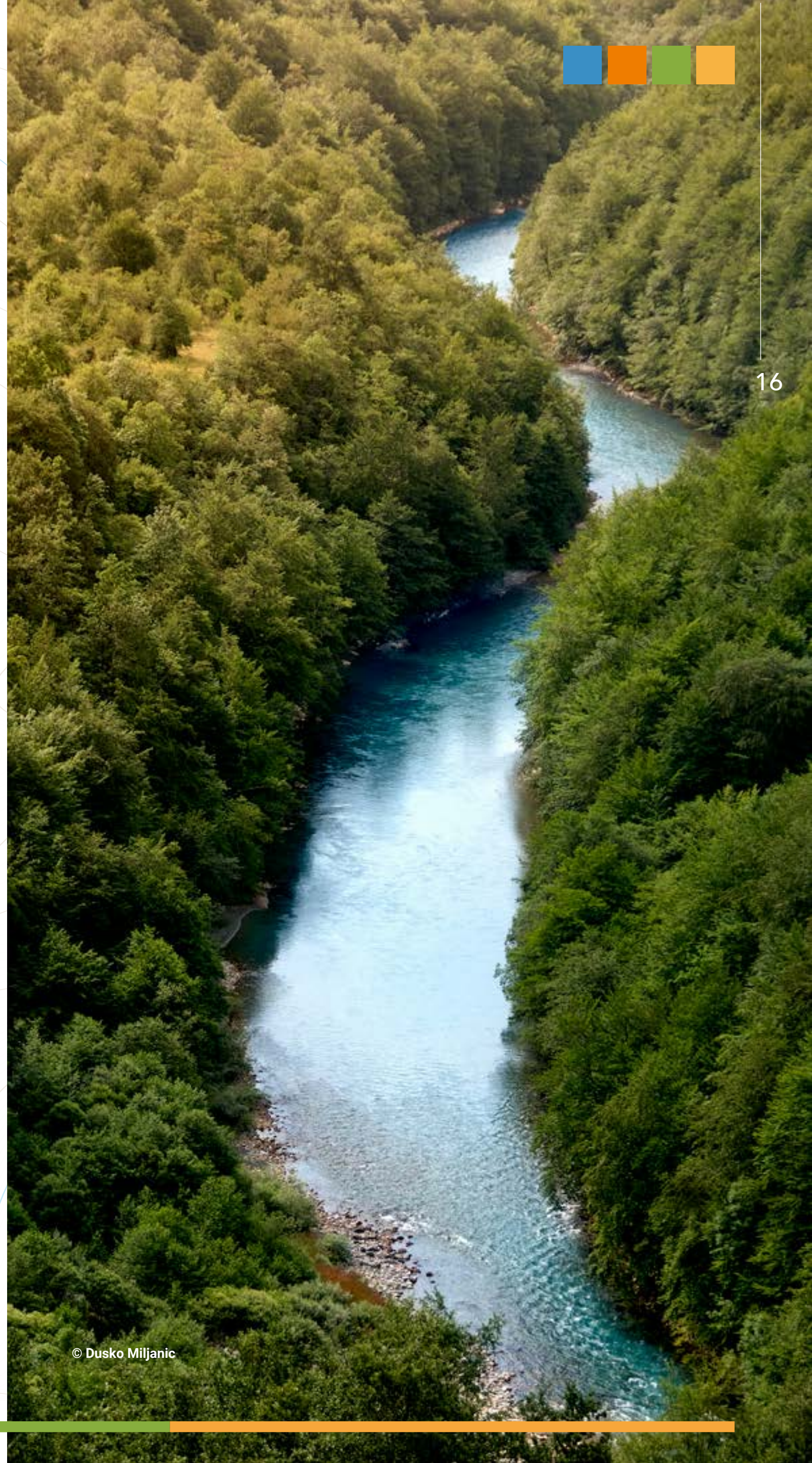
- Control illegal dumping, and promote sustainable practices in the agriculture, industrial and mining sectors.

To improve the wastewater and solid waste management infrastructure (Action 22):

- Evaluate potential financial arrangements to improve the capacity of utilities to resolve the infrastructural challenges of wastewater and solid waste management.
- Use and expand the current wastewater treatment plants for municipal and industrial use and ensure full coverage for agglomerations of more than 2,000 inhabitants.
- Collect and separate municipal and industrial waste and ensure full coverage. Explore developing partnerships between municipalities and energy companies to reduce solid waste at source.
- Develop existing landfills and ensure they meet sanitary requisites.
- Ensure that existing or abandoned industries and mining sites are treated, waste is collected, and toxic material is immobilised.

- Invest in wastewater and waste management infrastructure, including reconstruction of landfills. Undertake investments to comply with the law, particularly in wastewater treatment and solid waste management facilities, progressively and under realistic timeframes.

In planning and implementing the actions, the measures foreseen in the Sava RBM Plan should be kept in mind. The improvement of the wastewater and waste management infrastructure is foreseen in the Action Plan for the Implementation of the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans, where progress in this regard is expected to be reported by the countries by 2025, with a continuous further improvement in the area by 2030.



8

REDUCE THE PRESSURES ON WATER QUALITY, ASSOCIATED WITH EROSION AND SEDIMENTATION IN THE DRINA RIVER BASIN

The pressures on water quality, associated with the erosion and sedimentation processes in the Drina River Basin, have been acknowledged during the Drina Nexus process as an important issue and anti-erosion measures have been found to be of strategic importance for various sectors, including water management, economy, spatial planning, and environment in the Basin, as briefly explained in Annex 1, Section 1.10 of the Phase II Drina Nexus Assessment Report. Accordingly, the issue has been granted considerable attention and a scoping study was developed within Drina Nexus Follow-up Project, to analyse existing challenges and elaborate potential measures to counter the erosion and sedimentation problem in the Basin [7], ranging from the preparation of erosion maps and the implementation and monitoring of the erosion control measures to the awareness raising and the establishment of a sediment monitoring system for the Basin. The proposed measures were then supported by high-level representatives of the Drina countries, held within the framework of the same project in October 2019. The following actions are recommended to be undertaken in this area:

To **develop and update erosion maps to guide action** (Action 23):

- Prepare new erosion maps and define areas prone to erosion, every 10 years.
- Integrate erosion measures into spatial plans and forestry and agricultural masterplans, as well as flood risk management and RBM plans.
- Integrate the erosion and sedimentation map(s) developed in the Drina Nexus Follow-Up Project into the Sava GIS. Implement this action in close coordination with the ISRBC Secretariat.

To **apply and monitor appropriate erosion control measures** (Action 24):

- Apply measures to reduce erosion and torrent impact in a coordinated fashion.
- Prepare and maintain cadastre of erosion areas and structures built for the anti-erosion and torrent control purposes.
- Regularly assess the condition of existing structures and maintain them.
- Apply biological and biotechnical measures. Explore

synergies, e.g., with flood control, forestry actions and biomass production, where appropriate.

To **raise awareness, promote, and exchange good practices** (Action 25):

- Raise awareness of sectoral actors and the population about the consequences of inadequate land use practices and appropriate/recommended anti-erosion measures. Consider using the public participation tools developed and implemented under the ISRBC Framework.
- Exchange experience about good practices among the riparian countries.

To **establish a sediment monitoring system in the Basin** (Action 26):

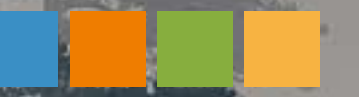
- Set up or reactivate monitoring of suspended sediment at priority locations in the Basin. As a starting point, consider the stations proposed for the Sava River Basin sediment monitoring system that is being developed under the ISRBC Framework.
- Regularly survey the existing reservoirs in cooperation with the HPP/dam operators and analyse the development of the sedimentation

process. Include the expected reservoir capacity loss due to sedimentation in the analysis.

- Regularly survey cross-sections along the Drina River and its main tributaries. Update the cross-section data in hydraulic models, based on the surveys.

The timeframe for the implementation of the above actions should be harmonised with respective plans and documents of ISRBC, including an Outline of the Sediment Management Plan for the Sava River Basin, which was approved in March 2022.

The Action Plan for the Implementation of the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans foresees the integration of soil protection into other relevant policies and the establishment of a regional partnership to facilitate knowledge exchange and identify best practices of the soil protection from pollution and degradation, under the joint coordination of RCC and RRD SWG, by 2024. This process may provide opportunities for creating synergies with the implementation of some activities under Objective 8.



9 FOSTER THE RENEWABLE ENERGY DEVELOPMENT IN THE DRINA RIVER BASIN

As indicated in Annex 1, Section 1.11 of the *Phase II Drina Nexus Assessment Report*, the renewable energy (RE) transition is a major issue in the Drina River Basin, and the implementation of the Nexus approach has been recognised as an excellent opportunity to cope with the current challenges and facilitate this process. As a result, a vast number of recommendations have been made during the Drina Nexus process on how progress towards achieving that goal can be made. Accordingly, a wide range of concrete actions have been proposed based on all categories of solutions – transboundary cooperation, the improvement of governance and policy framework, as well as the infrastructure improvements in this field. The following actions are proposed to be taken to contribute to achieving Objective 9.

To **support the renewable energy development in the basin through transboundary cooperation** (Action 27):

- Develop transboundary SEAs of renewable energy strategies or policies.
- Establish a high-level, strategic policy dialogue (among energy, water, agriculture, and environment sectors) to discuss common interests that can be achieved through sustainable RE deployment. Take advantage of ISRBC as a platform to discuss the basin-level effects of planned energy sector developments – notably hydropower. Take advantage of the platform provided by the Energy

Community to discuss implementation and financing of energy efficiency measures, as well as their impact.

- Update estimates of hydropower potential in the Basin. Consider climate change impacts and other environmental aspects. Revisit feasibility studies taking the current economic outlook into account.
- Develop a Basin-wide approach to hydropower development. Analyse good international practice and apply existing guidance for sustainable development of hydropower plans and projects (e.g., those developed by ICPDR, the World Commission on Dams, the International Hydropower Association, and the International Energy Agency). Agree strategically upon the approach to the development of small hydropower plants in the Basin.
- Accelerate the harmonisation of the legislative, regulatory, and institutional frameworks of the countries. Consider those related to water resources management and water use for energy generation, in accordance with the UNECE Multilateral Environmental Agreements and EU requirements.

To **improve governance to ensure sustainability of renewable energy deployment in the Basin** (Action 28):

- Map and quantify the potential for sustainable renewable energy development in the Basin, beyond hydropower. Re-evaluate the competitiveness of

hydropower compared to other technologies by considering the value of environmental assets and the needs for ecosystem protection. Understand the role of the Basin's natural resources in achieving the countries' targets on renewable energy, climate action, and other sustainable development objectives.

- Strategically prioritise sites and technologies that optimise RE exploitation by maximising positive and minimising/off-setting negative impacts (including transboundary). Build on the 'renewable-energy Nexus tool' for renewable energy deployment [8].
- Implement energy efficiency measures and assess the technical potential for wind, solar power, and biomass.
- Carry out transboundary SEA and EIA of programmes and projects requiring infrastructure in the basin, including energy projects. Coordinate this action with Actions 3 and 7.

To **improve national renewable energy policies to address trade-offs and facilitate synergies** (Action 29):

- Revise the existing policies to better address the need to promote/incentivise synergetic projects and projects with minimal trade-offs (e.g., consider renewable energy installations that are well-integrated in the built infrastructure, energy recovery from wastewater treatment, etc.).

- Revive regional electricity trade by removing national obstacles to efficient regional capacity allocation.
- Harmonise national legislation related to the water use for energy generation, the issuing of permits for hydropower projects and utilities, and the environmental flows.

To improve planning of renewable energy projects to foster the infrastructure investments in the Basin (Action 30):

- Address the trade-offs associated with the renewable energy deployment early in the decision-making process of selecting and siting projects. Compare technological alternatives and apply the principle 'avoid, mitigate, compensate' by effectively using spatial planning, permitting and assessments (notably SEA, EIA). Consider developing the non-hydro renewable energy infrastructure to reduce dependence on coal and on water resources in the Basin.
- Design renewable energy projects in a way that explicitly harnesses cross-sectoral synergies and multiplies social benefits.
- Explore co-financing opportunities (across sectors, countries, public and private) for such projects. Coordinate this action with Action 9 (drafting of the Nexus investment strategy).
- Ensure stakeholder involvement and public participation in the decision-making process to reduce the social and political risks associated with renewable energy investments. Involve local communities and other key stakeholders, as well as the public. Use the stakeholder involvement and public participation tools developed in the ISRBC Framework.
- Revise or update feasibility plans for new power plants if projects are not implemented within 5 years.

To accelerate the sustainable energy transition through a multi-stakeholder, cross-sectoral dialogue (Action 31):

- Accelerate and promote the recognition of practical means to achieving a sustainable energy transition in the country, through high-level political commitments.
- Establish targets and formulate a roadmap and a clear long-term policy direction to achieve them, also considering the regional dimension of energy cooperation.
- Apply the existing legal framework on renewable energy and introduce transparent and fair auction rules for renewable energy projects taking into account other mechanisms for small-size projects.
- Facilitate multi-stakeholder dialogues and public consultations focused on sustainable energy transition. Include both social and environmental considerations, and related benefits, in the process.
- Implement the cross-sectoral approach to renewable energy deployment by enhancing inter-ministerial cooperation initiatives.

To enhance sustainability of the biomass value chain (Action 32):

- Establish a clear methodology to quantify biomass consumption in households and to monitor progress towards achieving targets to 2030.
- Adopt a law specifically for district heating and heat energy systems and incentivise the sector, either at the production side (especially regarding heat and Combined Heat and Power) or the fuel side (incentives to produce modern feedstocks).
- Retain feed-in tariff regime for small-scale renewable energy production (the 'small-scale' threshold to be defined) and include additional

mechanisms for community energy initiatives and self-consumption.

- Implement a support scheme based on feed-in premiums through capacity auctions for large projects.
- Address the fossil fuel subsidies (especially coal) and consider measures for their phasing out, and other market distortions as a prerequisite for the sustainable energy transition.

The renewable energy development is given significant attention in SEE 2030 Strategy, within Priority 2 ("Promoting investment, research, and innovation in renewable energy to increase the share of carbon free energy supply and improve energy efficiency") of Dimension I ("Prosperity of the SEE Region") of the strategy. In addition, several actions relating to renewable energy development are included in the Action Plan for the Implementation of the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans, under the "Decarbonisation" pillar. These two frameworks (together with the Energy Community as the regional coordination body in the field) should be seen as precious windows of opportunities from the viewpoint of the implementation of Actions 27-32.

The implementation of Actions 27-32 can start as soon as the Nexus Coordination Platform becomes functional. In accordance with the timeline foreseen in the Action Plan for the Implementation of the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans and SEE 2030 Strategy, the improvement of the governance and policy frameworks (Actions 28 and 29) should take place by 2026, whereas the other actions should yield continuous improvement, starting from 2022.

10

STIMULATE THE AGRICULTURE, RURAL, AND ECO-TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN THE DRINA RIVER BASIN

During the Drina Nexus process, a variety of challenges and obstacles to the agriculture and rural development in the Basin have been identified, as summarised in Annex 1, Section 1.12 of the *Phase II Drina Nexus Assessment Report*. A set of actions related to the strengthening of transboundary cooperation in the Basin, the governance and policy improvements, as well as infrastructure investments, have been recommended to overcome the challenges and obstacles. The following actions have been proposed to facilitate achievement of Objective 10.

To **strengthen transboundary cooperation to support agricultural, rural, and eco-tourism development in the Basin** (Action 33):

- Accelerate the harmonisation of laws among countries taking advantage of the EU accession processes. Make use of the EU accession processes and funding in implementing the action.
- Develop bilateral and trilateral agreements for individual sectors, such as agriculture and tourism. Coordinate this action with Action 2.
- Exchange experiences in rural development. Consider the experiences, e.g., on modernisation of

agriculture, transition towards higher-value crops, and nature-based tourism. Make use of existing frameworks (e.g., RRD SWG).

To **improve the governance to foster the agriculture, rural, and eco-tourism development in the Basin** (Action 34):

- Promote integrated rural development in the Basin by exploiting the synergies between eco-tourism, agriculture, and renewable energy production.
- Improve sectoral and inter-sectoral communication and information sharing across the Basin (e.g., for tackling sedimentation and ensuring protection of agricultural soil).
- Ensure the participation of key stakeholders and the public in the development of plans, programmes and policies.
- Raise awareness among local communities on nature-based tourism and how to harness potential opportunities (e.g., rural entrepreneurship).
- Strengthen associations and action groups to plan initiatives and mobilise resources including those from regional development funds (e.g., IPA funds). Establish farmer-based organisations to

boost cooperation among farmers at local level and across borders.

- Develop capacities in the agricultural sector. The objectives are to: (i) speed up the effective implementation of long-term strategies on rural development, (ii) increase the ability of agricultural communities to access markets and financing, and to represent their interests in broader decision-making and policymaking processes, and (iii) adapt to climate change and manage natural resources in a sustainable way.
- Develop practice in SEA or sustainability impact assessment in land use planning. Coordinate this action with Actions 3, 7, and 28.

To **improve the policy framework for the agriculture, rural, and eco-tourism development in the Basin** (Action 35):

- Develop a mix of instruments to promote climate-smart and sustainable agriculture and forest management within an ecosystem approach. Consider modern technology including high-efficiency irrigation, agri-environmental measures, traditional agricultural products, organic agriculture, etc.

- Provide incentives to increase horizontal and vertical integration of producers and processors.
- Support farmers to increase agricultural productivity and climate resilience.
- Develop climate forecasting models, in particular seasonal forecasting, to support farmers.
- Ban fertilisers and pesticides not approved by the EU.
- Advance towards the establishment of transboundary protected areas, notably the Tara-Drina.

To **invest in infrastructure that supports sustainable rural development** (Action 36):

- Invest in road infrastructure.
- Develop tourism infrastructure (e.g., tourist paths to important biodiversity areas). In doing so, balance supporting local communities and nature conservation.
- Invest in flood control infrastructure, including through Nature-based Solutions.
- Invest in waste and wastewater management infrastructure, including reconstruction of landfills (Action 22).

The agriculture, rural, and eco-tourism development are addressed, both in SEE 2030 Strategy (within Priority 1: “Promoting economic growth through trade creation, sustainable and responsible tourism and enhancing transport connectivity” of Dimension I: “Prosperity of the SEE Region”) and in the Action Plan for the Implementation of the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans (as a separate pillar: “Sustainable agriculture”). As far as the implementation of Actions 33-36 is concerned, these two frameworks are considered as valuable sources of opportunities.

The implementation of Actions 33-36 can start as soon as the Nexus Coordination Platform has been created. According to the timeline from the Action Plan for the Implementation of the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans and SEE 2030 Strategy, the governance and policy improvements (Actions 34 and 35) are expected to take place by 2026, while other actions should result in continuous improvements starting from 2022.



ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ADA	Austrian Development Agency
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
EU	European Union
FFWS	Flood Forecasting and Early Warning System
GIS	Geographic Information System
GWP-Med	Global Water Partnership – Mediterranean
HIS	Hydrological Information System
HPP	Hydropower Plant
ICPDR	International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River
IPA	Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (of the EU)
ISRBC	International Sava River Basin Commission
RBM	River Basin Management
RCC	Regional Cooperation Council
RE	Renewable Energy
RRD SWG	Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group
SAP	Strategic Action Programme
SDIP	Sava and Drina Rivers Corridors Integrated Development Program (of the World Bank)
SEA	Strategic Environmental Assessment
SEE	South-Eastern Europe
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
WFD	Water Framework Directive (of the EU)



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