

Stakeholder Consultation – National Policy Dialogue (NPD) on Industrial Safety in Serbia, Belgrade, 20 September 2023 Summary and Conclusions

Main Meeting Results:

- Draft National Programme for Industrial Safety of Serbia reviewed and discussed;
- Timeline and actions to be taken to finalize the National Programme for Industrial Safety of Serbia agreed upon;
- Stakeholders are informed on ongoing work, priorities and gaps with regard to industrial accidents prevention, preparedness and response in Serbia;
- Cross-sectoral cooperation between all relevant actors strengthened;
- Capacities of relevant stakeholders dealing with industrial safety, disaster risk reduction and related policy areas were increased;
- Further needs for technical cooperation and capacity building and next steps in the NPD process in Serbia identified.

Organizers:

The meeting was led by the Ministry of Environmental Protection of Serbia (MEP) and organized with support from the secretariat of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Programme on Chemical Accidents.

Attendees:

The meeting was attended by the representatives of two competent authorities for the Convention's implementation, namely the MEP and the Ministry of Interior¹ as well as the representatives of other relevant national authorities, such as the Ministry of Construction, Traffic and Infrastructure and Ministry of Mining and Energy. The representatives of local self-governments of Belgrade, Novi Sad and Pancevo, as well as the representatives of industry, academia, Chamber of Commerce of Serbia and international organizations and donors such as UNECE, OECD, UNDP, WHO Regional Office, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, Embassy of Switzerland to the Republic of Serbia and to Montenegro also participated in the event. Furthermore, the national and international consultants to the Industrial Accident Convention, the Chair of the Working Party on Chemical Accidents from the United Kingdom and the Chair of the UNECE Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents from Norway contributed to the meeting. Participation was both in-person and online; for details, please refer to [the list of participants](#).

The meeting was opened by the Assistant Minister from the MEP of Serbia, the United Nations (UN) Resident Coordinator (RC) in Serbia and the principal administrator of the Chemical Accidents Programme of OECD.

Overview and summary of the meeting:

During the meeting, the feedback of all relevant state and non-state actors on the National Programme for Industrial Safety was collected. It was an essential step before the Programme's finalization to ensure that it encompasses the views of all stakeholders responsible for the prevention of, preparedness and response to industrial/chemical accidents in Serbia.

¹ Serbia nominated the following competent authorities under the Industrial Accidents Convention: Ministry of Environmental Protection, Ministry of Interior and Ministry for Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management. The representatives of the Ministry for Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management were also invited to the Stakeholder Consultation, however, did not attend it.

The meeting took place on 20 September 2023 and comprised three sessions with presentations and discussions with participants. In the opening, Ms. Đurić, Assistant Minister from the MEP, Ms. Jacob, UN RC in Serbia and Mr. Dagallier, Principal Administrator of the Chemical Accidents Programme from the OECD, welcomed the participants, highlighting the importance of the Stakeholder Consultation for the industrial accident prevention, preparedness and response in Serbia. Ms. Jacob, UN RC, underlined how the NPD process in Serbia contributes to attaining the global commitments, such as the Sustainable Development Goals and priorities under the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, as well as brings the country closer to the full implementation of multilateral environmental agreements, such as the [UNECE Industrial Accident Convention](#), and overall enhancement of industrial safety. The RC highlighted that preventing industrial accidents is key to ensuring industrial safety, which adds to the efforts of Serbia to address the triple planetary crisis and improve public health and occupational safety.

The first session allowed to collect the stakeholders' feedback on the current draft of the National Programme for Industrial Safety of Serbia, a document outlining the national strategy in terms of industrial accidents prevention, preparedness and response, which is being developed under the NPD process. The session allowed for an exchange of views and proposals on the draft document. The importance of climate change mitigation, horizontal coordination in public policy, the role of local self-governments, "one health" approach, risk assessment information on industrial facilities, knowledge transfer on industrial safety and prevention of accidents for the future of safe industry in Serbia were underlined. In addition, the operators confirmed their willingness to engage in activities aimed at strengthening industrial safety and environmental protection in the future.

The second session was featured by an overview presentation on international best practices and recommendations for developing industrial safety programmes and strategies; a presentation of the OECD's new legal instruments [the 'Decision-Recommendation of the Council concerning Chemical Accident Prevention'](#) and ['Guiding principles for Chemical Accident Prevention, Preparedness and Response'](#); and the WHO's presentation on the health's sector national contingency plan for chemical accidents in Serbia. This was followed by the presentation of the Co-chair of the UNECE's Joint Expert Group on Water and Industrial Accidents (JEG) on the work of JEG, its publications and current work topics that may be used also in Serbia.

The third session provided an overview of Serbia's ongoing work and priorities in industrial accident prevention, preparedness and response, as well as brainstorming on a potential Action Plan for the National Programme for Industrial Safety of Serbia and the next steps in the NPD process. The Assistant Minister of the MEP in Serbia shared the plan for developing bylaws in relation to the Law on control of major accident hazards involving dangerous substances. She highlighted the work on the Environmental Protection Strategy of Serbia, which will be aligned with the goals of the Sofia Declaration and five pillars of the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans: decarbonization, circular economy, depollution of the environment, protection and investment in biodiversity, as well as the sustainable food systems for sustainable rural livelihood. Following the National Programme for Industrial Safety finalisation, she informed the meeting about the plans of the MEP of Serbia to organize several public consultations according to the Law on the planning system of Serbia and with support by UNECE and other international stakeholders, as may be relevant. The participants emphasised the importance of intersectional cooperation and ensuring financial support for implementing the Programme.

During the closing session, the participants expressed their satisfaction with the results of the Stakeholder Consultation, as it allowed to identify Serbia's current needs in industrial safety policy and confirm the readiness of the relevant stakeholders to collaborate in enhancing the country's industrial safety. In particular, the representatives of operators and local self-governments showed interest in the future steps of the National Programme development. The meeting concluded with an agreement on the next steps of the NPD process in Serbia, both substantively and procedurally. More detailed information on the key outcomes and conclusions is available below.

Key outcomes and conclusions:

- The National Programme was highlighted to be a strategic document for enhancing the safety of industries in Serbia.
- The participants agreed on the timeline and next steps for the development of the Programme in the coming months, notably to provide additional comments/suggestions on the Programme by 29 September 2023. Furthermore, it was agreed to update the Draft Programme based on the feedback received during the Stakeholder Consultation by mid-October 2023, and aim to finalize it by end of 2023; and hold the 3rd NPD Steering Committee meeting in late 2023 or early 2024. This should be followed by the implementation of all necessary procedures according to the Law on the planning system of Serbia in order to submit the final draft of the Programme for the government approval.
- It was noted that Serbia faces adverse impacts of climate change, hence, it was suggested that the impact of climate change should be considered in the Programme, in regard with the increasingly frequent extreme weather events that can lead to industrial accidents (so-called Natechs). Additionally, the participants suggested that the Programme should comprise innovative approaches, such as cybersecurity and digitalization. The updated draft of the Programme should consider issues related to spatial planning, permit issuing and local risk assessments.
- The participants took note of existing gaps and needs, such as a need for improving infrastructure for treatment and collection of hazardous waste, need for more training of inspectors and establishment of a joint database for inspection, the necessity to transfer knowledge and enhance work on preventing accidents and highlighted the importance of considering these in the further update of the National Programme..
- The prevention of industrial accidents in policy implementation and enhanced collaboration and cooperation with various authorities and sectors were underlined to be indispensable for the environment, health and occupational safety. Hence, the participants took note of the importance of continuing the dialogue between all authorities and relevant stakeholders, given the cross-cutting character of the NPD process. The continued participation of the Chamber of Commerce (representing the business community), industry, and local self-governments in the NPD process should be sought.
- Enhanced local, municipal, and national communication is essential for responding to industrial accidents. It is also vital to ensure the public access to the information. In addition, the private sector has a significant role to play in preventing industrial accidents and in supporting the implementation of the Programme, including through the provision of resources.
- It was agreed that the MEP would invite additional ministries, such as the Ministry of Health and other relevant national authorities, to join the NPD process.
- Considerable attention was drawn to the financial aspects of the future implementation of the National Programme for Industrial Safety, along with the prioritization of planned activities. It was stressed that exploring opportunities for additional resources and having international partners' support is important to sustain the process of NPD on Industrial Safety in Serbia.
- The participants took note of existing legal and policy frameworks and guiding materials, such as the UNECE Industrial Accidents Convention, relevant EU legislation (Seveso-III Directive, EU Civil Protection Mechanism) and OECD Guiding Principles and agreed to consider them in the development and implementation of the Programme.
- Following the finalization of the National Programme for Industrial Safety, the necessity to develop an Action Plan with clear responsibilities, timelines, and necessary resources was agreed upon.

More information, including the meeting agenda, list of participants, and evaluation summary is available here:

<https://unece.org/environmental-policy/events/stakeholder-consultation-national-policy-dialogues-industrial-safety>