

Evaluation of the project “Evidence-based environmental governance and sustainable environmental policies in support of the 2030 Agenda in South-East Europe” (April 2022)

Final Progress report as of 31 December 2023

#	Recommendation	Management response	Responsibility	Date of implementation/comments
1	Project design: UNECE may consider developing a Theory of Change for projects in the future to describe the processes through which change comes about for individuals, stakeholder groups, ministries, industry or communities. The Theory of Change should provide an assumption (or series of assumptions) about how change will happen in a country, regardless of what a donor or project does or does not do.	<p>UNECE partially accepts the recommendation.</p> <p>A request that project managers develop a Theory of Change for project proposals is included in the ECE Concept Note and Project Document template, namely under sections 1. Context (development challenges), 10. Country level situation analysis and 11. Stakeholder analysis and capacity assessment. UNECE Programme Management Unit (PMU) will continue to monitor that such elements are adequately addressed in projects Concept Notes and Documents.</p> <p>PMU will also share with ECE project managers existing UN guidance on how to develop a theory of change when designing projects.</p> <p>Furthermore, PMU will bring this recommendation to the attention of DESA-Programme Management Team, the UNDA project Manager.</p>	Programme Management Unit	<p>Implemented as of 30 June 2023</p> <p>PMU updated the ECE Concept Note and Project Document template and included a section recommending the development of a project-wide theory of change for projects at or above USD 250,000 and requiring it for projects at or above USD 1 million.</p> <p>PMU shared with ECE directors and project managers existing UN guidance on how to develop a theory of change when designing projects on 30 January 2023, together with the updated ECE Concept Note and Project Document template.</p> <p>PMU shared with DESA-Programme Management Team, the UNDA project Manager, the revised ECE Concept Note and Project Document template and the UN guidance on how to develop a theory of change when designing projects on 15 February 2023, after distribution to ECE directors and project managers.</p>
2	Regional information sharing: 2.1: Acknowledging that sharing	UNECE accepts the recommendation.	Environment Division	<p>Implemented as of 31 December 2023</p> <p>The EPR unit organized three workshops on waste management, climate change, and disaster risk reduction based on Policies and practices on the</p>

#	Recommendation	Management response	Responsibility	Date of implementation/comments
	<p>information is already ongoing, continued sharing clean industry practices or step by step approaches for overcoming negative consequences of environmental hazards and waste across countries in the region.</p> <p>2.2: Depending on funding available, organise a workshop for all project countries inviting representatives of governments, CSOs/ UN system and EU active in those countries, to share experiences, network, and develop partnerships for future needs. Alternatively organise workshops at national level.</p>	<p>The Environmental Performance Reviews (EPR) unit will address environmental risks/hazards and waste in reviews of countries at their request and to share information on reviews and recommendations with all countries in the region (2.1).</p> <p>Subject to the availability of resources, the EPR unit will organize a regional workshop for EPR countries on environmental risks/hazards and/or waste (2.2).</p>		<p>basis of UNECE Environmental Performance Reviews.</p> <p>About 20 countries participated in the workshops. In order to prepare the workshop, EPR related recommendations were assessed including the participation of CSOs.</p> <p>The workshops were carried out in September and October 2023. The main objectives were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a platform for countries of Eastern and South-eastern Europe, Central Asia and the Caucasus to share their experiences in addressing respective topics and to support cooperation between the relevant experts. • Discuss opportunities and challenges considering the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals • Improve the understanding of available tools and instruments. • Brainstorm, discuss and identify solutions to overcome challenges and remove bottlenecks.
3	<p>Climate change: Consider how to best mainstream climate change considerations into all projects, linking with the UNECE Climate Task Force/ Regional Advisors, whilst also ensuring linkages to relevant results groups of UN Country Teams.</p>	<p>UNECE accepts the recommendation.</p> <p>The Environment Division, in consultation with PMU, the ECE Climate Action Task Force and ECE Regional Advisors, will discuss how to best mainstream climate change considerations into future projects, subject to member States concurrence, to ensure that they contribute to member States' attainment of their UN global commitments, namely those contained in the Paris agreement. The consultation with PMU and</p>	<p>Environment Division and Programme Management Unit</p>	<p>Implemented as of 31 December 2023</p> <p>The Environment Division has arranged discussions with PMU, the ECE Climate Action Task Force and ECE Regional Advisors on how to best mainstream climate change considerations into future projects. Following a review of the climate change mainstreaming strategies by the UN and other international organizations, UNECE has updated its project Concept Note template in 2023, with one section on <i>Contribution to climate change mitigation and adaptation</i>. The Evaluation Policy was also revised in December 2021, highlighting the Paris Climate Agreement of 2015 as one relevant internationally agreed principle to be promoted and uphold in evaluation practice.</p> <p>The UNECE secretariat to the Industrial Accidents Convention has supported mainstreaming climate change and industrial safety considerations, by developing its work on Natech (natural hazard triggered technological accidents). A joint UNECE/OECD Seminar on Natech risk management was organized on 29 November 2022 as part of the twelfth meeting of the</p>

#	Recommendation	Management response	Responsibility	Date of implementation/comments
		<p>ECE Regional Advisors will among others aim at ensuring linkages to relevant results groups of UN Country Teams.</p>		<p>Conference of the Parties (CoP-12). https://unece.org/info/Environmental-Policy/Industrial-Accidents/events/372467</p> <p>The development of OECD/UN/EU JRC Guidance on Natech risk management was initiated in 2022 and will be pursued actively in 2023, aiming to finalize it by end-2023, to publish in 2024. Natech risks are also being considered in the majority of the assistance activities in EECCA and SEE countries. More specifically, UNECE supported Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan in addressing industrial accident including Natech risk in national DRR documents under a joint UNECE-UNDRR project during the period 15 August 2022 - 15 Jan 2023.</p> <p>The Environmental Monitoring and Assessment Programme has supported countries in the past to enhance their environmental monitoring and statistics including in the area of climate change. In 2023 a regional training on the revised UNECE indicators on air and related to climate change was conducted under the programme with funding from the EU. https://unece.org/info/Environmental-Policy/Environmental-Monitoring-and-Assessment/events/375056</p> <p>UNECE is a leading member of the UN inter-agency Issue-based Coalition (IBC) on Environment and Climate Change. UNECE worked with UNEP and UNESCO to issue Guidance on integrating the Environment and Climate Change in Processes for UNSDCF in July 2021, and follow-up training in December 2021-January 2022. UNECE led the preparation of an IBC policy brief on the importance of a continued focus on climate action in support of UNCT engagement with Governments in Europe and Central Asia, issued in October 2022.</p> <p>The Water Convention has supported mainstreaming of climate change and water among its work programme 2022-2024 and this issue will be discussed at the Water Convention 14th meeting of the Task Force on water and climate that will be held in February 2024 in Geneva. https://unece.org/info/Environmental-Policy/Water-Convention/events/386480</p> <p>Under the Air Convention, UNECE will start a new project on aligning air pollutant and GHG emission inventories development in Central Asian countries in 2024.</p>

#	Recommendation	Management response	Responsibility	Date of implementation/comments
				Regional Adviser on Environment is co-chairing Results Groups in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. While co-leading the discussion on joint workplans and joint resource mobilization, she ensures the integration of climate change aspects, in particular in the Vision 2030 Fund in Uzbekistan she continuously advocating climate actions to be prioritized for the second resource allocation strategy.
4	Capacity building:	UNECE accepts the recommendation.	Environment Division	Implemented as of 31 December 2023
	4.1 Continue to develop projects where UNECE provides support in prioritizing recommendations arising from EPRs. Continue to work with staff in ministries who understand the SDGs and have energy and enthusiasm to move the agenda forward.	The EPR unit, and other units in the Environment Division, will continue to develop project proposals to provide support to UNECE member States in prioritizing recommendations arising from EPRs (4.1).		<p>Under the Air Convention, a recent project proposal for consideration by the EU Delegation in Uzbekistan takes the recent EPR recommendations for the country into account.</p> <p>In the EPR unit, project proposals were elaborated that successfully mobilized resources for the holding of three workshops to support reviewed countries in their implementation of EPR recommendations. The three workshops, held in September and October 2023, looked at policies and practices regarding waste management, climate change and disaster risk reduction. In each case, the workshop programme included introductions to national policies, strategies and regulatory frameworks, with an emphasis on identifying replicable initiatives appropriate to the reviewed countries.</p>
	4.2: Encourage countries to develop their own environmental training programmes including systems where training of trainer capacity building becomes systematic and reaches inspection authorities responsible for environmental enforcement.	The Environment Division will encourage countries to develop their own environmental training programmes including systems where training of trainer capacity building becomes systematic and reaches inspection authorities responsible for environmental enforcement (4.2).		<p>Under the Environmental Monitoring and Assessment Programme support is provided to UNECE member States in transition to enhance their environmental monitoring and assessment systems and to follow-up on EPR recommendations. In 2022 the programme has for example, initiated support for the development of a National State of the Environment report in Uzbekistan which was finalized in December 2023.</p> <p>Moreover, the Air Convention recently developed a project proposal on air quality monitoring and management, including training, in Uzbekistan, which took the recommendations on air protection in the 3rd Cycle EPR of Uzbekistan (2020) as a basis.</p>
	4.3 Apart from technical environmental issues, UNECE should also unpack related aspects of governance where member States require support–	The Environment Division will unpack related aspects of governance where member States require support (4.3).		<p>Following requests from countries undergoing the EPR process, the EPR unit organized three workshops in Skopje, which helped unpacking aspects of governance related to waste management, climate change and disaster risk reduction.</p> <p>The EU4Environment (Green Economy in Eastern Partnership Countries)</p>

#	Recommendation	Management response	Responsibility	Date of implementation/comments
	e.g. transparency, accountability aspects; how to develop an accountability chain; or how to be inclusive and unlock citizens participation.			<p>project implemented by the Espoo Convention secretariat includes multiple events on strategic environmental assessment (SEA), with each including a component on public participation. https://unece.org/environment-policy/environmental-assessment/eu4environment</p> <p>For example, within an SEA pilot project in Azerbaijan, a public hearing on the SEA for the draft master plan of the city of Ganja was held in September 2023. https://unece.org/environmental-policy/events/kick-event-pilot-strategic-environmental-assessment-draft-master-plan</p>
	4.4 The UNECE nexus approach must continue to be shared with member states. During UNECE missions hold workshops on the nexus approach in a concrete way. Continue to encourage ministries to engage on the SDGs across sector silos, using projects such as these as a means.	The Environment Division will continue to share with member States the UNECE nexus approach and to encourage ministries to engage on the SDGs across sector silos, including through workshops and projects, subject to the availability of resources (4.4).		<p>UNECE has, among others, pursued a nexus approach, by supporting the establishment of inter-institutional working groups on mine tailings safety and the prevention of accidental water pollution in Kazakhstan and Tajikistan and continuing to pursue the engagement of relevant institutions and their cross-sectoral considerations in 2023. A National Policy Dialogue (NDP) on Industrial Safety in Serbia, initiated since 2021 under the leadership of the Ministry of Environmental Protection, in close cooperation with the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management, with support by the UNECE, under the auspices of its Industrial Accidents Convention, also engages various institutions and serves as a platform to address respective cross-sectoral concerns and gaps. https://unece.org/info/Environmental-Policy/Industrial-Accidents/events/353193</p> <p>A Launch meeting, two NPD Steering Committee Meetings and a Stakeholder Consultation meeting have been held in the period 2021-2023. A National Programme on Industrial Safety, a document outlining the national strategy in terms of industrial accidents prevention, preparedness and response, is being developed under the NPD. The work under the NPD on Industrial Safety in Serbia will continue in 2024.</p>
5	EU Accession focus: Any new projects that support Western Balkans countries to implement the SDGs should also try to align (somewhat) with the EU Green Agenda. Highlight how the EPR methodology also facilitates EU	<p>UNECE partially accepts the recommendation, while recalling that UNECE does not promote the instruments of regional economic integration organizations.</p> <p>The Environment Division will, in</p>	Environment Division	<p>Implemented as of 31 December 2023</p> <p>The Environment Division has not initiated any new projects dedicated to supporting Western Balkans countries to implement the SDGs. However, the Environment Division co-chairs the regional UN Inter-agency Issue-based Coalition on Environment and Climate Change and the Environment Division organized, for example, a webinar on 29 November 2022 on “Enabling policies and strategic frameworks: towards a more strategic approach to</p>

#	Recommendation	Management response	Responsibility	Date of implementation/comments
	law and how EU law is built on and references major UNECE Conventions.	any new projects that support Western Balkans countries to implement the SDGs, take into consideration the EU Green Agenda. The EPR Unit will continue to recognize links with EU law in its reviews of countries that are EU members, candidates or partners.		<p>supporting the green transition”. The accompanying guidance note refers repeatedly to the EU Green Deal. The webinar was the last in a series of five events supporting UN Country Teams in their assistance to member States in the green transition. The dialogue with UN Country Teams on this topic continued in a regional workshop organized by the Coalition in November 2023, in which a case study was presented from the West Balkans of “Growth through Green and Just Recovery from COVID-19” in the context of the EU agenda. The Coalition has been invited to continue fostering coordinated UN support on environment and climate change in the West Balkans, inevitably in line with the EU Green Agenda.</p> <p>The next EPRs will be of Montenegro and Republic of Moldova, both EU candidate countries, and the same practice as employed recently for Romania (a recent EU member State) https://unece.org/info/Environment-Policy/Environmental-Performance-Reviews/pub/363321 and Armenia (which has a Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement with the EU), in terms of linking the review of the legal and policy framework to EU law and policy, will be applied as per the EPR methodology. Meanwhile, workshops held in North Macedonia in September and October 2023 to support countries in implementing waste- and climate change-related EPR recommendations (see recommendation 4.1 above) referred to the relevant EU laws.</p>
6	<p>Politics and advocacy</p> <p>6.1: At policy level, UNECE must continue to work with high level representatives from member State ministries of environment to convey messages of commitments made to SDGs, climate change agreements and human rights.</p>	<p>UNECE accepts the recommendation.</p> <p>The Environment Division will work with member State ministries of environment to convey messages of commitments made to SDGs, climate change agreements and environmental human rights (6.1).</p>	Environment Division	<p>Implemented as of 31 December 2023</p> <p>As co-chair of the Result Groups in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, the Regional Adviser on Environment conveys messages of commitments made to SDGs and climate change agreements at various platforms such as at the joint UNSDCF Steering Committee and SDG Forums.</p>
	6.2: Linking to UN information campaigns (twitter cards or other social media methods) may be useful to push the 2030 Agenda and environmental governance	The Environment Division will continue to push the 2030 Agenda and environmental governance issues, through social media (6.2).		The Environment Division generally relies upon the UNECE Information Unit for social media posts, while providing source materials. However, the Water Convention has its own social media posts. Together, they make several social media posts every week.

#	Recommendation	Management response	Responsibility	Date of implementation/comments
	issues.			
	6.3: CSOs should be considered a stronger part of the environment advocacy coalitions. More encouragement could be placed on member States to consult and work closely with CSOs in projects that deal with environmental governance. This means government provides adequate time for others to comment and agree action plans and roadmaps. Preparations for UNECE country missions should ensure that they leave time to engage early with many stakeholders including CSOs and encourage national coordinators to ensure their voice to be brought to the table.	The Environment Division will continue to encourage member States to consult and work closely with CSOs in projects that deal with environmental governance and ensure that country missions engage early with many stakeholders including CSOs (6.3).		<p>Projects in the Environment Division routinely include work with CSOs. Each EPR mission includes on its first or second day a plenary meeting between the international team of experts and national civil society organizations. Moreover, in the course of an EPR mission, international experts could have individual meetings with representatives of national CSOs. In the period since the evaluation, this has occurred in all EPR missions: Kyrgyzstan (May 2022), Mauritania (December 2022) and Tajikistan (November 2023).</p> <p>A typical example from outside the EPR unit is from the EU4Environment (Green Economy in Eastern Partnership Countries) project implemented by the Espoo Convention secretariat. Two training workshops on strategic environmental assessment were held in Armenia in October and November 2023 under the project with representatives of CSOs participating.</p> <p>https://unece.org/environment-policy/environmental-assessment/eu4environment</p>
7	Implementing legislation	UNECE accepts the recommendation.	Environment Division	Implemented as of 31 December 2023
	7.1: Follow up on what was approved and how it was implemented in a year or so. Find out which EPR recommendations are not yet being implemented and encourage civil society organisations to continue to play a 'watchdog' role.	The EPR Unit will continue to monitor which EPR recommendations are not being implemented, through requests for updates sent to member States, and encourage civil society organisations to continue to play a watchdog role when meeting them during EPR country missions (7.1).		See recommendations 2.1 and 2.2.
	7.2: Continue efforts to locate sources of finance to demonstrate and pilot what can be achieved to improve the	The Environment Division will continue to raise funds to demonstrate and pilot what can be achieved to improve the		Under the Air Convention, a project proposal for two workshops on emission inventory development in the Western Balkans was recently submitted for consideration by the Nordic Council of Ministers. The outcome of the proposal is not yet known.

#	Recommendation	Management response	Responsibility	Date of implementation/comments
	<p>environment. Funding for conveying meetings that help build environmental advocacy coalitions is also suggested, so results/innovations are shared more widely. Consider whether resources can be obtained from the Western Balkans Investment Framework</p>	<p>environment and will consider whether resources can be obtained from the Western Balkans Investment Framework (7.2).</p>		<p>Under the Water Convention a project for cross sectoral cooperation in transboundary basins in the Western Balkans has recently been funded (Dec. 2023) by the Italian Ministry of Environment and Energy Security for the period 2024-2026.</p>
8	<p>Learn and draw lessons from the collaborative gender mainstreaming process that took place in Serbia. The need to continue capacity building on gender mainstreaming as it relates to environmental policy and at local level implementation is important. A regional workshop to share experience may be useful.</p>	<p>UNECE accepts the recommendation.</p> <p>The Environment Division will learn and draw lessons from the collaborative gender mainstreaming process that took place in Serbia, and use the lessons learned in further capacity building on gender mainstreaming in environment policy at national and local levels.</p>	<p>Environment Division</p>	<p>Implemented as of 31 December 2023</p> <p>Following a series of training sessions organized in Serbia in 2021 and at the request from countries in the Western Balkan region, an experience sharing workshop on the integration of gender aspects into environmental policies in the Western Balkan region was held on 9 February 2022, bringing together participants from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia. The main objective of the online workshop was to share experiences and discuss challenges and opportunities on gender equality policy frameworks and practical approaches to gender mainstreaming in environmental policy amongst national institutions. https://unece.org/info/Environmental-Policy/Environment-and-Gender/events/365077</p> <p>Gender has been mainstreamed in the new guidance document “Updated Strategies for Monitoring and Assessment of Transboundary Rivers, Lakes and Groundwaters” prepared in the framework of the Water Convention in 2022. https://unece.org/environment-policy/publications/updated-strategies-monitoring-and-assessment-transboundary-rivers</p> <p>A webpage was created to disseminate information on activities related to gender mainstreaming into environmental policies under MEAs and policy programmes, https://unece.org/environment-policy/environment-and-gender</p> <p>Under the Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme (THE PEP) a representative from the Serbian Ministry of Environment presented, in a seminar on gender mainstreaming, the experience from the process that took place under the EPR UNDA project. Further work on gender issues is to be undertaken under THE PEP.</p>