

NORTH MACEDONIA

Project: Strengthening institutional capacities for mainstreaming quadruple synergy schemes in implementation of the National Action Plans (NAPs) for implementation of SAICM and inclusion of Minamata Convention

Second Independent Assessment of the Closed Projects under the Special Programme Report (December 2024)

RESULTS

Overall Assessment

The project made progress across four Core Indicator Criteria, achieving its planned objectives to varying degrees. It facilitated the development of a preliminary web-based portal to consolidate chemicals and waste management data and contributed to capacity-building efforts. Additionally, the project updated the National Implementation Plan (NIP) under SAICM and developed an action plan for the quadruple synergy scheme. However, challenges remained regarding the uncertain establishment of a dedicated coordination unit for chemicals and waste-related instruments within the Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning, and the delayed operationalization of the webbased portal.

Implementing partner:

POPs Unit at North Macedonia
Ministry of Environment and
Physical Planning (MOEPP)

Agreement timeframe:

13 Apr 2020 – 30 Jun 2022
(Initially to 31 Mar 2023, with 1
amendment)

Budget: 198,556 USD

Results & progress by Core Indicator Criteria

The project covered four of the existing eight Core Indicator Criteria, namely:

Criterion 1.1: Level of development of national chemical/waste database

The grey color coding reflects the fact that as of the time of this assessment the portal is developed but not yet operational or integrated as planned.

RATING

Project Start → Project End



0 No database or registry

1 Database or registry covering 1 Multilateral Environmental Agreement (MEA)

2 Database or registry covering 2 MEAs

3 Database or registry covering 3 MEAs

4 Database or registry covering 4 MEAs

5 Database or registry covering 4 MEAs and SAICM

SPECIFIC RESULTS:

- The project facilitated the development of a preliminary version of a web-based portal designed to consolidate chemicals and waste management data and enhance intersectoral coordination. This centralized platform aimed to serve as a repository for documents, legislative resources, and policy updates, while also providing automated notifications to registered members about updates or newly uploaded materials.
- For the development of this platform there was an engagement with representatives from Serbia who had already developed and operationalized a platform for intersectoral collaboration in chemicals management. During this exchange, the Serbian team shared insights on platform design, user engagement strategies, and technical features that facilitate multi-stakeholder coordination and data sharing. These sessions aimed to provide practical guidance and lessons learned that could inform North Macedonia's efforts to develop its own system.
- It should be noted that, this activity was not part of the project's original design. Due to COVID19 travel restrictions and cancelled workshops, funds were redirected to portal development. However, due to the personal circumstances of the portal developer, the work on its completion was delayed. According to the project manager, work is still ongoing, but as of this assessment, the portal's completion remains uncertain.

Criterion 1.2: level of necessary for chemical/waste management expertise

RATING

Project Start → Project End



- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>0 No knowledge or expertise available</p> <p>1 Not enough personnel in at least one priority Ministry, Department or Agency have basic training in chemical and/or waste management</p> <p>2 Enough personnel in at least one priority Ministry, Department or Agency have basic training in Chemical and/or waste management</p> | <p>3 Enough personnel from 1 or 2 Ministry, Department or Agency have been trained in chemical and /or waste management and know how to apply it into country planning</p> <p>4 Enough personnel in 3 or 4 Ministries, Departments or Agencies have been trained in chemical and/or waste management and can transfer their knowledge to colleagues for day-to-day use</p> <p>5 All the required personnel have necessary expertise and can integrate chemical management into the development planning process</p> |
|---|---|

SPECIFIC RESULTS:

The project included a capacity-building initiative to support institutional preparedness for implementing international chemicals and waste conventions. A hybrid workshop held in April 2022, in collaboration with RECETOX¹, focused on training stakeholders for the quadruple synergy scheme. RECETOX contributed tailored presentations, and North Macedonian focal points shared their progress on implementing the BRS and Minamata Conventions, and SAICM. Designed with international reach, the workshop invited participants from the Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) region, with RECETOX and regional representatives joining online, ensuring broader knowledge exchange and collaboration.

Criterion 1.3: Existence and level of development of chemical/waste management unit or department

RATING

Project Start → Project End



- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>0 Nothing had been done</p> <p>1 The Government decided on a mandate to establish a unit</p> <p>2 The Government developed a framework document detailing how the unit would be established and would operate</p> | <p>3 The unit was established and had an executive director</p> <p>4 The unit was established and had an executive director. In addition, standard operating procedures were developed, and staff were hired</p> <p>5 The unit had all human, financial and physical resources and was fully operational</p> |
|---|---|

SPECIFIC RESULTS:

- A key objective of the project was the development of terms of reference and a framework document for a new division under the Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning to coordinate the implementation of the Basel, Rotterdam, Stockholm, and Minamata Conventions as well as SAICM. The institutional assessment consultant developed this framework, as documented in the Institutional Assessment Report (April 2022) and the National Plan for Synergy Scheme (June 2022), both of which explicitly recommended establishing such a division.
- The Head of the Department of Chemicals at the Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning (MoEPP) supports the establishment of such a division and envisions the formal integration of the POPs Unit (implementing partner of the closed SP project) to undertake these responsibilities within the Ministry. However, changes at senior leadership levels have contributed to uncertainty regarding the commitment to establish the proposed division.

Criterion 2.1: Level of development and implementation of chemical/waste management policy, plan or strategy

RATING



0 There was no strategy, policy or plan

1 The strategy, policy or plan was proposed

2 The strategy, policy or plan was adopted

3 The strategy, policy or plan was in place and being implemented

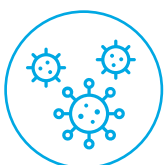
SPECIFIC RESULTS:

- The project successfully updated the National Implementation Plan (NIP) under the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM). This revised plan addressed gaps identified during legislative and institutional analyses and outlined national priorities for improving chemicals management across their life cycle.
- The project also developed an action plan for implementing the quadruple synergy scheme (BRS and Minamata Conventions). This plan included measures to enhance coordination among focal points and integrate Minamata Convention provisions into existing frameworks. Stakeholders emphasized the need for sustained engagement and resource allocation to ensure the plan's effective implementation.

FACTORS AFFECTING PERFORMANCE



Socio-political factor: The project faced moderate impacts from socio-political factors, including disruptions due to the COVID-19 pandemic and frequent changes in leadership positions within the Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning. Additionally, wider consultations on the updated National Action Plan (NAP) were delayed due to elections.



COVID-19: The pandemic moderately affected project timelines and methodologies, necessitating shifts from in-person activities to hybrid and virtual formats.



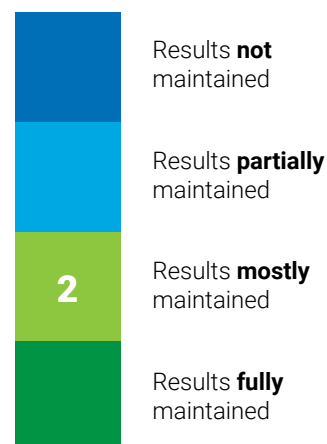
Gender: Over half of the project participants were women, showcasing active engagement of women in chemicals and waste management activities.

SUSTAINABILITY

The project results are **mostly maintained** due to the following:

- While no dedicated post-project financing was secured, minimal support from the national budget ensures continuity of obtained results – implementation of the developed plans. Challenges persist with retaining the trained staff due to their turnover.

RATING After the End of the Project



LESSONS LEARNED

Adaptive management helps ensure project flexibility in the face of unforeseen circumstances. Due to COVID-related travel restrictions, project funds were reallocated to the portal development. This flexibility in planning ensured that resources addressed critical needs. Although the web portal has not yet operationalized, it holds significant potential for coordinating activities and sharing knowledge related to the implementation of the relevant conventions.

Capacity building needs to be institutionally embedded. While workshops increased individual knowledge, the lack of institutional continuity highlighted the need for structured systems to retain and institutionalize capacity.

Alignment of institutional structures strengthens long-term outcomes. Incorporating the Minamata Convention into the existing triple synergy scheme ensured better coordination, minimized duplication, and aligned national strategies with international chemical management obligations.

¹ RECETOX is the Stockholm Convention Regional Centre hosted by the Research Centre for Toxic Compounds in the Environment at Masaryk University, Czech Republic