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ACTION PLAN FOR HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA UNTIL 2030: MONITORING AND EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

Introduction

The Republic of Macedonia has serious issues with the state of the environment and with environmental risk management. Issues of concern include the general driving forces and the pressures on the environment as well as the way in which natural resources are used. Negative demographic trends with population moving towards urban areas carry an additional pressure on top of the processes of industrialization, urbanization and motorization. Fossil fuel based electricity generation and traffic are among the main pollution sources.

All environmental media are at risk, starting first of all with ambient air, but there are also the registered phenomena of high noise levels, inappropriate treatment of solid and liquid waste, a number of historical as well as current industrial hotspots with an unresolved status and, certainly, the pressure and the risks brought about by climate change.

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Strategy and Action Plan

The process of development of strategic documents addressing environmental health issues in the Republic of Macedonia began in 2013, at the initiative and upon request of the Ministry of Health and with expert/technical assistance from the World Health Organization. Following the initial document which provided an overview of the situation and an estimate of the areas where actions are needed, the process proceeded with the involvement of intersectoral working groups composed of representatives of the public administration, technical and academic experts and institutions from all relevant areas of this cross-cutting and multimedia issue, as well as of the civil society. Based on the approach involving a public debate and presentation of the existing evidence, and by using the conceptual model of driving forces – pressures - actions, priority areas for action were defined for further elaboration (which includes governance and policies for protection of the environment and human health, air pollution, asbestos, Radon and noise, waste management and climate change, water and sanitation, safe food and soil, chemicals and industrial hotspots).

Monitoring and Evaluation Framework

One of the key segments in the entire strategic process is the monitoring of the progress made with regard to the implementation of the envisaged actions and the occasional evaluation thereof. This process includes systematic collection and analysis of indicators and information about the envisaged programmatic, project and other activities, which shall serve as a basis for evaluation and policy-making.

This process enables, *inter alia*, to see the extent to which the strategies have fulfilled the goals and have led to the desired results, and provides the decision-makers with a clear platform for sound policy-making; it also generates greater transparency and accountability with regard to the use of resources in the process of project and program implementation.

Several workshops were held in 2015-2016, in which the already established intersectoral working groups set out, *inter alia*, the framework for monitoring and evaluation of the actions included in the Republic of Macedonia's Environmental Health Action Plan 2030. This plan includes a set of intersectoral actions of different nature and deadlines. According to their nature, the actions in the plan have been classified as: (a) policy and legal measures; (b) infrastructure investments; (c) monitoring activities; (d) educational, training and promotional actions; and (e) other types of actions.

While evaluation features two key criteria, namely: assessment of the efficiency of the actions taken (whether these actions have brought any results and progress), and of their cost-effectiveness i.e. if and when positive effects on human health and environment have resulted from the actions and at what cost, **monitoring** is about the following sets of indicators to monitor the progress made, like: *descriptive indicators* (they show what is happening in the area where the measures have been taken); *performance indicators* (if at all and if yes - to what extent is the progress made so far significant, and whether we are moving closer to the goal specified in the Action Plan); *efficiency indicators* (quantifying the progress achieved); *effectiveness indicators* for the policies/actions taken (if the measures are truly yielding results/effects and what are the latter); and, finally, *general wellbeing indicators* (if our general physical and mental state has improved with the actions taken) which help to monitor, in addition to the health status, the improvements in the areas of living conditions and citizen wellbeing. In line with the strategic goals, one of the leading criteria for the monitoring exercise and for the classification of actions and indicators is the framework for health purposes referred to as the DPSEEA framework (driving forces, pressures, state, exposures, effects and actions). The working groups assigned such indicators to all actions in the plan with an indication as to whether a given indicator has a direct or indirect link with the action and whether the indicator is available in any national or international database and if yes – in which one(s).

The **evaluation** of the progress made shall be performed at mid-term and end of program intervals; it shall consist of policy, socio-economic and technical/scientific evaluation. Evaluation findings shall be posted on the relevant website, published and transparently presented at a public debate.

Link with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)

At WHO initiative during 2016, the working groups linked the actions in the Action Plan and the progress indicators, with the 17 published Sustainable Development Goals and sub-goals (from the Agenda 2030) and the 200+ indicators. It was estimated that among the SDGs a direct health goal is the SDG 3 - Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages; in addition, 12 SDGs have been assessed as indirectly linked with a wide group of health determinants as follows: end of poverty; end of hunger, food security and improved nutrition; gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls; water and sanitation; employment; reduction of inequalities; sustainable, resilient and inclusive cities and human settlements;

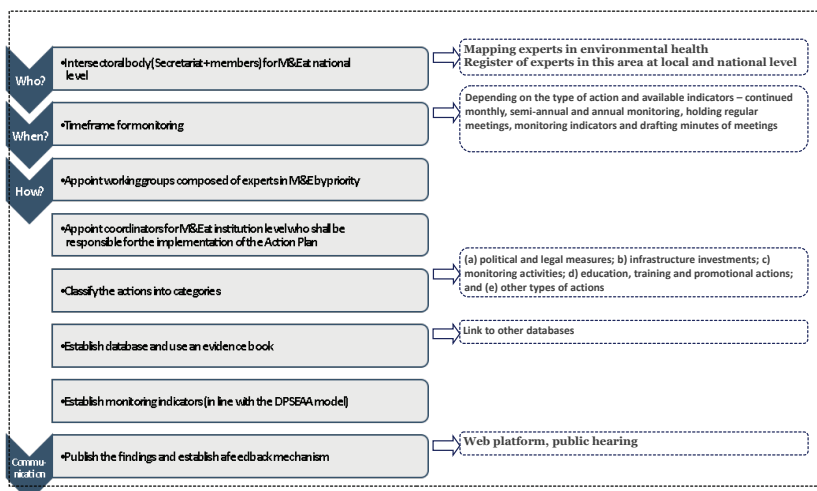
sustainable consumption and production patterns; climate change; promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development; revitalization of the global partnership for sustainable development.

In the tables of actions in all selected priority areas of the Action Plan , the working groups added the relevant SDGs, indicators and sub-indicators that are directly and/or indirectly correlated with the specific action.

Next steps

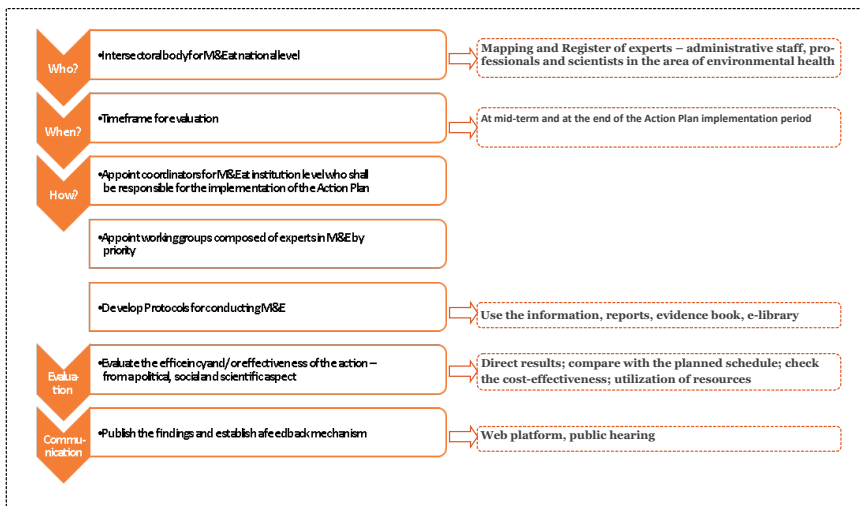
In the forthcoming period, there is a need of establishing a mechanism and a process for conducting monitoring and evaluation, which shall be done through appointed committees and technical bodies composed of administrative staff, professional staff and staff engaged in scientific research from adequate intersectoral backgrounds, with a central body at national level for both processes and separate intersectoral and interdisciplinary bodies for separate thematic areas. The appointment of these bodies shall be preceded by a period of mapping activities and establishment of a register of professional and academic profiles with competence for the relevant areas. (Chart 1)

Chart 1: Monitoring of the Strategy



The **evaluation** of the progress is to be performed at mid-term and end of program intervals; it shall consist of political, socio-economic and technical/scientific evaluation. Evaluation findings shall be posted on the relevant website, published and transparently presented at a public hearing. (Chart 2)

Chart 2: Evaluation of the Strategy



Abstract

The Republic of Macedonia has serious issues with the state of the environment and with environmental risk management. Issues of concern include the general driving forces and the pressures on the environment as well as the way in which natural resources are used. Negative demographic trends with population moving towards urban areas carry an additional pressure on top of the processes of industrialization, urbanization and motorization. Fossil fuel based electricity generation and traffic are among the main pollution sources.

In that light, the country has developed a Strategic Framework for Health and Environment with action plan until 2030, which encompasses detailed Monitoring and evaluation plan in order to closely follow-up and monitor the advances in protection of environment as factor of good health.

References:

1. MoH (2016). Strategic Framework for Health and Environment with action plan until 2030, available at: http://zdravstvo.gov.mk/health_2020/