Summary of Project Results

The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers (the PRTR Protocol) has 38 Signatories and 35 Parties, including the European Union. Among the Western Balkan countries (also referred to below as South Eastern Europe, or SEE), Albania, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia are Parties to the Protocol; while Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro are Signatories.

Despite the progress made in recent years in Western Balkan countries, at the time the project started only Serbia had a functioning operational register with regular reporting. The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia had taken steps to set up a register, and made preparations for reporting in 2016, although reporting did not start. In Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina, efforts to establish the necessary conditions for setting up a PRTR had been made in the framework of various EU-funded projects, but no functional PRTR reporting system had been launched. Montenegro had a pollution cadaster, which it planned to upgrade into a PRTR system. Kosovo[*] had expressed interest in the development of a PRTR. Moldova, as the first country in the Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA) region to ratify the protocol, had taken the first steps towards implementation.

In the current project, activities focused on four parties to the PRTR Protocol: Albania, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Moldova and Serbia, who were given assistance to fulfil their obligations to put in place operational PRTRs and/or improve the efficiency of already functioning PRTRs. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo* and Montenegro, stakeholder discussions were proposed in order to give impetus to the PRTR development process, evaluate the current situation, and develop proposals for the next steps.

Project activities built on the results of earlier projects funded by Germany and the Environment and Security Initiative (ENVSEC) and implemented by the REC, other EU-funded projects, identified needs and consultations with key country partners and stakeholders. Activities were implemented in line with the PRTR Protocol and the EU E-PRTR Regulation, and in close cooperation with the National Focal Points to the Protocol, respective national ministries and agencies, and PRTR Protocol and Aarhus Convention bodies.

Project objectives

1. To strengthen the transparency of decision making on PRTRs by raising public awareness and knowledge about PRTRs, and strengthen NGO capacities to use PRTR data and be better involved in the implementation of the PRTR Protocol.

To fulfil this objective, multi-stakeholder meetings and CSO trainings were organised in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Moldova and Serbia to provide participants with knowledge about PRTRs, an overview of current developments in the implementation of the PRTR Protocol, stakeholders' responsibilities, and reporting obligations in their countries.

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2. To further support the development of functioning PRTRs in line with the UNECE PRTR Protocol and the E-PRTR in selected SEE and EECCA countries on the way towards PRTR.

This objective was addressed by organising multi-stakeholder consultation events in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo* and Montenegro, covering the efforts made in recent years towards the development of PRTRs, ratification/implementation, and reporting obligations under the PRTR Protocol and the E-PRTR Regulation. Technical assistance was provided in the form of the updating and launch of reporting software in Albania, which was developed under an earlier EU-funded project. Assistance was also given to the creation of a national PRTR website and the preparation of a draft proposal for the development of a legislative basis for PRTR in Moldova.

3. To improve the efficiency of PRTR reporting in SEE countries where registers already exist.

In Serbia, the project contributed to the development of a PRTR web application and the introduction of a new module on quality assessment and assurance within the existing national reporting software. In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, activities focused on fixing technical problems in the German BUBE reporting tool, which was adopted earlier, and making it fully operational; as well as on updating the PRTR web portal from both a technical and content point of view. Both the tool and the web portal were also translated into English.

4. To build the capacities of authorities responsible for regular reporting and operators in order to prepare them for reporting and using online reporting in practice and as well as for working with data on emissions to air, water, land, waste and wastewater (including procedures for collection, verifying and processing the emissions data).

Trainings organised within the project in Albania, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Moldova built the capacities of national experts and industry operators on their PRTR reporting obligations under national legislation, the PRTR Protocol and the EU E-PRTR Regulation; the practical aspects of operating a PRTR system; and their respective roles. The trainings focused on priority sectors such as the mineral industry and intensive livestock production, for which guidance materials on reporting were developed based on Serbian and international experience. The chemical industry, the food and beverage sector, and the production and processing of metals were also addressed.

5. To share experience and practical knowledge in regional workshop/s and assist Parties and Signatories to the Protocol to improve their practices in operating their PRTRs.

A regional experience-sharing workshop was held in Skopje on November 8 and 9, 2016, with the participation of 52 experts, including representatives of authorities, operators, CSOs, National PRTR Focal Points, the German Environment Agency, international experts and the REC project team. The workshop provided an opportunity to share the experience and practical knowledge gained during project implementation so as to

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improve their practices related to the development and operation of PRTRs and promote mutual learning, adaption, and the use of best practices from different European and other countries on the implementation of the PRTR Protocol and the EU E-PRTR Regulation.

Results and impacts achieved by the project:

Through the assistance provided to the competent authorities to launch, improve and/or expand their reporting software and systems, national PRTRs were made operational or improved, contributing to the better implementation of the PRTR Protocol and the E-PRTR Regulation. Assistance included the modernisation and installation of reporting software in Albania; the improvement of the reporting tool in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia; and the development/updating of the PRTR web portals in Albania, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Moldova and Serbia and their translation into English in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia. In Albania, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Moldova, country-specific PRTR reporting guidance materials were developed using Serbian and international experience, as tools to support functioning PRTRs. In Moldova, a feasibility study, assessment and proposal for draft legislation on PRTR were also proposed, in order to create the legal and institutional framework for developing an operational PRTR.

Assessments and recommendations were prepared on the status of legal, institutional and technical requirements. These assessments identified difficulties, needs, solutions and next steps for the implementation of PRTRs in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, Moldova and Montenegro; specified the support needed for the implementation of obligations under the PRTR Protocol, the E-PRTR Regulation and national legislation; and provided an understanding of the efforts required to make progress.

The capacities of authorities, operators, CSOs and other stakeholders were built by means of multi-stakeholder consultations, trainings, and the regional workshop in Skopje in November 2016. These events improved participants' knowledge and skills, enabled them to contribute to the implementation of the PRTR Protocol, and improved their understanding of the legal, technical and operational requirements of PRTR systems, the PRTR Protocol and the E-PRTR Regulation and their respective roles and responsibilities. The events also helped actors and stakeholders to understand the practical aspects of the reporting procedure and to fulfil their reporting obligations more efficiently.

Through its activities and results, the project contributed to activities under the PRTR Protocol (the Working Group of Parties, the Meeting of the Parties and the capacity-building coordination meeting). It also supported the implementation of the Work Programme and Strategic Plan, as project team members regularly attended these meetings, reported on project activities and results, and participated in meeting discussions.

The project has created the conditions for the launch of a practical reporting procedure in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Albania, starting in 2017, and these efforts will be taken forward by the competent authorities and operators to the full implementation phase, using the reporting software, the web portal and guidance

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materials. The ongoing reporting process in Serbia will be continued by using, maintaining and further developing the web portal, and via the quality control module. Most of the conditions have also been created for the development of a PRTR in Moldova. The reporting software will be prepared and installed in the context of another project, and the launch of official reporting can be expected from 2020 for the 2018 reporting year.

National dialogue and further cooperation have been continued in all project countries between the competent authorities, operators and CSOs on their roles and responsibilities in PRTR development and operation and the implementation of the PRTR Protocol. This dialogue has also made it possible to identify achievements, current difficulties and possible solutions, and ways to improve cooperation among key actors to mobilise them for further joint actions.

Active CSOs in all project countries have learnt about PRTR systems and their potential role in contributing to the development process, the use of PRTR data, and the monitoring of the PRTR process. Their capacities were also strengthened during the multi-stakeholder consultations and trainings. The PRTR web portals that were developed or improved in Albania, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Moldova and Serbia, provide wide public access and ensure the more efficient dissemination of information to the public about the environmental situation and the potential impacts of pollution. The better use of this information will enable the public and CSOs to participate in a more meaningful way to environmental decision making.

Taking into account the results achieved and the ongoing difficulties and needs, further targeted capacity-building efforts are recommended to support key actors and stakeholders in the development and operation of PRTRs in the project countries. These efforts could take the form of further trainings, consultations or workshops and additional guidance materials to reach out to, and educate, as many key stakeholders as possible, and to facilitate reporting by operators by providing assistance on methodologies for reporting on priority sectors.

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