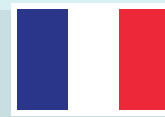




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NEWSLETTER #5

EU Twinning project at the Center for Disease Control and Public Health of Georgia

“Support in Implementation of Health Impact Assessment Practice in Georgia” Newsletter #5 November 2023
02/2022 to 04/2024

The twinning project consists of four major components:

- Approximating Georgian legislation to EU directives in environmental health and standards of EU Member States in carrying out Health Impact Assessment
- Building technical and administrative capacities of NCDC for implementation of HIA in Georgia
- Building partnerships between Georgian institutions and improving data value chain for HIA
- Improving public participation, involving civil society, and disseminating results in HIA

Component 1: Georgian Public Health legal and regulatory framework revised in-line with the Environmental Health provisions of the Association Agreement and Georgia's commitments towards Multilateral Environmental Agreements and other relevant international pledges (e.g. WHO Parma and Ostrava Declarations, UNECE Conventions).

Four workshops were organized in October 2023 on environmental health risks assessment and management related to chemical substances. Caroline Paul, head of the Outdoor Environment and Chemical Substances at the Ministry of Health of France, met with Georgian colleagues from health and environmental authorities to present the implementation of relative directives in France, especially the Classification, Labeling and Packaging Regulation, and its Article 45 and Annex VIII for the Appointment of bodies responsible for receiving information relating to emergency health response, laying the ground for Poison Information Centers. Another focus was put on the safety and management of biocidal products. Different recommendations on legislation changes were formulated to the health authorities for further approximation to EU legislation.



A coordination mechanism with the relevant stakeholders is being established to further discuss the outputs of the twinning project and their proper legal status: inventory and recommendations on environmental health legislation, guidelines of the “Health Impact Assessment in Georgia: Practical Implementation of Health in Environmental Assessment”, recommendations on improvements to environmental assessment legislation.

Component 2: Institutional Capacity to Conduct Health Impact Assessment of the Environmental Health Risks under the National Center for Disease Control and Public Health Strengthened.

Under the leadership of the French School of Public Health, French and Finnish colleagues have elaborated the draft “HIA Guidelines in Georgia: Practical Application of Health in Environmental Assessment”. These guidelines, are in their present form specially targeted at practitioners:

- to support the integration of health in strategic documents, development projects and activities;
- to allow authorities to frame, review and make recommendations along the SEA/EIA/HIA process.



HIA Guidelines in Georgia: Practical Application of Health in Environmental Assessment

Support in Implementation of Health Impact Assessment (HIA) Practice in Georgia - 02/2022 - 04/2024 - Twinning project GE 20 ENI HE EN 02 21

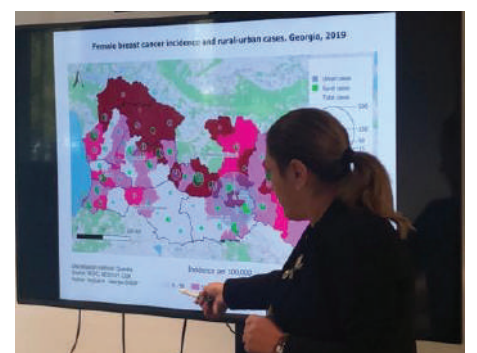


The guidelines are aligned with the relevant existing guidelines on SEA and EIA in Georgia produced under the supervision of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture. They are also aligned with EU legislation and international practice. They are divided in three parts:

- 1) sharing a common language on HIA, terminology and related concepts with links to research;
- 2) practical implementation of HIA in Georgia according to the EAC and resolution 420 on HHIA with step-by-step approach with specific tools for stakeholders and recommendations;

- 3) annexes (tools like matrixes, checklists, support sheets for specific risks and sectors) for the different EA stages (screening, scoping, appraisal, public hearing, reviewing the EA report and issuing recommendations, monitoring).

Training on Geographical Information System with data from Georgia institutions were performed for the staff of NCDC, NEA and Geostat, enabling the staff to understand the use and applications of GIS in public health and environmental assessment. Analysis was performed for instance for the incidence of female breast cancers in Georgia and the division between rural and urban cases over the territory.



Further work on the component includes:

- the review and minor changes to the guidelines as suggested by partners, and its dissemination inside the NCDC;
- Technical training of the NCDC laboratory on chemical risks for improved chemical risk surveillance at the environmental health laboratory LERES on matrices for heavy metals, biocides and pesticides.

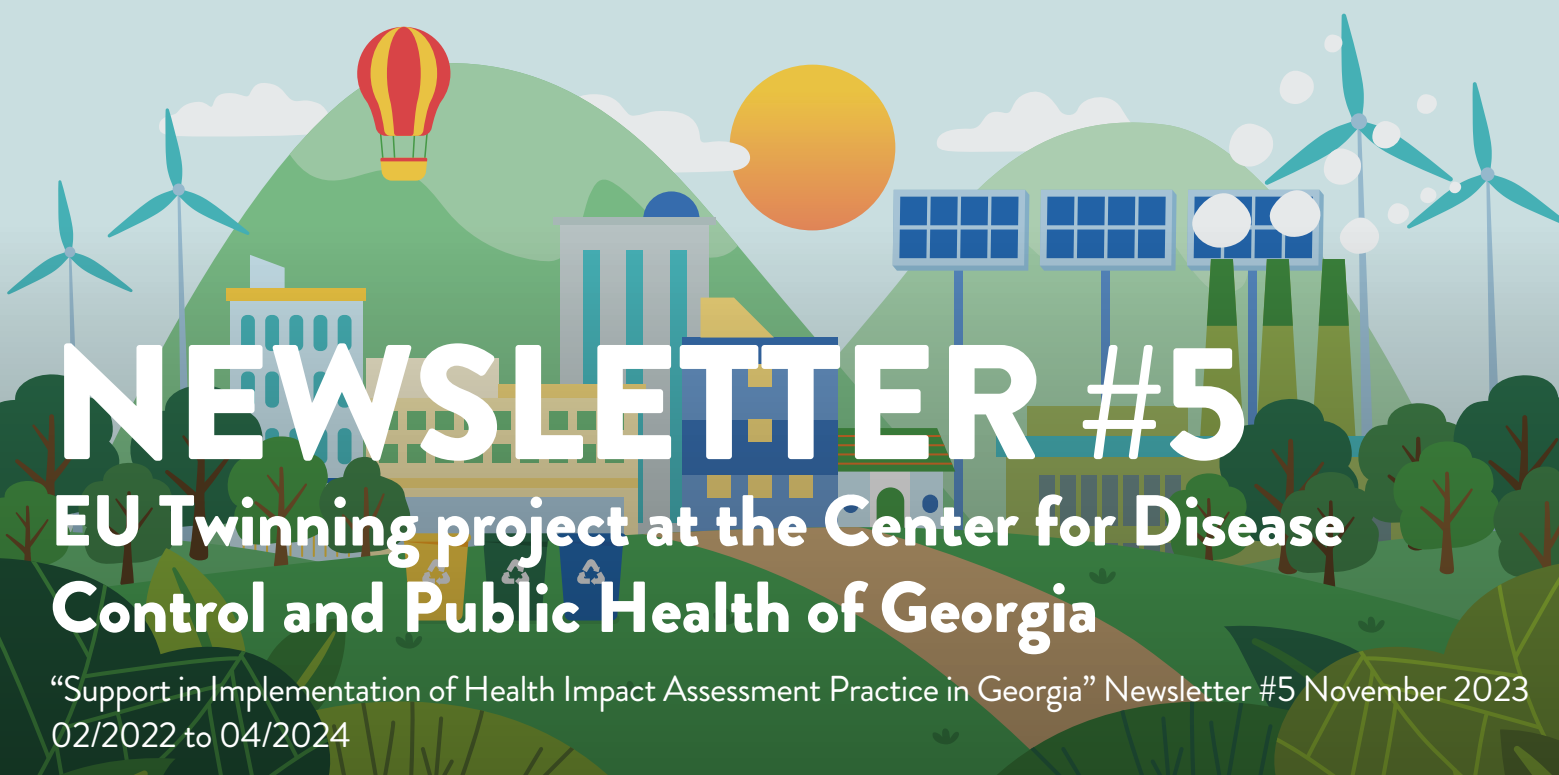
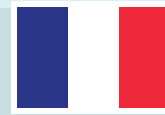
Component 3: Capacity of relevant state authorities and other key stakeholders to ensure reliable and quality data management of Health Impact Assessment in compliance with EU Best Practices strengthened.

Further work on the data quality for the quantitative health impact assessment of outdoor air quality of Tbilisi, Rustavi, Kutaisi and Batumi was made in collaboration with the EU project “Support to Environmental Protection and Fight against climate change” and the NCDC and NEA.

Data checks for Tbilisi for the QHIA of outdoor air pollution in Tbilisi allowed to chose the following:



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- air quality data from the NEA surveillance system;
- health endpoints from the Medical Statistics department of the NCDC;
- demographics data from Geostat.

Preliminary results of QHIA of outdoor air pollution in Tbilisi were presented to stakeholders on the following health endpoints: mortality of +30y.o., asthma in children under 18 and cerebrovascular diseases.

Furthermore, two trainings at the French School of Public Health were held in September:

- “Health data for HIA” allowing participants from the Environmental Health Department and Medical Statistics Department of the NCDC to be able to i) commission a diagnosis adapted to the local situation, ii) contribute to the collection, structuring of data and their use in the context of the HIA; iii) take a critical look at the data (availability/quality), and iv) be able to interpret/use epidemiological and statistical indicators useful for HIA;

- “Quantitative modeling of the impact of environmental exposures on health”, enabling participants from NCDC, NEA and MEPA to understand some tools and methods used to assess health impact (mainly negative ones) and know the respective interest and limits of each one and their main fields of application.



Further work on the component includes:

- the dissemination to partners (NEA, planning authorities like Spatial and Urban Development Agencies, municipalities) and training on the HIA guidelines.

- retraining of NCDC on use of AirQ+ and other interested parties for further QHIA of outdoor air in Georgia when the air quality data will be sufficiently robust to carry such calculations for Batumi, Kutaisi and Rustavi.

Component 4: A well-organized and coordinated public involvement, reporting and communication system to support the Health Impact Assessment process in compliance with the EU Best Practices established.

Following the communication and public participation strategy elaborated in November 2022, activities in that field were implemented by Finnish experts together with their Georgian counterparts elaborating a narrative report for the architecture of the website of the NCDC for HIA process: general information, access to the guidelines and tools, cases with standard project card, linking case by case with the website eia.gov.ge.



Along this part, task descriptions were made regarding communication and public participation for the different departments of the NCDC.

In the framework of the short-film contest on heat waves launched by the twinning, different videos were received from students and civil society organizations. The selection of the winner has been made on July 2023 and the video is available here: [Short film on heatwaves - YouTube](#).

Further work on the component includes:

- signature of a MoU with NEA and EIEC for improved public information on SEA/EIA;
- dissemination of the results of the QHIA on outdoor air for Tbilisi;
- dissemination and publication of the guidelines.

Further cooperation between partners



Santé Publique France has joined the Human Biomonitoring (HBM) Partnership (led by Georgia and Germany) under the WHO EH Partnerships. The HBM Partnerships is working towards expanding the application of HBM as a scientific tool to inform decision making, sharing experiences and building capacities across the WHO European Region for the use of HBM in the regulation of hazardous chemicals and public health. Santé Publique France, as a leader of the Work Package 4 on Exposure and Monitoring of the HORIZON EUROPE “Partnership on the Assessment of Risks from Chemicals (PARC, 2022-2029) will be pivotal in HBM Partnership too.

Santé Publique France has invited the NCDC to join the working group of the International Association of the National Public Health Institutes (IANPHI) on climate change and health.

Expertise France will continue working on environmental health with the NCDC beyond the end of the twinning project, especially on climate change and epidemiology (under fundings from the French Development Agency) and on water and health (EU funded, together with the Austrian Umweltbundesamt and the Office Internationale de l'Eau).



PROJECT INFORMATION

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A quarterly newsletter published by the RTA office of the EU-financed twinning project

This publication has been produced with the assistance of the European Union. Its contents are the sole responsibility of Expertise France and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union

