

# NEWSLETTER

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

A quarterly newsletter published by the RTA office of the EU-financed twinning project  
“Support in Implementation of Health Impact Assessment Practice in Georgia” Newsletter #1 June 2022

### THE OFFICIAL LAUNCH OF THE TWINNING PROJECT

The Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia, and the National Center for Disease Control and Public Health are long-term partners of the European Union and committed to environmental health and international cooperation. The EU-funded Twinning project “Support in Implementation of Health Impact Assessment Practice in Georgia” officially commenced on May 6th of 2022. The overall aim of the project is to support Georgia and its institutions in the implementation of environmental health-related obligations of the Association Agreement (AA) between the European Union and Georgia to foster the health-in-all-sectors approach. The project is implemented by Expertise France and the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (THL), with the involvement of different public health institutions in France and Finland.

During the opening ceremony, attendees had an opportunity to hear some interesting introductory speeches by the Deputy Minister of Health Mrs. Tamar Gabunia, his Excellency the Ambassador of France Mr. Diego Colas, who emphasized that “France supports the GoG and its institutions in its European path, especially towards building resilient, environmentally-friendly and healthy economies. Impact assessments protect the health and the environment in Georgia and enhance the quality of life of its citizens over the long term. “ The General Director of NCDC, who is also a Project Leader from the beneficiary country’s side pointed out that this new project aims to support the goals of an association agreement signed between Georgia and the European Union, along with support in improving the practice of Health Impact Assessment, a mandatory check within the Environmental Assessment Code to ensure mitigation of negative health impact and promotion of positive ones for strategic projects. Dr. Geneviève Chêne, the Executive Chief of Santé Publique France, and Markku Tervahauta, Director General for the Finnish Institute of Health and Welfare, also made opening remarks to support the importance of environmental health and HIA for adaptation and fight against climate change, and the engagement of institutional cooperation between the countries in the long-term.

Member States Twinning project leaders Mr. Joseph Magnavacca (France) and Mr. Juha Rumpunen (Finland) took on



the second part of the event, where they presented the project to the audience in general and elaborated on the long-term goals of the project as well as the role of partnering institutions.

### SHARING HIA PRACTICES IN GEORGIA, FRANCE, FINLAND AND CZECH REPUBLIC

In the second part of the day, different public health and environmental health specialists participated in a conference on Health Impact Assessment Practice in selected countries. HIA is not a mandatory process in most EU Member States, however EU directives mention “population and human health” to be assessed in environmental assessments. The situation is very heterogeneous among countries and practitioners, however HIA has become more and more used for strategic projects and policies. The table below compares in a very brief manner the legislation basis for HIA in the selected countries of the conference.

Opening the conference with Georgia, Dr. Nana Gabriadze presented the evolution of the Environmental Health Department in the NCDC and case-studies of HIA on municipalities’ master plans. It was then followed by a presentation of Dr. Timo Stahl from THL on how HIA has been used in Finland as a concrete tool for “health in all policies”. Dr. Anne Roue-Le Gall presented the case study of an HIA conducted in a renewal urban plan of a district of Strasbourg and how the link with the Environmental Impact Assessment improves the coherence and recommendations for planning authorities and their monitoring. Dr. Helena Kazmarova presented how Health Risk Assessments and HIA have been linked with environmental health and the challenges of HIA in Czech Republic using the example of an HIA carried out on the Common Agricultural Policy of the EU.

In the afternoon two different workshops were held on environmental health issues: “Healthy urban planning” and “Identifying solutions for enhancing public participation and involvement of CSOs in impact assessment”. Different partner organizations (MEPA and agencies, NGOs, urban and architecture design companies) participated and showed their interest and involvement in various matters that were presented by the project experts.

### PRESENTATION OF THE TWINNING

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: Improving Georgian Public Health legal and regulatory framework revised in line with the provisions of the relevant Annexes of the Association Agreement related to the environmental health**

The twinning project will compare environmental health provisions within the Georgian legislation and the different regulations inside the EU and AA, as well as international conventions of which Georgia is a signatory. If there is no legislation at EU level regarding HIA, different sets of legislation and on environmental health exist and are part of the AA. Whereas the Environmental Assessment Code of Georgia is considered in line with EU directives (SEA Directive 2001/42/EC and EIA directive 85/337/EEC), some parts might be improved and sanitary-hygienic norms, technical regulations and calculations are outdated and haven’t been revised to fit with EU Member State standards and practices. Within the framework of Georgia’s application for the EU membership, parts of the self-assessment questionnaire by the Government of Georgia as well as the expected answer of the EU concern different directives and practices on environmental health issues and EIA/SEA. Those documents will be the roadmap for the component.

The twinning project has already carried out a few missions towards this direction on Component 1. Finnish and French experts have provided their input on what steps to take in the future.

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### Component 2: Building technical and administrative capacities of the NCDC to carry out HIA

Based on practice and the resources of the NCDC, different capacity-building activities will be conducted in order to improve the HIA process and technical requirements. The NCDC will be in a leadership position of making recommendations to planning authorities on how to mitigate health negative impacts and maximize positive ones. During the expert's missions carried out since February, experts have started identifying the main training needs for this particular component, and have discussed different administrative and capacity-building matters, therefore work towards this direction seems fruitful and ambitious. Recommendations and tools for organizational development within the NCDC will be developed. Within the framework of the National Environmental Health Action Plan (NEHAP-2), two pilots will be carried out by the NCDC staff with the support of the twinning on the health impacts of air pollution in four cities of Georgia and drinking water pollution.

### Component 3: Improving data value chain and partnerships

Because there are many health determinants, HIA is interdisciplinary and different inputs from partners are required. Furthermore, there are different qualitative and quantitative methodologies. In that sense, the twinning will support the improvement of medical and public health data as well as partnerships with other institutions (National Environmental Agency, National Food Agency, and Geostat for instance) in order to make access to outside data easier for NCDC staff. The twinning project has successfully conducted the expert's missions within this work frame in February and March, where the experts were able to meet with different partners, discuss the scope of work, identify the needs for NCDC and discuss their involvement in this

process. Partnering authorities also suggested some ideas and expressed their readiness to provide much-needed support.

### Component 4: Improving public participation and communication

HIA relies on the principles of healthy democracy and transparency. It entails the early stage of planning until the dissemination of recommendations and results to the public, as well as monitoring of recommendations for mitigating negative health impacts/ maximizing health benefits. According to the Environmental Assessment Code and the regulation on HIA, planning authorities are mandated to disseminate information and organize public hearings in order to present the project and reports. Project experts have actively been working on this particular component since the early stage and a few missions have already been conducted on component 4. Experts have made the situation analysis, identified some issues, met the Georgian partner from public service and civil society, and discussed communication material, format, and their better involvement with the public towards the

approximation of communication standards to EU guidelines.



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