

PROCEEDINGS OF THE

6th MEETING OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE OF THE

NATIONAL POLICY DIALOGUE ON INTEGRATED WATER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT AND

WATER SUPPLY AND SANITATION IN GEORGIA

October 2, 2018
Tbilisi, Georgia

The 6th Meeting of the Steering Committee (SC) of the National Policy Dialogue (NPD) on Integrated Water Resources Management in Georgia was chaired by Ms. Nino Tandilashvili, Deputy Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia and Ms. Nino Tkhilava the Head of the Environment and Climate Change Department of the Ministry of Environment Protection and Agriculture of Georgia (MEPA). The objectives of the Steering Committee meeting were:

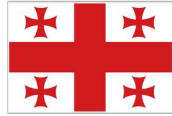
- to provide updates on the status of new water legislation and institutional set up and developments in environmental and water policies in Georgia;
- to discuss progress and next steps in implementing the European Water Initiative Plus (EUWI+) programme in Georgia and to receive feedback from local stakeholders;
- to provide a platform for coordination of donor activities in the water sector in Georgia.



6th Meeting of the Steering Committee of the NPD on Integrated Water Resources Management and Water Supply and Sanitation in Georgia

In the **opening session** welcoming remarks were made by Ms. Nino Tandilashvili – Deputy Minister of Environment Protection and Agriculture of Georgia, Mr. Alexandre Darras, EU Delegation to Georgia and Mr. Marco Keiner, Director, Environment Division, UNECE. During the session the vital role of National Policy Dialogues was stressed in ensuring proper coordination between national stakeholders, international projects and donors for meeting the country's commitments under the Association Agreement with the EU.

The **first session** of the Steering Committee meeting was devoted to the progress under Result 1 of the EUWI+ programme and provided updates on the development of new water legislation, the National Water Strategy and on the process of the ratification of the UNECE/WHO Europe Protocol on Water and Health and the status of transboundary cooperation. The first part of this session included presentations on the draft new Law on Water Resources Management (Water Law), its bylaws and its harmonization with other laws and on the "Status of transboundary cooperation" held by Ms. Mariam Makarova, Head of the Water Division of the Department of Environment and Climate Change, MEPA. Mr. Alisher Mamadzhonov, UNECE provided an overview on the ratification of the Protocol on Water and Health.



The presentations were followed by a Q&A session, during which the ongoing process of adoption of the new Law on Water Resources Management by the end of this year, challenges during this process and planned activities of the MEPA for facilitating this process were discussed. Participants also underlined the importance of ratification of the Protocol on Water and Health for the country to support the implementation of its requirements considered by the newly developed National Environmental and Health Action Plan of Georgia.

Based on the results of the presentations and follow-up discussion the Steering Committee adopted following decisions:

1. Appreciated the support of the EUWI+ program in the development of the draft new Water Law and its selected by-laws, underlined the need to conclude stakeholder consultations on the draft law and expressed hope that it will be adopted by the end of the year.
2. Took notice of the past preparatory work conducted in Georgia for the implementation of the main obligations of the Protocol on Water and Health and stressed the need to continue the official process of ratification of the Protocol.
3. Expressed will to conclude negotiations on the Kura agreement with Azerbaijan and expressed interest to develop cooperation on the Khrami-Debed basin between environment and water agencies of Georgia and Armenia.

The second part of this session was dedicated to the development of “The policy paper providing a vision for further policy developments in preparing the National Water Strategy of Georgia. The presentation on “Setting long-term priorities for the water sector to overcome existing and future challenges” was held by Ms. Tatiana Efimova, OECD and Mr. Zurab Jincharadze, national expert.

During the Q&A session the short- and long-term priorities for the country to overcome existing and future challenges beyond implementation of water reforms were discussed. Members of beneficiary institutions stressed the issue related to the future impacts of reforms in the water sector on different stakeholders. In addition, the importance of economic instruments in this process was highlighted. Ms. Nino Tandilashvili, Deputy Minister, highlighted the need for a timeline in developing the water strategy, the need to involve all relevant agencies and ministries, to assess the availability of resources and the need to develop an Action Plan for implementation of the strategy.

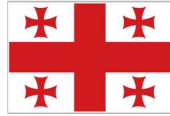
Based on the results of the presentation and follow-up discussion the Steering Committee adopted following decision:

4. Expressed appreciation of the work done in preparation of the conceptual vision of the long-term water strategy of Georgia and called on national stakeholders to cooperate closely with experts in the upcoming phase of the strategy formulation.

The **second session** of the meeting was devoted to progress under result 2 and 3 of the EUWI+ and discussed progress, needs and outlook for monitoring development and for strengthening the basin level planning.

EUWI+ Result 2&3 Leader Mr. Michael Sutter made a detailed presentation on the project progress in Georgia, providing an update on the laboratory development, and surface and ground water monitoring.

The session was continued by Mr Pierre Henry de Villeneuve, (Office International de l'Eau/International Office for Water) making a presentation on Planning & Implementing of Integrated River Basin Management Plans, particularly focusing on the development of the Alazani-Iori and Khrami-Debed River Basins Management Plans and on implementation of existing RBMP on Chorokhi. The presentation was also made by Ms. Yunona Videnina, Thematic Leader for Communication and Stakeholder Involvement. Ms. Videnina presented issues related to stakeholder involvement (RBMP & Transboundary aspects); development, regular update and implementation of the communication strategy for RBM planning and the project visibility.



The presentation was followed by a Q&A session. Among other issues, needs for territorializing the national water policy at the basin scale through participative River Basin Management Planning was discussed and the importance of strengthening of monitoring databases and laboratory capacity for implementation of the EU WFD directive was highlighted.

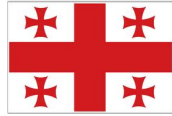
Based on the results of the presentation and follow-up discussions the Steering Committee adopted following decisions:

5. Expressed appreciation for the inclusion of 2 additional regional laboratories (Kutaisi and Batumi) as partners in the EUWI+ laboratory development support. The concept of sustainability and its specific prerequisites, e.g. legal basis, budgets, competent staff and professional processes were acknowledged.
6. Acknowledged the requirements for clarifying the status of cooperation of the Batumi Lab within the EUWI+.
7. Appreciated the information that agreements for the start of tenders for supplies, work and services for laboratory and monitoring infrastructure are well on their way. It was acknowledged that continuous high-level attention is required to fulfil the proposed ambiguous timetables.
8. Expressed satisfaction that the preparation of pilot river basin management plans (RBMPs) for the Alazani/Iori and the Khrami-Debed started in summer 2018 and stressed the need to increase capacity of relevant civil servants, acknowledging that consultants were involved in developing the RBMPs.
9. Recommended to follow up on the implementation of the existing RBMP on Chorokhi, e.g. by identifying pilot implementation of actions to be financed from the investment plan of the project.
10. Suggested harmonizing the delineation of water bodies at the border with Azerbaijan using the opportunity that within the EUWI+ project, delineation for the Alazani-Iori in Georgia and for the Kura River Basin upstream Mingachevir dam in Azerbaijan is done at the same time.
11. Stressed the need to develop a communication strategy for participative RBM Planning in the near future.
12. Highlighted the need to conclude the discussions for the purchase of a web-server for water information in line with the data management strategy.

The aim of **the third session** was providing a platform for co-ordination and exploring synergies with other activities on water implemented by donors and international organizations. During the session activities of other international projects working in the field of water resources management were presented. During the Q&A session SC members and participants underlined the significant role of synergies with other international projects implemented in Georgia to achieve sustainability of project activities. The Steering Committee:

13. Took notice of the information about projects implemented by international donors and projects in the Georgian water sector.

During the **closing session** of the 6th Meeting of the SC of the NPD on Integrated Water Resources Management and Water Supply and Sanitation in Georgia the Chair recalled the Steering Committee decisions, as follows:



DECISIONS OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE

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2. Took notice of the past preparatory work conducted in Georgia for the implementation of the main obligations of the Protocol on Water and Health and stressed the need to continue the official process of ratification of the Protocol.
3. Expressed will to conclude negotiations on the Kura agreement with Azerbaijan and expressed interest to develop cooperation on the Khrami-Debed basin between environment and water agencies of Georgia and Armenia.
4. Expressed appreciation of the work done in preparation of the conceptual vision of the long-term water strategy of Georgia and called on national stakeholders to cooperate closely with experts in the upcoming phase of the strategy formulation.
5. Expressed appreciation for the inclusion of 2 additional regional laboratories (Kutaisi and Batumi) as partners in the EUWI+ laboratory development support. The concept of sustainability and its specific prerequisites, e.g. legal basis, budgets, competent staff and professional processes were acknowledged.
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9. Recommended to follow up on the implementation of the existing RBMP on Chorokhi, e.g. by identifying pilot implementation of actions to be financed from the investment plan of the project.
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