

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE**

**7<sup>th</sup> MEETING OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE OF THE**

**NATIONAL POLICY DIALOGUE ON INTEGRATED WATER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT IN**

**GEORGIA**

March 5, 2020  
Tbilisi, Georgia

The 7th 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. Maia Javakhishvili, the Deputy 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:

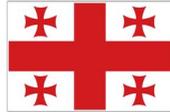
- to provide updates on the status of new water legislation and institutional set up and developments in environmental and water policies in Georgia;
- to provide a platform for discussion in the water management sector and its linkages with development of different economic sectors;
- to discuss progress 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.



7th Meeting of the Steering Committee of the NPD on Integrated Water Resources Management and Water Supply and Sanitation in Georgia

In the **opening session** Ms. Nino Tandilashvili – Deputy Minister of Environment Protection and Agriculture of Georgia, Mr. Alexander Zinke, EUWI+ Project Team Leader, Ms. Tatiana Efimova, OECD partner of the EUWI+ Project made welcoming remarks. During the session the crucial role of National Policy Dialogues was stressed in order to implement the Integrated Water Resources Management approach in Georgia in a coordinated manner, ensuring proper coordination and getting common understanding between national stakeholders, international projects and donors in order to meet the country's commitments under the Association Agreement with the EU and for the successful adoption of the sustainable water resources management policies.

The **first session** of the Steering Committee meeting was devoted to the country progress and challenges towards approximation to water-related EU Directives (EU WFD, DWD, UWWTD, Nitrate



Directive, Floods Directive, Marine Directive) and synergies of different economic sectors in implementation of SDG 6.5. The key beneficiary ministries and agencies presented on-going and planned reforms and activities with linkages of water reforms and their role in this process. The Ministry of Environment Protection and Agriculture of Georgia led this session. The head of the water division Ms. Mariam Makarova presented progress on legislative approximation to EU water related directives. The roles of different economic sectors in the implementation of obligations of the Association Agreement were presented by representatives of following water user sectors in Georgia: amelioration systems (speaker: Mr. Gizo Chelidze, head of the department of land management and amelioration, MEPA); public health (Ms. Nana Gabriadze, Head of the environment and health division, NCDC, MoH), water supply and sanitation (Ms. Nino Sulkhaniashvili, Head of the Environment Protection Department of GGU Group), energy development (Ms. Margarita Arabidze, Deputy head of Energy division, Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development). The aforementioned beneficiary institutions stressed the economic and social aspects of the future impacts of reforms in the water sector on the development of different economic activities.

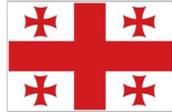
The presentations were followed by a Q&A session, during which the on-going process of adoption of the new Law on Water Resources Management, challenges during this process and planned activities were discussed. In addition, participants discussed future cooperation platform in the process of developing the water resources management strategy and related sectorial strategies, in order to achieve consistent and coordinated implementation of commitments of Georgia on approximation towards the EU water related directives.

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

1. The NPD Steering Committee (SC) welcomes progress in recent policy developments and institutional changes in the water sector of Georgia according to the European Union Water Framework Directive (WFD) requirements and emphasised a commitment to expedite implementation of other water directives (on wastewater, drinking water, floods etc.).
2. The NPD SC welcomes that the Ministry of Environment Protection and Agriculture of Georgia continues public consultations and official procedures to accelerate the adoption of the new Water Law by the Georgian Parliament in the coming months.

The **second session** of the meeting was devoted to progress under result Result 1 of the EUWI+ programme, in particular updates on recent policy and legislation developments on IWRM and the regulatory framework reforms including economic instruments and transboundary cooperation supported under EUWI+ were provided. In this session Mr. Alisher Mamadzhonov, UNECE, presented an overview of activities provided by the project towards the finalization of the draft Law on Water Resource Management, including corresponding bylaws and transboundary cooperation with the neighbouring countries, particularly cooperation on the technical level between the National Environmental Agency of Georgia (NEA) and the Environmental Information and Monitoring Centre (EMIC) of Armenia in the Khrami-Debed/Debeda basin on the joint monitoring program and data exchange on water quality. In this session another main activity supported by UNECE was also presented - the status of development of a pilot activity on a strategic environmental assessment for the draft Alazani-Iori River Basin Management Plan (developed with support of EUWI+) and development of a SEA methodology for RBMPs. This topic, including timeline of the project development and the main findings of the scoping assessment stage, was presented by Ms. Irma Melikishvili, National consultant for SEA, UNECE, and Ms. Nino Malashkhia, project coordinator, NGO GEO.

The second part of this session was dedicated to the newly started activity under OECD, in the frame of EUWI+, on economic instruments envisaged by the upcoming reforms, in particular introduction of water abstraction charges in Georgia in accordance with the new draft Law on Water Resources Management. The issue "Necessity for reforming economic instruments for water management" was presented by Ms. Tatiana Efimova, OECD and Mr. Pierre Strosser, international expert (France).



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. The Ministries, NGOs and other participants stressed the importance of the new initiative of a strategic environmental assessment for RBMPs and for facilitating its adoption.

On the Q&A session the future impact of economic reforms in the water sector on different stakeholders was another important issue for discussion. The meeting participants underlined the necessity for introducing water abstraction charges as an effective instrument of water management and an incentive measure for achieving a rational and sustainable use of water resources in water supply and the industry sector, especially by taking into account the on-going and future impact of climate change on surface and ground water resources. Participants also highlighted the need to involve all relevant ministries, agencies and other stakeholders in order to reflect different local circumstances and types of water uses on abstraction tariffs.

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

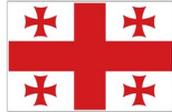
1. New strategic documents (e.g. Strategic Environmental Assessments/SEA for RBMPs) can help to identify potential issues to be addressed in RBMPs, which will support their adoption. RBMPs will be reviewed and revised every six years and are therefore living roadmaps that will be reviewed and updated, as reform progresses. A pilot SEA for the Alazani-lori RBMP and a related methodology, being prepared under the EUWI+ programme, will develop capacity in Georgia to prepare and apply such management documents in the future.
2. The NPD SC welcomes the efforts made in enhancing transboundary water cooperation with the neighboring countries, particularly with respect to fostering practical ways of cooperation with Armenia in the Khrami-Debed/Debeda basin under the EUWI+, e.g. through developing a joint monitoring programme.
3. All participants agreed that Georgia will benefit from a reform of economic instruments for water resources management, with the reforms of water abstraction charges as a first step. This process will need the involvement of all relevant ministries, agencies and other stakeholders in order to reflect different local circumstances and types of water uses on abstraction tariffs.

The **third session** of the meeting was devoted to the monitoring and river basin management planning activities, supported under Results 2 and 3 of EUWI+. Mr. Alexander Zinke, Project Leader (UBA) gave a detailed presentation on the project progress in Georgia, providing an update on the laboratory development under EUWI+ and on surface, ground, coastal and transitional waters monitoring.

The session was followed by Mr. Yannick Pochon, IOWater, making a remote presentation (from Nice, France) on developing River Basin Management Plans, particularly focusing on the development of the Alazani-lori and Khrami-Debed River Basins. The subsequent presentation on participation of stakeholders on the basin planning process and the development of water policy reforms including awareness raising activities was also given by Ms. Sopiko Akhobadze, (subcontractor of EUWI+ for RBM Planning, director of REC Caucasus).

The presentation was followed by a Q&A session. This session allowed to discuss key lessons learned while developing RBMPs for pilot river basins of Georgia, and sustainable application of these lessons in other basins. The meeting participants highlighted challenges associated with the future implementation of RBMPs in other river basins in Georgia and sustainable mechanism for establishing river basin councils who coordinate the RBMP implementation.

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



1. River Basin Management Plans (RBMP) are the main tools for assessing and resolving water management issues in an integrative way.
2. Monitoring of surface, ground- and coastal waters is an important instrument for understanding the environmental status and justifying decision making in RBM Planning. It requires support from the government side to upgrade and sustain capacity of laboratories and staff. The NPD welcomes important support provided by the EUWI+ programme in reforming the water monitoring system in Georgia.

The aim of **the fourth session** was to provide a platform for coordination and exploring synergies with other activities on water management issues implemented by donors and international organizations. The session was led by the beneficiary ministry. 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 international projects implemented in Georgia for achieving tangible results in the new water policy development. The meeting participants discussed the areas of further assistance of international initiatives and key obstacles for the sustainability of international projects.

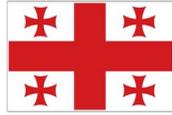
Based on the results of the presentation and follow-up discussions, the Steering Committee adopted the following decisions:

1. Securing a synergy and follow-up of international projects is extremely important for sustainably strengthening the capacity development, and for achieving a more efficient and effective implementation of the provisions of the EU Directives in Georgia.

During the **closing session** of the 7th Meeting of the SC of the NPD on Integrated Water Resources Management in Georgia the Chair recalled the Steering Committee decisions, as follows:

#### DECISIONS OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE

1. The NPD Steering Committee (SC) welcomes progress in recent policy developments and institutional changes in the water sector of Georgia according to the European Union Water Framework Directive (WFD) requirements and emphasised a commitment to expedite implementation of other water directives (on wastewater, drinking water, floods etc.).
2. The NPD SC welcomes that the Ministry of Environment Protection and Agriculture of Georgia continues public consultations and official procedures to accelerate the adoption of the new Water Law by the Georgian Parliament in the coming months.
3. River Basin Management Plans (RBMP) are the main tools for assessing and resolving water management issues in an integrative way. New strategic documents (e.g. Strategic Environmental Assessments/SEA for RBMPs) can help to identify potential issues to be addressed in RBMPs, which will support their adoption, RBMPs will be reviewed and revised every six years and are therefore living roadmaps that will be updated, as reform progresses. A pilot SEA for the Alazani-Iori RBMP and a related methodology, being prepared under the EUWI+ programme, will develop capacity in Georgia to prepare and apply such management documents in the future.
4. Monitoring is an important instrument for understanding the environmental status of surface, ground- and coastal waters and for justifying decision-making in RBM Planning. It requires support from the government side to upgrade and sustain capacity of laboratories and staff. The NPD welcomes the important support provided by the EUWI+ programme in reforming the water monitoring system in Georgia.
5. The NPD SC welcomes the efforts made in enhancing transboundary water cooperation with the neighboring countries, particularly with respect to fostering practical ways of cooperation with Armenia in the Khrami-Debed/Debeda basin under the EUWI+, e.g. through developing a joint monitoring programme.



6. All participants agreed that Georgia will benefit from a reform of economic instruments for water resources management, with the reforms of water abstraction charges as a first step.
7. Securing a synergy and follow-up of international projects is extremely important for sustainably strengthening the capacity development and for achieving a more efficient and effective implementation of the provisions of the EU Directives in Georgia.