

European Union Water Initiative Plus for the Eastern Partnership

MINUTES OF THE 9<sup>TH</sup> MEETING OF THE STEERING  
COMMITTEE OF THE NATIONAL POLICY DIALOGUE  
ON INTEGRATED WATER RESOURCES  
MANAGEMENT IN THE REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN

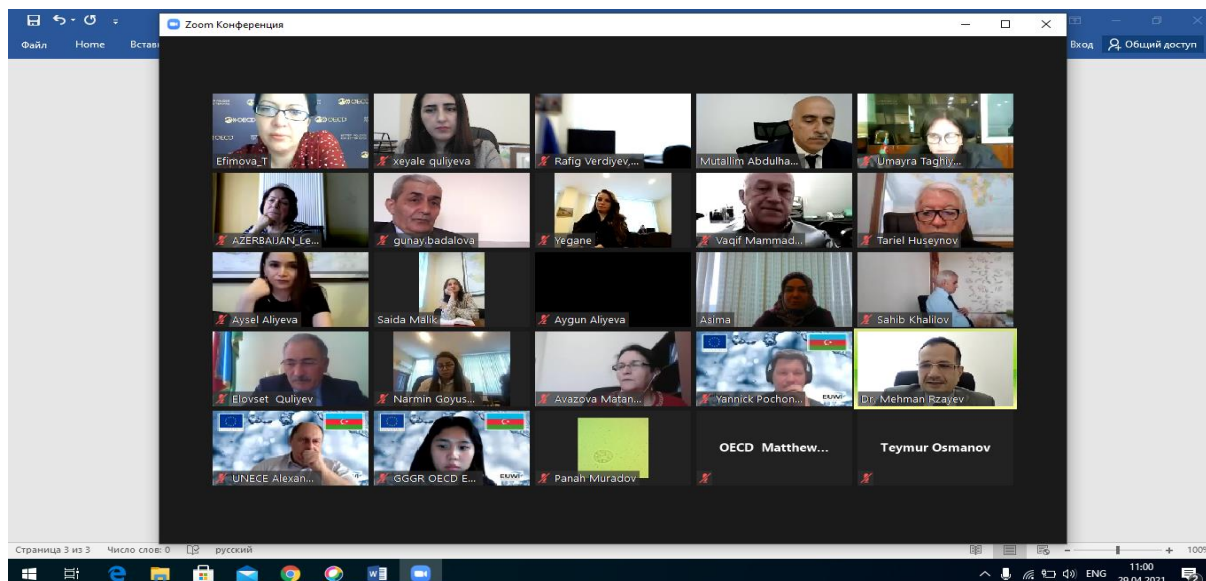


**Baku and online, 29 April 2021 (*all times shown are CET+2*)**

*Venue:* hosted by the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of Azerbaijan, Baku and virtually via Zoom

The meeting was held in a hybrid/online format and chaired by Mr Mutallim Abdulhasanov, Head, Division of Water Resources Management, Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources (MENR) of the Republic of Azerbaijan and Chair of the Steering Committee of the National Policy Dialogue on Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM). It was attended by over 40 participants representing different governmental entities and international organizations, NGOs, scientific institutions and by water experts. Governmental entities were represented by the central office and territorial bodies of the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of the Republic of Azerbaijan and other state water institutions: Azersu, State Agency on Water Resources, Amelioration JSC and others.

The objective of the Steering Committee meeting was to discuss recent progress in modernising national water policy, extending access to water supply and sanitation, as well as enhancing transboundary co-operation in the Republic of Azerbaijan. As the EUWI+ programme will soon be completing the current phase of implementation, the meeting also offered an opportunity to address remaining tasks in conjunction with the priorities and activities of the country-specific work programme, as well as to discuss next steps towards ensuring sustainability of results and reflect on further needs and priorities in the water sector beyond EUWI+.



In his opening remarks Mr Rauf Hajizadeh, Deputy Minister, MENR welcomed participants and highly appreciated the support provided by the European Union under the EUWI+ project for rehabilitation of laboratories and monitoring stations, legal and institutional improvements, including preparation of the draft National Water Strategy and Action Plan and transboundary cooperation and expressed the official opinion of MENR on readiness to continue close cooperation with the European Union in the sphere of water resources management.

In his welcoming statement, Mr Rainer Freund mentioned about cooperation between Azerbaijan and the EU in the water and other sectors at the national and regional levels. He highlighted the main achievements of the EUWI+ in the country and underlined the importance of the adoption of the National Water Strategy and Action Plan for further advancement of the water sector reform in the country. He informed that the European Union stands ready to continue cooperation with Azerbaijan both at the bilateral and regional level in the overall context of the new EU-Azerbaijan cooperation agreement, the

work on which continues. He also mentioned the anticipated start in 2021 of a follow up to EUWI+ programme.

Then Mr Alexander Zinke from UBA also welcomed participants on behalf of the EUWI+ implementing partners and informed that the meeting would review the main results of the work carried out within the framework of the entire project since 2016, the progress achieved in Azerbaijan and the future priorities.

After this opening, the short new video on the main achievements and results of the EUWI+ project was shown.

In accordance with the approved agenda, discussions took place around the following topics:

- Recent progress in modernising national water policy and governance in Azerbaijan, implementation of the Multilateral Environmental Agreements and enhancing transboundary cooperation, including with support from EUWI+, and discussion on the emerging national priorities;
- Progress in the River Basin Management Planning and enhancing water monitoring capacities under EUWI+;
- Adopting new plans and regulations and addressing the implementation challenge;
- Next steps towards completion of EUWI+, outlook beyond 2021.

1. Ms. Tatiana Efimova, OECD, Mr. Mutallim Abdulhasanov and Mr. Rafiq Verdiyev, EUWI+ country representative, presented information about important institutional reforms, including the establishment of a high-level Water Commission, a new Water Division at MENR, and various support provided to the development of the draft Water Strategy until 2030 and its proposed Action Plan and the alignment of the Strategy with the EU water policies and international legislation. The process of the development of the documents was presented in detail, as well as the proposed adoption timeline.

2. Mr. Alisher Mamadzhanov, UNECE and Mr Rafiq Verdiyev informed about the progress on transboundary water cooperation with the neighbouring countries and reporting under the Water Convention and SDG 6.5.2, which was supported by EUWI+ both through a regional workshop and a national online meeting and consultations. The achievements and gaps and the way to address were discussed.

3. Mr. Alexander Zinke, UBA, presented information about upgrading the water monitoring capacities for surface, coastal and ground water bodies, highlighting gained competence and analytical instruments in laboratories and the field as key steps towards compliance with WFD, and citing the outstanding challenges and opportunities for future work.

4. Mr. Yannick Pochon, OiEau, informed participants about the developed River Basin Management Plan for the Kura River Basin upstream of the Mingachevir reservoir and additional outputs: technical guidance documents, initial Programme of Measures and the public consultation process about the draft Plan. He highlighted the major achievements in water data management and public communication (webpage, media work), and the priorities for the RBMP adoption and implementation in the future.

5. Mr. Alisher Mamadzhanov, UNECE, presented brief updates on the Protocol on Water and Health to the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes, specifically highlighting the high relevance of the Protocol in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic. Ms Leyla Tagizadeh (MoH) informed participants about the work done in Azerbaijan in the area of implementation of the national targets adopted under the Protocol on 2018. She specifically highlighted the work on water, sanitation and hygiene implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic by the Ministry of Health and other governmental entities. Ms Matanat Avazova (MENR) complemented this presentation by providing information about relevant monitoring activities.

6. Mr. Mutallim Abdulhasanov and Mr Rafiq Verdiyev informed about future priorities on river basin management planning in Azerbaijan, highlighting also possible work areas in the frame of the follow-up to the EUWI+ project.

7. At the end of the session, a discussion was held about ensuring the implementation of the programme of measures under the RBMP, possibilities of the Government budget allocation for the future extended

surface and groundwater monitoring programme, covering more sites and parameters (notably on biology), the process to ensure harmonised RBMPs on both side of the borders with the riparian States, and about legislative and/or institutional frameworks to organize data sharing among stakeholders.

## **Results and Decisions**

Participants acknowledged the importance of the results achieved with the EU support under the EUWI+ project to advance integrated water resources management and water supply and sanitation in the Republic of Azerbaijan. They expressed their appreciation to the EUWI+ implementing partners and EU for the applied methodology and the financial support as well as for the many opportunities for direct exchanges with international experts.

The following immediate priorities to further advance water sector reforms in the coming years in Azerbaijan were mentioned:

- In the field of legislation, the need to harmonize key water legislation with the EU directives, and specifically to further align the work done on the RBMP development with the EU WFD.
- In the institutional field, the need to assist to Water Division of MENR to apply IWRM and also to support national institutions in the establishment of basin management structures.
- Taking into account the importance of transboundary waters to Azerbaijan, to continue negotiations with the riparian countries on bilateral agreements on the protection and use of transboundary waters.
- Further support towards implementation of the National Water Strategy and its Action Plan.
- Continue to strengthen the NPD platform and use it as a venue to discuss the key water reforms.

It was suggested to prepare proposals on priority areas and tasks of the Republic of Azerbaijan for the period after 2021 and submit them to the EUWI+ project management group based on the results of discussions held during the meeting in different water related spheres.

The minutes were drafted by Mr. Rafiq Verdiyev



# 1 ANNEXES

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- **Baku and online, 29 April 2021 (all times shown are CET+2)**

**Venue:** hosted by the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of Azerbaijan, Baku and virtually via Zoom

**Languages:** Azerbaijani and English, simultaneous interpretation provided

The meeting will be chaired by Mutallim Abdulhasanov, Head, Division of Water Resources Management, Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of the Republic of Azerbaijan and Chair of the Steering Committee of the National Policy Dialogue on Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM)

**The objectives of the meeting are:**

The meeting will focus on discussing recent progress in modernising national water policy, extending access to water supply and sanitation, as well as enhancing transboundary cooperation. As the EUWI+ programme will soon be completing the current phase of implementation, the meeting will offer an opportunity to address remaining tasks in conjunction with the priorities and activities of the country-specific work programme, as well as discuss next steps towards ensuring sustainability of the results and reflect on further needs and priorities in the water sector beyond EUWI+.

### TENTATIVE AGENDA

10:45 – 11:00	<b>CONNECTION TO ZOOM AND OTHER TECHNICAL DETAILS</b>
11:00 – 11:15	<b>Opening and welcoming statements</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Mr. Rauf Hajiyev, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of the Republic of Azerbaijan - Welcoming remarks and opening of the meeting</li><li>• Mr. Rainer Freund, Program Manager, Delegation of the European Union to Azerbaijan – welcoming statement</li><li>• Welcoming remarks on behalf of the EUWI+ Implementing Partners</li></ul> <b>Demonstration of a short video on the results of the EUWI+ programme</b> <a href="https://youtu.be/3Pbi-c4qvDk">https://youtu.be/3Pbi-c4qvDk</a>
Session 1	<b>Recent progress in modernising national water policy and governance and emerging national priorities</b>

<b>11:15 – 12:00</b>	<p><i>This session will examine recent progress in modernizing national water policy and governance and discuss future priorities. The session will also focus on strategic planning of the water sector in the light of recent government decisions.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recent developments in the field of national water policy and governance, MENR</li> <li>• Progress in the development and the start of implementation of the National Water Strategy and Action Plan, OECD and MENR</li> <li>• Future priorities of Azerbaijan with regard to the water governance reform and implementation challenges, OECD and MENR</li> <li>• Q&amp;A followed by discussion</li> </ul>
<b>Session 2</b>	<b>Progress in the implementation of the Multilateral Environmental Agreements and transboundary water cooperation</b>
<b>12:00 – 12:30</b>	<p><i>This session will focus on progress in implementing Multilateral Environmental Agreements in the water domain, with focus on transboundary water cooperation.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Update on transboundary water cooperation with the neighbouring countries and recent reporting under the Water Convention and SDG 6.5.2, MENR and UNECE</li> <li>• National priorities in the drinking water supply and sanitation sector, including with respect to implementation of the Protocol on Water and Health, Ministry of Health and Azersu</li> <li>• Q&amp;A followed by discussion</li> </ul>
<b>12:30 – 12:40</b>	<b>Technical break</b>
<b>Session 3</b>	<b>Progress in River Basin Management Planning and enhancing monitoring capacities under EUWI+</b>
<b>12:40 – 13:40</b>	<p><i>This session will take stock of progress with respect to river basin management planning in Azerbaijan and review progress in enhancing monitoring capacities. Participants will discuss the ways to institutionalize River Basin Management Planning in the country and the required legislative and technical aspects.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Upgrading the water monitoring capacities for surface and ground water bodies, <i>Alexander Zinke, Environment Agency Austria</i></li> <li>• Updates on the Kura upstream of Mingachevir dam River Basin Management Plan, and additional results, <i>Yannick Pochon, OiEau</i></li> <li>• Future priorities and timeline on river basin management planning in Azerbaijan, <i>MENR</i></li> <li>• Q&amp;A followed by discussion</li> </ul>
<b>Session 4</b>	<b>Next steps towards successful completion of the EUWI+, outlook beyond 2021 and closing remarks</b>
<b>13:40 – 14:00</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remarks by EUWI+</li> <li>• Remarks by EU Delegation to Azerbaijan</li> <li>• Closing remarks by the Ministry, Mutallim Abdulhasanov</li> </ul>