

UPDATE

on National Policy Dialogues in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia



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Highlights:

- New Water Code drafted in Turkmenistan
- NPD program launched in Kazakhstan
- Progress of NPD program endorsed by the Meeting of Parties of the Water Convention

About National Water Policy Dialogues

NPDs are the main operational instrument of the EECCA component of the EU Water Initiative. The EUWI, including its EECCA Component, was launched at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2002. It contributes to the implementation of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

It is through the successful implementation of NPDs that the vision of the EUWI will materialise, key objectives will be attained and policies and institutions will be reformed.

The objective of each NPD is to facilitate the reform of water policies (covering both water supply and sanitation, and integrated water resources management) in a particular country/region. Each NPD involves high level representatives of all key partners, including national and basin authorities, representatives of relevant international organisations, civil society (NGOs) and the private sector.

The OECD and UNECE act as strategic partners of the EUWI in EECCA. The OECD specialises in the economic and financial dimension of water policies, and UNECE focuses on legal and institutional reforms for IWRM.

Dear friends,

I am happy to present to you the sixth Update on the European Union Water Initiative (EUWI) National Policy Dialogues (NPDs), implemented in the countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA).

The last half a year has been busy. On 28-30 November 2012, the Meeting of Parties to the Water Convention was held in Rome. There was a side event on NPDs to exchange experiences and plan for future work. The success of the NPD process was also highlighted during the plenary discussions of the MOP, and it features in the Convention work programme for 2013-2015.

On 21 June 2013, the first NPD Steering Committee meeting was held in Astana. It marks the beginning of the NPD process in Kazakhstan and thus the National Policy Dialogues are now active in 9 countries of the EECCA region.

In the first half of 2013, high-level Steering Committee meetings were organized in Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Georgia and Kazakhstan. The needs of the countries are different, and types of activities carried out in NPD processes vary. Let me highlight two encouraging examples – within the last half a year, national working groups in Georgia and Turkmenistan have drafted, respectively, a new Water Law and Water Code. Both draft legal acts are fully in line with IWRM principles and will hopefully soon be adopted by national parliaments.

The EUWI-EECCA will continue to focus on the national needs, targeting the Millennium Development Goals on water but also the emerging issues such as the effect of climate change on water resources. It is clear that the NPD process is demand-driven, and we are ready to take on board the countries' proposals for future activities. In this respect the implementing agencies, UNECE and OECD, will continue to provide their active and professional support. The continuation of the support granted by the European Union as well as other donors is further a necessary precondition for continued work and we hope that this could be a platform for strengthening the cooperation between regions in water management.

Finally, I want to use this opportunity to welcome Peep Mardiste as a new UNECE coordinator within the EUWI-EECCA team and to wish him success in his new position.

*Gheorghe Constantin
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NPD profile: Georgia

by Mariam Makarova and George Dzamukashvili

Some history

The official request for initiation of the NPD process in Georgia was submitted on 28 October 2009 with a letter sent by the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources of Georgia to UNECE.

The National Policy Dialogue in Georgia started in November 2010 with the first mission of UNECE representatives to Georgia. The Steering Committee was established in March 2011 and a Memorandum of Understanding was signed on 28 October 2011. The first meeting of the Steering Committee took place on 11 June 2012 and the second on 30 May 2013. Two meetings of the working groups and two stakeholder meetings also took place in period of 2011-2013.

Besides support from the European Commission through UNECE, additional support to NPD process has been provided by the Government of Finland.

Cooperation under NPD

The overall objective of the National Policy Dialogue in Georgia is to help reach the water-related Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The National Policy Dialogue in Georgia is a platform for drawing up and implementing policy packages on IWRM, focused on the following key issues:

- Support to the on-going institutional reforms in implementation of the principles of the EU Water Framework Directive (including preparation of a new national Water Law);
- Setting up the targets under the UNECE/WHO Protocol on Water and Health;
- Strengthening transboundary water cooperation with Azerbaijan;
- Supporting Georgian efforts towards preparing for accession to the UNECE Water Convention.

These specific objectives will be achieved through implementation of different policy packages. Such policy packages can, for example, be draft pieces of legislation, recommendations, analysis of institutional structures, water management plans, etc. Three national expert groups have been established to work on policy packages.

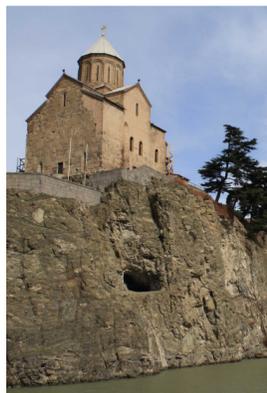
The first session of the first Steering Committee meeting (11 June 2012) was devoted to institutional and legal reforms in the Georgian water management sector. The Steering Committee agreed that a concept for the further development of water legislation shall be developed on the basis of the document presented during the meeting.

The first Steering Committee further discussed the expert group report “The target indices setting in accordance with the Protocol on Water and Health in Georgia”, and it also took note on the preparative work with regard to the possible accession to the Protocol on Water and Health.

The expert group report “Transboundary Water resources Management Problems in Georgia and Transboundary Water Cooperation with Neighboring Azerbaijan” was also discussed, as well as the state of negotiations on the management of transboundary watercourses shared by Georgia and Azerbaijan.

Development of the Water Legislation

At its second meeting (30 May 2013), the Steering Committee discussed the draft Law on Water Resources Management in Georgia, prepared by the expert group. The Law will



**Draft new
Water Law of
Georgia will
be passed to
national
parliament for
discussions
in autumn
2013**

consist of four main parts – general, principal, transitional and final sections with approximately 40 chapters covering the water-related subjects consistently and integrally. The scope of the law, in line with the EU Water Framework Directive, shall cover surface waters, transitional waters, coastal waters, groundwater and related protected areas. The new law would also cover water infrastructure facilities - all water services which provide, for households, public institutions or any economic activity: abstraction, impoundment, storage, treatment and distribution of surface water or groundwater; waste-water collection and treatment facilities which subsequently discharge into surface water etc.

The Law will establish water management on a river-basin basis. The Law also will provide for all other aspects of the Integrated Water Resources Management, such as water classification system, water quality objectives and standards, water use, water resources planning, pollution prevention combined approach, economic tools, public participation, monitoring and enforcement, flood risk management etc. The comments of UNECE and other international experts were taken into account during preparation of the draft Law. Consultations with stakeholders took place in May and June 2013 in order to get their feedback. It is expected that the draft Law will be passed to national parliament for discussions in autumn of 2013.

Joint seminar of two EU-funded water projects in Tbilisi

On 7 March 2013 a joint event was organised by two teams currently implementing EU-financed projects in water sector. During the first half of the day, National Water Partnership of Georgia held a meeting of the expert group that drafted the new Water Law. In the afternoon, the project "Environmental Protection of International River Basins" had its steering committee meeting. As there was an overlap of participants, all participants stayed for the full day, creating the possibility for an exchange of views and to find ways for future cooperation between the projects.



Participants at the joint seminar in Tbilisi, 7 March 2013

Photo: Peep Mardiste

EU Water Initiative NPD activities in EECCA in November 2012 – June 2013

Side-event on NPDs during the Meeting of Parties to the UNECE Water Convention

29 November 2012 – Rome, Italy

The 6th Session of the Meeting of Parties to the Water Convention took place in Rome on 28-30 November 2012. The side event on National Policy Dialogues was aimed at sharing best practices between countries and identifying opportunities for regional dialogues and cross-fertilization. There was good mix of panellists - representatives from EECCA countries, donors and NGOs. A number of issues were raised during the discussion, such as engaging relevant stakeholders, sustaining inter-sectoral interaction and ensuring strong ownership by national partners. Options for future work were also debated, including ways to transfer the lessons learned in one country to other countries and to the entire region. There is potential interest in other regions to learn from the experience of EECCA NPD platforms, and it shall be studied how to best respond to this interest.



Meeting of EUWI Coordination Group

23 January 2013 – Brussels, Belgium

The European Commission organised the meeting to review the work in different regional components in the framework of the EU Water Initiative (EUWI). Some 40 participants, including representatives from 7 EU Member States, took part in the meeting. A presentation of activities in the EECCA region was made along with reports from other regions. The work of UNECE and OECD on National Policy Dialogues in EECCA region received very positive feedback. A new initiative, the China-Europe Water Partnership, was also introduced. Initial planning for joint 2013 EUWI activities was done.

The 9th Steering Committee meeting in Kyrgyzstan

13 March 2013 – Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan

The 9th meeting of the Steering Committee brought together representatives of various ministries and agencies of Kyrgyzstan, as well as the international organizations and projects active on environment and water in the region (EU, OECD, GIZ, SDC/World Bank, EBRD, WHO, UNDP, CAREC). A key outcome of the Steering Committee was the approval of national targets with regard to water quality, water supply and wastewater treatment with a view of improving human health and reducing the incidence of water-related diseases. The targets were part of a report, "Setting targets in the context of the Protocol on Water and Health in Kyrgyzstan", developed by a national inter-ministerial working group over the past few years. Different agencies reported further on the latest developments with regard to the drafting of river basin management plans. In particular, the approaches to basin planning in the Chu, Isfara, Kugart and Talas River Basins were presented. Participants also discussed the concept of river basin planning developed by the Transboundary Water Management in Central Asia Programme of the GIZ, and the concept for the Chu River Basin Management Plan developed in the NPD process. It was agreed that a uniform approach should be developed in the future to ensure that a similar methodology was used in development of river basin plans in Kyrgyzstan. The meeting also welcomed the establishment of the Chu River Basin Council, which had its first meeting on 28 February 2013 with support from the NPD Programme.

The final results of the project on reforming subsidies impacting the water sector were presented at the meeting by OECD. Stakeholders approved a follow-up project focused on implementation, involving consultations with key ministries on priority recommendations regarding the reform of economic instruments for water resource management, including subsidies. EBRD and CAREC expressed their willingness to collaborate.

The 3rd Steering Committee meeting in Turkmenistan

5 April 2013 – Ashgabad, Turkmenistan

The 3rd NPD Steering Committee meeting was organised with support of GIZ and was hosted by the Ministry of Water Economy. The meeting took

notice of the work of the inter-ministerial expert group drafting the new Water Code as part of the NPD process. After ten expert group meetings were held (with two yet to take place) the Steering Committee approved the preliminary results achieved by the expert group. Presentations were made by experts of UNECE, GIZ and CAREC on approaches to basin management. During the donor session, the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia (UNRCCA) and UNDP presented their projects in Turkmenistan. The Steering Committee agreed to have one meeting a year, possibly linked to national water celebration festivities in early April.



The 5th Steering Committee meeting in Tajikistan

23 May 2013 – Dushanbe, Tajikistan

The meeting of the Steering Committee was attended by around 60 people - representatives of various ministries and agencies of Tajikistan, as well as international donors and projects active in the field of water management (EU, SDC, GIZ, EBRD, ADB, UNDP). Ambassadors of the EU and Germany were also present. Key sessions discussed the water sector reform and setting targets in the context of the Protocol on Water and Health. A detailed report on the draft Water Sector Reform Strategy was presented. The Strategy is almost finalized and it will be distributed for comments in June 2013. Proposed reforms involve institutional changes, such as the separation of policy-making and operational functions at the national level and granting relevant decision-making powers to the levels of four river basins (to be determined). The main questions raised by participants were about ownership of the water distribution infrastructure and about rights of Water User Associations. The final report on setting targets in the context of the Protocol on Water and Health was presented. The main questions concerning the targets were linked to the issues of funding for the implementation.

Stakeholder meeting and the 2nd Steering Committee meeting in Georgia

29-30 May 2013 – Tbilisi, Georgia

The draft new Water Law was presented to stakeholders during the Stakeholder meeting on 29

May 2013 in Tbilisi. Over 20 different NGOs were present to discuss the principal provisions of the proposed new law. On next day, 30 May, the 2nd NPD Steering Committee meeting took place. There were 36 participants from relevant ministries and state agencies, as well as donors, NGOs and water utility companies. A key agenda item was the presentation of the draft new Water Law, drawn up by an inter-ministerial working group as part of the NPD process. This ambitious new law is in line with principles of integrated water resource management (IWRM) and the requirements of the EU Water Framework Directive. It introduces the river basin approach to water resources management, permitting and licensing for water use and discharge, and clarifies the roles of the different State agencies involved in the management of the water resources. In the draft law, special attention is paid to ensuring access to safe drinking water and the comprehensive monitoring of water quality. Feedback from stakeholders was gathered in the first half of June before it was sent to different ministries for comments.

The 1st Steering Committee meeting in Kazakhstan

21 June 2013 – Astana, Kazakhstan

The 1st meeting of the National Policy Dialogue on water in Kazakhstan took place on 21 June in Astana. It was attended by some 30 officers representing several ministries, local NGOs and think tanks, as well as international stakeholders (EC Delegation to Kazakhstan, GIZ, EBRD, OSCE, OECD and UNECE). Prior to the meeting, an Inter-ministerial Steering Committee was set up by the authorities of Kazakh to guide the dialogue process. The Steering Committee is chaired by Vice-minister of Environment Protection and includes high level officials from the Ministries of Environment Protection (Water Committee *et al*), Economy and Budget Planning, Education, Emergencies, Foreign Affairs, Health, Regional Development, Industries and Technologies, National Regulator for Natural Monopolies, National Center for Public-Private Partnership etc., as well as several local NGOs and think tanks.

The meeting officially launched the National Policy Dialogue on water in Kazakhstan, provided comments on draft project concepts, and agreed on further directions of work. With the support of OECD and UNECE, the next steps in the NPD will focus on sustainable business models for operating and financing water supply and sanitation systems in small towns and villages in Kazakhstan and on water and health issues.

Workshop on water pricing in Tajikistan

25-26 June 2013 – Dushanbe, Tajikistan

A workshop on water pricing took place on 25-26 June in Dushanbe. Assistance was requested by the Antimonopoly Agency (AMA) of Tajikistan, which is in charge of setting the tariffs for water supply and sanitation and holds responsibility for economic regulation. About 30 people participated

in the workshop, mainly professionals of the Agency. The workshop was organized with technical support from the Institute for Urban Economics (Moscow) and financial support from the Finnish Environmental Institute (SYKE). The workshop covered, in particular, tariff setting rules and procedures, measures to address affordability issues, and indicators to benchmark the performance of water utilities.

Exchange of experiences between water professionals from the European Union and Central Asia. Educational visit to Portugal and Spain

by Nazik Mamedova, GIZ

A study trip for water professionals from Central Asia was organized on 5-11 May 2013 by the EU-funded project “Water Management and Basin Organizations in Central Asia (WMBOCA)” to share experiences with European colleagues.

A delegation of representatives from the state water agencies of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan took part in the study trip to Portugal and Spain.

During the visit special attention was paid to issues related to the management of transboundary river basins, with the cases of Guadiana and Tagus river basins shared by Portugal and Spain. Having a similar climate to the Central Asian region (frequent droughts and floods), these two neighbouring European countries have established a mechanism for resolving inter-state disputes on water resources and emergency response by creating a legal framework for transboundary water resources.



Many water management installations were visited during the study tour Photo: Jenniver Sehring/GIZ

Particularly valuable was the opportunity to communicate with the European counterparts - representatives of national water agencies, water utilities, farmers and water users associations. The study tour also provided an opportunity to obtain first-hand information on water management, legal frameworks, and problems in transboundary river management. The participants also visited irrigation systems and water supply facilities. One of the interesting lessons learned was that irrigation water passes through pipes laid under the ground, which helps to prevent water loss due to evaporation in hot climates - this experience can be useful for Central Asia.

Water distribution and transboundary rivers management

Employees of the National Water Institute (INAG), located in Lisbon, accounted for the history of the development and implementation of agreements on transboundary rivers with Spain. Cooperation started in early 1990s and the countries reached the Albufeira Agreement in 1998 to regulate the management of transboundary water resources. The participants of the study tour were interested in the exchange of information between the two countries on the availability and abstraction of water, the terms of which are prescribed in the agreement, as well as in experience in the joint struggle against natural disasters such as droughts and floods.

Of particular interest was the experience of data exchange on water resources, coordination, allocation issues, as well as the mechanisms of payment for infrastructure maintenance, and conflict resolution mechanisms. There are some differences between Portugal and Spain regarding water issues, including different legislation on transparency of data and the definition of the boundaries of the delta of the river Guadiana. However, current institutional mechanisms, in particular the Commission for the Development and Application of the Albufeira Agreement and the Permanent Technical Secretariat, help to solve these issues without leading to tensions between the countries.

What was the most interesting?

Despite the arid climate, Portugal and Spain have been able to set up a mechanism for joint water management that is effective even in dry years. Both countries follow their obligations and agreements. Special attention was paid to organizational and administrative structures regarding the implementation of the agreement, as well as to the level of automation and control of water resources.

The experiences of Portugal and Spain will be further examined by experts from the countries of Central Asia. Water professionals from Spain and Portugal are expected to attend the meeting of water management organizations in August 2013 in Dushanbe.



Participants of the study tour

Photo: Jenniver Sehring/GIZ

Meetings and events until Spring 2014

(the schedule is tentative, meeting dates may change)

4 September 2013	Stockholm, Sweden	The annual EUWI meeting during the World Water Week
September 2013	Baku, Azerbaijan	The 3rd NPD Steering Committee meeting
25-26 September 2013	Geneva, Switzerland	The 6th meeting of the Water Convention IWRM working group
15 October 2013	Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan	The 10th NPD Steering Committee meeting
18 October 2013	Dushanbe, Tajikistan	The 6th NPD Steering Committee meeting
24-25 October 2013	Helsinki, Finland	The EUWI EECCA Working Group meeting
25-27 November 2013	Oslo, Norway	The 3rd Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on Water and Health
February 2014	Tbilisi, Georgia	The 3rd NPD Steering Committee meeting
March 2014	Astana, Kazakhstan	The 2nd NPD Steering Committee meeting
April 2014	Ashgabad, Turkmenistan	The 4th NPD Steering Committee meeting

Publications and reports

Publications related to the NPD process are available at UNECE site

www.unece.org/env/water/npd/publications/

Documents and presentations of national-level meetings in EECCA region are available at UNECE site

www.unece.org/env/water/npd/countrydialogues

All water-related publications of OECD are available at www.oecd.org/water

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