



UNECE



World Health Organization

REGIONAL OFFICE FOR **Europe**

**UNITED NATIONS
ECONOMIC COMMISSION
FOR EUROPE**

**WORLD HEALTH
ORGANIZATION
REGIONAL OFFICE FOR EUROPE**

Meeting of the Parties to
the Protocol on Water and Health
to the Convention on the Protection
and Use of Transboundary
Watercourses and International Lakes

Fourth session
Geneva, 14-16 November 2016
Item 6 (g) of the provisional agenda
Report on implementation of the European Union
Water Initiative National Policy Dialogues

MOP4/WH/2016/INF.14

REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EUROPEAN UNION WATER INITIATIVE NATIONAL POLICY DIALOGUES

Summary

The National Policy Dialogues are the main operational instrument under the European Union Water Initiative in the countries of Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia.

This document gives an outline of objectives and current state of the National Policy Dialogues on Integrated Water Resource Management led by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe in those countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia where the work related to the Protocol on Water and Health has been identified as a thematic priority.

I. Background and objectives of the National Policy Dialogues

1. National Policy Dialogues (NPD) on integrated water resources management (IWRM) and water supply and sanitation (WSS) are the main operational instrument of the European Union Water Initiative (EUWI) Component for Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia. EUWI, including the above component, was launched at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2002. It contributed to the implementation of Millennium Development Goals and is expected to support the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda). The United Nations Economic

Commission for Europe (UNECE) is the strategic partner for support to the policy dialogue processes on IWRM, whereas the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) is the strategic partner for WSS and financial aspects of IWRM. Altogether, since 2006 the EUWI NPDs have been carried out in nine countries. The EUWI component for Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia is presently chaired by Romania.

2. In those countries, where the NPDs cover both IWRM and WSS aspects and/or the economic and financial dimension of water resource management, the NPD process is implemented by UNECE and OECD in a coordinated way. In some countries, one of the partners takes the lead with the other partner providing inputs on selected issues. OECD is supporting the national policy dialogue in the Russian Federation, while in Turkmenistan the dialogue is currently implemented by UNECE only.

3. NPDs on IWRM provide practical assistance to strengthen the application of the principles of IWRM as enshrined in the UNECE Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention), the UNECE-World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe (WHO/Europe) Protocol on Water and Health to the Water Convention, the EU Water Framework Directive (WFD) and other relevant documents.

4. The NPDs on WSS provide practical assistance to the countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia in achieving their global and regional commitments through improving the legal, institutional and regulatory framework in water supply and sanitation and overall sector governance in line with international best practices and OECD expertise.

5. In 2014-2016, the focus on water and health issues in general and the activities under the Protocol in particular were increasingly recognized as priority in most countries where NPDs on IWRM are operational.

6. In particular, over the last three years, the UNECE-led NPDs ensured high-level political commitment and provided significant financial and substantive support to the implementation or application of the Protocol in those countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia where this has been identified as a thematic priority, namely in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Republic of Moldova, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan.

7. NPDs provided a political platform and financial and expert support for target-setting processes in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. National policy dialogues were also instrumental in promoting accession to the Protocol in all of the above countries (except Azerbaijan which is already a Party) and in Turkmenistan.

8. The Protocol-related activities under the policy dialogues have also established synergies, where relevant, with different thematic areas of work, such as equitable access, and raised awareness on global monitoring programmes such as the WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme and GLAAS.

II. Activities and stakeholders involved

9. Policy dialogues are based on consultations with relevant ministries, agencies and institutions (including science and academia), non-governmental organizations, parliamentary bodies and other national and international organizations. The dialogue process is usually conducted under the leadership of a high-level government representative such as the Minister/Deputy Minister of Environment or the Chairman of the State Water Committee, with the involvement of health authorities for issues related to the Protocol on Water and Health. In the respective countries, national Steering Committees are established to guide and steer the NPD process. They include representatives of relevant ministries, agencies and institutions, as well as non-governmental organizations.

10. The Steering Committees usually meet twice a year at the national level. They discuss key national water policy issues and adopt decisions on NPD activities. International and donor organizations, such as the EU, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), WHO/Europe, the World Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and bilateral donors are invited to and encouraged to attend the policy dialogue meetings.

11. In addition to their original function of supporting the development of policies on IWRM and WSS, in several countries the NPDs and their Steering Committees have been playing the role of national coordination mechanisms for water-related projects carried out under the auspices of international organizations (e.g. EC, UNECE, UNDP, WHO/Europe, World Bank, OECD) and donor countries (e.g. Finland, Germany, Norway and Switzerland). This contributes to streamlining action in the area of water and to a more efficient use of available funds.

12. Although the NPDs implementation follows the same methodology, the processes in each country are unique as regards approaches for introducing IWRM principles, substantive agendas of the dialogues and dynamics of the process. Activities and progress depend on the objectives for water management in each country, the legislative and institutional framework, as well as the political and socio-economic situation.

13. Memorandums of Understanding were signed between UNECE and Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Republic of Moldova and Ukraine at the seventh session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Water Convention (Budapest, 17–19 November 2015) with the aim of renewing political commitment to the national policy dialogue processes and framing the activities of the government authorities in implementation of the National Policy Dialogue, also in relation to the Protocol on Water and Health.

III. Implementation of the National Policy Dialogues on Integrated Water Resources Management with the focus on the Protocol on Water and Health

Armenia

A project supporting the implementation of the Protocol on Water and Health started in December 2012 with support from Finland. Setting of national targets was completed in summer 2014 and in December 2014 the NPD Steering Committee adopted an action plan to support the implementation of targets and target dates. At the same meeting, a roadmap to the

ratification of the Protocol on Water and Health by Armenia was agreed. The roadmap suggests sequential steps required for acceding to the Protocol and explains benefits to be gained by Armenia. Currently, the possibility of acceding to the Protocol is being reviewed by the Armenian Ministry of Nature Protection. In addition, a consultation on the management of small-scale water supply and sanitation and assessing equitable access to water and sanitation was organized back to back with the Steering Committee meeting in December 2015: a project of self-assessment of the situation of equitable access to water and sanitation in Armenia was launched at this occasion.

Azerbaijan

In Azerbaijan, the work on setting national targets and target dates under the Protocol on Water and Health started in summer 2015. To support these activities a dedicated workshop on the main obligations under the Protocol, i.e. target setting and reporting, was organized in September 2015. A special emphasis was also placed on the issue of equitable access to water and sanitation and the importance of assessing the situation in the country through applying the UNECE-developed self-assessment tool - the Equitable Access Score-card. Following the workshop, the working group of experts prepared the first draft of the national targets that were discussed at the NPD Steering Committee meeting in February 2016. The draft targets were then sent for consultation to the relevant ministries and agencies. The process of drafting the targets is currently at the finalization stage.

Georgia

Work on revision of the national targets set in the context of the Protocol on Water and Health in 2011 was continued within the current programme of work of the Protocol at the request of the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection and the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia, with support of NPD process. Several new target areas were to be added and target dates to be renewed, also in light of the 2030 Agenda. The process of revision of targets has been implemented in close synergy with the work under the National Environment and Health Action Plan (NEHAP) currently being developed by the Georgian National Center for Disease Control and Public Health with support of the World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe (WHO/Europe) and the European Union. The revision of targets is still ongoing.

Kazakhstan

Following the prioritization of activities at the first NPD Steering Committee meeting (Astana, 21 June 2013), UNECE assisted Kazakhstan in analysing the benefits of accession to the Protocol on Water and Health. Based on the results of the analysis by a national expert group, a decision was taken at the second NPD Steering Committee meeting (Borovoi, Kazakhstan, 24 April 2014) to launch the ratification process of the Protocol on Water and Health. In autumn 2015, the process of setting national targets and target dates under the Protocol, supported by UNECE and financed by the EU, started with the establishment of a national expert group formed by representatives of relevant ministries, NGOs and academia. The draft national targets developed by the group are currently undergoing consultations among the relevant stakeholders and are expected to be finalized in the beginning of 2017.

With regard to the accession to the Protocol, it is expected that this process will run simultaneously with the process of target setting so that both processes are completed in first half of 2017.

Kyrgyzstan

In Kyrgyzstan, setting targets and target dates at the national level in the context of the Protocol on Water and Health is one of the main focus areas of the NPD process. In the past triennium, with support of Finland, the work focused on revising the targets and target dates set and formally adopted in 2013. A national expert group established in spring 2016 analyzed the targets with the support of an international consultant and made recommendation for revision. The revised targets were circulated to get feedback from the relevant stakeholders and are expected to be submitted for endorsement to the 15th NPD Steering Committee meeting (Bishkek, 9 December 2016), after which a detailed action plan for their implementation will be developed. At this meeting, a number of measures related to non-infrastructure water and health targets will also be selected in order to support their implementation in the NPD framework. The process of official adoption of targets is expected to be carried out in early 2017.

Republic of Moldova

In the Republic of Moldova, support to the implementation of the Protocol on Water and Health in the past triennium was provided in the framework of the dedicated joint UNECE and Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (UNECE-SDC) project. However, in order to ensure synergies with the NPD process on water supply and sanitation coordinated by OECD, the Steering Committee meetings under the project were held back to back with the meetings of the NPD Steering Committees. As the UNECE-SDC project ended in October 2016, the work of UNECE-led NPD process is expected to intensify within the Protocol's programme of work for 2017-2019. NPDs will continue supporting implementation of national targets on water and health adopted in the Republic of Moldova as a National Programme in July 2016, besides providing support for the approximation of EU water legislation according to the EU-Republic of Moldova Association Agreement, signed in 2014.

Tajikistan

In Tajikistan, the work on revising the targets and target dates set in 2013 in the context of the Protocol on Water and Health is being supported by Finland and carried out in the NPD framework, with the support of an international consultant. An inter-ministerial expert group was formed in spring 2016 with the mandate of reviewing and revising the national targets on water and health. The revised targets will be submitted for endorsement to the upcoming meeting of the NPD Steering Committee (Dushanbe, 6 December 2016). At national level, the work is being coordinated by the Ministry of Energy and Water Resources and the Sanitary-Epidemiological Service under the Ministry of Health. In the same way as in Kyrgyzstan, a set of non-infrastructure measures will be proposed for supporting their implementation in the NPD framework in the course of 2017.

Turkmenistan

In Turkmenistan, the platform of NPDs on IWRM was used to build capacity of the national stakeholders on the Protocol on Water and Health. Two workshops were organized by

UNECE in Ashgabat (10 October 2014 and 1 April 2015) in order to introduce the main obligations under the Protocol and communicate the benefits of possible accession. The workshop in 2015 was held back-to-back with a training organized by WHO/Europe in order to raise awareness on global monitoring programmes and help to examine and define the in-country consultation process for data validation. In May 2016, the Ministry of Health of Turkmenistan officially informed the joint secretariat about the intention to start the process of accession to the Protocol and identified the needs of the country in this regard.

IV. Lessons learned and challenges ahead

14. As confirmed by the countries where NPDs take place, the national policy dialogues are shaped in a way so that they respond to countries needs. In the past triennium, the water and health issues and activities under the Protocol were identified as key priority in most countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia where NPDs on IWRM are operational, with Ukraine requesting the work under the Protocol to become part of the activities under NPD on IWRM under the Protocol's programme of work for 2017–2019.

15. Leadership and commitment of national actors is key for successful implementation of the NPDs. Continuous involvement of representatives of parliamentary and governmental bodies is required for discussing and adopting new policy packages and measures. NGOs and research community are important drivers for policy reform discussions and should also be actively involved in the dialogue processes.

16. Political leadership by the European Commission (EC) and by the EUWI Chair is crucial for implementing the NPDs. Participation of Heads of EU Delegations and of the EU Special Representative for Central Asia in the Steering Committee meetings has ensured and demonstrated such political leadership. Close coordination of NPD activities with the EU Delegations and embassies of EU member States, as well as coordination of NPD activities with other EU activities (e.g. under EU-Central Asia Platform and in the framework of projects supported by the EC) should be continued.

17. Coordination with development partners contributes to ensuring sustainability of the results of NPDs in the medium term: e.g. on several instances, EC and bilateral donors followed up on specific priority actions and technical assistance needs identified in the policy dialogue processes. Donors and international organizations also find an interest in NPDs as NPDs provide a platform to share expertise and coordinate initiatives.

18. An unstable and rapidly changing political environment in some of the beneficiary countries is one of the major risks for NPDs implementation. Supporting and, where needed, re-establishing NPD platforms is lengthy and resource consuming process.

19. NPDs evolve over time. They are typically set for several years and require a medium/long term perspective. It is important that financial support reflects this dimension. Financial support by EC is crucial as it contributes to ensure the sustainability of the processes over several years. Recurrent and stable funding from Finland, Germany, Norway and Switzerland is also key for implementing specific projects in the NPDs framework.
