

UPDATE

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



EUWI
EU WATER INITIATIVE



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In this issue:

NPD profile: Moldova	2
Update of EUWI meetings	4
Meetings and events until June 2016	8
Contacts	8

Highlights:

- First stakeholder discussion in Belarus for launching NPD
- Three trainings organized in Turkmenistan

About National Policy Dialogues on Water

National Policy Dialogues (NPDs) are the main operational instrument of the Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA) Component of the European Union Water Initiative (EUWI). 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) and to Post-2015 Development agenda.

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 (WSS) and integrated water resources management (IWRM)) in a particular country. Each NPD involves high level representatives of all key partners, including national and basin authorities, representatives of relevant international organisations, civil society (NGOs) and private sector.

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

Dear friends,

I am happy to present to you the ninth issue of the 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 previous issue of the Update was released in September 2014 and quite a lot has been taking place in the NPD process since then. Brief summaries of the main meetings held are presented in the update of NPD activities in October 2014-October 2015. There is also an interesting overview of NPD activities in the Republic of Moldova where the process has been ongoing for over nine years already.

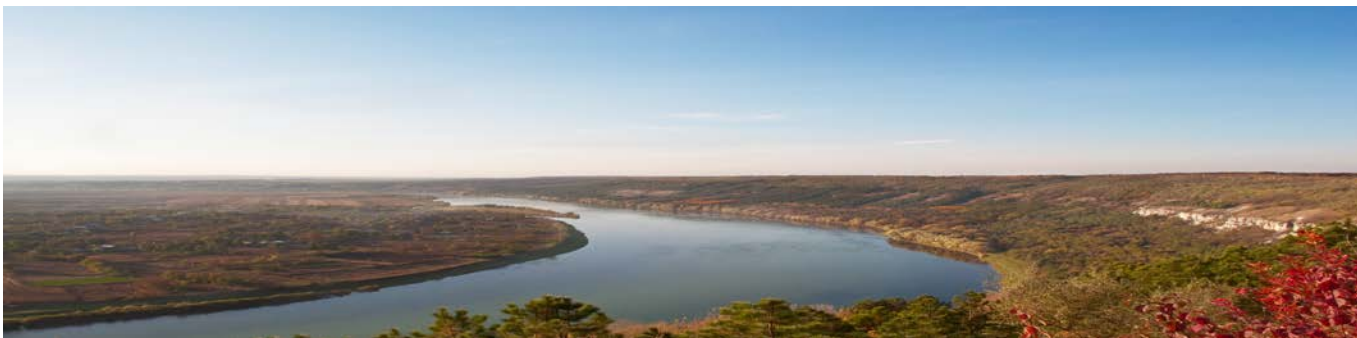
NPD processes are active across the region, providing policy advice to countries on broad range of issues. For example in Central Asia, UNECE has got more involved in studying how irrigation sector reforms can help implementing IWRM principles. In Kyrgyzstan, studies are underway to see how to apply modern irrigation technologies, notably drip irrigation systems. In Tajikistan, irrigation sector development programme is being prepared. In both cases local and international experts have worked closely, ensuring exchange of experience.

The planned 2015 EUWI EECCA working group meeting is postponed to 2016. The reason for this replacement is that there is a need for more clarity on the setup for the future of EUWI in the region. The current EU core funding of the project will be finished in early 2016. For Eastern Europe and the Caucasus, EU support has been agreed or another 4 years. For Central Asia the planning is just starting and NPDs will probably become part of future EURECA II programme. Despite of the fact that the two components will be financed in separate programmes we will work to maintain the exchange of experience between the countries initially covered by EUWI EECCA.

Meeting of Parties to Water Convention in Budapest on 17-19 November 2015 will serve as good opportunity to take stock on achievements of NPD process and discuss plans for future. This will be another opportunity to highlight the need of improving transboundary cooperation within the international river basins or regional seas particularly taking into account the present and future effects of the climate change in the region.

I want to thank you all for the outstanding cooperation and I am confident that continuing to work together – countries and implementing agencies – we will contribute to a step by step improvement of the access to safe water, and proper sanitation and integrated water management and will keep EECCA as a front runner of EUWI.

*Gheorghe Constantin
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NPD profile: Republic of Moldova

Elina Comment, UNECE

The NPD in the Republic of Moldova started in 2006. The work on the NPD on IWRM led by UNECE and on the NPD on WSS led by OECD is conducted in close coordination. The dialogue resulted in three policy packages adopted in 2009-2010, including a Governmental Order on wastewater discharges from municipal sources (2009), a Draft Order of the Agency “Apele Moldovei” on the establishment of river basin management authorities and river basin councils (2009), and an Action Plan to achieve the water-related MDGs under the Protocol on Water and Health. In 2009-2010, with financial assistance from the Government of Switzerland under an agreement between the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and UNECE, the dialogue focused on the setting of targets and target dates on water and health in accordance with the Protocol on Water and Health. It resulted in a Government Decision on the targets under the Protocol that was adopted on 20 October 2010. In 2011 the main focus of the NPD was the monitoring of implementation of the established targets under the Protocol on Water and Health. Steering Committee (SC) meetings decided to establish a Clearing House on the Protocol on Water and Health, to develop Water Safety Plans in rural areas, to conduct capacity building for operators, as well as norms for small water operators and water user associations.

**NPD process
started in
Moldova
already 10
years ago**

During the latest period, the NPD in Moldova focused on: (a) the implementation of actions to achieve national water and health targets; and (b) the identification of ways to improve domestic financial support mechanisms for WSS. The first element, which has been financially supported by the Project in co-operation with the SDC, included developing a plan of actions to achieve the targets established under the UNECE-WHO/Europe Protocol on Water and Health. Subsequently to drafting and consulting the plan of action in 2013 and 2014 the NPD SC, at its meeting on 20 May 2015, agreed to send the document to Government for the official adoption. In addition the Project supported sharing of experience from establishing the Clearing House on the Protocol with other countries, including NPD seminars in Kazakhstan (April 2014) and in Turkmenistan (October 2014). The Clearing House on the Protocol, which was established in 2013 sets an outstanding example for the entire region.

Under the second element, the OECD conducted a study that analysed existing domestic financial support mechanisms for WSS and identified the ways to streamlining them and increasing their efficiency and cost-effectiveness. The results of this work were discussed at the NPD Steering Committee meeting in May 2015 during which the main policy recommendations of the study were endorsed. On the Ministry of Environment side, this activity has generated demand for a follow up work on establishing a sound system of economic regulation for WSS. Respective request was sent to the OECD indicating that it is a topical political issue.

The implementation of the Protocol on Water and Health and of the proposed improvement in Domestic Financial Support Mechanisms in WSS contribute to achieving water-related MDGs in Moldova (specifically, the target on WSS), as well the internationally (UN) adopted “Equitable Access to Water for All” objective. Furthermore, improved Domestic Financial Support Mechanisms will contribute to shifting to a more sound economic regulation and tariff policy in WSS improving incentive for the sustainable use of water resources and, thus, helping to achieve the environmental objectives under the Water Framework Directive.

Work on the Protocol on Water and Health

The Republic of Moldova is Party to the Protocol on Water and Health to the 1992 UNECE Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes since 2005.

As the country faced difficulties in complying with the Protocol's basic provisions, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and UNECE implemented during 2009–2010 a project on "Setting of targets and target dates under the Protocol on Water and Health in the Republic of Moldova". As a result of this project, in 2010, the Minister of Environment and the Minister of Health signed the Order No. 91/704 on the approval of national targets and target dates on water and health.

The second UNECE-SDC project titled "Implementation of targets and target dates set out in the Order of the Minister of Environment and the Minister of Health of 20 October 2010 to implement the Protocol on Water and Health in the Republic of Moldova" was launched in 2012 with the overall objective of ensuring that the population of Moldova, in particular marginalized and vulnerable groups, benefits from improved access to safe water and sanitation, reduced water-related diseases and a protected environment, through the Protocol's implementation.

The core project output is an action plan defining measures and specific activities for the achievement of the targets and target dates, including financial requirements and human resources. According to the Moldovan legislation, the action plan has been developed as a National Programme to be adopted by the Government in the coming months. There are seven other project outputs, including conducting trainings for water operators, elaboration of norms and standards for small-scale installations, awareness raising, promotion of Moldovan experience at international level, etc. The upcoming months are crucial for the official approval of a number of documents prepared such as the above-mentioned National Programme and norms and standards for small-scale water supplies.

The project is expected to be completed in mid-2016. National targets under the Protocol on Water and Health are currently being revised in Moldova. In this process, some of the existing targets will be deleted because they have been already achieved and few additional targets will be added. It is expected that the updated targets will be formally approved in Spring 2016.

NPD Moldova: what is done under the UNECE/WHO- Europe Protocol on Water and Health?



EU Water Initiative: National Policy Dialogue activities in Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia in October 2014 – October 2015

National seminar on the Protocol on Water and Health in Turkmenistan

7-8 October 2014 – Ashgabat

The seminar was organized under the EUWI NPD with support of the Norwegian Ministry of Environment. It gathered over 20 representatives of different ministries and agencies responsible for water and health related issues in Turkmenistan. Key features of the Protocol on Water and Health were presented by UNECE and WHO/Europe: such as target setting and reporting as well as establishing systems for water related disease surveillance. A particular emphasis was made on the importance of creating an inter-sectoral working group for accession process and future implementation of the Protocol. Participation of experts from Norway and Moldova was particularly important as it gave an overview of how Protocol works in practice, using examples of its application and implementation in other countries of EECCA region. It was concluded that further exchange of information and specific capacity development activities should be conducted before next steps could be taken towards possible accession.

National workshop on the Industrial accidents convention in Turkmenistan

9-10 October 2014 – Ashgabat

The workshop was organized back-to-back with the seminar on the Protocol on Water and Health. The overall objective of the workshop was to enhance the capacity of all relevant stakeholders in the area of prevention, preparedness and response to industrial accidents and to present the benefits and obligations related to accession to the Convention, notably with regard to improvement of industrial safety and to sustainable development of Turkmenistan. Examples of the Convention's application in the United Kingdom and Slovenia were used as an illustration. Representatives of Turkmenistan presented the existing institutional and legal frameworks in their respective field of competence. The participants of the workshop expressed their interest in exploring the possibility of joining the Convention, however, after a further exchange of information and specialized trainings. Establishment of an expert group may be considered within the framework of the NPD process.

2nd NPD Working group meeting in Kazakhstan

14 October 2014 – Astana

The meeting served as a preparation for the 3rd NPD SC meeting. Local experts presented latest

updates of two projects being currently implemented under NPD in Kazakhstan: accession to the Protocol on Water and Health and business models for rural WSS. The NPD workplan for 2014–2015 was also discussed and updated.

National seminar on sustainable business models for WSS in small towns of Kazakhstan

15 October 2014 – Astana

The national workshop discussed and generally endorsed key recommendations of the draft final report on sustainable business models for WSS in small towns and rural settlements of Kazakhstan. Specifically, the rayon vodocanal model complemented by models for small distant settlements: WSS systems operated by community based organizations or by small scale private operators. The seminar advised to present the recommendations to the government for consideration and making decision.

20th meeting of the NPD Steering Committee and 4th Steering Committee meeting of the project “Implementation of targets set under the Protocol on Water and Health” in Moldova

7 November 2014 – Chisinau

The joint meeting of the NPD SC and the SC of the UNECE-SDC project “Implementation of targets set under the Protocol on Water and Health in the Republic of Moldova” was attended by over 40 national and international stakeholders. SC of the UNECE-SDC project took note of the draft Programme on implementing national targets under the Protocol, including the draft Action Plan and draft financial strategy, and requested experts to finalize the documents addressing comments received at the meeting for its submission to the 5th meeting of the SC. As part of the 20th NPD SC meeting, international experts hired by OECD presented draft findings on most suitable mechanisms of funding WSS projects in Moldova.

The 7th Steering Committee meeting in Tajikistan

13 November 2014 – Dushanbe

Over 60 representatives of different stakeholders and donors involved in improving water resources situation in Tajikistan attended the meeting. The main issue on the agenda was a discussion of the ongoing water sector reforms. The Water Sector Reform Strategy developed with UNECE support has not yet been approved by the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan. Key prerequisite for moving the reform forward is a clear division of

tasks between the relevant state agencies. Important role of the SC for the Government of Tajikistan was reiterated by a decision to subordinate to it an existing governmental steering group on WSS. Representatives of governmental agencies, International Financial Institutions and donors welcomed the move that would reduce duplication and increase necessary coherence in developing water sector in Tajikistan. With this decision, the former Inter-ministerial coordinating group on WSS becomes a permanent working group under the NPD SC.

Seminar on green cities and multi-purpose use of rivers and riverbanks in Georgia

12 December 2014 – Tbilisi

The workshop was organised by UNECE under the EUWI NPD in cooperation with embassies of Estonia and the Netherlands in Georgia upon the request of the City of Tbilisi. The workshop aimed at highlighting interesting cases from different European cities which are engaged in developing and applying concepts of green/sustainable cities. Presentations were also made to illustrate the work that has already been done in Tbilisi. Protection and use of water resources was one of the central issues of the workshop. There was a special session on IWRM in the Kura/Mtkvari river basin in Tbilisi area.

The 13th Steering Committee meeting in Armenia

16 December 2014 – Yerevan

The meeting was organised back-to-back with the meeting of the National Coordination Committee of the Environmental Protection of International River Basins (EPIRB) project to exchange the experience between two projects. One session was dedicated to the Protocol on Water and Health. As there were many new SC members, a brief overview on target setting process in 2013-2014 has been provided. Participants took a decision to approve (a) action plan for implementation of targets and target dates and (b) roadmap for ratification of the Protocol. A session was dedicated to economic and financial dimension of the water sector reforms in Armenia.

The 3rd Steering Committee meeting in Georgia

23 February 2015 – Tbilisi

There were a number of new members to the SC, so an overview of activities since the start of NPD in 2011 in three priority areas was given: (a) Georgian-Azerbaijani bilateral agreement on transboundary Kura River; (b) work on water legislation; and (c) on Protocol on Water and Health. It was agreed to continue cooperation between UNECE and Georgia in all three areas. Six draft bylaws that have been developed in

parallel to drafting a new Water Law were presented at the SC meeting. Other issues discussed included water-food-energy nexus assessment, state of the ratification of the Protocol on Water and Health and economic aspects of water resources management. Recently appointed head of Armenian Water Resources Management Agency, Mr. Vahan Davtyan, also attended the meeting on invitation from UNECE to seek for possibilities for bilateral cooperation with Georgia.

The 4th Steering Committee meeting in Azerbaijan

27 February 2015 – Baku

During the SC meeting was given an overview on developments related to the State Water Strategy which was initially elaborated with the support of UNECE in the framework of the NPDs. Azerbaijan has been selected as one of the countries to benefit from support in setting targets according to the Protocol on Water and Health. The UNECE Secretariat outlined planned process for setting national targets under the Protocol. Concerning 2015-2020 plans for the NPD for Azerbaijan, suggestion was made to prioritize institutional strengthening and legal work, and to complete the Water Strategy by perhaps merging expert groups of the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources and the Water Agency. Potential elements to be included in the strategy could be green technology, nexus, economic instruments, infrastructure etc.

Stakeholder meeting for preparation of NPD process in Belarus

3 March 2015 – Minsk

Meeting was organised in response to the letter from the Ministry of Economy, indicating interest to discuss potential start of the EUWI NPD process in Belarus. Preparatory meeting with representatives of several ministries was chaired by Mr Anatoly Shagun, the deputy minister of the housing and communal services. OECD and UNECE representatives presented background of the NPD programme and work in other countries of the region. Ministry of housing and communal services listed two priority areas where OECD is willing to help: drafting of water supply and sanitation strategy and feasibility study for regionalization of water service providers. UNECE will potentially be involved through work in transboundary basins.

The 12th Steering Committee in Kyrgyzstan

17 March 2015 – Bishkek

Search for ways to increase water use efficiency in agricultural sector has emerged as a new direction of work under NPD process lately, partly as response to the very dry vegetation season in 2014. National expert group presented results of a

report on modern irrigation technologies financed by UNECE that suggested an introduction of sprinkler or drip irrigation instead of surface irrigation. Both – sprinkler and drip irrigation – involve big upfront investments, but may offer 50% water saving while doubling agricultural production. Discussions revealed that it makes perhaps most sense to promote such technologies in more hilly landscapes which the Government plans to offer to farmers. The water-saving study also recommends increasing the share of crops that need less water and produce higher economic value, such as fruits, vegetables and berries. At the next stage of the process, experts will study practical application of such technologies in specific regions of Kyrgyzstan.

The OECD presented information on the upcoming start of implementation of projects on improving coordination of agricultural and water policies and development of Guidelines on rural water supply and sanitation reform in Kyrgyzstan, prepared with support of the Government of Finland and European Commission. OECD representative also informed the meeting on the upcoming workshop of the OECD Environmental Action Programme Task Force that took place in July 2015 in Paris. Other issues discussed at the SC meeting included the Syr Darya Nexus work and new projects initiated by the World Bank, Finland and OECD.

The 5th Steering Committee meeting in Turkmenistan

31 March 2015 – Ashgabat

Decisions of the 5th SC meeting included establishing two inter-ministerial working groups for elaborating national IWRM strategy and for studying the Protocol on Water and Health. It was also decided to request assistance from UNECE to organize seminars on the industrial accidents convention with the aim of forming official suggestion about potentially becoming a Party.

Capacity building workshop on the Protocol on Water and Health and its links with global monitoring programme for WSS in Turkmenistan

1 April 2015 – Ashgabat

The workshop was organized in cooperation with the WHO-Europe as follow-up to October 2014 workshop. The first part of the workshop aimed at clarifying the main obligations and provisions of the Protocol on Water and Health and at understanding the status of the process towards accession to the Protocol in the country. As the result, the Ministry of Water Economy suggested establishing an interministerial working group which would analyze legal, institutional, financial and capacity implications of acceding to the Protocol. The second part of the workshop, serviced by

WHO/Europe, focused on the Global Monitoring Programme for WSS. Participants got a better understanding of the methodological aspects (such as data sources, collection and validation of data) of the Global Monitoring Programme.

The 8th Steering Committee in Tajikistan

12 May 2015 – Dushanbe

8th meeting of NPD SC discussed the state of water management reforms that the UNECE helped to design. It was assumed that the Government would make decision on reform strategy in June 2015. The issue of water use in sectors of industry and fisheries was on agenda of the second session. A presentation about Industrial Accidents Convention and Joint Expert Group with Water Convention was made during this session. Outcomes of the 7th World Water Forum in Korea and plans for International conference on water in Tajikistan (9-11 June 2015) were also presented.

The 3rd Steering Committee in Kazakhstan

15 May 2015 – Astana

The 3rd NPD Steering Committee meeting discussed the situation of the two first policy packages under NPD process in Kazakhstan: preparations for accession to the Protocol on Water and Health (the package led by UNECE) and sustainable business models for WSS in rural areas and small towns (the package led by the OECD). Workplan and upcoming next projects, future plans of both UNECE and OECD were presented, as well as preliminary results of Syr Darya basin nexus assessment.

20th meeting of the NPD Steering Committee and 5th Steering Committee meeting of the project “Implementation of targets set under the Protocol on Water and Health” in Moldova

20 May 2015 – Chisinau

The joint meeting was attended by over 40 national and international stakeholders and was chaired by the newly appointed Minister of Environment and the Deputy Minister of Health. At its 5th meeting, the SC endorsed draft National Programme on implementing national targets under the Protocol on Water and Health, including the draft Action Plan and draft financial mobilization strategy as well as the revised targets under the Protocol, and recommended to subsequently submit the document for official approval procedure. As part of the 21st meeting of the EUWI NPD, OECD consultant presented draft recommendations on improving domestic financial support mechanisms for WSS. The need for establishing a sound economic (tariff) regulatory system was also discussed.

Working meeting to launch the target setting process under the Protocol on Water and Health in Azerbaijan

11 June 2015 – Baku

The working meeting was held in the premises of the State Sanitary and Epidemiological Service with participation of experts from the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources, State Agency for Water Resources under the Ministry of Emergency Situations, national water and sewage operator Azersu and an independent expert from academia. During the meeting the methodology and timeline for target setting process was discussed and agreed upon. It is planned to finalize draft targets by March 2016 and officially adopt them in time for the upcoming Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on Water and Health in November 2016.

Workshop: The Protocol on Water and Health - supporting progress to set targets and achieve equitable access to water and sanitation in Azerbaijan

29 September 2015 – Baku

The workshop aimed at supporting progress to set national targets under the Protocol on Water and Health and to achieve equitable access to WSS. After the introduction on the Protocol and the target setting process, representatives of the Government informed about the general situation with water and health in the country and about recent improvements related to the prioritization of health and well-being of population. Local expert group carried out a baseline analysis and started the target setting process under the Protocol. The presentation of the 11 target areas prioritized by

the country prompted an active discussion on the remaining challenges and issues that would need to be addressed to enhance the current situation. Participants discussed and agreed on the timeline and next steps in the target setting process, to be continued with support of the Protocol Secretariat and the NPD process in Azerbaijan. International obligations related to ensuring equitable access to WSS and the work on equitable access to WSS under the Protocol were also introduced.

6th Steering Committee meeting of the project «Implementation of targets under the Protocol on Water and Health in the Republic of Moldova» and the 22nd meeting of the NPD Steering Committee in Moldova

13 November 2015 – Chisinau

The meeting aimed at gathering both SCs as well as broader community active in the water sector in the Republic of Moldova in order to present main outputs and results of the work carried out in 2015. The meeting participants discussed follow-up and future activities under both processes. The main outputs of the project on implementing targets under the Protocol on Water and Health were presented in the first session of the meeting. The second session, led by OECD, informed on the new project on establishing a sound economic regulatory system for WSS in Moldova. The representatives of the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Health presented activities to fulfil the National Programme on implementing national targets under the Protocol on Water and Health. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Water SDGs were also discussed at the meeting.

Meetings and events until June 2016

(the schedule is tentative, meeting dates may change)

30 November 2015	Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic	The thirteenth NPD SC meeting
3 December 2015	Dushanbe, Tajikistan	The ninth NPD SC meeting
14 December 2015	Yerevan, Armenia	The fourteenth NPD SC meeting
February 2016	Tbilisi, Georgia	The fourth NPD SC meeting
April 2016	Ashgabat, Turkmenistan	The sixth NPD SC meeting
April 2016	Baku, Azerbaijan	The fifth NPD SC meeting
April/ 2016	Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic	The fourteenth NPD SC meeting
April/May 2016	Astana, Kazakhstan	The fourth NPD SC meeting
April/May 2016	Dushanbe, Tajikistan	The tenth NPD SC meeting

Publications and reports

Publications related to the NPD process are available at the UNECE Water Convention website www.unece.org/env/water/npd/publications/

Documents and presentations of the meetings held at the national level in the EECCA region are available at www.unece.org/env/water/npd/countrydialogues

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

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