



**ANNUAL MEETING OF THE EU WATER INITIATIVE
EASTERN EUROPE, CAUCASUS AND CENTRAL ASIA (EUWI EECCA)**

WORKING GROUP

24-25 October 2013, Helsinki

Summary Record

Overall information about the meeting

1. The meeting was chaired by Mr Gheorghe Constantin, Chair of the EUWI EECCA.

Welcome and adoption of the draft agenda

2. Delegates noted the opening remarks by Ms. Lea Kauppi, Director General of SYKE, who welcomed the meeting participants, acknowledging the continued support of the donor community to the water reforms in the region; and Mr. Mathieu Bousquet, Head of Sector - Environment, Directorate-General EuropeAid Development and Cooperation, EC, who acknowledged progress made under the EU Water initiative; stressed the importance of national policy dialogues as umbrella processes to identify and implement reforms; stressed water diplomacy as a cross-cutting theme for future work; highlighted the role of the implementing agencies as co-ordinators; insisted on the need for the EUWI to demonstrate results and to promote river basin approaches in national and transboundary waters following the principles of the EU Water Framework Directive.

3. Delegates adopted the Draft Agenda.

Tour de Table

4. Delegates from EECCA countries flagged recent developments in water policies in their country. The following delegates took the floor: Armenia (on river basin management plans and the establishment of working group on monitoring), Azerbaijan (on water sector reform strategy; water pricing and capacity building), Georgia (on new draft water law and need for further changes in legal framework for water management; and on bilateral treaty with Azerbaijan on Kura river), Kazakhstan (on implementation of national green growth strategy; rational water use in agriculture; water supply and sanitation, adaptation to climate change; and water and health), Kyrgyzstan (on assistance needed to implement the water and health targets formally adopted and on work of Chu river basin council), Moldova (on amendments to Water Law released in October 2013; and a revised strategy for water supply and sanitation, including

developments of solidarity mechanisms), Russia (on a new water code and water strategy), Tajikistan (on planned institutional changes in the water sector), Turkmenistan (on adhesion to the Water Convention; the development of a new Water Code; and capacity building need for water managers), Ukraine (on approximation with the Water Framework Directive; devolution of responsibilities for water supply and sanitation to local authorities), Uzbekistan (on possibility of joining the NPD process; and on rational water use and irrigated land).

5. NGOs flagged the need to give higher visibility of policy dialogues and to further involve stakeholders or to sustain their participation.

New developments on the global water policy agenda

6. UNECE reported on the UN-led process of establishing post-2015 Sustainable development Goals (SDGs) to replace current Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). As regards water, the importance of ongoing debate on standalone water goal vs water issues being integrated into other goals was underlined. SDGs are expected to be endorsed at the UN General Assembly in September 2014.

7. The OECD presented how water can be managed to drive (green) growth and support development. This approach can support further work in EECCA such as the development of river basin management plans that contribute to growth; the reform of water allocation regimes; the design of policy instruments that promote coherence across the water – food – energy nexus; investment in water infrastructure.

8. The EC DG Environment presented a holistic vision of EU policies and legislative framework, related to water management including the Water Framework Directive. It highlighted recent policy documents such as the *Blueprint to Safeguard Europe's Water Resources*, that provides tools designed for the EU context and useful in EECCA countries as well (e.g. the links between land use and the ecological status of water bodies; addressing non-point sources of pollution; increasing efficiency of water uses).

9. The EC DG Relex highlighted the role of water diplomacy and international conventions on water in improving trans-boundary water management – a very topical issue in EECCA countries.

Transboundary Water Management: challenges and benefits

10. Delegates noted the presentations by Mr. Peep Mardiste (UNECE) and Mr. Erkin Orolbaev (Kyrgyzstan) on strengthening institutional framework for transboundary cooperation and a practical case from the Chu/Talas basins; delegates acknowledged the successful functioning of the Interstate Kazakh-Kyrgyz Chu-Talas Commission and supported sharing the experience with other Central Asian countries.

11. Delegates noted the presentation by Mr. Timothy Turner on the project for International River Basins in the wider Black Sea basin (supported by the EC); and discussed the challenges of developing river basin management plans.

12. Delegates took note of progress by the OECD in the development of an analytical framework to assess the benefits of cooperative water management in the Caucasus (mainly between Azerbaijan and Georgia).

13. Delegates welcomed the lessons learned from the 50 years' experience of the Finnish-Russian transboundary water co-operation; took note of the issues related to managing flood and drought risks in both countries, and of the compensation mechanism for Russian losses.

Policy coherence and sustainability when addressing water, climate, food, energy nexus

14. The UNECE informed the delegates about the setting up of a Task Force on Food, Water and Energy security issues. Experience of selected countries with the issue is being reviewed. The next stage of the project will propose policy options to achieve Food, Water and Energy security targets in selected transboundary basins.

15. Tajik delegates presented experience with improving the level water and food security in Tajikistan. Respective measures included: improving legal and institutional framework (e.g. new Water Code and National Water Council), river basin management (establishing basin councils and developing river basin management plans) as well as the on-going efforts aimed at improving economic regulation of the water and irrigation sectors and plans to build new hydropower stations.

Managing water for growth

16. The OECD presented the outcomes of a recent assessment of water-harmful subsidies in Russia and in Kyrgyzstan. The project also recommends reforms that directly contribute to better coherence between policies that drive water demand and water availability. Delegates noted opportunities to replicate similar projects in other EECCA countries.

17. Delegates took note of recent developments regarding water supply and sanitation in Moldova. The design of sustainable business models for rural water supply and sanitation is relevant for other countries.

18. The EBRD briefed delegates about its activities in the region. It stressed the benefits of a staged approach to investment in water infrastructure and services, starting from emergency programmes in city centers and gradually expanding to suburbs and adjacent communities. Capacity building and the combination of grants and loans were also highlighted.

Future developments

19. Delegates took note that European Commission financial support to the EU Water initiative for the EECCA region beyond 2015 will depend on results achieved, EECCA countries' commitment to water policy reforms, approximation to EU *acquis* and demonstrated value of the regional approach. Delegates acknowledged the political priorities of the European Commission in the region (sustainable inclusive socio-economic development, security and stability) and priorities for future work on water: the water-energy-food security nexus; green economy; and water diplomacy.

20. Delegates discussed the OECD/UNECE programme of work for 2014. They signalled the need for further work in several fields, such as the reform of economic instruments for water management, water and agriculture, the development of river basin management plans, the upgrade of water legislation, and work on water and health. There was call for more exchange of experience within the region.

21. Delegates expressed their appreciation for the substantial financial support provided by the European Commission, Germany, Finland, Norway, and Switzerland.

Other business and closing remarks

22. Delegates expressed gratitude to the Finnish Government for hosting the meeting.