



European Union Water Initiative Plus for Eastern Partnership Countries

***Proceedings of the
5th Meeting of the Coordination Committee of the National
Policy Dialogue on Integrated Water Resources
Management in the Republic of Moldova***

25 October 2019



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1 DESCRIPTION OF THE EVENT

The 5th Meeting of the Coordination Committee (CC) of the National Policy Dialogue (NPD) on Integrated Water Resources Management and Water Supply and Sanitation in the Republic of Moldova was chaired by Ms. Iuliana Cantaragiu, NPD CC Chair and State Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture, Regional Development and Environment of the Republic of Moldova. Ms. Serafima Tronza served as Deputy Chair of NPD CC.

The objectives of the meeting were to discuss the progress in the water sector development in the Republic of Moldova and implementation of the *European Union Water Initiative Plus for the Eastern Partnership countries* (hereinafter EUWI+) programme, funded by the European Union.

Furthermore, the meeting aimed to present the achievements of the National Policy Dialogue (NPD) on Integrated Water Resources Management in the Republic of Moldova during the 10 years of the Eastern Partnership.

In particular, the meeting served to inform the Committee and the invited stakeholders on the recent changes in the institutional set up and developments in environmental and water policies and legislation in the Republic of Moldova and to get feedback from local stakeholders on interim results of activities implemented through the NPD with support from the EUWI+. Furthermore, the meeting aimed to serve as a platform for sharing and exchanging information of donor activities in the water sector in the Republic of Moldova.

About 70 participants attended the meeting, representing the Committee members, Governmental organizations, civil society (NGOs), expert community, international organizations, bilateral donors and the EUWI+ team.

Women represented 48% of the total number of participants, thus nearly achieving the gender parity objective, this number being around 50% over the last years.



1.1 Opening Session

Ms. Iuliana Cantaragiu welcomed the participants and expressed her appreciation that so many international and national stakeholders demonstrated their interest in the NPD and this important programme (EUWI+), which is essential for the continuity of the policy dialogue process and the water



Action funded by the
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sector reforms. Ms. Cantaragiu stressed that national and international stakeholders play an important role in this process in order to ensure the fulfilment of Moldova's obligations according to the Association Agreement signed with the European Union. She thanked the EU and bilateral donors for their continuous support and highlighted that the activities of the EUWI+ in Moldova play a vital role in informing and facilitating the National Policy Dialogue. The NPD Coordination Committee has been an essential platform to discuss various issues related to implementing and further developing the state policy related to water resources management and development of the water supply and sanitation sector.

Ms. Iuliana Cantaragiu highlighted the importance of this high level session, aiming at evaluating the achievements of 10 years of the Eastern Partnership. In this context, Mr. Gintautas Baranauskas, Deputy Head of Operations of the EU Delegation to the Republic of Moldova, recalled the most important EU supported projects and programs implemented in the Republic of Moldova in the last decade and the importance of cooperation of the EU with the partner countries within Eastern Partnership. Mr Baranauskas's also underlined the importance of water for the population and the environment, and confirmed the EU commitment to further supporting the objective of promoting cross-border cooperation and integrated water management, as well as efficient water governance.

At the same time, it was pointed out that good management can unlock investments for improvement of the situation in the water and sanitation sector.

The next speaker, Ms Daniela Demiscan, Deputy Chief Public Health Directorate, Ministry of Health, Social Protection and Labor mentioned the cooperation in the field of implementation of the Protocol Water and Health in the Republic of Moldova and the support provided by EUWI+ and overall the NPD process over the past years in this regard.

Ms Caroline Tissot, Director of the Swiss Cooperation Office in the Republic of Moldova, mentioned the importance of cooperation during the last decade through the implemented projects in the field of water, and especially the ApaSan project, supported jointly with the Austrian Development Agency. These projects were very successful in the Republic of Moldova.

Mr. Alexander Karner, the Head of Office of the Austrian Development Agency in the Republic of Moldova reported on the commitment of the Austrian Development Agency to further support the Republic of Moldova in the field of water resources management and strengthening institutional capacities. He underlined that the national policy dialogue has an important value especially in relation to water security and the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goal 6.

Ms Svetlana Dogotaru, State Secretary of the Ministry of Economy and Infrastructure informed about the reforms which are carried out. In particular she drew attention to the separation of responsibilities in the field of water supply and sanitation. Mentioning that water supply and sanitation services fall within the scope of the Law on Public Services and must be organized under the responsibility of the Local Public Authorities. She also mentioned the adoption of a provisional regulation for the design and construction of small-scale water supply networks with support of EUWI+ as a very positive development.

Ms Ina Coseru, President of the National Environmental Center, with a vast experience in the field of water resources management, presented information on public participation in the water field. She mentioned the organization of public events in the Prut-Danube basin (ex. Danube Day - June 29), and local level consultations with river basin committees and with 16 sub-basin committees as very successful activities. Over 300 people were involved in the implementation of the river basin management plan that is now being developed and discussed.



Ms Iuliana Cantaragiu, thanked the speakers, mentioning that all these topics will be discussed during the meeting, which she considers crucial in the development of this important sector in the Republic of Moldova.

The 5th meeting of the Coordination Committee of the National Policy Dialogue on integrated water resources management in the Republic of Moldova was structured in 4 thematic sessions.

1.2 Session 1

In this session, an update on recent changes in the institutional set up and developments in the environmental and water policies in Moldova was provided. Moldova has passed through a major reform of its government. This session took also stock of recent policy developments, including in relation to the establishment of the Environmental Agency.

Session 1 was completed with a presentation by the Inspectorate for Environmental Protection, reporting about the situation following the institutional reforms and the problems which remain to be resolved.

1.3 Session 2

In the **second session** of the meeting, an update on the status of the normative framework regarding the management of water resources in relation to the commitments assumed under the Association Agreement was provided.

The representative of the "Apele Moldovei" Agency presented the information on the activities of the committees of the districts of the Dniester and Danube – Prut and Black Sea river basins, including the sub-basin commissions and the progress in implementing the management plans for these basins (cycle I).

The intervention of the Deputy Director of the "Apele Moldovei" Agency regarding the results of the activities of the bilateral Commission for the Sustainable Use and Protection of the Dniester River basin underlined the importance of transboundary cooperation with Ukraine.

1.4 Session 3

In the 3rd session, the Committee was informed about the progress in implementing the EUWI+ Work Plan for Moldova. It took stock of progress, discussed interim results and provided guidance for work in progress under Result 1.

In particular the Committee was informed by OECD that a study was completed on establishing a sound economic regulatory system for Water Supply and Sanitation (WSS) in the Republic of Moldova. Furthermore, good progress was achieved in assisting the country in implementation new design and construction norms for small-scale WSS systems. Also, a draft mid-term action Plan (2019-2023) for the WSS Strategy for 2014-2028 was presented, which will support the implementation and revision of the Strategy.

The UNECE informed the Committee that it supported MARDE in the preparation of the recent amendments to the Water Law No. 272 and its adoption by the Parliament in 2018. Furthermore, information was provided on the work for the revision of the National Programme for implementation of the Protocol on Water and Health in the Republic of Moldova for 2016-2025 and the implementation of some of its measures.



It was stressed that the activities have been carried out to promote implementation of principles and requirements of the Water Framework Directive (WFD) and other water-related EU Directives and international commitments, such as the Paris Agreement, water-related SDGs and the applicable MEAs. The activities in the Work Plan involve contribution to implementing national strategies, several EU Directives, MEAs & SDGs.

Also, the EUWI + OECD project team supported the development of new design and construction norms for small-scale WSS systems. Temporary norms were adopted by the Ministry of Economy and Infrastructure (MEI) by Order dated 04/04/18, and in 2019 a workshop on implementation of the developed norms was organized.

A report on the consolidation of the Economic Regulation System for the WSS sector has been finalized. Work on the elaboration of economic instruments (tariffs, water use fees, compensation for water resources damage) and the possibility of setting up a dedicated water fund was presented. These activities will continue in 2020.

The overview continued with the focus on the expected benefits for the citizens of the Republic of Moldova and the whole country, such as: support for the implementation of the WSS Strategy, not least in rural areas, which will allow faster progress in the implementation of SDGs 6.1 and 6.2. It is expected that the activities on the Economic Regulation System will lead to a more efficient regulatory task, to a better financial health and sustainability of WSS operators. The development and implementation of the new norms have already resulted in much lower unit costs per person connected to new capital investments in the field of WSS in the rural area. This will also lead to a positive impact on tariffs; greater profitability of interventions from the public budget and donors.

In this session the meeting participants were also informed about the progress in implementing EUWI+ activities in the Republic of Moldova under Results 2 and 3, which relate to laboratories development, surface water and ground water monitoring systems, river basin management planning, data management and communication.

All topics presented in the previous sessions, as well the development of the laboratories for monitoring represent important elements of the process of integrated management of water resources.

Detailed information was presented by the EUWI+ team on the activities to assist the Environmental Agency in accrediting the laboratory to the ISO 17025 standard to ensure the quality of monitoring to evaluate the water quality status according to the WFD requirements.

It is necessary to inform local public authorities by explaining the approaches used and by providing information on the current reform in the management of water resources. This will be done through NGOs and Public Associations.

1.5 Session 4

The 4th session served as a platform for identifying and strengthening the synergies between various projects in the areas concerned, implemented in the Republic of Moldova with the support from the European Union, international financial organizations and bilateral donors (Switzerland, Austria, World Bank, etc.). Presentations were given on the following subjects:

The project "Diagnostic study of water safety in the Republic of Moldova" implemented with the support of the World Bank and the Project "Strengthening the institutional framework in the water and sanitation sector of the Republic of Moldova", supported by ADA and SDC.



A brief information was distributed about the study of the social and environmental impact of the Dniester Hydroenergy Complex, implemented by UNDP with the support of the Swedish Government.

The chair of the SC of the NPD and the participants of the meeting expressed their gratitude and addressed sincere thanks to the European Union, International Financing Institutions and bilateral donors for their continuous support in implementing the projects aimed at improving the management of water resources and development of water supply and sanitation systems in the Republic of Moldova.

1.6 Other remarks and comments

The participants and the members of the Committee noted very active discussions at the meeting and the important platform of NPD for discussing key issues of water resources management and reforms. The EU's senior environmental adviser to MARDE, Ms Svetlana Zhekova, e.g., mentioned that she appreciated very much the real dialogue among authorities, experts, and the public provided by the NPD and welcomed this approach. She mentioned that only through such dialogues the problems will be discovered and solutions can be developed for the improvement of this important sector.

1.7 Closing session

In the **closing session**, the Chair recalled the Coordination Committee recommendations and conclusions, as follows:

2 RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS OF THE COORDINATION COMMITTEE

The Coordination Committee of the National Policy Dialogue (Coordination Committee) on Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) welcomed the achievements of the National Policy Dialogue on IWRM within the European Union Water Initiative in the Republic of Moldova over the past 10 years since the launch of the Eastern Partnership as summarized during the high-level panel discussion.

The Coordination Committee thanked the European Union and all the development partners and bilateral donors for their continued support to the Republic of Moldova in the area of IWRM and expressed hope for continued cooperation beyond 2020 in the framework of the Eastern Partnership.

The Coordination Committee took note of the information on the institutional reform in the field of environmental protection in the Republic of Moldova presented by the subordinated institutions to the Ministry of Agriculture, Regional Development and Environment (MARDE) and the challenges to strengthen the capacities of the institutions in order to carry out their missions;

The Coordination Committee welcomed the progress regarding the development of recent policies and normative acts and the institutional reforms in the water sector, made in the Republic of Moldova. Specifically, the Coordination Committee welcomed support provided for the preparation of amendments to the Water Law 272/2011, which were adopted by the Parliament in November 2018 as Law 249/2018;

The Coordination Committee acknowledged the work of the Committee of the Dniester and Danube-Prut and Black Sea River Basin Districts and the Commission for the Sustainable Use and Protection of the Dniester River Basin and requested their representatives to regularly inform the Coordination Committee about their activities.



The Coordination Committee welcomed the progress made in developing and implementing the RBMPs for the two river basin management districts (Dniester/Nistru, Danube-Prut and Black Sea) in the Republic of Moldova, as well as the active public participation processes in developing RBMPs.

The Coordination Committee welcomed the support provided for the development of the RBMP (cycle II) in the Danube-Prut and Black Sea districts;

The Coordination Committee welcomed the support for the development of a master plan for water supply and sanitation in the river basin of the Nirnova River, including a pilot mechanism for the implementation of the Directive on urban waste water treatment;

The Coordination Committee welcomed the support for the development of the Code of good agricultural practices in the national regulations for the implementation of the Directive concerning the protection of waters against pollution caused by nitrates from agricultural sources;

The Coordination Committee welcomed the adoption of new design and construction norms for small-scale potable water supply systems, resulting in reducing unit capital costs (per person connected) without compromising service quality.

The Coordination Committee welcomed the progress made in the development of the new mid-term Action Plan to support implementation of the Water Supply and Sanitation Strategy (2014-2028) and requested MARDE to take into account comments received from governmental bodies, to finalize the Action Plan and to submit for government adoption.

The Coordination Committee welcomed the progress of the work of the expert group to update the National Program for the Implementation of the Protocol on Water and Health for the years 2016-2025 and to guide the implementation of measure N18, ensuring the legal and institutional framework to provide equitable access to water for vulnerable and marginalized groups

The Coordination Committee requested the expert group to organize a Stakeholder Consultation Meeting in November 2019 to discuss the proposed revisions to the National Program for the Implementation of the Protocol on Water and Health for the years 2016-2025 and proposals for legal amendments with respect to equitable access to water and sanitation;

The Coordination Committee welcomed the launch of the work on economic instruments for managing water resources and bodies and water systems in the Republic of Moldova.

The Coordination Committee appreciated the support provided by the EUWI+ programme in local capacity development through national and regional events and activities;

The Coordination Committee supports the efforts made by the EUWI+ to increase institutional capacities, both from the point of view of personnel training, as well as from the endowment with modern equipment for the Environmental Agency's reference laboratory.

The Coordination Committee acknowledged the achievements of the Project "Diagnostic study of water safety in the Republic of Moldova" implemented with support of the World Bank, which recommendations will mitigate the risks for water resources with a focus on improving water efficiency in all sectors, diversifying supply, demand management and planning on the basis of climate change for managing potential variability and shortcomings.

The Coordination Committee emphasized that ensuring and improving the quality of the surface and ground waters in Moldova is essential for water security in Moldova;

The Coordination Committee welcomed the achievements of the project "Strengthening the institutional framework in the water supply and sewage sector in the Republic of Moldova", supported by the SDC/ADA.



The Coordination Committee welcomed the commitment of the EUWI + programme to continue supporting the Republic of Moldova in order to implement the principles of Integrated Management of Water Resources.

At the same time, the Coordination Committee mentioned about the consolidation of efforts and the commitment of the subordinated institutions of the MARDE for the implementation of the provisions of the EU Water Framework Directive and other directives according to the EU-Moldova Association Agreement.

The Coordination Committee requested the maintenance of continuous communication and the public involvement at all stages of the planning of integrated management of river basins and in the development of the normative framework in accordance with the international commitments assigned by the Republic of Moldova.