



DRAFT SUMMARY RECORD OF THE SECOND EUROPEAN UNION WATER INITIATIVE PLUS (EUWI+) REGIONAL STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING

14-15 NOVEMBER 2018, TBILISI, GEORGIA

This document was prepared by the Project team at the OECD with input from all implementing partners. The draft version was circulated to all participants on 14 December 2018 for comment. A written procedure was used to approve the report.

General Overview

1. The second Regional Steering Committee Meeting of the "European Union Water Initiative Plus (EUWI+) for the Eastern Partnership" aimed to discuss the 2017-18 progress report and the proposals for the 2019 work programme. It was structured around five Agenda items (see Annex A). The meeting was attended by all partner countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Republic of Moldova and Ukraine), the European Commission, the European Union Delegation to Georgia, the European Environment Agency and the implementing partners (see Annex B for List of participants). The four-year action is funded by the European Union and implemented by the OECD, UNECE (Result 1) and an EU Member States Consortium of Austria and France (Results 2 and 3).
2. The Regional Steering Committee meeting was held on 15 November 2018. On 14 November 2018 there was a networking event organised in partnership with the "Shared Environmental Information System Phase II for East" (ENI SEIS II East) project. The networking event aimed to bring together focal points and implementing partners from both EU funded projects to promote synergies and strengthen working relations.

Agenda Item 1: Opening and Welcoming Remarks

3. Participants took note of welcoming remarks from Ms. Maia JAVAKHISHVILI, Deputy Head of the Environment and Climate Change Department, Ministry of Environment Protection and Agriculture who welcomed participants on behalf of Georgia as host country and provided an overview of the importance of EUWI+ for the water policy reform process to Georgia.
4. Dr. Michael RUPP, Team Leader Connectivity, European Commission, Directorate-General for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR), put the meeting in the context of joint efforts to strengthen growth, good governance, resilience, connectivity and sustainability in Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries and provided an overview of ongoing and future EU support to the EaP region.
5. The participants also took note of welcoming remarks from H.E. Mr. Arad BENKÖ, Austrian Ambassador to Georgia and Mr. Eric TOSATTI, First Counsellor of the French Embassy in Georgia

who shared their experience and aspirations for EUWI+ on behalf of the EU Member States Consortium.

6. Mr. Michael SUTTER of the EU Member States Consortium outlined the objectives for the Second Steering Committee Meeting, introduced the documents and the agenda.
7. Key messages in the opening remarks included:
 - a. the role of better water resources management in conjunction with the EU's global agenda and the priorities set in the 2017 Eastern Partnership Summit Declaration;
 - b. progress towards the targets agreed in the *20 Deliverables by 2020* that constitute a structured framework to bring tangible benefits to citizens in conjunction with the Eastern Partnership (see Annex C for a summary of progress against the *20 deliverables by 2020*);
 - c. political support for improved environmental management and shared commitment for action reiterated at the Second Eastern Partnership Ministerial Meeting on Environment and Climate Change in Luxembourg (9 October 2018);
 - d. the importance of ownership of the programme by Governments of Eastern Partnership countries and of ensuring synergies with other initiatives and projects;
 - e. that this second Regional Steering Committee meeting is the mid-point in the project. Despite good progress to date, there is much to do within the next two years to maintain progress, complete work programmes and deliver tangible benefits for citizens; and
 - f. intermediate discussion of progress in April 2018.
8. The draft meeting agenda was adopted without amendment (Annex A).

Agenda Item 2: Country Progress and Regional Expectations

9. The EUWI+ team reported progress (Annex D) since the First Regional Steering Committee meeting in May 2017 for all countries. Progress was reported for each country in turn and for each result area, the presentation also captured country specific challenges and recommendations. The countries responded at the end of each presentation. Following the six country presentations, regional progress, risks and challenges were reported. The progress report presentation can be found here: [Country Progress Reports](#)
10. The Steering Committee members broadly endorsed progress achieved. All partner countries expressed a strong commitment to address the remaining challenges. Key discussion points are summarised in Annex E.
11. Participants acknowledged feedback from DG NEAR on the progress reports and discussion. DG NEAR expressed gratitude to the leadership provided by the countries to secure timely decisions and drive progress. This support must continue to maintain the impact of EUWI+ and needs to include allocation of appropriate resources. Decisions should be expedited where delays exist, particularly for framework agreements and procurement as the project should not lose financial resources because of delays in decision making. DG NEAR recognised that synergies with other EU funded projects have increasingly been in place citing ENI SEIS II East, EMBLAS and APENA as good examples. DG NEAR reaffirmed the need for the project to assess impact against the *20 deliverables by 2020* and called to accelerate progress with strong ownership and sustainability as key principles. DG NEAR also requested that EU Delegations were kept informed of, and involved in, the project, particularly through the National Policy Dialogue process.

Agenda Item 3: Steering Issues

12. The Steering Committee noted a number of steering issues that were presented for discussion:

- a. DG NEAR provided feedback on the Result Oriented Monitoring (ROM) exercise which was conducted in September 2018. The feedback comprised an overview of the ROM process, including interviews in four selected countries (Belarus, Georgia, Republic of Moldova and Ukraine) and will conclude with development of an Action Plan to address recommendations. It was explained that the ROM exercise is conducted on all large EU funded projects and reflects the views of an independent senior expert, not the European Commission. DG NEAR reported that the ROM feedback was generally positive for EUWI+ and that the project remains relevant with strong engagement within countries to drive implementation. Comments were primarily received regarding the log frame and indicators and work may be completed in the future to look at refinement in this area. The ROM concluded that the implementation arrangement of the project was satisfactory and it was noted that this model, where a number of implementing partners are working under a single Description of Action, would be replicated in the upcoming EU4Environment programme. The quarterly updates under EUWI+ were highlighted as good practice. Recommendations were reported as (i) revise the log frame to strengthen implementation of the action; (ii) strengthen coordination between the partners within the project framework; (iii) build capacity and understand the financial aspects of capacity development; and (i) consider continuing to provide EU support to water resources management in the partner countries, with preferably the same model of international partners and EU Member states while considering best use of regional and national projects. Countries were invited to provide comments on the conclusions and recommendations of the draft ROM report direct to DG NEAR by close of business on 20 November 2018.
- b. The EU-Member States Consortium provided an overview of EUWI+ collaboration with relevant ongoing projects. The European Environment Agency then delivered an overview of the ENI SEIS II project.
- c. The EU-Member States Consortium provided an update on the status and outlook of Communication and Visibility under the EUWI+. The discussion included information on the status of the EUWI+ website, social media progress including country specific Facebook campaigns and the enhanced use of infographics. The Ukraine Dnipro Day and Clean Beach Day campaigns were highlighted as a particular success. The importance of linking materials to other websites and social media platforms was discussed with Ukraine's MENR website and DG NEAR's OPEN Programme driving significant traffic to EUWI+ outputs. [Communication and Visibility Progress](#) and [EUWI+ Videos](#)
- d. The EUWI+ team gave an overview of implementation and sustainability challenges faced to date in the project. This discussion was recognised as issues within and beyond the scope of EUWI+ and those that impacted long term sustainability of the water reform process. Three key challenges were identified: (i) institutional strengthening and the fact that policy making, enforcement and implementation resource is often fragmented making coordination difficult. The fragmentation also jeopardises progress when political level changes occur. The case for dedicated and sustainable water units was discussed; (ii) capacity development was identified as a key issue both at the technical and policy making level. The role of financing was identified as being key to sustainable capacity development and staff engagement and retention including incentivising participation within River Basin Organisations; (iii) sustainable financing and commitment to budgetary needs for WFD implementation was identified as a key challenge impacting human capital and also areas such as monitoring equipment, analysis, operation and maintenance. The project team offered support in helping countries justify the financial elements of their reform proposals.
- e. The subsequent discussion focussed on (i) youth engagement with an offer from the EU Member States Consortium to sponsor Masters students; (ii) a call for more technical

- specialists to be involved in international projects to aid capacity development and networking; and (iii) the role of well-trained media staff in the reform process.
- f. The EU-Member States Consortium opened a discussion on longer-term needs in the water sector. Each country presented its vision for requirements post 2020 and agreed to summarise in writing the key points of their intervention and share with the European Commission's DG NEAR. Country needs included support to capacity building and strengthening of institutions; further progress in River Basin Management planning and implementation; progress towards water related SDGs and MEAs; data and information management; progress against EU Association and Cooperation Agreements and the development of economic and financing instruments such as dedicated water funds.

Agenda Item 4: Presentation and Adoption of the National and Regional Work Plans for 2019

13. The Steering Committee took note of a presentation by the EUWI+ team summarising key milestones of the proposed work programme for 2019. Work plans for each country were presented followed by a regional work plan. Countries were invited to confirm that the proposals were in line with their expectations for 2019. In general terms, all countries confirmed that the plans presented by EUWI+ were aligned with their expectations. Key discussion points included:
 - a. Clarity over timing of procurement of equipment with the intent of using new equipment in upcoming field surveys;
 - b. Clarity over transboundary projects (Belarus-Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova-Ukraine);
 - c. Alignment with other international projects (GEF projects on transboundary waters covering Belarus, Republic of Moldova, Ukraine); and
 - d. Additional support to workshops on the new water law strengthening municipalities (Georgia).
14. DG NEAR confirmed that the Commission also broadly supports the work plans as presented and reaffirmed the desire to see EU Delegations involved in implementation of the 2019 programme and, where relevant, other EU Member States as well, particularly those that have recently experienced approximation. DG NEAR advised the Steering Committee that any work on Strategic Environmental Assessments (SEAs) should be monitored against the EU4 Environment project and that any activity related to SDGs should be crosschecked against UNDP activities to prevent duplication. DG NEAR stated that countries and the EUWI+ team must deliver on existing commitments before embarking on new work and future activities. TAIX, twinning and cross-border projects were identified as alternative tools available to address country capacity development needs plus ensuring linkages with EU investment projects. It was stated that procurement of equipment should target completion by the end of Q1 2019 so that it can serve as an example tangible results in conjunction with the 10th anniversary of the Eastern Partnership in 2019.

Agenda Item 5: Any Other Business and Closure

15. DG NEAR invited the Steering Committee to raise items of other business. The next meeting was identified as an interim progress meeting in June 2019 ahead of a full Steering Committee in November 2019. Proposed locations for the interim progress meeting included Vienna or Brussels. The Republic of Moldova expressed an interest to host the next Steering Committee in November 2019.
16. DG NEAR thanked participants for their active participation and closed the Second EUWI+ Regional Steering Committee meeting.

ANNEXES

Annex A: Annotated Agenda

Annex B: List of participants

Annex C: 20 Deliverables by 2020: State of play in 2018

Annex D: EUWI+ Progress Report PowerPoint (via hyperlink under paragraph 9 and here [Country Progress Reports](#))

Annex E: Summary of Country Challenges and recommendations discussion