

European Union Water Initiative Plus for the Eastern Partnership

SUMMARY RECORD FIRST STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING (15-16 MAY 2017, BRUSSELS)

This document was prepared by the project team at the OECD with input from all partners. Its draft version was circulated for feedback on 23 May 2017 and a written procedure was used to approve the record. ¹

1 GENERAL OVERVIEW

1. The first Steering Committee Meeting of the "European Union Water Initiative Plus (EUWI+) for the Eastern Partnership" aimed to discuss the findings of the inception phase and provide feedback on the draft inception report and was structured around eight Agenda items (see Annex A). The meeting was attended by all partner countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova (hereinafter referred to as "Moldova"), and Ukraine), the European Commission, the European External Action Service, the European Environment Agency, and the implementing partners (see Annex B for List of participants). The European Union Water Initiative Plus is part of the EU regional support to partner countries within the framework of the Eastern Partnership (EaP). This four-year action is implemented by the OECD, the UNECE and an EU Member States Consortium of Austria and France.

2 AGENDA ITEM 1: OPENING/WELCOMING REMARKS

2. The participants took note of welcoming remarks from Mr Vassilis Maragos, Head of Unit of Directorate-General for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR), who put the meeting in the context of joint efforts to strengthen growth, good governance, resilience, and sustainability in Eastern Partner Countries and outlined the objectives for the EUWI+ programme and its first Steering Committee Meeting.
3. The participants also took note of welcoming remarks from the Water Director of the Austrian Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Environment and Water Management and senior members of the EU Member States Consortium (Austria and France) who shared their experience and aspirations for the programme.
4. Key messages in the opening remarks included:
 - a. the role of better water resources management both in conjunction with the EU's global agenda and the priorities set at the Eastern Partnership's Riga Summit in 2015, which were further spelled out in the Eastern Partnership Ministerial Declaration on Environment and Climate Change of October 2016 and a Joint Staff Working Document on 20 Deliverables by 2020;
 - b. the EU's strong focus on tangible results that are visible for citizens, also in the run-up to the next Eastern Partnership Summit in November 2017;
 - c. the need to ensure links between policy dialogue, technical support, and investment, including through the EaP Panel on Environment and Climate Change and as part of bilateral assistance provided by the European Union;

¹ For Reference: Ares(2017)4404757 - Final Summary Record of the 1st EUWI Plus Steering Committee Meeting (15-16 May 2017)

- d. the importance of ownership of the programme by governments and of ensuring synergies with other initiatives and projects;
 - e. expectations that well-planned, technically sound, high-impact and visible work be conducted by the EU Water Initiative Plus to support reforms and implementation of water policies in the partner countries, including those identified in the Association Agreements and other political documents – within their scope and timeframe, and
 - f. the need to use the Steering Committee as an annual forum for monitoring progress, updating work plans, and providing feedback.
5. The draft meeting agenda was adopted without amendment.

3 AGENDA ITEM 2: COUNTRY EXPECTATIONS AND COMMITMENTS - *TOUR DE TABLE*

6. The partner country delegations re-confirmed their full engagement and indicated expectations for EUWI+ support in addressing challenges of a "second generation" of water sector reform. All countries underlined the aim of aligning their water legislation with the principles of the EU Water Framework Directive (WFD) and asked EUWI+ implementing partners to be explicit about operational implications of country ownership. Gratitude was expressed to the EU for supporting reforms.
7. Key expectations included receiving support for:
- a. Implementing the Association Agreements in Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine;
 - b. Where not yet done, defining roadmaps for alignment with the water related EU acquis and elaborating national water strategies;
 - c. River basin planning, without duplicating work done by the "Environmental Protection of International River Basins" Project;
 - d. Actual implementation and continuous improvement of monitoring capacity;
 - e. Improving governance arrangements, especially in conjunction with structural reforms that the water sector undergoes;
 - f. Well-targeted capacity development, including staff training and exchange of experience;
 - g. Further work on transboundary aspects of river basin management and economic instruments of water resources management;
 - h. Better management of increasing competition for water resources and reducing conflict, including in the context of climate change;
 - i. Harmonisation of water sector legislation with other relevant legislation undergoing amendment and elaboration; and
 - j. Achieving tangible results across all areas of EUWI+ support.
8. The European Commission stressed that priorities for EUWI+ should be clear and feasible to achieve with resources that were allocated to the action, while additional support could also be provided through other instruments such as TAIEX and Twinning, for example. Also the need for ensuring sustainability of results was highlighted which call for full institutionalisation of policy recommendations and methodologies to be developed as part of EUWI+.

4 AGENDA ITEM 3: KEY FINDINGS OF THE BASELINE REGIONAL ASSESSMENT

9. The Steering Committee took note of a presentation on [Key challenges and the status of Water reforms: Regional trends and baseline indicators](#) that highlighted the key findings of the inception phase from a regional perspective.

10. Partner countries officials noted that the findings of the regional baseline assessment reflected well the actual situation, as well as demand and priorities for further work. The European Commission stressed the need to involve all stakeholders, aiming at an inclusive process of reform planning and implementation. The importance of having a clear basis for gradually moving forward, including in terms of baseline indicators and targets, and clear inputs and outputs, was also highlighted. This approach has to be adopted in each country.

5 AGENDA ITEM 4: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EU WATER ACQUIS IN THE MEMBER STATES

11. Participants took note of a presentation on [the status of implementation of the EU water acquis in the EU – member countries](#) delivered by DG Environment. The presentation and a follow up discussion resulted in the following with key points:
 - a. The importance of having a holistic policy framework that would embed investments into water infrastructure;
 - b. Recognition that “Ecological Status” is a composite indicator demonstrating progress against biological, chemical and hydromorphological monitoring. Progress thus should be measured across several dimensions to understand better the overall picture; progress under each dimension may be blurred by aggregation;
 - c. The existence of a Common Implementation Strategy and the usefulness of staying in contact with the network of EU Member States engaged in this process;
 - d. The link between implementation, data management and work done by the European Environment Agency to monitor progress; and
 - e. Opportunities for synergies between the EUWI+ programme and the Shared Environmental Information System (SEIS) Phase II project.

6 AGENDA ITEM 5 AND 6: PRESENTATION AND ADOPTION OF NATIONAL WORK PLANS

12. The Steering Committee noted the following work plan proposal presentations:
 - a. [Georgia](#)
 - b. [Moldova](#)
 - c. [Ukraine](#)
 - d. [Armenia](#)
 - e. [Azerbaijan](#)
 - f. [Belarus](#)
13. The Steering Committee members provided comments (Annex C) and broadly accepted the proposed work programmes assuming that clarifications are provided and amendments made, where necessary, most importantly:
 - a. After clarifications on proposed refinement and implementation of the Chorokhi River Basin Management Plan (RBMP), Georgia requested less focus on the fine tuning of Choroki RBMP and concentration of efforts on developing new RBMPs.
 - b. Ukraine presented its proposals for the project’s activities and tasks and requested the Inception Report and working programme to be adjusted accordingly. Minor changes and clarifications were requested to the Results 1 and 3. Further work was requested with regard to Result 2. Ukraine reconfirmed its request to include activities for the whole Dniro basin. The European Commission stated that EUWI+ is open to respond to demand from countries but the degree of flexibility would need to be checked in relation to the relevant Commission Decision and the Description of Action. The EUWI+ team together with Ukraine, taking into account the analysis provided during discussions on

proper approaches to address preparation of the RBMP for Dnipro and taking into account the respective pros and cons, experience and better practices in EU Member States, will specify the scope of work on Dnipro RBMP preparation with the respective details of necessary extent. The work programme will be finalised accordingly.

7 AGENDA ITEM 7: PRESENTATION AND ADOPTION OF REGIONAL WORK PLANS

14. The Steering Committee took note of a presentation on [proposed components of Regional workplan](#) and provided the following feedback:
- The use of umbrella RBMPs was of interest to a number of countries, including discussions from Moldova and Ukraine on the Prut and a working group by Belarus. Ukraine expressed interest in principle and highlighted that there is a need to have RBMPs legally in force and administratively operational which means that preparations and adoption should go according to the internal procedures harmonised with the WFD and the Association Agreement, as well as reflect relevant developments under the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River. Ukraine sees these activities as additional to Result 2;
 - The need for addressing gender issues as part of implementation was voiced;
 - The importance of multi-donor coordination was re-iterated;
 - The importance of the communication and visibility plan and the need for it to be operationalised as soon as possible, in line with best practices in this area, and in full compliance with EU visibility requirements. Ukraine highlighted that communication under the project should support activities under Result 1 and 2 and be focused on communicating the policy itself at all stages of the policy making cycle..

8 AGENDA ITEM 8: NEXT STEPS AND CLOSURE

15. The Steering Committee took note of a presentation on [the next steps](#) delivered by the EUWI+ Team, and in particular the following information:
- The EUWI+ draft inception report was sent to EUWI+ national focal points on 28 April 2017. Some countries have already provided initial written comments. It was agreed that further written comments are to be provided to EUWI+ Team by 26 May 2017.
 - EU Delegations were invited to provide comments; after consolidation, feedback will be shared with the EUWI+ team by 9 June 2017.
 - The final EUWI+ inception report will be completed by the end of June 2017.
16. The Steering Committee members requested that their meetings be limited to one day and summary records be written in a succinct manner, recording key points on up to four pages.
17. The European Commission closed the meeting, thanked the participants for active contribution to discussions, and summarised short-term actions required for EUWI+ implementation.
18. The Steering Committee members preliminary agreed to hold their next meeting in Georgia in February-March 2018.

9 ANNEX A: AGENDA

15 May 2017: High-level segment		
12:00-13:00	Arrival and registration	
13:00-13:30	Item 1. Opening/Welcoming remarks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation of the meeting agenda and objectives • Overview of inception phase activities 	DG NEAR EUWI Plus
13:30-14:30	Item 2. Country expectations and commitments	EaP country delegations
14:30-15:30	Item 3. Key findings of the baseline regional assessment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key challenges, regional trends and baseline indicators, status of reforms, alignment opportunities, capacity development needs • Questions/Discussion 	EUWI Plus
15:30-16:00	<i>Coffee break</i>	
16:00-17:00	Item 4. Benefits of implementation: status of implementation of the EU water acquis in the EU –member countries Questions/Discussion	Hans Stielstra Deputy Head of Unit DG ENV Unit ENV.C.1 Clean Water European Commission
17:00-17:15	Summary of the first day	DG NEAR
16 May 2017: Operational segment		
9:30-9:45	Objectives of the second day	DG NEAR
9:45-12:00	Item 5. Presentation and Adoption of National Work Plans <i>(45 min per country, including Questions/Discussion)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine 	EUWI Plus
12:00-13:00	<i>Lunch</i>	
13:00-15:15	Item 5. Presentation and Adoption of National Work Plans <i>(Continued)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus 	EUWI Plus
15:15-15:45	<i>Coffee-break</i>	
15:45-16:45	Item 6. Presentation and Adoption of Regional Work Plan Questions/Discussion	EUWI Plus
16:45-17:30	Item 7. Next steps and closure Wrap-up	EUWI Plus DG NEAR

10 ANNEX B: LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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11 ANNEX C: COUNTRY FEEDBACK

Armenia

The Ministry of Natural Resources highly regards the plan outlined in the inception report. Goals of the project match well with the Government strategy on water resources management. All priorities presented by Armenian stakeholders have been discussed with the EUWI+ project team and have been largely taken on board, there are no further comments. After the first wave of reforms in 1999-2002, a second generation of reforms has started with attention on decentralisation through basin approach, work with legislation and alignment with EU directives. There are clear and strict deadlines set by the cabinet for submitting of certain bylaws on water, such as for model basin plans. In general the help of EUWI+ project is welcome in designing a roadmap for transposition of 5 EU water directives as new agreement between EU and Armenia is expected to be signed soon. Updating of the Water code is a priority in line with development of a national water programme.

Azerbaijan

Azerbaijan has a detailed plan for harmonization with EU legislation even though the formal agreement with the EU is still under negotiation. Help for harmonization with WFD is welcome. Being party to the UNECE Water Convention and its Protocol on Water and Health, help is now needed to meet new reporting requirements. The plan of Result 2 of EUWI+ project to concentrate on Kura below Tbilisi as proposed in workplan for Georgia was welcomed. Water pollution in the Kura continues to be a problem and adoption of a common water quality assessment system on the Kura downstream of Tbilisi and incorporating the Khrami-Debed was seen as important.

Azerbaijan is open for transboundary cooperation with Georgia to follow up on earlier regional projects. It will be important to avoid overlaps with UNDP/GEF Kura-2 project and EU twinning project on monitoring. This calls for close coordination between 3 projects and a coordination meeting in Baku at the start of implementation was recommended, including the Georgian partners. It should be noted that the GEF project will be implementing the agreed Strategic Action Programme for the Kura and will not be limited to the middle Kura.

Belarus

Belarus has provided the EUWI+ team with written comments on draft work programme. Belarus has a new Water Code which incorporates transboundary aspects and the basin principle. Belarus is interested in harmonizing with certain aspects of EU water acquis but has no plan for formal agreement with EU. The first basin plan has been adopted and planned assistance of EUWI+ to basin planning for Pripyat is welcomed. Belarus is open to discuss with Ukraine a potential joint umbrella for Pripyat and a transboundary basin council. Assistance to drafting a Water Strategy until 2030 is a first priority under Result 1 as it needs to be submitted to the Government before end of the year. Secondary legislation is also a focus area. The International Water Forum in October 2017 will provide opportunity to showcase plans of the EUWI+ project. Laboratories and monitoring network are generally well developed, especially for hydro-chemical monitoring. The monitoring of priority substances and their analysis is an important target. Need to develop guidelines for the assessment of diffuse pollution. Work on issue of floods should not be a priority for EUWI+ as it's covered by other projects at Ministry of Emergency Situations.

Georgia

Georgia thanked the EUWI+ team for the work conducted during inception phase and was pleased to see a number of previous comments taken on board and planned work to support implementation of

Association Agreement. The Regulatory Impact Assessment for the draft Water Law is ongoing, draft law needs to be harmonized with other national legal acts on EIA/SEA, liability and IPPC. Finding a suitable model for institutional setup for adoption of basin principle important (preferably by studying the experience of newer EU Member States with similar economic situations), as well as capacity building for future staff of basin management units. Clarity is needed on what is meant by refinement of Chorokhi RBMP and what are the planned soft measures. Georgia requested less focus of EUWI+ to the fine tuning of Chorokhi RBMP and stressed the need to concentrate on developing RBMPs in the lower Kura for basins of Alazani-Iori and Khrami-Debed. Transboundary cooperation with both Azerbaijan (Kura) and Armenia (Khrami-Debed) were described as crucial for Georgia.

Georgia wants the laboratory and monitoring assessments to go ahead to programme but recognise that the final delivery of equipment may be delayed depending on re-location of the two NEA laboratories in Tbilisi and Batumi.

Armenia agreed to work jointly with Georgia on a RBMP for the Khrami-Debed.

Republic of Moldova

Moldova strongly supports the EUWI+ approach and is confident that it will help to improve water resources management and policy framework. Different aspects of the project help to implement Association Agreement with EU, signed in 2014 – improving legislation, development of RBMPs, strengthening monitoring capacity, better data management. Moldova already provided written comments on the draft EUWI+ inception report. The national executive strategic board under EUWI+ was established by Ordinance of the Minister of Environment signed on 14 April 2017. A small number of technical comments were identified e.g. the inception report refers to 3 basin districts.

On the Dniestr agreement, reference shall be added that Ukraine is yet to ratify it although both countries are open to maintain momentum after two recent meetings between deputy ministers and will continue the dialogue while waiting for formal enforcement of agreement.

Moldova asked Ukraine to support the establishment of a WG under the ICPDR to develop an umbrella plan for the river Prut with the three basin countries. This was agreed by UA as long as resources were made available.

Moldova requested as part of the laboratory assessment that the provision of a mobile laboratory be considered; capacity for analysis of priority substances be enhanced; accreditation of laboratory be strengthened; and automatic monitoring stations on both Dniester and Prut be considered. Moldova would like to establish thematic working groups linked to the NPD and the strengthening of the information management system.

Ukraine

EUWI+ is timely and necessary for Ukraine to support implementation of EU Association Agreement. There were no major concerns with what was presented under Result 1 and it was suggested to establish clear division of tasks for development of secondary legislation with APENA project, noting that the APENA work plan was recently updated. Normally, the policy framework (EUWI+ help with water strategy) shall be developed before legal acts but it will go in parallel due to time pressure. In addition to legal work, help was requested for institutional reform at the Water Agency under the national water strategy work, this was not visible in the Gantt chart.

Under Result 2, Ukraine is currently undertaking a review of laboratory capacity for implementation of the WFD and the laboratory assessments should be completed by the end of August. The results should be used as input for final assessment of the Ministerial requirements to meet its obligations under the WFD.

Regarding basin planning, Ukraine asked for support for its biggest basin, the Dniepr and has suggested that the RBMP for the whole basin could be prepared in two stages and completed by 2024

rather than 2022. The first stage to be supported by EUWI+ would include delineation, characterisation, pressures and impacts assessment and monitoring programme design. The European Commission responded that they would need to check if the DoA allowed for such a division of activities and only partial production of RBMP. The EUWI+ team said it would review the proposal based on several key prerequisites and pointed to a number of technical and financial constraints to such an arrangement which may not make it feasible. The European Commission requested that both proposals were analysed in terms of pros and cons to allow a suitable way forward to be agreed.

Under Result 3, communication work shall be designed in a way that it supports policy work.

Ukraine presented the table below as its proposals to the country work programme.

Table C-1. Proposal by Ukraine to the country work programme

Objectives\Streams\Activities	Tasks\outputs\deliverables	Responsibility	Timeline
Result 1			
Legislation Policy and institutional strengthening			
National WPD and Water Forum	1-2 per year	UNECE\OECD	Oct-Nov 2017 Q1 2018
EUWI+ Regional SC	Specific tasks\events tbd	OECD	March 2018
National SC (Strategic Board)		UNECE\OECD\UBA\IOW	to 2020
AA acquis implementation	The list of tasks not covered by APENA	UNECE	July 2017
Water Policy Frameworks	Water Policy Paper	OECD	May – December 2020
	Institutional Reform Concept (Water Agency Reform)	OECD	June 2017
	Study on sustainable economic mechanism to ensure implementability of the water sector reforms in Ukraine.	OECD	2019
	Waste water treatment strategy	OECD	2019
	Water Policy Strategy	OECD	Dec 2017 – Q3-4 2018
Revision of the national targets under Protocol on Water and Health (to be included in WP paper and strategy)	Revision of the national targets	UNECE	July 2017 - June 2018
	Implementation Plan	UNECE	Sep 2018-March 2019
Implementation of the Dnister Treaty	Bilateral meetings and consultations	UNECE	2 - 3 per year



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Objectives\Streams\Activities	Tasks\outputs\deliverables	Responsibility	Timeline
Result 2			
Laboratory and Monitoring programme			
Assessment		UBA	August 2017
Contract document preparation		UBA	Adjust appropriately
Procurement		UBA	Adjust appropriately
Delivery and installation		UBA	Adjust appropriately
Surveys and Training		UBA	Adjust appropriately
RBMP Development			
Support in preparation of the following documents through participation in the relevant MENR and SAWR WGs	Review of drafts (optional): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ MENR order on Methodology for the identification of surface and groundwater bodies, ○ MENR order on Methodology for Classification of Surface Water Bodies Pursuant to their Ecological and Chemical Status and ○ Resolution of the CMU on State Water Monitoring <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● According to agreement with APENA, UNECE prepared engagement with the two MENR orders but APENA informed later that they don't need assistance. 	UBA\IOW\UNECE	
Dnipro river RBMP	Based on the developed national typology to delineate water bodies of the whole Dnieper river basin (all five categories for surface water and groundwaters) <p><i>We will start with the development of a national methodology on delineation, typology and also designation tests for heavily modified water bodies. The practical implementation is then focused at the main river channel respectively on further jointly selected areas of high significance.</i></p>	UBA\IOW	



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Objectives\Streams\Activities	Tasks\outputs\deliverables	Responsibility	Timeline
	<p>Prepare general description of the characteristics of the Dnieper river basin district and pressures and impacts assessment</p> <p><i>For the pressure and impact analysis a tiered approach is proposed starting with the development of a concept (guidance) of such an analysis, followed by a rough screening of significant pressure areas based on available data and finally: i) a detailed exemplary pressure impact assessment in jointly agreed areas/sub-basins of high significance, for training and demonstration purposes, ii) a wide scale exercise of planning with limited information.</i></p>	UBA\IOW	
	<p>Based on the Resolution of the CMU on State Water Monitoring to develop monitoring programme for the Dnieper river basin district including assessment for needed equipment, its purchasing and staff training</p> <p><i>Based on the pressure and impact analysis the principles and the strategy for the design of a WFD monitoring programme will be discussed and elaborated. Following a stepwise and risk based approach, a monitoring programme will be developed for commonly agreed areas of high importance/significance (based on the conclusions of the needs assessment).</i></p>	UBA\IOW	
	<p>Based on surface water body delineation to conduct surveillance monitoring in order to establish type-specific reference conditions for the Dnieper basin.</p> <p><i>Definition of type specific reference conditions have to be done in parallel to the development of ecological classification systems with focus on the main river channel and jointly agreed areas/sub-basins of high significance.</i></p>	UBA\IOW	



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<i>Objectives\Streams\Activities</i>	<i>Tasks\outputs\deliverables</i>	<i>Responsibility</i>	<i>Timeline</i>
	36 water bodies types maximum		
	To identify and map protected areas following the WFD for the Dnieper river basin district.	UBA\IOW	
	Identification of water main issues for Dnipro	IOW	Before mid-2018
	Development of the first generation of programme of measures for Dnipro	IOW	At last after mid-2018
RBMP Implementation			
	Assessment of the Prut RBMP	IOW	Before mid-2018
	Development of a dashboard to monitor the implementation of Prut RBMP	IOW	At last after mid-2018
Data flow management(horizontal activity)	ToR for IMS based on Recommendations on data management at National level Specific tasks tbd if needed	IOW	October 2017 – Q3 2020
Result 3 Stakeholder involvement and communication			
Stakeholder involvement mechanisms	Assessment of the existing practices at different scales (national, basin, transboundary basin)	IOW	November 2017
Development of Communication Strategy, regular update	To be tailored according to the objectives and activities under Results 1 and 2	IOW	October 2017 Update twice a year
Implementation of Communication Strategy	To be tailored according to the objectives and activities under Results 1 and 2 as well as according to the progress	IOW	October 2017 – Q3 2020
RBC establishment and support; public	RBC establishment for Dnipro	IOW	linked with RBMP development



<i>Objectives\Streams\Activities</i>	<i>Tasks\outputs\deliverables</i>	<i>Responsibility</i>	<i>Timeline</i>
consultations	Public consultations for Dnipro RBMP	IOW	All along RBMP development

