



Water Laboratory Day in Georgia: European Union provides laboratory equipment to detect industrial chemicals and pesticides in water

Tbilisi, Georgia, 30 October - The Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia and the European Union celebrated the Water Laboratory Day to mark new laboratory capacities provided by the European Union in the framework of the EU-funded project “European Union Water Initiative Plus for Eastern Partnership Countries” (EUWI+).

Through the recent upgrade of the water laboratory at the National Environmental Agency, the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture now conducts state-of-the-art water analysis and provides certified laboratory capacities which advance the protection of water and river basins in Georgia. The new devices are able to detect a much wider range of industrial chemicals and pesticides, many of which are cancerogenic, neurotoxic, or bioaccumulating. With this expansion of the laboratory, more pollutants can now be monitored and subsequently managed with greater precision. This will eventually lower the risk for people and ecosystems to suffer from the toxic effects of such pollutants.

The event also celebrated the recent accreditation of the laboratory according to ISO/EN 17025:2017 which attests its compliance with international quality standards for laboratories. Georgia is the first country of the Eastern Partnership to achieve this outstanding result. The accreditation confirms that analytical results provided by the National Environmental Agency are comparable, consistent, and trustworthy, hence policy decisions can be taken based on solid scientific evidence. The availability of state-of-the-art laboratories is key for Georgia’s compliance with chemical water quality standards set by the EU Water Framework Directive.

During the Water Laboratory Day, young students from the Eastern Partnership European School in Tbilisi visited the new laboratory facilities, learned from experts about environmental analysis of water and rivers systems, and conducted water analysis together with laboratory staff.

A high-level panel informed the audience and media representatives on recent developments regarding water policy and integrated water management in Georgia, followed by a visit of the laboratory and opportunities for exchange between media representatives, students and panelists.

Ambassador Carl Hartzell, Head of Delegation of the European Union to Georgia, told: *“The EU is committed to improve the environment and the health of the population in Georgia – a key aspect of this is water quality. The laboratory equipment we have provided to the National Environment Agency, along with the technical support of the EUWI+ project is a part of this support, and will permit the authorities and other relevant actors to take further action to protect the environment based on solid findings and facts.”*

“Sustainable water management is a state priority. Safe water is vital for protection of human life and health, creation of sustainable livelihoods and preservation of ecosystems. The recent technological upgrade of the Ambient Air, Water and Soil Analysis Laboratory of the National Environment Agency and its accreditation according to ISO/IEC 17025, realized with support from the European Union, is a major step towards integrated management of water resources. The mentioned process contributes to consolidation of Georgia’s position as an important partner of the European Union”, said Mr. Levan Davitashvili, Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia.

“Austria has already a multi-annual commitment for the development cooperation with Georgia, in particular in the water sector. We are pleased that we co-finance the excellent EUWI+ project together with France at a volume of some 1 Million Euro and we are convinced that there will be further joint progress in water management in Georgia”, mentioned Mr. Arad Benkö, Ambassador of Austria to Georgia. It worth to mention a cooperation agreement signed in 2018 between the Ministry of Environment Protection and Agriculture of Georgia and the French Basin Agency Artois-Picardie.

Alexander Zinke, EUWI+ project leader of the EU Member State Consortium, underlined: “Beside our support for measuring chemical parameters, we focus much on biological indicators, like water insects, water plants and fish. This will allow an ecological classification of water bodies and to define the needed corrective actions in water pollution and consumption. The resulting river basin management plans will be publicly presented and consulted in spring 2020.”

Over the last ten years, the European Union has provided significant technical and financial support to improve water policies to the benefit of people and the environment. The Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture has partnered with peers in the European Union through the European Union Water Initiative Plus for the Eastern Partnership (EUWI+). As part of its commitments under the Association Agreement, Georgia is aligning its national policies and strategies with the EU Water Framework Directive. The recent upgrade of the laboratory is a major step towards integrated management of water resources, and support Georgia in its process of approximation to the EU Water Framework Directive. In 2020, two river basin management plans will be the main project outputs.

Keynote speakers

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- Mr. Levan Davitashvili – Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia
- H.E. Mr. Carl Hartzell - Ambassador of the European Union to Georgia
- H.E. Mr. Arad Benkő – Ambassador of Austria to Georgia
- Mr. Andro Aslanishvili – Head of National Environment Agency of Georgia
- Mr. Alexander Zinke – EUWI+ project leader of the EU Member State Consortium
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Photo 1: From left to right: Mr. Alexander Zinke – EUWI+ project leader of the EU Member State Consortium, H.E. Mr. Carl Hartzell - Ambassador of the European Union to Georgia, Mr. Levan Davitashvili – Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia, H.E. Mr. Arad Benkő –

Ambassador of Austria to Georgia, Mr. Andro Aslanishvili – Head of the National Environment Agency of Georgia.



Photo 2: Mr. Levan Davitashvili, Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia, highlights that sustainable water management is a state priority for Georgia.



Photo 3: Laboratory staff at the National Environment Agency discuss water analysis results with Mr. Levan Davitashvili, Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia.



Photo 4: Mr. Alexander Zinke (center), EUWI+ project leader of the EU Member State Consortium, presents the analytical equipment funded by the European Union to Ms Nino Tandilashvili, Deputy Minister for Environmental Protection and Agriculture (second from left), H.E. Mr. Arad Benkö (third from the left), Mr. Levan Davitashvili (second from the right), and H.E. Mr. Carl Hartzell (right).