



PRESS RELEASE

Celebrating the newly renovated Environmental Laboratory in Armenia: the European Union provides laboratory equipment to detect industrial chemicals and pesticides in water

On Friday 31 January, Armenia and the European Union celebrated the newly renovated Laboratory of the Environmental Monitoring and Information Centre (EMIC) in Yerevan. The festive ceremony marked the opening of 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+).

Thanks to the recent technological upgrade and renovation of the Laboratory, with a relevant financial contribution from the Armenian government, the Environmental Monitoring and Information Centre (EMIC) now conducts state-of-the-art water analysis, which will clearly advance the protection of water and river basins in Armenia. The new devices are able to detect pollution, like nutrients, chemicals and salts, in lower concentrations and with much higher precision. This will eventually reduce the risk for people, ecosystems, and water-using economic sectors, of suffering from the toxic effects of anthropogenic contaminations and mismanagement of water bodies.

The ceremony celebrated the renovated EMIC laboratory and its relocation to new premises, offering improved working conditions for laboratory staff and new technologies for water analysis. The support from the EU-funded EUWI+ project and the Armenian government for the renovation of the EMIC laboratory amounted to more than €270,000, more than a half of which (€140,000) was provided by the Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Armenia. High-end equipment provided by the European Union (totalling almost €300,000) and related expert training take Armenia closer to attaining international laboratory accreditation. As a result, government bodies can rely on the technical competence and data quality generated by the laboratories in charge of environmental analysis.

During the ceremony, the Minister of Environment of the Republic of Armenia, Mr Erik Grigoryan, informed the audience and media about recent developments in the water sector in Armenia. Following statements delivered by the high-level panel, the minister and distinguished guests officially opened the renovated laboratory, followed by a visit of the laboratory premises. Students from the Lake Sevan and Hrazdan river basins communities also presented the results of their 2019 summer investigation campaign on water quality to the high-level panellists.

Ambassador Andrea Wiktorin, Head of Delegation of the European Union to Armenia, said: *“With the EU Green Deal, the European Union puts environmental protection and climate change at the top of its priorities. Our shared goal is to become the first carbon neutral continent. The commitments undertaken in the EU-Armenia Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA) foresee cooperation to protect the environment and use natural resources in a sustainable manner. With cleaner rivers, we have more opportunities for sustainable economic growth.”*

“With its new capacities, the EMIC laboratory is now equipped to provide reliable data on the status of Armenian water resources. The Ministry of Environment will have access to more precise and consistent data in order to carry out its environmental policies. The ministry will make sure that the environmental information will also be available to Armenian citizens,” said Mr Erik Grigoryan, Minister of Environment of the Republic of Armenia

“Improvement of Armenian water monitoring and assessment systems is what Austria is providing in the EUWI+ project. I am convinced that international accreditation will come very soon thanks to the new equipment and trained dedicated personnel,” said Mr Alois Kraut, Ambassador of Austria in Armenia.

“Armenia has already considerably improved the management and protection of its water resources, and France will continue with its engagement to help it implement its climate policy on a regional scale and carry out its environmental ambitions,” said Ms Claire Le Flécher, First Counsellor of the Ambassador of France in Armenia, on behalf of the Ambassador of France in Armenia, H.E. Mr Jonathan Lacôte.

Alexander Zinke, EUWI+ project leader of the EU Member State Consortium, underlined: *“The EUWI+ partners and experts are highly impressed about the visible achievements accomplished here, which are the result of a lot of financial and personal investment by the Ministry of Environment of Armenia, the EMIC and the lab staff over many months. Our team is looking forward to guide them in the coming months towards full accreditation.”*

At the end of the press conference, Mr Afanasy Lazarev, Director of the EMIC laboratory, extended its gratitude to Austria, France and the Armenian government for their support in the framework of the EU-funded EUWI+ project.

Keynote speakers:

- Mr Erik Grigoryan, Minister of Environment of the Republic of Armenia
- H.E. Ms Andrea Wiktorin, Ambassador, Head of the Delegation of the European Union to Armenia
- H.E. Mr Alois Kraut – Ambassador of Austria in Armenia
- Ms Claire le Flécher, First Counsellor of the Ambassador of France, on behalf of the Ambassador of France in Armenia, H.E. Mr Jonathan Lacôte
- Mr Alexander Zinke, EUWI+ project leader of the EU Member State Consortium
- Mr Afanasy Lazarev, Director of the EMIC laboratory.

Background info

Launched in September 2016 for a duration of 4 years, the [European Union Water Initiative plus for the Eastern Partnership \(EUWI+\)](#) is one of the biggest policy dialogue and technical support commitments of the European Union to the water sector in the Eastern Partner countries. The programme supports the six partner countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine) to align their legislation with European Union policy on water management, with a focus on transboundary rivers. The project is co-funded by the European Union (EUR 23.5 million) and Austria and France (EUR 1.0 million). It is implemented by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), and an EU member states consortium comprising the Environment Agency Austria (Austria) and the International Office for Water (France). The recent upgrade of the laboratory is a major step towards integrated management of water resources, and supports Armenia in its process of approximation to the EU Water Framework Directive. In 2020, the main project outputs will be river basin management plans for the Hrazdan and Lake Sevan river basins, developed with the support of the French Artois-Picardie River Basin Agency.

The goal of the **laboratory at the “Environmental Monitoring and Information Centre” (EMIC)** State Non-Commercial Organisation (SNCO) of the Ministry of Environment is to provide reliable, accurate, relevant information in real time on the situation of the environment, including natural and anthropogenic impacts and pollution risks. The overall aim is the environmental protection and sustainable use of natural resources to ensure the country’s ecological security and sustainable development.

For more information, please contact Ms Chloé Déchelette at c.dechelette@oieau.fr ([English version](#))

PICTURES



From left to right: Mr Vahagn Tonoyan - country representative of the EUWI+ project in Armenia, Mr. Alexander Zinke, H.E. Mr. Alois Kraut, H.E. Ms. Andrea Wiktorin, Mr. Erik Grigoryan, Ms. Claire le Flécher, Mr Afanasy Lazarev. ©Philipp Hohenblum/EAA



H.E. Ms. Andrea Wiktorin, Ambassador, Head of the Delegation of the European Union to Armenia. ©Philipp Hohenblum/EAA



Mr. Erik Grigoryan, Minister of Environment of the Republic of Armenia. ©Philipp Hohenblum/EAA



From left to right: Ms. Claire le Flécher, H.E. Mr. Alois Kraut, Mr. Andrea Baggioli, project manager at the EU Delegation to Armenia, Ms. Andrea Wiktorin, Mr. Alexander Zinke, Mr. Erik Grigoryan. ©Philipp Hohenblum/EAA



Ms Andrea Wiktorin, and Mr Alois Kraut with the students from the Hrazdan river and Sevan lake schools. ©Philipp Hohenblum/EAA



From left to right: Mr Erik Grigoryan and Ms Gayane Shahnazaryan, deputy director and laboratory responsible at the EMIC laboratory. ©Philipp Hohenblum/EAA

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