



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

26 NOVEMBER 2019, PARIS, FRANCE

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 20 December 2019 for comment. A written procedure was used to approve the report.

General Overview

1. The third Regional Steering Committee Meeting of the "European Union Water Initiative Plus (EUWI+) for the Eastern Partnership" aimed to discuss the 2018-19 progress report and the priorities for the remainder of the project. 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 Investment Bank (EIB), and the implementing partners (see Annex B for [List of Participants](#)).
2. 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).
3. The Steering Committee Meeting formed part of "EUWI+ Week", arranged by the implementing partners with the intent of improving water management through peer-to-peer exchange. In addition to the Steering Committee Meeting, EUWI+ week also included a high-level exchange with authorities responsible for water policy in France, a Regional Capacity Development event on strengthening the use of economic instruments and a field visit to Artois Picardie Water Agency and Lille Metropole. Further details can be found via the following link [EUWI+ week](#) .

Agenda Item 1: Opening and Welcoming Remarks

4. Participants took note of welcoming remarks from Mr. Rodolfo Lacy, Director of Environment, OECD, who welcomed participants as host of the meeting. Mr Lacy underlined the value of evidence-based policy development and the role of National Policy Dialogues in promoting policy coherence. Mr Lacy noted that National Policy Dialogues were initially trialled within the region and have now become a mainstream OECD process.
5. Mr. Pascal Bertaud, President, International Office for Water, shared his experience of water policy reform including the need to be realistic when setting goals and to focus on water policy implementation and its inclusiveness.
6. Ms Angela Bularga, Programme Manager, European Commission, Directorate-General for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR), re-iterated the focus on tangible

results for people within the Eastern Partnership (EaP) including progress towards the “20 Deliverables for 2020” document which spelled out specific targets, including on better water management. Participants noted that structured consultations have been conducted over recent months to shape up the post-2020 agenda and that demand for increasing action related to environment and climate are amongst the outcomes of these consultations. It was noted that the European Green Deal and the implementation of environment and climate policies are very high on the agenda of the European Commission. DG NEAR noted the adoption by the EU Foreign Affairs Council of conclusions on water diplomacy in November 2018 that underlined the EU's commitment to address water challenges internationally.

7. The draft meeting agenda was adopted without amendment ([Annex A - Agenda](#))

Agenda Item 2: Country Progress and Regional Cooperation

8. The EUWI+ team reported progress since the Second Regional Steering Committee meeting in November 2018 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 is Annex C and can be found here: [Country Progress and Regional Cooperation Report](#).
9. The Steering Committee members broadly endorsed progress achieved. All partner countries expressed a strong commitment to address the remaining challenges and delivery of the remaining work plan items by the end of the project.
10. 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 particularly to ensure use of currently unallocated budgets and adoption of draft strategic and legislative documents produced under EUWI+. DG NEAR recognised that synergies with other EU funded projects continues, in particular citing SEIS II as a good example. EU4Environment and EU4Climate were noted as newly launched EU projects that EUWI+ may benefit from engagement with in the future. DG NEAR reaffirmed the need for the project to assess impact against the 20 deliverables by 2020 and to maintain a focus on public participation. DG NEAR confirmed that a 6-month, cost-neutral project extension request is under consideration for EUWI+ and welcomed progress against the Results Oriented Monitoring (ROM) Report recommendations from 2018.

Agenda Item 3: Investment Facilitating the Implementation of the EU Water Acquis and SDGs in EaP Countries

11. The Steering Committee noted introductory remarks from Angela Bularga, DG NEAR and a presentation from Mr Marco Beros of the European Investment Bank (EIB). The presentation can be found at the following hyperlink ([EIB Presentation](#)) and key discussion points were as follows:
 - a. Participants took note of a range of EU instruments for supporting the Eastern partnership countries. In particular, the Neighbourhood Investment Facility helps countries to access investments. In the municipal sectors, the “Eastern Europe Energy Efficiency and Environment Partnership” (E5P) is a multi-donor fund that also includes the six partner countries as contributors, alongside the EU and other donors. Provision by E5P of an investment grant to a wastewater project in Belarus was cited as an example of recent support channelled through such instruments. DG NEAR recalled the EBRD Eastern Partnership Investment Summit, which took place on 22 November 2019, as a platform where investment priorities were voiced at the highest level.

- b. There is the continuous need for mature investment projects in the region. It was noted that many project proposals fail as they are not aligned with current lending criteria for example the use of “optioneering” of different solutions, Environmental and Social Impact Assessments, sustainable and affordable tariffs. The incorporation of old norms or design standards remains a barrier. Climate Risk and Vulnerability Analysis (CVRA) studies were presented as a current tool to support project preparation.
- c. Participants noted that political will and continuity are important for unlocking finance and recalled that the EU Water Initiative Plus is aiming to help re-design water policies in support of more affordable and cost-effective investments.
- d. Participants discussed the role that National Policy Dialogues could possibly play, working upstream with countries to prioritise needs and consider the suitability of the enabling environment to support investment projects. Participants also discussed the role of robust strategic plans to guide investment needs, prioritise resources and secure maximum benefit of projects delivered.

Agenda Item 4: Steering Issues Discussion

- 12. The Steering Committee took note of a presentation by the International Office of Water, on behalf of the EUWI+ team, summarising communication and visibility progress, the revised strategic plan, results to date and key milestones for the remainder of the EUWI+.
- 13. The presentation summarised strategic priorities including delivery of tangible results with reference to policy making, for example newly equipped or refurbished water laboratories or finalised RBMPs; strengthening beneficiary action and ownership; maintaining communication infrastructure; improving coordination with EU networks and actions for example, participation in the Young European Ambassadors scheme; streamlining communication activities and monitoring key performance indicators.
- 14. Key tools and achievements were noted as the EUWI+ website (<https://www.euwipluseast.eu/en/>) and associated social media networks including Facebook pages. Results included a range of cartoons, videos and newsletters, with key success stories including the opening of the water laboratory in Georgia on 30 October 2019, with high-level participation and significant media coverage, a campaign to raise awareness on water quality in Armenia and the clean beach day in Ukraine.
- 15. Key visibility events and opportunities to the end of the project were noted as including laboratory-opening events in the five remaining EaP countries, World Water Day 2020, River Days 2020, National Policy Dialogues during 2020 and a final regional conference to close EUWI+.
- 16. Tools to be produced during the remainder of EUWI+ were detailed as videos covering national level and regional outcomes of EUWI+, factsheets on the pilot basin plans developed under the project and a series of video interviews to be distributed through social media.
- 17. Participants discussed the level of transparency of environmental data, with focus on data that could be made visible without a login code on the data management platform. In coherence with SEIS principles, countries expressed willingness to provide free public access to the dataset managed in the frame of the EUWI+ project in close coordination with the beneficiary.
- 18. The full presentation can be found here: [Communication and Visibility PPT](#) .
- 19. The Steering Committee took note of an intervention by the OECD on behalf of the EUWI+ team. The intervention aimed to summarise emerging issues that have come to attention under EUWI+. The intervention recognised that:

- a. Significant progress has been made under EUWI+ including the setting of strategic visions, the revision of targets and standards, the procurement of monitoring equipment, progress in data sharing, the progression of river basin management planning and human and technical capacity development across all result areas.
- b. The policy reform journey is long and that EUWI+ will leave a platform for the EaP countries to build upon.
- c. A number of EU member states have mature water sectors with country specific structural and institutional arrangements. Typically, these include significant stakeholder collaboration, including for example participation in River Basin Organisations, revenue raising capacity and financing mechanisms; legal frameworks and mandates for sector entities; strong political support and guidance; and enforcement capabilities.
- d. Follow up work to EUWI+ is likely to be characterised by supporting implementation including the development of economically feasible and actionable roadmaps and action plans; driving policy coherence across different sectors, line ministries and EU directives; supporting countries to “think internationally” in terms of transboundary benefits and cooperation and SDG obligations; supporting programmes of measures that are well costed, technically and financially feasible, aligned with strategic priorities; and promoting a move towards more economically and financially sustainable water sectors.
- e. In addition, it was noted that new priorities will be triggered by this move, for example new business models to support improved sector operation, including fulfilling increased service expectations in the event of any tariff changes; more attention to the inclusion of social issues of water management and further consideration of the management of rural versus urban communities in the light of SDG alignment; adopting a “nexus” approach to water management, recognising the synergies with energy, food and land management when developing strategies and planning investments; mainstreaming resilience into plans and strategies; and driving sustainable financing opportunities.

Agenda Item 5: Any Other Business and Closure

20. DG NEAR invited the Steering Committee to raise items of other business. The next Regional Steering Committee meeting was identified as the concluding meeting of the project with Brussels a likely venue. The dates will be proposed in due course.
21. Participants recognised the contribution of Michael Sutter (UBA) and Josiane Mongellaz (IOW) to the EUWI+ project and wished them well for their future roles. Participants welcomed Alexander Zinke (UBA) and Stéphanie Laronde (IOW) to the EU-Member States consortium management team.
22. DG NEAR thanked participants for their active participation and closed the Third EUWI+ Regional Steering Committee meeting.

ANNEXES

Annex A: Annotated Agenda (via hyperlink [Agenda](#))

Annex B: List of participants (via hyperlink [List of Participants](#))

Annex C: EUWI+ Progress Report PowerPoint (via hyperlink [Country Progress Reports and Regional Cooperation](#))