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The European Union for Georgia



Press Release

The European Union and Georgia review five years of EU support to water at the 8th meeting of the National Policy Dialogue on Water

Release date: 31 May 2021

Tbilisi, Georgia

Over the past five years, the EU has supported a combination of policy reform and capacity development at both national and basin scale to improve water management in Georgia for the benefit of people and the environment. Experts representing Georgia, the European Union and the European Union Water Initiative Plus programme implementing partners (Austria, France, OECD and UNECE) exchanged their views on future needs and country priorities in the water governance domain after 2021.

Georgia is undertaking a major reform of its water sector that includes enhancing and fully operationalizing a shift towards basin management of water resources to comply with the European Union Water Framework Directive (WFD) requirements. The reform includes completing the development of River Basin Management plans and further strengthening the water monitoring system in line with the obligations under the Association Agreement with the European Union. The current reform agenda and remaining challenges in the water sector were the focus of discussions at the 8th Steering Committee meeting of the National Policy Dialogue on Integrated Water Resources Management on 31 May 2021. Delegates from national authorities, local stakeholders, NGOs and international experts from EU Member States gathered in a virtual meeting to share practical experiences of the water reform journey and to discuss the next steps to ensure the environmentally sound management of water resources.

“On behalf of the Ministry of Environment Protection and Agriculture of Georgia I would like to express special thanks and gratitude to the EU, EU delegation in Georgia, and EUWI+ project for very significant assistance and support in a very important process in Georgia, planning of reforms in the field of water resources management, and hope of continuing the successful cooperation, in order to achieve fruitful result together in the introduction of reforms in line with WFD and implementation of the requirements, undertaken by Georgia under Association Agreement between Georgia and European Union” said Ms. Nino Tandilashvili, Deputy Minister of the Environment Protection and Agriculture.” said Ms Nino Tandilashvili, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia

Mr. Alexandre Darras, EU Delegation to Georgia stated *“With the support of the EUWI+ project, Georgia has made significant steps toward improvement of the management of water as a key resource for the country, and has reinforced its capacity to monitor and improve water quality to the benefits of all inhabitants. We look forward to the adoption of the Law on Water Resources which is a key element to pursue reforms in the water sector and ensure sustainable and qualitative water resources for all.”*

“We fully support efforts of Georgia to enhance transboundary cooperation with Armenia on joint monitoring of water quality in the Ktsia (Khrami) – Debeda River Basin in the overall context and spirit of Agenda 2030 and specifically the Sustainable Development Goal indicator 6.5.2 on transboundary cooperation” said Mr Alisher Mamadzhonov, Environmental Affairs Officer at the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)

Mr Alexander Zinke, team leader of the EUWI+ consortium of the Environment Agency Austria and the International Office of Water from France added *“We are pleased to confirm that Georgia has now a full set of detailed management tools for water resources in the Alazani-Iori, Khrami-Debed and*

Chorokhi-Ajaristskali basins including its coast as well as modern measuring instruments in the field and laboratory for assessing the status of all water bodies.”

Participants discussed the need for the soonest adoption of the Draft Law on Water Resources, developed with the support of the EU, including under the EUWI+ programme. The meeting participants also reflected the analysis developed by the EUWI+ experts to support the surface water abstraction reform in Georgia.

Two river basin management plans for the pilot river basins of Khrami-Debed and Alazani-Iori are now ready for adoption. Another one for the Chorokhi-Ajaristskali basin including its coast is ready very soon. Law enforcement at the national level will ensure the further implementation of these plans to help manage water resources for sustainable development.

Transboundary cooperation was given an impetus despite the sanitary crisis, with the organisation of a simultaneous field survey with Armenia on the Debed river, a first step to increase comparability of collected data and coordinate environmental monitoring at each side of the transboundary river. Participants discussed at the meeting, the options for formalizing in the near future transboundary cooperation with Armenia on this important river. Water monitoring activities in Georgia can now be implemented in line with the modern approaches of the Water Framework Directive thanks to EU investment in laboratory upgrading and technical capacity building through EUWI+ trainings and guidance.

Participants expressed their appreciation of support provided by the European Union and implementing partners under the EUWI+ programme and stressed importance of continuation of this work during the next stage of the programme. The meeting was facilitated by the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia with support from the European Union through the “European Union Water Initiative plus for the Eastern Partnership Countries” (EUWI+) programme.

Background info:

National Policy Dialogues (NPDs) are the main operational instruments under the European Union Water Initiative in the countries of Eastern Europe and the Caucasus. The objective of National Policy Dialogues is to facilitate the reform of water policies in a particular country. The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe is the strategic partner for NPDs on Integrated Water Resources Management; the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) is the strategic partner for NPDs on Water Supply and Sanitation and also works on the economic and financial dimension of water policies. See details at <https://unece.org/euwi-npds> .

Launched in September 2016 for a duration of 4 years, [the European Union Water Initiative plus for the Eastern Partnership programme \(EUWI+\)](#) 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's 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).

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