



# Water Policy Reforms in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia

Achievements of the  
European Union Water  
Initiative, 2006-16

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## Foreword

People's wellbeing and economic development are increasingly dependent upon water. Water scarcity is already a matter of daily struggle for more than 40 percent of people around the world. Our vulnerability to water stress is and will be more and more exacerbated by climate change. Improved water governance is therefore crucial for accommodating a growing demand for water in the context of important scarcities. Without efforts to rethink and adjust the way we manage waters, an eventual water crisis will have daunting effects, including conflicts and forced migration.

The European Commission has made water governance one of the priorities of its work, including in the context of international co-operation. The European Union's Water Initiative (EUWI), launched in 2006, has been an important avenue for sharing experience, addressing common challenges, and identifying opportunities that would enable our partners to meet water use demands in an environmentally sustainable manner. As part of its Neighbourhood and Development policies, the EU has closely involved the countries of Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia in this initiative. The EUWI has been a political undertaking that has helped participating countries improve their legislation in the water sector through the design and the implementation of national policy reforms.

Ten years after the EUWI launch, we are glad to see more robust national policy frameworks, targeted investments, and improved water management practices in countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia. The Initiative has supported the integration into the national strategies and legislations and the regular application of internationally recognised principles of integrated water resource management. The UNECE Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes and its Protocol on Water and Health has been another benchmark for such reforms.

This brochure highlights the outcomes of EU support from both national and regional perspectives, including progress in transboundary water management. The results outlined in the following pages are also the product of a fruitful institutional co-operation as the European Commission has joined forces with the OECD and the UNECE to support partner countries in achieving progress in the management of water resources.

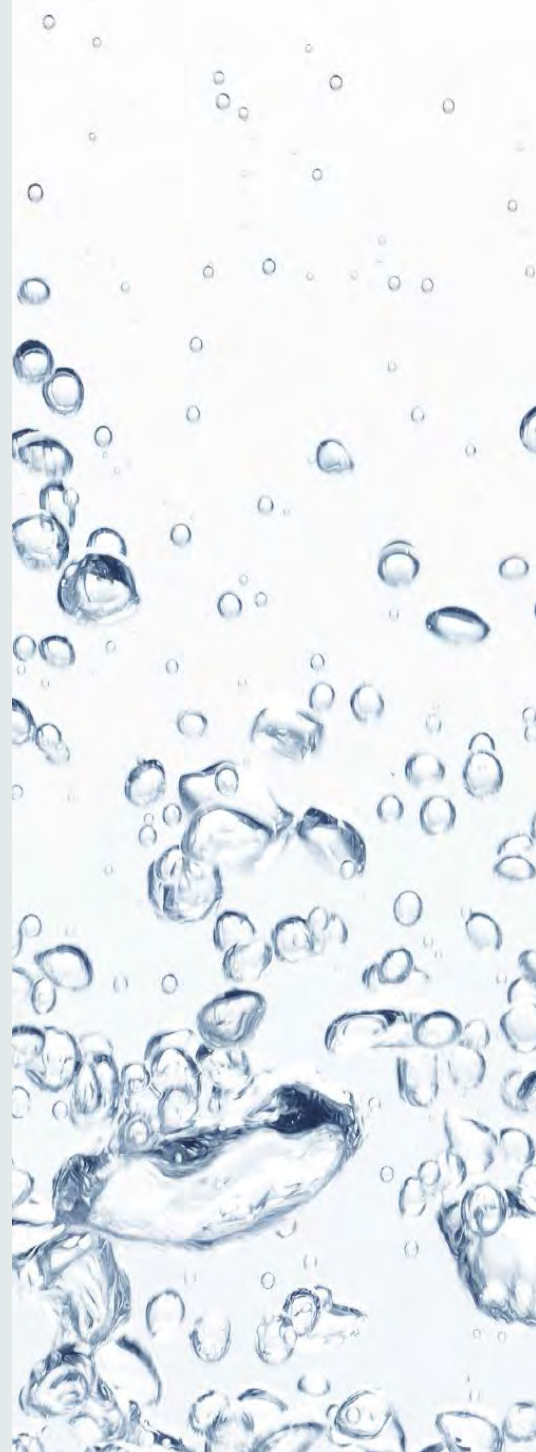
Despite progress made, water resources in partner countries continue to be exposed to old and new pressures. Available water quantities are diminishing. Water quality needs further attention because of past and present pollution. In a context where climate change is creating uncertainty about water availability, the need to protect freshwater resources remains very high. Addressing water challenges collectively appears important because of the transboundary nature of a large share of water resources in the partner countries.

In the future, we count to build on the good results achieved so far in order to make reforms bolder, and make them work for the benefit of people, development, and the environment. The EU is willing to continue its support to the countries that are strongly committed to manage water sustainably.

**Johannes Hahn**

Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy  
European Commission

*"Ten years after the EUWI launch, we are glad to see more robust national policy frameworks, targeted investments and improved water management practices in countries of Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia."*



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## Abbreviations and acronyms

EAP TF	Task Force for the Implementation of the Environmental Action Programme
EBRD	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
EC	European Commission
EECCA	Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia
EU	European Union
EUWI	European Union Water Initiative
GEF	Global Environment Facility
IFAS	International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea
IWRM	Integrated Water Resources Management
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MS	Member State(s) of the European Union
NPD	National Policy Dialogue
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PSP	Private sector participation
RBMP	River basin management plan
SC	Steering Committee
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
<b>The Water Convention</b>	<b>The UNECE Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes</b>
WFD	Water Framework Directive <sup>1</sup>
WRM	Water resource management
WSS	Water supply and sanitation

1. Directive 2000/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a framework for the Community action in the field of water policy



# 1. The EUWI and water policy reforms in EECCA

## The EUWI and its EECCA component

The European Union Water Initiative (EUWI) was launched at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2002. The overriding aim of the EUWI is to support the achievement of the water-related Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). This includes targets for the integration of sustainable development principles into country policies and programmes (goal 7) and a reversal of the losses of environmental resources (target 9). It also comprises an ambitious target to halve the proportion of the population without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation by 2015 (target 10).

A key operational tool of the EUWI is the Water Framework Directive (WFD). This is an essential legislation for water management promoted by the European Commission. The WFD aims primarily at getting Europe's waters cleaner while getting the citizens involved (see Box 1).

The WFD policies can be tailored to respond to local conditions and priorities. Hence, countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA) would

also be able to benefit from adopting a range of relevant measures. As these countries have many problems in common with regard to water management, the EECCA component of the EUWI has envisaged several water policy reform goals across the region.

Key objectives are:

- **Water resources management:**
  - Improving the institutional and regulatory framework with a view to approximate to the WFD and related legislation;
  - Managing water in a way that contributes to water-, food- and energy security, and economic development;
- **Water supply and sanitation:**
  - Ensuring access of the poor to essential water services as a basic human right;
  - Improving the institutional and regulatory framework;
  - Encouraging investment in water supply and sanitation and ensuring financial viability of utilities;
  - Safeguarding public health;
- **Transboundary co-operation:**
  - Contributing to peace by developing inter-state co-operative structures for water management.

### BOX 1

## The EU Water Framework Directive

The EU Water Framework Directive (WFD) was adopted in October 2000. It is commonly acknowledged as a model for water legislation and water policies. It provides a framework for water reform policies in EU member states and beyond.

In response to concerns by European citizens, the European Commission aims to get polluted waters clean again. In achieving these objectives, the role of citizens and citizens' groups is crucial.

Specifically, the WFD's water protection goal aims at:

- **expanding the scope of water protection** to all waters, including surface waters and groundwater;
- **achieving "good status" for all waters by a set deadline:** there are a number of objectives which define whether the quality of water is protected. All these objectives must be observed for each river basin and converge towards the "good status" of all water bodies;

- **managing water based on river basins:** the natural geographical and hydrological unit is considered the best model for a single system of water management;
- **proposing a "combined approach"** of emission limit values and quality standards;
- **getting the prices right:** adequate water pricing acts as an incentive for the sustainable use of water resources and thus helps to achieve the environmental objectives under the Directive;
- **getting citizens involved more closely:** there are two main reasons for an extension of public participation. First, decisions on the most appropriate measures to achieve the objectives in the river basin management plan will involve balancing the interests of various groups. Second, the implementation of decisions is likely to be more effective and lasting if endorsed by the public;
- **streamlining legislation:** the framework directive approach streamlines the Community's water legislation by replacing seven pieces of legislation, which can be repealed.

More information: [http://ec.europa.eu/environment/water/water-framework/info/intro\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/water/water-framework/info/intro_en.htm)



## OECD and UNECE – strategic partners in the implementation process

The European Union identified the OECD and the UNECE as strategic partners for the implementation of the EUWI in EECCA. The partners co-operate closely on the many interlinked areas of work.

The OECD focuses on the economic dimension of water resources management: managing water as a driver for growth; making the best use of economic instruments for water management; and enhancing the financial sustainability of water supply and sanitation services. The OECD's contribution is provided within the framework of the Task Force for the Implementation of the Environmental Action Programme (EAP Task Force), which was created by environment ministers in 1993 to guide reforms of environmental policies in the transition economies. The EAP Task Force was renamed as GREEN Action Programme in 2016.

The UNECE is the strategic partner for work on IWRM, including transboundary river basin management. It contributes to the approximation of the EU *acquis*, building on the Water Convention and its Protocol on Water and Health.

The implementation of the EUWI in EECCA relies on National Policy Dialogues (NPDs). These are platforms where key stakeholders meet to discuss and advance policy reforms (see more details about NPDs in Section 5). NPDs are fed by robust analytical work and international good practice. They are jointly facilitated by the OECD and UNECE.

## Structure of this brochure

This brochure highlights the main outcomes of the EUWI contributions in the EECCA countries. Section 2 highlights specific achievements at a country level in the context of national policy dialogues facilitated by the OECD and UNECE. Section 3 focuses on water diplomacy, highlighting progress in the context of transboundary water management and the regional dimension of the EUWI EECCA.

Section 4 looks ahead and suggests avenues for future work in the region, highlighting where the input of the EUWI and EU member states can make a difference. Section 5 describes how NPDs work as a process for achieving policy reform.

*"We have a long history of working with UNECE as a strategic partner on the EUWI in the EECCA region. In particular our work on joint facilitation of National Policy Dialogues has delivered results, providing a platform for policy debate and reform, strengthening institutions and improving the lives of people within the region. The NPD platform has also been rolled out to OECD member countries. Working together, the OECD and UNECE are stronger and can have a greater impact to bring about the changes needed to address the water challenges in the region."*



**Kumi Kitamori,**  
Head of Green Growth and Global Relations Division, OECD

## 2. Major outcomes of the EUWI in EECCA countries

This section highlights the major outcomes in ten EECCA countries where the EUWI has been active since 2006. Some cross-cutting outcomes deserve particular attention.

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[https://www.yunbaogao.cn/report/index/report?reportId=5\\_1532](https://www.yunbaogao.cn/report/index/report?reportId=5_1532)

