

UPDATE

on National Policy Dialogues in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia



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Highlights:

- Kazakhstan initiates ratification of the Protocol on Water and Health
- Policy dialogue starts in Russian region of Buryatia
- Armenian Steering Committee approves national targets on water and health

About National Policy Dialogues on Water

National Policy Dialogues (NPDs) are the main operational instrument of the Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA) Component of the European Union Water Initiative (EUWI). EUWI, including its EECCA Component, was launched at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2002. It contributes to the implementation of Millennium Development Goals and to Post-2015 Development agenda.

It is through the successful implementation of NPDs that the vision of the EUWI will materialise, key objectives will be attained and policies and institutions will be reformed.

The objective of each NPD is to facilitate the reform of water policies (covering both water supply and sanitation and integrated water resources management) in a particular country. Each NPD involves high level representatives of all key partners, including national and basin authorities, representatives of relevant international organisations, civil society (NGOs) and private sector.

UNECE and OECD act as strategic partners of the EUWI in EECCA. UNECE focuses on legal and institutional reforms for IWRM while OECD specializes in the economic and financial dimension of water policies.

Dear friends,

I am happy to present to you the eighth issue of the Update on the European Union Water Initiative (EUWI) National Policy Dialogues (NPDs), implemented in the countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA).

The previous issue of the Update was released in January 2014 and quite a lot has been taking place in the NPD process since then. Brief summaries of the main meetings held are presented in the Update. There is also an interesting overview of NPD activities in Kyrgyzstan where the process has been active for over seven years already.

OECD and UNECE as strategic partners to the NPD process have published two joint publications in spring 2014 to present the results of their work on water sector reforms in the EECCA region. These highly informative publications are available in English and Russian and both are worth having a close look at.

On 24 June 2014 the 18th meeting of the EUWI EECCA working group was hosted by UNECE in Geneva. An update on the latest activities was given. The future workplan will be discussed at the next working group meeting. Using this opportunity, I reiterate the proposal by Romania to host the EUWI EECCA working group meeting in 2015.

The next 'season' of NPD meetings is starting after the summer with national-level meetings being planned in nine countries over the next four months. We will hopefully also see the first steps towards restarting of NPD activities in Ukraine as the country is starting to shape its policies in line with the EU legislation.

I am confident that continuing to work together, countries and implementing agencies, we will contribute to improve, step by step, the access to safe water and proper sanitation and will keep EECCA as a front runner of EUWI. On the other hand we have to think about future directions and activities, which will hopefully be included in the new EU assistance programme for the water sector in this region.

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NPD profile: Kyrgyz Republic

by Erkin Orolbaev



In June, 2007 Kyrgyzstan in its statement to the European Union expressed interest to begin National Policy Dialogue on integrated water resources management and asked for assistance to support this process. The main objective was to increase water efficiency and contribute to achievement of the relevant Millennium Development Goals.

The “Action Plan” included establishment of the Steering Committee as the key mechanism to manage and coordinate the process of National Policy Dialogue (NPD). The Steering Committee was created in 2008, according to the Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Industry of the Kyrgyz Republic and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. The Department of a water management and melioration, under the Ministry of Agriculture and melioration was appointed as the agency responsible for development of the process of Dialogue.

Simultaneously in Kyrgyzstan the National Policy Dialogue on Financing Urban and Rural Water Supply and Sanitation was launched. It was organized under the auspices of another Steering Committee, established with the decree of the Prime Minister. Its main purpose was to strengthen the capacity of the Government in the planning and implementation of priority investments in water infrastructure. In 2008-2009 the meetings in the frame of National Policy Dialogue were chaired by the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade.

After the political changes in 2010 and the structure of the Kyrgyz Government changed, it was decided to merge the two processes within National Policy Dialogue. From 2008 to 2014 eleven meetings of the Steering Committee have been held to review the status and development of the national water sector of Kyrgyzstan. The main areas of work of the NPD in Kyrgyzstan have been:

- Organization of water management planning and protection activities on the basis of hydrographic (basin) principle of IWRM;
- The establishment and implementation of the targets in the context of the Protocol on Water and Health;
- Improvement of economic policies, financial planning and funding mechanisms of the water sector in Kyrgyzstan;
- Project coordination of the international and donor organizations working in the water sector of Kyrgyzstan.

NPD Kyrgyzstan how it all began?

Since 2009, a project on establishing the national targets in the context of the Protocol on Water and Health has been conducted in framework of the National Policy Dialogue. In 2009-2010 a project proposal for the setting of targets in the context of the Protocol on Water and Health in the Kyrgyz Republic was developed and presented at the implementation meeting. At the end of 2011 the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressed interest to support this activity. Within the project in 2011-2012 the basic analysis for setting of targets was prepared; target indicators and measures for their implementation were developed for further discussion by interested parties. In June 2013 a joint decree of the Minister of Agriculture and Land Reclamation and the Minister of Health formally approved the targets in the context of the Protocol on Water and Health.

In 2009-2010 the recommendations to improve the financing and economic management tools of the urban and rural water supply and sanitation in the Kyrgyz Republic have been developed. In 2011-2012 the assessment of existing economic policies and recommendations for their reform, as well as additional economic tools for water resources management in Issyk-Kul Lake has been conducted. In 2013, the subsidies affecting the water sector in Kyrgyzstan were assessed, and recommendations for reform of certain types of subsidies have been presented.

Today, all stakeholders are involved in the process of NPD, including non-governmental organizations and civil society. One of the reasons for success of the NPD process is the fact that the main activities have been formulated in a rather general form and specific priority topics at different stages of the Dialogue were chosen directly by the participants. The National Policy Dialogue proved itself as an effective mechanism for coordination among donors which are implementing projects in the Kyrgyz water sector. Regular meetings of the Steering Committee have created a platform for a broad discussion of project proposals, progress and achievements of concrete international projects. At the same time it's an opportunity to amend some issues, yet to avoid duplication, join efforts in achieving more effective results at minimal cost. As representatives of international and donor organizations are attending Steering Committee meetings, the results of the discussions allow these organizations to quickly review their approaches if needed.

It is expected that in the future the National Policy Dialogue can act as an advisory body that develops expert view and gives recommendations for action to the National Water Council and the State Water Administration based on the Water Code. In order to share experiences and best practices the Steering Committee meetings have been attended by representatives of Kazakhstan, Moldova, and Tajikistan. Currently, the National Policy Dialogue in Kyrgyzstan is implemented with the support of the European Union and the Governments of Finland, Denmark, Germany (through the German Society for International Cooperation GIZ), Norway and Switzerland.

Support of National Policy Dialogue in Chu Basin

As part of an initial area of work within the National Policy Dialogue it was decided to improve the system of comprehensive planning in the Chu River basin - the most difficult region of Kazakhstan from hydrographic point of view. By the end of 2009, the provisional regulations on the Chu Basin Water Council and its membership were approved by the Department of Water Resources and Land Reclamation. In 2010-2011 various approaches in basin planning were discussed in the framework of the National Policy Dialogue. The concept of Chu Basin water plan was prepared and adopted in 2012. In 2013 an inventory was carried out to assess and systematize the available data related to water resources of the Chui River Basin. In 2014, the review - "Strategically important water infrastructure in the Chu basin" was finalized and presented to NPD Steering Committee.

In parallel with the work on basin planning a number of organizational activities for the establishment and maintenance of Chui Basin Water Council had been conducted in the framework of NPD. The first meeting of the Council took place in 2013 where tasks, duties and responsibilities of its members, as well as the work floor were discussed. In 2014 the second meeting of the Council was conducted which covered the priorities for the preparation of river basin plan and studied the experience of basin councils in neighboring Kazakhstan. Improvement of basin planning system is carried out in close coordination with the bilateral Chu-Talas Commission. This work is performed in accordance with the decisions of the National Water Council, which, at its meeting in February 2013 approved the hydrological boundaries of river basins in the territory of Kyrgyzstan.



Participants at the NPD Steering Committee meeting in Bishkek

photo: GIZ

EU Water Initiative NPD activities in EECCA in February-August 2014

The 11th Steering Committee meeting in Kyrgyzstan

20 March 2014 – Bishkek

The Steering Committee of the Kyrgyz National Policy Dialogue on water resources discussed an expert assessment of the state of water reservoirs in the basin, along with a wide range of policies and projects in field of water.

UNECE is supporting the step-by-step development of the Chu River Basin Management Plan, including the creation of the database that provided the framework for the recent assessment. Many dams on the reservoirs in the Chu Basin are poorly maintained and pose a potential risk for downstream populations. The creation of the database on the state of the existing dams will help to prioritize which are most at risk of failure and need to be repaired first. A common approach to the categorization of reservoirs for irrigation and hydropower generation as was done in the present assessment will be very useful also for the development of management plans in other basins. It is foreseen that a World Bank project will step in to complete the Chu River Basin Management Plan, which was started with UNECE support a few years ago.

OECD proposed a set of different economic instruments to increase the efficiency of water use in Kyrgyzstan.

Over 30 representatives of different stakeholders and donors involved in improving the situation of water resources in Kyrgyzstan attended the meeting, which was chaired by the Deputy Head of the Department of Water Management and Melioration of the Ministry of Agriculture and Melioration, Mr. Tilek Isabekov.

The meeting was attended by many international institutions and donors as well to ensure coordination of their activities in the water sector in Kyrgyzstan. Participating donors included the Asian Development Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the European Union, the Finnish Environmental Institute, the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ), OECD, the Swiss Cooperation Office (SDC), UNECE, UNDP and the World Bank.



The 4th Steering Committee meeting in Turkmenistan

3 April 2014 – Ashgabat

Around 40 representatives of different stakeholders and donors attended the fourth meeting of the NPD Steering Committee. The meeting was co-chaired by Mr. Niyazmuhamet Gyrlov, Deputy Minister of Water Economy, and Mr. Rejeggeldi Meredov, Chair of the Environmental Committee of the Turkmen Parliament. The meeting was organized in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Turkmenistan.

The Steering Committee of the National Policy Dialogue on water resources management decided to develop a road map for implementation of the principles of integrated water resource management in Turkmenistan.

In 2012, Turkmenistan became a Party to the Water Convention. The road map to be developed will assist in applying the principles of that treaty. Also at the meeting, the Steering Committee decided to start to raise awareness about the potential benefits of joining the related United Nations Economic Commission for Europe environmental treaties, such as the Protocol on Water and Health and the Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents (Industrial Accidents Convention). Since Turkmenistan's accession to the Water Convention, different ministries have expressed an interest in learning more about these legal instruments.

The 2nd Steering Committee meeting in Kazakhstan

24 April 2014 - Burabay

At the meeting, the Steering Committee adopted its work plan for 2014–2015, which includes a range of activities to be conducted in the framework of the NPD, such as strengthening of river basin administrations and fostering transboundary cooperation. UNECE and the OECD, as strategic partners for the National Policy Dialogue process, will seek assistance from donors to finance the implementation of the activities. The work plan will also help Kazakhstan to implement its ambitious State Programme on Water Resources Management until 2040.

Key stakeholders of the National Policy Dialogue on water resources Steering Committee of Kazakhstan recommended the initiation of the process of joining the UNECE-WHO Regional Office for Europe Protocol on Water and Health.

The recommendation is based on the positive results of the assessment conducted by UNECE-supported local expert group, which examined the legal, institutional and financial needs for the implementation of the Protocol in Kazakhstan, as well as the outcomes of the national workshop on the Protocol held on 23 and 24 April. The workshop was attended by more than 30 participants representing key governmental agencies responsible for water and health issues, non-governmental organizations and academia.

In spite of progress in recent years in access to water and sanitation in Kazakhstan, there is still room for improvement, especially in rural areas. Thanks to Government investment programmes, 42.5% of the rural population now has access to the centralized drinking water supply.

Wastewater treatment also requires improvement, as currently only two thirds of urban wastewater is treated according to national standards. In addition, 64% of water supply networks need to be rebuilt.



The 12th Steering Committee meeting in Armenia

6 May 2014 - Yerevan

The Steering Committee of the National Policy Dialogue on water resources management approved the draft national water and health targets, prepared by the national expert group with support from the UNECE.

The targets were developed under the Protocol on Water and Health within a project financed by Finland. Members of the NPD Steering Committee provided their comments and subsequently adopted the draft targets. They recommended the Ministry of Nature Protection to officially circulate them for comments by relevant governmental authorities. The final draft will then be forwarded to the Government for formal adoption. In addition, the Committee also discussed the process of preparation of the road map for the ratification of the Protocol by Armenia, also supported by UNECE.

A total of 25 national targets were prepared in 9 out of 20 target areas specified in the Protocol, along with relevant target dates, indicators and supporting measures. The selected target areas include such high priority issues for Armenia as access to drinking water and sanitation, the quality of drinking water supplied, the quality of treated wastewater discharged into water bodies and the reduction of water-related diseases and their outbreaks. Armenia signed the UNECE-WHO/Europe Protocol on Water and Health in 1999 and is currently in the process of its ratification.

The 6th Steering Committee meeting in Tajikistan

23 May 2014 - Dushanbe

The NPD Steering Committee discussed the state of water management reforms that the UNECE helped to design.

Over 60 representatives of different stakeholders and donors involved in improving the water resources situation in Tajikistan attended the meeting, which was chaired by the Minister of Energy and Water Resources of Tajikistan, Mr. Usmonali Usmonzoda.

Participants expressed satisfaction with the recently implemented institutional changes in water management, based on the Water Sector Reform Strategy developed with support from UNECE. The first step of the reform was implemented in late

2013, when the functions of water sector policymaking and the management of the irrigation infrastructure were divided, ending the potential conflict of interests that existed when the same institution was responsible for both water policy and managing water infrastructure.

The next stage of the reform will concentrate on making the necessary changes in legislation to implement the principles of integrated water resources management. The Steering Committee meeting adopted the proposals on the scope of changes needed in the Water Code, proposed by the UNECE-funded national working group. Once the new Water Code is adopted, the introduction of the basin principle of water management is expected to be the next step of reform.

Different donors, including the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank and Switzerland, confirmed at the Steering Committee meeting that they are planning to support the development of basin management plans and the creation of basin administrations.



The 18th meeting of the EUWI EECCA working group

24 June 2014 - Geneva

three main components: (a) transboundary cooperation; (b) managing water for green growth; and (c) water-climate-food-energy nexus.

Meeting confirmed the validity of priorities agreed during October 2013 meeting in Helsinki. Romania as the Chair of the working group kindly offered to host next meeting of the EUWI EECCA working group in 2015.

Meeting of European Neighbourhood Partnership Initiative (ENPI) East regional projects on environment, water, and climate change

1 July 2014 – Brussels

Meeting gathered team leaders of 12 environmental, water and climate projects that are currently supported by the European Union in the EECCA region. Meeting concentrated on sharing experiences and discussing potential for more collaboration between projects. Achieving better communication and visibility, as well as more regional cooperation were listed among key future tasks. UNECE and OECD presented the success of engaging stakeholders and creating ownership in the NPD processes in EECCA region.

The second Steering Committee meeting in Buryatia (Lake Baikal basin)

4 July 2014 – Ulan-Ude

The Steering Committee meeting was attended by about 30 officials from the ministries and departments of the Republic of Buryatia (Ministry of Economy, Natural Resources, Agriculture, Tariff Service, and others), the Federation Council of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation and the territorial units of the federal executive bodies, as well as representatives expert community and

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