

Dear friends,

We are happy to present the first update on implementation of National Policy Dialogues on integrated water resources management (IWRM). The National Policy Dialogues (NPD) on IWRM provide practical assistance to the Governments in countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA) in strengthening IWRM in accord with the principles outlined in the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Water Convention, the Protocol on Water and Health, the European Union (EU) Water Framework Directive and other EU and United Nations policy documents. Support to the National Policy Dialogues on IWRM is provided by the European Commission, Denmark, Finland, Norway and Switzerland.

Since 2006, NPDs on IWRM have been carried out in Armenia, Kyrgyzstan, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine. In 2010, policy dialogues are starting in Azerbaijan, Georgia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

More information on the programme is available at
<http://www.unece.org/env/water/npd.htm>

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What are National Policy Dialogues?

National Policy Dialogues on IWRM and water supply and sanitation (WSS) are the main operational instrument of the European Union Water Initiative Component for Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia.

This Initiative was launched in 2002 at the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD). The Initiative is a partnership that aims at contributing to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and targets set at WSSD for water supply and sanitation, within an integrated approach to water resources management.

UNECE is the strategic partner supporting the policy dialogue process on IWRM. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) is the strategic partner for water supply and sanitation.

Figure 1. Map of the region of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia



Report on Implementation of National Policy Dialogues on IWRM at the fifth UNECE Water Convention Working Group on IWRM, held on 8 July 2010, Geneva

The UNECE Water Convention Secretariat informed the Working Group on IWRM about recent developments under the EU Water Initiative and its National Policy Dialogues (NPD) process regarding IWRM activities conducted by UNECE in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia. Please see the full secretariat report at http://www.unece.org/env/water/npd_implementation.htm.

The representative of the Republic of Moldova informed about progress of the NPD IWRM and expressed the hope that the NPD in the country would continue. It was noted that the dialogue needed to support preparation of a national strategy for water sector adaptation to climate change and the NPD Steering Committee should also support preparations for the Astana "Environment for Europe" Ministerial Conference and help to foster implementation of the Water Convention protocols.

According to representative of [Ukraine](#), the NPD IWRM had lead to the development of concrete policy outputs, for example, to a study on the causes for the increasing occurrence of floods and to the development of a flood directive/strategy which is now being considered by the Ministry of Economy of Ukraine for implementation.

Representatives of [Azerbaijan](#) underlined the importance of initiating an NPD in the country soon; they proposed that a national NPD IWRM Steering Committee be established and that it focuses on the development of a national water management strategy. Implementation of the NPD IWRM could also support activities on evaluation of the implementation of MDGs in Azerbaijan.

A representative of [Armenia](#) described the history of the NPD IWRM in the country, which started in 2006 and focused at the beginning on a pilot basin of the Marmarik basin where a river basin management strategy had been developed. Currently, the NPD continues focusing on implementation of the river basin management approach and especially on the financial aspects of water resources management. Future plans included starting a pilot project on Payments for Ecosystem Services (PES).

A representative of [Georgia](#) expressed its high expectations for the start of the NPD IWRM process in September 2010, underlining the importance of ownership of the country also for the definition of aims and of cooperation with other existing coordination mechanisms, such as the donor committee in Georgia's case.

A representative of [Tajikistan](#) described some already existing processes on IWRM in the country and welcomed the expected start of the NPD IWRM. The representative of Tajikistan underlined that a major barrier to the transfer of water management from the administrative to the river basin management approach is the very high financial costs of such a reform.

[Kazakhstan](#) expressed interest in being included or in cooperated in the NPD IWRM process. The Secretariat, welcoming that expression of interest, explained that such an interest would need to be expressed by the country through an official letter and pointed to Kazakhstan's financial and human resources limitations.

In that connection, [IWAC](#) expressed its readiness to possibly support the start of a similar process in Kazakhstan.

A representative of [Switzerland](#) invited donors to provide support to the NPD IWRM process and suggested that it was important to ensure there was an exchange between the countries where NPDs IWRM are implemented and processes at the Astana Ministerial Conference, and that a "network of NPD experts" could be created on that occasion.

The Working Group welcomed the progress made under the NPDs IWRM, which were considered as a vital instrument promoting implementation of the Convention on the ground. It invited Parties and non-Parties to provide not only funding, but also in-kind expertise and review of the products, such as action plans developed under the NPDs.

Approach to Implementation of National Policy Dialogues on IWRM in the countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia

National Policy Dialogues are among the many international assistance programmes for the countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia that are aimed at achieving the Millennium Development Goals in the region. Therefore, it is important to reflect on the experiences of NPD IWRM implementation in a wider context of assistance programmes in the region.

Studies¹ related to implementation of international assistance programmes have indicated challenges that donors face. This is especially true when it comes to programmes in Central Asia, a number of which, according to experts, did not achieve their established objectives. Martha Olcott (Kreikemezer and Zellener, 2007) outlined the following recommendations for the design of the programmes to increase their chances of success in achieving the programme objectives. First, donors should make more of an effort to view events in the region through a locally focused lens, rather than imposing realities from outside the region. They should learn to be more flexible in dealing with those countries to reflect the rapid political and economic changes that take place in those States and the realities in the countries. Second, the Governments of countries where programmes are being implemented should be fully engaged in the policy dialogue rather than pursue policies of sanctions. Finally, she suggests "the West should move away from a 'we-they' understanding of events in the region, and learn to be more inclusive in its approach".

¹ See, for instance, Kreikemezer, A., Zellener, W., *The Quandaries of Promoting Democracy in Central Asia: Experiences and Perspectives from Europe and the USA*, Working Paper 18 (Hamburg, Germany, Centre for OSCE research, 2007); and Boonsra, J., Hale J., *EU Assistance to Central Asia: Back to the Drawing Board?*, EU-Central Asia Monitoring, Working Paper 08, Brussels, Belgium, 2010, 18 pp.

Overall, the experiences of implementation of the water policy dialogues in the countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia confirm findings of the above-mentioned studies. The following approach to implementation of the NPD IWRM programme has been adopted by the UNECE:

Ownership of the programme by the Governments of beneficiary countries

One of the five principles of Paris Declaration¹ on aid effectiveness is about ownership. The beneficiary country should perceive itself as an owner of the project. The enhanced ownership encourages the countries at the highest political level to share equally the responsibility with donor countries for the implementation of the project. In this context, the NPD is a powerful instrument to identify the needs and objectives of each individual country and support the countries in achieving them. The NPD IWRM programme begins after a Government submits an official request to UNECE to initiate the programme. The programme is implemented in a regular dialogue between the Government, UNECE and other international partners.

Encouraging intersectoral dialogue and involving key stakeholders

The NPD IWRM programme involves not only the authorities in the beneficiary countries dealing with water management, but also representatives of ministries of economy, health, finance, and others; this allows for integrating necessary changes into the legal frameworks in other sectors than just water management. Another important issue is that successful implementation of assistance programmes necessitates the involvement of different actors ranging from the central authorities to civil society, including at the grass-roots level. Especially for countries that are not stable politically, involvement of a larger circle of key stakeholders is a must. NPD IWRM Steering Committees include a wide range of organisations involved in water management.

Long-term perspective of support is important

The political transformation in countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia is a long-term process and the application of the NPD instrument needs to take this into account. National Policy Dialogues need to be established as instruments assisting the countries in their reforms; therefore they also need to be long-term processes. A process-oriented rather than a project-oriented approach to implementation of IWRM principles should be adopted.

Flexibility when working in transition countries

In transition countries, the political framework and the socio-economic situation evolve constantly. In addition, transition countries often experience a lack of capacity to implement international projects' activities. Genuine partnership between Governments and international organizations require the flexibility and the capacity to adapt to new challenges and needs of the target countries. Also, instruments of support (grants, contracts, etc.) need to be used in a flexible and less bureaucratic manner. It should be also added that, despite the similarity of the recent historical paths of the countries of the region, they have developed politically and economically in different directions and are facing different challenges and difficulties. Consequently, needs also vary considerably from one country to another. A one-size-fits-all approach should be avoided. A needs-based approach can yield the desired results.

Developing a strong knowledge base for assistance programmes

The NPD programme requires a strong knowledge base — political discussions among decision makers and stakeholders should be based on a solid analysis of the environmental situation, as well as on the changing socio-economic conditions and legal frameworks. As experience of implementation of the NPDs IWRM has demonstrated, there is a need for increased support making it possible to involve international as well local experts more effectively in developing the programme knowledge base.

Importance of evaluation and benchmarking

Evaluation of the success of donor programmes' implementation gives them more transparency and also allows for reflection on the experience and the development of viable strategies for future activities. With regard to the NPD programme, so far there is only one benchmarking report, produced by the Global Water Partnership in 2004, Status and plans of EECCA countries in fulfilling the WSSD target on IWRM plans by 2005, which made an evaluation of implementation of IWRM principles in the institutional and legal basis of the countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia. This kind of benchmarking needs to be made on a regular basis in all NPD countries; if possible simultaneously. The benchmarking would also allow for the identification of gaps that could guide both technical assistance and directions of the national policy dialogues in those countries. Such a benchmarking could be done through studies, organization of regional (Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia) or subregional meetings, working groups on specific topics and use of EU expertise in IWRM for such studies. Presently funding for this is not available.

¹ Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness. 2005 High Level Forum, Paris, February 28 – March 2, 2005.

Calendar of NPD IWRM events for 2010

9 September, Stockholm, Sweden	EU Water Initiative Multi Stakeholder Forum within Stockholm Water week
12-14 September, Baku, Azerbaijan	NPD IWRM stakeholder meeting
15-18 September, Tbilisi, Georgia	Fact-finding mission to plan the First Steering Committee meeting
27-30 September, Chisinau, Republic of Moldova	NPD IWRM stakeholder meeting – preparation of the Steering Committee meeting planned for beginning of 2010
27-28 October, Brussels, Belgium	EU Water Initiative Working Group Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia
10-11 November, Kiev, Ukraine	Ukraine NPD IWRM Steering Committee Meeting
23 November, Bucharest, Romania	Side Event on Synergies between NPD IWRM and UNECE/WHO Protocol on Water and Health within the Second Session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol

2010 Past Events

February, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan	Meetings in Kyrgyzstan to prepare a Steering Committee meeting
1-5 April, Ashgabat, Turkmenistan	Fact-finding mission for the NPD IWRM for Turkmenistan and participation in an international forum "Drop of water – a grain of gold". The workshop "Environmental aspects of protection and sustainable use of water resources in Central Asia: experiences and practices of cooperation on the regional, national and local levels". Working Group meeting of the International Fund for Saving Aral Sea (IFAS)
06-14 April, Tashkent, Uzbekistan	Joint OECD/Environmental Action Plan (AEP) Task Force Secretariat and the UNECE fact-finding mission for the start of the NPD in Uzbekistan
11-15 April, Baku, Azerbaijan	Fact-finding mission in Baku, Azerbaijan, following the expression of interest by the Government of Azerbaijan to start the NPD IWRM
7-10 June, Dushanbe, Tajikistan	Participation of UNECE delegation in the High-Level International Conference (HLIC) on the mid-term comprehensive review of the implementation of the International Decade for Action, "Water for Life", 2005 - 2015.

Recently Published

The NPD IWRM programme brochure was published in English and Russian and is available in PDF format at

<http://www.unece.org/env/water/publications/brochure/NPD.Brochure.E.pdf>

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