The official opening ceremony of the newly refurbished EMIC laboratory was successfully conducted on 31 January 2020. The ceremony was attended by high-level officials including the Minister of Environment of the Republic of Armenia, the Head of the EU Delegation in Armenia, the Ambassador of Austria in Armenia, and the First Chancellor of the Embassy of France in Armenia. The event gained national interest with significant media coverage through 8 different Armenian media outlets covering the laboratory opening ceremony. Q1 of 2020 also saw improvements in technical capacity and infrastructure of the laboratory. Training was held for EMIC laboratory staff on determination of dissolved anions with the newly supplied Ion Chromatograph as part of the support to the process of laboratory accreditation. New laboratory equipment and spare parts were delivered and tested. In February, EMIC laboratory participated in a proficiency test for determination of metals & nutrient elements in water. Needs assessment and procurement of consumables for the analytical methods trainings commenced in Q1 to allow successful delivery of trainings on site.

Water monitoring infrastructure in the field was improved with rehabilitation works of six hydrological observation posts in Hrazdan RBD successfully completed in January 2020 with contactless water level measurement equipment with radar sensors for these sites delivered and operational by the end of March 2020. In order to ensure adequate monitoring of all groundwater bodies, EMIC identified 36 additional monitoring sites of high priority. A methodology to assess the available groundwater resources in mountainous areas was finalised.

The preparation of RBMPs in Hrazdan and Sevan River Basin District continued with the work on the key chapters of Programme of measures and economic analysis progressed.

The contract for the digitalisation of historical data was finalised, in addition to a contract for training on GIS with the State Water Committee. Exchanges were reactivated on the terms of reference for the creation of an “Armenian Water Monitoring Information System” (AWMIS) for the new “Hydro-meteorology and monitoring center” (HMMC) of Armenia.

In February, the Ministry of Environment initiated the official circulation of the comprehensive amendments to the Water Code of Armenia, developed with support of EUWI+, in response to the requirements under the CEPA in the context of the five water related EU directives.
Look ahead to Q2

By the end of Q2 2020, the project hopes to deliver a **first draft of water quality standards** for the assessment of the ecological quality of Lake Sevan and the Sevan River Basin District. This work began in Q1 2020 and aims to deliver a new, efficient water quality assessment system for the Sevan RBD based on the requirements of the EU WFD. Recently, algal blooms, triggered by high nutrient loads, have been negatively affecting Lake Sevan. The lake is a priority water body in Armenia with significant value to citizens and the local economy. The procedures for the adoption of amendments to the Water Code of Armenia in line with the CEPA requirements will continue in Q2. The consultations on the revision of the previously developed Armenian-Georgian joint monitoring programme for the Khrami-Debed/Debeda basin will continue, including inputs from the EUWI+ team.

Due to the Covid-19 situation, planned surface water surveys have been postponed. However, preparation will continue regarding site selection, logistics and contracting to ensure continuation as soon as the situation allows. In Q2, suppliers **will deliver equipment required for the biological monitoring of surface waters**. Conceptual preparations for investigative monitoring are ongoing.

Meanwhile, work on monitoring documents (RBMP monitoring chapter, thematic summaries, monitoring development plans and ecological status classification systems) continues as planned and is expected to be finalised by the end of Q2.

A set of 18 existing **groundwater monitoring sites will be rehabilitated**. To fill gaps in the network, a consultant will develop the design documents for the 36 selected additional monitoring sites. In Q3 and Q4, EUWI+ will support the construction of several of these sites. A scheduled groundwater survey has to be moved to Q3 or Q4. Via online conferencing, we will train EMIC staff on groundwater status assessment and launch the development of methodologies for chemical and quantitative status, building on the new methodology to assess available groundwater resources. EUWI+ will continue to support the EMIC laboratory through technical support for quality management and laboratory accreditation.

The **finalisation of Hrazdan and Sevan RBMPs** is planned for this quarter. Plans are being developed to ensure consultations progress with on-line information campaign and consultation.

The new e-newsletter in English and Armenian will released at the beginning of April 2020.

Work on **integration and visualisation of the hydromet historical data** will be done, and tender will be launched on the basis of the updated specifications of a “Armenian Water Monitoring Information System” (AWMIS) for the new “Hydro-meteorology and monitoring center” (HMMC) of Armenia.