



Action funded by the  
EUROPEAN UNION



## The 7<sup>th</sup> MEETING OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE OF THE NATIONAL POLICY DIALOGUE IN WATER SECTOR OF AZERBAIJAN

### MINUTES OF THE MEETING

**Date:** 4 July 2018

**Location:** Caspian Plaza Hotel, Baku

**Background:** *The objective of the meeting was to discuss the key issues in the development of the national water policy and the status of ongoing activities within the EUWI+ project in Azerbaijan. The meeting also served as a platform for strengthening of synergies with other international projects implemented in Azerbaijan.*

**Languages:** *Azeri and English, simultaneous interpretation provided*

#### Agenda

Agenda of the 7<sup>th</sup> NPD Steering Committee meeting is attached to the minutes (Annex 1).

#### Participants

List of Participants of the meeting is attached to the minutes (Annex 2).

#### Summary of Discussions

---

#### Welcome – Opening remarks

---

Mr. Mutallim Abdulhasanov, Head of Unit, Environmental Policy Division, Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of Azerbaijan, opened the 7<sup>th</sup> NPD Steering Committee (SC) meeting, welcomed the participants and thanked them on behalf of MENR for accepting the invitation and attending the meeting.

He informed participants about the objectives of the meeting and noted that during the discussions key issues in the development of the national water policy and the status of ongoing activities within the European Union Water Initiative Plus (EUWI+) project in Azerbaijan will be addressed. He noted that the meeting would also serve as a platform for strengthening of synergies with other international projects implemented in Azerbaijan.

Then, Mr. Abdulhasanov informed participants that currently the signing of an agreement between the Republic of Azerbaijan and EU on enhanced cooperation was expected and that work in that direction was ongoing, also in relation to the development of a new wider



Action funded by the  
EUROPEAN UNION



cooperation program, including the environment and water management improvement component.

It was also noted that the National Policy Dialogue on Integrated Water Resources Management (NPD IWRM) in Azerbaijan focuses on the support to the development and implementation of a government strategy for management of water resources based on the principles outlined in the European Union Water Framework Directive (EU WFD) and the UNECE Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention) and its Protocol on Water and Health, as well as other United Nations and EU instruments. As Party to the Convention, Azerbaijan actively cooperates with concerned stakeholders to implement its obligations and requirements.

The harmonization of legislation with the EU WFD and full application of the basin approach and IWRM principles to the water resources management by finalizing and adopting the National Water Strategy and relevant legislative acts were mentioned among priority actions for Azerbaijan.



Finally, Mr. Abdulhasanov underlined the close cooperation of Azerbaijan with the EUWI+ project implementing partners: the Environment Agency Austria (UBA), the International Office for Water, France (IOW), the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), with the overall aim to improve the water resources management in line with international standards.

Opening statements were made also by Ms. Ulviya Abdullayeva, Program Manager, EU Delegation to Azerbaijan, Ms. Tatiana Efimova from OECD, Mr. Alisher Mamadzhanov from UNECE and Mr. Michael Sutter from UBA (on behalf of EU Member States Consortium). They also welcomed participants, noted the importance of the anticipated signing of the new EU-Azerbaijan cooperation agreement and underlined the significant role the EUWI+ project can play to assist the country in reforming the water sector. The items below were identified



by the project implementing partners as key issues for discussion and relevant decisions by the NPD Steering Committee:

- Finalisation and adoption of the water strategy and development of the strategy action plan, with special orientation of application of the principles of basin approach and IWRM, water allocation and environmental flow;
- Regarding the draft national targets under the Protocol on Water and Health, cooperation opportunities between MENR, the Ministry of Health and other involved stakeholders for the implementation of some selected targets with the support of the EUWI+ project, following their adoption;
- Water monitoring and classification issues, including safeguarding long-term sustainability of surface and ground water monitoring by building human resource capacities and securing financing;
- Development of the river basin management planning (RBMP) and stakeholders' involvement under the EUWI+ project;
- Stakeholder involvement through further institutionalization of platforms for dialogue at the basin level (basin councils).



---

## First Session

---

In session 1, the key priorities of the national water policy were discussed following presentations on the status of work on the development of the National Water Strategy of Azerbaijan by Mr. Mutallim Abdulhasanov, MENR and Ms. Tatiana Efimova, OECD, and Mr. Rafiq Verdiyev, National expert.



Action funded by the  
EUROPEAN UNION



It was noted that it was critically important to finalize and adopt the National Water Strategy and start the development of an action plan for its implementation in the coming months. The presentation on the status of development of the National Water Strategy in Ukraine by Ms. Natalia Zakorchevna, National expert (Ukraine) highlighted opportunities for approximation with the EU water acquis and challenges with its implementation. An active exchange of opinions followed the presentation, during which experts from Azerbaijan clarified specific elements of the strategy in Ukraine and its related actions to draw possible lessons for their country. Members of the NPD SC thanked Ms. Zakorchevna for the interesting presentation and the EUWI+ project for its support to sharing experiences on the water reform practices with other countries.

---

## Second Session

---

The main theme of the second session was the implementation of the national water and health targets set under the UNECE-WHO/Europe Protocol on Water and Health. Ms. Leyla Tagizade, Ministry of Health and Ms. Gunel Gurbanova, MENR informed participants that the work on the setting the national targets under the Protocol on Water and Health had been finalised with the formal adoption through a Joint Order of the Ministers of Ecology and Natural Resources and Health expected soon. The importance of maintaining the existing interagency working group for coordination of activities for the implementation of national targets was underlined. The future support of the EUWI+ project for the implementation of some selected targets, following their adoption, was reiterated.

Mr. Alisher Mamadzhanov, UNECE, presented information on the Protocol on Water and Health as a tool to implement Sustainable Development Goals at the national level and described the necessary actions to implement national targets according to international requirements.

---

## Third Session

---

Information provided by Mr. Michael Sutter, Mr. Timothy Turner, Mr. Philipp Hohenblum, Mr. Yannick Pochon and Ms. Yunona Videnina focused on progress, needs and outlook for the development of monitoring and for territorializing the national water policy at the basin scale through participative River Basin Management Planning in the context of work under Results 2 and 3 of the EUWI+ project in Azerbaijan. Presentations for discussion covered the below items:

- An update on EUWI+ Laboratories' development;
- An update on surface water, coastal & transitional waters and ground water monitoring;
- Enabling organization for participative RBM Planning;
- Geographic breakdown from river basin districts to water bodies and monitoring;
- Data sharing as base for knowledge development and multidisciplinary integration;
- Participation of stakeholder in the basin planning process and awareness raising as key for policy implementation.

During the discussions, NPD SC members thanked EUWI+ project team for their work and provided some recommendations on the harmonization of the water legislation with the EU Directives and on institutional improvements to enable the application of IWRM, as well as on monitoring, laboratory improvement, development of river basin management plans in pilot basin districts and others.



---

#### Fourth Session

---

In session 4, possible synergies with other international projects implemented in Azerbaijan were discussed. Particularly, discussions focused on the following projects, following presentations by their representatives:

- UNDP/GEF Kura-2 project, presented by Ms. Mary Matthews
- EU twinning project “Upgrading the National Environmental Monitoring System (NEMS)”, presented by Ms. Katja Loven
- SEIS project, presented by Mr. Vafadar Ismayilov

Each presentation was followed by discussion, which covered particularly the issues of coordination between the respective projects and the EUWI+ project. Participants committed to work in close cooperation and inform each other about the relevant work carried out by each project to ensure effectiveness of joint efforts in assisting the water sector reform of Azerbaijan and avoid duplication.



---

## Fifth Session

---

In the fifth session Mr. Abdulhasanov made closing remarks and presented the following recommendations and decisions of the NPD SC:

- **ON WATER STRATEGY:** Expressed appreciation of the support provided by EUWI+ project for finalization and adoption of the National Water Strategy, which is recognised as a critical factor for successful implementation of the water sector reform in Azerbaijan. The Steering Committee called on national stakeholders to cooperate closely with the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources towards the adoption of the strategy by the end of 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter of 2018.
- **ON WATER AND HEALTH:** Took notice that the work on setting of national targets under the Protocol on Water and Health had been finalised with formal approval expected soon and suggested to maintain the existing working group for coordination of activities for implementation of national targets. Recommended MENR to request support of EUWI+ project for the implementation of some of the targets, following their adoption.
- **ON MONITORING:** Acknowledged the need of safeguarding the long-term sustainability of surface and ground water monitoring by building human resource capacities and budget security. The NPD SC also supported the involvement of national experts on urban waste water treatment and industrial discharges in the Pressure and Impact analysis activities Under Result 2 of the EUWI+ project.
- **ON RIVER BASIN MANAGEMENT PLANS:** Took notice on the ongoing activities on RBMP development and stakeholders involvement under EUWI+ project and acknowledged the interest of future experience feedback for the national level, in terms of organisational, methodological and capacity building aspects.



Action funded by the  
EUROPEAN UNION



- **ON STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT:** Took into consideration further institutionalization of platforms for dialogue at the basin level (basin councils) for more effective involvement of stakeholders in the river basin management planning process.

