



## European Union Water Initiative Plus for the Eastern Partnership



### Minutes

#### of 4th meeting of the Coordination Committee of the National Policy Dialogue on integrated water resources management in the Republic of Moldova

*(The 26th NPD meeting under the EUWI in Moldova)*

**15 June 2018**

*VisPas Hotel, Conference Room, 26, A. Lapusneanu Str., Chisinau*

**Objectives of the meeting:** The objectives of the meeting were to discuss the implementation in Moldova of the *European Union Water Initiative Plus for the Eastern Partnership countries* (hereinafter EUWI+ or EUWI+ East) project funded by the European Union and progress in the water sector development in Moldova.

In particular, the meeting aimed to inform the Committee and invited stakeholders about an update on recent changes in the institutional set up and developments in environmental and water policies and legislation in the Republic of Moldova and to get feedback from local stakeholders on interim results of activities implemented through the NPD with support from the EUWI+. Furthermore the meeting aimed to serve as a platform for sharing and exchanging information of donor activities in the water sector in Moldova.

The agenda of the 4<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Coordination Committee (CC) of the National Policy Dialogue (NPD) on integrated water resources management in the Republic of Moldova is attached to these minutes (Annex 1).

#### **Participation:**

About 70 people participated in the 4th meeting of the Coordination Committee of the National Policy Dialogue on integrated water resources management in the Republic of Moldova, representing the Committee members, Governmental organizations, civil society (NGO's), expert community and consultants, international organizations, bilateral donors and the EUWI+ team.

The List of participants is attached to these minutes (Annex 2).

Ms. Valentina Tapis, NPD CC Chair and State Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture, Regional Development and Environment in the Republic of Moldova, chaired the meeting. She welcomed the participants and expressed her appreciation that so many international and national

stakeholders showed their on-going interest in the NPD and this important project (EUWI+) which is essential for the continuity of the policy dialogue process. Ms. Tapis stressed that national and international stakeholders play an important role in this process in order to ensure the fulfilment of Moldova's obligations according to the Association Agreement signed with European Union. She thanked the EU and bilateral donors for their continuous support and highlighted that the activities of the EUWI+ project in Moldova play a vital role in informing and facilitating the National Policy Dialogue. The NPD Coordination Committee has been an essential platform to discuss various issues related to implementing and further developing the state policy related to water resources management and development of the water supply and sanitation sector.

Ms. Tapis expressed a special welcome to Mr. Christian Ballaro, Attaché and project manager on Environment and Climate Change, EU Delegation to Moldova, for attending the meeting.

Mr. Antonio Castillo, Head of the European Investment Bank (EIB) Representation to Moldova, informed the meeting about investments made through the EIB and other donors such as the EBRD and EU on various projects on water and sanitation in rural areas. Since 2007, the EIB's Management Board has approved over EUR 69 million for water supply and sewerage projects in different areas for the Republic of Moldova. All of them with a significant grant component. However, only 49% have been signed. Beside the citizens of Chisinau, approximately 200 000 people have already benefited from these water and sanitation projects in several municipalities.

Mr. Castillo said that several challenges have been identified that will require increasing the capacity on the local promoters side, making necessary technical assistance support both for the preparation and implementation of projects. Due to the limited investment capacity of the government and municipalities, and to avoid significant impact on tariffs, donor's assistance is so important to have a solid financing of these activities, as ongoing projects have demonstrated that blending of loans with grants is very successful.

Mr. Michael Sutter, Project Leader, EU Member State Consortium for implementing the EUWI+, provided background information on how the project started in Moldova and welcomed the progress in implementing the project. He mentioned that in comparison with other countries that are involved in this project, it can be said that Moldova is progressing well. He furthermore stressed that based on the current positive implementation results there is confidence that this project will be successful and he is looking forward to the tangible results in the near future.

### **Discussion:**

The 4th meeting of the Coordination Committee of the National Policy Dialogue on integrated water resources management in the Republic of Moldova was structured in 4 thematic sessions.

#### **Session 1**

In this session, an update on recent changes in the institutional set up and developments in the environmental and water policies in Moldova was provided. Moldova has passed through a major reform of its government. This session took also stock of recent policy developments, as well information on the establishment of an Environmental Agency was provided. Furthermore an update on the state of the legal framework in the Integrated Water Resources Management Policy Department, Ministry of Agriculture, Regional Development and Environment (MARDE) in connection with the Commitments under Association Agreement was provided.

Session 1 was completed by a presentation on the *Management of water resources based on the river basin districts*. The presentation highlighted the establishment of two hydrographical basin district committees, basin district committee "Dniester" and basin district committee "Danube-Prut and Black Sea".

#### **Session 2**

In this session the Committee was informed about the progress in implementing the EUWI+ Work Plan for Moldova. It took stock of progress, discuss interim results and provide guidance for work in progress under Result 1. In particular the Committee was informed by OECD that a study was completed on establishing a sound economic regulatory system for Water Supply and Sanitation (WSS) in Moldova. Furthermore, good progress was made in assisting the country in introducing new design and construction norms for small-scale WSS systems. Also the work was launched on drafting a mid-term action Plan to help implement the national WSS Strategy for 2014-2018, and eventually update it.

The UNECE informed the Committee that it supported MARDE in the preparation of recent amendments to the Water Law No. 272 and in the initiation of the next cycle of amendments to be submitted to the Parliament in the fall of 2018. Furthermore, information was provided on the launched preparatory work for the revision of the National Programme for implementation of the Protocol on Water and Health in the Republic of Moldova for 2016-2025 and the implementation of some of its measures. UNECE also elaborated on its contribution to the preparatory stages of the establishment of the bilateral Moldovan-Ukrainian Dniester Commission as a feed into the GEF project.

It was stressed that the activities have been carried out to promote implementation of principles and requirements of the Water Framework Directive (WFD) and other water-related EU Directives and international commitments, such as the Paris agreement, water-related SDGs and the applicable MEA. The activities in the Work Plan involve contribution to implementing national strategies, several EU Directives, MEAs & SDGs.

### **A brief overview on the OECD-led activities in Moldova under the EUWI+ East project**

Currently, drafting of a new mid-term Action Plan to support implementation of the national WSS Strategy is in progress. EUWI+ project team (OECD) provided support to developing new design and construction norms for small-scale WSS systems (*temporary norms adopted by the MoEI Ordinance of 04/04/18*). Further work is planned such as the development of respective Code of Practice and execution of a training on the new norms. A report is finalised on strengthening the Economic Regulatory System for WSS. Work on economic instruments (tariffs, water use fees, compensation of damage to water resources and the possibility of establishing a dedicated Water Fund is expected to be launched in H2 2018.

The overview focused further on expected benefits for citizens of Moldova and the whole country, such as: support to implementing WSS strategy, not least in rural areas, leads to a faster progress in implementing SDG 6.1 & 6.2 & priority improvements in WSS. Work on ERS is expected to result in lower regulatory burden on, and improved financial health and sustainability of, WSS operators. The development and implementation of new norms are expected to result in much lower unit costs per person connected under new capital investments in rural WSS. It is expected to have a positive impact on tariffs; higher cost-effectiveness of interventions from the public budget and by donors.

The new mid-term Action plan integrated into broader policy (Moldova 2030 / NSSD) and budgetary frameworks (MTBF and annual budgets) are expected to result in higher coverage and better service quality; more resilient and sustainable WSS. Right incentives will be created by respective economic instruments that are or will be introduced or strengthened. Also they will lead to larger sources of finance for the water sector and (or) higher public revenues.

### **Progress of UNECE-led activities under EUWI+ and future plans**

Current ongoing work led by UNECE under EUWI+ focuses on supporting preparation of amendments to the Water Law no. 272 on protected areas (in line with Annex IV of WFD). Furthermore, inputs have been provided as feed-in to the GEF project on the Dniester, e.g. preparatory meeting for the establishment of the bilateral Moldovan-Ukrainian Dniester Commission under the 2012 Dniester Treaty in Chisinau (5 April 2018). The preparatory work on the revision of the National Programme to implement the Protocol on Water and Health 2016-2025 and some of its measures was also mentioned.

Future work will focus on providing support for drafting new round of amendments to the Water Law no. 272 to reflect developments since the adoption of the law and ongoing work related to different water-related EU Directives (June-November 2018). Based on decision of the NPD CC, a working group of experts on the revision of the National Programme will be established to implement the Protocol on Water and Health 2016-2025 and to start implementation of its Measure 18 (equitable access). This work will start in July 2018. Also ad-hoc support on legislative and institutional matters will be provided, based on request from MARDE. This must be seen as a continuous activity.

Also in this session technical presentations were given on the following subjects:

- Presentation of interim results of the work on mid-term Action Plan for WSS
- The on-going and planned work for the elaboration of amendments to the Water Law No. 272
- The progress under the National Programme for implementation of the Protocol on Water and Health in the Republic of Moldova for 2016-2025, its planned revision and activities to implement some its measures
- Temporary new design and construction norms for small-scale WSS systems, approved by Ordinance of the Minister of Economy and Infrastructure (MoEI) of Moldova on 04/04/2018.

During discussion in this session questions were posted by participants about the official responsibilities for the development of WSS-related norms and regulations. Due to some legal responsibilities of the Local Public Authorities, there is a need to clarify who plays which role in this regard, as well as who will be responsible for developing and promoting the norms. This issue is currently not addressed.

Ms. Tapis confirmed that there was a proposal to create a special section within water Agency “*Apele Moldovei*”, that will deal with WSS. These tasks will be included in the new regulation on its responsibilities.

### **Session 3.**

In this session the meeting participants were informed about the progress of implementing EUWI+ activities in Moldova under Results 2 and 3, which are laboratories development, surface water and ground water monitoring systems, river basin management planning, data management and communication. Both, the EU MS partners, as well as the responsible Moldovan partners made presentations on these topics and the session took stock of progress, discussed interim results and provided guidance for work in progress under Results 2 & 3, with special attention to:

#### **A summary of the EU Member States Consortium activities under EUWI+**

All topics presented in the previous sessions, as well the development of the monitoring laboratories represent are important elements of the chain – of the process of integrated management of the water resources.

#### **Laboratory development and strengthening of surface water and groundwater monitoring**

Detailed information was presented on activities through the EUWI + project to assist monitoring of the water quality, to obtain and to analyze qualitative data in order to assess the status of the water quality in compliance with WFD.

In that regard an approach for the self-evaluation of the laboratories was developed to identify the needs and gaps of the monitoring of surface and groundwater. It was mentioned that the reaccreditation process at SHS laboratories was completed at the end of 2017. Assistance through the EUWI+ project for SHS laboratory ended successfully with the ISO 17025 certification updated. This gives credibility to the qualitative assessment of the water quality. Several missions were performed to evaluate and sharing the experiences and information on this topic.

Two selected state laboratories (under SHS) are responsible for the monitoring of the quality of surface waters and one more lab (of AGRM) is responsible for the monitoring of the quality of groundwater. Both laboratories work together with the EU experts on this matter to improve the knowledge on performing sampling and analysis of the water.

A priority is the financial support to the procurement of chemicals and equipment. This topic has been discussed at the ministry level about the importance of data needed for the River Basin Management Plans and decision making in this regard. The Focal Point of the NPD and Chair of the CC mentioned the decision taken at the meeting of the Ecological Fund Board on 14 June 2018, that substantial support was accepted until the end of 2018 to assist laboratories.

The first purchase of equipment is foreseen in the beginning of the 2019. The procurement process is complicated. A list with technical specifications for the new equipment for the laboratories needs to be developed.

Evaluation reports on the quality of groundwater show needs to enhance work in this sector. The main achievement was to have the groundwater map developed. Future steps are to provide trainings and capacity building activities for the staff. Romania can be involved as an EU neighboring country aiming at harmonizing Plans on the RBM. A proposal was made to work on bilateral agreements, including the development of trainings aiming at transferring knowledge and experiences- in this area.

The topic of Laboratory development and strengthening of Surface Water and Groundwater Resources Monitoring Improving the Capacity of Water Monitoring Laboratories was presented. The Coordination Committee discussed the topic and concluded that analysing opportunities to enhance the capacity for Ground Water (GW) surveys and the analysis of GW samples should be taken forward.

Ms Tapis informed the meeting about an extraordinary allocation of MDL 1.3 million (EUR 65 000) from the National Environmental Fund of Moldova for laboratory operations & monitoring in 2018. In addition, she reported of plans to increase such allocations in the coming years.

### **River Basin Management Planning, stakeholder involvement and data management**

Development of stakeholder participation in different basins, and awareness raising as key for policy implementation, data sharing as base for knowledge development and integration were addressed in this session. In particular the progress and feedback on River Basin Management Planning for Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) was presented and discussed. Furthermore special attention was given to stakeholder participation mechanisms at different basin scales and awareness rising as key for implementation. Finally 'Data Sharing' as base for knowledge development and integration was presented.

A communication strategy will help support the stakeholders' involvement in the development and implementation of the RBMP Action Plan will be attached to respond to this communication strategy. Amongst others initiatives will be taken to inform the public about the real situation of the water status at the national level and awareness raising on possible actions.

There is a need to inform local public authorities by explaining the used approaches and to provide information about the current reform in the management of aquatic resources. This will be done through NGO's or Public Associations.

### **Strengthening of RBM Planning including transboundary harmonization with direct application to the Danube-Prut and Black Sea river basin district**

In a presentation on this topic the needs to support the secretariats of the two basin district committees were explained and illustrated. Also the need for trainings for the staff of the committees was stressed. Furthermore the need for establishing a 'water cadaster' was highlighted as well as the need for the development of specialized software for the 'water balance'. A bilateral agreement with Romania could enhance the cooperation between both countries. Special attention was given to ICPDR groups and it was proposed to create working groups at national level and a regional one for the Prut.

Furthermore, the issue of the adoption of the current RBMP, coordination of the preparation of the new generation of RBMP for the next 2021-2017 period, tools for the monitoring of the implementation of the RBMPs, as well as needs for specific trainings were discussed.

### **Other remarks and comments**

Information was provided by the beneficiary partners about the results and achievements. Prime vice director of SHS informed that three missions at the SHS laboratories with the EUWI+ project were conducted last year, to evaluate the needs and gaps of the monitoring capacities for the analyzing of the surface water quality.

The acknowledgement to the EUWI+ Project and EU MS consortium for their provided support and assistance was expressed by both representatives of the beneficiary partners (SHS and AGMR).

One Participant drew attention to the fact that the current legislation does not provide for effective mechanisms for combating surface water pollution (small rivers, etc., including cross-border) by the processing enterprises, and this situation does not allow improving in the future the quality of surface waters according to of the Water Framework Directive (WFD). It was proposed to initiate the elaboration of the ecological pollution assessment methodology and the changes in the legislation by significantly increasing the level of the fines provided for the pollution of the waters.

### **Session 4**

This session served as platform for identifying and (or) strengthening the synergies between various projects in the areas concerned, implemented in the Republic of Moldova with the support from the European Union, international financial organizations and bilateral donors (Switzerland, Austria, Czech Republic). Presentations were given on the following subjects:

- "Strengthening the Institutional Framework in the Water and Sanitation Sector", *Project ADA/SDC project*
- *The project "Harmonization of national legislation with Directive 91 on urban waste water treatment", (the Czech implementing project partners)*

- *The Partnership of the Republic of Moldova with the Green Climate Fund in the context of mitigation and adaptation to climate change, funding opportunities for the water resources sector, Mr. Vasile Scorpan, Climate Change Office, MADRM*
- *Integrated Drought Management Programme in Central and Eastern Europe Mr. Dumitru Drumea, local representative of GWP Moldova, representative of Institution of Ecology and Geography” .*
- *Experience of an inter-municipalities governance model for WSS development in the Nirnova valley, Remy Douguet, project manager, and Tudor Vrabie, national expert from Solidarity Water Europe (SWE)*

The participants of the meeting expressed their gratitude and addressed sincere thanks to the European Union, International Financing Institutions and bilateral donors for their continuous support in implementing the projects aimed at improving the management of water resources and development of water supply and sanitation systems in the Republic of Moldova.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS of the NPD CC meeting:**

#### **A. In the field of Planning and Improving the Legal Framework**

1. It is recommended to the experts who are drawing up the mid-term Action Plan for WSS:
  - to integrate in the draft Action Plan initiatives to improve the legal framework and decision-making database, including reporting on existing water and sanitation systems;
  - to integrate the general measures for the implementation of the Water and Health Protocol;
  - to coordinate the Action Plan with the Regional Development and Rural Development Plans as well as with River Basin Management Plans and other relevant plans;
  - to submit a note to the NPD CC with recommendations for amendments to the WSS Strategy and Strategy Plan by end-July 2018, to receive comments, suggestions for modifications by members of the CC and to all authorities and stakeholders.
2. It is recommended to organize a workshop in September-October 2018 on new norms for design and construction of small-scale water supply and sanitation systems, in collaboration with the Technical University of the Republic of Moldova.
3. In the work on economic instruments, the NPD CC *inter alia* recommends to consider elaboration of the methodology for assessing and monetary evaluation of damage from pollution of aquatic systems and developing legislative proposals on the increase of fines for pollution of aquatic ecosystems.
4. The NPD Coordination Committee expressed appreciation of support provided by the EUWI+ team (UNECE) to revision of Water Law No 272 and request further assistance to develop next round of amendments in second half of 2018. *Inter alia*, consider completing the Water Law with several definitions.

#### **B. In the field of the River Basin Planning**

The Coordination Committee recommends the adoption of the first generation Danube-Prut & Black Sea River Basin Management Plan without further delay in order to allow for EUWI+ support to the implementation of this plan within the remaining project period until end of 2020.

1. The Coordination Committee recommends launching the preparation of the second generation Danube-Prut & Black Sea RBD for the 6-year period 2021-2027 as required in the WFD to develop a plan synchronized in time with Danube countries, in particular Romania.
2. The Coordination Committee recommends considering using the bi-lateral agreement with Romania to develop technical exchange for RBMP harmonization at the border and to explore opportunities to modernize the agreement.

**C. In the field of Water and Health Protocol implementation in line with Sustainable Development Goals.**

The CC of the NPD recommends the creation of a group of experts to update the National Program for the Implementation of the Water and Health Protocol 2016-2025 and to guide the implementation of the N18 measure on equitable access to water and sanitation.

**D. In the field of strengthening the capacities of laboratory development and monitoring.**

1. The Coordination Committee welcomes additional national financial resources for monitoring development within the EUWI+ project, which were made available from the National Environmental Fund of Moldova for the year 2018 and welcomes the outlook of potential additional financial resources in the coming years. The CC recommends to closely monitoring its development and requests information about its status in the coming NPD meetings.
2. The Coordination Committee recommends analyzing opportunities to enhance the capacities for Ground Water (GW) surveys and the analysis of GW samples.
3. Reorganization and modernization of the national Hydrological monitoring network based on hydrographic basin principles.

The CC Secretary of NPD will deliver the minutes with the recommendations and conclusions mentioned for comments and proposals within 25 June 2018.

State Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture,  
Regional Development and Environment of the Republic of Moldova  
NPD CC Chair

**Ms. Valentina TAPIS**

Vice Chair of the Coordination Committee

**Ms. Serafima TRONZA**

The minutes were drafted by Ms. Svetlana Stirbu  
Local representative of the Result 1 of the EUWI+ Project in Moldova,

The minutes contain 8 pages, including the following annexes:

- *Agenda (3 pages).*
- *List of participants (6 pages).*