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EU4Environment

Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Republic of Moldova, Ukraine

EU4ENVIRONMENT VIRTUAL COUNTRY CONSULTATIONS

BELARUS

Thursday, 25 June 2020

Start: 16h Brussels/Paris time - 17h Minsk time

End: 17h30 Brussels/Paris time - 18h30 Minsk time

Draft Summary Record

Action implemented by:



Draft summary record

Item 1. Welcome by the Chair of the meeting

Mr. Michael Rupp, Team Leader, opened the meeting and welcomed the participants on behalf of the European Commission. He stressed the gravity of the COVID-19 pandemic and emphasised the European Union's comprehensive support to the Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries to address the COVID-19 challenges, including an expeditious contract concluded with the World Health Organization to deliver medical supplies. The first delivery to Belarus took place on 22 June 2020.

Mr. Rupp pointed out that the reduction of economic activities during the pandemic led to some improvements of the environment, but stressed that these changes are temporary and emphasized that the COVID-19 crisis should not hide another crisis related to long-term degradation of environment and living conditions on our planet. He called for continuous work on making the improvement of environment sustainable.

Mr. Rupp pointed out the importance of the EU4Environment consultations with Belarus that are organised virtually and welcomed the opportunity to provide an update on the EU4Environment activities carried out by the Implementing Partners and to discuss the ways to advance on the Programme implementation during these unprecedented times.

Item 2. Update on in-country situation

- Ms. Larissa Lukina, Head of International Relations Department in the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection, expressed her appreciation for the opportunity to participate in this digital-format consultation, which is becoming more and more common. She mentioned that due to the ongoing ministry-level restructuring process, the Ministry of Economy could not be represented at the meeting. Mr. Alexander Korbut, Deputy Minister of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection, unfortunately could not join the meeting because of an urgent mission.
- Ms. Lukina also highlighted that:
 - Belarus chose a different way of going through the global pandemic, which included the normal operations of the economy and keeping the borders open;
 - Belarus is grateful for the EU support and has been following closely the situation in the European Union Member States;
 - Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection has continued working actively on implementing all programmes and strategies related to environment, including the key documents, and using online format (which is also less costly);
 - Belarus advanced on the development of an economic development strategy for the next five-year period, in cooperation with several Ministries, business community and general public;
 - Belarus' priority is to sustain the improvements of the environment and to develop programmes/plans to address the remaining challenges. The country is ready to continue cooperation despite some implementation challenges.

Decisions and follow up:

The participants:

- Took note of the updates by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection on the situation in Belarus in the light of the COVID-19 crisis;
- Took note that a new National Focal Point will need to be identified when the restructuring of the Ministry of Economy is completed and new officials are appointed;
- Agreed to continue ensuing timely communication on the EU4Environment implementation and coordination on its activities.

Item 3. Update on past and on-going EU4Environment activities and plans for the rest of the year

- The Implementing Partners provided updates on the implementation of activities under the Belarus Work Plan:
 - Result 1 (UNEP, UNECE) – see Slide 2-3;
 - Result 2 (UNEP, UNIDO) – see Slides 4-5;
 - Result 3 and 5.3 (OECD) – see Slides 6-7.

During the discussion, the participants noted:

- Re-confirmation of interest from Belarus in all activities listed in the work plan and information that under Result 1 the selected entity for Green Economy trainings (output 1.4) is ready to collaborate with UNEP;
- Preparation by Belarus of a new strategy (plan) on Green Economy and call for support in this regard. The draft is currently in its initial stage and may be shared with the Partners in a month's time, after inputs from the Ministry of Economy are incorporated. The promotion of inter-ministerial dialogue (output 1.1) may also complement this process (to be further discussed);
- Good progress on UNIDO-led activities, including: 1) an updated RECP course for the national experts, which includes examples from the previous projects, available also in Russian; 2) progress in work with two free economic zones (ex-Mogilev free economic zone, including preparation of an agreement with the municipal administration and a questionnaire for business).
- Increasing interest by Belarus in trainings on topics such as green budget and green investments and ongoing reflections to consider these topics as priority. In this regard, the OECD would like to follow up to discuss the details;
- Update on the Result 4 (led by World Bank), which was put on hold due to wider framework agreement negotiations, which are now expected to be finalized shortly;

Decisions and follow up:

The Participants agreed to:

- Continue to implement the activities as envisaged in the Work Plan and in line with the agreed timeline, using alternative modes of operation (virtual communications/meetings and engaging local consultants);
- Follow up on bilateral basis on individual activities (ex. OECD– on green budget and green investments);
- Receive updates from the EC on the status of the EC/World Bank contract (Result 4).

Item 4. Preparation for the EU4Environment Regional Assembly meeting

The participants took note of:

- Update by the OECD on coordination of activities, including a round of the virtual consultations with the six EaP countries in May and June 2020 (Belarus is 5th consultation of this type), and proposed options to hold the next Regional Assembly, as in Slide 9 of the Presentation;
- Discussions to move forward on activities and maintain the date of the Regional Assembly on 22 September 2020 (as one day/two hours meeting) in a virtual form, and consider in-person meeting for November-December 2020;
- Readiness of Belarus to take part in a virtual Regional Assembly;
- Proposal to consider the virtual Regional Assembly as a milestone to adjust the work plans, if necessary;
- Belarus' suggestion to request virtual consultations with each Partners separately on an as needed basis on particular activities.

Decisions and follow up:

The participants agreed to:

- Keep the date of the second Regional Assembly meeting on 22 September 2020 in a virtual format; and consider organising the in-person meeting in November-December 2020, subject to lifting of the travel restrictions.

Item 5. Communication (Result 5.2) and coordination with other projects

The participants took note of:

- Update by the OECD on communication activities, as shown on Slide 10 of the Presentation;
- Invitation to subscribe to the Newsletter and share with the colleagues.

Decisions and follow up:

The Participants agreed to:

- Continue implementing the communication activities, as envisaged in the Work Plan;
- Continue paying particular attention to compliance with the EU's visibility requirements;
- Promote the wide subscription to the EU4Environment Newsletter.

Item 6. Progress on administrative issues (Result 5.1)

The participants took note of:

- Update by the OECD on the National Focal Points (NFPs), Action Registration, National Action Coordinator (NAC) and the National Implementing Committee (NIC), including:
 - **NFPs:** following the promotion of the current NFP at the Ministry of Economy, Deputy Minister Dzmitry Matusевич, OECD and the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection will work on the appointment of a new NFP from that Ministry;
 - **Registration:** Information by OECD that the registration package was submitted in December 2019 and an invitation to provide guidance on the next steps by Belarus;
 - **NAC:** Gratitude expressed by the Partners to Prof. Dorozka, UNIDO Focal Point and National Action Coordinator (currently, on a contract with UNIDO), for his support and inquire for advice from Belarus on how to formalize and make sure that a selected candidate fulfils officially this job, if the Programme is not registered as a whole;
 - **NIC:** a request for advice from Belarus on a possible existing structure (which already coordinates Green Economy dialogue) to act as NIC (also in relation to Result 1).
- Reactions from Belarus:
 - **NFPs:** Importance of having the Ministry of Economy on board for the EU4Environment implementation due to a number of crosscutting issues and readiness to provide support and facilitate contacts with the Ministry of Economy to appoint a new NFP after a new Deputy Minister is appointed;
 - **Registration:** Indication that the project registration is dependent on a transfer of funds to the country. Since it is not the case for EU4Environment (each Partner manages own budget), three alternative options were proposed:
 - registration of individual events (takes a few months, simple documents package required);
 - use of a local service providers to help in organising individual events;
 - combination of these two options - register events and use a service provider (Ministry of NR is ready to support a process with preparation of documents).
 - **NAC and experts:** experts/individual contracts are allowed and their reports and analysis will be recognized by the Government. There was a request to coordinate the selection of experts with the Ministry. Belarus welcomed Prof. Dorozka as NAC, pointing out that the Ministry has already worked with him;
 - **NIC:** several inter-ministerial commissions currently exist, including on green economy; the Ministry will inquire with colleagues if they are ready to take over this additional task.

Decisions and follow up:

The participants agreed to:

- Follow up on the new NFP appointment in the Ministry of Economy (for the Ministry of NR to inquire a new NFP nomination after a new Deputy Minister is appointed and for OECD to prepare the official letter in this regard if necessary);
- Not to register the EU4Environment Programme as a whole, but rather proceed with registration of the individual events or contracting local service providers to help in organising individual events;
- Take note on the current temporary NAC arrangements and for OECD to launch process on a longer term arrangements;
- Work with the Ministry of NR to explore opportunities to use the existing inter-ministerial commission on green economy to serve as NIC and support the green economy dialogue under Result 1 (Output 1.1).

Item 7. Other issues and closure

The participants:

- Noted that the work plan for 2020 is ambitious and was prepared based on the assumption of the Programme registration in its entity but express their confidence to find a "modus operandi" convenient for all parties and noted willingness of the Ministry of NR to provide support in preparation of the documents package for individual registrations;

- Agreed to have a follow up discussion with UNIDO to benefit from their experience with registration of individual events and consider the next Regional Assembly as a milestone to assess possible impact on the work plan timeline;
- Mr. Michael Rupp, EC/DG NEAR briefly summarised the key outcomes of the meeting (challenging environment, valued contribution of the EU4Environment Programme, agreement on running the virtual RA meeting, followed by a physical meeting towards end 2020; agreement and follow up, as described above on NFP/registration/NAC/NIC arrangements) and thanked the participants for the discussion and closed the meeting.

Decisions and follow up:

- OECD will prepare and circulate a draft Summary record for comments.

Agenda

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|---------------------------|---|---|
| 16:00-16:05
(5 min) | 1 | Welcome by the Chair of the meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Mr. Michael Rupp, EC/DG NEAR |
| 16:05 - 16:15
(10 min) | 2 | Update on in-country situation <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Short presentations on the current situation by the Country representatives, the post COVID-19 recovery plans and their potential impacts on greening the economy<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection |
| 16:15 - 16:55
(40 min) | 3 | Update on past and on-going EU4Environment activities and plans for the rest of the year <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Presentations by Implementing Partners (see a PPT presentation)<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Result 1 (UNEP and UNECE)● Result 2 (UNIDO)● Result 3 and 5.3 (OECD)○ Reactions from the country representatives after each result: feasibility of using alternative modes of operation (ex. virtual meetings, web-based trainings, use of local consultants), and maintaining/postponing/advancing activities. More in-depth discussions could be carried out on a bilateral basis after the consultation. |
| 16:55 - 17:05
(10 min) | 4 | Preparation for the EU4Environment Regional Assembly meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Presentation of the proposed options by OECD (see a PPT presentation)<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Maintaining the planned date for the Regional Assembly in the week of 21 September 2020 (suggested 22-23 September) as a virtual meeting by Zoom (e.g. 3 hour morning sessions over two days)● an in-person meeting after travel restrictions are lifted, possibly November-December in Kyiv, Ukraine○ Reactions from the country |
| 17:05 - 17:15
(10 min) | 5 | Communication (Result 5.2) and coordination with other projects <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Presentation by OECD (see a PPT presentation)○ Reactions from the country |
| 17:15 - 17:25
(10 min) | 6 | Progress on administrative issues (Result 5.1) <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Presentation by OECD on the Action Registration, National Action Coordinator and the National Implementing Committee○ Reactions from the country |
| 17:25 - 17:30
(5 min) | 7 | Other issues and closure <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Mr. Michael Rupp, EC/DG NEAR |

List of participants

Government representatives		
Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection	Ms. Larissa LUKINA Head of International Relations Department	
National Action Coordinator and Partners' focal points		
UNIDO's Senior National Advisor and EU4Environment National Action Coordinator	Prof. Siarhei DAROZHKA Director of RECP Center, Institute of Business Management, Belarus State University	
European Commission and EU Delegation		
EC/DG NEAR	Mr. Michael RUPP Team Leader Connectivity	
	Ms. Angela BULARGA International Aid / Cooperation Officer	
EU Delegation in Belarus	Mr Tomas STRAVINSKAS Attaché Project Manager/Cooperation Section	
Implementing Partners		
UNEP	Ms. Rie TSUTSUMI Project Coordinator	
	Mr. Alex LESHCHYNSKY Technical Officer – Eco-innovation	
	Ms. Lesya NIKOLAYEVA Technical Officer	
	Ms. Irina DAVIS Project assistant	
UNECE	Mr. Leonid KALASHNYK Project Coordinator	
	Ms. Elena KASHINA Programme Management Assistant	
UNIDO	Ms. Carolina GONZALEZ MUELLER Project Manager	
	Ms. Tatiana CHERNYAVSKAYA Project Coordinator	
OECD	Mr. Krzysztof MICHALAK Senior Action Coordinator	
	Ms. Irina BELKAHIA Assistant Action Coordinator	
	Ms. Maria DUBOIS Communications officer	
	Mr. Jonathan WRIGHT Project Assistant	

	Ms. Nelly PETKOVA Policy Analyst	
	Mr. David SIMEK Policy Analyst	
	Mr. Guy HALPERN Policy Analyst	
	Ms. Isabella NEUWEG Policy Analyst	
World Bank	Madhavi M. PILLAI Senior Natural Resources Specialist	
Interpreters		
Interpreter	Ms. Natalia CIUMACENCO	