



Action funded by
the European Union

EU4Environment

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

EU4ENVIRONMENT VIRTUAL COUNTRY CONSULTATIONS

GEORGIA

Friday, 29 May 2020

Start: 10h Brussels/Paris time - 12h Tbilisi time
End: 11h30 Brussels/Paris time - 13h30 Tbilisi time

Summary Record

Action implemented by:



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 (EC). Mr. Rupp 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 personal protective equipment, diagnostic tests, and other necessary equipment and technical support to the EaP countries, including Georgia.

Mr. Rupp emphasised that green economic development and the protection of the environment remain important on the EU agenda, as emphasised in the recent communication on the EaP Strategy adopted on 18 March 2020. He stressed that economic slow-down should not undermine efforts to protect the environment and called for strengthening work on environment and climate issues in the post-pandemic recovery, turning new challenges into opportunities. He informed the participants about a possible virtual first ever EaP Summit or Leaders' Conference, planned around the initially announced date of 18 June 2020.

He pointed out the importance of these consultations on EU4Environment with Georgia in the challenging times of the COVID-19 pandemic and welcomed this opportunity to provide an update on the EU4Environment activities and better align work with the country priorities.

Item 2. Update on in-country situation

The participants took note of:

- Ms. Ekaterine Mikabadze, Deputy Minister of Economy and Sustainable Development, intervention in which she emphasised that:
 - The economic crisis and shocks resulting from COVID-19 pandemic are unprecedented, associated with health emergency and containments measures. Now the countries are progressively opening their economies after the lockdown, but economic recession is inevitable; as illustrated by latest projections of global economic decline by about 3% in 2020;
 - Georgia was not an exception; its positive economic trajectory of the last year (1.5% of growth) was interrupted, with latest estimation of 16.6% economic decline in April 2020 and anticipated 4% decline for the whole 2020;
 - Georgia timely response measures helped to mitigate impact on citizens health, limit pressure on the health system and open the economy much faster than other countries;
 - Anti-crisis measures in Georgia focus on minimizing economic impact on business and support the most vulnerable groups (through various fiscal, monetary, financial, social and business-support measures, including the deferring property income taxes, payments to the banks by enterprises (for 3 months extended to other 3 months), and targeted social subsidies for people who may have lost their jobs);
 - The crisis also showed a need to diversity economy which is followed by a number of support programmes is in place, with more targeted and sector-oriented actions, such as state programme for SMEs "Produce in Georgia" that was redesigned to ease pressure on business sector, with an increased budget of 350 mln lari for subsidies, grants, credit guarantee scheme and other support to regions, the capital city, micro financial institutions and commercial banks or a special programme (with 300 mln lari) designed to support agriculture (the biggest employer in the country) that supported domestic production and decreased level of external dependency;
 - "Green" projects receive special support, including energy efficiency package adopted by the Parliament and signed by the President;
 - Expressed hope and need to provide coordinated response to the challenges brought by COVID-19, and join forces to overcome the crisis; importance of the EU4Environment support in the recovery process.
- Ms. Nino Tandilashvili, Deputy Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture intervention in which she:
 - Expresses a concern that recovery from this dramatic economic lockdown globally in Georgia will be more difficult than experienced in the previous crises;
 - Highlighted serious problems related to social aspects and need to support the most vulnerable groups;
 - Underlined importance of the agricultural sector for food security as the Government priority and presented examples of concrete measures to support agriculture (such as allocating financial support for the sector; subsidizing prices; modified conditions for farmers eligible to apply for this programme and provisions of grants and state insurance);
 - Indicated some positive, from environment perspective, effects of the confinement, such as cleaner air, water, lower carbon emissions (6% reduction of emission by end of 2020); and expressed hope to keep this clean environment when economy re-starts by shifting policies to more sustainable production and consumption;

- Underlined that the environmental reforms remain a priority for the Government, and will continue as planned reinforced by post-pandemic responses.

Decisions and follow up:

The participants:

- Took note of the on-going responses to COVID-19 crisis in Georgia and EU support to the partner countries;
- Agreed to review the EU4Environment activities to better support the current country agenda and post-COVID-19 recovery measures.

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

The participants:

- Took note of updates on the implementation of activities under the Georgia Work Plan by the Implementing Partners on:
 - 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.
- Took note of the importance and timely work on green growth indicators as part of the post-Covid-19 recovery programmes.
- Took note of the intervention from the EC that a contract between the EC and the World Bank under EU4Environment is temporary on hold due to on-going negotiations of a wider EC-WB framework agreement, and related legal issues.

Decisions and follow up:

The Participants agreed:

- To continue to implement the activities as envisaged in the Work Plan, using alternative modes of operation (virtual communications/meetings and engaging local consultants);
- That no major revisions of the work plan is needed at this stage, noting that minor adjustments (such as timeframes) may take place as the situation evolves;
- To follow up on bilateral basis on individual activities, as needed, after the meeting;
- To receive updates from the EC on the progress with the World Bank contract under EU4Environment.

Item 4. Preparation for the EU4Environment Regional Assembly meeting

The participants took note of:

- Update by the OECD on coordination activities, and proposed options for holding the second Regional Assembly as shown in Slide 9 of the Presentation;
- Highly uncertain situation for making a decision to plan the Regional Assembly meeting in one or another form;
- Preference from Georgia for having in-person Regional Assembly meeting, if the situation allows, but also readiness to have a virtual meeting as an alternative option;
- Proposal to hold the virtual meeting in September (as preparatory one) and target in-person meeting towards the end of the year (possibly in December 2020, in Kyiv, subject to confirmation);
- General agreement to monitor closely and react to any new developments, including a possible ease on travel policy, which can be expected during or towards end of the summer.

Decisions and follow up:

The participants agreed to:

- Suggest keeping the dates of the second Regional Assembly meeting as planned on 22-23 September 2020 as a virtual meeting (preparatory one); and consider organising the in-person meeting in November-December 2020, subject to lifting of the travel restrictions;
- Monitor closely any new developments, in particular travel policy.

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;
- Close cooperation of EU4Environment with other programmes, including “EU4” family;
- The intervention by the EU Delegation in Georgia about the existing communication programme in Georgia and a call for its use for communication purposes;
- Suggestion to increase visibility of the EU4Environment Newsletter and ongoing work under the EU4Environment through the EU Delegation channels (Facebook, re-tweeting).

Decisions and follow up:

The Participants agreed to:

- Continue implementing the communication activities, as envisaged in the Work Plan;
- Continue paying particular attention to comply with the EU's visibility requirements and increase visibility through the EU Delegation channels (Facebook, tweets);
- Continue close co-operation with other EU-funded projects;
- Receive contact details of a person responsible at the EU Delegation for the overarching communication programme and that Partners explore using this channel to upgrade the EU4Environment visibility.

Item 6. Progress on administrative issues (Result 5.1)

The participants took note of:

- Update by the OECD on the Action Registration, National Action Coordinator (NAC) and the National Implementing Committee (NIC);
- Information by the OECD on less restrictive requirements for the Programme registration in Georgia, compared to some other countries, and that the registration procedure is now fully completed in Georgia;
- Information by the OECD about the NAC in Georgia, including:
 - Appreciation for Mr. Malkhaz Adeishvili's work and support as the NAC on a short-term contract;
 - Preparation of a long-term arrangements, in compliance with the internal OECD procurement requirements (“market consultation”), which included the job announcement published on the OECD and EUD web sites (with closure date of 5th of June 2020) and plans to finalize the procedure over the next 3 weeks.
- Information by the OECD about the provisions in the Description of the Action for establishing National Implementing Committees (NIC) in all EaP countries to co-ordinate the EU4Environment work, with a preference of using an existing structure rather creating a new one
- Information from Georgia about not having currently working arrangements for a NIC, good and proactive support from the Ministries and NAC and a proposal from the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development to take a lead in additional discussion on clarifying the purpose, functions and the actual need of creating such Committee to avoid any potential unnecessary administrative burdens;
- Reminder from UNEP about Activity 1.1.3: Facilitation of National Policy Dialogues on Green Economy, which was requested by Georgia, and proposal to continue discussion with Georgia and the OECD as follow-up of the meeting.

Decisions and follow up:

The participants agreed to:

- Update the Ministries and the Partners by the OECD upon the full completion of the NAC selection procedure;
- Continue discussion with OECD and UNEP on the possible NIC arrangements (actual need, purpose, functions) and Activity 1.1.3: Facilitation of National Policy Dialogues on Green Economy. UNEP and OECD will follow up soon with Georgia on these questions.

Item 7. Other issues and closure

- Ms. Ekaterine Mikabadze, Deputy Minister of Economy and Sustainable Development and Mr. Nino Tandilashvili, Deputy Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, thanked the participants;
- Mr. Michael Rupp, European Commission, 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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| 10:00-10:05
(5 min) | 1 | Welcome by the Chair of the meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Mr. Michael Rupp, EC/DG NEAR |
| 10:05 - 10:15
(10 min) | 2 | Update on in-country situation <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Short presentations on the current situation by the National Focal Points (NFPs), the post COVID-19 recovery plans and their potential impacts on greening the economy<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Ms. Ekaterine Mikabadze, Deputy Minister of Economy and Sustainable Development● Mr. Nino Tandilashvili, Deputy Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture |
| 10:15 - 10:55
(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 NFPs 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. |
| 10:55 - 11:05
(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 |
| 11:05 - 11:15
(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 |
| 11:15 - 11:25
(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 |
| 11:25 - 11:30
(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 Environmental Protection and Agriculture	Ms. Nino TANDILASHVILI Deputy Minister EU4Environment National Focal Point	
	Ms. Nato ORMOTSADZE Second Category Senior Specialist, Sustainable Development Division, Department of Environment and Climate Change Technical Focal Point	
Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development	Ms. Ekaterine MIKABADZE Deputy Minister EU4Environment National Focal Point	
	Mr Davit ADVADZE Acting Head, Sustainable Development Department Technical Focal Point	
National Action Coordinator and Partners' focal points		
EU4Environment National Action Coordinator	Mr. Malkhaz ADEISHVILI	
European Commission and EU Delegation		
EC/DG NEAR	Mr. Michael RUPP Team Leader Connectivity	
	Ms. Angela BULARGA International Aid / Cooperation Officer	
	Ms. Lilian TODTER Desk Officer – Georgia	
EC/DG ENV	Madalina IVANICA Policy Officer	
EC/DG CLIMA	Ms. Justyna GLODOWSKA-WERNERT Policy Officer	
Delegation of the European Union to Georgia	Mr. Alexandre DARRAS Attaché, Team Leader Connectivity, Energy, Environment & Climate change	
Implementing Partners		
UNEP	Ms. Rie TSUTSUMI Project Coordinator	
	Mr. Alex LESHCHYNSKYY 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	
World Bank	Ms. Darejan KAPANADZE	