



2nd Regional Steering Committee Meeting
Environmental Protection of International River Basins Project

Tbilisi, Georgia
18-19 September, 2013

Meeting Report

Venue: Hotel Sheraton Metechi Palace
20 Telavi Str., Tbilisi, 0103 Georgia

1. Appointment of Chairperson and approval of draft meeting agenda

Mr Nicola Di Pietrantonio, EU Programme Manager, and Ms Nino Tskhadadze, Chief specialist of Environmental Policy and International Relations Department of the , Ministry of Environment Protection, Republic of Georgia, were proposed and approved joint chairpersons for the meeting. Mariam Makarova, Head of Water Management Division, Ministry of Environment Protection, Republic of Georgia co-chaired the second day of the meeting replacing Ms Tskhadadze.

The draft agenda for the meeting, annex 1 of this report, was approved with no changes.

Participants:

RSC members

- **Mr Nicola Di Pietrantonio**, Programme Manager, European Commission
- **Ms Mariam Makarova**, Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection of Georgia, Head of Water Resources Management Service
- **Mr Volodya Narimanyan**, Head of Water Resources Management Agency, Ministry of Nature Protection of Armenia
- **Mr Hamlet Melkonyan**, Deputy Head of the State Hydro-meteorological Monitoring Service, Ministry of Emergency Situations of Armenia
- **Ms Matanat Avazova**, National Environmental Monitoring Department, Deputy Head of Department, Azerbaijan
- **Mr Shafiq Babayev**, Ministry of Emergency Situations of Republic of Azerbaijan, Head of the Monitoring, Metrology and Hydro Technical Structures Department
- **Ms Larisa Sinila**, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of Belarus
- **Ms Diana Celac**, Water Resources Division, Ministry of Environment of Moldova
- **Ms Viktoriya Voranova**, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of Moldova
- **Mr Lyubomyr Goncharuk**, Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources of Ukraine, Director of International CEI Department

EU Delegation to Georgia

- **Mr Stephen Stork**, Deputy Head of Operations Section
- **Ms Muriel Lambert De Rouvroit**, Project Manager

EU Delegation to Azerbaijan

- **Mr Parviz Yusifov** – Project Officer

2. Summary of Discussion

Day 1: 18th September 2013

Session 1: Opening and official welcome

The meeting was opened by Mr Nicola Di Pietrantonio who introduced the project and invited the Georgian Government representative, Ms Nino Tskhadadze, Chief specialist of Environmental Policy and International Relations Department of the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection, who is also Representative to the Black Sea Commission from Georgia, to give the official welcome.

Ms Nino Tskhadadze welcomed everyone and thanked the European Union for the project to assist participating countries to improve their water resource management, converge towards the principles of Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM) and implement the Water Framework Directive through development of transboundary River Basin Management Plans. She hoped that this collaborative work would help the countries to reach a shared understanding of the management of the Black Sea and wider basin ecosystem and improvement of water quality in the region. Georgia has expressed its commitment to IWRM and the project's objectives that are fully aligned with the national environmental management plan, a key national strategic document for the next five years.

Mr Stefan Stork from the EU Delegation in Georgia welcomed Mr Stork reminded everyone of the importance of water and that fact that it flows across political and administrative borders and that the beneficiaries share these water resources both GW and SW The WFD is the most important legislation covering the protection of Water and the Environment in the EU member states and that the river basin planning is considered the basis of sound water resource management. He was pleased to see that Eastern European neighbourhood countries were moving towards implementation of measures to improve water quality and to achieve good water quality status for the benefit of all the region's citizens.

Mr Ivan Davidov, Human Dynamics Project Director, welcomed everyone and asked that everyone to take an active role in the next two days in discussing the direction and focus of the project. Mr Davidov introduced the full project team and wished everyone a fruitful meeting.

The countries representatives introduced themselves and addressed the meeting in alphabetical order, starting with Armenia.

Mr Vladimir Narimanyan, Head of Water Resources Management Agency, Ministry of Nature Protection of Armenia, welcomes the project and hoped that it would build on the substantial work and reforms that have been undertaken in the water sector in the last ten years.

Ms Matant Avazova, Deputy Head of National Environmental Monitoring Department, Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of Republic of Azerbaijan, said the countries had a lot of expectations of the project, in particular, assistance in bringing the national laboratories up to international standards. For most of the countries ecological monitoring is a new concept and they are keen to learn more from the technical team.

Ms Viktoryia Voranova, Consultant to Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of Republic of Belarus, said that the project is important in helping Belarus to approximate its legislation with the EU aquis and introduce the principles of River Basin Management. Belarus has recently introduced a set of new norms in a revised Water Code and is interested to hear about best practices and experiences in EU countries.

Georgia is particularly interested in improving the water quality of the rivers flowing into the Black Sea basin. Vakhtang Tsuladze, Head of the Directorate of Environment and Natural Resources of the Autonomous Republic of Adjara said that the project will allow Adjara to determine the status of the Chorokhi-Adjaristskali River and its impact on the Black Sea coastal region.



Ms Diana Celac, Senior Advisor to Ministry of Environment, said Moldova is supporting all the tasks and activities within the framework of the project and confirmed its importance to the country. A new Water Law was adopted in 2011 which shall enter into force in October 2013 which includes regulations for elaboration of River Basin plans. The River Prut is a transboundary river and it is hoped that the project will assist in development of a basin plan which is compliant with the WFD and meets the country's obligations under the ICPDR.

Mr Lubomyr Ghoncharuk, Advisor to the Minister of Environment and Natural Resources of Ukraine, sent the meeting the warm regards of the Minister of Ukraine. Mr Ghoncharuk expressed the importance of the project to the Ukraine and noted the large progress made in the last 18 months. The signing in November 2013 in Vilnius of the association agreement between Ukraine and the EU will be an important incentive to further approximation of Ukraine's legislation to EU norms. It is hoped that this project will help Ukraine to implement some of the tasks and achieve some of the objectives under the National Strategy for Water Management (2011-2021).

Following addresses by the country representatives, all the meeting participants introduced themselves, including Mr Parviz Yusifov, Programme Manager EU Delegation to Azerbaijan and Mr Vasiliy Kostiusyn, UNDP EMBLAS project, sister project to EPIRB.

Tim Turner, Team Leader outlined the meeting objectives which were to:

- Report project delivery during the last twelve month implementation period
- Report on project planning for the next six months and approve the second progress report
- Review planning for the remaining project life for the two main tasks: Monitoring and RBMP
- Review challenges in project implementation and management and agree ways forward

Session 2: Overall Project Progress and management issues

All the Steering Committee meeting presentations are summarised in the main text of this report and are reproduced in full in annex 3.

Project outline, objectives and results and project management issues – Timothy Turner, Team Leader, and Zurab Jincharadze, Deputy Team Leader.

In general the project was reported to be on programme and on budget. Development of the SW and GW monitoring programmes is progressing well, with extensive Joint Field Surveys taking place in the summer; however better coordination of the monitoring elements is required. The water body delineation and typology reports have been delayed due to late delivery of GIS mapping and this has impacted upon the implementation of the RBMPs. The RBMPs are behind schedule and it was reported that implementation will need to be accelerated over the next six months. The project has established National Coordination Councils and these will meet every six months for the remainder of the project. The first meetings have already taken place in Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan and meetings are planned in the other countries in October and November 2013. The project reports on a monthly basis to the countries regarding its activities and progress. The following changes have been made to the project team:

- Timothy Turner replaced Andrei Demydenko as Team Leader as of June 20th 2013
- Svetoslav Cheshmedjiev replaced Mike Jackman as Key Expert 3 as of June 1st 2013
- Michael Jackman remains as a non KE chemist to address activities 1.5/1.6

Nicola Di Pietrantonio thanked Mr Turner and Mr Jincharadze for their presentations. He recognised that this

was a demanding and complex project and it was important that the implementation steps were followed and there was country support at each step. Mr Parviz Yusifov asked what “Joint” meant in reference to the Joint Field Surveys. Mr Di Pietrantonio explained that it referred to the mixed country teams which should be undertaking the surveys. It was noted that the JFS during the summer had been undertaken by single country teams and that this should be rectified in the next round of JFS to be executed in summer 2014.

Ana Tsvetkova, Co-Ordinator from Mama-86, a Ukrainian NGO, asked how the project will assist the countries to comply with the eleven component Directives under the WFD as stated by Mr Turner. In reply Mr Turner stated that WFD is an umbrella Directive and if the countries are to comply with the requirements of the WFD they must also comply with the standards and monitoring requirements of the component Directives which include both water and environmental legislation. Mr Di Pietrantonio said that the project was designed to assist the countries to comply with the WFD, especially in view of the signature of the Association Agreements by some of the Eastern Partnership countries at the Vilnius Summit in November 2013.

Presentation by UNDP project, Improving Environmental Monitoring in the Black Sea (EMBLAS), Vasilii Kostiusyn, Project Manager

The project was introduced by Mr Di Pietrantonio as the sister project to EPIRB: as EPIRB is supporting countries in approximating their legislation on freshwaters to the WFD, EMBLAS is assisting countries in the same type of process in the marine environmental monitoring field by promoting approximation with the principles of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD). Implemented by UNDP and co-funded by UNDP and EU, he explained the linkage between EPIRB and the EMBLAS project. It is important that the EPIRB and EMBLAS work together particularly in the transitional waters one mile from the coastline where the Marine Directive takes effect. There has been a small delay in the commencement of EMBLAS (January 2013) but the project is now established and activities are being implemented.

Vasilii Kostiusyn outlined the objectives and activities of the project.

It was suggested that the two projects begin to share information and knowledge and think about how to design monitoring programme in the transition waters. Tim Turner said that this might be approached through the pilot RBMP being developed on the Black Sea coast of Georgia. It was agreed that the two project managers should meet to discuss cooperation arrangements in the near future.

Session 3: Presentations of project activities and plans for the next planning period: RESULT 1 Development of WFD Compliant monitoring programmes

Result 1: Increased capacity of national authorities for hydrobiological, chemical and hydromorphological monitoring of water quality

Activity 1.2 Support to UNECE and Danube Conventions, Birgit Vogel Legislation and Institutional NKE

Ms Vogel reported in detail on the results of the workshop held in Minsk in April 2013 at which priority support measures for the two Conventions were identified. It was proposed that the project assist the Danube countries meet their obligations to contribute to the Danube Basin Analysis 2013 and Danube River Basin Management Plan 2015 and support of the UNECE Convention develop and deliver training on River Basin Organisations. This proposal was approved by the meeting. It is now understood that UNECE have developed and are funding comprehensive RBO training and that EPIRB project support is not needed. Other support options are now being investigated.

There were a number of comments and questions from the meeting.

The representative from Moldova expressed her country’s interest in organising a tripartite meeting between the three River Prut countries, Moldova, Romania and Ukraine and asked if such a meeting could be supported by the project under the stewardship of the ICPDR. This proposal was discussed at a meeting in



Kishinev but no action had been taken. Ms Birgit Vogel reported that the project had been in touch with ICPDR about this possibility and the Secretariat had said that they are willing to host such a meeting in Vienna.

The meeting facilitator proposed that each activity be approved at the end of each presentation rather than wait until the end of the day when the information is less fresh in the mind. This was agreed.

Activity 1.3/1.4 Development of WFD compliant monitoring programmes. Biological monitoring systems, presentation by KE 3 Svetoslav Cheshmedjiev

The key expert gave a thorough and detailed description of the Rapid Biological Assessment (RBA) system trialled during the JFS. Based on sampling of macro invertebrates the method can be used in the field without the need for laboratory sample analysis. The JFS focused on the sampling of reference conditions in the five pilot basins and Mr Cheshmedjiev explained how the data gathered may be used to develop biological classification systems for surface water. The limitations of the RBA system were outlined and the need to develop monitoring programmes for the other biological components including phytoplankton, macrophytes and fish was emphasised.

The presentation generated a large number of technical questions. It was agreed that the countries needed more training in biological monitoring and classification systems. The KE was questioned about the practicality of monitoring fish species as part of a biological monitoring programme. It was agreed that the details of such a programme, particularly for the Upper Dnieper, had not been yet worked out and much work had still to be done in the development of possible biological monitoring programmes.

Arkadii Sakevych from the Dnipro River Basin Authority in Ukraine said his organisation was happy with the way the project was progressing and had particular interest in biological monitoring. He said however that the project should provide more training in the topic. It was agreed further training will be undertaken.

Tim Turner asked whether we have enough historical data with the data collected during the JFS to establish classification systems in the sub-basins. Svetoslav Cheshmedjiev said that this was an important question which he couldn't commit himself to at present; however the focus on reference conditions in the JFS was the best way to approach the problem.

The meeting was informed that these and other technical matters would be discussed at a monitoring and classification workshop to be held in Chisinau, Moldova in November and the proposals for the way forward would be presented in a specific monitoring and classification systems report to be prepared in spring 2014.

Activity 1.3/1.4 Development of WFD compliant monitoring programmes. Hydromorphological monitoring, presentation by Tatjana Koltsova, KE4.

. The presentation focused on different types of hydro-morphological monitoring and complementarity with biological monitoring in assessing the ecological status of surface water bodies. The hydromorphological (HM) parameters to be measured under WFD were discussed, as well as the typical pressures and sampling frequency.

Arkadii Sakevych from Ukraine asked whether a more detailed study of the hydromorphological and flooding problems of the Kiev water reservoir could be undertaken under the project as it is the principal water supply reservoir to the city and there have been many changes are taking place in its sedimentation and hydrological regime. It was agreed that this was an important and large study and the team leader said he

would investigate how it could be supported by the project, perhaps as a pilot study.

Activity 1.3/1.4 Development of WFD compliant monitoring programmes. Chemical Monitoring Development, presentation by Paul Buijs, NKE

The meeting welcomed the proposals to adopt a chemical classification system in the short-term to support the River Basin Management Planning, but there were some technical disagreements within the project team as to the proposed system to be adopted. The OECD system developed in Moldova was not thought to be suitable in all countries, but was welcomed in Moldova and Azerbaijan, albeit with adjustments. Tim Turner said that this issue would need to be discussed further. All countries agreed that in the short-term any classification system used had to comply with national legislation.

The project manager said that a lot of training would be required in the development of the SW monitoring programme and classification system and the construction of an integrated ecological monitoring programme. He informed the meeting of a planned workshop to be held in November to discuss the technical issues.

Activity 1.3/1.4 Development of WFD compliant monitoring programmes. Ground water monitoring, presentation by Bernardas Paukstys, KE5

The Key Expert described the support the project had provided and task ahead the meeting was appreciative of the practical work and training which had been undertaken by the key expert and recognised the limitations of the assistance given the low level of GW monitoring being undertaken in most of the countries. There were no specific questions.

Activity 1.5/1.6 Laboratory Analytical Quality Control and capacity building training. Presentation by Michael Jackman, NKE laboratory chemist

Mr Michael Jackman described in great detail the support and training provided to the beneficiary laboratories during his first two missions to Eastern Europe and the Caucasus in the last twelve months. There was a general appreciation of the work undertaken, especially with regard to the quality assurance training. There were no specific questions.

The Chairperson summarised the project presentations of task 1 and asked the meeting to approve activities undertaken in the past six months and plans for the next six months, as described in the second progress report. He noted that there was on-going technical discussion regarding development of the monitoring programmes and urged the project team to resolve any disagreements as soon as possible. Tim Turner noted the need to create linkages with the EMBLAS project, open dialogue with UNECE and ICPDR regarding project support and develop a training programme for monitoring activities. The meeting approved the task 1 activities and plans.

Day 2: 19th September 2013

Session 4: Presentations of project activities and plans for the next six months: Result 2 River Basin Management Planning (RBMP)

Result 2: River Basin Management Planning (RBMP) Overview, presentation by Tim Turner, project manager

The Team Leader described the progress made under this result which included the selection of the pilot basins, initial basin assessment reports and completion of the delineation and typology reports. It was reported that activities were behind schedule due principally to the late delivery of the delineation reports and would need to be accelerated. The ToR for completion of the RBMPs are to be produced in November/December and implementation, with EC approval, would be by a nominated institution or agency. The project manager gave a summary of activities remaining under this result and a preliminary timeline until October 2015. There were no specific questions or comments.



Activity 2.1 River Basin Assessments in the selected pilot basins, presentations by the Country Water Managements Experts (NWME) in the six participating countries

Detailed descriptions were given by the CWMEs of the results of the assessments in each of the pilot basins including initial pressure and impact assessments. It was explained that more detailed analysis of the pressures and impacts will be undertaken in the next reporting period based on the water bodies at risk. There were no specific questions regarding the presentations.

Activity 2.2 Water body delineation and typology, presentations by Tatjana Kolcova KE4 (SW) and Bernardas Paukstys KE5 (GW).

The two key experts described the delineation procedure for the pilot basins for SW and GW and the criteria used to identify the water body types and those water bodies heavily modified and at risk. The Team Leader asked about the number of SW water bodies identified in each basin, which seemed large, and if the number could be reduced by aggregation. Tatjana Kolcova replied that there were a number of ways by which the number of water bodies and monitoring requirements could be reduced and these would be investigated in a later stage of the work. Further detailed questions regarding water body typology would be addressed at the monitoring and classification workshop in November. Bernardas Paukstys explained that delineation and typology of the GW was different and therefore there were fewer water bodies.

Activity 2.4 Joint Field Surveys and information management system – presentations by Svetoslav Chesmedjiev KE3, Tatjana Koltsova KE4, Bernardas Paukstys KE5 and Zurab Jincharadze KE2.

The presenters described the objectives, coverage and methodologies of the Joint Field Surveys undertaken in the pilot basins in June to September 2013. They also described some of the initial results and next steps in development of the monitoring programmes and their integration.

Zurab Jincharadze presented a number of options regarding the development of an information management system for monitoring data, including the EU Shared Environmental Information Management System (SEIS). He raised the important question of who would maintain the system once the project closes since many systems have been developed in the past but remain unused.

Activity 2.5/2.6 Development of Programme of Measures and pilot projects, presentations by Tim Turner project manager and Paul Buijs monitoring NKE.

Paul Buijs made a presentation on the proposed Road-maps and their purpose, which is to identify in each country a medium to long term strategy for the development of compliant monitoring programmes and classification systems. The Road-maps will look at the legislative, capacity, institutional and investment (infrastructure and operational) needs against realistic development programme. The first draft Road-maps will be developed for Ukraine and Moldova.

Tim Turner described the type of project to be included in the Programme of Measures in the pilot River Basin Management Plans. The projects could take a variety of forms. For instance, they can be legal and policy strengthening, capacity building, institutional reform, technical analysis or investment in character and can be implemented at basin or national level. The project has 500,000 euro divided between the six participating countries to be spent on priority pilot projects drawn from the pilot basin Programme of Measures. There is a limited time to implement the pilot projects and therefore early pilot project selection is required. It is expected that implementation of the pilot will begin in March 2014 and the beneficiaries were encouraged to make their proposals as soon as possible when developing their plans.

Activity 2.7: Public Involvement and Awareness Raising, presentation by Imola Coszta, Public Involvement expert, regional Environmental Centre for Central and Eastern Europe.

Activities implemented include the production of the first issue of 'In Flow' the project newsletter (copies of the English version were distributed at the meeting), and draft communication and public involvement strategies for the pilot river basins. The strategies include the objectives, the key stakeholder targets, best methods of communication in each basin and critical messages to be relayed. The strategies also contain a provisional list of activities to be supported such as stakeholder conferences and commemoration events (World Water Day, Black Sea Day, etc) The beneficiaries were asked to comment on the strategies and to include them in the planning of their RBMPs.

Summary of day 2 and meeting closure

The Steering Committee approved the activities undertaken in the last six months and planning for the next six months for result 2. Nicola Di Pietrantonio in summing up asked the beneficiaries for their comments and feedback regarding project progress.

The Armenian representative said that the project is working well and has no further comments.

The representative of Azerbaijan thought that the region would benefit from a more active and practical project - she would like to see more training for the laboratories and more details about the proposed Road-maps.

Belarus representatives were particularly interested in the technical presentations on monitoring by Svetoslav Cheshmedjiev, Bernardas Poukstys and Paul Buijs and wished the project to focus on reference conditions in SWs.

The Georgian representative said that the Ministry of Environment was satisfied with the project and is working in close contact with the project team both at the national and basin levels.

The representative from Moldova stated her satisfaction for the way activities are being implemented but believed a lot more was still to be done and the work needs to be carefully planned, taking into account national legislation as well as the WFD. The Moldova representative thanked the project for its assistance in organising a tripartite meeting for the River Prut under the ICPDR.

Ukraine is happy to support the current project activities and hoped the project will consider their pilot project proposals for the Kiev and Kanin reservoirs.

Tim Turner thanked everybody for their time and interest in attending the SCM. He said that the project was in transition and the team is working very hard to improve the project performance.