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EU Water Initiative for Eastern partnership: water as a shared asset

How important is water in terms of cooperation between the EU and Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries?

EaP countries are strategically important to the EU, and the EU is committed to establishing a strong, durable and stable relationship with them. The region faces a number of challenges, and water management and transboundary water cooperation are key among them. Sound management of water remains high on our agenda, and the EU has made water governance one of its top priorities.

Are there clear benefits stemming from improved water governance?

Coordinated decision making across sectors is essential if we wish to eliminate unsustainable practices., and water issues can be a catalyst for closer regional cooperation and integration. The integrated definition and implementation of key policies such as agriculture and food

The EPIRB project's final event will help to jointly assess progress and set specific targets for follow-up activities in partner countries.

security, energy, and sustainable use of water resources is a fundamental pillar for sustainable development and the future of our societies and economies.

Five years ago, a study conducted to inform the development and implementation of the European



IN GOOD COMPANY: Kremilis touts the examples of good water management for Eastern Partnership countries.

Neighbourhood Policy estimated that the benefits of improving water quality in Eastern Partnership countries can be as high as 1.7% of the GDP in individual countries, with further benefits of up to 1% stemming from improved drinking water quality and sewage connection. Additional benefits can be associated with addressing water scarcity, especially in countries where droughts lead to severe economic consequences.

What are the major avenues for providing EU support?

Support for achieving water-related benefits is provided both in terms of technical assistance to reform policies and water management practices, as well as in terms of investment to upgrade water-

related infrastructure and enhance water use efficiency by enterprises and households. The EU Water Initiative (EUWI), launched 10 years ago, has been an effective mechanism for promoting environmentally sustainable water use through policy dialogue. Furthermore, specific projects, such as EPIRB, have been designed to translate political engagement into legislative and planning decisions, and to help partner countries in their efforts to improve water governance. The EPIRB project's final event will help to jointly assess progress **continued on back page** ▶

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BASIN SPOTLIGHT

Georgia: Chorokhi Coastal Assessment expands scope of draft RBMP

Two main pieces of European Union legislation regulate the monitoring of coastal waters: the Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC), or WFD; and the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (2008/56/EC), or MSFD. Both are complex legislative texts that have the overall aim of achieving 'good' status for all the water bodies to which they pertain. As part of the river basin management planning (RBMP) and development exercise, the EPIRB project has assisted countries in taking several essential steps required both by

The beaches of the Batumi coast are formed by gravel sediment carried by the Chorokhi River.

WFD and relevant national legislation. The results of these successful efforts have been thus incorporated into a draft RBMP for the Chorokhi-Ajaristkali river basin.

In addition, to ensure consistency with EU and national legislation, a decision was taken to include the monitoring and assessment of coastal and

transitional waters adjacent to the pilot area to the draft RBMP. This being the case, a new study — i.e. Coastal Assessment — was designed to build on the results of the Chorokhi-Ajaristkali draft RBMP; it also reaches further to include a coastal zone situated one nautical mile north of the Chorokhi River estuary.

The Coastal Assessment, inter alia, includes the following:

- a baseline analysis of natural characteristics, including climatic, morphological, hydrological and physico-chemical characteristics;
- a description of biological habitats and biodiversity of the coastal and transitional waters, as well as existing protected areas and marine habitats;
- a description of methodology and results obtained from the delineation of coastal and transitional water bodies in the pilot area;
- a risk assessment of pressures and impacts on the identified coastal and transitional water bodies, and specifically:
 - drivers and types of pressures specific to the Georgian Black Sea coast, including: diffuse and point sources of pollution, hydromorphological pressures, and pressures on biological elements; and
 - significant impacts on coastal and transitional waters, such as: impacts on physico-chemical quality elements, impacts on hydromorphological quality elements, and impacts on biological parameters;
- identification of coastal and transitional water bodies 'at risk' or 'not at risk', according to different types of quality elements; and
- a Programme of Measures with basic and supplementary measures and established priorities in accordance with short-term and long-term environmental objectives.

The Chorokhi Coastal Assessment is part of the larger Chorokhi-Ajaristkali RBMP and will be annexed to the main document to make it comprehensive and compliant with EU WFD requirements.

TAKING THE LONG VIEW: Comprehensive in scope, the new draft RBMP aims for full compliance with the EU Water Framework Directive.



EPIRB-SUPPORTED PILOT PROJECTS

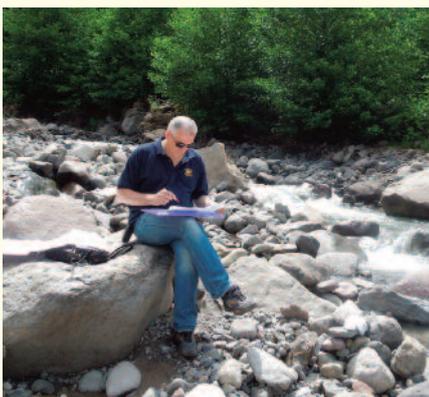
GEORGIA: Facilitating the Use of Economic Instruments and Revenue Generation Mechanisms for Efficient Water Resources Management

The EU WFD entails the systematic use of economic instruments to recover the cost of water services from households, industry and farmers. This pilot project involves an updated assessment of the performance of economic instruments for water management to find out how advanced cost recovery measures are at present.

New economic instruments will be introduced, such as: abstraction charges; user charges for water and sanitation services, and fines for non-compliance with environmental protection laws; and irrigation water supply charges. Meanwhile, existing instruments will be strengthened or modified. These include, but are not limited to: pollution charges for discharging into rivers and lakes; creation of an Environmental Fund for subsidising water-friendly investment; lower taxes on water-saving and recycling technologies, and surcharges on land and property taxes in environmentally sensitive localities.

Did you know?

The updated assessment includes several key elements, such as making changes to relevant legal codes; adjusting the regulatory framework; creating conditions for effective implementation; detailing existing and envisaged costs of regulatory frameworks; and incentivising efficient water use.



UKRAINE: Development of Draft Legislation in Accordance with IWRM Principles and WFD Requirements



This pilot project elaborates the transition from an administrative-territorial management model to a management regime based on WFD requirements. Harmonisation between Ukrainian law and the WFD will result in the appointment of an authorised basin management authority.

The adoption of the draft Decree of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine on Approval of the Model Regulations on Basin Water Resources Management Authority of Ukraine will: ensure the introduction of integrated water management methods with regard to specific river basins; set environmental objectives and requirements for the use of water resources use; introduce economic and financial incentives for rational use and protection of water resources; promote the development of efficient RBMPs; and encourage public participation in planning processes.

Did you know?

The Basin Water Resources Management Authority operates directly or through regional water resources management departments, and also cooperates with oblast-level water resources management departments, local state administrations, local authorities, water users and NGOs. This helps to ensure development and implementation of RBMPs and the coordination and maintenance of state water monitoring within the river basin, including trans-boundary monitoring.

AZERBAIJAN: Implementation of the EU Flood Directive in the Zayamchay River Sub-Basin

During often tumultuous flooding periods, water levels at the narrowest points of the Zayamchay River generally increase by between 2.0 and 2.5 metres, but have in the past risen by up to 4 metres. Since 1954, no fewer than 15 serious floods have occurred in the basin area, causing significant damage to surrounding areas. Temperature increases over the past 50 years due to climate change are definitely a contributing factor to the increased regularity of flooding.

A three-pronged flood risk management plan has been put in place for the Zayamchay River sub-basin. The first objective is to fill gaps in the management of river basins by making changes to the Water Code and other legislative acts in Azerbaijan. The second is to create a flood monitoring system and introduce an early warning system. Finally, concrete measures have been proposed to reduce flood risk for human settlements and other built objects along the Zayamchay River.

Did you know?

Future socioeconomic-related construction activities in the Zayamchay River basin will be carried out while taking into account the flood regime, hydro-morphology and ecological features of the river valley. This will help to reduce damage caused by flooding and help to preserve ecological balance in the basin.



MOVING FORWARD

PROTECTIVE MEASURES: Work for the future is just getting started in EaP countries.

EUWI+ will follow up EPIRB to achieve EU WFD convergence

Water resources are relatively abundant in Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries, but growing pressures on water resources and poor water use efficiency increasingly affect water quality and availability. Given that the majority of the water resources in the EaP are of transboundary nature, transboundary water management is an important aspect of regional cooperation.

In recent years, EaP countries have demonstrated their willingness to align water sector policies and practices with the general principles and more specific requirements of the

European Union (EU) Water Framework Directive (WFD), as well as other relevant water-related directives and multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs). Several EU-funded regional projects, including the EPIRB project, have proven instrumental in enabling this change.

There remains a need to reform water sector policies and improve existing regulatory and institutional frameworks to bring them in line with the principles of integrated water resource management (IWRM). Another task is to address the economic aspects of water management.

Water allocation rules, as well as flood protection management, should be further developed; and a mix of policy instruments should be used to identify and implement incentives for water use efficiency.

Work on the development of river basin management plans (RBMPs) needs to be followed up with support to countries in implementation of the plans and the underlying monitoring systems. Countries are keen to initiate RBMPs, but support should only be provided where implementation is nationally financed. The programme of measures at the core of each of these plans must be realistic and ambitious, but also linked to national capacities and resources. EU member states with practical experience are well placed to provide support where and as needed.

The overall objective of the EUWI+ initiative is to improve the management of water resources in EaP countries. The three specific result areas of the EUWI+ East project are: 1) Legal and regulatory frameworks improved in line with the WFD, IWRM and MEAs; 2) RBMPs designed and implemented in line with WFD principles; and 3) Lessons learned are regularly collected, shared and communicated to stakeholders.

EaP countries have benefitted from several EU-funded projects that aim to support water sector reforms.

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and set specific targets for follow-up activities in partner countries.

Key stakeholders in partner countries were consulted in 2015, and reviews and assessments of results and challenges of current and past projects have been carried out. Based on this preparatory work, the European Union Water Initiative Plus for the Eastern Partnership (EUWI+ EAST) was designed to further promote the agenda of sound water resources management.

Does the EU plan to continue facilitating water sector reforms in EaP countries?

The EU recently allocated EUR 23.5 million for regional cooperation on water under the EUWI umbrella. The Neighbourhood Investment Facility has a related priority: its second strategic objective — addressing climate change and environmental threats in general — can be used to combine EU grants with funding from other public and private sources. The facility aims to encourage beneficiary governments, the private sector and/or public institutions to carry out essential investments in sectors that would otherwise be postponed due to lack of resources. Water could be one of those sectors.

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