

EU Water Initiative National Policy Dialogue on IWRM in Central Asia and Caucasus

B. Libert and G. Roll

UNECE, Palais des Nations, Geneva, Switzerland, bo.libert@unece.org

National Policy Dialogues (NPD) on integrated water resources management (IWRM) and water supply and sanitation (WSS) are the main operational instrument of the European Union Water Initiative (EUWI) Component for Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA). The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) is the strategic partner to support the policy dialogue process on IWRM, whereas the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) is the strategic partner for WSS.

Since 2006, under the UNECE Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention) NPDs/IWRM have been carried out in four countries: Armenia, Kyrgyzstan, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine. In 2011, the policy dialogues were initiated in Azerbaijan, Georgia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan¹. The Government of Kazakhstan has requested the start of the NPD/IWRM in September 2010 and the NPD could start in Kazakhstan at the end of 2011.

The UNECE-supported policy dialogues provide practical assistance to strengthen integrated water resources management in the EECCA countries in line with the principles for IWRM. Important background documentation include the UNECE Water Convention, the Protocol on Water and Health and the EU Water Framework Directive (WFD).

The dialogues are based on consultations with relevant ministries, agencies and non-governmental organizations. To ensure the intersectoral coordination, national Steering Committees are established, which include high-level officials representing a wide range of stakeholders organizations. The Steering Committees meet regularly, at least at annual basis. The main outcome of the NPDs are so-called “policy packages” such as legislative acts, strategies, ministerial orders and plans of implementation.

The scope of issues addressed by the NPDs/IWRM include preparation of strategic water management plans, drinking water quality (Protocol on Water and Health), management of transboundary waters (Water Convention principles), adaptation of the water sector to climate change and other issues. For countries in Eastern Europe implementation of EU WFD and other EU policies principles is one of the major directions of work of the NPDs.

The NPDs/IWRM processes in the nine countries are rather different from each other in terms of the depth of introducing the IWRM principles in the countries, the dialogues’ agendas and dynamics of the processes - Implementation of the IWRM principles depends on the countries’ established IWRM objectives as well as on the legislative and institutional framework as well as political and socio-economic situation. Still, the NPDs/IWRM follow the same principles that are also documented in the UNECE Water Convention, the EU Water Framework Directive and other water related UN and EU policy documents.

¹ In Uzbekistan, the National Policy Dialogue is focused on the water and health issues under the UNECE-WHO Europe Protocol on Water and Health.