

Expert Workshop

Beyond water: Regional economic integration and geopolitical benefits of transboundary water cooperation

Tallinn, Estonia, 28–29 January 2015

Information notice

Workshop Objective

The objective of this Expert Workshop “Beyond water” is to contribute to the further development of a *Policy Guidance Note on Identifying, Assessing and Communicating the Benefits of Transboundary Water Cooperation* by producing recommendations on how to assess and communicate the regional integration and geopolitical benefits of transboundary water cooperation.

Background

Transboundary water cooperation has the potential to generate significant benefits for cooperating countries. Those benefits can be realized by accelerating economic growth, increasing human well-being, enhancing environmental sustainability and contributing to political stability and peace. Although transboundary water cooperation has been increasing, some countries still face difficulties in cooperating. Even those countries that do cooperate often do so only on narrow issues. There is scope for increasing transboundary water cooperation from quantity or quality issues to a broader set of issues and for moving from “sharing water” (i.e. allocating water resources among riparian States) to “sharing the benefits of water” (i.e. managing water resources to achieve the maximum benefit and then allocating those benefits among riparian States, including through compensation mechanisms). There is even greater scope for increasing cooperation by moving from “sharing the benefits of water” to “realizing the broader benefits of water cooperation”.

The United National Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Water Courses and International Lakes (Water Convention) recognizes that water is a cornerstone of societies. It promotes a holistic approach to transboundary water cooperation, looking at environmental, social and economic implications of water uses. One of the factors often hindering better transboundary water cooperation is the lack of recognition of some of the benefits of cooperation. Countries generally cooperate when the net benefits of cooperation are perceived to be greater than the net benefits of non-cooperation and when the distribution of these net benefits is perceived to be fair.

The work programme adopted by the Meeting of the Parties to the Water Convention at its sixth session (Rome, 28–30 November 2012) includes the development of a *Policy Guidance Note on Identifying, Assessing and Communicating the Benefits of Transboundary Water Cooperation*.

The primary target audience of the *Policy Guidance Note* is decision-makers in ministries responsible for environment, water, economic and foreign affairs, as well as joint bodies for transboundary water management. It is expected that the *Policy Guidance Note* will support Governments and other actors in realizing the potential of transboundary water cooperation by providing an overview of the full set of potential benefits that can be exploited, an introduction to how the specific benefits can be assessed and guidance on how the assessment of benefits can be integrated into policymaking processes.

The expert workshop to take place in Tallinn on 28–29 January 2015 is the third and last workshop organized to support the development of the *Policy Guidance Note*. A scoping workshop¹ took place in Amsterdam in June 2013, to initiate a discussion on the approaches and methods, and an expert workshop “Counting our gains”² took place in Geneva in May 2014, to discuss benefits of transboundary water cooperation in basins from around the world. A draft *Policy Guidance Note* has been developed based on the outcomes of these two workshops.

Rationale

Transboundary water cooperation, through improved water management, generates a range of economic, social and environmental benefits. Although comprehensive identification, assessment and communication remains a challenge, most of those benefits are well-known in the water policy community and some methodologies to assess them are available. Participants at the expert workshop “Counting our gains” discussed existing experiences, in particular regarding economic and environmental benefits.

Transboundary water cooperation may also have spill-over benefits in terms of regional economic integration, peace and security and other foreign policy goals. The reasoning for this is that water is a policy area where cooperation can make progress starting at a technical level, showing practical results and helping to build trust. Cooperation on water may make it easier for the cooperating parties to make progress in other policy areas, in particular regional economic integration, peace and security. Whether transboundary water cooperation can actually generate those spill-over benefits is contested in the academic literature. Participants at the workshop “Counting our gains” could only touch upon this topic in the limited time available.

It is thus important to get a better understanding of those spill-over benefits of transboundary water cooperation in practice. This final expert workshop in the process of developing the *Policy Guidance Note on Identifying, Assessing and Communicating the Benefits of Transboundary Water Cooperation* will, therefore, focus on regional economic integration and geopolitical benefits. It aims to gather participants from regional economic integration and foreign policy communities.

¹ More information at : www.unece.org/env/water/1st_workshop_benefits_cooperation.html

² More information at : www.unece.org/env/water/workshop_benefits_cooperation_2014.html

Potential benefits for transboundary water cooperation

	On economic activities	Beyond economic activities
From improved water management	<p>Economic benefits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expanded activity and productivity in economic sectors (aquaculture, irrigated agriculture, mining, energy generation, industrial production, navigation, nature-based tourism) • Reduced cost of carrying out productive activities • Reduced economic impacts of water-related hazards (floods, droughts) • Increased value of property 	<p>Social and environmental benefits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health impacts from improved water quality and reduced risk of water-related disasters • Employment and reduced poverty impacts of the economic benefits • Improved access to services (such as electricity and water supply) • Improved satisfaction due to preservation of cultural resources or access to recreational opportunities • Avoided habitat degradation and biodiversity loss
From enhanced trust	<p>Regional economic integration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of regional markets for goods, services and labour • Increase in cross-border investments • Development of international transport infrastructure networks 	<p>Peace and security</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoided costs of military conflicts • Savings from reduced military spending • Other geopolitical benefits

Targeted participants

The expert workshop “Beyond water” aims to gather about 40 participants. Participants will include primarily government officials working in the areas of foreign or economic policy and having an interest in transboundary water governance issues, as well as officials from intergovernmental organizations (such as regional economic commissions). It will also include experts with experience in facilitating transboundary water cooperation. Participants are expected to come from all regions of the world.

Structure of the workshop

The workshop will be divided into two parts:

- Day 1 will focus on the benefits of transboundary water cooperation in terms of promoting regional economic integration and cooperation in other sectoral policy areas.
- Day 2 will focus on the geopolitical benefits of transboundary water cooperation, in terms of peace and security and other foreign policy concerns.

For each day, the morning will focus on presentations about existing experiences, while the afternoon will focus on discussions (in working groups and in plenary).

To encourage openness and the sharing of information during the expert workshop, participants will be free to use the information from the workshop after the meeting, but not to reveal the identity or the affiliation of the speaker(s) who have shared such information (known as Chatham House Rule).

Venue and partners

The Expert Workshop “Beyond water” will take place in Tallinn (Estonia) on 28 and 29 January 2015 on the premises of the Ministry of Environment, Narva mnt 7a.

The Expert Workshop is organized by UNECE under the leadership of the Government of Estonia, and in partnership with the UNDP Shared Waters Partnership (SWP). It is hosted by the Ministry of the Environment of Estonia. Funding for the workshop is provided by the government of Estonia, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and the Shared Waters Partnership.

Practical information

The meeting will start at 9.00 a.m. on Wednesday, 28 January 2015 and end at 5.30 p.m. on Thursday, 29 January 2015.

The working language will be English. Whispered interpretation into Russian can be provided if needed.

Coffee breaks and light lunches will be provided. A diner will be organized on 28 January 2015.

Registration

Participants are requested to confirm their participation at their earliest convenience, but by **5 January 2015** at the latest, by registering on-line using the following link: <https://www2.unece.org/uncdb/app/ext/meeting-registration?id=C466Fu>. In case of difficulties, please contact the secretariat by email (cammile.marcelo@unece.org).

Financial support

The organizers can finance the participation in the expert workshop of a limited number of experts. Eligible participants from countries with economies in transition and developing countries may apply for financial support to facilitate their participation in the workshop. Requests for financial support should be submitted to the UNECE secretariat (cammile.marcelo@unece.org) as soon as possible and not later than **12 December 2014**. No application for financial support will be accepted after this deadline. A copy of the passport is required for administrative purposes.

Visas

Participants requiring entry visas should inform the secretariat (cammile.marcelo@unece.org) as soon as possible. A copy of passport page with data and contact details of visa applicants would then be required.

Webpage of the workshop

Further information about the workshop and relevant material, such as the programme, practical information on the workshop venue as well as on transport and accommodation in Tallinn will be available shortly at: www.unece.org/env/water/workshop_benefits_cooperation_2015.html

Transport and hotels

More information about buses connecting the airport and the city centre can be found at: www.tallinn-airport.ee/eng/transport/publictransport. At the airport, taxis stop at the arrival exit door.

Possible hotels close to the Ministry of Environment include:

Hotel name	Hotel website	Address	Room price (indicative)
Hotel Euroopa 4*	www.euroopa.ee	Paadi 5	55-85 eur
Metropol	www.metropol.ee	Roseni 13	55-85 eur
Nordic Hotel Forum 4*	www.nordichotels.eu	Viru väljak 3	86-120 eur
Original Sokos Hotel Viru	www.sokshotels.fi/en/tallinn/sokos-hotel-viru	Viru väljak 4	55-85 eur
Solo Sokos Hotel Estoria	www.sokshotels.fi/en/tallinn/sokos-hotel-estoria	Viru väljak 4	55-85 eur
Park Inn by Radisson Central Tallinn	www.parkinn.com/hotel-centraltallinn	Narva mnt 7c	55-85 eur

Contact information

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