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AL REPUBLICII MOLDOVA

PROCEEDINGS OF THE

8th Meeting of the Inter-Ministerial Steering Committee of the National Policy Dialogue on Water Issues in Moldova

20 March 2024
Chisinau, Moldova



The Summary Record and the analytical documentation in support of the meeting were prepared by the Implementing Partners of the EU4Environment Water and Data Programme (the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, the Environment Agency Austria, the Austrian Development Agency and the International Office for Water, France).

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1. Proceedings

The 8th Meeting of the Inter-Ministerial Steering Committee of the National Policy Dialogue (NPD) on Water in the Republic of Moldova (20 March 2024, Chisinau) brought together a broad and engaged group of representatives from national and sub-national authorities, academia, civil society, and international organisations. Hosted by the Ministry of Environment and organised with the support of the European Union, the NPD aimed to discuss the ongoing institutional reforms, progress with the implementation and approximation of the EU water legislation, and the plans for the transboundary collaboration with Ukraine and Romania. The agenda for the meeting and the list of participants are attached as annexes to this report.

The meeting was opened with remarks from Mr Petru Tataru, General State Secretary of the Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Moldova, Mr Adam Grodzicki, Deputy Head of Cooperation Section of the EU Delegation to Moldova and Mr Alexander Zinke, Environment Agency Austria and Head of the Consortium for the EU4Environment Water Resources and Environmental Data programme. Mr Tataru paid particular attention to ongoing legal and institutional reforms, including the recent amendments to the Water Law. These reforms reflect Moldova's commitment to align its policies with the EU acquis. The speaker expressed gratitude for the continuous EU support, which is helping the country modernise its water management capacities and policies. Mr Grodzicki welcomed the commitment shown by Moldova in its capacity as an EU candidate country and noted the significance of water legislation as one of the pillars of the European Green Deal. Referring to climate change impacts and water scarcity, he stressed that building water resilience requires continuous improvement of policies and follow-up investment. The speaker highlighted the fact that water financing is part of the Economic and Investment Plan for the Eastern Partnership and that the EU has already invested in many water-related projects in Moldova through its bilateral portfolio. The speaker also noted the progress made in transboundary cooperation with Ukraine and Romania and stressed the importance of action in both transboundary basins that Moldova shares with its neighbours. Mr. Grodzicki pointed out the developments in the EU legislation, particularly the new requirements for the safe reuse of treated wastewater in agriculture enacted through the Water Reuse Regulation, the Recast Drinking Water Directive, and the upcoming recast Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive and Nature Restoration Law. Mr Zinke spoke on behalf of the EU4Environment Water & Data Programme partners, sharing highlights of progress to date under the programme and introducing the two days agenda.

Sessions 1 and 2 focused on the advancement of the implementation of the EU Water Framework Directive, the Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive and the Nitrates Directive, as well as Moldova's focus on strengthening overall environmental enforcement, and on the alignment with the EU legislation, and institutional structures. Ms. Victoria Gratii, Head of IWRM Policies Department at the Ministry of Environment, highlighted several important points on the **water sector reform agenda**:

- Analysis by the national environmental authorities of 43 EU environmental directives and close cooperation with the European Commission on the technical aspects of EU integration,
- Recent increase in the responsibilities assigned to water users and local authorities through the amendments made to the Water Law,
- Change of the rules for collection and disposal of industrial wastewater,
- Development of a programme for nitrates pollution reduction,

- Policy responses to increased droughts, which include decreasing the duration of permits on water use to allow for more regular review and the development of a methodology to support decision-making in times of drought,
- Future work on the enforcement of the WFD-compliant monitoring, rehabilitation of the wastewater treatment plants, and protection against floods,
- Gradual implementation of institutional changes, including the transfer of the irrigation functions from Apele Moldovei to the agriculture sector and the transfer of the water quality monitoring from National Environment Agency to the future State Authority on Meteorology and Environmental Monitoring,
- The need to address the issue of low salaries and high turnover of staff in the agencies subordinated to the MoE and an “ageing workforce”.

Mr. Alberto Carlei, Head of EIB Representation to Moldova for Partnerships for Impact Department and Mr. Alexandru Cosovan, Associate Director at EBRD, shared their experience of **investment project pipeline development**. This included the challenges of identifying “bankable” projects in many small municipalities and called for a whole-of-government approach to project planning for future loan applications. Moldova’s efforts on policy coherence, which build confidence in project proposals, were noted, especially when the government can demonstrate coherence across ministries and strategies to innovative approaches such as “regionalisation” and “corporatisation” of WSS service operators. This led to the intervention from Mr. Alexandru Osadci, Coordinator of International Relations and Programmes, Congress of Local Authorities from Moldova (CALM), who urged for the use of a wide variety of approaches to solving these issues and called for caution when applying a single approach to widescale strategies, noting that while involvement from the private sector is needed, public administration capacity and funding towards infrastructure should be significantly increased.

The discussion also involved the issue of low **water tariffs** and collection rates as well as the misalignment with the latest policy objectives. The State Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry of Moldova, Mr. Vasile Sarban called for a better application of the user pays principle, and drew attention to the issues concerning abandoned water reservoirs, low number of the operational irrigation systems, a need for soil conservation from secondary salinization (due to frequent cases of illegal ground water use for orchards irrigation), and a critical situation with depopulation in rural areas. Ms. Anna Cravciuc of the National Agency for Public Health, reported on the country’s efforts to align the national legislation with the EU Drinking Water Directive, and reported on the increased access to quality and affordable water and sanitation services, which remains a policy priority.

Session 3 examined progress on **river basin management** in Moldova, focusing on implementation. This included presentations from the implementing partners of the EU4Environment Programme and a dialogue with relevant basin management committees, projects and donors active on water, environment and climate issues impacting river basins in Moldova.

Apele Moldovei shared results of the River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs) implementation, notably the rehabilitation of several small rivers (Bic, Lapusna, Cogilnic, Raut), cleaning and afforestation of the river banks.

Within a project supported by Sweden and implemented by UNDP, the second cycle Nistru district RBMP has been developed, methodologies and identification of the environmental risks have been developed, and assessment of fisheries policies and capacity building of the environmental inspectorate is planned.

Overall it was stressed the need to enhance the implementation of the RBMP at large basin scale and to empower basin committees through thematic programming of sectoral measure in priority sub-basins as for example the development of the master plan for WSS in Nirnova or future development of quantitative management plan following the methodology that will be presented at a future regional WS on 20 June 2024. This shall be the occasion to strengthen the sub-basin committees, which will find their usefulness and become pro-active actors of a progressive decentralisation.

Several projects with EU-Member State involvement were also presented, showing progress and results, including a project on water security implemented with support from the Austrian Development Agency (ADA) by the World Bank, the above-mentioned project on sustainable management of the Nistru River funded by Sweden, and an ADA project considering reduction of flood risks implemented together with UNDP.

Session 4 focused on **transboundary water management**, where the trilateral cooperation between Moldova, Ukraine, and Romania to achieve the signature of the Prut Declaration was praised. Ms Birgit Vogel, ICPDR Executive Secretary, Ms. Mariia Shpanchyk, from the State Agency of Water Resources of Ukraine, Mr. Vitalii Zhuk, from the Ministry of Environment, Protection and Natural Resources of Ukraine, and Mr Gheorghe Constantin, Ministry of Environment, Water and Forests of Romania joined Mr. Petru Tataru, General State Secretary of the Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Moldova in sharing hopes for cooperation, including speeding up evidence-based decision-making and increasing transparency. It was also agreed that the draft Terms of Reference for the trilateral Prut Expert Group should be available at the end of April for review and presented for endorsement at the ICPDR's "Standing Working Group" meeting scheduled for June 2024.

Discussion on harmonization with the Ukrainian part of the RBMP is expected at the upcoming Dniester Commission Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management, expected in June 2024. It was further noted that the Global Environmental Facility's regional project was approved in December 2023 and is to start later in 2024.

Finally, session 5 discussed the **water and health agenda** with a discussion noting the much-improved access to water and sanitation, notably in rural areas, as well as capacity building in municipalities to prepare them to accept finance for expanding infrastructure and improve general monitoring, data and reporting. A joint presentation between the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Health demonstrated the progress made to date on the implementation of the National Programme on the Water and Health Protocol for 2016-2025 and provided ideas on the targets beyond 2025. UBA praised the good progress made on introducing wastewater-based epidemiological surveillance in Chisinau in the scope of EU4Environment. Experience from the Vienna City with an application serving to publicly share up-to-date public health data based upon wastewater-based epidemiology was shown to participants and generated interest in cost-effective communication on the health of the population. The potential for Moldovan cities to implement a similar application was discussed.

Meeting documents, including presentations are available [here](#).

1.1. Key Actions

During the discussions, several key actions were agreed upon by government representatives:

- **Gather more environmental data for decision makers in particular for effective pricing through more metering of water used for irrigation and drought risk management.**
- **Extend regular water monitoring across the country and improve the capacity of responsible agencies**
- **Deepen the implementation of the RBMP at a large basin scale through thematic planning in priority sub-basins, for example, the development of a master plan for water sanitation and supply in Nirnova or quantitative management plans (note future regional workshop on 20/6/24), and continue transboundary co-operation with Ukraine and Romania for the finalisation of the Terms of Reference of the recently signed Prut Declaration.**
- **Integrate the data from wastewater epidemiology into public health decision-making processes.**
- **Conduct public surveys to better understand attitudes on water scarcity, use, and on willingness and ability to pay for water services.**
- **Develop a public communications approach to water that emphasises its importance and value, as well as its widespread deterioration and the need for better protection by all water users.**
- **Organise follow-up consultation on implications of the EU Drinking Water Directive roadmap.**
- **Continue implementation of the National Programme in alignment with the UNECE Protocol on Water and Health Protocol, aiming to create targets beyond 2025.**
- **Enhance the sharing of relevant information on the state of the environment with European and international organizations and the general public.**

2. Participation and visibility

Sixty participants joined the NPD in person, with 32 female and 28 male participants.

The Ministry of Environment published an article under its news section in [English](#) and [Romanian](#). An article about the event was also published on the website of [EU4Environment Water & Data Programme](#).

About National Policy Dialogues

National Policy Dialogues facilitates policy discussions where stakeholders meet to advance water policy reforms. NPDs are driven by the demand from the host countries and are usually chaired by heads of respective government agencies. A variety of stakeholders participate in the meetings, such as ministries and government agencies and institutions, as well as nongovernmental organisations, the business community, parliamentary bodies, academia. Participants typically include international organisations and EU Member States active in water policy reforms in each country. Under the EU-funded EU4Environment Water Resources and Environmental Data Programme, NPDs are supported in the five Eastern Partner countries.

About EU4Environment – Water Resources and Environmental Data

This programme aims at improving people's well-being in EU's Eastern Partner Countries and enabling their green transformation in line with the European Green Deal and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The programme's activities are clustered around two specific objectives: 1) support a more sustainable use of water resources and 2) improve the use of sound environmental data and their availability for policymakers and citizens. The programme is implemented by five Partner organisations: Environment Agency Austria (UBA), Austrian Development Agency (ADA), International Office for Water (OiEau) (France), Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE). The programme is principally funded by the European Union and co-funded by the Austrian Development Cooperation and the French Artois-Picardie Water Agency based on a budget of EUR 12,75 million (EUR 12 million EU contribution). The implementation period is 2021-2024.

3. Annexes

3.1. List of participants

Ministries, National and Regional Stakeholder Institutions

Petru Tataru, General State Secretary, MoE
 Victoria Gratii, Head of IWRM Policies Department, MoE
 Anna Casuta, Senior Advisor, IWRM Department, MoE
 Aurelia Donos, Senior Advisor, IWRM Department, MoE
 Valentina Ceres, Senior Advisor, IWRM Department, MoE
 Nicolina Cramarenco, Head of legal department, MoE
 Sergiu Balacci, Senior advisor, Nature Conservation and Biosecurity Department, MoE
 Radu Cazacu, Deputy Director, Agency Apele Moldovei, NFP C1
 Mariana Codreanu, Main specialist, Water Management Department, AAM
 Dumitru Proca, Main specialist, Water Management Department, AAM
 Radu Stratuta, Deputy Director, Environmental Agency
 Angela Savca, Main specialist, Environmental Agency
 Mihai Grigoras, Director, State Hydrometeorological Service
 Gherman Bejenaru, State Hydrometeorological Service
 Vasile Sarban, State Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry
 Cătălina Bîrca, Senior advisor, Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry
 Ion Salaru, Deputy director NAPH
 Anna Cravciuc, Medic specialist, National Agency for Public Health
 Liliana Carp, Medic specialist, National Agency for Public Health
 Burduja Daniela, Scientific researcher, Institute of Ecology and Geography
 Ana Jeleapov, Scientific researcher, Institute of Ecology and Geography, Head of National Dniester River Basin Commission
 Iordanca -Rodica Iordanov, Associate Professor
 Liudmila David, General Inspectorate for Emergency Situations
 Alina Pleșca, Department of regulation, National Agency for Energy Regulation
 Ana Sîrbu, Department of regulation, National Agency for Energy Regulation
 Viorel Miron, Head of Danube-Prut and the Black Sea Basin Commission
 Rodica Sirbu, Ministry of Environment
 Adam Nicoleta, Senior Consultant, Bureau for EU Integration
 Alexandru Osadci, Coordinator of International Relations and Programmes, Congress of Local Authorities from Moldova (CALM)

International Organisation, Donors, Projects and IFIs

Patricia Pella, UNDRR Country based focal point for the Republic of Moldova
 Dorin Andros, Project manager, Security of water supply and sanitation in Moldova (WB)
 Diana Celac, Program manager, ADA
 Irina Guban, Economist, ONU ORC
 Justina Grigaraviciene, EU High-Level Adviser on Environment and Green Transition, MoE of the Republic of Moldova

Ilia Trombitki, ONG Eco-Tiras
Dilan Vitalie, OIKUMENA
Corina Andronic, WASH office, UNICEF
Nadejda Chilaru, Team Leader, Supporting the authorities of the Republic of Moldova in the sustainable management of the Dniester River
Ludmila Gofman, Project manager, Supporting the authorities of the Republic of Moldova in the sustainable management of the Dniester River
Victor Găină, PO LOCOMO Project, ADA
Alberto Carlei, Head of EIB Representation to Moldova
Partnerships for Impact Department
Kristyna Novosadova, Czech Embassy
Mariia Shpanchyk, The State Agency of Water Resources of Ukraine
Vitalii Zhuk, Ministry of Environment, Protection and Natural Resources of Ukraine
Gheorghe Constantin, Ministry of Environment, Water and Forests of Romania
Birgit Vogel, Executive Secretary, ICPDR
Alexandru Cosovan, Associate Director, EBRD
Mogildea Vlad, USM, IEG
Vitali Mutaf, UTM, professor

EU Delegation, EU4WD Implementing Partners

Adam Grodzicki, Deputy Head of Cooperation Section, EU Delegation to Moldova
Ilona Gruenewald, Project Manager, Rural Development and Agriculture, EU Delegation to Moldova
Tamara Kutonova, UNECE, Environmental Affairs Officer /Manager National Policy Dialogue Programme
Alexander Zinke, EU4Environment Water & Data Programme Lead, Environment Agency Austria
Johannes Mayer, Environment Agency Austria
Florian Wolf-Ott, Environment Agency Austria
Matthew Griffiths, Senior Programme Manager, Environment Directorate, OECD
Lupita Johanson, Research Officer and Project Co-ordinator, Environment Directorate, OECD
Guy Halpern, Policy Analyst, Environment Directorate, OECD
Pierre Henry de Villeneuve, Head of Institutional Support, International Office for Water, France
Andrei Ursache, EU4Water&Data National Representative, ADA

Total number of participants – 60
of which 32 were female and 28 male

3.2. Agenda

Local Time	Item	Speaker
08:30-09:00	Registration and welcome coffee	
09:00-09:30	High-level Opening and welcome statements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcoming statements • High-level opening remarks • Adoption of agenda 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Mr. Petru Tataru, General State Secretary of the Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Moldova – Mr. Adam Grodzicki, Deputy Head of the Cooperation Section of EU Delegation to Moldova – Mr. Alexander Zinke, EU4Environment Water and Data Programme
09:30-11:00	Thematic session 1: Progress with EU accession and water management High-level round-table policy discussion The high-level panel will include an exchange on progress with water policy reforms and upcoming priorities. The panel will look at policy ambition and targets aligned with the latest EU legislation and the investments required to achieve policy implementation. The discussion will build around key questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What progress had Moldova made in EU Integration with regard to water since the last NPD? • Which elements of the integration process have gone well and what challenges remain? • What areas of the integration process have particularly benefited from cross-ministerial cooperation? Q&A and discussion.	Moderator: Petru Tataru, Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Moldova Speakers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Representative from the Ministry of Environment (5 min) – Representative from the Ministry of Agriculture (5 min) – Representative from the Ministry of Infrastructure (5 min) – Representative from the Ministry of Health (5 min) – Justina Grigaraviciene, High-Level Advisor on the Green Transition (5 min)
11:00-11:30	Coffee Break	
11:30-13:00	Thematic session 2: Discussion on reform of water law and normative acts and the operational implications The session is devoted to discussion of the progress on recent amendments to the water law, normative acts and institutional structures. The session will explore the progress to date and operational implications and priorities.	Moderator: Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Moldova <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Victoria Gratii, Ministry of Environment – Nicolina Cramarenco, Ministry of Environment – Responses from:

	<p>A representative from the Ministry of Environment will share latest developments with amendments to the water law and normative acts and institutional reforms including with regard to water monitoring. Colleagues from agencies involved in implementation will respond to the presentation.</p> <p>The discussion will build around key questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – What are the key amendments to the water law and what are the practical day-to-day implications of the amendments? – How do these changes align with the EU integration process discussed in Session One? – What are the institutional and organizational reforms ongoing or planned to support this? – What are the current challenges for implementation? <p>Q&A and discussion</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Radu Cazacu Apele Moldovei (5 min) – Mihail Grigoras the State Hydrometeorological Service of Moldova (5 min) – Radu Stratuta Environmental Agency (5 min) – Open floor for interventions from NPD participants – Birgit Vogel, Eexc. Secretary of ICPDR (online)
<p>13:00-14:00 14:00–15:30</p>	<p>Lunch</p> <p>Thematic session 3: Progress with River Basin Management Planning implementation and update on EU4Environment Programme</p> <p>The session will focus on implementation and include presentations and a dialogue with relevant basin management committees and projects and donors active on water, environment and climate issues impacting river basins in Moldova.</p> <p>The EU4Environment Water and Data Implementing Partners will provide an update on their activities with regard to programme implementation highlighting achievements in River Basin Management Planning, Economic Instruments, Mobilising Finance, Legislative developments, progress on Environmental Data and open data issues, including water accounts, environmental data, air quality, waste, land cover mapping and international co-operation</p> <p>The discussion will build around key questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What progress has been made regarding River Basin Management Planning in Moldova? • What needs to be done next towards operationalisation and implementation of plans? • How are pressures related to climate and water scarcity incorporated in plans? • What further support is needed from the national and international stakeholders? <p>Q&A and discussion</p>	<p>Moderator: Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Moldova</p> <p>Keynote speech:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Radu Cazacu, Apele Moldovei and National Focal Point (7 min) <p>Additional interventions 5 min each):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Viorel Miron DPBS basin committee – Ana Jeleapov Head of Dniester basin committee – EU4Environment Water and Data: UBA, OiEau, UNECE, OECD (in total 15 min) – Dorin Andros, Water security project, World Bank – Ludmila Gofman, project manager, Supporting the authorities of the Republic of Moldova in the sustainable management of the Dniester river, UNDP – Diana Celac, Water and Environment programme manager, ADA

<p>15:30-16:00 16:00-16:45</p>	<p>Coffee Break</p> <p>Thematic session 4: Transboundary Water Management.</p> <p>The session will recognise the achievement of signature of the Prut Declaration with Ukraine and Romania and look ahead towards development of a terms of reference for implementation of the Declaration and will provide a brief overview on the developments in the Dniester River Basin Commission.</p> <p>The discussion will acknowledge the impact of such a declaration and the benefits for citizens and the environment and requirements for making the Prut Commission operational.</p> <p>Q&A and discussion</p>	<p>Moderator: Representative from Ministry of Environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Gheorghe Constantin, Ministry of Environment, Romania (online) – Representative of Ministry of Environment, Ukraine (online) – Representative of UNECE Water Convention – Representative of OiEau
<p>16:45 – 17:15</p>	<p>Session 5: Water and Health</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress in the implementation of the National Programme on the Protocol on Water and Health for 2016-2025 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What priorities remain for national stakeholders? • Progress with wastewater-based COVID monitoring • Progress with access to water and sanitation services 	<p>Moderator: Ministry the Environment of the Republic of Moldova</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – ANA Casuta, Ministry of Environment – Ion Salaru, deputy director of National Agency for Public Health – Alexander Zinke, UBA
<p>17:15-17:30</p>	<p>Session 6: Concluding session:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting summary • Decisions and recommendations • Feedback questionnaire on the NPD and next steps • An introductory overview of workshops on 21 March 2024 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Victoria Gratii, Ministry of Environment of Moldova • Matthew Griffiths, EU4Environment Water and Data Programme
<p>17:30-19:30</p>	<p>Networking Cocktail</p>	

3.3. Pictures

