



EU4Environment in Eastern Partner Countries:  
Water Resources and Environmental Data (ENI/2021/425-550)

## MINUTES

### DEVELOPMENT OF ENGURI RIVER BASIN MANAGEMENT PLAN IN GEORGIA: CONSULTATION MEETING

**Date of the meeting:**  
14 November 2023

**Venue:**  
Zugdidi Center of Democratic  
Engagement, 52 Rustaveli  
str., Zugdidi, 2100, Georgia

**Time:** 12:00 – 18:30

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#### Background:

The consultation meeting was held within the framework of the project “Development of Enguri/Rioni River Basin Management Plans in Georgia” primary objective of this assignment is to produce the elements and prepare the draft of the River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs) and the implementation dashboards for the Rioni and Enguri river basins in Georgia, covering 15,820 km<sup>2</sup> and 6,610 km<sup>2</sup> respectively. This aligns with the European Union Water Framework Directive (WFD) principles. The consultation meeting was held in order to familiarize the local and national stakeholders with the work conducted to date. The aim of the consultation was to:

- Present the preliminary results for development of the Enguri River Basin Management Plan - RBMP
- Discuss the main challenges in the river basin with the stakeholders
- Reaching an agreement on the main issues

**Agenda:** The meeting was split into two sessions, the morning session served as an introduction to the work conducted to date in the process of developing the draft river basin management plan for Enguri Basin. The afternoon session focused on detailed overview of the work conducted, main findings and issues identified for the basin.

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### Opening and Welcome Remarks:

The consultation meeting commenced with Irakli Tsanava, Representative of Samegrelo Zemo-Svaneti State Administration, welcoming participants and emphasizing the significance of the project. He thanked the programme for ongoing efforts in the region, specifically highlighting the importance of water resources and their sustainable use. Mr. Tsanava Expressed his readiness for further collaboration with the project experts and wished everyone a fruitful meeting.

Following the State Representative, Mariam Makarova, leading the Water Division at the MEPA Department of Environment and Climate Change, extended a her warm welcome to all participants, expressing appreciation for their attendance at this crucial consultation session. Emphasizing the importance of joint endeavors, she highlighted the crafting of the Enguri River Basin Management Plan as a key initiative for the sustainable oversight of water resources in Georgia. Ms. Makarova expressed her hope for a productive consultation meeting as well as fruitful future collaboration.

Yannick Pochon, the EU4Environment Water and Data Programme RBMP expert from the International Office of Water – OiEau, France, extended warm greetings to the participants. On behalf of the International Office of Water, he emphasized the program's dedication to supporting environmental initiatives and its ongoing collaboration with Georgia in the development of robust River Basin Management Plans. Mr. Pochon expressed gratitude for the diverse representation across various sectors, highlighting the importance of this multi-sectoral engagement. Wishing everyone a fruitful and collaborative meeting, he looked forward to the valuable insights that would emerge from this diverse group.

Following the opening remarks, the floor was opened for a tour de table in order to foster cooperation between the attendees and deepen the understanding of perspectives present at the consultation meeting.

After the opening session was concluded, the thematic presentations commenced, introducing the work conducted to date in Enguri Basin.

### Presentations:

Zurab Jincharadze took the floor, delivering a concise yet comprehensive overview of the EU4Environment Water and Data programme, with a specific focus on the development of the River Basin Management Plan in the Enguri River Basin. Mr. Jincharadze delved into the primary objectives and strategies of the program, underscoring its dedication to fostering sustainable environmental practices and facilitating data-driven decision-making.

The presentation underscored the program's significance in the Eastern Partner Countries, particularly in Georgia, where its aim is to enhance water resource management and environmental data collection. Mr. Jincharadze highlighted the collaborative nature of the initiative, stressing the importance of

partnerships between the EU and Georgia to achieve shared environmental goals specific to the Enguri River Basin.

Mariam Makarova, Head of Water Division at the MEPA Department of Environment and Climate Change, then took the stage to offer insights into the unique context and ongoing efforts for the development of River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs) in Georgia, referencing the Alazani-Iori, Chorokhi-Adjaristskali and Khrami-Debeda RBMPs. Her presentation outlined key elements and considerations involved in the development of the Enguri River Basin Management Plan. Ms. Makarova emphasized local nuances and challenges shaping water management strategies in the country, setting the stage for a more in-depth discussion during the consultation.

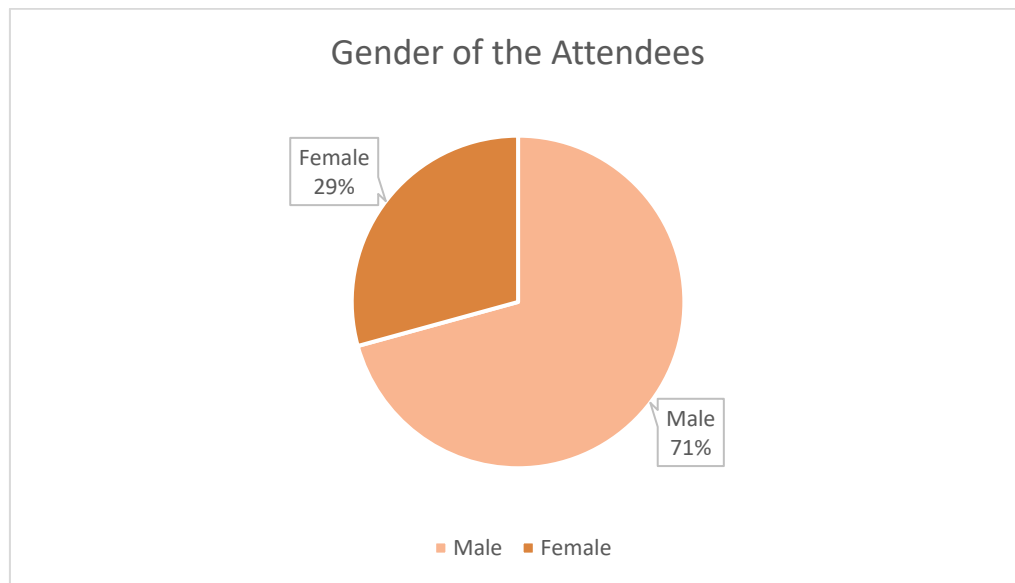
Maia Zumbulidze, representing the Regional Environmental Centre for the Caucasus (REC Caucasus), then guided the audience through the pressure and impact assessment in the context of river basin management plans, targeting the main pressures and drivers in the Enguri River Basin. Her presentation delved into the methodologies employed to assess environmental pressures and impacts within the basin. Ms. Zumbulidze's presentation focused on the analytical frameworks used to evaluate the effectiveness of proposed management strategies and their potential implications on the ecosystem.

Questions and Answers followed, with some clarifications being made in the process. The discussion of concrete details and concerns was scheduled for the afternoon session.

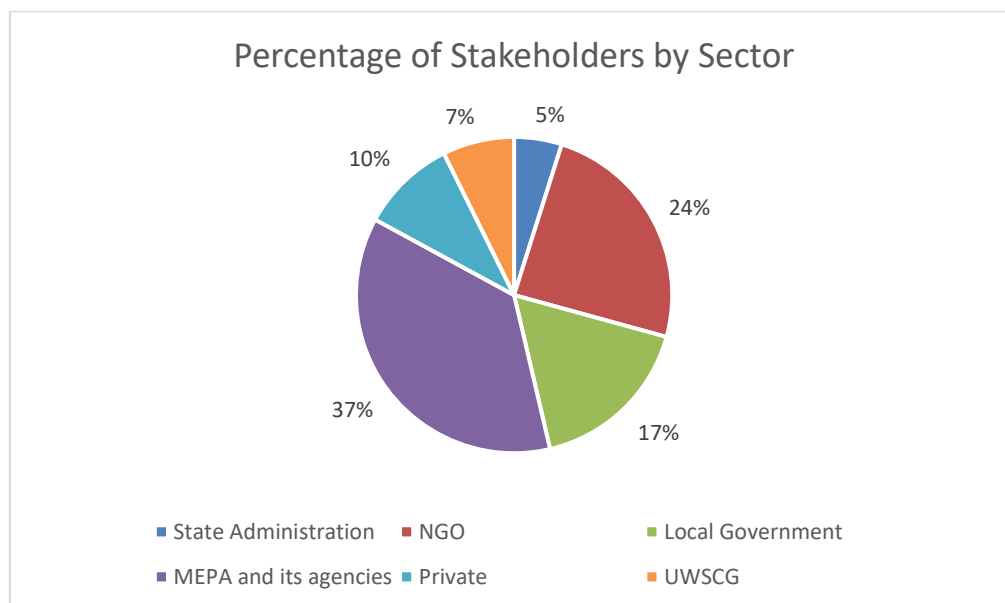
The afternoon session was kicked-off with a comprehensive exploration led by Giorgi Mikeladze and Gia Melikadze, focusing on the delineation of surface and underground water bodies in the Enguri River Basin. The presentation covered the identification, coding, and typological classification of water bodies, as well as the determination of hydro-morphological changes. Led by experts this session provided a technical understanding of the geographical and hydrological aspects crucial for the development of the Enguri River Basin Management Plan.

Following the presentations, the floor was opened for the discussion and identification of data needs and additional main issues in the Enguri River Basin, results of which are described below.

**Participants:** The meeting, saw a diverse group of participants representing various organizations, governmental bodies, and environmental stakeholders. In total, 41 participants attended the consultation meeting, out of which 12 were women and 29 were men. Below, please find the chart of the gender breakdown.



It is quite crucial to also look at the sectoral distribution of the stakeholders in attendance. The sectors represented at the consultation meeting are as follow:



Stakeholders were most prominently represented from the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture and its agencies: Rural Development Agency, National Environmental Agency, Georgian Amelioration. As the agencies play a pivotal role in the gathering necessary information, their strong presence provided an opportunity for discussing related challenges.

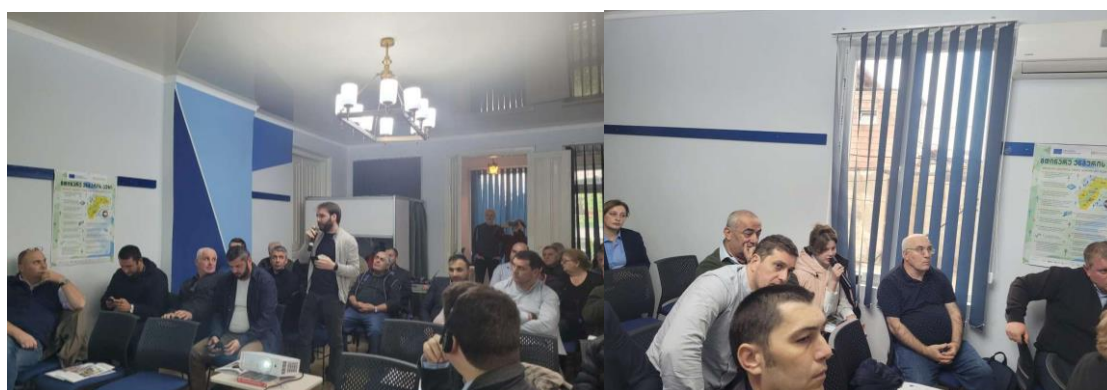
Second largest group was the NGO sector, as the priority was to gather input from community organizations. Large number of those representing the NGO sector are directly or indirectly involved in

the RBMP development process, thus providing insights regarding the working process and challenges in the data gathering process.

Additionally, representatives of local and national governments were present, providing valuable insights on on-the-ground situation in administrative units of Enguri Basin.

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## MAIN DISCUSSION POINTS



### TOP1: Main Issues of the Enguri River Basin

During the session, participants engaged in a comprehensive review of the main issues presented. There was a unanimous agreement that the issues highlighted by the expert team in charge of the development of the RBMP accurately reflected the pressing needs of the Enguri River Basin. In addition to the identified main issues, the participants collectively identified and discussed additional concerns that warrant attention. This inclusive approach aimed to ensure a thorough understanding of the complex challenges faced by the basin, laying the groundwork for targeted and effective strategies for environmental management and conservation.

### TOP2: Discussion on Pesticide Use

The attendees devoted considerable attention to the pervasive issue of pesticide use within the region. Recognizing the multifaceted nature of this concern, a separate and focused discussion was proposed to explore the intricacies of pesticide application. This dedicated discourse aimed to delve into the environmental impacts of widespread pesticide use and consider potential regulatory measures to mitigate adverse effects on water quality. The existing facilities for processing pesticide wastes were underscored, emphasizing a shared responsibility among farmers and producers to conscientiously dispose of remnants at these designated facilities. The ongoing monitoring practices, as highlighted, were acknowledged as integral to ensuring compliance and fostering the sustainable management of environmental challenges associated with pesticide usage.

### TOP3: Suggested Measures for Addressing Existing Issues

The participants actively contributed to a brainstorming session that resulted in a comprehensive list of suggested measures for addressing the identified issues in the Enguri River Basin. These measures encompassed a range of strategies, including enhanced pollution control measures, community engagement initiatives, and the implementation of sustainable agricultural practices. The discussion

aimed to provide a roadmap for the development and implementation of effective interventions, ensuring a holistic and collaborative approach to tackling the challenges faced by the basin.

#### **TOP4: Information Gathering - Local and National Government Involvement**

In the pursuit of accurate and up-to-date data for the Enguri River Basin, the participants identified key local and national government bodies that play pivotal roles in information provision. The discussion underscored the importance of collaboration and information sharing between stakeholders and these governmental entities. Government agency representatives from Rural Development Agency, National Environmental Agency and the National Agency of mines voiced their readiness for further cooperation. Emphasis was placed on establishing effective channels of communication to facilitate the seamless exchange of data, fostering a collaborative environment for evidence-based decision-making and sustainable management of the Enguri River Basin.

### **AGREEMENTS / DECISIONS**

During the discussions, the following key topics were prioritized by the attendees, which the project team has noted for inclusion in the final RBMP for Enguri River Basin:

- The participants emphasized the significance of the Enguri River as a crucial habitat for sturgeon in Georgia. They highlighted the presence of **six distinct species of sturgeon** in the river, underscoring its pivotal role in supporting and maintaining the sturgeon population in the region. The attendees acknowledged the need for concerted efforts to safeguard and sustain these species, recognizing the importance of the Enguri River in the overall conservation strategy for sturgeons.
- The consensus among the attendees was that the development of River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs) should be approached on **a basin-specific basis**. They stressed the importance of tailoring these plans to the unique characteristics of each significant river basin. Recognizing the diverse ecosystems and challenges across different basins, it was deemed preferable to adopt a customized and targeted approach in order to address specific environmental concerns and promote effective resource management.
- A critical aspect of the discussions centered around the **responsible management of pesticide wastes**. Attendees highlighted the existence of dedicated facilities for processing these wastes. It was emphasized that each farmer or producer carries the responsibility of transporting the remnants of pesticide usage to these facilities. Furthermore, the importance of ongoing monitoring practices to ensure compliance with waste disposal regulations and to track the impact on the environment was underscored. The group emphasized the need for a collective commitment to sustainable agricultural practices and waste management to mitigate the potential adverse effects of pesticide residues on the ecosystem.

### **NEXT ACTIONS**

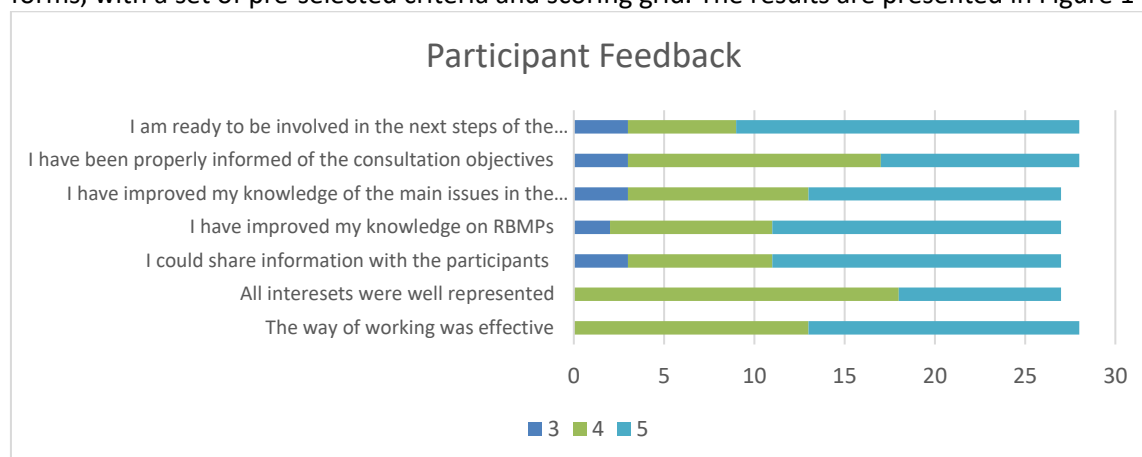
The participants of the meeting agreed that the stakeholders will actively participate in the process of determining additional priority areas as needed by the project team. Additionally, the environmental data regarding pesticide use will further be clarified and included in the draft RBMP which will be presented at the next consultation meeting.

### **NEXT MEETING**

The next consultation meeting was decided to be scheduled upon the availability of the first draft of RBMP, alongside the proposed programme of measures. Additionally, the participants expressed their readiness to communicate with the project experts throughout the RBMP development process.

## MEETING EVALUATION

At the end of the consultation meeting, the participants were provided with the meeting evaluation forms, with a set of pre-selected criteria and scoring grid. The results are presented in Figure 1 below.



**Figure 1. Meeting Evaluation Results.** The question was “On a scale from 1 (not at all) to 5 (yes, totally), how would you answer the following statements”

An insightful analysis of participant feedback reveals a notable trend, where the assessment of "All interests were well represented" received the lowest proportional score. Similarly, readiness for involvement, along with the effectiveness of disseminating information about the meeting's objectives and ensuring equal participation, was also comparatively lower. This observed trend can be attributed to the constraints posed by the limited duration of working group sessions, leading to variations in the levels of engagement among stakeholders. Acknowledging this, the project team has proactively identified areas for improvement. To address these concerns, the team intends to implement strategic measures during the upcoming consultation meeting. These measures include a) extending the time allocated for discussion and b) optimizing group formations based on shared interests to foster a more inclusive and participatory environment. This analytical approach aims to enhance the effectiveness of stakeholder engagement and ensure a more equitable representation of diverse interests in future project activities.

## DISCLAIMER

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December 2023



EU4Environment in Eastern Partner Countries:  
Water Resources and Environmental Data (ENI/2021/425-550)

## "Development of Enguri River Basin Management Plan in Georgia"

### Consultation Meeting

**Date:**  
14 November, 2023

**Place:**  
Zugdidi Center of Democratic  
Engagement  
52 Rustaveli str., Zugdidi, 2100,  
Georgia

**Time:** 12:00-18:30

#### Aim of the meeting:

- Presentation of the preliminary results for development of the Enguri River Basin Management Plan - RBMP
- Discussing the main challenges in the river basin with the stakeholders
- Agree on main issues

## AGENDA

**Tuesday, November 14, 2023**

Local time	Topic	Speaker
12:00-13:00	Registration and Light Lunch	
<b>First Session</b>	<b>River Basin Management Plans - Introduction</b>	
13:00-13:10	Open and welcoming remarks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mariam Makarova, Head of Water Division, MEPA Department of Environment and Climate Change</li> <li>- Yannick Pochon, International Office of Water - OiEau / EU4Env Program Representative</li> </ul>
13:10-13:20	Introduction of participants ( <i>tour de table</i> )	- All Participants
13:20-13:30	<b>EU4Environment Program</b> Brief overview of the program "Water Resources and Environmental Data"	- Zurab Jincharadze EU4Env Programme Representative in Georgia

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13:30-13:45	<b>River Basin Management Plans in Georgia</b>	- Mariam Makarova, Head of Water Division, MEPA Department of Environment and Climate Change
13:45-14:35	<b>Pressure/impact assessment</b> - Pressure/impact assessment of river basin management plans	- Maia Zumbulidze, REC Caucasus
14:35-14:50	<b>Q/A</b>	
14:50-15:30	<b>Delineation of surface and underground water bodies of the Enguri basin</b> - Identification, coding and typological classification of water bodies - Determination of hydro-morphological changes	- Giorgi Mikeladze, GIS-Lab / REC Caucasus - Gia Melikadze, Project Expert
15:30-15:45	<b>Q/A</b>	
<b>Second Session</b>		
15:45-16:00	<b>Main Issues/ Challenges</b>	- Nino Rostomashvili, REC Caucasus
16:00-16:15	<b>Q/A</b>	
16:15-16:45	<b>Coffee Break</b>	
16:45-18:00	<b>Interactive session and WG discussions:</b> - Data, information sources, and processes - The main challenges in the river basins	- Consultants and EU4Env Experts, All Participants
18:00-18:20	<b>Presentations of the findings</b>	- WG representatives, EU4Env Experts
18:20-18:30	<b>Closing the meeting</b> - Final remarks and next steps, closing the meeting	- Mariam Makarova, Department of Environment and Climate Change, Head of Water Division, MEPA

### Background and Objectives

The main objective of this assignment is to produce the elements and prepare the draft of the RBMPs and its implementation dashboards for the Rioni and Enguri river basins in Georgia (covering respectively 15,820 km<sup>2</sup> and 6,610 km<sup>2</sup>), in line with the Water Framework Directive (WFD) principles. The River Basin Management Plans are the key tools for implementing the Water Resources management and are drawn up after extensive public consultation and are valid for a six-year period.

Other key documents and links to the reported River basin management plans - along with other important information from the process of implementing the Water Framework Directive

This information production will be based on available data, existing reports and literature, meetings with stakeholders, data formatting and exploitation, brainstorming, experts' judgement, etc. No new field survey neither additional census is asked at these first steps of the planning process.

Some consultation events at sub-basin level are foreseen including 2 plenary meetings to share the initial characterisation, the draft Programme of Measures (PoM) and draft RBMP.

### About EU4Environment – Water Resources and Environmental Data

This programme aims at improving people's wellbeing 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 policy-makers and citizens. It ensures continuity of the Shared Environmental Information System Phase II and the EU Water Initiative Plus for Eastern Partnership programmes.

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 action 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.