



9TH MEETING OF THE INTER-MINISTERIAL STEERING COMMITTEE OF THE NATIONAL POLICY DIALOGUE ON INTEGRATED WATER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT IN THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA (Chisinau, 26 March 2026)

Summary Record

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1. Purpose and participants

The National Policy Dialogue (NPD) is a whole-of-government, multi-stakeholder platform supporting water policy reforms. NPDs emerged as part of cooperation with the European Union and have been instrumental in the EU integration and the accession process. The main outcomes of the NPDs are policy packages, such as legislative acts, national strategies, ministerial orders, and implementation plans.

A total of 87 participants¹ attended this annual meeting, both in person and online. Attendees included representatives from the Ministry of Environment, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Infrastructure and Regional Development, the Ministry of Economic Development and Digitalisation, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry, and the Bureau of European Integration. Representatives of four EU Member States, the European Commission and the EU Delegation to Moldova took part in the discussion. Also, international partners such as the World Bank, EBRD, AFD, GIZ, ADP, UNDP, UNEP and the EU4Green Recovery East implementing partners contributed to the discussion.

2. Main discussion points

2.1. High-Level opening session

Key messages from the opening statements provided by Gheorghe Hajder, Minister of Environment of the Republic of Moldova, H.E. Petra Lärke, Swedish Ambassador to the

¹ 33 men and 54 women.

Implementing partners:

Republic of Moldova, Ms Laura Zampetti, of the European Commission, Ms Yeşim Oruç, UN Resident Coordinator in Moldova, and Ms Sandra Horina, Head of Cooperation, Austria Development Agency, included the following:

- Moldova aims at **transposing and implementing the EU water acquis** and is **making progress** on the path of accession. Gaps remain, for example, in the implementation of the Water Framework Directive or the transposition of the Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive. In this process, Moldova can rely on support from the EU for Green Recovery East programme.
- Moldova has engaged in systematic **transboundary water cooperation** with Romania and Ukraine. This engagement, alongside EU support, has helped to address shared issues, including a recent accident linked to Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. The oil spill into the Dniester River on March 7, resulting from a Russian attack on the Dniester hydropower complex in Ukraine, illustrated that water must be recognised as a **strategic security resource**, not only concerning climate change challenges but also in transboundary and geopolitical matters. The incident impacted downstream Moldovan towns days later, depriving residents of potable water for several days. Through close collaboration with Romania and Ukraine, and with support from the EU Civil Protection Mechanism, the Moldovan Government implemented measures to contain and reduce water contamination, conduct laboratory analyses of critical pollutants, and organise water distribution for the affected population. Lessons learned for Moldova include the need for a water resources inventory and improved preparedness and response protocols.
- In a **Team Europe spirit**, support from Sweden on wastewater reuse in agriculture and transboundary water management was highlighted, while the progress on SDG 6 was commended by the UN. A human capital deficit was highlighted as one of the key obstacles in the water sector and for addressing climate-induced challenges. Austria recalled its support for water supply and sanitation in Moldova and welcomed further cooperation and alignment with EU good practice.

2.2. Thematic session 1: Policies and institutional framework for water in the context of EU integration

The European Commission acknowledged Moldova's progress in implementing the Water Framework Directive and other elements of the EU water law, recognised following the bilateral screening exercise held in Brussels in June 2025. Although national institutions are in place, infrastructure gaps remain, necessitating substantial investment. Institutional capacity needs to be strengthened to go beyond the transposition of legislation to implementation. Additional gaps include capacity building and human capital, particularly in water sector monitoring and laboratory technicians. Long-term financing and implementation plans are required, which may involve modifications to the education system and technical training programs. This will be critical to ensure that there are enough qualified personnel.

As part of the plenary discussion, the participants stressed that in the water and sanitation sector, national targets are being pursued until full integration, but more time is needed to meet EU standards. Negotiations regarding the implementation schedule have started, including transition periods, especially for areas requiring significant investments,

infrastructure modernisation, and capacity development. Participants emphasised that while the discussion is on water, it's actually much broader than that – quality of life, education, and infrastructure are all tied in.

As the chair of the UNECE Water and Health Protocol, Moldova will host its Meeting of the Parties in Chisinau in 2028. Protocol adherence aligns with the EU Directives required for accession.

The OSCE presented a GEF-funded cross-border cooperation project focused on strengthening water resource management between Moldova and Ukraine, emphasising the shared goal of EU accession as a driving force for the project.

The Romanian Embassy in the Republic of Moldova discussed Romania's journey toward European integration, highlighting challenges including infrastructure deficits, pollution management (especially nitrate pollution), and the need for institutional reform. Key lessons included the importance of digital monitoring, cost-recovery principles, and long-term planning. The transition to a basin approach posed challenges due to contentious reforms, while consolidating small utilities was necessary to improve financing and infrastructure planning. The discussion also covered specific cooperative initiatives, including cross-border water supply projects and technical assistance.

Attendees expressed heartfelt appreciation for the efforts of Romanian colleagues in addressing the Dniester pollution disaster. A proposal was made to invest in an automated monitoring facility to enable rapid transboundary action and exchange in case of emergencies. Regarding the need to enhance communication at the regional level and the associated funding needs, the UN emphasised its support through projects with Sweden and other partners. It also called for guidance from Moldova on how to allocate funds effectively.

2.3. Thematic session 2: Economic aspects of water management

The OECD provided a scene-setting presentation that linked the experiences of EU Member States with different approaches for financing water security and alignment with the EU Water Framework Directive. The presentation emphasised that there were many different paths to alignment, and that cost-recovery (or “water paying for water”) was a holistic concept, involving the balancing of tariffs, transfers, and taxes. The OECD linked this to proposed reforms for Moldova's enabling environment for water finance and Moldova's water tax.

EBRD supported the OECD analysis, recognising that significant financing is available for water security-related investments, but that utilities' indebtedness and small-scale investments pose challenges. While highlighting new work planned to support Moldova's path to EU membership, the EBRD emphasised the need for clearly articulated goals and investment planning for water security.

The Ministry of Environment provided an update on a forthcoming legal reform in Moldova aimed at revising environmental economic instruments, including pollution and water taxes. The forthcoming law is a partial operationalisation of the roadmap on reforming the water tax, developed by the OECD as part of a previous EU-funded programme, and marks an exciting development.

The complexity of water finance and of reforming water-related economic instruments was evident during the discussion, with stakeholders presenting a range of at times contrasting

views – one participant argued the barrier to tariff reform is mismanagement at the local level, while another argued that tariff flexibility at the local level provides the ability to adapt to local conditions.

The Romanian Embassy in Moldova provided insights and lessons learned from its EU accession process, highlighting that basin management is key to cooperation with regional water operators, especially when smaller agencies lack the capacity to do so. Romania also offered guidance based on its experience with International Financing Institution grant application processes.

Ultimately, participants agreed that water protection and economic and social development should go hand in hand. Sustainable operation of institutions and infrastructure was identified as requiring cost recovery through various measures. This must be considered within the broader context of water financing strategies. Moreover, effective management of water resources and educational campaigns are necessary to encourage households and society as a whole to adopt better water usage behaviours.

2.4. Thematic session 3: Water for economic development

The meeting offered the opportunity to better understand the views of the agriculture, wastewater and health sectors on water use and management:

- The Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Moldova presented the country's progress on water reuse and circular economy initiatives, highlighting the efforts to harmonise its legislative framework with European standards, including a feasibility study on wastewater reuse in three localities and the drafting of a regulation on minimum requirements for water reuse.
- The National Agency for Land Reclamation (ANIF) discussed the current state of irrigation systems in Moldova, noting that only 16,900 hectares are effectively irrigated, and referred to ongoing projects aimed at expanding irrigation to 30,000 hectares by 2030, which is 10% of the area irrigated before 1991². The discussion also touched on challenges such as insufficient infrastructure, especially in rural areas, and the need for modernisation to improve productivity and water efficiency (currently equalling 8,9 USD/m³ in Moldova versus, e.g. Albania 14 USD/m³, Portugal 32 USD/m³, and Slovenia 56 USD/m³)³.
- The Ministry of Agriculture spoke of its good cooperation with the environment authorities and its policies on land improvement, including forest planting to protect fields and along river basins covering around 3,000 hectares; use of groundwater for agriculture is strictly regulated and thus almost not used; awareness raising on agroecological measures among the farmers.
- The Group AFD Moldova presented its integrated **Agriculture and Irrigation Development Programme**, which includes a EUR 45 million loan for the rehabilitation of the centralised irrigation system and EUR 15 million in EU grants for small-scale rainwater harvesting structures and technical assistance.

² Soviet-era irrigation in Moldova left a complex legacy. Although massive infrastructure projects temporarily boosted agricultural yields, they were highly water- and energy-intensive, resulted in soil degradation and pollution. As part of a package of measures, smart irrigation is important in the context of climate adaptation.

³ SDG 6.4.1 Change in water-use efficiency over time in the Republic of Moldova, progress over time, compared to other countries (and areas) in the region – from [Country \(or area\) | SDG 6 Data](#), 2022

- The Ministry of Infrastructure and Regional Development stressed the importance of integrating wastewater treatment plants into functional systems with sufficient human capacity, proper planning, and a mix of financing sources to ensure efficiency and sustainability. Some of the Ministry's current focus areas include cooperation with energy authorities on the feasibility of installing hydropower turbines at wastewater treatment plants, sludge management, and data collection.
- UNIDO presented the findings of an initial assessment of wastewater treatment infrastructure conducted under the EU4GRE programme. The assessment aimed to identify the current condition and performance of wastewater treatment plants (WWTPs) in Moldova and to support the selection of pilot sites for process optimisation and energy efficiency improvements. The presentation highlighted significant gaps in wastewater collection, treatment performance, monitoring systems, and data availability across the sector. While progress has been made in aligning the regulatory framework with EU directives, including revisions to the Water Law and the development of River Basin Management Plans, implementation and enforcement remain limited. Of the 272 WWTPs currently operating in Moldova, only 31 provide treatment that meets normative standards. The presentation also outlined opportunities under the EU4GRE programme, including feasibility studies on treatment performance and energy efficiency, pilot assessments at selected WWTPs (Căușeni, Făleşti and Ungheni), and targeted capacity-building activities for WWTP operators and decision makers to strengthen institutional and operational capacities in the sector.
- The National Agency for Public Health reported on progress under the previous National Programme of the Protocol on Water and Health (2016–2025), highlighting an 80% implementation rate and a threefold reduction in waterborne diseases, including hepatitis A, *E. coli*, and parasites. An updated programme for 2026–2030 is currently in draft form and will be presented in autumn 2026. Key priorities include reducing pollution risks; promoting rainwater harvesting for irrigation; strengthening collaboration with universities to integrate drinking water directives (DWD) into academic programmes; addressing the 60% gap in sewage treatment coverage between rural and urban areas; and securing sustainable funding. Current financing relies on approximately 30% from state sources and 70% from international sources, with rising costs of materials and services posing an additional challenge.

3. Conclusions and next steps

- Need for cost recovery mechanisms, blended financing approaches for infrastructure investment. EU4Green Recovery East to work with the Ministry to confirm the exact focus of activities for 2026-27 from the proposed menu of reform options.
- Support from international partners for the implementation of the EU water directives and SDG 6 will continue.
- The Ministry of Environment will continue its efforts to implement the approved legislation to date, and further its progress with EU Directive alignment.
- Based on the outcomes of the discussion, the NPD participants outlined the following next steps:

N°	Task	Who	Target
1	Organise a follow-up coordination meeting with the NPD, involving local government representatives.	UBA, Ministry of Environment, Moldova and Sandra Horina, ADA	Q2/3 2026
2	Review and comment on proposed legislative changes for water-related economic instruments.	EU4Green Recovery East (EU4GRE) - OECD	April 2026
3	Assist with analysing water pollution related to the incident in the Dniester River.	EU4GRE – UBA	Q2 2026
4	Update the National Water and Health Programme.	MoE, Ministry of Health, EU4GRE - UNECE	By end of 2026
5.	Develop capacity and necessary policies on rainwater harvesting.	ANIF, MoE, EU4GRE – UNECE	By mid-2027
6.	Discuss human capital and water-related education needs with the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Education, identify and implement support measures.	MoE, EU4Green Recovery East - UNECE	By spring 2027

About the EU4Green Recovery East programme

The EU4Green Recovery East programme is a regional programme supporting the EU's Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries on their path towards a greener, more resilient, and competitive economy.

EU-funded programme of EUR 21.3 million (2025-2028), it builds on the results of a decade of EU support for better water management and green economy adoption and focuses on five key components: (1) promoting a circular economy, (2) ensuring water is managed as a critical resource, (3) advancing legal approximation with EU environmental legislation, (4) strengthening integration into EU-wide environmental cooperation and data exchange, and (5) fostering cross-border environmental cooperation.

The programme is implemented by five partners: Expertise France with the French International Office for Water (OiEau), OECD, UNECE, UNIDO, and the Environment Agency Austria (UBA), as the consortium coordinator.

<https://www.eu4greenrecoveryeast.eu>

4. Annexes

AGENDA

Time	Item	Speaker
08:30–09:00	Registration and welcome coffee	
09:00–10:00	High-level Opening Welcoming statements and discussion on progress and priorities for strengthening water management in line with EU and EU Member State good practice	Moderator: Ms. Victoria Gratii, State Secretary, Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Moldova - Mr. Gheorghe Hajder, Minister of Environment of Moldova - Ms. Laura Zampetti, DG ENEST, European Commission (online message) - H.E. Petra Lärke, Swedish Ambassador to the Republic of Moldova - Ms. Yeşim Oruç, UN Resident Coordinator in Moldova - Ms. Sandra Horina, Head of Cooperation, Austria Development Agency.
10:00–11:30	Thematic session 1: Policies and institutional framework for water in the context of EU integration Setting the scene: introductory statement and presentation from the Ministry of Environment High-Level Round-Table Policy Discussion: The high-level panel will discuss the outcomes of the EU accession screening process recently conducted by Moldova. The panel will examine the institutional reforms implemented by the Moldovan government, including progress to date, operational implications, and future priorities. A representative from an EU member country will share their experiences and lessons learned from their own accession process.	Moderator: Mr. Matthew Griffiths, OECD - Ms. Aurelia Donos, Acting Head, Division of Policies for IWRM, Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Moldova (introductory presentation) - Ion Salaru, Chairman, Protocol on Water and Health - Valeria Hutuleac, Deputy General Secretary of the Ministry of Environment - Dana Bogdan, Environmental Programme Officer, Environmental Co-operational Unit, OSCE - Mr. Ovidiu-Viorel Năftănăilă, the Romanian Ambassador's first adviser, Representative from EU member country Open floor for interventions from NPD participants
11:30–12:00	Coffee	

Time	Item	Speaker
12:00-13:30	Thematic session 2: Economic aspects of water management Setting the scene: introductory statement/PPT on the enabling environment for water finance and the reform roadmap for Moldova's water tax. A panel discussion will build on the previous day's workshop to discuss key economic issues of water management: - Priorities and opportunities for implementing water tax reforms - River Basin Council financing - Whole-of-government approach to financing the water sector and approaches to finance the Water Framework Directive - Environmental Data and policymaking Other topics for discussion: - Taxonomy - Green Bonds	Moderator: Mr. Matthew Griffiths, OECD • Mr. Guy Halpern, OECD • Representative from the Ministry of Environment • Ms Anna Jeleapov, Representative of the Dniester basin committee • Representative from EU Member country (France) • Representative from international projects Open floor for interventions from NPD participants
13:30-14:30	Lunch	
14:30-16:00	Thematic Session 3: Water for economic development Setting the scene: introductory statement/PPT Topics for discussion: - Irrigation, agrochemicals and good agricultural practices - Economic efficiency of WWTP operation: options and plans - Water and health - Groupe AFD project on irrigation and climate adaptation of agriculture	Moderator: Ms. Tamara Kutonova, UNECE) • Aurelia Donos, Acting Head of the Policies for IWRM Division • Ms. Angela Dogotari, Head of Land Improvements and Land Fund Directorate, Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry • Mr. Vasile Nemțanu – Head of Hydro-Amelioration Service • Sergiu Tăbăcaru, Head of WSS Division, Ministry of Infrastructure and regional development • Mr. Maxime Lebovics – Groupe AFD Chișinău • Ministry of Infrastructure and Regional Development • Ms. Arsha James, UNIDO • Mr. Ion Salaru, National Agency for Public Health Open floor for interventions from NPD participants

Time	Item	Speaker
16:00-16:30	Coffee	
16:30-17:30	Session 4: Closing Remarks, conclusions and next steps - Meeting summary - Decisions and recommendations - Feedback questionnaire on the NPD and next steps	Moderator: Mr. Matthew Griffiths, OECD • Ms. Victoria Gratii, State Secretary, Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Moldova • Mr. Gerhard Pulfer, EU4Green Recovery East Programme
17:30-19:30	Cocktail and networking	

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Total: 87 participants (33 men and 54 women)

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