



## **EU-CA Working Group on Environment and Climate Change (WGECC)**

### **Work programme 2020-2022**

*Adopted on 13 February 2020*

The overall objective of the WGECC is to promote sustainable development and circular economy in Central Asia (CA) through the improvement of environmental, climate and water policies at the national level to approximate them to EU standards. The WGECC will also promote sound green investments in relevant sectors in order to contribute to a tangible reduction in man-made pollution, including a measurable reduction of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

Following the decision of the Sixth EU – Central Asia High-Level Conference on Environment and Water Cooperation (Tashkent, 2019), during the next three years the WGECC will focus on the following priority areas: environmental governance, circular economy, sustainable consumption and production, climate change (adaptation and mitigation), integrated water resources management and cross-cutting issues.

The WGECC will also focus on priority areas such as promoting sustainable land management and combating land degradation, as well as restoring the glacier monitoring system as it is the most vulnerable object to climate change.

The WGECC activities will be based on a high-level policy dialogue between the European Union and the governments of five CA countries structured in line with the EU environmental *acquis communautaire* to cover the following areas of environmental regulation:

- Horizontal (general) legislation
- Air quality
- Waste management
- Water quality
- Nature protection and biodiversity
- Industrial pollution
- Chemicals
- Climate change.

While the above reflect relevant areas of the *acquis* another very important topic to address is Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM). This will primarily be covered in the context of the work of UNECE within the framework of the EU Water Initiative (EUWI). However, it should also be ensured that future WGECC meetings pay due attention to this, while recognising that other EU funded programmes, such as Central Asia Water & Energy Programme (CAWEP) and the Nexus Dialogue may also offer venues to address it. Other issues

such as environmental noise, civil protection, etc. could be considered, provided that CA countries express an interest.

The current environmental policy issues will be linked to concrete investment projects to address them through local, national and regional actions and in strict alignment with the current ongoing work at the national level.

The EU will lead the policy dialogue through High-Level Conferences and meetings of the WGECC, as well as via 'clinic' workshops with International Financial Institutions (IFIs) to identify and develop green investment projects (not being limited by corporate selection criteria set by international financial organisations) through blending and from other public and private sector sources through a more bottom-up approach. Other capacity building activities will be carried out to help CA countries to achieve measurable reductions in man-made pollution and protect biodiversity.

The WGECC will meet on an annual basis and a High-Level Conference will take place either in Brussels or in one of the EU Member States in 2022.

The WGECC will be supported by the EU-funded WECOOP project that will function as a technical secretariat of the WGECC and its Steering Committee. The current phase of WECOOP started in mid-October 2019 and will last until mid-October 2022.

The meetings of the WGECC will be the occasion to report on current progress, discuss possible issues and to jointly define further topics to address. In pursuance of the decisions made at the WGECC meetings, a number of technical activities and events will be carried out to assist CA countries in their day-to-day work to implement environmental policies and advance in the preparation of project proposals. National focal points appointed by CA countries as members of the Steering Committee and other members of the WGECC will interact with each other and relevant representatives of the EU in CA countries in between the meetings of the WGECC.

For the next three years, the WGECC activities will be structured as follows:

- **Capacity Building** – following needs assessment, thematic training workshops for national experts in CA as well as study tours in Europe to support the development of environmental policies and frameworks and the introduction of relevant **environmental EU approaches and standards** will be organised by the WECOOP team based on specific requests from CA countries. Special attention will be paid to present relevant European Best Available Techniques (BAT) and provision of international expertise in BAT and development of BREFs. In addition, assistance will be encouraged to facilitate the desire of Central Asian countries on organization of up to 6 months training for environmental agencies staff in the relevant departments of the EU and EU Member States.
- **Legal Framework Improvement** – following a mapping of the current status of environmental policies, frameworks and legislation, including on water and climate change in CA countries and based on specific requests from CA countries, technical

expertise will be provided by the WECOOP team to **strengthen the legal framework of CA countries** (improve Environmental Codes and other environment related laws and regulations) in line with the European approaches.

- **Environmental Performance Review (EPR)** – close cooperation with UNECE EPR to facilitate the **implementation of the recommendations included in the EPR Reports** to support CA countries to find possible partners for their implementation. Selected relevant experiences of EU Member States will be presented to CA countries to illustrate successful approaches to common environmental issues and share the lessons learnt.
- **Regional 'Clinic' Workshops with IFIs** – where possible project ideas/proposals will be shared among CA countries, EU Member States and the major donors and financing institutions active in the region (EIB, EBRD, GCF, AFD, KfW *et al.*), in coordination with the ongoing work of the EU Delegations at national level. A set of possible bankable ideas/proposals will be selected for further follow-up support by the WECOOP team according to the current standards and requirements set by the EU Delegations, other donors and IFIs. Such support will be provided until the proposal is submitted to the relevant donor/IFI. To achieve this goal, expert (or group of experts) will be assigned for this purpose for each Central Asian country for the preparation of project proposals.
- **EUWI National Policy Dialogues (NPD)** – close cooperation with UNECE to enhance IWRM and inter-sectoral coordination for water security at the national level in CA countries to support sustainable development.
- **Facilitation of dialogue with EU institutions and member states** - Given the desire of Central Asian countries to establish closer contacts with the environmental authorities of EU member countries, the project implementation team WECOOP will organise presentation events in Europe to discuss potential opportunities in environmental cooperation, climate change and water resources, where delegates of CA countries (up to 2 per country) will be able to discuss with EU and EU member states agencies potential areas of concrete cooperation opportunities, including issues related to scientific exchange and internships.

The EU – Central Asia development cooperation in the areas that fall under the scope of the WGECC activities will be implemented not only by the WECOOP project, but also by other ongoing and future EU-funded programmes and projects implemented in Central Asia such as CAWEP, NEXUS, Switch-Asia, DRR, etc.