



International & Transboundary Cooperation

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Background

REC Caucasus was established in 2000 by the governments of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and the European Union.



RECC's main aim is to assist in solving environmental problems as well as in developing the civil society in the countries of the South Caucasus

For over the past two decades, REC Caucasus programs and innovative approaches have led to transformative changes in water management sector that have contributed to 3 pillars of sustainable development providing blueprint towards achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the South Caucasus Countries.

Support in introduction of Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM), improve *water quality* and wastewater *infrastructure* development as key elements to achieve EU Water framework directive have been identified as one of the core focal areas for the activities of RECC in the past years as a means to foster equitable and efficient management and sustainable utilization of water resources for the economic growth and human security.

Regional Context

- South Caucasus is Eastern Europe's one of the largest regions, with the total area of **186,100 km²** and population of about **17.2** million
- The three South Caucasus countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia share common resources and common problems related to the trans-boundary water resources management
- The Kura and Aras Rivers are the two major and the largest transboundary water courses of the region
- The Kura-Aras drainage basin occupies greater part of the South Caucasus. The total area of the Basin is about **188,000 km²** and in addition to the three South Caucasus countries shares borders with Iran and Turkey



Existing Agreements

- Soviet time agreements between Armenia-Turkey (1927), Armenia-Iran (1957), and Azerbaijan-Iran on joint use of Aras river for irrigation, hydro power and domestic use;
- Bilateral agreements between Georgia-Armenia (1998), Georgia-Azerbaijan (1998) MoEs on cooperation in environmental field;
- MoU between Armenia-Iran on joint monitoring of Aras River (2001);
- MoU between Georgian and Azerbaijan Environmental Ministries (2007) on cooperation included establishment of a working group on exchanging information and joint monitoring of transboundary waters
- European Neighborhood Policy Action Plans (2006): Riparian states are committed "to identify possibilities with neighboring countries for enhanced regional co-operation, in particular with regard to water issues"
- Individual Partnership Action Plans with NATO: the countries have committed to participate with their neighbors in the Science for Peace project on Environmental Impact of Pollutants in a Trans-Boundary Context objective of conducting an assessment of trans-boundary impact on environmental pollution in a regional context

Main Issues – Kura River Basin

- Need for improvements to be made in the data structures and information flows to facilitate decision making
- Development of a joint Transboundary River Monitoring Programme to harmonise sampling and analysis methods between the SC countries
- Need for pilot projects, addressed by: Draft river basin management plans (RBMP) for 5 pilot river basins using EU Water Framework Directive methodology
- Need for the development of Technical Guidelines, Training, and EU Study Tour for the beneficiaries' staff from the Project Countries
- Lack of public awareness of the priority water issues in the Kura River basin



KURA II and III - Trans-boundary River Management for the Kura River Basin

- Practical understanding and adoption of common approach to water quality monitoring and assessment based on WFD
- Practical integration of biological, physico-chemical, and hydro-morphological quality elements in one field survey program
- Identification of sites representing reference conditions (high status)
- Reinforcement of cooperation and trust between the project countries
- Update of the Joint Information Systems for 2 transboundary river basins - Debed/Khrami (AM/GE) and Alazani/Ganikh (GE/AZ)



Main Issues – Alazani-Iori River Basin

- There is no legal basis to support implementation of Water Framework directive;
- There are no river basin councils in place;
- Absence of monitoring network of the surface and ground waters of Alazani basin, with abundant rivers;
- Insufficient number of automatic hydrographic and water quality monitoring stations in Alazani basin;
- Water scarcity (increasing trend of water demand from energy, irrigation and water supply systems);
- Weak Water quality monitoring system, including Biological monitoring, ground water monitoring and data processing;
- Lack of information on use of Pesticides and fertilisers;
- Lack of water use data management system;
- Disturbance of environmental flow due to absence of respective norms and standards.

Development of Draft River Basin Management Plan for Alazani/Iori River Basins in Georgia

The main objective of this assignment was to produce the elements for the draft of the RBMP and its implementation dashboard for the Alazani / Iori river basins in Georgia (22 000 and 4700 km² respectively), in line with the Water Framework Directive principles.

Ensuring the involvement of all relevant stakeholders and specifically, through transboundary collaboration. Water quality checks have been conducted in all three countries.



Opportunities

- In South Caucasus countries, qualified experts show their readiness to collaborate on various projects focusing on water resource management.
- REC Caucasus, representing the 3 South Caucasus countries, received the mandate to implement integrated water resource management activities in 2010, specifically targeting Kura River Basin.
- Water topics are a high priority in the South Caucasus countries and bilateral committees have been established in Armenia-Georgia and Georgia-Azerbaijan on governmental level and the economic commissions established, take water issues into account to a degree.
- International Network of Basin Organizations (INBO)' experience in river basin management can be utilized in the region and be used in order to support informed decision-making

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Thank you for your attention!