



## **Instruments for integrated and transboundary watershed management in Georgia**

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Integrated water resources management includes a number of approaches: integration of water sources (mainly ground- and surface-water sources); linkage of social and economic development and land and water uses within the context of watersheds, groundwater basins, and estuaries; decentralization of government services to local authorities, private enterprises, and communities; stakeholder participation in decision-making and involvement in project planning and implementation; integration of sectoral water demands; integration of water-resources planning and management into the framework of the national planning process; consideration of the needs of aquatic ecosystems for water; coastal-zone management; recognition of water as a social, ecological, and economic good; contingency planning to mitigate the social and economic effects of natural disasters; conservation of soil and water; and prevention and reduction of pollutant discharges.

Unfortunately, currently acting water law of Georgia (adopted in 1997) is out of dated with lack of IWRM mechanisms and basin approaches. Now, the Ministry of Environment of Georgia is developing a new water policy and law based on the basin approach and with elements of IWRM. In this respect good thing is that the draft water law is also harmonized with EU WFD.

As Georgia has several transboundary rivers and lakes it is important to conduct basin management in compliance with neighbor countries' respective activity. So one of the instruments for transboundary water resources management could be Convention on the Protection of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Helsinki 1992). The convention encourages riparian parties enter into bilateral and multilateral agreements. Such agreements and the joint bodies established under these agreements could be play significant role in transboundary watershed management.

Water monitoring data exchange among riparian countries is one of the intrinsic instrument, which allows to have real picture of the state of water bodies within particular basins. In this respect Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia, as a riparian countries have been implementing several international projects focusing on the improvement of their water monitoring and data exchanging capacity. It is good starting point and background for Georgia step by step adopt river basin management.

It should be mentioned that legal instruments such as new water law, above mentioned water convention, bilateral or multilateral agreements could significantly promote of better integrated and transboundary watershed management in Georgia. Using these instruments on the first step should be followed by other e.g. economic instruments in the light of cross sectoral approach. Integrated water-resources management should be linked to social and economic development and should address land and water uses and the conservation of biodiversity within the context of river basins and aquifers. Existed water data and information programs should be strengthened to support integrated management.

Having good water policy and legislation, water resources assessment and monitoring data, it is necessary also to develop the plans for IWRM and strengthen decentralization of water institutions to the lowest level.

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