



Strategic Framework for Adaptation to Climate Change in the Neman River Basin

2015

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Expert group:

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This document has been developed based on the outcomes of the above Project¹, in whose implementation a team consisting of the following experts was involved: V. N. Korneev, A. A. Volchak, L. N. Hertman, I. P. Usava, V. N. Anufriev, A. V. Pakhomau, I. E. Rusaya, I. A. Bulak, E. P. Bahadziash, S. A. Dubenok (Republic of Belarus), Egidijus Rimkus, Edvinas Stonėvičius, Audrius Šepikas (Republic of Lithuania), Paul Buijs (the Netherlands) and Givanni Crema (Italy).

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¹ The Project’s outcomes are presented on the UNECE website, in the section entitled “Transboundary Pilot Projects on Climate Change Adaptation”, at:

<https://www2.unece.org/ehl/platform/display/ClimateChange/Neman+project+workshop+and+expert+meeting+19-20+March+2013>

Forewords

The Republic of Belarus was one of the first countries to sign the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change on 11 June 1992. The Republic of Belarus ratified this Convention by Decree of the President of the Republic of Belarus No. 177, dated 10 April 2000. The convention entered into force for the Republic of Belarus on 9 August 2000. Since 2005, the Republic of Belarus has been a Party to the Kyoto Protocol to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.

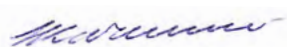
Activities to mitigate the impact of climate change and allow swifter adaptation, including studies on climate change, are prioritized in a number of documents at various legal levels that are important for Belarus's development.

The National Strategy of Sustainable Socio-Economic Development in the Republic of Belarus until 2020 is the most significant and comprehensive policy document for the Republic of Belarus. Increasing the efficiency of water utilization and improving the quality of water resources, in balance with the public's needs and projected climate change, are strategic goals in the sphere of conservation of the country's water resources. Issues related to the climate change challenge were fixed in the Water Strategy of the Republic of Belarus until 2020 and the State Program of Climate Change Mitigation Measures until 2013-2020.

According to the Water Strategy "... the issues of estimation and use of transboundary watercourses in the river basins with account of European approaches and in the context of the climate change adaptation have not been adequately addressed". The State Program of measures stipulates that the main climate change adaptation activities in the sphere of water resources should include: an assessment of the vulnerability of specific regions to the climate change; development of sectoral climate change adaptation strategies by national bodies of state administration; implementation of these strategies; and mitigation of the impact of climate change-related dangerous hydrometeorological phenomena, including through the elaboration of methods for estimating risks and damage and also scenarios for adaptation to such phenomena.

Given the transboundary character of all large rivers in Belarus, the problems related to the impact of climate change on water resources need to be addressed jointly with other states located in these basins.

The "Strategic Framework for Adaptation to Climate Change in the Neman River Basin" was developed within the framework of the International Technical Assistance Project "River Basin Management and Climate Change Adaptation in the Neman River Basin". It is the first document aimed at improving the management of integrated water resources in the context of the climate change, using the basin approach at the international level.



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The increasing impact of a changing climate is leading to growing international concern. This effect is very diverse and includes both natural systems and the social sphere. Water resources are also affected by climate change, while their quantitative and qualitative parameters are good indicators of the changes in the climate system. There are no doubts that against the background of this growing threat, it is necessary to take additional measures in the conservation and protection of water resources.

The European Union pays great attention to climate change mitigation and displays political leadership in the development of climate change adaptation plans. Two important programmatic documents on adaptation to climate change have been adopted by the European Commission, namely the Green Paper «Adapting to Climate Change in Europe – Options for EU action» (2007) and the White Paper «Adapting to Climate Change. European Framework for Action» (2010).

The Republic of Lithuania adopted a “*National Strategy for Climate Change Management Policy*” in 2012. The strategy consists of sections on climate change mitigation and adaptation. The purpose of the strategy is to develop and implement a climate change management policy as well as to identify short, medium and long-term goals and objectives of climate change mitigation and adaptation. In 2013, the Government of Lithuania approved an action plan for the period 2013–2020, which also includes a number of measures for water resources.

Problems related to climate change cannot be solved by the efforts of individual countries. Cooperation is necessary among the whole international community. The project “River Basin Management and Climate Change Adaptation in the Neman River Basin” which resulted in the present Strategic Framework, is an excellent example of transboundary cooperation in tackling problems related to water resources and water quality at the basin level. Without any doubt, the results of the project are important at the national level and promote further cooperation on climate change issues in the Neman basin.

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