

# Fostering Multi-country Cooperation over Conjunctive Surface and Groundwater Management in the Bug and Neman Transboundary River Basins and the Underlying Aquifer Systems

Review CEO Endorsement and Make a recommendation

## Basic project information

**GEF ID**

9767

**Countries**

Regional (Belarus, Ukraine)

**Project Name**

Fostering Multi-country Cooperation over Conjunctive Surface and Groundwater Management in the Bug and Neman Transboundary River Basins and the Underlying Aquifer Systems

**Agencies**

UNDP

**Date received by PM**

5/24/2019

**Review completed by PM**

5/27/2021

**Program Manager**

Christian Severin

**Focal Area**

International Waters

**Project Type**

FSP

**PIF**   
**CEO Endorsement**

**Project Design and Financing**

**1. If there are any changes from that presented in the PIF, have justifications been provided?**

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request  
(7/29/2019; AH)

The project is consistent with the PIF.

19th of May 2021 (cseverin): PPG has not been selected (Table F) please tick the box.

27th of May 2021 (cseverin): addressed according to agency, hopeful the tick will show properly in the portal now.

Response to Secretariat comments

**2. Is the project structure/design appropriate to achieve the expected outcomes and outputs?**

## Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

(7/29/2019; AH)

### **Overall comments:**

The project structure/component are along the lines of what is typical for a GEF project (and therefore the PIF approved), yet from PIF to endorsement is the time to firm up the formulation of the outputs and possible rewording of outcomes (as needed without changing the nature of the project) (see also select STAP and Council comments).

Furthermore, the Results framework in many occasions also needs more clearly formulated (less wordy), measurable indicators and provide corresponding targets. This will tremendously improve management and monitoring of the project when in implementation (see also more detailed comments under question 9 below) . Please review and revise and also align the Theory of Change with the project logic/results framework.

**SH (4.21.2020):** Not cleared. Refer to above comment: "The project structure/component are along the lines of what is typical for a GEF project (and therefore the PIF approved), yet from PIF to endorsement is the time to firm up the formulation of the outputs and possible rewording of outcomes (as needed without changing the nature of the project) (see also select STAP and Council comments)."

Specific Comments on the design (note: all page #s refer to a US letter size format/print-out):

1. Please note that the SAP is to be endorsed by at least one Minister from each country.

**SH (4.19.2020):** Cleared. Per the below response, UNDP confirms that the SAPs will be signed at the level of relevant ministers.

2. Please throughout the document note references to the EU regulations incl the WFD: Not all countries are party to the EU which should be acknowledged while the WFD is a key guiding document for others.

**SH (4.19.2020):** Cleared.

3. Please assure (during implementation of the project) that e.g. water quality indicators and other environmental status indicators are aligned across the two basins and also other basins in the countries (see PIF discussions).

**SH (4.19.2020):** Cleared.

4. Theory of change: Please adjust after /together with the results framework. The project logic and link of assumptions, activities and outputs and how they lead to the outcomes is often not very clear (see also qu. 9). The current impacts show in the ToC are not all within the project fW.

SH (4.21.2020): Not cleared. Please see the STAP ToC Primer for guidance on how to construct a Theory of Change: <http://www.stapgef.org/theory-change-primer> Please also note that the revised ToC figure should be accompanied by an explanatory text section.

5. Execution arrangement: the role of UNESCO is clearly formulated and by the "legal context" section (section IX in prodoc) is the *only* executing agency (implementing agency in UNDP terminology). UNESCO is also the only listed executing agency with M& E functions . What then is the definition of an "executing partner"? Will there be a sub-contract from UNESCO to UNECE? What is the role of UNECE as project executing agency (or 'UNDP implementing agency') and why are they not listed in the Legal context or organogram (besides being a member of the PSC)? As written this is not very clear and gives impression of UNECE just being contracted which then could be hang up in procurement threshold limits.

SH (4.21.2020): Cleared.

Additional component specific:

Component 1:

6. activities under 1.1.1: Seem to suggest that the TDA aims at "Harmonization of typology and delineation of water bodies" and on " Development of surface and groundwater water quantity and water quality programs" .. If so, these are important *outputs* of the project and should be tracked as such. Else please clarify.

SH (4.21.2020): Not cleared. Refer to "overall comments".

7. The same activity 1.1.1 states under bullets a.) to e.) that the TDA will explore the aerial extent and connection between aquifers which would imply the modeling of the aquifers. This would be great and again, worth to list as output of the component.

SH (4.21.2020): Not cleared. Refer to "overall comments".

8. Outcome 1.3: Please clarify a tangible outcome and reformulate ! As written it is unclear what is meant and the text below confuses further by explaining the definitions/meaning of eco-hydrology in general.

SH (4.21.2020): Not cleared. In addition to clarifying a tangible Outcome and reformulating, per STAP guidance the Output description should contain details

regarding specific concepts, techniques, modelling approaches, etc. that are appropriate for the integrated surface and groundwater system and its analysis.

9. Output 2.1.1. (page 54) - lists the preparation of guidelines, outreach documents, awareness raising tools *AND* terms of reference for the creation *AND* functioning of River Basin Commissions in the two project basins *AND* defining coordination *AND* information sharing mechanisms between the two Commissions.

- please split each of the items into distinct outputs to make them explicit. (though some of this seems to overlap e.g. with component 5?)

- later in that same output under 'activities' there are other distinct and well-placed activities described such as 'twinning arrangements', and an analysis of an recommendations for improving monitoring networks. etc.

Such accumulation of a large number of items in *one output* renders the project description very confusing and it makes it rather unclear what the project does and what it does not !

SH (4.21.2020): Not cleared. Refer to the above comment and to "overall comments".

10. Outcome 3.1 - agree with STAP comment which is not addressed. Please address.

SH (4.21.2020): Not cleared. Refer to the above comment and to "overall comments". In addition, please note that the current Portal table B Outcome description reads "...builds country and regional Institutions and their capacity and commitment to reforms and investments.". When one looks at other places in the submitted documents, including the RFs, the Outcome description reads: "...build country and regional Institutions capacity and commitment to reforms and investments." Please revise the Outcome and introduce consistency throughout the PRODOC, Portal submission and their different tables.

11. Pilots: please provide some additional information on the envisioned type and scope (incl. average \$ amount) for the demo projects. Right now the criteria do not aid to assess this.

SH (4.21.2020): Not cleared. Please note that the PPG phase constitutes an opportunity to engage with partners to define the pilot baseline, activities and the underlying selection criteria. Please expand the Output 3.1.1. description in the PRODOC and GEF portal submission so that it reflects work undertaken during the PPG phase.

12. Please tighten the linkage between Outcome 4.1 and output 4.1.1..

SH (4.21.2020): Cleared, however, please update the Output activity description to include info on the sustainability of the Basin councils beyond the lifespan of the

project. Note that any updates to the PRODOC should be reflected in the GEF portal submission.

13. Please clarify if the project will support Flood Risk Management plans \_mentioned under "Activities" bottom of page 56.

SH (4.21.2020): Not cleared. Thanks for adding text specific to Flood Risk Management plans. Please note that there are inconsistencies regarding the formulation of Output 4.2.1 across the GEF Portal submission and the PRODOC submission.

14. Please rethink how/if the formulation of management actions in the SAP is truly likely to be informed by the results from the pilot demonstration activities (see top page 57). Is it realistic to expect such early results in time to inform SAP formulation ?

SH (4.21.2020): Not cleared. Please add text to the Output 3.1.1 description specifying that one of several pilot selection criteria is for pilots to be able to inform the SAP formulation in a timely fashion.

15. Component 5: Please list the aim to develop a Communication Strategy and a Capacity Building Strategy as project outputs - now listed as activities only and not tracked in the RF. These are substantive outputs and good to document them as such.

SH (4.21.2020): Not cleared. Please amend the RF (in the PRODOC and the Portal submission) so that each of the new Outputs has a baseline, mid-term target to end-of-project target.

16. Please expand section 4.8 "Stakeholder Engagement" and please describe the roles of key stakeholders (incl. among agencies listed) in the project implementation. Ownership and leadership of country institutions will be key to the sustainability of project results.

SH (4.21.2020): Not cleared. Please expand section 4.8 "Stakeholder Engagement" by explaining the specific roles of key stakeholders. Please note that while the PRODOC sections 2.2 ? 2.6 contain a generic description of Ministries/agencies and their mandates, these sections do not include sufficient info regarding the specific Roles and Responsibilities of key government ministries, agencies and NGO stakeholders as part of project execution. Finally, and in addition to expanding section 4.8, please submit (in the form of an Annex) an overview of the meetings conducted with relevant stakeholders during the PPG phase.

17. In which country/agency will the PMU be located and how was/will the selection of the location be made?

SH (4.21.2020): Cleared.

Additional comments:

18. SH (4.21.2020): The Portal Table B Output 4.2.2 and 4.2.3 are missing from the PRODOC description (including the RF) and the Portal CEO Endorsement submission sections (including the RF). Please makes sure that all Outputs activities are thoroughly described and featured in the PRODOC/ Portal CEO Endorsement submissions, including in all relevant tables and figures (e.g. Results Framework and Work Plan tables etc.).

19. SH (4.21.2020): The portal table B Outcome 5.1 contains Outputs which are not captured in the Portal submission text or in the PRODOC Project description or associated annexes, e.g. yearly work plans etc. On a general note, it will be necessary to expand Output activity descriptions specific to Outcome 5 in the PRODOC and the GEF Portal before it is possible to evaluate their merits.

20. SH (4.21.2020):

Please note an additional example of a lack of clarity between Outcome, Outputs and Indicators:

The Outcome 2.2. description reads as follows: "Overall cross-sectoral coordination of actions at the national level improves cooperation and defuse nexus conflicts in the two basins."

The Output 2.2.1 description reads as follows: "Mechanisms for coordination and exchanges with other relevant projects and initiatives put in place."

In the RF, the Indicator description specific to Output 2.2.1 reads as follows: "TORs of national Basin Councils prepared"

Yet, when one reads the Output 2.2.1 activity description (PRODOC pp 55), it reads as: "During project meetings efforts will be made to invite representatives of other on-going projects to make sure that information is shared. Formats making it possible to include similar information sharing in bilateral Commission meetings will also be developed and proposed." There seems to be a lack of alignment between the Output description and the associated RF indicator.

21. SH (4.21.2020):

As the RF currently reads, the project will develop ToRs for both the national Basin Councils and River Basin Commissions. Note that in the RF it is assumed that both the National Basin Councils and River basin Commissions will become fully operational during the project, e.g. the end of project target for Output 4.1.1 states: "The national Basin Councils submit lists of strategic priority actions to the two RBCs for harmonization and adoption?". As part of the Belarus and Ukraine National and regional

policy and institutional framework sections, please include text specific to the baseline of the National Basin Councils and River Basin Commissions. An expanded baseline will make it more clear as to how such bodies can be expected to become fully operational within the lifespan of the project. In general, if the project assumes that the ToRs will lead to fully functional Basin Councils and Basin Commissions, then please consider if wording to this effect can be captured as part of the End of Project Target specific to Output 2.1.1 and 2.2.1 in the RF?

22. SH (4.21.2020): Please remove annex B from the PRODOC.

23. SH (4.21.2020): Regarding PRODOC annex XII

Please revise the budget notes to clearly indicate how UNDP prorates PMC cost from technical consultants, preferably based on a better defined TORs for consultants (both international and national). Further, please make clear where the Project Manager and Project Monitoring and Evaluation Officer are budgeted from? Please note that staff who manage the project e.g. manager, director, finance, admin and procurement officer should be charged to PMC, and technical staff to project components.

24. SH 4.21.2020):

Please note that the Social and Environmental Screening Report does not contain a signature. It is GEF's impression that during the PPG phase, the SESP is revised based on the findings of the PPG and signed by the relevant UNDP Country Office representative. Please upload a signed version of the report.

25. SH (4.21.2020): To ensure country/regional ownership, usually agencies are just members of PSCs or some even just observers. Please explain the choice of Project Executive and consider if this role is not better placed with the countries.

21st of September 2020 (cseverin): Cleared

18th of November 2020 (cseverin): Please address following comments:

Gender: Please provide more relevant information on gender as related to project components, review its results framework and possibly to revise the gender tags. The brief analysis provided on gender, does not seem to relate closely to the objective/component of the project. Further, the project tags, that it will close gender gaps related to access/control over resources; improve women's participation and decision making; and generate socio-economic benefits or services or women. The attached results framework does not include any gender sensitive indicators or output areas related to the gender tags. Please ensure that these will be included.

Budget: All the budget descriptions are the same in each component and in PMC. Although there is a small budget note, it is not explanatory enough. Please provide a more detailed budget, including PMC, M&E and the Project's components.

19th of May 2021 (cseverin): Addressed

2nd of June 2021 (cseverin): No, please address following points:

1) On GENDER: the results framework still does not include sex-disaggregated indicators. The project can still not say that it includes sex disaggregated indicators and should revise the ticked box or consider finding ways to include some relevant indicators in the results framework.

2) On Budget: as presented in Portal, there is a mix of items paid by different sources, so it is not possible follow the basic principle of the budget: costs associated with the execution of the projects (project's staff, utilities, etc.) are meant to be covered by both portions of the Project Management Cost ?the GEF portion and the co-financing portion?, while the costs associated with monitoring are meant to be covered by the M&E part. See below the parts that need to be amended:

o Contractual services - company - \$28,500 + Training ? workshops , Meetings - \$29,167: it is not straightforward to understand why activities under component 5 (Communication, Dissemination and Replication Activities) are charged to M&E. Also further explanation is required on what entails ?external contracts needed for the PMU? - \$35,000 charged to PMC.

o Mid-term Review and Terminal Evaluation associated costs must be charged to M&E Plan

o Office supplies are meant to be partially charged to PMC ? there is none charged to PMC - please ask the Agency to amend.

Please clearly present:

i. What costs are associated with the Mid Ter Review and with the Terminal Evaluation, and charge those costs to the M&E

ii. To proportionately charge the salary of the Project Manager to the PMC (for coordination activities) and to the Project Components (for technical activities) ? according to the Guidelines (paragraph 5 ? page 42), ?if project staff are charged to both PMC and project components (i.e. not only to PMC), clear Terms of Reference

describing unique outputs linked to the respective components are required at the time of CEO Endorsement/Approval, for review by the Secretariat.?

## Response to Secretariat comments

### **UNDP response 04/08/2020**

- STAP and Council member comments fully addressed, Outcomes and Outputs sharpened and revised.
- 4. Addressed, Section revised as per STAP guidance, more explanatory text added.
- 6. Addressed, additional outputs added as requested
- 7. Addressed, additional outputs added as requested.
- 8. Addressed as requested in STAP comments Text clarified and more details provided.
- 9. Addressed, Outputs clarified, and activities rearranged, split and sharpened to avoid confusion.
- 10. Coherence throughout the PD text was checked and text was revised throughout Prodoc, Portal submission and various tables
- 11. Done, please see revised section 3.1.1
- 12. Done, text revised throughout Prodoc and Portal
- 13. Addressed, explanatory text added, the project will produce Flood Risk Management plans
- 14. Text added as requested
- 15. Prodoc RF and Portal submission revised accordingly.
- 16. Addressed, stakeholders? sections revised, summary table of stakeholders roles and responsibilities added, Annex H provides overview of consultation with stakeholders during PPG.
- 18. Coherence throughout the PD text was checked and text was revised throughout Prodoc, Portal submission and various tables
- 19. Agreed, text in the portal is fixed now.
- 20. Addressed, Outcomes, Outputs and indicators aligned, sharpened and reformulated
- 21. The establishment of, and interactions between National Basin Council (of intersectoral nature), and the transboundary River Basin Commissions, are the key results that the project aims to achieve. Countries are fully committed to this goal, and the EU approximation process provides the necessary incentives, as clearly shown in the ToC diagram. The end of project targets are, for both bodies, the ?submission for adoption by governments? of the relevant ToRs. The actual adoption ? a political decision ? is beyond the control of the project. The mid-term and end of project targets for the two outputs, coincide with those of the outcome
- 22. Removed from both documents
- 23. Addressed in the budget note and revised TOR for PM/CTA
- 24. As per our safeguards policy and processes, the ProDoc-stage SESP should only be signed after PAC/LPAC

- 25. For all UNDP Implemented project the SC meetings are co-chaired by UNDP RTA and the National focal points, as this is regional project. Revised accordingly

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**UNDP response 04/03/2020**

Please see Annex B 'Response to Reviews' to the Request for Endorsement Document.

The formulation of the outcomes and outputs that appears in the PD has been endorsed by the countries and approved by the GEF Council at the PIF stage and by the countries at the PD validation stage. Even minor modifications would imply new rounds of consultations and negotiations with the four countries. Only Outcome 2.2 has been slightly modified upon request of the countries.

Key aspects of Outcome Indicators have been highlighted in italics in the Results Framework.

1. The following language was agreed upon with the countries and reflects the level of government commitment desired by the GEF: 'SAP elaborated by the countries for endorsement at high ministerial level' 2. All references to EU regulations have been specifically requested by Belarus and Ukraine. 3. Please see output 1.2.1. Alignment or harmonization across the two basins, albeit a desirable outcome, is largely a decision of the countries, and hence may not be achieved; the project will endeavour to achieve as much harmonization as possible. 4. The 'Theory of Change: from Outcomes to Impacts' as described in the UNDP Project Document is intended to show what changes are expected to happen AFTER project completion if all outcomes will have been achieved and if the assumptions and drivers were correctly identified. The long-term impacts in terms of environmental status and sustainable development are implicit in the Project Objectives. 5. Consensus was reached during the PPG on the execution arrangements: UNESCO IHP has been identified as the sole Executing Agency for the project, while UNECE, as Secretariat of the Water Convention, will execute specific activities under the responsibility of UNESCO (e.g. in UNDP terminology, UN ECE will serve as a 'Responsible Party') as described in sections 4.4 and VIII. Project management and governance arrangements of the Project Document and page 38 of CEO ER. UNESCO IHP as discussed is the responsible Agency and this is explained in the Project Document.

It is written in the Project Document that: 'In the document the 'UNESCO Division of Water Sciences -Secretariat of the Intergovernmental Hydrological Programme', acronym is UNESCO IHP'

6. The TDA will capture and consolidate all the available scientific knowledge of the two basins and current monitoring practices for both surface and groundwater. It will also outline possible solutions (e.g.: monitoring programs) and provide critical inputs that will strengthen the countries' adherence to the EU approximation process (water

bodies etc.). The choice was to highlight the main output of the various Components only.

7. The TDA will be based on Conceptual Models of the aquifers underlying the basins built on the basis of existing information and cutting-edge expertise present in the region and elsewhere; there will no new sampling or analysis to inform more advanced aquifer modelling.

8. Eco-hydrology and hydrogeology are branches of the natural sciences which were first developed by scientists of the project region, in particular Poland, and which are now broadly known in the water community as Nature Based Solutions to water related concerns. The project countries have shown much interest in testing these innovative approaches to concrete cases in the two basins. The formulation of the outcome was agreed upon with the countries

9. Output 2.1.1 is one of the main outputs that the project will produce: the establishment of transboundary River Basin Commissions. To reach this ambitious objective, the project will have to produce, in addition to the TDA (Output 1.1.), a number of tools and preparatory documents as well as targeted awareness raising among decision makers. Again, the choice was to list as output only the final product.

10. The Outcome 3.1 reads: 'Testing of conjunctive surface and groundwater management options for balancing water nexus conflicts and adapting to climate change and variability identified through the TDAs or other similar processes build country and regional Institutions capacity and commitment to reforms and investments.' The PD also includes as an introduction to the alternative scenario, (3.1.1, page 45) extended text explaining the meaning of 'conjunctive surface and groundwater management' which apparently is not familiar to the STAP reviewer. In fact, STAP comments the following: Regarding Outcome 3.1 'testing of conjunctive management options...'; surely this is not testing per se, but has tested and reported on the results of the pilots, so the outcome should read something along the lines of, 'A strategy published containing options to manage water conjunctively'. However, what is really confusing is the second part of the outcome statement which appears to refer to a completely different output, presumably resulting in the building of country and regional institutions. It does not seem to relate to the Overall Component 3 description which is all about testing approaches. STAP suggests moving that part of Outcome 3.1 to Component 2, within sub-component 2.1. The UNDP response to the STAP review (contained in the Endorsement Request Document) provides a clarification that hopefully will also respond to the GEF reviewer concerns: During its early implementation phase, the project will select two or more demonstration pilot projects (at least one in each basin and according to GEF criteria for the selection of pilot sites) and present these for approval to the first PSC meeting. It is foreseen that successful pilot testing (on the ground) of innovative approaches to conjunctive management in the region, will strengthen the countries' ability to build institutional capacity and make a better (science-based) 'case' for investments and reforms that would not have been viable beforehand. It can also be highlighted that throughout the PPG phase (inception and

validation), country representatives have expressed their agreement with the wording used to describe project Outcomes and Outputs, and with their placement and pertinence under each project Component.11. As stated in the PD, the project aims at a minimum of two pilots, one for each basin, focusing on groundwater discharge areas. The budget will rely mostly on national cofinancing, with limited GEF contributions (USD 674k).12.

Text has been modified as follows:

Outcome 4.: Policy makers in countries, having improved their understanding of (i) the surface, groundwater and ecosystems interactions in the two basins, (ii) the implications of expected climatic changes, and (iii) the existing and/or potential water nexus conflicts, commit to develop effective conjunctive water resources inter-ministerial management mechanisms and strategies.

Output 4.1.1: Basin councils, of inter-ministerial nature, focused on harmonization of existing frameworks, and identification of priority reforms, established in each beneficiary country.

13. As part of the SAP, which for countries coincides/includes Basin Management Plans, there will be actions (reforms, investments) to mitigate the effects of floods framed in the context of a Flood Risk Management Plan. Text has been modified to clarify this.

14. Pilots will be designed in order to inform the SAP process.

15. Text has been modified accordingly

16. The text has been modified introducing reference to sections 2.2 ? 2.6 of the PD, pages 30-42.

17. Countries requested that decision on this point be taken after project effectiveness and prior to the Inception Meeting

#### **UNDP Response 10 May 2021**

Gender: The whole document has been revised, strengthening the gender aspects, in both the narrative and in the results framework. Most of the edits can be found in section 4.9: Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, which has been edited to make it more relevant to the context of the project. In addition, the results framework has been integrated with gender elements.

Budget: All budget notes have been revised. They now indicate to which outputs and activities they refer to. In addition, the links between budget lines, activities, consultants (national and international) and PMU are made more explicit.

**3. Is the financing adequate and does the project demonstrate a cost-effective approach to meet the project objective?**

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request (7/29/2019; AH) The finance provided for a TA type project is well placed give co-finance from countries and partners, but will require efficiency in the implementation. Cleared.

Response to Secretariat comments

**4. Does the project take into account potential major risks, including the consequences of climate change, and describes sufficient risk response measures? (e.g., measures to enhance climate resilience)**

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request  
(7/29/2019; AH)

The project risk section is included and outlines why climate change is not a risk to project success, but will be a risk to basin management and sustainability and therefore be addressed in the TDA and SAP/RBMs.

1. The Results Framework (RF) repeatedly mentions the risk of institutional fragmentation. It therefore should be added in the project risk section and outline how project design is addressing this risk, e.g by forming IMCs.

SH (4.21.2020): Cleared.

Response to Secretariat comments

**UNDP response 04/03/2020**

Text of the risk section has been modified accordingly.

**5. Is co-financing confirmed and evidence provided?**

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request  
(7/29/2019; AH)

Co-financing letters have been provided.

Please note that the letter from the Ministry of Environment of Lithuania doesn't specify any number but refers to a "validated Project Document (Validation Meeting, 16-17 March 2019). The UNDP prodoc includes Lithuania's co-financing number.

Please also include minutes of the Validation Meeting or how other means to support the amount of Lithuania co-finance.

SH (4.21.2020): Not cleared. Please note that the minutes of the validation meeting do not contain any reference to the the Lithuania cofinance contribution. Please provide documents that support the listed amount of Lithuanian co-finance. The document should also confirm that the co-finance will be made available during the time frame of the anticipated GEF/UNDP project.

21st of September 2020 (cseverin): No, as noted above, please provide a Lithuanian Co-finance letter that provides reference to the co-finance amount.

26th of October 2020 (cseverin): Addressed

18th of November 2020 (cseverin): No, please use ?donor Agency? for those UN Agencies that are not implementing Agencies for the project (UNESCO). Similarly, use ?donor Agency? for bilateral donors (both Poland and Lithuania).

19th of May 2021 (cseverin): Addressed

Response to Secretariat comments

**UNDP Response, 23 October 2020**

*The letter is enclosed to the co-financing letters.*

**UNDP response 04/08/2020**

The letter will be sent soon

**UNDP response 04/03/2020**

Lithuania made the case that by validating the PD, they commit to the co-financing amount indicated in the PD.

Minutes of the Validation Meeting are now included in the resubmission package.

**UNDP Response 10 May 2021**

Action has been taken, in the table that lists of co-financing as well as in the portal.

**6. Are relevant tracking tools completed?**

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request  
(7/29/2019; AH)

Yes, the IW tracking tool has been provided.

1. Please note that while the core indicator worksheet has been filled out, the portal does not show the main indicator 7 which should be "2" (shared basins). Also, sub-indicator 7.3 is empty (in the portal endorsement request).
2. Please do not fill in MTR and end of project values in the worksheet.

SH (4.21.2020): Cleared.

Response to Secretariat comments

**UNDP response 04/03/2020**

1. The indicator worksheet information is now correctly displayed in the portal
  2. The MTR and TE values are now removed from the worksheet
- 7. Only for Non-Grant Instrument: Has a reflow calendar been presented?**

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request N/A

Response to Secretariat comments

**8. Is the project coordinated with other related initiatives and national/regional plans in the country or in the region?**

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request  
(7/29/2019; AH)

The project describes well how it will build on PAST projects but does *not* describe in sufficient way how the project will coordinate with other relevant *ongoing* projects (GEF- and non-GEF) in the project area. This would not be only on water and basin management but related to other relevant assets well described in the prodoc, including such as e.g. the transboundary biosphere reserve.

It would be useful to describe key relevant projects reviewed during design briefly and what key areas of synergies are. (e.g. in the prodoc pages 58 onwards and corresponding section in the Portal)

SH (4.21.2020): Cleared.

## Response to Secretariat comments

### UNDP response 04/03/2020

The opening text of section 4.5 Coordination, reads: "The project will build upon and take advantage of the numerous efforts being undertaken by the countries within the contexts of the implementation of the EU Framework Directive and of the UNECE Water Convention, and establish links with ongoing similar projects in the region, including GEF funded." A short description of the projects follows. Relevant text has been highlighted.

### **9. Does the project include a budgeted M&E Plan that monitors and measures results with indicators and targets?**

#### Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

(7/29/2019; AH)

1. The project includes a budgeted M&E plan. Can you please review and revise/clarify that there will be **more than an annual requirement** for monitoring of indicators against the results framework. Most agencies field at least bi-annual supervision missions.

SH (4.21.2020): Cleared (with reference to footnote 12).

2. The Results FW (page 67 onwards) is included but needs *clearer formulation of indicators*. Current wording is in many instances very wordy - please provide *simple, clear, measurable indicators and corresponding mid-term and end of project targets*. Often indicators read like outputs or targets making it rather unclear what is to be achieved and how it will be measured.

(just *one* example among many: "Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis (TDA) identifying major issues of transboundary concern for the two basins prepared and submitted for adoption by the four riparian countries" - this is an indicator (?) but reads like an MT output and not an indicator or means of verification).

SH (4.21.2020): The extent to which the above comment have been addressed will be evaluated once the comments specific to the review sheet box 2 have been addressed.

3. Please maintain the numbering of outcomes and corresponding outputs in the Results Framework to allow easier tracking of results. All outputs should be tracked and part to the RF.

SH (4.21.2020): Cleared.

4. Furthermore, please assure that the indicators measure what contributes and leads to the respective outcome. Some of this needs reformulation/adjustment: e.g. Outcome 4 reads: "Strengthened institutional cooperation, coordination and information sharing ...." ... "improves the sustainability of the shared resources." The output indicator for this are TORs . Progress on these could account for the cooperation but says nothing about sustainability of the shared resources. Outcomes, Indicators and Outputs 5 are equally unclear in formulation.

Note: above are examples and the entire RF needs to be worked through in the same spirit (another "indicator " that is sticking out as actually describing actions of the project: " National Basin Councils identify possible priority actions, conforming to conjunctive management and privileging nature based approaches, to address major transboundary issues of concern, enhance resilience to climatic changes, and reconcile water nexus use conflicts in the two basins". Please revise such indicators so they are conforming with "SMART" attributes.

SH (4.21.2020): The extent to which the above comment have been addressed will be evaluated once the comments specific to the review sheet box 2 have been addressed.

5. Please also review and verify that the 'data collection' matches the outputs and indicators. E.g. it seems unclear how the TDA is a measure for pilots . This may contribute to the identification , but nothing more and does not aid in tracking the results /impacts of the pilots.

SH (4.21.2020): Thanks ensuring alignment between "data collection" and the Outputs and indicators. Per council and STAP guidance, revisions must be made to the Outcomes and Outputs. Please ensure that "data collection" matches the revised RF.

21st of September 2020 (cseverin): Yes and comments cleared

#### Response to Secretariat comments

**UNDP response 04/08/2020**

2. Addressed, indicators in RF have been clarified and sharpened

4. Indicators in RF have been clarified and sharpened.

5. STAP and Council member comments fully addressed, Outcomes and Outputs sharpened and revised

**UNDP response 04/03/2020**

1. The annual face to face supervision mission will be complemented by several virtual oversight engagements (see footnote 11.)
2. The example may not be clear: the TDAs submission for adoption to governments is a very clear, measurable and verifiable indicator, repeatedly used in a number of foundational IW projects.
3. The RF has been revised, introducing outputs, and tightening indicators and targets. Numbering has been modified accordingly.
4. Cooperation among countries sharing a waterbody, as evidenced in various documents such as TORs for institutional frameworks, is a key factor controlling the sustainability of the resource.

5. The RF has been revised, introducing outputs, and tightening indicators and targets. The outcomes - cleared by GEFSEC, approved by the Council, and the result of extensive negotiations with the countries - have not been modified.

**10. Does the project have descriptions of a knowledge management plan?**

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

(7/29/2019; AH) Yes , included in component 5. Yet the budget for KM seems to not go beyond IW learn participation (1 % of grant) despite the plans for participation in other events. Please clarify if additional is budgeted for.

SH (4.21.2020): Cleared.

Response to Secretariat comments

**UNDP response 04/03/2020**

There is a misunderstanding: GEFTF amount for Component 5 is USD 192k (7.4% of the total GEF grant). Co-financing is of USD 800k. The figure of 1% refers to IW LEARN, and appears in the M&E table.

**Agency Responses**

**11. Has the Agency adequately responded to comments at the PIF stage from:**

## GEFSEC

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request  
(7/29/2019; AH)

Not entirely , some comments have not been addressed.

- GEFSEC asked a PIF stage to include mention of an awareness and fundraising effort for SAP implementation, such as a donor partner conference.

SH (4.21.2020): Not cleared. Please note that the new Outputs specific to Outcome 5 (featuring in the portal table B) have not been added to the PRODOC project description or the Portal Component, Outcomes or Output description. Please add the new Outputs and include in their activity descriptions , amongst other core activities, the raising of awareness of donors.

- the request was for explicitly stating the data sharing protocols/mechanisms. Please list as outputs (this currently seems buried in the text.)

SH (4.21.2020): Not cleared. Refer to comments in the review sheet box 2.

21st of September 2020 (cseverin): Yes and comments cleared

Response to Secretariat comments

**UNDP response 04/08/2020**

- Output 5.1.2 and 5.1.3 were added and the text in the portal has been updated

- Addressed, added to 2.2.1

**UNDP response 04/03/2020**

Countries considered that a number of the activities under Component 5 will achieve the same results (raising awareness of donors etc.) and did not consider the Conference as essential. This might change during the course of project implementation. In any event, the SAP as per standard practice will include an SAP implementation financial commitment and resource mobilization strategy.

Data sharing protocols have been explicitly introduced as an indicator of outcome 2.1, and in Output 2.1.1

STAP

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request  
s(7/29/2019; AH)

No, some comments have not been addressed in Annex B i.e. not answered in the agency response. Please address (many coincide with the GEFSEC endorsement review):

1. More precise definition of some of the outcomes appreciated.

SH (4.21.2020): Not Cleared. Refer to comments in review sheet box 2.

2. Greater specificity of a strategy for engaging institutional partners and their resulting changes in capacities and actions - see STAP review)

SH (4.21.2020): Not cleared. Please address the STAP comment.

3. More specific on ecohydrology (component 3) see STAP

SH (4.21.2020): Not cleared. Refer to comment in review sheet box 2.

4. Risk section - add scientific uncertainty

SH (4.21.2020): Cleared.

5. Rework stakeholder section/table and include roles

SH (4.21.2020): Not cleared. The PRODOC Stakeholder Engagement section should reflect the dialogue with key stakeholders during the PPG phase and include a section/table with roles and responsibilities of key partners. Please note that currently the PRODOC sections 2.2-2.6 do not contain such info.

6. Comments on cooperation and exchange with other basins (Drina, ICPDR)

SH (4.21.2020): Not cleared. Please include specific language in the PRODOC/Portal submission specific to the foreseen exchanges with the WB Drina project. Further, please incorporate text into the PRODOC/Portal submission and with the intent of addressing the following comment from STAP: "Additionally STAP suggests that the project seeks not only to foster communication between the two emerging river basin commissions, but in consultation with the participating governments formally invites observers from the Danube ICPDR to participate, at a suitable review point, to comment on drafts of technical and governance-related findings generated by the project."?

21st of September 2020 (cseverin): Yes STAP comments addressed

Response to Secretariat comments

### **UNDP response 04/08/2020**

1. STAP and Council member comments fully addressed, Outcomes and Outputs sharpened and revised.
2. Addressed through Revised stakeholders? section and new annex G
3. STAP comments fully addressed, detailed explanation of concepts, techniques, modelling approaches sharpened and revised.
5. Addressed through Revised stakeholders? section and new annex
6. The Drina being a karst river in the Dinaric karst (Bosnia and Serbia) has very little in common with the Bug and Neman rivers. However, as indicated in the revised prodoc, Portal submission , some level of exchange will be established to accommodate the request of STAP. ICPDR involvement added.

### **UNDP response 04/03/2020**

Please refer to previous responses, and to Annex B of CEO ER. All the above points have been considered and answers provided. Not all suggestion for changes have been accepted, mainly reflecting respect for country positions as determined during PPG, and explanations for this have been provided.

GEF Council

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request  
(7/29/2019; AH)

No , some Council comments have not been addressed and the response seem to disqualify them.

1. Please revise some of the outcome formulations (more precise; measurable goals)
2. Roles and responsibilities of stakeholders

SH (4.21.2020): Not cleared. Per comments from the council member, please revise some of outcome formulations and address comments specific to Roles and responsibilities of stakeholders.

21st of September 2020 (cseverin): Council comments addressed

Response to Secretariat comments

**UNDP response 04/08/2020**

STAP and Council member comments fully addressed, Outcomes and Outputs sharpened and revised. Roles and responsibilities of stakeholders provided in a new table under stakeholders engagement section.

**UNDP response 04/03/2020**

Germany's comments have been fully addressed in Annex B of CEO ER. The one on revising outcomes and the RF has not been accepted, and a justification has been provided (i.e. the RF has been the result of extensive word by word negotiations with the countries and substantial modifications would require a new round of negotiations, translations etc.). The recipient countries points of view and decisions have been systematically privileged throughout the project design phase.

Convention Secretariat

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request N/A

Response to Secretariat comments

**Recommendation**

**12. Is CEO endorsement recommended?**

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request  
(7/29/2019; AH)

Endorsement cannot yet be recommended. Please address the comments.

SH (4.21.2020): Endorsement cannot yet be recommended. Please address the comments.

21st of September 2020 (cseverin): No, please submit Lithuanian Co-financing letter.

26th of October 2020 (cseverin): Yes, the submission is recommended for CEO Endorsement.

18th of November 2020 (cseverin): No, please address the above comments.

19th of May 2021 (cseverin): No, please address comment.

27th of May 2021 (cseverin): Yes, project is recommended for CEO Endorsement

2nd of June 2021 \*cseverin): No, Please address following comments

Response to Secretariat comments

**UNDP response 04/03/2020**

Please note that some text in chapters VII-XI of the Project document and relevant text of CEO ER (pages 43-44) has been updated according to the newest Project document template from January 2020 as requested by UNDP GEF HQ. In both documents these revisions are highlighted with green.

**UNDP Response 10 May 2021**

All comments are addressed.

**Review Dates**

	<b>Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request</b>	<b>Response to Secretariat comments</b>
<b>First Review</b>	<b>7/29/2019</b>	
<b>Additional Review (as necessary)</b>		

**CEO Recommendation**

**Brief Reasoning for CEO Recommendations**

In the North Eastern European region draining into the Baltic Sea Basin, Belarus, Lithuania, Poland and Ukraine share a post-glacial depositional morphology and extensive transboundary freshwater resources, both surface and groundwater. The present project focuses on two adjacent and artificially interconnected basins of high regional and global significance: The Bug River Basin shared by Belarus, Poland and Ukraine, and the Neman River Basin shared by Belarus, and Lithuania. These rivers are little regulated and show diversified channel depth and width along the river course,

characterized by many intermittently flooded areas and shallow ponds, which host rich aquatic biodiversity.

The project aims to advance transboundary water governance through the conjunctive management of surface and groundwater in the Central European adjoining Bug and the Neman river basins as a means to improve water security and sustainability of freshwater ecosystem services, balance competing water uses, and mitigate the expected impacts of climate variability and change.

The project will assist Belarus and Ukraine in joining forces with Poland and Lithuania to reach a common understanding of the water resources of the shared basins, of the existing pressures and drivers of change impacting the sustainability of the resources and of the dependent ecosystems, with the ultimately goal of moving towards joint planning and management of the basins.

To do so, the project will adopt the TDA ? SAP approach and methodology, expanded to include an assessment of the present and likely future impacts of climatic variability and change, an attempt to unravel conflicts at the water nexus, the characterization in terms of quantity and quality of the groundwater resources of the region, both confined and unconfined, and of the conditions regarding gender roles and equality in water resources management. The project will also support countries in implementing the European Union Water Framework Directive, the Flood Directive and the UNECE Water Convention as well as the guidance given in the Draft Articles on the use of transboundary aquifers.