

Access to water and sanitation is a human right in Georgia. This human right is in itself essential for life and dignity, but it is also the foundation for achieving a wealth of other human rights, including the right to health and the right to development.

According to the paragraph 1st of Article 29th of the Constitution of Georgia citizens have the right to receive complete, reliable and timely information on their working and living environment.

Georgia ratified Convention of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Aarhus Convention (Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters) in 2000.

The waters within the land territory, its subsoil, continental shelf, territorial waters, and special economic zone of Georgia are a national treasure of Georgia and shall be protected by the State. Inland water resources located on the country territory are the state property and can be used only on the basis of the licenses issued by authorized agencies. Ownership of the land does not imply permission for water use.

Water resources in Georgia are unequally distributed and are mainly concentrated in western part of it, whereas eastern regions often experience water shortages. Almost all East Georgian rivers create the Mtkvari river single system flowing into Caspian; and West Georgian rivers flow into the Black Sea individually.

Throwing or burring industrial, household, toxic, radioactive and other hazardous waste into the water bodies or nearby areas is prohibited as well as discharge of wastewater without having an appropriate license. Despite of great importance of administrative-legislative policies, economically grounded scientific-technical activities play decisive role in environmental protection. For example, rational allocation of industrial objects according to availability of water resources and its quality and implementing the technologies, that ensures getting the production with minimal consumption of natural resources and minimizing hazardous waste.

Georgia represents part of Aarhus Convention and its requirements in Georgia are regulated under "General Administrative Code" and other appropriate special laws. According to the legislative and normative acts, information about the state of environmental quality standards, also information about environmental quality norms and decisions cannot be confined to the category of state secrets.

-Ministries and Agencies created Public and Media relations Special Services.

-All State Agencies and Departments created special Web Pages, where is regularly published policy of each institution, as well as strategies and projects, information on their progress and performance results, also planned and prospective actions.

-Special governmental "Code" electronic system has been created, where is regularly published all legislative acts adopted and published by state institutions, decrees and decisions; President and Government decrees, orders and etc.

Public information dissemination procedures and deadlines, among them from governmental agencies and institutions (on the level of governmental, regional and local administration units) are established according to „General Administrative Code of Georgia” .

Water quality and resources management is one of the most complex areas of the Association Agreement between Georgia and the EU, including Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (AA / DCFTA), as it relates to many issues. Due to the large number of the water sector stakeholders, elaboration of some parts of the new legislation requires involvement of many stakeholders. In particular, the requirements of the Directive 2015/1787 of 6 October 2015 amending Annexes II and III to Council Directive 98/83/EC on the quality of water intended for human consumption are to be introduced. According to "Water Quality and Resource Management Road Map", 27 activities are identified, twelve out of which apply to elaboration of the new legislation, nine - to policy documents development and six - to research and planning.

Despite the recent intense rehabilitation and construction of water supply and sanitation infrastructure and water quality improvement work, the issue of drinking water supply to the country's population as well as educational and boarding institution remains currently central as most of the populated areas, water pipelines and distribution networks still require replacement, capital and / or current repairs etc., which is evidenced by the ongoing projects in this field¹. The situation is also aggravated by irrational expenditure of drinking water and quite common practices of its inappropriate use.

The Law of Georgia on Public Health defines responsibilities related to water management in the country and allocates them to various state agencies. The law on "Public Health" was adopted in Georgia in 2007.

The article 23 stipulates the following general provisions to ensure safety of water and protection of public health:

1. Ministry of IDPs from the Occupied Territories, Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia, in accordance with the recommendations of the World Health Organization, sets quality norms and technical regulations of drinking-water that is safe for human health;
2. The Ministry of Environment Protection and Agriculture provides:
 - development and implementation of uniform governmental policy in the sphere of water resources management using the principles of sustainable development and basin-based management;
 - protection of water bodies from negative impacts which could be harmful to health, worsen water supply conditions and cause its qualitative changes;
 - organization of the state system of water use permits;
 - planning and implementation of water use suspension, termination or prohibition measures in special cases.

Internal control of water quality and external laboratory audit shall be performed by accredited independent laboratories.

The "National Environment and Health Action Plan " (NEHAP-2) was approved by the Governmental Resolution #680 on 29 of December 2019. NEHAP-2 was developed with financial and technical support of WHO ECEH and later was reviewed by the experts of Twinning GE22 project "Institutional Strengthening Environmental Health System of Georgia".

¹ <http://water.gov.ge/geo/about-us/company>

Elaborated National environment and Health Action Plan -NEHAP-2, were including all aspects of institutional WASH.

Currently two legislative documents are in process of elaboration:

1. Technical Regulation- „On the Quality of Water Intended for Human Consumption“
2. Technical Regulation- “on Bathing Waters”

National Center for Disease Control & Public Health of Georgia (NCDC), as a secretariat of the Governmental Coordinating Council of NEHAP, is strengthening institutional and human capacities in environment and health issues with support of the Government and partners and in order to accomplish strategic objectives set forth in the Action Plan, to fulfil the commitments under EU-Georgia Association Agreement; and EU-Georgia Association Agenda, asks for EU action to support Georgia in the implementation of the following 2 Twinning projects in Environmental Health field:

1. Twinning project “Climate change: resilience, disaster risk management and renewable energy. Economic, environment & health impact in Georgia” (In line with NEHAP SO’s: 1; 2 and 5);
2. Twinning Project “Strengthening the capacities for effective implementation of the EU acquis in the field of bathing and drinking water in Georgia” (In line with NEHAP SO’s: 1 and 5);

The monitoring framework of WASH in Schools was developed and tested for integration into the Education Management Information System (EMIS). Status: the integration of the WASH monitoring framework into EMIS is pending.

The national guidelines on WASH for preschools was developed and approved by the Ministry of IDPs from the Occupied Territories, Labour, Health and Social Affairs through the Ministerial Decree N01-172/o on July 28, 2016.

The WASH technical regulations for preschools was developed and approved by the government of Georgia through the government resolution N 485 of October 27, 2017.

The nutrition technical regulations for preschools was developed and adopted through the Government Resolution N 487, October 30, 2017.

The guidelines on monitoring of WASH of conditions against the approved technical regulations in preschools was developed and approved by the Ministry of IDPs from the Occupied Territories, Labour, Health and Social Affairs through the decree N 01/o on January 18, 2018.

Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) was successfully carried out in Georgia in 2018 (between September-December). The current round of MICS for Georgia has been expanded in content and scope to include questionnaires for drinking water and water quality testing. The NCDC supported the inclusion of Water Quality testing in Georgia MICS Survey in 2018, with the financial and technical support of WHO.

The results of the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey are available since September 2019 and National Statistics Office of Georgia published report of the survey. MICS results clarified ,

that Georgia has to work hard on “Institutional water, sanitation and hygiene”. Namely MICS report reconfirmed, that following activities should be implemented:

1. Training and Implementation Water safety plans;
2. Assessment of WASH in Health Care facilities;
3. Elaboration of WASH Strategy in Georgia;
4. Implementation NEHAP objectives.

Current water-related legislation practically does not provide for comprehensive and clear regulation of the water resources management. The absence of effective pollution prevention and water extraction control mechanisms is one of the major problems related to water resources in Georgia. At present the Ministry of Environment Protection and Agriculture is in the process of harmonization and approximation of the water legislation with that of EU. The draft of the new framework law on water resources was finalized by the end of 2019 and forwarded for inter-ministerial consultation. It should be noted that, The Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Labor, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia, within the competence, was fully involved in the preparation of the the key legislative framework for integrated water resources management nationwide (IWRM -integrated water resources management).