

Questions and Answers – Cooperation with WB6 legislators on transboundary river protection and hydropower development

Background:

The Secretariat was approached by the parliaments of Albania, Kosovo*, Montenegro and North Macedonia with an initiative to sign a Memorandum of Understanding on cooperation in the energy and energy-related environmental sectors in order to meet international commitments and align with EU policies. As stated by the Parliaments, cooperation with the Energy Community Secretariat was motivated by the challenges that the countries face with respect to the development of hydropower, in particular projects with transboundary impact, and their obligations on environmental protection.

What are the concrete proposals to legislators?

The Secretariat identified several cross-border river basins and sub-basins as being potential areas of concern for transboundary impacts of planned or existing hydropower projects and therefore of relevance for bilateral and/or trilateral consultations on cross-border river basin management.

The Secretariat and in particular its Dispute Resolution and Negotiation Centre offered the following assistance to the Contracting Parties:

- support to revise existing and conclude new agreements at bilateral or regional level between Contracting Parties to reduce the transboundary impact of hydropower projects, including impacts on flow rate;
- support to determine environmental standards and conditions for hydropower development;
- cross-border assessments for all hydropower plants having a cross-border impact, including the assessment of their cumulative impacts.

What is the envisioned timeline and dynamics of the cooperation?

The initiators of this initiative are the Parliaments. As soon as focal points are established and a memorandum is signed, a detailed working plan will be prepared and agreed with a specific timeframe. The Secretariat will propose tailor-made actions to address the challenges related to the protection of river basins and/or sub-basins.

What role will governments have in this initiative?

The Secretariat works closely with the governments of the Contracting Parties and assists them on a regular basis. The Secretariat strongly believes that cooperation with the legislators will foster achievement of the environmental and climate-related objectives of the Energy Community Treaty. We expect this cooperation to further elevate the discussion with the governments and their respective institutions as well as the public and help the countries to jointly find the right balance in achieving their renewables targets, while at the same time minimising the economic and environmental impacts of hydropower plant projects.