

# **How the UNECE Water Convention promotes transboundary water cooperation**

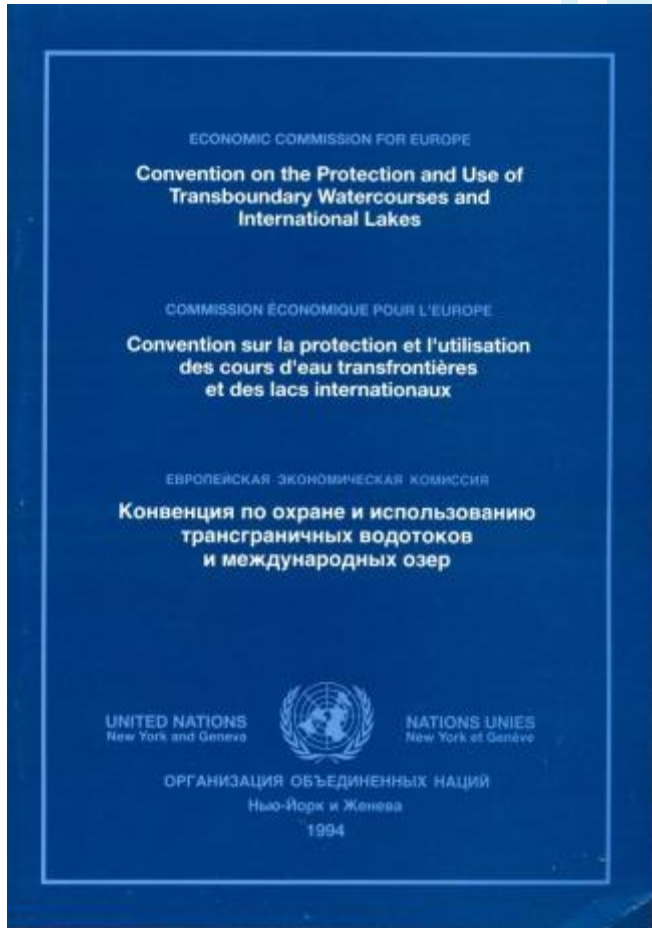
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Protection and Use of Transboundary  
Watercourses and International Lakes



# **Water Convention – negotiated in Europe – but what is Europe?**

- Not only European Union, but includes all ex-Soviet Union countries
- Not a peaceful continent
- Not a homogeneous continent in terms of economic development
- Not a water-problem free continent

# The UNECE Water Convention

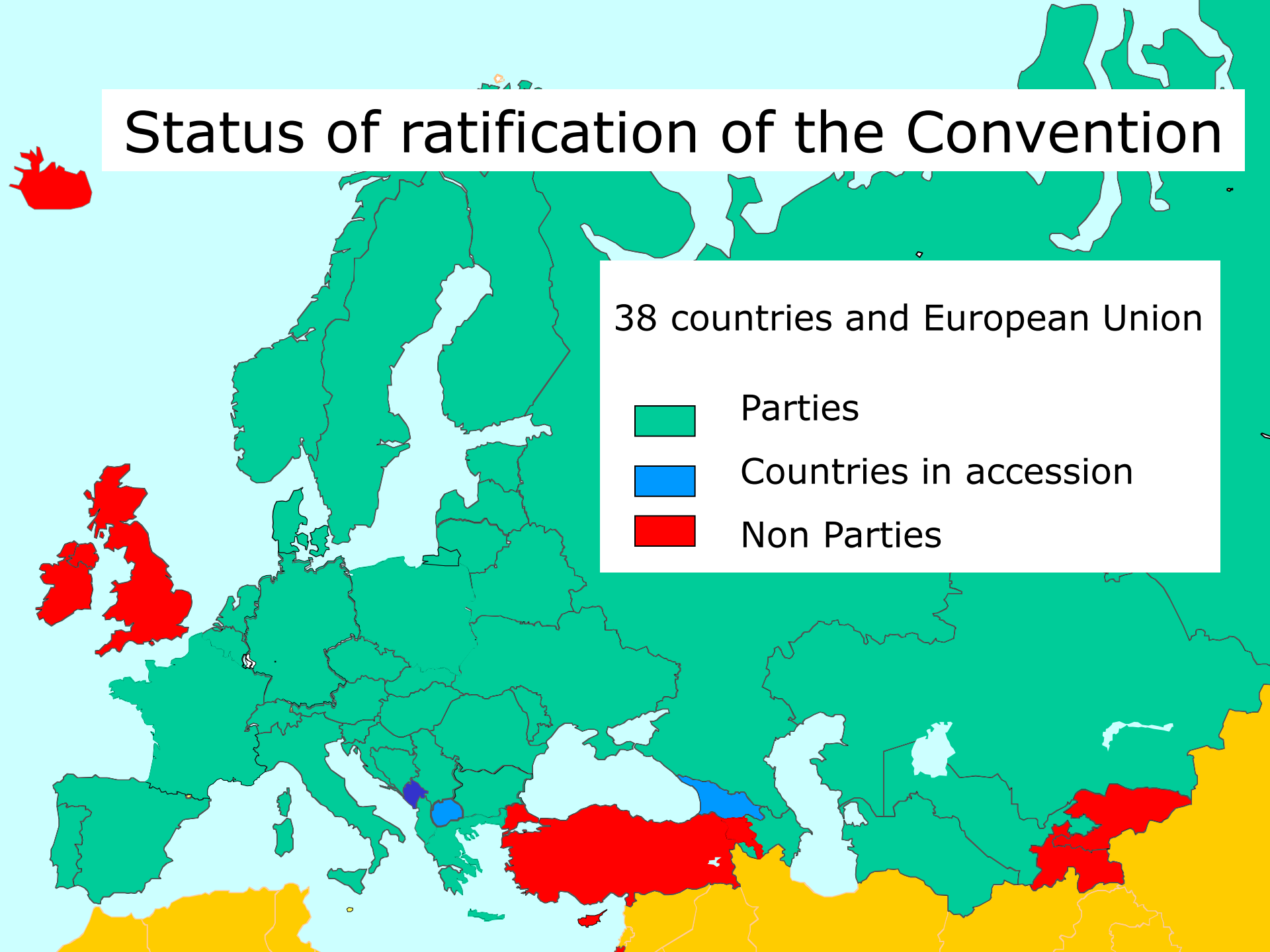


- Signed on 17 March 1992
- Entered into force on 6 October 1996
- Protocol on Water and Health adopted in 1999, entered into force in 2005
- Protocol on Civil Liability adopted in 2003

# Status of ratification of the Convention

38 countries and European Union

-  Parties
-  Countries in accession
-  Non Parties



# Opening Convention to all United Nations Member States



- Amendment entered into force in February 2013, so all countries can likely join Convention as of end of 2013
- Governing body approved all future requests for accession
  - => Promote exchange/share experience
  - => Raise awareness and build capacity
  - => Work together

# Main obligations



- Protection of transboundary waters by preventing, controlling and reducing transboundary impacts
- Reasonable and equitable use of transboundary waters
- Obligation to cooperate through agreements and joint institutions

**=> Overall objective is sustainability**



# Two categories of obligations

- I. Obligations for all Parties => also benefit for national legislation
- II. Obligations for Riparian Parties => Convention does not replace basin agreements



# General obligations for all Parties

- Licensing of wastewater discharges by competent national authorities and monitoring of authorized discharges
- Best environmental practice for non-point pollution sources
- Minimization of risk of accidental pollution
- Application of environmental impact assessment






# Provisions relating to Riparian Parties

- Cooperate on basis of equality and reciprocity
- Conclude bilateral and multilateral agreements or revise existing ones
- Establish joint bodies (e.g. river commissions)
- Consult and exchange information
- Joint monitoring and assessment
- Elaborate joint objectives and concerted action programme for their shared waters

An aerial photograph on the left side of the slide shows a winding river with a circular structure, possibly a dam or a reservoir, in the upper left. The surrounding landscape is green and hilly.

# Step-by-step approach

- Due diligence nature of the obligation to prevent, control and reduce transboundary impacts
  - “All appropriate measures” depend on potential risk involved, capacity of the country...
  - Good practice to develop a national implementation plan
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- A large, faint, light blue watermark of the United Nations logo is centered in the background of the slide. It features a world map surrounded by olive branches.

# Holistic approach

- Transboundary impacts means significant adverse effect on human health and safety, flora, fauna, soil, air, water, climate, landscape and historical monuments or other physical structures, and socio-economic conditions
- => **Convention looks at economic, social and environmental dimensions of water**
- Covers surface- and groundwaters, and links to recipient seas
  - Catchments area concept => IWRM



## In practice...

- Convention played a crucial role in the region in supporting cooperation
  - Most existing agreements in Europe modelled on Convention (Danube, Sava, Bug, Kazakh-Russian, Lake Peipsi, also EU Water Framework Directive)
  - Influenced work of river commissions
  - Promoted IWRM approach
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# Support to implementation

- Guide to Implementing the Water Convention (adopted by Meeting of Parties, 2009) – revised version soon
- Other guidelines: monitoring and assessment, transboundary floods management, ...
- Projects to support joint bodies, and agreements

# Responding to challenges

- Guidance on Water and Adaptation to Climate Change
- Recommendations on Payments for Ecosystem Services
- Model provisions on transboundary groundwaters



# Convention bodies

- Meeting of the Parties
- Bureau
- Implementation Committee
- (Legal Board)
- Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management
- (Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment)
- Task Force on Water and Climate
- Task Force on Water-Food-Energy-Ecosystems Nexus
- Joint ad-hoc Expert Group on Water and Industrial Accidents

## **Supported by**

UNECE Executive Secretary and the secretariat



# Looking ahead – new programme of work 2013-2015

- Support implementation and accession (projects on the ground, capacity building; Implementation Committee)
- EU Water Initiative: National Policy Dialogues
- **Adapting to climate change in transboundary basins**
- **Water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus**
- **Quantifying benefits of transboundary water cooperation**
- **Opening of Convention**





# **Planned activities for 2013-2015 related to opening**

- Participation of countries in regular activities
- Build capacity on Convention and promote exchange of experience
- Synergies with 1997 Convention on the Law of the Non-navigational Uses of International Watercourses
- Cooperation with other partners to support implementation of Convention(s)
- Organization of two workshops on joint bodies



# Quantifying benefits of transboundary cooperation

- Development of an approach for quantifying benefits of cooperation and gathering of experience
  - clarification of definitions
  - development of benefit typology
  - review of methodologies
  - case studies, workshop
- Guidance note on benefits of cooperation



# **Water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus**

- Thematic assessment examining water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus in selected transboundary basins from around the world
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# Thank you!

## More information

including guidelines, publications and information on activities under the Convention can be found at

<http://unece.org/env/water>  
[water.convention@unece.org](mailto:water.convention@unece.org)