



**UNITED NATIONS  
ECONOMIC  
COMMISSION FOR EUROPE**

**WORLD HEALTH  
ORGANIZATION  
REGIONAL OFFICE FOR EUROPE**

**Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on Water and Health to the  
Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary  
Watercourses and International Lakes**

**Working Group on Water and Health  
Sixth meeting**

Geneva, 3 and 4 July 2013

**Item 4 of the provisional agenda**

**INFORMATION PAPER 5**

**Atlas on Water and Health**

**Background**

The World Health Assembly Resolution 64.24 Drinking-Water, Sanitation and Health called the World Health Organization (WHO) to expand its role in monitoring progress towards access to safe water and sanitation and urged Member States to ensure the sustainability of comprehensive and harmonized national and/or local water and sanitation-related monitoring systems to prevent and control sanitation- and water-related diseases.

In 2010, the Ministers of Environment and Health of the WHO European Region adopted the Parma Declaration with regional priority goals (RPGs) on environment and health. The RPG I calls for providing each child with access to safe water and sanitation, *inter alia*, in homes, child care centres, kindergartens, schools and health care institutions. Progress towards RPGs is monitored by the European Environment and Health Information System (ENHIS).

Parties to the Protocol on Water and Health are required to adopt national targets towards improving access to safe water and sanitation, the reduction of water-related diseases, and to monitor and report progress towards these targets. Article 9 Paragraph 4b of the Protocol specifies that Parties shall encourage development of information systems to handle information about long term trends, past problems, current concerns and successful solutions to them in the field of water and health.

In response to this requirement, “The Atlas on Water and Health” (hereinafter “the Atlas”) has been developed by the WHO Collaborating Centre for Health Promoting Water Management and Risk Communication at the Institute for Hygiene and Public Health (IHPH), University of Bonn.

The first version of the Atlas has been launched at the Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health in Parma 2010. The WHO European Center for Environment and Health in Bonn has been supporting the update of the Atlas in collaboration with the IHPH.

The scope, design and updated version of the Atlas has been reviewed by country representatives at regional meetings on monitoring of water supply and sanitation (October 2012 and June 2013,

Bonn). The meetings recognized the Atlas as a useful tool to support informed decision making, resource allocation as well as its usefulness for professionals working in the area of water and sanitation, and recommended to further develop the Atlas and promote its application.

### **What is the Atlas on Water and Health?**

The Atlas is a data management tool using geographic information system (GIS) technology and aims to serve as a one-stop information source on sustainable use of water resources, access to improved drinking-water supply and sanitation as well as the magnitude of water-related diseases.

The Atlas is not a tool for collection and/or generation of additional data, but it solely relies on existing data sources which have established mechanisms of data collection. It is a tool for (i) bringing together data available in other information sources; (ii) analysis and presentation of data using GIS methodology. Data sources currently considered in the Atlas include:

- WHO/UNICEF JMP
- World bank
- United Nations Developing Programme
- Centralized Information System for Infectious Diseases (CISID)

The updated version of the Atlas includes various visualizations, which allow combining different aspects from diverse databases while simultaneously exploring the outcome along a timeline. Beside the presentation within the Atlas the resulting interactive diagrams or maps may be reused in other online reports, which refer to a specific country, indicator or outcome of interest.

### **Added value of the Atlas**

- The Atlas is a “one-stop” information source for various global and regional monitoring efforts in water, sanitation and health (e.g. JMP and CISID), a combination which is not available from other presentations. It facilitates dissemination the results of these efforts and offers analytical tools for country-specific information retrieve;
- The Atlas serves as complementary information source for the countries in setting targets under the Protocol and a good tool to communicate and present achievements;
- The Atlas can be used as an online visualization service, supporting electronic reporting and data provisioning and evaluation. The Atlas includes various visualization techniques, each including temporal aspects allowing getting an overview about processes and efforts over time.
- The Atlas contributes to monitoring implementation of the RPG I of the Parma declaration and links with the European Health and Information System (ENHIS);

### **Overview of the Atlas updates**

In response to the recommendations provided at the regional meeting in October 2012, the Atlas has been updated. It now includes

- A specific selection of water and sanitation related information combined with country background data and health-outcome data; the content and indicators were extended to meet the needs of the countries (e.g. hepatitis A );

- Latest available data sources; in the future updates of the original data sources will automatically reflected in the Atlas;
- Tools that enable the user to select particular thematic aspects, years, country and region to visualize trends over time and regional comparisons;
- In addition to visual depiction of data, tools to include explanatory texts to the data in order to support informed decision making.
- In light of development of post-2015 monitoring framework, technical provisions for adding further indicators according to future monitoring requirements.

### **Way forward**

- A communication strategy needs to be developed;
- A manual on how to use the Atlas needs to be developed, e.g. case-studies which include an easy to use exemplary guideline;
- The synergies of work on the Atlas with the Task Force on Target Setting and Reporting need to be further explored;
- Presentation of the updated Atlas at the third session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on Water and Health.