

1. What is the status on equitable access in your country/ what are the main challenges faced in progressing towards equitable access according to your organization?

The Hungarian Constitution declares the right to access to safe **drinking water**. Maintaining drinking water supply is the responsibility of the municipalities.

Regarding water quantity, the Hungarian drinking water supply system is basically established. Public drinking water supply based on improved water sources is available in each community. Access to public water supply has approached the maximum economically feasible level, for 98 % of the population, and piped into 93 % of the households. Future targets could be set in improving equitable access of safe water for underprivileged population, and for some isolated rural areas.

But from the drinking water qualitative point of view and from the safety of the public service, we are still facing more challenges.

30% of supplied drinking water in Hungary does not meet the EU and national qualitative requirements regarding some parameters. Arsenic, ammonium, manganese, and iron non-compliance from geological origin is still a frequent problem, but in the framework of the ongoing National Drinking Water Quality Improvement Programme, compliance will be achieved by 2015. In communities with inadequate drinking water quality, temporary water supply is provided through different means. For the citizens to make an informed choice on the water they drink in these cases, efficient information to the public – through public health offices - on the water quality is crucial.

According to the Hungarian legislation, provision communal **wastewater** collection and treatment is also the responsibility of the state or the municipalities. Our targets in this field are based on EU obligations. The implementation of the National Waste Water Collection and Treatment Implementation Programme is facilitated by EU funds, own funds of the municipalities and state support. The next deadline for achieving the targets of the Programme is at the end of 2015, by reaching 100 % access to sanitation in the agglomerations between 2000 and 15000 population equivalents (PE). Urban areas and typically bigger cities were in the focus of the Programme at first, thus there is still a significant difference between the total and urban areas access ratio to piped sanitation. More than 87% of communities in urban areas, and not more than 45 % of the villages in rural areas are connected to piped wastewater collection system. In the future we have to concentrate on improving sanitation in smaller rural agglomerations, especially in isolated living areas, using technically and economically sustainable, small scale solutions.

Beside the existing shortages in the rate of availability of accessing to improved water services we have to mention, that there are some social gaps in affordability of these services as well. People living in poverty have severe financial problems and in special cases they could not pay even for the drinking water supply or for sanitation services.

3. What would be the solution to improve equitable access to water in your country – and what would be the ambition (commitment) from your country/organisation?

As I partly mentioned earlier, improving the level of equitable access to water services needs further ambitious measures in Hungary, first of all:

- Continuation and full implementation of the targets of national programmes relating improving the quality of drinking water, develop wastewater collection and treatment networks and facilities, and ensuring proper protection of drinking water resources in the frame of integrated water management.
- In order to close the existing gaps on the field of equitable access to public water supply, new incentives and more financial support are necessary mainly for people living in isolated living areas or in very small villages. It needs the investigation of new local, small scale technical solutions.
- In terms of regulating water prices taking into account social aspects as well, many steps were taken in Hungary (special aid for housing, and a governmental decision on decreasing living costs) by now, but further aids and tools need to be introduced especially based on the social condition of people. It is necessary to improve the living conditions of indigent or disadvantaged groups in order to ensure them acceptable quantity and good quality drinking water and better personal circumstances.
- We have to use in future even more effectively communication, information, education tools helping the population to exploit better the available resources in this field.

In addition of the mentioned national actions Hungary would like to further help and promote the international activities on the field of equitable access to water and sanitation as well. Our intent is to continue the discussion process as a follow up the Rio+20 Conference and the Budapest Water Summit.

Hungary would like to support further the relevant activities of the Protocol also offering co-chairing the equitable access expert group, and to lead the sub-activity dealing with problem of sanitation and hygiene education in schools. We also consider using the recently published score-card on equitable access for self assessment in the future, because we are convinced that this is a very good tool for both baseline and progress analysis in this field. .

2. Individual question: Outcomes of the Budapest Water Summit

The Budapest Water Summit – held between 8 and 11 October 2013- was one of the major events in the International Year of Water Cooperation, a forward looking assembly of governments, the UN System and wide range of stakeholders dedicated to the issues of water.-We were honoured to have the UN Secretary General and the WHO Director General with us.

The Summit was initiated at United Nations Conference for Sustainable Development – “Rio+20” - by the Hungarian President with the principal objective to take stock of the various developments in preparing the stand-alone Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) on water in the post-2015 development agenda.

The main outcomes of the various deliberations were summarised in the Budapest Statement with title “A Sustainable World is a Water-Secure World”. (You can find it on the conference website, and some hard copies are also available here.). The Declaration reflects the messages of the thematic sessions, of the civil society, science, youth and business forums as well as the philanthropy roundtable that took place during the Summit.

Summarizing very shortly the synthesis of the Summit relating to the main water-related issues and tasks of the international community are the following:

- water must be handled as a priority in the new global development agenda through a dedicated Sustainable Development Goal;
- the dedicated SDG should cover all the major water-related issues, including. access to drinking water, waste water treatment, integrated water management, disaster management and international cooperation;
- a robust intergovernmental process to regularly monitor, review and assess progress of the implementation of a future water goal should be set up.

During the Conference a special session was dedicated to “Striving for universal access to water and sanitation” with high level representatives of countries and international institutes. The participants stated that:

- Achievement of universal access to sustainable and safe drinking water as well as gender-responsive sanitation and hygiene services as part of human rights has to cover all households, schools, health facilities, workplaces and emergency contexts including refugee camps.
- Narrowing the water and sanitation deficiency gap will generally protect and improve human health.
- The sustainability and quality of drinking water and sanitation services must be improved for all while giving priority to the most vulnerable, increasing equality.
- Drinking water and sanitation should be fully integrated into water resources management because water and sanitation not only consume and use, but also can pollute the water.
- To achieve these objectives new partnerships, innovation in the technologies and behavioural dimensions of drinking water and sanitation must be promoted and developed. Successful approaches to ensure access to poor and disadvantaged population should be identified. These include financing mechanisms and budgets for operation and maintenance.

During the Summit a special side event was also organised by UNECE and WHO/Europe for promoting the UN ECE Water Convention and particularly the Protocol on Water and Health

as a unique international instrument supporting the implementation of the international WASH agenda.