

GOVERNMENT of ROMANIA



**MINISTRY of ENVIRONMENT and CLIMATE CHANGE
DEPARTMENT for WATERS, FORESTS and FISHERIES**

**The third session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on Water and Health
25-27 November 2013, Oslo, Norway**

**Special Session on Equitable Access to Drinking Water and Sanitation
„FAIR AND SMART WAYS TO REACH UNIVERSAL ACCESS’
25 November 2013 (3.30 pm-5.30 pm)**

Successful participatory approaches for sustainability and relevance

Romania: Mr. Ionuț-Ciprian Iuga, State Secretary, Department for Waters, Forests and Fisheries, Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (*on the importance of public participation in the decision making process for the implementation of the human rights to water and sanitation*)

Excelencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

The Protocol on Water and Health brings together and mobilise water and health sectors in order to work together with the aim to increase access to water and sanitation, improve water and drinking water quality and prevent water-related diseases.

The work means to develop and to implement policy, strategies and programmes through projects and investments. Who are the beneficiaries of these policies and investments ? The individuals, groups of people, local communities, interest groups, associations, the public. For this reason public participation in the decision-making process must be an integral part of any policy, project or investment concerning water and sanitation.

What do we want to achieve by public involvement?

Public participation will allow to express their interests and priorities, their experiences and ideas, to plan for themselves with the aim for a better co-ordination of development of the community. Participation means collaboration for mutually objectives, acceptance of responsibilities and sharing of benefits as well.

Participatory approaches to development on water and sanitation is built on the basis that the communities support effective project implementation and enhance the well-being of the people, especially of the poor.

The questions are: is the participation a true one? What is the role of governments, communities, stakeholders, non-governmental organizations? Is participation effective and in the interest of community? Are the decisions taken in a transparent way? Are the voices of poor and marginalized people heard?

The Protocol on Water and Health stipulates that States should be guided by several principles related to human rights, including equitable and adequate access to water for everyone, access to information, public participation and special consideration for vulnerable groups.

We all know that there are different levels and types of participation. We need to have instruments to guide us in making this participation an effective one and increasing people willingness to participate. For this reason we strongly believe that the Guide to public participation under the Protocol on Water and Health developed under the Programme of Work 2011-2013, under the coordination of Romania and Women in Europe for a Common Future and financial support of Norway will provide the needed assistance to Governments in improving the public participation in the water and sanitation issues and health as well. This document is also addressed to the public to be informed about the process of participation and therefore to increase their willingness to participate in the decision-making process. Governments and non-governmental organisations have an important role in disseminating this document to the public as well as in its translation into national language.

What about the access to the safe drinking water and basic sanitation and public participation in the decision-making processes in Romania?

In Romania all the population groups have the right to access the safe drinking water and basic sanitation. The legislation in this field refers to the granting of the drinking water supply for population and public sanitation as well as to the rational and balanced distribution of water resources. The Romanian Constitution stipulates that the state is obliged to take measures in order to assure the hygiene and public health.

The actions of the Romanian authorities are oriented to the extension of the centralized drinking water supply and sanitation systems, including those within the disadvantaged areas.

The provisions of the specific legislation on water and sanitation require the access and participation of population in decision making process. For example, according to the provisions of the Drinking Water Quality Law, the authorities with attributes in the field of drinking water supply should ensure the adequate and updated information on quality of water intended for human consumption. The access to information and decision making process, is also provided by the Water Law and is available for all the population groups, no matter of their incomes.

The water supply and sewage public services are the responsibility of the local public administration authorities and its aim is to ensure the water supply, sewage and wastewater treatment for all users on the territory of the localities based on the principle of equitable tariffs and equal accessibility to the public service, on a contractual basis. The information campaigns are organised by the water utilities in the area where they provide services.

In case of regionalization, the users connected to water services in urban areas provide (direct or indirect) financial support to users in rural areas so as to facilitate their access to water and sanitation

In some cases, there are granted subsidies to reduce the price of water services in the rural areas where the provision of these services is particularly expensive. For instance, this is the case of the families with the residence in one of the localities of the “Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve’s” territory.

I gave these examples at our national level just to show that even providing water and sanitation for all is not an easy task, we could find or think on different solutions. All we have to consider is that the water is essential for our health and the health is most precious wealth we have. We think that the Protocol on Water and Health is the best platform to share the experiences in this field and to think for common solutions

I will conclude about the importance of public participation by quoting from Benjamin Franklin:
“If everyone is thinking alike, then no one is thinking.”

Thank you very much for your attention.