



UNITED NATIONS
ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE



WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION
REGIONAL OFFICE FOR EUROPE

BUREAU/2014/2

PROTOCOL ON WATER AND HEALTH

30 June 2014

**Bureau of the Meeting of the Parties
Twelfth meeting
Dübendorf, Switzerland, 24–25 March 2014**

REPORT OF THE TWELFTH MEETING

Prepared by the joint secretariat

The twelfth meeting of the Bureau of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on Water and Health took place on 24 and 25 March 2013 in Dübendorf, Switzerland. The meeting was attended by the following members of the Bureau: Ms. Ana Drapa (Romania), Ms. Alena Drazdova (Belarus), Mr. Yannick Pavageau (France), Mr. Jarkko Rapala (Finland), Ms. Bettina Rickert (Germany), Mr. Pierre Studer (Switzerland), Mr. Kjetil Tveitan (Norway) and Ms. Marta Vargha (Hungary).

The meeting was chaired by Mr. Pierre Studer and serviced by the secretariat provided jointly by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) and the World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Office for Europe (WHO/Europe).

1. Adoption of the agenda

The Bureau adopted its agenda as set out in the document BUREAU/2014/1.

2. Workplan to carry out the secretariat functions in 2014

The joint secretariat presented the workplan to carry out the secretariat functions under the Protocol on Water and Health in 2014 (document BUREAU/2014/2) agreed by ECE and WHO/Europe in accordance with the Memorandum of Understanding between the two organizations. The secretariat explained that many of activities reflected in the workplan were subject to the availability of resources. The document would be updated periodically, as necessary.

The secretariat reported the approval of the United Nations Development Account (UNDA) project for 2014–2017 that would support the implementation of the programme of work in relation to target setting and reporting, equitable access and small-scale water supplies and sanitation. WHO/Europe informed the Bureau about the biennial collaborative agreements (BCAs) concluded between WHO and its member States. The BCAs will support

implementation of the programme of work under the Protocol, in particular the programme areas on the prevention and reduction of water-related diseases as well as safe and efficient management of water supply and sanitation systems.

The secretariat also introduced the preliminary schedule of meetings and other major activities under the Protocol on Water and Health for 2014–2016, contained in document BUREAU/2014/3.¹

The representative of Norway noted that the 2014 meeting of the Nordic/Baltic water and sanitation network should be included in the schedule of meetings. The Bureau also asked that the schedule, which was presented as a table, be complemented by a column indicating the programme area for each meeting or activity.

The Bureau took note of the schedule under the Protocol for 2014–2016, acknowledging that some deviations from the programme of work approved at the third session of the Meeting of the Parties (Oslo, 25–27 November 2014) may occur during the implementation period. Some activities that would not be adequately funded could be dropped while other additional activities may be implemented in different areas of work.

3. Programme of work for 2014–2016

The Bureau reviewed in detail the future implementation of the programme of work for 2014–2016 vis-à-vis the available and foreseen financial and human resources, particularly focusing on activities to be carried out in 2014.

The representatives of lead Parties and the joint secretariat reported on the planned activities under the Protocol within the following programme areas:

- Programme area 1 – Improving governance for water and health: support for setting targets and implementing measures

The representatives of Romania and Switzerland shared their views on the implementation of this programme area. The Chair stressed that priority should be given to sanitation in target setting under the Protocol and the need for elaboration of proper indicators for reporting. A workshop on sanitation could be organized in 2015 to discuss relevant indicators.

The representative of the WHO/Europe secretariat noted that aspects of sanitation were cross-cutting challenges that went beyond the current focus of work under the Protocol on drinking water and on approaching sanitation only from the point of view of access. A scoping study was therefore considered necessary to address sanitation, as was included in programme area 4 on safe and efficient management of water supply and sanitation systems. Funding, however, was not yet available for that activity.

The Chair noted that in the current triennium the Task Force on Target Setting and Reporting would need to address the request by the Meeting of the Parties to study the possible need to review and update the guidelines and template for reporting, as well as the *Guidelines on the setting of targets, evaluation of progress and reporting*.

The representative of Hungary underlined that the proposed workshop on reporting in 2016 could be moved to an earlier date to allow more time for Parties to prepare for the next

¹ The document on the preliminary schedule of meetings and other major activities under the Protocol on Water and Health for 2014–2016, was prepared by the joint secretariat based on the request of the Chair of the Bureau.

reporting exercise. Thus, the workshop could be held in November 2015 while the letters on reporting could be sent out in December 2015.

On the basis of the recently-conducted analysis by WHO/Europe of the responses to the questionnaire on small-scale water supplies and sanitation (SSWSS) in the pan-European region, the representative of the WHO/Europe secretariat suggested that the Task Force consider including an item on small-scale systems in the reporting requirements. It would provide an opportunity for routine reporting on SSWSS. This could be also considered an advantage over other reporting schemes and create an added-value for the Protocol, compared to reporting under relevant European Union (EU) directives that cover agglomerations above 5,000 persons. The representative of Germany noted that the feedback on the surveys was diverse.

The Bureau noted that the elaboration of reporting indicators on SSWSS could be considered at the next meeting of the Task Force, scheduled for 3–4 July 2014 in Geneva.

The representative of Romania proposed that the outcomes of the second reporting exercise be discussed at the Task Force meeting. She also noted that issue of public participation in the context of the Protocol, specifically in relation to target setting and reporting, should also be covered at the meeting.

Bureau members also discussed what it meant to establish targets, as required by article 6, paragraph 2, of the Protocol, and the challenges faced by Parties with following the *Guidelines on the setting of targets, evaluation of progress and reporting*, which suggest that targets “should be endorsed at the appropriate political level (e.g. council of ministers or Parliament)”. The Bureau agreed that this matter too could be brought to the attention of the Task Force.

The representative of the ECE secretariat stressed the importance of securing funds for adequate operation of the Task Force and for activities implemented under its auspices. He also highlighted some possible funding opportunities that could arise in relation to a possible water goal in the post-2015 development agenda, and the associated future regional and global schemes for monitoring progress.

In this regard, the Bureau noted that a regional workshop on linkages with other reporting mechanisms could be organized as part of the next Task Force meeting, to discuss connections with current and possible new reporting schemes.

The joint secretariat also reported plans to organize a national workshop under the Protocol for Kazakhstan on 23–24 April 2014 and on the recent request received from Serbia to provide assistance in the process of target setting. In response to this request, WHO/Europe informed the Bureau about the possibility to organize a national workshop on global monitoring on water and sanitation back-to-back with a seminar on target setting under the Protocol. The Bureau supported this approach as a part of assistance to the target-setting process in Serbia.

The representative of Switzerland noted that his country would continue to support activities under programme area 1 with annual contributions of about 50,000 CHF.

- Programme area 2 – Prevention and reduction of water-related diseases

WHO/Europe informed the Bureau about the progress that had been made in this programme area which covers four distinct thematic areas. An in-depth planning meeting was to be held on 31 March 2014 in Bonn (Germany) to map out priority activities to be undertaken in the coming three years, identify lead countries for individual activities and discuss the scope and programme components for two technical meetings planned in autumn 2014 supporting programme areas 2.1 and 2.4. The meeting was to be attended by the Bureau members from Belarus and Norway as well as a representative of the Norwegian National Institute of Public Health. The Chair requested the WHO/Europe secretariat and lead Parties to submit informal meeting notes on the outcomes of the planning meeting to the Bureau.

WHO/Europe mobilized funding from Germany for the two above-mentioned meetings on water, sanitation and hygiene in schools (17–18 September 2014, Bonn) and strengthening surveillance of water related diseases (22–23 October 2014, Bonn). Norway allocated 40,000 USD to support the implementation of activities of programme area 2. Hungary may contribute in-kind by hosting a WASH in schools meeting in 2015 through the Ministry of Health. Belarus is interested to provide a technical contribution, in particular in cost-effective drinking water quality surveillance to support activities under 2.3.

The Bureau considered that activities for prevention of soil-transmitted helminthes were not a priority for this year.

- Programme area 3 – Small-scale water supplies and sanitation

The representative of Germany described the progress made on the development of the policy guidance document on SSWSS. The next meeting of the drafting group is planned for June 2014. The budget was likely available for editing the document but needs to be confirmed. The next step would be the dissemination and promotion of the guidance document.

The representative of Germany also informed the Bureau that the response rate to the questionnaire survey on small-scale water supplies in the pan-European region was high; the results were currently being analyzed. She welcomed more case studies from the eastern part of the region (e.g. experiences of the situation analysis of small-scale water supply systems in Georgia). The draft report on the analysis of the questionnaires was to be presented at the November 2014 meeting of the Working Group on Water and Health.

The representative of Germany also informed the Bureau about other activities linked to programme area 4, financially supported by Germany. A project proposal was being developed with Serbia on water and sanitation safety planning in small systems. WHO/Europe noted that the WHO concept of sanitation safety plans (SSP), which is currently being developed, focuses primarily on safe reuse of wastewater. However, a wider approach of SSP could be considered under the Protocol work. The representative of Finland supported an integrated water and sanitation safety approach.

As per the programme of work, WHO/Europe, with financial support by Germany, was to organize a meeting of the WHO-led *Small Community Water Supply Management Network* in Bishkek on 26–27 June 2014 to promote networking and share best practices on management of SSWSS among countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia. The meeting would be held back-to-back with a subregional water safety planning (WSP) capacity-building workshop (see programme area 4 below).

The representative of Hungary noted that cost-benefit analysis would be a very good argument for giving priority consideration to sanitation. The Ministry of Health of Hungary had submitted a proposal to the country's Ministry of Foreign Affairs for an international development project. The Protocol would be used as a potential platform to target assistance and a good means to implement international development projects. SSWSS could be an important area of the project.

- Programme area 4 – Safe and efficient management of water supply and sanitation systems

The representative of the WHO/Europe secretariat introduced the recently-published field guide on WSP for small community water supplies. It is a practical guide for rural communities and provides a number of templates to assist development and implementation of WSPs. The document would be launched officially at the subregional WSP capacity-building workshop to be held in Bishkek on 24–25 June 2014. The workshop was to target decision-makers of 12 countries in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia. It was stressed that Germany provided funding for the workshop while Portugal and the International Water Association (IWA) would be providing in-kind intellectual support to the workshop. In addition, WHO/Europe was planning to support national training courses on WSP in five countries within the BCAs with its member States.

The representative of ECE secretariat informed the Bureau about the upcoming training event on WSPs in the Republic of Moldova, to be held in cooperation with IWA and WHO/Europe and tentatively scheduled for September 2014.

The Bureau discussed the need for a scoping study that would outline the areas for possible intervention under this programme area, including the issues of sanitation and wastewater management in large- and small-scale systems, also in a transboundary context. The Bureau would welcome in-kind contributions through technical expertise and funds to support the scoping study.

The WHO/Europe secretariat informed the Bureau about the outcomes of the European Strategic Workshop on WSP which was co-organized by Germany, WHO/Europe and IWA.

- Programme area 5 – Equitable access to water and sanitation: translating the human right to water and sanitation into practice

The representative of France reminded that two important publications were produced in the previous triennium – the collection of good practices *No-one left behind* and the scorecard on equitable access to drinking water and sanitation. The main priorities for work for 2014–2016 would thus be the promotion of the scorecard implementation and of the realization of the human right to water and sanitation across the region. In this regard, the conduct of self-assessment exercises would be promoted, similar to those done in Paris, Portugal and Ukraine. He noted that the utility Eau de Paris was available to share experiences with other countries. Another item of work was to develop action plans on equitable access to water and sanitation following previous self-assessment exercises. France was working on its third national plan on environment and health for 2014–2018, which would include action plans on equitable access in 26 regional health agencies.

The representative of Hungary confirmed the commitment of her country to co-lead this area of work. The support could be provided through the organization of one expert meeting in Hungary. In addition, Hungary was planning to conduct one local or national self-assessment.

The WHO/Europe secretariat proposed to use the remaining funds provided by France for equity work, e.g. to support the national assessment in Hungary. The Bureau requested Hungary to explore the possibility of self-assessment with the national authorities and subsequently to inform the Bureau on the resource needs.

The representative of France confirmed that his country would continue its financial support to this area of work on a level similar to that in the previous triennium.

The secretariat informed the Bureau about the on equitable access activities to be funded by the UNDA project and underlined the importance of the continued receipt of voluntary contributions from Parties, especially to sustain the funding of staff.

The Bureau also discussed developments regarding the EU European Citizens Initiative on the human right to water and sanitation. It was noted that the European Commission (EC) had issued an official reply to the request. The Bureau underlined that in the light of these developments, it was important to take a strategic approach to work with EC. It would be useful if some Parties to the Protocol that are EU member States shared with EC relevant information in relation to the work on equitable access undertaken so far under the Protocol. Hungary volunteered to prepare a draft letter to EC on the progress in equitable access, to be circulated to Bureau members for input.

In addition, the Bureau invited the ECE secretariat to seek opportunities to arrange a meeting of senior ECE staff with the relevant staff at the EC to discuss collaboration between EU and ECE multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs).

- Programme area 6 – Assistance to support implementation at the national level

The members of the Bureau shared their ideas about potential projects that could strengthen the implementation of the Protocol at the national level.

The representative of Finland informed the Bureau about the upcoming new stage of the country's FinWaterWei programme that would focus on Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. He confirmed his support to proposals submitted in this regard by ECE and WHO/Europe.

In response to Serbia's request, a national workshop on target setting would be organized supported by the secretariat. The outcome of this event could be the identification of priority needs for the target-setting process in the country. A separate target-setting project would require funding and would be subject to further discussion.

Azerbaijan had requested funding support from Norway; a project was to be supported through bilateral collaboration.

The secretariat updated the Bureau on the status of cooperation and exchange of ideas with the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. Possible plans to approach the European Investment Bank were also mentioned.

The Bureau requested the secretariat to circulate requests for funding for national projects/activities as soon as they arrive in order to allow more time for fundraising. The Bureau also requested the secretariat to look into the possibility of producing a simplified template for project proposals for countries and present it at the next Bureau meeting. It was noted that the template prepared under the Project Facilitation Mechanism could serve as an example.

- Programme area 7 – Compliance procedure

The ECE secretariat presented the plan of activities under the Compliance Committee in line with the adopted programme of work and explained that it was striving to raise funds for the operation of the Committee, including through a proposal to the Ministry of Environment of Norway.

Some immediate tasks of the Compliance Committee, in accordance with the decisions taken by the Meeting of the Parties, would include addressing the issue of non-compliance of Parties with reporting obligations and the application of the Consultation Process.

Following the review of all 7 areas of work under the Protocol, the Bureau discussed the need to secure funding for the core secretariat functions, including for servicing the Working Group on Water and Health and the Compliance Committee.

The representative of Norway stated that his country would continue to support the work of the Working Group on Water and Health with annual voluntary contributions.

The Bureau requested the secretariat to send a letter to Parties asking for financial contributions to support the implementation of the programme of work. The letter should include the programme of work and the schedule of meetings and other activities. It should also identify funding gaps. The secretariat should also offer to calculate a possible contribution on the basis of the United Nations scale of assessments. The result of such a calculation for all Parties should be shared with the Bureau.

4. Resources to implement the programme of work and the financing mechanism under the Protocol: general discussion/possibilities for funding

The ECE secretariat introduced the current status of discussions on financing arrangements under some other ECE multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) and reported on recent deliberations in EU on possible coordination of EU support to ECE MEAs.

The representative of Norway noted that a United Nations scale of assessment type of estimate was useful to mobilize resources within the country and recalled documents that were produced earlier by ECE on different options for financing mechanisms for ECE MEAs. Members of the Bureau agreed to review those documents in order to extract useful points and prepare an initial scope and outline for further discussion on financing.

The Bureau also discussed potential donor agencies and partners that could be approached in relation to fundraising and shared responsibilities among its members for contacting some specific potential donors.

The joint secretariat shared updates on its fundraising efforts, mentioning proposals submitted to Finland, Germany, Norway, Switzerland and other countries and agencies.

In this regard the Bureau agreed to hold an informal meeting on financing in Geneva on 2 July 2014, back to back with the meeting of the Task Force. It further entrusted the secretariat to make available for this meeting all documents previously prepared in conjunction with the meetings of the informal group on financing.

5. Overview of the implementation of the Protocol on Water and Health

The Bureau discussed the situation with the implementation of the Protocol on Water and Health in the pan-European region based on: (i) the outcomes of the second reporting exercise under the Protocol outlined in the regional report on the status of implementation of the Protocol² submitted to the third session of the Meeting of the Parties; and (ii) the updated information regarding the number of Signatories and Parties to the Protocol and the number of Parties that adopted and communicated to the secretariat their national targets and targets dates in accordance with article 6.

In relation to improving the outreach and promoting the accession of the Protocol throughout the region, the Bureau considered the possibility of engaging its members in networking with their neighbouring countries to encourage ratification. The members of the Bureau shared among themselves responsibilities for approaching some specific countries to increase awareness of the Protocol in those countries and to promote accession and target setting.

The representative of Norway mentioned that the Nordic/Baltic network on water and sanitation could be used to promote the Protocol in participating countries.

The WHO/Europe secretariat informed the Bureau about an upcoming international meeting in Spain where the WHO/Europe secretariat had been asked to present target setting and reporting under the Protocol.

The Bureau also discussed upcoming opportunities for promoting the Protocol at different regional and global events, including the high-level mid-term review meeting of the European Environment and Health process, scheduled for November 2014 in Israel. It was underlined that the benefits of such promotional events should be carefully weighed against the resources put into them. The Bureau members could take initiatives to promote the Protocol at different events by different means, e.g. making interventions from the floor or making presentations.

6. Self-assessment of the ECE Environment Division

The ECE secretariat informed the Bureau about the outcomes of the self-assessment exercise of the ECE Environment Division, which covered the evaluation of the activities under the Protocol on Water and Health in 2011–2013 and the preparations for and the conduct of the third session of the Meeting of the Parties. Some of the concrete recommendations of the exercise included making the official documents shorter and providing opportunities for more interactive sessions during the Meeting of the Parties.

7. Provision of financial support to participants of meetings held under the Protocol

The Bureau considered the current rules for the provision of financial support for travel of participants from selected ECE member States to meetings held under the Protocol (document BUREAU/2014/4). The Bureau decided to maintain the current eligibility criteria for financial support as reflected in annex to the present report, pending possible decision on this matter at the fourth session of the Meeting of the Parties.

The Bureau also endorsed the proposal by the ECE secretariat to introduce a new procedure for the disbursement of financial support to eligible participants in meetings held under the

²The document is available at www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/documents/2013/wat/MOP3-PWH/docs/ECE_MP.WH_2013_3_regional_implementation_report_ENG.PDF

Protocol, whereby some participants would be offered additional subsistence payments in lieu of an air ticket. It was believed that this would save staff time without increasing costs.

8. Closing

The Bureau tentatively scheduled its next meeting for 28 November 2014 in Geneva. The Bureau asked the secretariat to ensure that the Chair of the Bureau of the ECE Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes would be invited to attend.

The Chair closed the meeting on 25 March 2014 at 1 p.m.

Annex: Financial support arrangements under the Protocol on Water and Health

<i>Event type</i>	<i>Participation</i>	<i>Financial support (subject to availability of funds)</i>
Session of the Meeting of the Parties	Representatives of national authorities in Parties or other ECE member States (<i>Delegates</i>)	One or two representatives of national authorities in eligible countries only ¹ (the secretariat seeks clarification from the country with the aim of representation by both water and health sectors, when funding allows)
Meeting of the Working Group on Water and Health	Representatives of national NGOs	One representative of NGOs in eligible countries only ¹ whose work has a direct relevance to the activity (the secretariat gives priority to those NGOs whose work is of greatest relevance, subject to the availability of funds)
Meeting of the Task Force on Target-Setting and Reporting	Representatives of international NGOs	One representative of NGOs whose work internationally has a direct relevance to the activity (the secretariat gives priority to those NGOs whose work is of greatest relevance, subject to the availability of funds)
Regional workshop	Observers from other United Nations Member States	One or two representatives of national authorities of non-ECE countries if earmarked contributions have been made
	Invited experts and speakers	Internationally renowned experts, normally from academia or research , invited to deliver speeches or presentations if earmarked contributions have been made
	Project experts	Representatives of countries and organizations involved in field projects, using project funds
	Staff of WHO/Europe secretariat	In accordance with a host country agreement (Meeting of the Parties) or if earmarked contributions have been made
Bureau meeting	Representatives of national authorities in Parties	Bureau members from eligible countries only ¹
Compliance Committee meeting	Members of the Committee	All Committee members
	Observers	If earmarked contributions have been made
Subregional workshop	Invited participants	In accordance with earmarked contributions or project funds, as appropriate
National workshop	Invited experts and speakers	Internationally renowned experts, normally from academia or research , invited to deliver speeches or presentations if earmarked contributions have been made
	Staff of WHO/Europe secretariat	Invited to provide substantive inputs, including to deliver speeches or presentations if earmarked contributions have been made

¹ Eligible countries: Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Montenegro (DSA only), Republic of Moldova, Serbia (DSA only), Tajikistan, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.