



# International obligations related to equitable access to water and sanitation

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Protocol on Water and Health



# The Human Right to Water and Sanitation



## **UNGA Res (2010): Water & sanitation = basic human right**

Everyone is entitled to water & sanitation which is:

- ... available
- ... accessible
- ... of good quality / safety contamination
- ... affordable
- ... acceptable

### ***Principles of the human right:***

- Non-discrimination and equality
- Information and transparency
- Participation
- Accountability
- Sustainability



# The Human Right to Water and Sanitation



## States obligation:

- Progressive realisation and maximum available resources
- Respect, protect, fulfil

## Human Rights Council Resolution 15/9 (2010)

Calling on States to achieve progressively the full realization of human rights obligations:

- including unserved and underserved areas
- attention to vulnerable & marginalized groups

# Equitable access under the Protocol on Water and Health



The Protocol key objectives:

- (a) Access to drinking water for everyone
- (b) Provision of sanitation for everyone



**A specific focus on equitable access:**

“Equitable access to water, adequate in terms both of quantity and of quality, should be provided for all members of the population, especially those who suffer a disadvantage or social exclusion” (art. 5)



# Equitable access under the Protocol on Water and Health



The Protocol: a practical **instrument to progressively implement** the human right to water and sanitation

- \* **Safety:** ensure «adequate supplies of water free from [...] substances which constitute a potential danger to human health»
- \* **Implementation strategy:** set targets and target dates, develop plan for achieving the targets, provisions for public participation
- \* **Monitoring:** establish arrangement for monitoring achievement of targets, Compliance Committee (possibility of communication from public if non compliance)

Questions?

# No One Left Behind

- \* Identifies key **challenges** in ensuring equitable access to water and sanitation
- \* Analyzes **national governance frameworks** and options for them to address equitable access
- \* Presents concrete **good practices** and lessons learnt on policy options and measures to address inequities

UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION REGIONAL OFFICE FOR EUROPE

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



**NO ONE LEFT BEHIND**

GOOD PRACTICES TO ENSURE EQUITABLE ACCESS TO WATER  
AND SANITATION IN THE PAN-EUROPEAN REGION



World Health  
Organization  
REGIONAL OFFICE FOR  
Europe

UNITED NATIONS

REGIONAL OFFICE FOR  
Europe



Protocol on Water and Health



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# Inequities to be fought on 3 fronts

Dimension	Inequities in access to water and sanitation
<b>Geographical disparities:</b> water resources, WSS infrastructure	Certain areas of a country (rural areas, poor urban neighborhoods) have no physical access or have access of lower quality than other areas
<b>Social disparities:</b> vulnerable and marginalised groups	Within areas with good access, certain groups do not have access because they don't have private facilities, the public and institutional facilities they rely on are not adequate, or suffer unintended or intended discrimination
<b>Economic disparities:</b> affordability issues	Within areas with good access, the water and sanitation bill represents too large a share of disposable income for some households




# Reducing geographical disparities

Policy options	Example of good practice
Closing price gaps	<p><i>Ensuring access to water in remote rural areas in Finland</i></p>  <p>Long term programme of public subsidies for water sector: investment targeted to smaller and remote communities, no subsidies for operation and maintenance + extensive groundwater research</p>
Closing access gaps	

# Ensuring access for vulnerable and marginalized groups (1)

Examples of vulnerable and marginalised groups	Examples of barriers for enjoying access
Persons with disabilities, persons with serious and chronic illnesses	Standard (private and public) water and sanitation facilities may not be adequate to their special physical needs
School children, hospitalized patients, detainees, refugees	Institutions on which they rely (schools, hospitals, prisons, refugee camps) may not have adequate water and sanitation facilities
Homeless people, nomadic and travelling communities	Public facilities (fountains, showers, toilets) on which they rely may not be available
Illegal settlers, illegal immigrants	Water and sanitation service providers may not serve undocumented persons or housing facilities located in untenured land
Indigenous people, persons belonging to ethnic or other minorities	Water providers and social services agencies may incur in unintended or intended discriminatory practices (service provision, allocation of aid, participation)

# Ensuring access for vulnerable and marginalized groups (2)

Policy options	Example of good practice
Cross-cutting policy options to ensure non-discrimination	<p data-bbox="511 535 1729 678"><i>Providing water and sanitation for persons without fixed dwellings in Flanders (Belgium)</i></p>  <p data-bbox="1033 749 1825 1363">Belgium's Flanders region has established four transit areas for travelling communities with water and sanitation facilities - each one can receive 10-25 families for a period of a few days</p>
Targeted policy options	

# Keeping water and sanitation affordable for all

Policy options	Example of good practice
Tariff measures	<p data-bbox="531 599 1825 664"><i>Voluntary introduction of social tariffs in Poland</i></p>  <p data-bbox="1014 706 1825 1313">The Polish operator AQUA SA introduced a reduced tariff for low-income households (at a cost of 1% of utility revenue) based on the eligibility criteria used by the municipal social services</p>
Targeted policy options	

# But also a need to steer governance frameworks to ensure equitable access

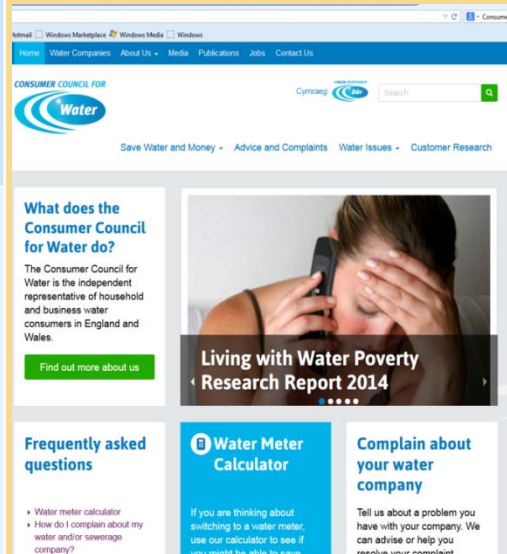
## Policy options

Good water governance and management

“Equitable access lens” to speed up progress

## Example of good practice

*Empowering consumers in the UK: Consumer Council for Water in England and Wales*



The screenshot shows the website for the Consumer Council for Water. At the top, there are navigation links: Home, Water Companies, About Us, Media, Publications, Jobs, and Contact Us. Below this is the logo for the Consumer Council for Water, with the tagline 'Save Water and Money - Advice and Complaints - Water Issues - Customer Research'. A search bar is visible with the text 'Cynwacy' and a search icon. The main content area features a section titled 'What does the Consumer Council for Water do?' with a sub-headline 'The Consumer Council for Water is the independent representative of household and business water consumers in England and Wales.' Below this is a green button that says 'Find out more about us'. To the right of this section is a large image of a woman talking on a mobile phone, with a dark overlay containing the text 'Living with Water Poverty Research Report 2014'. Below the main content area, there are three columns of links: 'Frequently asked questions', 'Water Meter Calculator' (with a sub-headline 'If you are thinking about switching to a water meter, use our calculator to see if you might be able to save'), and 'Complain about your water company' (with a sub-headline 'Tell us about a problem you have with your company. We can advise or help you resolve your complaint').

The Consumer Council for England and Wales uses consumer research and direct customer feedback to inform water policy making and implementation – such as on affordability issues



# Questions?

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