

Water Convention and other UNECE multi-lateral environmental agreements

Dr Annukka Lipponen
Water Convention secretariat, UNECE



The Water Convention:

Main objective:

Foster cooperation over transboundary waters in order to **ensure** that they are **sustainably and equitably managed**



Water Convention Key Principles

Principle of prevention

Principle of equitable and reasonable utilization

Principle of cooperation

Main provisions of the Water Convention (1)



General obligations for Parties:

Parties shall implement all appropriate measures to **prevent, control** and **reduce transboundary impact:**

- Waste water treatment, licensing of discharges and monitoring of authorized discharges
- Best environmental practice for non-point pollution sources
- Minimization of the risk of accidental pollution
- Protection of groundwaters
- Application of Environmental Impact Assessment
- Monitoring and assessment of water resources

Main provisions of the Water Convention (2)



Specific provisions for riparian countries:

- Conclusion of bilateral and multilateral agreements and creation of joint bodies
- Consultation between Riparian Parties
- Joint monitoring and assessment
- Common research and development
- Exchange of information between Riparian Parties
- Warning and alarm systems
- Mutual assistance
- Public information

Water Convention: different types of support and assistance

- * Soft-law tools: **Guidelines** and model provisions
- * **Support to implementation**
- * Provides for a **dialogue and exchange of experience** at different levels
- * **Projects on the ground** (technical and political levels)

Documents, material from meetings and publications available at: <http://www.unece.org/env/water>

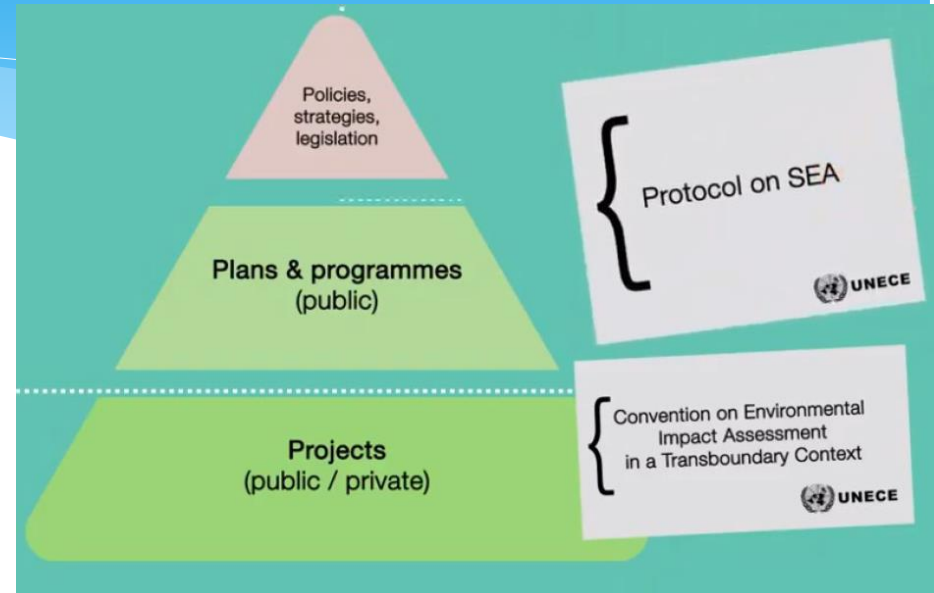
UNECE Espoo Convention and the Protocol on SEA

= Key tools for sustainable infrastructure



Underlying principles

- EIA: applied to projects
- SEA: applied to plans, policies/ legislation, programmes
- Helps to avoid/reduce & monitor negative environmental & health impacts of planned strategies and projects
- Improve planning & project design
- Decision-making better-informed & more objective through stakeholder consultations
- Enhance governance – transparency, public participation
- Improve cross-boarder cooperation, help avoid tensions/conflicts
- Guidelines, legislative advice, pilots and training help countries in reforming legislation and assessing the impacts of plans and projects – important tools



Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention) underpins the importance of involvement of all actors to achieve sustainable development

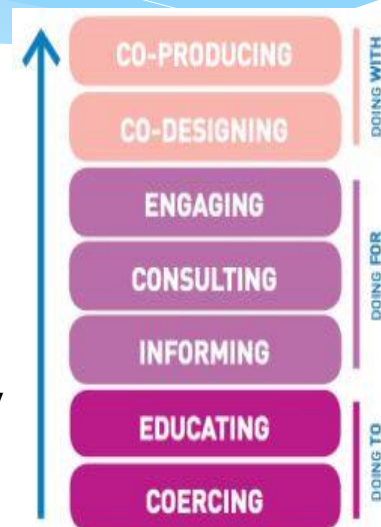
Underlying principles

■ Aarhus philosophy

- Sustainability needs involvement of all actors
- People should be entitled to have a say in issues affecting their life
- Appropriate recognition and support of organizations and groups promoting environmental protection
- Party's obligations to encourage developers, investors and operators to engage with the public as early as possible and provide the sufficient information on activities and products (e.g. through voluntary eco-labelling or eco-auditing schemes)
- Effective and informed participation = Improved decision-making and implementation

■ Key features:

- Non-discriminatory
- Duty to our children
- 'Rights-based' approach
- A 'floor' not a 'ceiling'



Source: new economics foundation

Aarhus model for effective public participation in decision-making

THE RIGHT
TO PARTICIPATE



1 Early, adequate and effective notice



2 Early public participation, when all options are open, and reasonable time frames



3 Access to all relevant information



4 Opportunity to comment and/or be heard



5 Due account to be taken of public participation



6 Prompt notice of decision



7 If operating conditions are reconsidered or updated, the above steps should be repeated, as appropriate

To learn more, follow [Task Force on Public Participation](#) and use [the Maastricht Recommendations](#) and [Good practice online database](#)