

Implementation of the Protocol on Water and Health to the 1992 Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes

Lithuania

The Protocol on Water and Health was ratified in Lithuania and came into force in Lithuania in 7 March 2004.

To facilitate and coordinate the implementation of the Protocol on Water and Health the working group under the leadership of the Ministry of Health was established by the order of the Minister of Health and Minister of Environment on June 21, 2004.

The working group prepared the Outlines for the Implementation of the Protocol on Water and Health that was approved by the Order of the Minister of Health and the Minister of Environment on January 12, 2005.

The approved Outlines set forth the objectives, directions for action and stages for the implementation of the Protocol on Water and Health.

The objectives for the implementation of the Protocol in Lithuania were formulated on the basis of paragraph 2 of article 6, five targets being of high priority to Lithuania had been chosen:

1. to ensure adequate supplies of wholesome drinking water which is free from any micro-organisms, parasites and substances which owing to their numbers or concentration, constitute a potential danger to human health. It includes the protection of water resources which are used as sources of drinking water, treatment of water and the establishment, improvement and maintenance of collective systems;

2. to provide adequate sanitation of a standard which sufficiently protects human and the environment. This will be done through the establishment, improvement and maintenance of collective systems;

3. to ensure effective protection of water resources used as sources of drinking water and their related water ecosystems, from pollution from other causes, including agriculture, industry and other discharges and emissions of hazardous substances. This shall aim at the effective reduction and elimination of discharges and emissions of substances judged to be hazardous to human health and water ecosystems;

4. to apply sufficient safeguards for human health against water-related diseases arising from the use of water for recreational purposes, from the use of water for aquaculture, from the water in which shellfish are produced or from which they are harvested, from the use of waste water for irrigation.

5. to establish effective systems for monitoring and early-warning of situations likely to result in out-breaks or incidents of water-related disease.

Directions for action for the implementation of the Protocol in Lithuania were set as follows:

First Stage (to be implemented 2005 -2008):

1. to create legal, administrative and economic provisions that would be stable and would promote the implementation of the targets of this Framework;

2. to establish national arrangements for coordination between the competent authorities and for relations maintained with other states at the intergovernmental level;

3. to develop programs or incorporate the means in other relevant programmes which are being drawn up for other purpose;

4. with the aim to supply high quality drinking water to improve and maintain a legal and organizational framework for monitoring and enforcing standards for the quality of drinking water;

5. to develop a system of indicators designed to identify observe and control the spreading of water-related diseases;

6. to establish preventive, surveillance systems for the outbreaks of water-related diseases which would include:

- monitoring of water-related diseases and their out-breaks;
- giving notification to the state authorized institution about the outbreaks of water-related disease and a significant threat of the spreading of diseases;
- information made available to the public about such outbreaks of water-related diseases and information about the means to be in order to avoid damage to their health or its reduction;
- rendering information to the relevant state authorities and, if necessary, to the public about preventive and remedial actions taken to improve the emerging situation.

Second Stage (to be implemented from 2009):

7. to develop water management plans at the transboundary and national level. Such plans may be incorporated in other relevant plans, programs or documents drawn up for other purposes;

8. to review national trends in changes of water and health indicators and to carry out a comparative analysis on the territory basis;

9. to collect and evaluate data concerned with the implementation of the Protocol and to assess the progress achieved;

10. to publish periodically the results of this progress assessment.

Many of the activities under the Protocol highly relates with the implementation of the EU directives on drinking water, bathing water, urban waste water and water resources management.

For the year 2004-2006 the possibility was set for municipalities to apply and use the EU Structural Funds to fund modernization and development of water supply and waste-water treatment activities. The financial support will be continued in 2007-2013.

The Law on Drinking Water Supply and Waste-water Treatment was adopted by the Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania in July 2006. The programme on Groundwater Resource Evaluation and Usage for Drinking Water Supply for 2007-2025 was approved by the Government of the Republic of Lithuania in June 2006.

As Lithuanian river basins are mainly transboundary basins, the international agreement and waste water treatments on transboundary river basin management are one of the basic activities. The bi-lateral agreement between Poland and Lithuania for the management for transboundary water usage and protection was signed in 2005. The draft trilateral agreement has been negotiated between Byelorussia, Lithuania and Russia (Kaliningrad region) on the transboundary Nemunas river basin management.