



Overview of the work of the Expert Group on equitable access to water and sanitation under the Protocol on Water and Health

Ms. Diane Guerrier, UNECE Joint secretariat of the Protocol
6th meeting of the Expert Group on equitable access to water and sanitation, 24-25 March 2021



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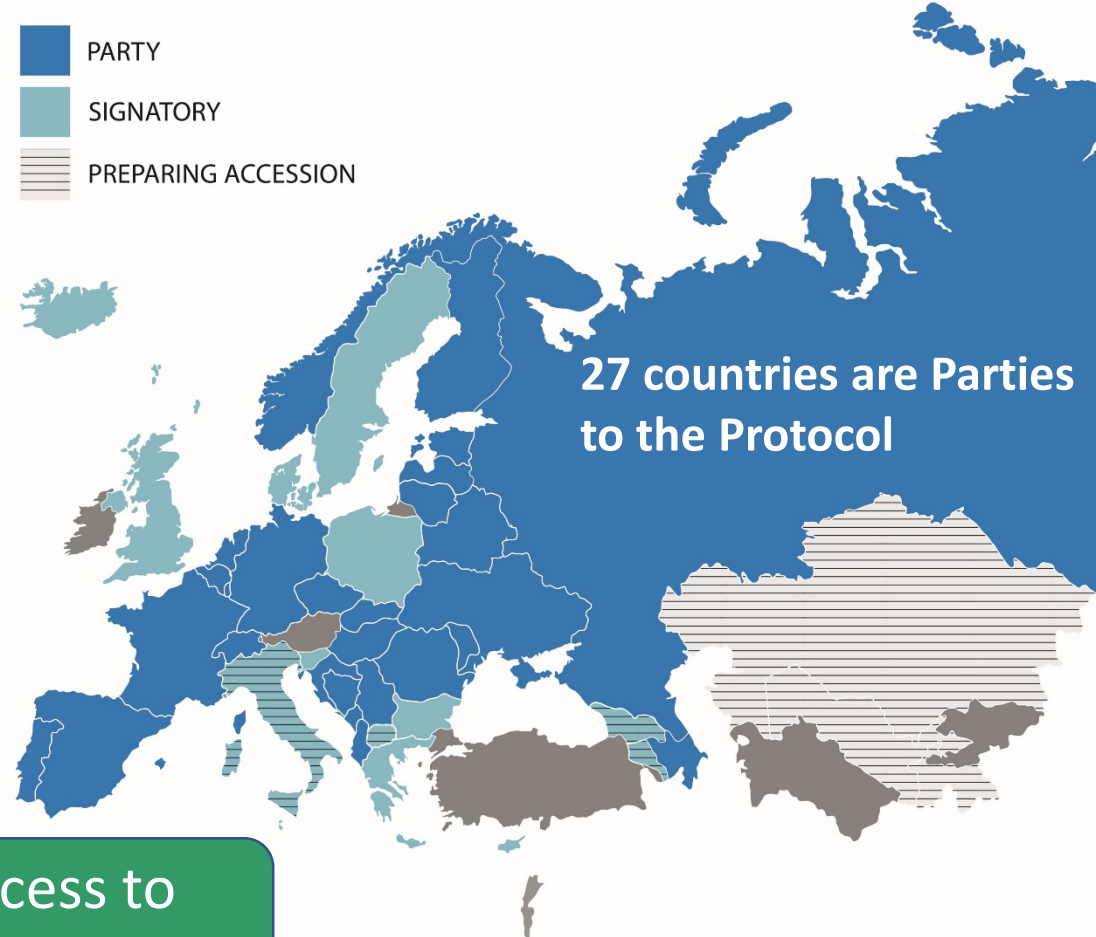
Outline

1. The Protocol on Water and Health in a nutshell
2. A special focus on equitable access to water and sanitation under the Protocol
3. The Expert Group on equitable access
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5. Progress since the 5th meeting of the Expert Group
6. Evolution of the global and regional context
7. Why is the work on equitable access important?
8. Planned activities under programme of work 2020-2022

1. The Protocol on Water and Health in a nutshell..



Legally-binding agreement aimed at protecting human health and well-being through sustainable water management and by reducing water-related diseases



Obligation to set targets to ensure access to drinking water and sanitation for everyone

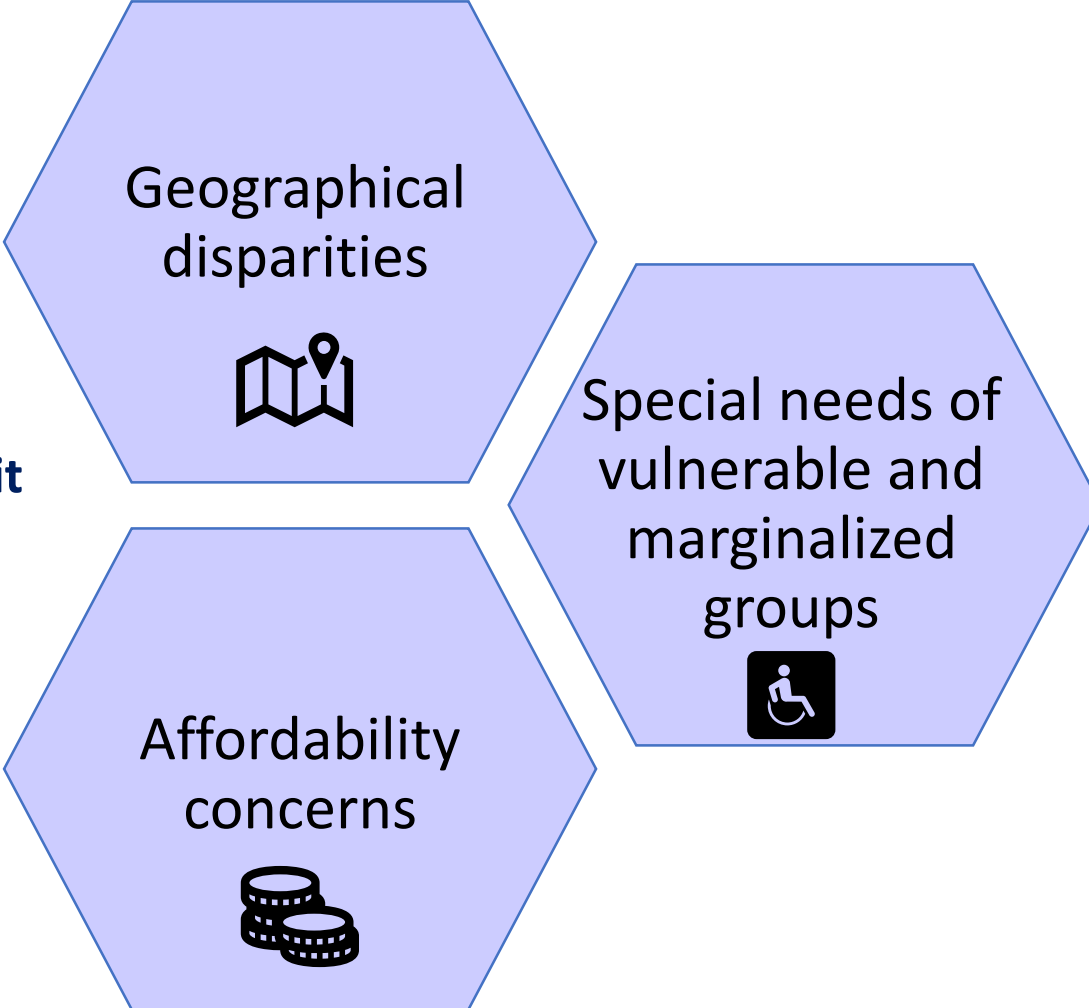


2. A special focus on equitable access to water and sanitation under the Protocol:

*“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 of the Protocol)



Three dimensions to consider when it comes to equity in access to WASH:



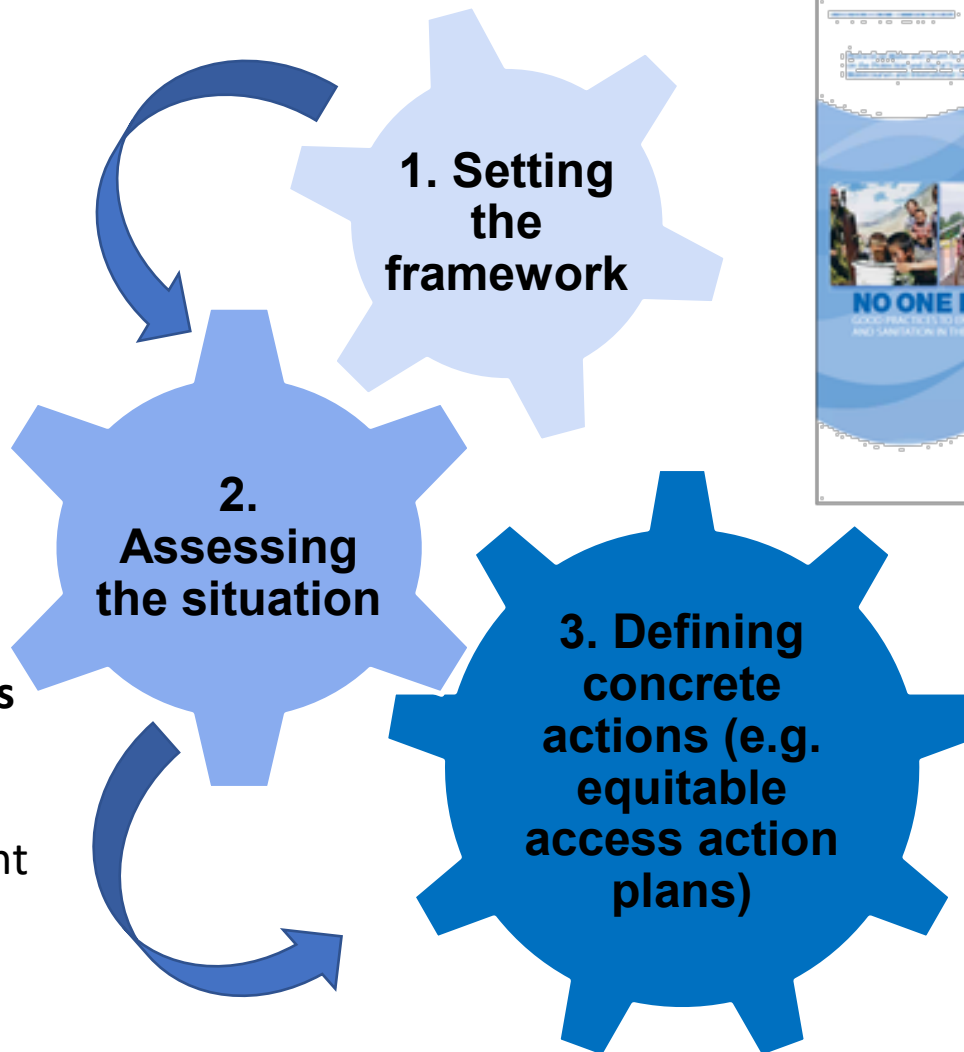
3. The Expert Group on equitable access

- Established in **2011** under the Working Group on Water and Health in the framework of the Protocol on Water and Health
- Composed of countries from the **pan-European region** (both Parties and non-Parties) on a **voluntary basis**
- **Platform** for countries/stakeholders from the region to:
 - **Exchange experiences** and **develop guidance** on enhancing equitable access to water and sanitation
- Chaired by **France** and **Hungary**, Lead Parties of the work-stream on equitable access to water and sanitation under the Protocol

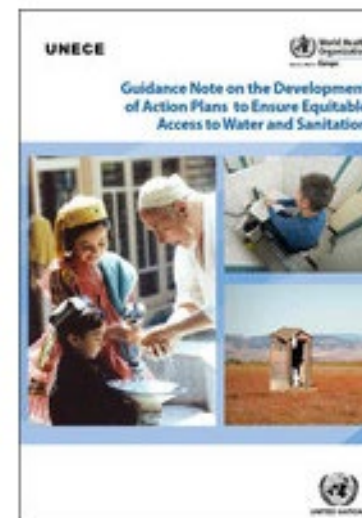
4. Tools and guidances developed under the Expert Group:



2. The Equitable Access Score-card
Identify “equity gaps” through self-assessment



1. No-one Left behind
Understand and un-pack the concept of equity



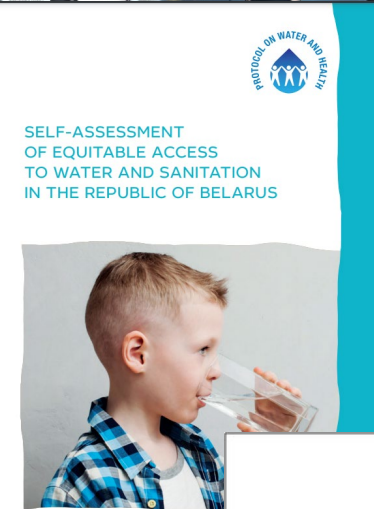
3. Guidance Note on equitable access action plans
Define action

5. What progress since the 5th meeting of the Expert Group (June 2018)..?



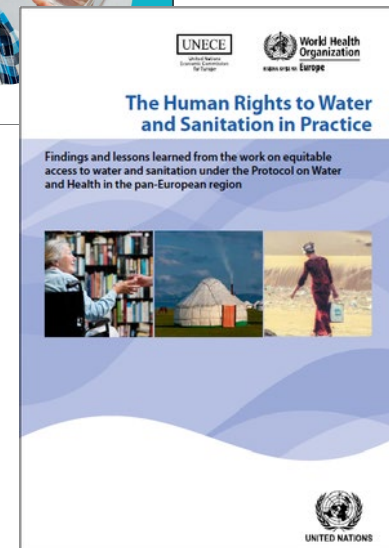
- Equitable access **action plan** developed in **Serbia** (2018) for period 2019-2022
- **Self-assessment exercise** on equitable access in **Belarus** (2019)

- **New publication** *“The Human Rights to Water and Sanitation in Practice: Findings and lessons learned from the work on equitable access to water and sanitation under the Protocol on Water and Health in the pan-European region”* (November 2019)

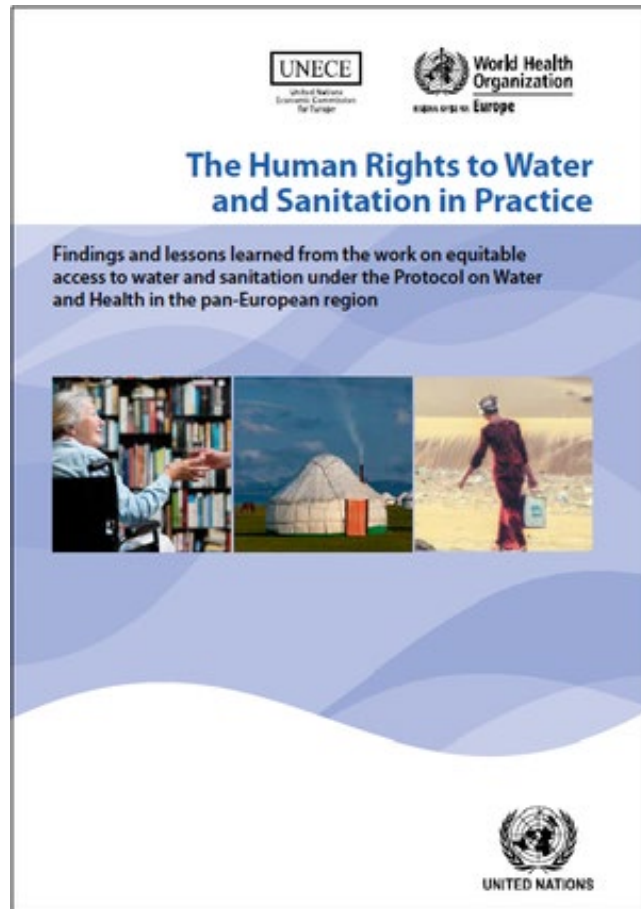


- **Promotion of the work on equitable access in 2019-2020 :**

- 24th World Water Week (Stockholm, 25–30 August 2019)
- Celebration of the 10-year anniversary of the HRWS (April 2020)
- Webinar on Equity in access to WASH (22 July 2020)



“The Human Rights to Water and Sanitation in Practice: Findings and lessons learned from the work on equitable access to water and sanitation under the Protocol on Water and Health in the pan-European region”



Experience of pan-European countries in establishing baseline measures of their situation with regards to **equitable access to water and sanitation**.

Ultimate objective → encouraging countries to:

- **Engage** in multi-stakeholder self-assessments
- **Implement** actions across different dimensions
- **Develop** strategic approaches to planning and financing for equitable access

Key findings and highlights of the publication:

- A mixed and complex picture at national level and some common trends at regional level
- Self-assessments have been instrumental in prompting progress
- Lack of strategic approach to financing equitable access to water and sanitation



Examples of measures taken by countries to address equity gaps identified through self-assessments:



FRANCE

Equitable access action included in the 2015–2019 National Plan on Health and Environment. New law adopted to improve the affordability of water and sanitation services.



SERBIA

Action plans (2019–2021) to ensure equitable access in the regions of Sumadija and Pomoravlje endorsed by the Inter-ministerial body.



HUNGARY

National Building Code amended to reflect the minimum requirements and standards for access to water and sanitation in buildings.



UKRAINE

Amendments regarding sanitation incorporated into the final version of the Drinking Water Law.



REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

Plumbing systems built to supply safe drinking water 24 hours a day to 67,000 villagers in rural areas.



AZERBAIJAN

Water supply established in 316 rural and urban secondary schools.



PORTUGAL

Affordability indicator included in the annual report of the water and sanitation regulator.



NORTH MACEDONIA

Ongoing improvement of facilities for menstrual hygiene management in cafés, bars and restaurants in Skopje in partnership with the professional union.



SPAIN

Seven public fountains installed in the city of Castelló to guarantee access to drinking water.



BULGARIA

Ongoing development of a regulatory framework for sanitation in schools by the recently established national working group under the Ministry of Health.



ARMENIA

National 2018–2020 Equitable Access Action Plan endorsed. Ongoing revision of Water Code to include the definition of vulnerable and marginalized groups.

6. Recent evolution of the global and regional contexts:

- Celebration of the **10th anniversary** of the recognition of the human rights to safe drinking water and the 5th anniversary of the right to sanitation
- **Covid-19** pandemic globalized since 2020 → increased political attention towards WASH issues
- Entry into force of the revised **European Union Drinking Water Directive** recognizing the relevance **the Protocol's guidance documents** to assess the policy background and baseline situation on access to water and to define action to improve equitable access for all.



7. Why is the work on equitable access important?

- Supports the progressive realization of the **human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation**.
- Offers an opportunity for countries to enhance **cross-sectoral cooperation** to further address inequities in access to water and sanitation;
- Has **interactions** with other Programme areas of the Protocol: **WASH in schools and health-care facilities** (programme area 3), **small-scale water supplies and sanitation** (programme area 4) and **water and sanitation safety plans** (programme area 5);
- Aligns with and supports implementation of **SDG targets 1.4, 4.A, 6.1, 6.2 and 11.1** and the **Parma Declaration on Environment and Health**.

8. Upcoming activities under the programme of work 2020-2022:

- Continuation of the support to countries in carrying-out equitable access self-assessments
- Development of a brochure on good practices to ensure affordability to water and sanitation services
- Organization of a regional workshop on equitable access to water and sanitation in 2022



Thank you for your attention!

Work on equitable access under the Protocol:

<https://bit.ly/3tJJGpA>

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