

Programme Area 6: Equitable Access to water and sanitation

Lead Parties: France & Hungary

Presenter: Ms. Beatrice Jedor, Ministry for Solidarity and Health, France

12th meeting of the Working Group on Water and Health, Geneva & online, 14-15 April 2021

Protocol on Water and Health

#ProtocolWaterHealth



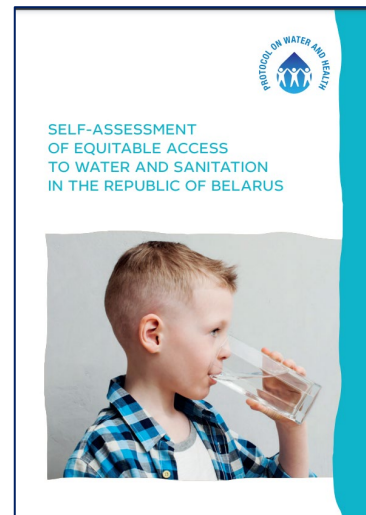
1. Main achievements since 2020 (1)

Finalization of the report of Belarus equitable access self-assessment:

- Belarus country report with key findings available in English and Russian (*e.g. findings: important geographical disparities between urban and rural areas, no definition of marginalized groups*)

Webinar on equity in access to WASH (July 2020) :

- Experience sharing from countries on actions taken at policy and technical levels to ensure equity in access to WASH during the COVID-19 pandemic and recovery (*e.g. prohibition of suspending provision of essential services during containment period*)
- Discussion on how the equitable access tools developed under the Protocol can be used by countries from the region during the recovery period to further integrate equity in WASH policies and technical interventions.



Webinar Series 2020
Protocol on Water and Health

UNECE World Health Organization
United Nations Europe

Equity in access to WASH

How to further take into account equity aspects to leave no one behind in access to water and sanitation?

Speakers:

Opening remarks by Nataliya Nikiforova
UNECE, co-secretariat
Representative from the Ministry of Solidarity and Health, France (to be confirmed)
Diane Guernier
UNECE, co-secretariat
Helena Costa
Water and Waste Services Regulation Authority (ERSAR), Portugal
Emma Anakshayan
Women for Health and Healthy Environment, Armenia
Shinee Enkhtsetseg
WHO Regional Office for Europe
Rio Hada
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
Moderation by Marta Vargha
National Institute for Environmental Health, Hungary

Addressing inequities among vulnerable and marginalized groups, between rural and urban areas, wealthy and less wealthy people in access to safe WASH is key to realize the Human Rights to drinking water and sanitation. The webinar will discuss how tools on equitable access to water and sanitation, developed under the Protocol on Water and Health, can support governments during COVID-19 recovery to further integrate equity in access to WASH, both at policy and technical levels. It will also take stock of countries' experience and will reflect on how an equity perspective is key to leave no one behind when responding to pandemics. The webinar is co-organized with the National Environmental Health of Hungary.

Wednesday 22 July 2020
11:00 - 12:30 CEST

Register here

Background information

Protocol on Water and Health

1. Main achievements since 2020 (2)

6th meeting of the Expert Group on equitable access (24-25 March 2021)

- **60 participants** including **23 countries**, the **EU commission**, civil society organizations, water and sanitation service providers and international organizations
- Experience sharing from countries on **recent progress** to enhance equitable access to water and sanitation in the Covid-19 context
- Discussion on the **equity dimension of the EU DWD recast**, in force since January 2021, which now refers to the Protocol in its preamble (para 34) as an effective mechanism to “assess the policy background and the baseline situation on access to water and to define the actions necessary to improve equitable access for all to water intended for human consumption”
- Special focus on **affordability challenges/good practices** in the region
- Launching of the preparation of the **brochure on good practices to ensure affordability**



Main outcomes of the 6th meeting of the expert group on equitable access

- The **COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated inequities in access to water and sanitation** (e.g. closure of public toilets, worsening of the economic and social crisis affecting household affordability) and in response to these new challenges, **a number of countries from the region took actions** (e.g. enhancement of inter-institutional coordination; investments to address geographical disparities; disconnection bans to address affordability concerns temporarily etc..).
- The economic and social impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and the blunt sector-based policy responses (disconnection bans, free water) have increased the **tension between affordability and financial sustainability objectives**.
- There is a clear consensus that **affordability of water and sanitation services is not a water sector issue, but rather a social protection issue** that requires mobilising actors and policy instruments beyond the water sector.
- The **EU Commission** confirmed that the Protocol guidance tools such as the equitable access score-card can be used by EU member countries and other countries to implement/align with the EU Drinking Water Directive equity related obligation stated in **Article 16** which calls on member States to take the “necessary measures to improve or maintain access to water intended for human consumption for all, in particular for vulnerable and marginalized groups”.

2. Lessons learnt for future work

- Continue the collaboration with the EU Commission to identify what would be needed from countries to further address equity in access to water and sanitation
- The issue of identifying vulnerable and marginalized groups is a key topic to be further considered under the equitable access work
- Online Expert group meeting has been an opportunity to welcome new countries and organizations enriching the discussions under the platform





3. Plans for future work in this area

- Finalization of the **brochure on good practices to ensure affordability** by 2022
- **Country activities** :
 - Carrying out of equitable access self-assessment exercises in up to 2 countries
 - Definition of equitable access action plans in up to three countries
- Organization of a **regional workshop on equitable access in 2022** , building on the outcomes of the expert group meeting
- Continue to participate in **promotional events**



We invite countries to express interest in this activities and to contact the secretariat at



Secondary priority activities:

- Provision of advice on integration of human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation into national legislation – based on country request
- Production of training and/or communication materials on equitable access to water and sanitation as appropriate

*Based on the draft programme of work for 2021-2022

Thankyou for your attention!

