Equitable access to water and sanitation under the Protocol on Water and Health

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Regional workshop on equitable access to water and sanitation
13-14 June 2022
Geneva/Online
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.

27 countries are Parties to the Protocol.
A special focus on equitable access 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)
Who is driving the work on equitable access under the Protocol?

The Expert Group on Equitable access to water and sanitation

- Established in 2011 under the Working Group on Water and Health, as a flexible body
- Chaired by France and Hungary (Lead Parties), composed of countries from the pan-European region (both Parties and non-Parties) on a voluntary basis
- Platform to exchange experiences and develop guidance on equitable access (met in 2012; 2013; 2015; 2017; 2018; 2021)
Tools and guidances developed under the Protocol to support countries in ensuring equitable access

No-one Left behind (2012)
Set the framework to further understand and un-pack the concept of equity

The Equitable Access Score-card (2013)
Help to dentify equity gaps through a self-assessment exercise

Guidance Note on equitable access action plans (2016)
Provide guidance to define concrete actions to address gaps

Latest documents developed...
Countries applying the score-card in the past 10 years

France
Spain
Hungary
Serbia
Belarus
Portugal
Ukraine
North Macedonia
Azerbaijan
Armenia
Bulgaria
Moldova

Upcoming... Montenegro & Albania

The Equitable Access Score-card supporting policy processes to achieve the human right to water and sanitation
→ Experience of 11 pan-European countries in establishing baseline measures of their situation with regards to **equitable access to water and sanitation** (using the score-card).

→ Aims at 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 across the pan-European region..

→ A mixed and complex picture at national level and some common trends at regional level

→ Self-assessments have been instrumental in prompting progress
  - Awareness raising efforts
  - Integration of EqA concerns in national strategies and plans
  - Legal and policy reforms
  - Infrastructure investments
  - Lobbying for financial resources

→ Lack of strategic approach to financing equitable access to water and sanitation
Recent evolution of the global and regional contexts:

• **2020:**
  - Human Rights to Water and Sanitation, respectively celebrated their 10th and 5th anniversary
  - Globalization of the Covid-19

• **2021:**
  - Entry into force of the revised EU Drinking Water Directive (Article 16- focus on equity)

• **Upcoming..**
  - UN 2023 Water Conference..
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 areas of work of the Protocol e.g. WASH in schools and health-care facilities; small-scale water supplies and sanitation;

• Ensuring an equitable access to water and sanitation (to ensure hand hygiene) is of key importance in combatting COVID-19 transmission

• Aligns with and supports implementation of SDG targets 1.4, 4.A, 6.1, 6.2 and 11.1.
New guidance tool on how to ensure affordability to be officially launched..tomorrow!
Thank you for your attention!

More information on the work on equitable access under the Protocol:
https://bit.ly/3tJJGpA

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