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Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on
Water and Health to the Convention on
the Protection and Use of Transboundary
Watercourses and International Lakes

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Items 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, and 14 of the provisional agenda

**Improving governance for water and health: support for
setting targets and implementing measures**

**Assistance to support accession and implementation
at the national level**

Increasing resilience to climate change

Compliance procedure

Prevention and reduction of water-related diseases

Institutional water, sanitation and hygiene

Small-scale water supplies and sanitation

**Safe and efficient management of water supply and
sanitation systems**

**Equitable access to water and sanitation: translating the human
rights to water and sanitation into practice**

**Report on the implementation of the programme of work
for 2020–2022**

Prepared by the joint secretariat

Summary

The document contains a report on the implementation of the programme of work for 2020–2022 of the Protocol on Water and Health to the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (ECE/MP.WH/19/Add.1-EUPCR/1814149/1.2/2019/MOP-5/06/Add.1). The document was prepared by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe/World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe joint secretariat, with input from lead Parties and countries. The report provides a general overview of implementation – highlighting progress achieved, success factors and challenges encountered – and a summary of activities undertaken under each programme area.

The Meeting of the Parties may wish to:

- (a) Endorse the report on the implementation of the programme of work for 2020–2022;
- (b) Commend the members of the Working Group on Water and Health, the Bureau, the other subsidiary bodies, the lead Parties, other States and organizations and the joint secretariat for their valuable support in the implementation of various planned activities under the Protocol;
- (c) Express its gratitude to Parties and other cooperating States, especially to the lead countries and organizations that have provided human and financial resources to implement the programme of work for 2020–2022.

I. Highlights of the programme of work for 2020–2022: Major outcomes

1. As of 6 September 2022, 27 countries¹ have ratified the Protocol on Water and Health to the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Rivers and International Lakes. Since the fifth session of the Meeting of the Parties (Belgrade, 19–21 November 2019), Montenegro became a Party to the Protocol on 19 February 2020. Several other countries (e.g., Italy, Kazakhstan, North Macedonia and Uzbekistan) have stated their intention to accede to the Protocol and are currently at different stages in the accession process.

2. Regarding the programme of work for 2020–2022 (ECE/MP.WH/19/Add.1–EUPCR/1814149/1.2/2019/MOP-5/06/Add.1), a significant number of tangible results were attained in most areas of work, thanks to the continuous leadership of lead Parties and countries, the commitment of Parties, other States and organizations working under the Protocol, and the joint secretariat’s efforts (see table below for detailed summary overview). However, the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has slowed implementation of the programme of work and led to the cancellation or postponement of some meetings, capacity-building activities and projects on the ground. Additionally, the lack of resources in the joint secretariat meant that certain activities could not be implemented as planned, such as the organization of the strategic round table on climate change and regional- and national-level target setting workshops. Nevertheless, the Protocol continued to provide a regional platform for steering the regional agenda on water, sanitation, hygiene and health by promoting action and exchange of experience between countries and across sectors, including on how to respond to and recover from the COVID-19 pandemic and prepare for future emergencies by focusing on the provision of essential water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services for all, and by facilitating cooperation and assistance.

3. Subsidiary bodies under the Protocol continued to successfully implement their mandates. The Bureau of the Protocol held its twenty-third, twenty-fourth, twenty-fifth, twenty-sixth, twenty-seventh and twenty-eighth meetings (Geneva (hybrid)), on 13–14 May 2020, 4–5 November 2020, 4–5 March 2021, 18–19 November 2021, 2–3 February 2022 and 17–18 May 2022, respectively. In accordance with its mandate, the Bureau oversaw and facilitated implementation of the programme of work, including reflecting on how to raise financial resources for, and further promote, the Protocol.²

4. The Working Group on Water and Health continued to provide an important forum for discussions on a wide range of issues related to water, sanitation, hygiene and health and the Protocol’s implementation and promotion. At its twelfth and thirteenth meetings (Geneva (hybrid), 14–15 April 2021 and 19–20 May 2022, respectively), the Working Group reviewed progress achieved, challenges encountered, priority activities, financial status and the resources required in implementing the programme of work for 2020–2022 and advised on the priorities for the draft programme of work for 2023–2025.

¹ See www.unece.org/env/water/pwh_status/legal.html.

² ECE/MP.WH/2/Add.1–EUR/06/5069385/1/Add.1, rule 20 (4) of the rules of procedure of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on Water and Health; and ECE/MP.WH/2/Add.2–EUR/06/5069385/1/Add.2, decision I/5, para. 5.

Outputs and outcomes of work under programme of work for 2020–2022 by programme area

<i>Key outputs by programme area</i>	<i>Outcomes and potential impacts</i>
1. Improving governance for water and health	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 meetings of Task Force on Target Setting and Reporting organized, including exchange of experience on COVID-19 and target setting • Fifth reporting exercise carried out • Summary report prepared based on national reports received • UN-Water Global Analysis and Assessment of Sanitation and Drinking Water surveys undertaken in 20 countries to support target setting and reporting efforts under Protocol 	<p>Policy impact: Reinforced implementation of Protocol’s core provisions on target setting and reporting under articles 6–7:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 7 Parties set or revised targets - 27 Parties reported under fifth reporting cycle <p>Addressing emerging issues: Good practices exchanged on how to consider emerging issues such as climate change and COVID-19 pandemic or other pandemics in national target setting</p>
2. Prevention and reduction of water-related diseases	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 training packages developed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Water-related disease surveillance and outbreak management – Drinking water surveillance using risk-based approaches • 2 documents developed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – <i>The Protocol on Water and Health and the COVID-19 pandemic: Relevance, lessons learned and future perspectives</i> – <i>Wastewater surveillance of SARS-CoV-2: Questions and answers (Q&A)</i> • Technical support provided in development of national standard for drinking water quality in Azerbaijan • Review of burden of legionellosis in pan-European region undertaken • Survey of regulatory and surveillance frameworks of legionella implemented • 4 events conducted: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Regional expert meeting on legionella prevention and control – Rapid expert consultation on environmental surveillance of SARS-CoV-2 in wastewater – Webinar on environmental surveillance of SARS-CoV-2 in wastewater – Second expert consultation on public health needs related to surveillance of SARS-CoV-2 in wastewater 	<p>Policy impact: Requirements for risk-based surveillance recommended by WHO guidelines taken up in national standards and regulations established in beneficiary countries</p> <p>Capacity-building for improved surveillance: Training programmes capacitated national institutions on application of effective approaches in surveillance of drinking water and water-related disease and strengthen preparedness, early warning and response systems, thereby supporting implementation of article 8 of Protocol</p> <p>Addressing emerging priorities: Exchange of knowledge and practices among countries on use cases, benefits and considerations for setting up environmental surveillance of SARS-CoV-2 in wastewater-supported countries in responding to pandemic</p> <p>Evidence generation: Comprehensive analyses of evidence informed identification of action priorities for legionella prevention and control, both at country level and for further programming under Protocol</p>

<i>Key outputs by programme area</i>	<i>Outcomes and potential impacts</i>
3. Institutional water, sanitation and hygiene	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 publications developed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – <i>Improving quality of care through better water, sanitation and hygiene: A pan-European perspective</i> – <i>Water, sanitation and hygiene in health-care facilities: A practical tool for situation assessment and improvement planning</i> • Technical advice for safe WASH services in schools during pandemic provided • Seven countries assisted in conducting situational analyses of WASH in health-care facilities • 4 events conducted: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Expert meeting on improving drinking water consumption for decreasing intake of sugar-sweetened beverages and reducing plastic waste – Webinar on universal access to hand hygiene and practices – Two subregional capacity-building workshops on WASH in schools • Communication and training products developed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Poster series on WASH in schools for pupils – Advocacy tiles for menstrual health – Capacity-building package on WASH in schools 	<p>Policy impact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Key requirements for WASH in schools recommended by WHO integrated into beneficiary countries’ national standards and regulations in beneficiary -Requirements for WASH in health-care facilities integrated into national health strategies, policies and regulations for antimicrobial resistance and infection prevention and control <p>Capacity-building: Technical support, training sessions and webinars enhanced capacities, resulting in policy interventions and improved surveillance in beneficiary countries</p> <p>Partnership building: Increased collaboration across different sectors and with relevant organizations for coordinated action in this area</p> <p>Evidence generation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Increased number of countries have comprehensive national data on WASH in schools and health-care facilities -30 European countries reported progress on WASH in schools under SDG 4 and over 10 countries reported progress on WASH in health-care facilities under SDG 6 - First regional report on WASH in health-care facilities established baseline and serves as scientific basis for action
4. Small-scale water supplies and sanitation	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 publications developed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – <i>Water safety plan: A field guide to improving small drinking water supplies: Water safety planning for rural communities</i> – <i>Small-scale water supply and sanitation systems: Country activities towards safe and equitable access in the pan-European region</i> – <i>Costing and financing of small-scale water supply and sanitation services</i> • 2 events conducted: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Webinar to launch publication on costing and financing 	<p>Evidence generation: Analysis of Protocol’s national summary reports and outcomes of expert consultation informed policy actions to improve small-scale water supply and sanitation services</p> <p>Tools for application: Practical tools specific for small-scale systems support Governments in making policy choices on financing of small-scale systems and assist practitioners in rural communities in implementing water safety planning</p> <p>Capacity-building: Field activities led to gaining practical knowledge and experience on application of WHO-recommended water safety plan and sanitation safety plan approaches in small systems as basis for scale up</p>

<i>Key outputs by programme area</i>	<i>Outcomes and potential impacts</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Expert consultation on on-site sanitation in pan-European region (in cooperation with programme area 5) • Field project on integrated water and sanitation safety planning implemented in Serbia 	
5. Safe and efficient management of water supply and sanitation systems	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publication <i>Delivering safe sanitation for all: Areas for action to improve the situation in the pan-European region</i> developed • 4 events conducted: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – First and second expert consultations on on-site sanitation in the pan-European region – Capacity-building workshop on integrated water and sanitation safety planning in Serbia – Webinar to disseminate key guidance of WHO/UNICEF Technical brief “Water, sanitation, hygiene and waste management for the COVID-19 virus” • Technical advice developed and provided on safe operation and management of water supply and sanitation services in context of COVID-19 pandemic 	<p>Emergency response: Activities disseminated evidence and knowledge to support country actions for preparedness and response to COVID-19 with focus on provision of safe WASH services for households, and vulnerable and high-risk settings</p> <p>Policy support: Activities promoted exchange of good practices and set solid rationale to accelerate policy attention and actions towards safe sanitation services and wastewater management, including for on-site systems</p> <p>Capacity-building: Activities supported implementation of risk-based management approaches, such as water safety plan and sanitation safety plan approaches in accordance with WHO <i>Guidelines for Drinking Water Quality</i> and WHO <i>Guidelines on Sanitation and Health</i></p>
6. Equitable access to water and sanitation: translating into practice the human right to water and sanitation	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sixth Expert Group on equitable access to water and sanitation organized to exchange on affordability challenges • Policy brief <i>Making water and sanitation affordable for all: Policy options and good practices to ensure the affordability of safe drinking water and sanitation services in the pan-European region</i> developed and promoted • Regional workshop on equitable access to water and sanitation organized to initiate revision of Equitable Access Score-card, including to address lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic • Webinar on Equity in access to WASH organized to raise awareness in times of COVID-19 	<p>Evidence generation: Equitable access self-assessment finalized in Belarus with priority areas for action identified</p> <p>Policy impact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Equitable Access work and tools referred to and recommended for use in recast of European Union Drinking Water Directive - Cooperation with Special Rapporteur on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation on issue of equity enhanced - Collaboration with EuReau and Aqua Publica Europea – associations of water services and operators – enhanced <p>Capacity-building: Improved knowledge and capacity on issue of affordability to water and sanitation services</p> <p>Scale up of equity assessments: New countries (Albania, Georgia and Montenegro) raised interest in carrying out equitable access self-assessment</p>

<i>Key outputs by programme area</i>	<i>Outcomes and potential impacts</i>
7. Increasing resilience to climate change	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Global workshop on building climate resilience through improving water management and sanitation at national and transboundary levels organized in cooperation with the Water Convention Background note on increasing resilience to climate change through the Protocol on Water and Health produced and presented at special session on climate change at the thirteenth meeting of the Working Group on Water and Health 	<p>Capacity-building: Activities supported pan-European countries to increase resilience of WASH sector to climate change</p> <p>Policy impact: Some countries have set specific targets on increasing resilience of water and sanitation services to climate change, as shown through analysis of national reports</p>
8. Assistance to support implementation at the national level	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brochure <i>The Protocol on Water and Health: Driving action on water, sanitation, hygiene and health</i> developed for outreach and awareness raising Special briefing on Protocol for Geneva-based permanent missions 11 countries assisted with Protocol's implementation through WHO Biennial Collaborative Agreements and Country Cooperation Strategies Under National Policy Dialogues: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Technical support provided to 10 countries on key aspects of water management related to the Protocol - Assistance provided to 4 countries to set/revise targets 	<p>Accession: Montenegro acceded to the Protocol in 2020. Several other countries (including Italy, Kazakhstan, North Macedonia and Uzbekistan) currently preparing for accession</p> <p>Increased awareness and knowledge about the Protocol among countries and partners, including its opportunities and benefits</p> <p>Capacity-building: In recipient countries capacities improved in implementing activities on different thematic areas relevant to the Protocol's work</p>
9. Compliance Procedure	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5 meetings of the Compliance Committee organized Consultation Process organized, including provision of specific advice (oral and written) Summary of interpretive note "The provisions of the Protocol on Water and Health and their relationship with European Union law governing water and health" prepared Analysis of reports under fifth reporting cycle as contained in Compliance Committee report to the Meeting of the Parties 	<p>Policy impact: Reinforced implementation of Protocol's core provisions on target setting and reporting under articles 6 and 7 by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Parties advanced with setting targets and communicating them to secretariat - Analysis provided on reporting requirements in accordance with article 7 of the Protocol <p>Increased awareness on how to implement the Protocol and European Union law governing water and health among European Union member States</p>

Abbreviations: SARS-CoV-2, severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2; SDG, Sustainable Development Goal; UNICEF, United Nations Children's Fund; WHO, World Health Organization.

II. Success factors, challenges and opportunities for future work under the Protocol

5. The pandemic affected the implementation of the Protocol's programme of work for 2020–2022. At the same time, the COVID-19 crisis reinforced the critical role of WASH in infectious disease prevention and control. Overall progress was made, involving important achievements, thanks, among others, to the following enabling factors:

(a) The Protocol rapidly positioned itself as a flexible functioning mechanism to address emerging threats. The scope and mode of work were adapted to new realities and the Protocol continued to be an effective pan-European platform for technical assistance and good practices exchange across countries, which were instrumental in the time of the pandemic. The online and hybrid formats of most intergovernmental meetings and expert consultations under the Protocol allowed work to advance under changing circumstances. The Protocol's 2020–2021 webinar series allowed the Protocol community to stay connected and discuss current matters related to managing the pandemic from a WASH and health perspective;

(b) The Protocol's well-established governance framework and technical assistance mechanisms continued to support countries in setting targets and implementing measures addressing priority WASH issues. The Protocol was increasingly recognized as an operational "engine" for translating key global and regional WASH commitments into concrete national actions, specifically Sustainable Development Goals 6 and 3, but also other Goals such as 1, 2, 4, 11 and 13; and the proposed actions set out in annex I to the Declaration of the Sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health (Ostrava, Czechia, 13–15 June 2017) (Ostrava Declaration), which explicitly calls for ratification of or accession to the Protocol and is fully consistent with the Protocol's priorities;³

(c) The Protocol's work was fundamental in accelerating regional implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and World Health Assembly resolutions 72.7 on water, sanitation and hygiene in health-care facilities⁴ and 73.1 on COVID-19 response,⁵ the WHO/UNICEF Hand Hygiene for All initiative,⁶ the WHO *Guidelines for Drinking Water Quality*,⁷ the WHO *Guidelines on Sanitation and Health*⁸ and the WHO *global strategy on health, environment and climate change*;⁹

(d) Collaboration with the European Union has increased, also thanks to efforts by the Bureau. The recast of the European Union Drinking Water Directive¹⁰ promotes use of guidance documents developed under the Protocol, requiring inter alia, the improvement and maintenance of access to water to all, particularly for vulnerable and marginalized groups, and the implementation of a risk-based approach, such as water safety plans, for the whole water supply chain. This has further reinforced the strong synergies and mutual supportiveness in the implementation of the provisions of the Protocol and the requirements of the European Union directives on water and sanitation;

(e) The Protocol Bureau's ownership and strategic oversight, and the lead Parties' leadership, technical and financial support were instrumental in accelerating progress under the different thematic areas. The Protocol's scope of work and outreach to countries have been further expanded, in turn boosting its recognition, political weight and relevance in the national and international contexts. However, in the coming years, the Protocol will have to

³ EURO/Ostrava2017/7, see www.euro.who.int/__data/assets/pdf_file/0008/341945/Annex1_13June.pdf?ua=1.

⁴ WHA72.7.

⁵ WHA73.1.

⁶ *Hand Hygiene for All*, available at www.who.int/publications/m/item/hand-hygiene-for-all-global-initiative.

⁷ See www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240045064.

⁸ See www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789241514705.

⁹ See <https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/331959>.

¹⁰ See <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32020L2184&from=EN>.

address existing challenges, including improving its financial system to ensure the implementation of its ambitious activities at the national and regional levels;

(f) The continued engagement of several donor countries and partner organizations was vital in addressing regional WASH priorities, the persisting challenges and emerging threats in the pan-European region, and in tracking progress. Collaboration with partner organizations within and outside the United Nations system (e.g., the European Union, EurEau, Aqua Publica Europea, the Japan International Cooperation Agency, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, UNICEF) strengthened the effectiveness and impact of the Protocol's work; and efforts and synergies with existing instruments and platforms, such as the National Policy Dialogues on Integrated Water Resources Management under the European Union Water Initiative, the Biennial Collaborative Agreements and Country Cooperation Strategies between the WHO Regional Office for Europe (WHO/Europe) and Governments, the WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene, the UN-Water Global Analysis and Assessment of Sanitation and Drinking Water, the UN-Water Integrated Monitoring Initiative for Sustainable Development Goal 6 and the WHO/Europe Small Countries Initiative also proved important in accelerating progress. Strengthened collaboration with the Special Rapporteur on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation made it possible to further raise awareness on the Protocol and its tools. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) also played an important role in advancing work under the different programme areas, by contributing to activities and sharing their experiences at Protocol events.

6. Several challenges, however, hindered further expansion of the work and affected implementation of some activities under the programme of work for 2020–2022. These included the following:

(a) Changes in countries' political priorities due to the pandemic led to the postponement of the launch of the implementation of certain projects. Furthermore, a number of meetings and in-country and in-person capacity-building activities could not take place due to international travel restrictions;

(b) While the trend of the Parties' contributions to the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) and WHO/Europe Protocol trust funds was positive, with several new Parties contributing, overall, the available financial resources remained insufficient to ensure implementation of all the activities aspired to in the programme of work and to secure an adequate level of secretariat support. Despite financial and in-kind contributions by Parties, other States and organizations, such as the European Union, as well as significant support provided by the United Nations and the WHO regular budget and the efforts of the joint secretariat in mobilizing additional resources, the lack of sustainable, predictable and unearmarked funding continued to be of significant concern and needs to be systematically addressed by the Protocol constituencies, even more so since the request for additional United Nations regular budget resources by the fifth session of the Meeting of the Parties was unfortunately rejected in 2020.¹¹ In addition, some co-funding, for example from the National Policy Dialogues programme, was unfortunately drastically reduced in 2021/22;

(c) Available joint secretariat human resources were often not commensurate with the expanded remit and the number and scope of planned activities, also considering that some joint secretariat staff of the joint secretariat were temporarily reassigned to support the United Nations response to the invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation and, previously, the pandemic response, making it difficult for secretariat staff to cope with the existing workload and meet the growing expectations of Parties, non-Parties and partners.

7. Regarding perspectives for future work of the Protocol, opportunities exist to maintain and accelerate progress, and to address the above-mentioned challenges and emerging issues under the programme of work for 2023–2025 and beyond, for instance:

(a) The Protocol Bureau, with the joint secretariat's support, will continue its efforts to increase the number of Parties in the pan-European region, and further align its

¹¹ ECE/MP.WH/WG.1/2021/2–EUCHP/2018917/4.1/2021/WGWH/06, para. 58.

work with key global and regional priorities, in order to benefit from synergies and partnerships with main actors;

(b) Support to Parties and other States in implementing the WASH-related commitments set by the 2030 Agenda and the Ostrava Declaration (including forthcoming commitments and priorities to be defined at the Seventh Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health, Budapest, July 2023), as well as in pursuing the outcomes of the 2023 United Nations Water Conference (New York, 22–24 March 2023), will remain of utmost relevance in future work under the Protocol;

(c) The programme of work for 2023–2025 embraces opportunities to enhance political attention to and actions on priority issues that have emerged from the pandemic, such as scaling up hand hygiene for all and assessing the equity gaps that seem to have widened during the pandemic. The Protocol’s objectives and provisions support countries with “building forward better” WASH and health systems in the context of pandemic recovery and strengthening capacities for prevention and control of future epidemics and emergencies;

(d) Advancing the implementation of article 8 of the Protocol, future work will focus on strengthening capacities and sharing experience on environmental surveillance of wastewater (for SARS-CoV-2, antimicrobial resistance and other emerging pathogens and pollutants) as an integral part of contingency planning and public health surveillance;

(e) The Protocol’s framework enables climate action in the area of water, sanitation and health. Its work will prioritize strengthening the resilience of water and sanitation services to extreme weather events and other climate risks and establishing systems for surveillance and response to water-related diseases triggered by a changing climate.

III. Programme area 1: Improving governance for water and health: support for implementing the 2030 Agenda through setting targets and implementing measures

Lead Parties: Portugal, Romania and Switzerland

A. Setting targets and implementing measures

Overview of activities and main achievements

8. This programme area continued to play a key role in advancing the Protocol’s implementation, in particular by mainstreaming policy and technical inputs from other areas so to strengthen national governance and planning through target setting. In the period 2020–2022, countries achieved significant progress in setting or revising their targets under article 6 of the Protocol, with seven Parties communicating their newly set and/or updated targets to the secretariat during the triennium, namely Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Czechia, Germany, Portugal, the Russian Federation and Spain. A number of other countries also achieved progress in setting, revising and/or implementing their targets and reported on their efforts to the Protocol’s bodies, including the Task Force on Target Setting and Reporting.

9. During the reporting period, the Task Force, chaired by Switzerland, held its eleventh and twelfth meetings (Geneva (hybrid), respectively, 3 November 2020 and 17 November 2021), at which it reviewed progress by Parties and other States in implementing article 6 of the Protocol and discussed key highlights of global and regional developments in monitoring implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 6.¹² Moreover, in the context of the pandemic, the Task Force also provided a forum to exchange experiences on measures taken in the areas of WASH and health and targets set by States to strengthen public health preparedness, response and recovery.

¹² See reports of eleventh and twelfth meetings, available at, respectively, <https://unece.org/environmental-policy/events/eleventh-meeting-task-force-target-setting-and-reporting> and <https://unece.org/info/events/event/358476>.

10. Unfortunately, due to the pandemic and to lack of financial resources, some activities in this programme area could not be implemented, notably the subregional workshops and twinning activities.

B. Strengthening reporting capacity

Overview of activities and main achievements

11. Twenty-seven Parties participated to the fifth reporting exercise (2021–2022), in accordance with article 7 (5) of the Protocol. Furthermore, seven other States submitted summary reports on a voluntary basis, including two States reporting for the first time under the Protocol's framework, giving a total of 34 reports. The regional report on the status of implementation of the Protocol (ECE/MP.WH/2022/5-EUCHP/2219533/3.1/2022/MOP-6/11), prepared by the joint secretariat with the assistance of the Swiss Federal Institute of Aquatic Science and Technology, contains a comprehensive overview and analysis of the reports. The report demonstrated that implementation of the Protocol's core provisions on target setting and reporting under articles 6 and 7 was strengthened with positive impacts on public health.

IV. Programme area 2: Prevention and reduction of water-related diseases

Lead Parties: Belarus and Norway

A. Water-related disease surveillance

Overview of activities and main achievements

12. A comprehensive annotated training package was developed based on the technical guidance *Surveillance and outbreak management of water-related infectious diseases associated with water supply systems*¹³ – published under the previous programme of work – which aims to support countries in meeting their obligations under articles 8 and 13 of the Protocol. While the organization of in-person capacity-building workshops was affected by the pandemic and shifted to the triennium 2023–2025, the use of training materials will capacitate countries to strengthen national surveillance systems and preparedness, early warning and response systems for water-related incidents and emergencies.

13. A review of available evidence on the occurrence of legionellosis in the pan-European region and a survey to assess regulatory and surveillance frameworks on legionella were conducted with the support of Belarus, Hungary and the WHO Collaborating Centre for Health Promoting Water Management and Risk Communication (University of Bonn, Germany). A regional expert meeting on prevention and control of legionellosis (online, 30 November–2 December 2021), with over 70 experts from 28 countries, was convened to appraise the relevance of legionellosis in the region, foster exchange on good practices and define priority actions under the Protocol for prevention and control of legionella infections.¹⁴

14. These activities supported country efforts towards achieving national health targets, strengthening national core capacities for surveillance, response and communication as required by the International Health Regulations; and achieving targets 3.3 and 3.9 of the Sustainable Development Goals.

15. A webinar entitled Surveillance of COVID-19 virus in wastewater: Where we stand was organized (15 October 2020) to disseminate the outcomes of a WHO first expert consultation¹⁵ held on this topic (online, 23 July 2020) and associated WHO recommendations, such as *Environmental surveillance for SARS-CoV-2 to complement*

¹³ See <https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/329403>.

¹⁴ See www.who.int/europe/publications/i/item/WHO-EURO-2022-5733-45498-65125.

¹⁵ See <https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/334305>.

public health surveillance: Interim Guidance.¹⁶ The webinar introduced the concept and use cases of surveillance of SARS-CoV-2 in wastewater, featured country case examples and discussed challenges and feasibility of promoting such surveillance as a part of public health surveillance, and launched the discussion of potential work in the context of the Protocol.

16. A second expert consultation on public health needs related to surveillance of SARS-CoV-2 in wastewater (online, 30 November 2020) facilitated exchange of experiences emerging in countries.¹⁷ The discussions at these meetings informed the scope of the publication *Wastewater surveillance of SARS-CoV-2: Questions and answers (Q&A)*.¹⁸

B. Drinking water quality surveillance

Overview of activities and main achievements

17. An annotated training package was developed based on the guidance document *Strengthening drinking water surveillance using risk-based approaches*¹⁹ (published under the previous programme of work). The package provides background to key drivers of drinking water surveillance, the concept of risk-based approaches in surveillance, practical case studies and knowledge tests. The WHO Collaborating Centre at the University of Surrey (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland) supported its development. In-country training sessions were shifted to the 2023–2025 triennium due to COVID-19-related restrictions.

18. Technical support was provided to Azerbaijan in developing updated national drinking water quality standards. This included an in-country consultation (Baku, 25–27 May 2022) to support the inter-agency working group. The work focused on establishing a baseline analysis, defining the scope of the standards, integrating key principles of the water safety plan approach, and advising on effective approaches to surveillance programming.

19. These activities support countries in translating the key recommendations of the WHO *Guidelines for Drinking Water Quality* into national regulations and promote implementation of the recast of the European Union Drinking Water Directive and article 6 (5) (c) of the Protocol to establish and maintain a legal and institutional framework for monitoring and enforcing drinking water quality standards.

V. Programme area 3: Institutional water, sanitation and hygiene

Lead Parties and country: Hungary, Republic of Moldova and Georgia

A. Strengthening water, sanitation and hygiene in schools

Overview of activities and main achievements

20. The activities contributed to improving health and learning in schools through safe WASH services. The work fostered collaboration across the health, education and environment sectors and cooperation with relevant organizations (such as youth organizations, the Schools for Health in Europe Network Foundation and UNICEF). Activities also supported ensuring school operations during the pandemic, re-emphasized action for improving hand hygiene in public spaces, and advocated for better conditions for menstrual hygiene in schools.

¹⁶ See www.who.int/publications/i/item/WHO-HEP-ECH-WSH-2022.1.

¹⁷ See www.who.int/europe/publications/i/item/WHO-EURO-2021-1965-41716-57097.

¹⁸ See <https://wsh.cmail19.com/t/d-l-fgyhll-tduuktfxh-y>.

¹⁹ See <https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/329396>.

21. Communication materials and campaigns were developed, including a poster series on WASH in schools for pupils,²⁰ advocacy tiles for menstrual health²¹ and a collection of stories from school staff and pupils in the region on menstrual hygiene management at school.²²

22. A webinar entitled Universal access to hand hygiene and practices: How to make it a reality? was organized (21 April 2021) with over 270 participants, launching the Hand Hygiene for All Initiative in the pan-European region and showcasing national initiatives.

23. Two subregional workshops were held, one for Eastern Europe (online, 6–8 July 2021) and one for South-Eastern Europe (4–6 April 2022), with representatives of 15 countries and partner organizations, to discuss policy and practical measures for WASH in schools and exchange on good practices for ensuring equitable learning and well-being, and in the context of the pandemic response.

24. Technical support was provided to countries (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Serbia, Tajikistan) and partner organizations (UNICEF, Schools for Health in Europe Network Foundation) in the application of tools developed under the Protocol for assessment and improvements of WASH in schools. This supported improving surveillance capacities and the evidence base, thus contributing to more than 30 countries from the region reporting progress under target 4.a of the Sustainable Development Goals in 2022.

25. An expert meeting on improving drinking water consumption for decreasing the intake of sugar-sweetened beverages and reducing plastic waste was held (Moscow, 27–28 February 2020). It facilitated exchange on good practices for tap water promotion in schools and other settings, and informed the development of a toolkit for local decision-makers.

B. Strengthening water, sanitation and hygiene in health-care facilities

Overview of activities and main achievements

26. The work advanced the implementation of World Health Assembly resolution 72.7. Important milestones were the development of two publications: (a) *Improving quality of care through better water, sanitation and hygiene: A pan-European perspective* (forthcoming), presenting the available evidence for decision-makers to prioritize WASH as a critical element of quality of care, and providing an overview of conditions observed in the pan-European region, good practices and emerging priorities; and (b) *Water, sanitation and hygiene in health-care facilities: A practical tool for situation assessment and improvement planning* (forthcoming), to support countries in creating/updating national databases and strengthening surveillance of WASH in health-care facilities.

27. Technical support was provided to six countries (Georgia, Hungary, Montenegro, Republic of Moldova, Serbia and Tajikistan) to undertake in-depth nationally representative surveys and review governance frameworks on WASH in health-care facilities.

28. Activities advanced the setting of dedicated national targets, improving the evidence base and surveillance, which resulted to more than 10 countries reporting progress on WASH in health-care facilities under Sustainable Development Goal 6 in 2020–2021. The work supported strengthening of coordination across WASH actors and related sectors. As an outcome, in several countries, WASH aspects in the context of health-care provision have been integrated into national policies and regulations for antimicrobial resistance, infection, prevention and control, environmental health, national health strategies, and related monitoring systems and international declarations, such as the “Dushanbe Declaration” of

²⁰ See www.who.int/europe/multi-media/item/poster-series-on-wash-in-schools-for-pupils.

²¹ See <https://www.who.int/europe/multi-media/item/menstrual-hygiene-management---ending-discrimination-improving-health-and-education>

²² See www.who.int/europe/news/item/27-05-2022-education-and-provisions-for-adequate-menstrual-hygiene-management-at-school-can-prevent-adverse-health-consequences#:~:text=On%20Menstrual%20Hygiene%20Day%2C%20celebrated%20on%2028%20May%2C,tract%20infections%20and%20affect%20the%20well-being%20of%20students.

the Second High-level International Conference on the International Decade for Action “Water for Sustainable Development” 2018–2028 (Dushanbe, 6–9 June 2022).²³

VI. Programme area 4: Small-scale water supplies and sanitation

Lead Parties: Germany and Serbia

Overview of activities and main achievements

29. The work in this programme area positions the Protocol as an operational framework to raise policy attention on small-scale water supply and sanitation systems, strengthen the evidence base related to such systems, and facilitate action for their safe management.

30. The webinar entitled Don’t forget the small ones (8 July 2020) launched the publication *Costing and financing of small-scale water supply and sanitation services*²⁴ that was developed under the Protocol. It promoted the key concepts underpinning sustainable financing strategies and presented case examples of successful actions taken in several countries of the pan-European region for broader uptake.

31. The publication *Water safety plan: A field guide to improving drinking water safety in small communities*²⁵ has been revised to reflect on experiences from recent water safety plan implementation, address climate change and strengthen the link between drinking water supply and sanitation. A set of complementary training materials for the application of water safety plans in small-scale water supplies in the pan-European region is under development and will be finalized in the next programme period.

32. The national summary reports of the fourth reporting cycle submitted by Parties and other States were analysed to extract information on small-scale water supply and sanitation systems. A complementary online survey and in-depth interviews were conducted to collect more detailed information on the targets set by Parties, identify good practices, and identify data gaps and needs with respect to small-scale systems. Consequently, a report entitled *Small-scale water supply and sanitation systems: Country activities towards achieving safe services* (forthcoming) was developed to analyse the efforts and progress made by countries and further support the setting of targets and development of national policies and strategies to improve such systems.

33. A project on integrated water and sanitation safety planning has been implemented in rural areas in Serbia to support the provision of safe water and sanitation services in small-scale systems, and to assess and demonstrate the feasibility of such an approach through pilots at selected sites. The project outcomes include raising awareness of key stakeholders about the risks of unsafe sanitation systems and practices, particularly in relation to drinking water safety, and developing an improvement plan for the safe management of water and sanitation systems. The experience and lessons learned in implementing integrated water and sanitation safety planning will be documented and can serve as model across the country and beyond for further scaling up of such integrated approaches. The project is supported by the Advisory Assistance Programme of the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection, with technical support provided by the Institute of Public Health of Serbia, the National Institute for Public Health and the Environment of the Netherlands and the German Environment Agency.

34. An expert consultation on on-site sanitation in the pan-European region was organized in cooperation with programme area 5 (see details in section VII below).

²³ See www.unwater.org/the-dushanbe-declaration-from-the-2nd-high-level-conference-on-the-international-decade-for-action/.

²⁴ See <https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/331843>.

²⁵ See <https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/329537>.

VII. Programme area 5: Safe and efficient management of water supply and sanitation systems

Lead Parties: Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Netherlands

Overview of activities and main achievements

35. Responding to the emergence of the pandemic, technical advice was provided to countries upon request on safe management and operation of WASH services for communities, vulnerable and other high-risk settings, including on maintaining disinfection of drinking water supply, household water treatment, surveillance of drinking water and sanitation systems and safe recommissioning of buildings after temporary closure to prevent water quality problems. A webinar on WASH for the prevention of COVID-19 was organized (8 April 2020) to disseminate the key messages of the WHO/UNICEF *Interim guidance: Water, sanitation, hygiene, and waste management for SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19*,²⁶ share ongoing activities and experiences of countries, and discuss actions related to WASH in the context of preparedness and response for COVID-19. The webinar brought together 350 participants and resulted in practical advice in a “questions and answers” format, which was immediately disseminated to countries to support their work on COVID-19 response.

36. The work on sanitation could be scaled up. A first expert consultation on on-site sanitation in the pan-European region (online, 5–7 October 2021) was organized in cooperation with programme area 4, attracting over 60 participants from 25 countries. It provided an opportunity to better understand the situation and challenges related to on-site sanitation systems, promote exchange of experiences and good practices on regulations, management and surveillance of such systems, and discuss priority actions for follow-up by countries and under the Protocol.

37. Another milestone achieved was the development of the publication *Delivering safe sanitation for all: Areas for action to improve the situation in the pan-European region* (forthcoming). It provides an overview of the situation on sanitation and wastewater management, current and emerging challenges in ensuring safe and sustainable sanitation services in the region, and proposes action areas to strengthen sanitation governance. Its development was supported by the second expert consultation on sanitation in the pan-European region (online, 24 June 2022), which addressed aspects related to the governance, management and surveillance of sanitation systems and exchange on good practices, thus informing the scope and thematic coverage of the above-mentioned publication.

38. The increased focus to sanitation-related matters under the Protocol is an important development in the reporting period. Activities set a solid rationale for and strong emphasis on accelerating commitment and proposed policy actions by decision-makers to improve governance mechanisms towards ensuring safe sanitation services and wastewater management. The programme area continues to serve as a technical hub for supporting countries in implementing key recommendations of the WHO *Guidelines for Drinking Water Quality* and the WHO *Guidelines on Sanitation and Health*, including the uptake of risk-based management approaches in national regulations, surveillance and practice.

39. Further activities were implemented in close coordination with other thematic areas, in particular with programme area 7 (see section IX below for further details).

40. In support to the integrated water and sanitation safety planning field project in Serbia (see section VI above for further details), an awareness-raising workshop on water and sanitation safety planning was organized (Belgrade (hybrid), 16 June 2021), as well as an in-depth capacity-building workshop on integrated water and sanitation safety planning (Belgrade (hybrid), 21–23 September 2021) to train facilitators and local team members to pilot the application of this approach.

²⁶ See www.who.int/publications/i/item/WHO-2019-nCoV-IPC-WASH-2020.4.

VIII. Programme area 6: Equitable access to water and sanitation: translating the human rights to water and sanitation into practice

Lead Parties: France and Hungary

Overview of activities and main achievements

41. The work supporting the implementation of the Protocol's requirements to ensure access to water and sanitation for all, particularly those suffering a disadvantage or social exclusion as referred to in article 5 (l), continued to be a flagship activity under the Protocol. Activities in this triennium have prompted significant progress towards the progressive realization of the human rights to water and sanitation in the pan-European region through the fostering of the exchange of best practices in mitigating the impact of COVID-19 on access to water and sanitation services and the development of guidance documents.

42. In Belarus, the assessment of equity of access to water and sanitation based on the *Equitable Access Score-card: Supporting policy processes to achieve the human right to water and sanitation*²⁷ was finalized in January 2020.

43. In April 2020, an online campaign conducted by the Special Rapporteur on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation provided an occasion to promote the equitable access tools and their relevance in the implementation of these human rights. With the advent of the pandemic in 2020, the secretariat organized a webinar on equity in access to WASH (22 July 2020) for pan-European countries to share their experiences in ensuring equitable access in times of pandemics, and highlight the usefulness of the Protocol's tools on equitable access in this regard.

44. The sixth meeting of the Expert Group on Equitable Access to Water and Sanitation under the Protocol on Water and Health (online, 24–25 March 2021) which gathered 69 participants from 23 countries and organizations, provided a platform to exchange experiences in developing situational analyses, defining action plans and implementing measures. In particular, participants discussed the recast of the European Union Drinking Water Directive, which entered into force in January 2020 and 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. The relevance of the equitable access guidance materials in this regard was discussed. Additionally, participants exchanged experiences and lessons learned in enhancing equitable access in times of COVID-19.

45. The regional workshop on equitable access to water and sanitation (Geneva (hybrid), 13–14 June 2022), which attracted 82 participants from 30 countries, laid the foundations for the revision of the Equitable Access Score-Card to adapt it to contemporary challenges such as the pandemic. Additionally, the regional workshop provided an opportunity to review and discuss new policy developments in the area of equitable access in the pan-European region. The transposition and implementation of the recast of the European Union Drinking Water Directive, particularly in the light of the obligations arising therefrom concerning access to water, were extensively discussed and reviewed from the perspective of both European Union and non-European Union countries. Furthermore, the workshop discussed policy options and good practices in ensuring affordability of safe drinking water and sanitation services and what future relevant work could be carried out under the Protocol.

46. The Expert Group, with support from the lead Parties and co-secretariat, developed the publication *Making water and sanitation affordable for all: Policy options and good practices to ensure the affordability of safe drinking water and sanitation services in the pan-European region*,²⁸ which unpacks the concept of affordability, identifies and analyses policy

²⁷ United Nations publication, ECE/MP.WH/8.

²⁸ United Nations publication, ECE/MP.WH/20.

options to address affordability concerns, and features good practices from the pan-European region.

IX. Programme area 7: Increasing resilience to climate change

Lead country: Italy

Overview of activities and main achievements

47. This area of work provided a platform for dialogue and exchange of best practices in increasing resilience to climate change in the water and sanitation sector. In line with this, States have reflected on how they have utilized the Protocol's framework in setting climate-sensitive targets, strengthening their efforts to increase resilience to climate change and adaptation in the context of increasingly extreme weather patterns.

48. A global workshop on building resilience through improving water management and sanitation at national and transboundary levels (Geneva (hybrid), 29–31 March 2021) was jointly organized with programme area 5 in partnership with the Water Convention. The workshop, which gathered 368 participants from 50 countries, concluded that integrating water and sanitation and the benefits of transboundary cooperation into national climate policies is crucial for strengthening the resilience of economies, societies, health and well-being, reducing disaster risks, and preventing maladaptation. The workshop also featured the role of water safety plans and sanitation safety plans in building safe and climate-resilient water and sanitation systems.

49. The Background note on increasing resilience to climate change through the Protocol on Water and Health was prepared as a follow-up and provides an overview of and further guidance on how the Protocol's framework, areas of work and tools can support climate-sensitive action in the water and sanitation sector. It was used as a background paper for the thirteenth meeting of the Working Group on Water and Health (Geneva (hybrid), 19–20 May 2022), which featured a special session on increasing resilience to climate change and the Protocol on Water and Health. The special session provided an opportunity to reflect on key actions that countries have taken to address the impacts of climate change on water and sanitation and how to use the platform and apply the tools provided by the Protocol to increase resilience to climate change.

X. Programme area 8: Assistance to support implementation at the national level

Responsible bodies: Bureau and joint secretariat

Overview of activities and main achievements

50. WHO/Europe provided technical assistance to 11 countries (Azerbaijan, Croatia, Czechia, Georgia, Hungary, Kazakhstan, Montenegro, the Republic of Moldova, Serbia, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan) through its Biennial Collaborative Agreements and Country Cooperation Strategies with ministries of health. The activities were aligned with the Protocol's different thematic programme areas and substantially contributed to improving national and local capacities, in particular in: setting targets and reporting progress; strengthening surveillance of drinking water quality and water-related diseases; undertaking systematic assessments of WASH in health-care facilities and schools to inform improvement actions; improving management of small-scale water supply and sanitation systems; and implementing risk-based management approaches in water supply and sanitation.

51. Under the National Policy Dialogues, which provided support to 10 countries, including four countries of Central Asia, high-level intersectoral Steering Committees provided platforms for discussions on key aspects of water with strong links to the Protocol's programme of work. Within the scope of this work, assistance was provided to Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine in the target setting and revision process, as well as for reporting. The National Policy Dialogues also provided overall support

in the accession process of Kazakhstan and promotion of the Protocol's benefits within the European Union Water Initiative National Policy Dialogues in Central Asia project. In addition, the Workshop on Water/Health Nexus and Gender Equality for Effective Water Management in Central Asia and Afghanistan in a post-COVID world (online, 15–16 March 2021), organized with the support of the National Policy Dialogues, increased national and local capacities for improved water management.

52. Moreover, some communication and awareness raising activities, such as the brochure *The Protocol on Water and Health: Driving action on water, sanitation, hygiene and health*²⁹ and the Special briefing on Protocol for Geneva-based permanent missions (6 November 2021) contributed to increasing understanding of and promoting accession to the Protocol.

XI. Programme area 9: Compliance procedure

Responsible body: Compliance Committee

Overview of activities and main achievements

53. The Committee reviewed compliance with the obligation to set targets and target dates under the Protocol, with the aim of having a clear understanding of the status of target setting by Parties. Building on activities carried out in the previous triennium, the Committee requested Parties that had not communicated their targets to provide information about the target setting process or to submit the formally established targets. In this context, three Parties that had set or revised their targets under the Protocol communicated them to the secretariat and two other Parties provided clear information on their progress towards target setting.

54. The Committee also engaged in a Consultation Process with the Russian Federation, which took place between 2020 and 2021. This stocktaking exercise ascertained the specific needs and expectations of the country regarding its water, sanitation and health situation and possible challenges in setting targets under the Protocol. Relevant guidelines were disseminated to facilitate implementation of the Protocol, based on the results of the stocktaking exercise; advice was provided to the country representatives during the twenty-second meeting of the Committee (Geneva (hybrid), 16 November 2021).³⁰

55. As an outcome of the Consultation Process, the Russian Federation developed draft targets, including clear information on correspondence with the target areas under article 6, dates for achievement, normative instruments containing the targets, and institutions responsible for implementation at the federal level.

56. Representatives of the Russian Federation highlighted the positive contribution of the Consultation Process in driving forward target setting at the national level, and the fact that consultations had provided an opportunity for intersectoral dialogue within the interministerial working group established for the Protocol's implementation.

57. The Committee did not receive any submissions, referrals or communications during the intersessional period.

58. The Committee worked on raising awareness of its work, including by developing an executive summary of the interpretive note *The provisions of the Protocol on Water and Health and their relationship with European Union law governing water and health*, prepared within the framework of the Consultation Process with Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania in the previous triennium.

59. Lastly, the Committee analysed the summary reports submitted by Parties and other States within the fifth reporting cycle, focusing on completeness, consistency, accuracy and quality of the summary reports and on grave issues of compliance.

60. In the reporting period, the Compliance Committee, serviced by ECE, held its nineteenth, twentieth, twenty-first, twenty-second and twenty-third meetings, respectively,

²⁹ United Nations publication, ECE/MP.WH/21

³⁰ ECE/MP.WH/C.1/2021/4-EUCHP/2018917/4.1/2021/CC2/06, paras. 12–18.

on 15 May 2020, 2 November 2020 (both online), 15–16 June 2021, 16 November 2021 and 7 June 2022 (all Geneva (hybrid)).

61. A detailed account of the Committee's activities, including the Committee's considerations on the fifth reporting exercise, is contained in its report to the sixth session of the Meeting of the Parties (ECE/MP.WH/2022/6-EUCHP/2219533/3.1/2022/MOP-6/12). The report also contains a draft decision on general issues of compliance for adoption by the Meeting of the Parties.
