

**Economic Commission for Europe****World Health Organization
Regional Office for Europe**

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

Compliance Committee

Twenty-fifth meeting
Geneva, 2 July 2024

**Report of the Compliance Committee on its twenty-fifth
meeting****I. Organizational matters**

1. The twenty-fifth meeting of the Compliance Committee under the Protocol on Water and Health to the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention) was held in Geneva on 2 July 2024.¹
2. The following members of the Committee attended: Ms. Ildiko Bodgal; Mr. Gian Luca Burci; Mr. Antonio Pedro de Nobre Carmona Rodrigues (remotely); Ms. Ingrid Chorus; Ms. Gunel Gurbanova; Mr. Morten Nicholls; Ms. Anna Tsvietkova; Mr. Sergei Vinogradov; and Mr. Jorge Viñuales. The meeting was serviced by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) secretariat.

II. Adoption of the agenda

3. The Compliance Committee adopted its agenda as set out in document ECE/MP.WH/C.1/2024/1–EUCDE/2422164/3.1/2024/CC/03.

III. Consideration of submissions, referrals and communications

4. The Committee noted that no submissions, referrals or communications had been received prior to the meeting.

¹ For additional information, a list of participants and meeting documents, see <https://unece.org/info/Environmental-Policy/Water-Convention/events/390300>.

IV. Review of compliance with the obligation to set targets and target dates under the Protocol

5. The secretariat informed the Committee of the overall status of target setting by Parties under article 6 of the Protocol, noting that the majority of Parties had already set their targets and that many countries had also engaged in regular revision of those targets.

6. The Committee specifically welcomed the formal adoption of the Albanian National Sectoral Strategy on Water and Sanitation for 2019–2030, which also contained targets set under the Protocol. The Committee took note of the progress with setting targets in Montenegro, acknowledging that, through a dedicated project component, the secretariat was supporting the country in the process of updating and formally adopting draft targets, including additional climate-sensitive targets.

7. The Committee also welcomed the accession to the Protocol by North Macedonia and Uzbekistan in 2023 and expressed willingness and availability to support both new Parties in implementing their obligations under the Protocol. The Committee took note in particular of the ongoing ECE-led project to support target setting in Uzbekistan.

V. Review of compliance with reporting requirements under the Protocol

8. The Chair recalled that, at its twenty-fourth meeting (Geneva, 5 June 2023), the Committee had discussed the fifth reporting cycle under the Protocol and in particular the recurrent shortcomings in the area of reporting, including some reports referring to domestic laws and regulations or European Union instruments without specific reference to the Protocol targets, and incomplete information on the targets or within other sections of the reporting template.² The Committee had therefore considered that it would be useful to convey to the reporting Parties and other States, through the Task Force on Target Setting and Reporting, some specific observations and comments of the Committee,³ in the form of informal annotations to the reporting template. In the intersessional period, a member of the Committee had worked on preparing such annotations.

9. The Committee discussed in detail the draft document compiling its comments and observations to parts one and two of the template for national summary reports, mainly stemming from the analysis of the fifth reporting cycle but also the previous cycles. The Committee adopted the text of the informal annotations to the reporting template and decided to include it as an annex to the present report. It also requested the secretariat to share the final document with the Task Force on Target Setting and Reporting, conveying the Committee's request to enclose it with the letter inviting Protocol Parties and other States to submit summary reports withing the sixth reporting cycle, as well as to specify in that letter that the Committee would take those aspects into account when analysing the forthcoming reports.

10. The Committee emphasized that the aim of the exercise was to facilitate and streamline reporting under the Protocol in what concerned specifically reports by countries, as the Committee had not entered into analysing the situation of the regional economic integration organizations. The Committee also reiterated that reporting was a key obligation under the Protocol, recalling that grave failure or imperfections relating to the contents of summary reports might constitute a basis for justifying a non-compliance process.

² ECE/MP.WH/C.1/2023/2–EUCHP/2219533/3.1/2023/CC/06, para. 13.

³ Ibid., para. 14.

VI. Consultations with Parties to facilitate implementation of the Protocol

11. The Committee recalled that, at the sixth session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol, the delegation of Azerbaijan had expressed interest in engaging in a Consultation Process in order to support the revision of its national targets under the Protocol.⁴ At its twenty-fourth meeting, the Committee had requested the secretariat to send a letter to Azerbaijan in order to confirm the country's interest in engaging in a consultation and to request that the Azerbaijani authorities specify the nature of the country's needs.⁵

12. In that regard, the secretariat reported that, according to information received from the focal points through informal channels, the country was not ready to engage in consultations due to the ongoing preparations for hosting the twenty-ninth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (Baku, 11–22 November 2024). Based on the above, the Committee took note that the request to engage in consultations was currently on hold.

13. In terms of future work of the Committee with respect to the Consultation Process, the Chair noted that the outcomes of the sixth reporting cycle might indicate whether some Parties were facing challenges with respect to the implementation of the Protocol and therefore could become possible candidates for consultations.

VII. Facilitating compliance with the obligations under the Protocol

14. The Chair recalled that, at its twenty-fourth meeting, the Committee had discussed the focus and scope of the interpretive note focusing on the key provisions of the Protocol relating to public health,⁶ prepared under its mandate to “facilitate, promote and aim to secure compliance with the obligations under the Protocol with a view to preventing disputes, by ... providing advice or assistance to Parties”.⁷ In the intersessional period, a member of the Committee had produced the draft of the note and shared it for review and feedback by other members.

15. The Committee discussed the contents of the draft note and agreed on the way forward and allocation of responsibilities to finalize the document.

VIII. Awareness-raising on the compliance procedure

16. The Chair encouraged Committee members to continue raising awareness of the Protocol and its compliance procedure on all relevant occasions, including at international conferences and academic lectures given at the international and/or national level.

17. By way of a specific awareness-raising initiative, the Committee decided to explore the possibility of presenting the conclusions and recommendations of the interpretive note at a side event that could be organized in connection with the seventh session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol (Budapest, 5–7 November 2025). Such an event would also be a good opportunity to raise the visibility and showcase the work of the Committee.

⁴ ECE/MP.WH/24–EUCHP/2219533/3.1/2022/MOP-6/06, para. 103.

⁵ ECE/MP.WH/C.1/2023/2–EUCHP/2219533/3.1/2023/CC/06, para. 18.

⁶ *Ibid.*, para. 26.

⁷ See ECE/MP.WH/2/Add.3–EUR/06/5069385/1/Add.3, decision I/2 on review of compliance of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol, annex, para. 1 (a)–(b).

IX. Report of the Committee to the Meeting of the Parties at its seventh session

18. The Committee discussed the preparation of the report on its activities, to be submitted to the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol at its seventh session. With respect to the process and timeline, the Chair recalled that the sixth reporting cycle under the Protocol would be launched in December 2024, with a deadline of 9 April 2025 for countries to submit national summary reports. Committee members would therefore analyse reports submitted by Protocol Parties and other States between April and June 2025 and, on that basis, the report of the Committee would be prepared together with the draft decision on general issues of compliance and submitted as an official document to the seventh session of the Meeting of the Parties by mid-August 2025.

19. Subsequently, the Committee discussed and agreed on the preliminary table of contents of its report to the Meeting of the Parties and the modalities for preparatory work, including an allocation of responsibilities and a template for analysis of the summary reports.

X. Programme of work and calendar of future meetings

20. The Committee tentatively agreed to hold its twenty-sixth meeting on 10–11 June 2025, in Geneva. The Committee highlighted that the meeting would be instrumental in the preparations for the seventh session of the Meeting of the Parties, discussing in particular the analysis of the sixth reporting cycle under the Protocol and the possible contents of the draft decision on general issues of compliance.

XI. Adoption of the report

21. The Committee adopted its report by electronic means after the meeting.

Annex

Comments and annotations by the Compliance Committee to the template for summary reports in accordance with article 7 of the Protocol on Water and Health

I. Background

1. At its twenty-fourth meeting (Geneva, 5 June 2023), the Compliance Committee of the Protocol on Water and Health reviewed compliance with reporting requirements under the Protocol and noted with appreciation that all Parties had submitted their national summary reports within the fifth reporting exercise under the Protocol.⁸

2. The Committee also recalled, however, that, in the fifth reporting cycle, there had been recurrent and fundamental shortcomings in the area of reporting, including some reports referring to domestic laws and regulations or European Union instruments without specific reference to the Protocol targets, and incomplete information on the targets or within other sections of the reporting template. In that respect, the Committee stressed the importance of reporting in accordance with the template for summary reports of the Protocol. Furthermore, the Committee noted that, when targets were set under the applicable European Union instruments, it was still necessary to report on their consistency with the target setting areas of article 6 (2) of the Protocol. Guidance on that issue could be found in the Committee's Interpretive Note "The provisions of the Protocol on Water and Health and their relationship with the European Union law governing water and health" (ECE/MP.WH/2019/5/Add.1–EUPCR/1814149/1.2/2019/MOP-5/11/Add.1), prepared within the framework of the Consultation Process with Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.⁹

3. The Committee also specifically noted some common inconsistencies in the responses to part one (general aspects) and part two (targets and target dates set and assessment of progress) of the template for summary reports in accordance with article 7 of the Protocol in what related particularly to scope and coverage of the information provided by Parties.

4. The Committee observed that it would be useful to convey the above-mentioned observations to the Task Force on Target Setting and Reporting.¹⁰ It therefore prepared the present informal annotations to the reporting template with the aim of facilitating compliance with reporting requirements in terms of completeness, consistency, accuracy and quality of the reports.

II. Comments to part one of the template for summary reports "General aspects"

5. Table 1 below summarizes the comments and annotations by the Compliance Committee to part one of the template for summary reports in accordance with article 7 of the Protocol.

Table 1
Comments to part one of the template "General aspects"

<i>Question</i>	<i>Further details</i>
1. Were targets and target dates established in your	For this question, please clarify whether the target setting process was followed in the framework of the Protocol on Water and Health (including if it is a combination of existing

⁸ ECE/MP.WH/C.1/2023/2 EUCHP/2219533/3.1/2023/CC/06, para. 12.

⁹ Ibid., para. 13.

¹⁰ Ibid., para. 14.

<p>country in accordance with article 6 of the Protocol?</p> <p><i>Please provide detailed information on the target areas in part two.</i></p> <p>YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> IN PROGRESS <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><i>If targets have been revised, please indicate the date of adoption and list the revised target areas. Please provide detailed information in part two.</i></p>	<p>national targets and new targets established under article 6 of the Protocol) or whether the targets set refer to developing or updating national regulations and to compliance with existing national regulations (i.e. were not set specifically in the framework of the Protocol).</p> <p>In the latter case (target setting process has not been carried out in the framework of the Protocol), please indicate NO and provide an explanation of the nature of national targets.</p> <p>Note that the intention of the Protocol is to support prioritization of action at the national level by setting targets in areas needing improvement, i.e. with insufficient compliance or lack of regulation. Where there is sufficient compliance, targets can address monitoring, maintenance and upgrading.</p> <p>If targets have been revised (updated or new targets), please explain whether the original targets have been achieved (fully or partly) and indicate the rationale for revising the targets. Detailed information on each target area should be provided in part two.</p> <p>If targets have not changed since the last reporting cycle(s), you may copy/paste text from your last report, but please provide additional explanations as needed.</p> <p>Note that “ongoing legal obligations” cannot be reported as target dates. Therefore, under part two, where there is a continuous need to monitor under national legislation, please identify a target date (e.g., to reduce non-compliance to specific obligations by year X).</p> <p>The purpose of target dates is to monitor stepwise improvement; thus the indicators for target achievement would ideally be quantifiable but at a minimum require an estimate of the degree of achievement (e.g., in % or symbols such as -, +, ++, +++).</p>
<p>2. Were targets and target dates published and, if so, how?</p> <p><i>Please explain whether the targets and target dates were published, made available to the public (e.g., online, official publication, media) and communicated to the secretariat.</i></p>	<p>For this question, please provide general information regarding the process followed to officially adopt (e.g., whether the targets had been adopted by a decision by the Government, joint order of the responsible ministries, etc.) and/or publish at the national and international levels the targets and target dates set.</p>
<p>3. Has your country established national or local arrangements for coordination between competent authorities for setting targets? If so please describe, including information on which public authority(ies) took the leadership and coordinating role, which public authorities were</p>	<p>For countries that have already been submitting summary reports under the Protocol, it is sufficient to report <u>further</u> coordination activities that occurred within <u>the current reporting cycle</u> (e.g., meetings of inter-authority working groups) or if the set-up has changed (e.g., new structure established, new organizations engaged).</p> <p>Any general activities for the implementation of the Protocol can also be reported here, while activities for specific target areas should be reported under the respective areas below.</p>

<p>involved and how coordination was ensured.</p>	
<p>4. Was a programme of measures or action plan developed to support implementation of the targets? If so, please briefly describe that programme or plan, including how financial implications were taken into account.</p>	<p>Under this question, it is important to report whether an overall action plan or a similar document has been developed in the framework of the target setting process specifying the authorities responsible for implementation, the concrete measures to reach the target(s), their funding (or lack thereof), and any risks/obstacles encountered that may delay or impede achievement of the target(s).</p> <p>Concrete implementation measures and actions are typically specific to each of the 20 different target areas and should therefore be reported under part two.</p>
<p>5. What has been done in your country to ensure public participation in the process of target setting in accordance with article 6, paragraph 2, and how was the outcome of public participation taken into account in the final targets set?</p>	<p>Under this question, please explain efforts to communicate the Protocol activities (including targets and reports) to the general public. Please also explain how the public was involved in target setting and/or what efforts have been made to ensure public participation.</p> <p>Where public participation can be reported under specific target areas, please report it in the respective areas below, with brief reference to said participation here.</p>
<p>6. Please provide information on the process by which this report has been prepared, including information on which public authorities had the main responsibilities and what other stakeholders were involved.</p>	<p>No specific recommendation here.</p>
<p>7. Please report any particular circumstances that are relevant for understanding the report, including whether there is a federal and/or decentralized decision-making structure.</p>	<p>No specific recommendation here.</p>

III. Comments to part two “Targets and target dates set and assessment of progress”

6. Please ensure you report progress for all of the targets you have set in your target document.

7. Many of the reports submitted by the Parties to the Protocol show substantial overlap of information for different target areas. This is due to differences between the 20 target areas of the Protocol and the structure of national regulations that serve to achieve the targets. To avoid overlap and redundancy in your reports, where progress in the implementation of your national regulations pertains to more than 1 target area, please explain progress comprehensively in the first relevant target area, integrating cross-references under other target areas, as appropriate.

8. All 20 target areas of the reporting template follow a common structure of 5 points, and reporting on progress would be clearer if you use a similar concise table or list covering these points in each target area. When describing the target, there is no need to reiterate the full-length description from your target document, but the essence of the target needs to be sufficiently captured in a few sentences. Table 2 below gives an example (fictional but compiled based on elements of various reports submitted by member States).

Table 2
Example for target area I for reporting in 2025: I. Quality of the drinking water supplied (art. 6, para. 2 (a))

<i>Questions under target areas</i>	<i>Actions taken/planned</i>
Target 1	Full surveillance coverage established for small supplies (those serving 1–10 households)
1. Target date	2028 (see below target dates detailed for each action/measure)
2. Actions / measures	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Employment of 16 further public health professionals for the 5 health authorities by end of 2023; 2. Intensive public communication campaigns with media and health authorities in 2022/2023; 3. Training courses for public health authority staff in 2024/2025; 4. Media campaign and regional workshops with owners and operators in 2025/2026; 5. First campaigns for site inspection, sampling and analyses in 2026–2028.
3. Indicators	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Number of new staff employed in public health authority with pertinent expertise by December 2023; 2. Registry of small supplies to be established by 2026; 3. Statistics showing workshop participation of owners and operators; media coverage of information campaigns in 2025/2026; 4. First report on condition of supply systems and water quality in 2028.
4. Progress; degree achieved	About 40 per cent for step 1, targeted for 2023
5. Comments; challenges; obstacles	Legally binding requirement for biannual surveillance by the public health authority passed into legislation in May 2022, including funding for only 8 of the 16 required new staff members; 6 of these positions have been filled (finding sufficiently qualified candidates has proven to be challenging). Whether funding for the further 8 positions will be granted in 2024 is uncertain. Some flexibility in reallocating tasks to positions when replacing staff retiring in 2024 may partially compensate (if no new pandemic requires shifting priorities again); otherwise lack of staff will stretch the timeline. One positive development is the feedback from operators and owners contacted so far that indicates an unexpected level

	of motivation and willingness to comply with surveillance requirements. We attribute this to our intensive public communication campaigns in 2022 and 2023, including increased awareness of microbial risks in the wake of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.
Target 2	Laboratory capacity established for full monitoring coverage of drinking water quality according to European Union Drinking Water Directive requirements
1. Target date	2026 (see below for target dates detailed for each action/measure)
2. Actions / measures	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Training courses for laboratory staff in developing standard operating procedures and establishing quality control systems (2023–2024); 2. Accreditation of laboratories in 2025/2026.
3. Indicators	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lists of staff members having taken part in training courses; 2. Draft quality assurance documents; 3. List of laboratories accredited for analyses following European Union Drinking Water Directive requirements.
4. Progress; degree achieved	About 80 per cent for the training targeted for step 1 in 2023
5. Comments; challenges; obstacles	While appropriately equipped laboratories with sufficient staff are available and 2 agencies for their accreditation have been established, the development of quality control systems in laboratories with a large fraction of the staff close to retirement and some gaps in finding qualified candidates for vacant positions has proven challenging.
Target 3	
Contribution to global/regional commitments	These targets contribute to achieving target 6.1.1 of the Sustainable Development Goals (proportion of population using safely managed drinking water services).

9. For targets that have been fully reached in one of the last reporting cycles, a line naming the target and noting “reached in the year ...; see report for the ... reporting cycle” is sufficient. It may be appropriate to report actions for ongoing maintenance and operation, particularly if it is anticipated that sustaining the level achieved is likely to prove challenging.

10. If you have not set any targets in a given target area, please provide information only under point 5 “Comments; challenges; obstacles” as contained in Table 2 above. Make sure to explain your considerations for not setting a target in that target area. For example, in some countries, aquaculture is not practised, consequently there is nothing to report for target area XVI. In other cases, other public health priorities may justify not setting a target in a specific area, but it is important to explain why this specific area is not relevant. Please note that full compliance with regulations alone, including those of the European Union, does not justify not setting any targets in the respective target area. The purpose of the Protocol on Water and Health is to strive for improvement and to consider the situation in all of the 20 target areas under article 6.