



## CONCEPT NOTE

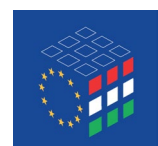
### Regional Workshop on Equitable Access to Water and Sanitation under the Protocol on Water and Health: *Strengthening regional WASH efforts through Protocol tools*

11 December (09:30-17:30) – 12 December 2024 (09:30-12:30)  
D50 Hotel and Event Centre  
Budapest, Hungary

Languages: English, French, and Russian

**Concept and background:** In the pan-European region, the [UNECE-WHO/Europe Protocol on Water and Health](#) provides a sound framework for translating into practice the human rights to water and sanitation and achieving Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6 and other water, sanitation, and hygiene-related targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Protocol specifically requires Parties to pursue access to water and sanitation “for all members of the population, especially those suffering a disadvantage or social exclusions”.

Achieving universal access to water and sanitation for all is a prerequisite for realizing SDG 3 on health and well-being and other SDGs, including those related to environmental protection, gender equality, education, and economic growth. Nevertheless, according to the UN-Water SDG 6 Progress Report, the current rate of progress needs to be quadrupled to meet the targets by 2030 due to insufficient investments, climate change, population growth, governance issues, and others. Consequently, there is an increased awareness of the need to accelerate progress, and action is taking place.



Since 2011, the Regional Workshops on [Equitable Access to Water and Sanitation](#) have been providing important intergovernmental platforms to discuss equity and human rights issues in the pan-European region, take stock of achievements, and exchange best practices in addressing challenges related to water, sanitation, hygiene, and health, including through the various tools and guidance developed under the Protocol. One of these tools, the [Equitable Access Score-card](#), has undergone thorough revision based on the lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic, which revealed severe inequities in safe access, and from its use since its inception more than ten years ago with the aim of capturing broader variability in ensuring equitable access to water and sanitation for all.

In addition to global processes, the European Union (EU) Drinking Water Directive (DWD) recast encourages Member States to make use of the guidance documents and tools developed under the Protocol, which are particularly helpful in implementing Article 16 of the Directive. This article requires Member States to “identify people without, or limited, access to water intended for human consumption and assess possibilities for improving access for such people”. Similarly, the recast EU Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive (EU UWWTD) calls on EU Member States to take concrete measures to improve access to sanitation progressively (Article 19), particularly for vulnerable and marginalized communities. Like the EU DWD recast, the EU UWWTD recast calls for the identification of persons with no access or limited access, the reasons for such lack of access, the assessment of possibilities to improve access for such persons, and the adoption of necessary and appropriate measures to ensure such services.

The upcoming Regional Workshop on Equitable Access to Water and Sanitation, organized by the Governments of France, Hungary, North Macedonia, with support from the joint secretariat of the UNECE-WHO/Europe Protocol on Water and Health will therefore provide an important opportunity to take stock of the latest developments in the field of water, sanitation, hygiene, and health, particularly in relation to EU legislation. It will also offer a platform for Parties, countries, and organizations to share challenges and best practices in implementing the EU DWD and UWWTD and other processes and how the tools and guidance developed under the Protocol, such as the Equitable Access Score-card 2.0, can further facilitate their implementation.



**Objectives:** The specific objectives of the Regional Workshop are to:

- *Launch* the revised Equitable Access Score-card 2.0 and discuss how the newly introduced dimensions can be leveraged to align with global and regional water, sanitation, hygiene, and health processes.
- *Explore* how the Protocol on Water and Health can support countries in implementing the relevant equity provisions of the EU Drinking Water Directive and the Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive, particularly considering the specific needs of vulnerable and marginalized communities.

**Expected outcomes:** By the end of the session, participants will have an increased awareness of how to leverage the various existing tools and guidance under the Protocol on Water and Health to implement water, sanitation, hygiene and health-related commitments at global and regional levels, with a particular focus on the EU DWD and UWWTD.

**Targeted participants:** Participants will primarily include country representatives from the pan-European region whose work concerns equitable access to water and sanitation, such as water, environment, education, health, social protection, and finance. Representatives of EU Member States, candidate countries, and those wishing to align with EU legislation are encouraged to attend. Furthermore, the workshop will include representatives from development agencies and donors, civil society organizations, and stakeholders engaged in water and sanitation services.

**Registration & Financial support:** Participants are requested to confirm their attendance at their earliest convenience and by **26 November 2024 at the latest** under the following [link](#).

Eligible participants from countries with economies in transition may apply for financial support to facilitate their participation in the meeting. Please note that financial resources are limited, and priority will be granted to participants actively contributing to the Regional Workshop.

Requests for financial support should be submitted to the UNECE secretariat ([protocol.water.health@un.org](mailto:protocol.water.health@un.org)) as soon as possible and not later than 31 October 2024, using the financial support request form available on the meeting website. Due to visa and travel arrangement regulations, no applications will be accepted after this deadline.



Since Hungary is part of the Schengen area, visa applications might take up to five weeks. Therefore, please indicate clearly in the registration if a personal invitation letter for visa purposes is needed. Participants requiring a visa are encouraged to register as soon as possible and start the visa procedure at least five weeks in advance.

### Background documentation:

- [No One Left Behind](#): Good practices to ensure equitable access to water and sanitation in the pan-European region;
- [The Equitable Access Score-card](#): supporting policy processes to achieve the human rights to water and sanitation;
- [Making Water and Sanitation Affordable For All](#): Policy options and good practices to ensure the affordability of safe drinking water and sanitation under the Protocol on Water and Health in the pan-European region;
- [Water, sanitation and hygiene in health-care facilities](#): a practical tool for situation assessment and improvement planning;
- [WASH FIT](#): A practical guide for improving quality of care through water, sanitation and hygiene in health care facilities. Second edition
- [Surveillance of water, sanitation and hygiene in schools](#): a practical tool;
- [Inequalities in access to at least basic drinking-water services](#): Environmental health inequalities: fact sheet series;
- [Inequalities in access to at least basic sanitation services](#): Environmental health inequalities: fact sheet series;
- [The Measurement and Monitoring of Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene \(WASH\) Affordability](#): A missing element of monitoring of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Targets 6.1 and 6.2;
- [Directive \(EU\) 2020/2184](#) on the quality of water intended for human consumption;
- Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council concerning [urban wastewater treatment \(recast\)](#).

