



Protocol on Water and Health as a tool to facilitate implementation of the EU Directives

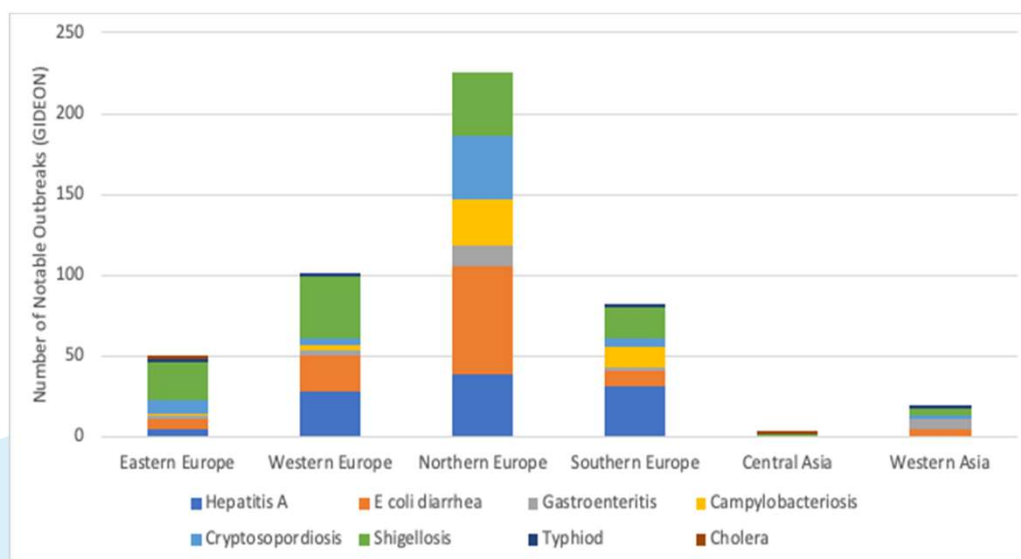
Nataliya Nikiforova, Environmental Affairs Officer, UNECE



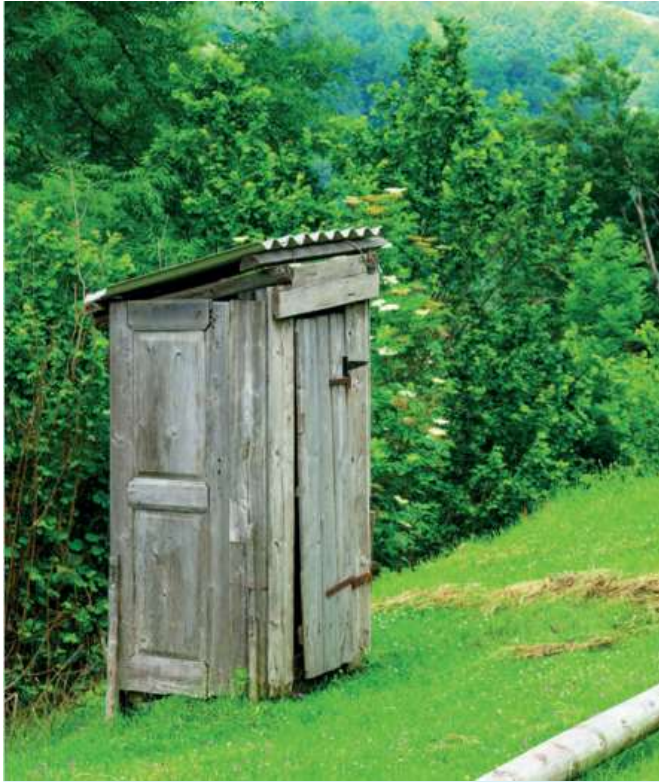
#ProtocolWaterHealth

Why a treaty on water, sanitation, hygiene and health?

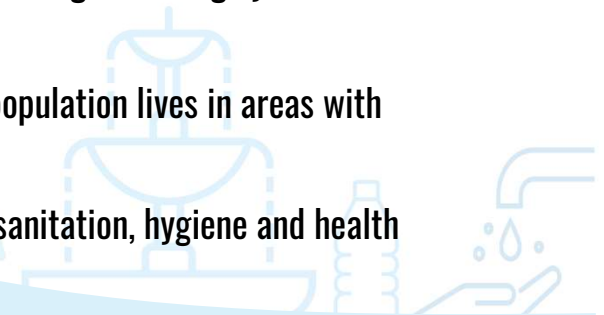
Water-related infectious disease burden, 2010-2021



- Over 77 million people **lack access** to safely managed drinking-water services and 271 million lack access to safely managed sanitation
- Shigellosis, *E. coli* infections, hepatitis A and cryptosporidiosis had the highest **number of outbreaks** reported in the region
- **Outbreaks of legionellosis** were reported in 34 of 53 countries between 2011 and 2021
- **Estimated annual deaths** attributable to poor WASH: 33,500 (13% diarrheal disease, 87% to acute respiratory infections)
- **WASH interventions** can reduce diarrhoeal diseases by 25–35% and significantly reduce other water-related diseases.



- Only 67% of domestic wastewater in the pan-European region is collected and safely treated
- Over 5 billion cubic meters of **untreated wastewater** are discharged into the environment annually
- Impact on **ecosystems and aquatic ecology** (e.g. eutrophication leading to algal blooms, heavy metals, micropollutants...)
- Except for a few high-usage countries, in the majority of countries of the pan-European region, limited available data indicate **low rates of reuse**.
- About 20% of the territory in the pan-European region and 30% of citizens are affected by **water stress** during an average year due to extreme weather events
- In Southern Europe up to 70% of the population lives in areas with seasonal water stress during summer
- Impact of **climate change** on water, sanitation, hygiene and health



The case for scaling up action

- Safe water and adequate sanitation are basic conditions for **human health** and for a **clean environment**
- Adequate WASH critical to guarantee **high-quality health care** in hospitals and other facilities and **learning environments** that are safe and inclusive for all children
- WASH interventions can promote **gender equality**
- Investment has **economic and social benefits** – US\$ 1 spent on improving sanitation brings a return of US\$5 in lower health costs, more productivity and fewer premature deaths
- Action is urgently needed to **achieve SDG6 targets** by 2030



What is the Protocol on Water and Health?



- International treaty adopted in 1999 and entered into force in 2005 – **28 Parties** as of November 2023, **2** in process, ~40 countries in total cooperating
- **Objective:** protect human health and well-being through sustainable water management and by preventing and controlling water-related diseases
- **Unique characteristics:**
 - First and only treaty that focuses on water, sanitation, hygiene and health
 - Precursor of SDG6
 - Combines environmental protection with promotion of human health
- **Scope:** entire water cycle – protection of water resources, drinking water supply chain from catchment to consumption, sanitation chain from collection and treatment of wastewater to discharge and reuse, water used for recreation
- **UNECE and WHO/Europe** jointly provide secretariat functions

Core provisions and obligations



Parties required to **take all appropriate measures** to ensure:

- ❖ Adequate supplies of safe drinking water for everyone, including water for personal hygiene
- ❖ Adequate sanitation for everyone of a standard that protects human health and the environment
- ❖ Protection of water resources used as sources of drinking water and their related ecosystems
- ❖ Sufficient safeguards for human health against water-related diseases



Main obligations:

- ❖ **Set national/local targets** on water, sanitation, hygiene and health
- ❖ Every three years, **submit national summary reports** on progress
- ❖ Maintain and improve systems for surveillance and early warning of **water-related diseases** and ensure response capacity

Other provisions:

- ❖ Strengthen **public awareness, education and training** and ensure accessibility of public information
- ❖ Promote **international cooperation** – exchange and peer-to-peer support

Target setting and reporting under the Protocol (arts. 6 and 7)

Targets are set following an in-depth baseline analysis, through a participatory process bringing together environment and health sectors (and others)

Accompanied by action plans and adopted at highest possible level

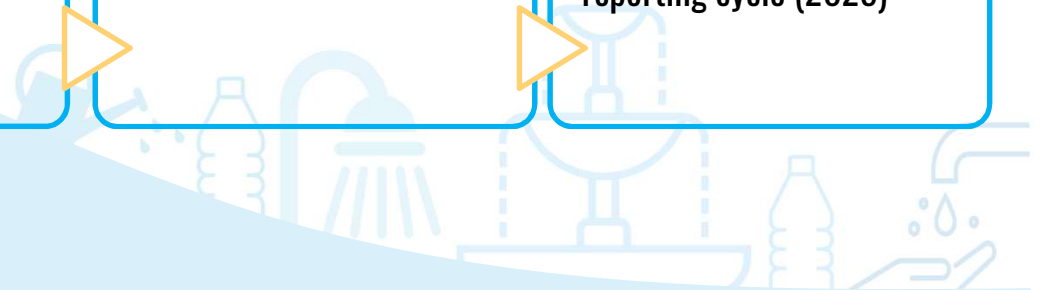
Targets cover 20 areas and can be “soft targets” (e.g. legislation revision) or “hard targets” (infrastructure-related)

Tailored to countries’ priorities, needs and environmental health situation

Countries report on progress to the Meeting of the Parties every three years, through submission of national summary reports

Protocol reporting provides a pan-European data hub, with harmonized information on water, sanitation, hygiene and health

Electronic reporting tool to be available for the sixth reporting cycle (2025)



Work programme and strategic priorities

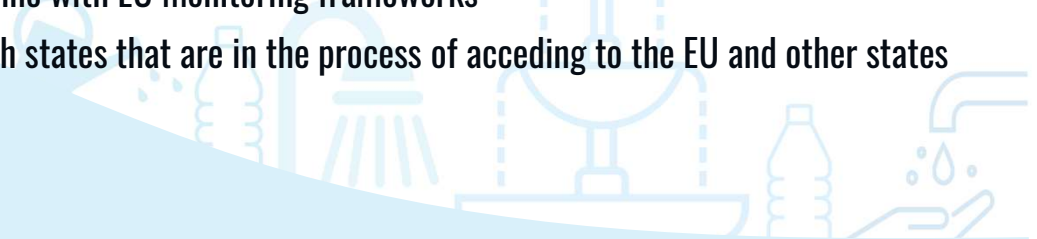


	1 NO POVERTY	3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING	4 QUALITY EDUCATION	5 GENDER EQUALITY	6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION	9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE	11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES	12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION	13 CLIMATE ACTION	16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS	17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS
Improving governance for water and health											
Prevention and reduction of water-related diseases											
Water, sanitation and hygiene in institutional settings											
Small-scale water supply and sanitation											
Safe management of water supply and sanitation systems											
Equitable access to water and sanitation											
Increasing resilience to climate change											
Raising awareness on the Protocol and facilitating accession											
Compliance procedure											



Synergies between the Protocol and EU Directives

- The objectives of the Protocol and the EU Directives on water and sanitation are consistent and mutually supportive
- The Protocol supports the implementation of the requirements of the **revised Drinking Water Directive**, including in the area of **access to water** and **risk assessment and risk management** of the water supply
 - Recital 34: Member States could make use of the guidance documents developed under the remit of [the] Protocol to assess the policy background and the baseline situation on access to water and to define the actions necessary to improve equitable access for all to water intended for human consumption
 - Article 16: Access to water
- The proposal for a revised **Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive** includes reference to the Protocol and a draft provision on access to sanitation for all, in particular vulnerable and marginalized groups
- The Protocol pools specific **technical support**, strengthens **intersectoral cooperation**, and promotes **integrated data collection** on water, sanitation, hygiene and health, in line with EU monitoring frameworks
- The Protocol promotes **international cooperation** with states that are in the process of acceding to the EU and other states that are not subject to EU law



Equitable access to water and sanitation work

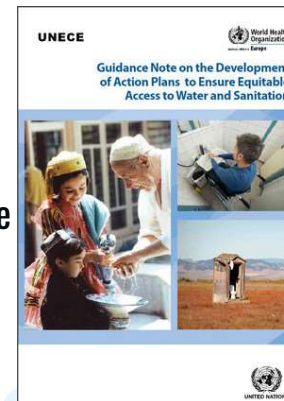


- Aim: Countries supported in addressing equity aspects in policymaking processes. Equity considered along three dimensions:
 - 1) Reducing geographical disparities
 - 2) Addressing the needs of vulnerable and marginalized groups
 - 3) Ensuring the affordability of services

- Lead Parties: France, Hungary, North Macedonia

- **Past achievements and outputs:**

- 13 countries have applied Equitable Access Score-card to establish a baseline measure of the equity of access
- Several guidance tools and documents developed



- **Future outlook**

- Revision of the Score-card to address the provision of WASH services in context of COVID-19 and other emergencies
- Supporting self-assessments and development of action plans or recommendations
- Promoting synergies between the Protocol and European Union Directives (e.g. through capacity-building activities in cooperation with EU institutions and EU Network of Drinking Water Regulators)

The Equitable Access Score-card



- Self evaluation tool to:
 - Establish a baseline and collect information
 - Prompt discussions and engagement (multi-stakeholder process)
 - Track progress

- Application in each country varies depending on



Assessment scale (national, regional, city-level)



Stakeholders involved (government, civil society..)



Data available

How does the Score-card work in practice?

- Four areas of action explored through qualitative questions

SECTION	AREA OF ACTION
Steering governance frameworks to deliver equitable access to safe drinking water and sanitation	1.1 Strategic framework for achieving equitable access
	1.2 Sector financial policies
	1.3 Rights and duties of users and right-holders
Reducing geographical disparities	2.1 Public policies to reduce access disparities between geographical areas
	2.2 Public policies to reduce price disparities between geographical areas
	2.3 Geographical allocation of external support
Keeping water and sanitation affordable for all	4.1 Public policies to ensure affordability
	4.2 Tariff measures
	4.3 Social protection measures

SECTION	AREA OF ACTION
Ensuring access for vulnerable and marginalized groups	3.1 Public policies to address the needs of vulnerable and marginalized groups
	3.2 Persons with special physical needs
	3.3 Users of health facilities
	3.4 Users of educational facilities
	3.5 Users of retirement homes
	3.6 Prisoners
	3.7 Refugees living in refugee camps and centres
	3.8 Homeless people
	3.9 Travellers and nomadic communities
	3.10 Persons living in housing without water and sanitation
	3.11 Persons without access to safe drinking water and sanitation in their workplaces

AREA 3.9 TRAVELLERS AND NOMADIC COMMUNITIES				
<p>Rationale. A number of people lack access to water and sanitation services not because their locality is not served or because they cannot afford them, but because they have no fixed dwelling to be connected to the water and sanitation networks. They include travellers and nomadic communities. Travellers and nomadic communities have to rely on public facilities. (The challenge of settlements of ethnic minorities is considered under area 3.10).</p>				
	YES	TO A LARGE EXTENT	TO A LIMITED EXTENT	NO
3.9.1 There is data on levels of access to safe drinking water and sanitation by travellers and nomadic communities				
<p>Score justification: (explain briefly and/or give examples that justify the answer)</p> <p>Means of verification used: (e.g. official documents, multi-stakeholder consultation, expert opinion)</p> <p>Reliability of the response: (high, medium, or low)</p>				
3.9.2 There is a public policy to ensure access to safe drinking water and sanitation by travellers and nomadic communities				
<p>Score justification: (explain briefly and/or give examples that justify the answer)</p> <p>Means of verification used: (e.g. official documents, multi-stakeholder consultation, expert opinion)</p> <p>Reliability of the response: (high, medium, or low)</p>				
3.9.3 There is specific public funding to support access to water and sanitation by travellers and nomadic communities				
<p>Score justification: (explain briefly and/or give examples that justify the answer)</p> <p>Means of verification used: (e.g. official documents, multi-stakeholder consultation, expert opinion)</p> <p>Reliability of the response: (high, medium, or low)</p>				
<p>Please calculate the score for Area 3.9 Add the points obtained (Yes = 3, To a large extent = 2, To a limited extent = 1, No = 0)</p> <p>Divide the number of total points by 3</p>				
<p>Please estimate the average reliability of the responses for this area (please mark one option)</p> <p>High Medium Low</p>				

Qualitative question

Response

- Score justification
- Means of verification
- Reliability of the response



Overview of results

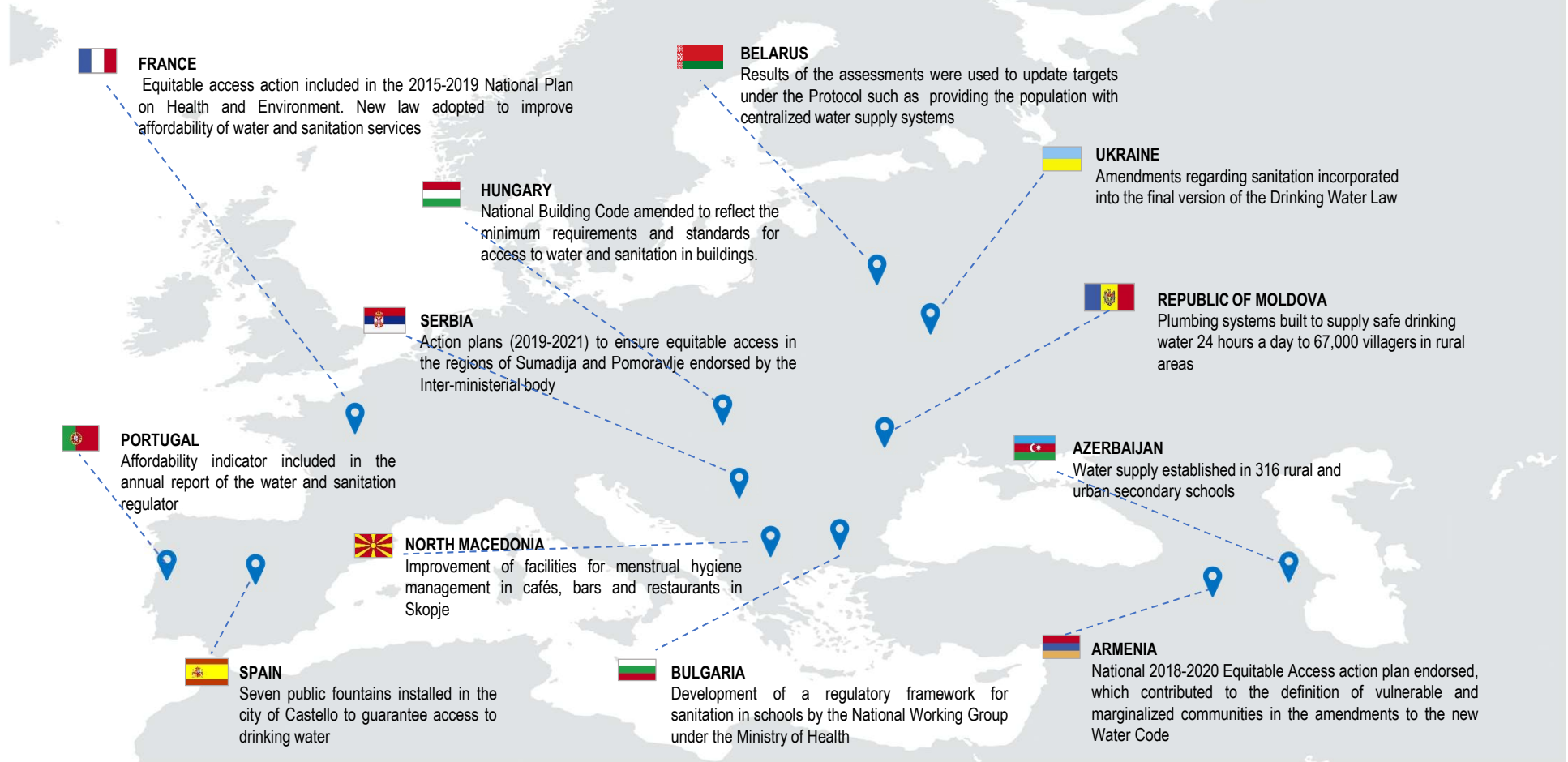
SECTION	AREA OF ACTION	SCORE	RELIABILITY
Steering governance frameworks to deliver equitable access to safe drinking water and sanitation	1.1 Strategic framework for achieving equitable access		
	1.2 Sector financial policies		
	1.3 Rights and duties of users and right-holders		
Reducing geographical disparities	2.1 Public policies to reduce access disparities between geographical areas		
	2.2 Public policies to reduce price disparities between geographical areas		
	2.3 Geographical allocation of external support		
Ensuring access for vulnerable and marginalized groups	3.1 Public policies to address the needs of vulnerable and marginalized groups		
	3.2 Persons with special physical needs		
	3.3 Users of health facilities		
	3.4 Users of educational facilities		
	3.5 Users of retirement homes		
	3.6 Prisoners		
	3.7 Refugees living in refugee camps and centres		
	3.8 Homeless people		
	3.9 Travellers and nomadic communities		
	3.10 Persons living in housing without water and sanitation		
	3.11 Persons without access to safe drinking water and sanitation in their workplaces		
Keeping water and sanitation affordable for all	4.1 Public policies to ensure affordability		
	4.2 Tariff measures		
	4.3 Social protection measures		

- Summary sheet helps to identify **priority areas of action**:
 - Where the country/region/city is lagging behind
 - Where the information is particularly unreliable
- Exercise helps to build the case to take **concrete follow-up action**



Improving equitable access to water and sanitation in the pan-European region

Selected measures taken to address gaps identified through equitable access self-assessments carried out in 2011-2022



Safe and efficient management of water supply and sanitation systems

- Support countries to ensure safe and climate-resilient water supply and sanitation services by strengthening national capacities in application of risk-based management approaches
- Lead Parties: Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Netherlands

Past achievements and outputs:

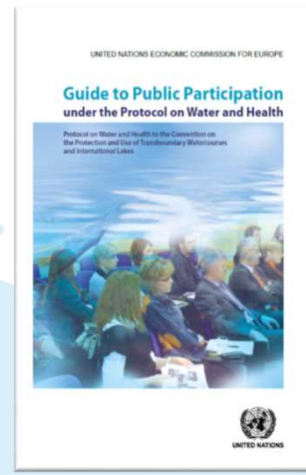
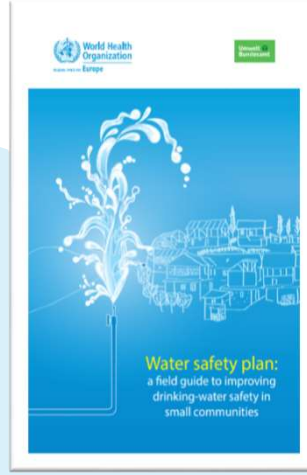
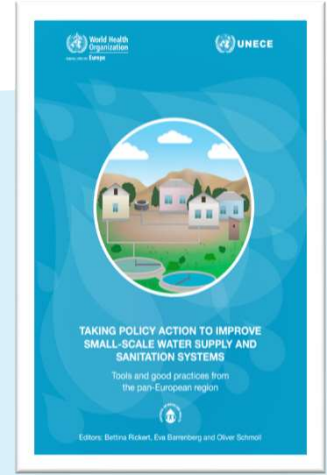
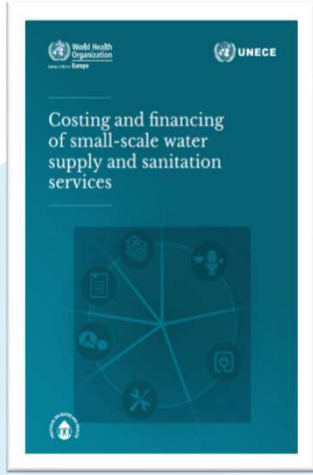
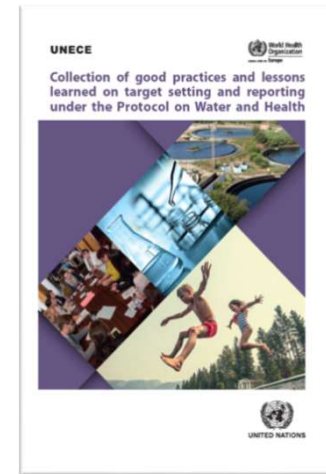
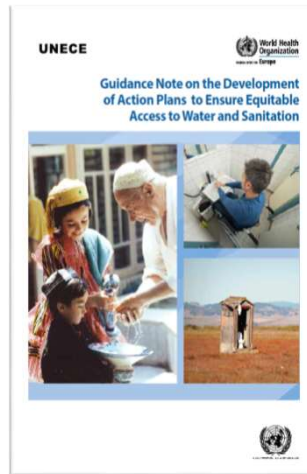
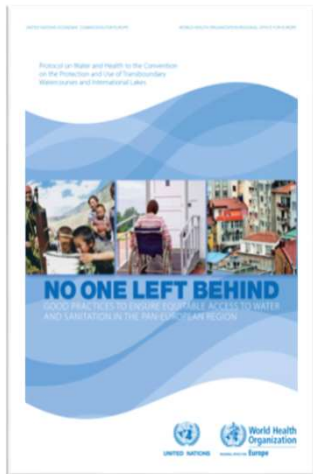
- Technical advice on safe operation and management of water supply and sanitation services in context of COVID-19 pandemic
- Broad support to national uptake of WHO-recommended water safety plan (WSP) and sanitation safety plan (SSP) approaches in legislation and practice (e.g. 24 countries implement WSP)
- Scale-up policy attention to sanitation and wastewater management, including a policy brief

Future outlook:

- Support the development of national road maps for long-term implementation of WSP and SSP
- Improve capacities on quantitative microbial risk assessment
- Support sanitation policies in accordance with the WHO Guidelines on sanitation and health
- National/subregional events on use and reuse of (waste)water for fit-for-purpose applications
- Regional workshop on (re-)emerging challenges in wastewater (e.g. AMR, micropollutants)



Relevant tools developed under the Protocol





Thank you for your attention!



Contact the Protocol secretariat at protocol.water_health@un.org
nataliya.nikiforova@un.org