

Equitable access to water and sanitation

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Access to water and sanitation in the pan-European region is unequal

- 1 We still have an access problem – 110 million Europeans do not have access
- 2 Large in-country differences are not random -- they affect mostly the poor and rural populations.
- 3 Richer countries also have an equitable access problem

Population group	Access in Tajikistan
Richest 20%	More than 75%
Poorest 40%	Less than 10%

EEA, 2007

The rate of access to water and sanitation by rural populations in the EECCA sub-region is 10 percentage points lower than that of urban populations

WHO-UNICEF, 2010

There are international obligations to end inequities in access

The General Assembly,
[...]

Acknowledging the importance of equitable access to safe and clean drinking water

[...]

Recognizes the right to safe and clean drinking water and sanitation as a human right that is essential for the full enjoyment of life and all human rights

UN General Assembly resolution 64/292

Equitable access to water, adequate in terms of both quantity and quality should be provided for all members of the population, especially those who suffer a disadvantage or social exclusion

Protocol on Water and Health, Article 5 (I)

Inequities in access need to be fought in at least 3 fronts

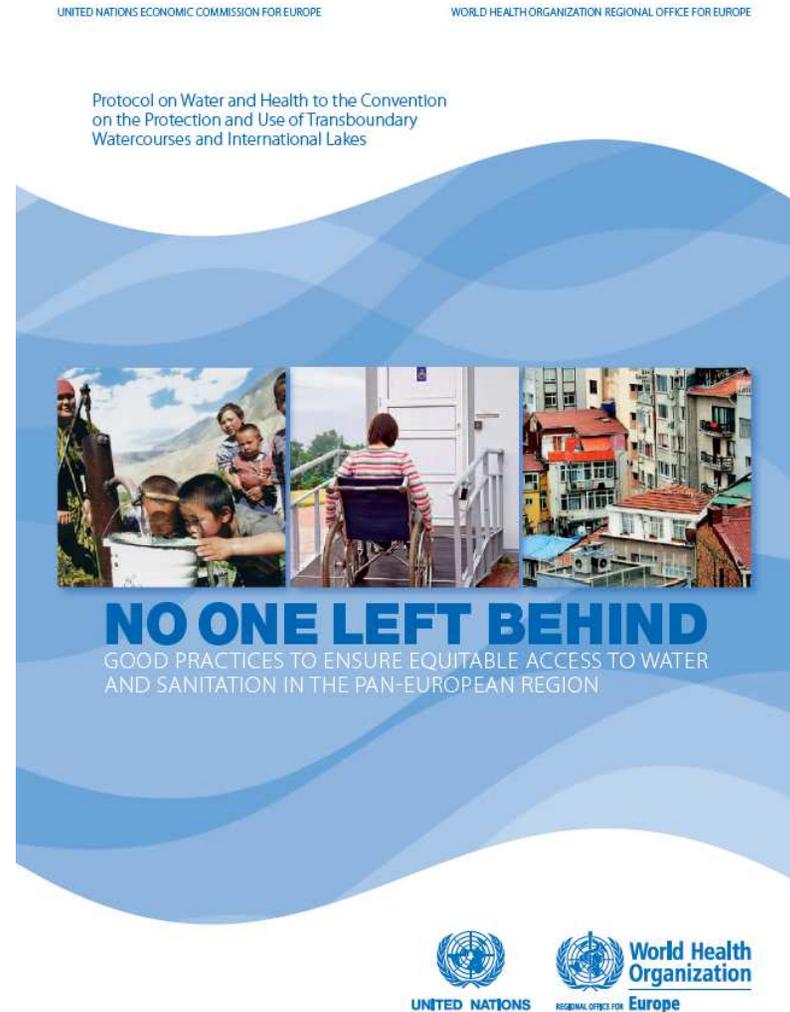
Dimension	Inequities in access to water and sanitation
Geographical disparities: water resources, WSS infrastructure	Certain areas of a country (rural areas, poor urban neighborhoods) have no physical access or have access of lower quality than other areas
Social disparities: vulnerable and marginalised groups	Within areas with good access, certain groups do not have access because they don't have private facilities, the public and institutional facilities they rely on are not adequate, or suffer unintended or intended discrimination
Economic disparities: affordability issues	Within areas with good access, the water and sanitation bill represents too large a share of disposable income for some households

No one left behind

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Steering governance frameworks to
ensure equitable access

Policy options

Good water
governance
and
management

- transparency and access to information
- inclusive participation
- efficiency incentives for operators
- accountability and redress mechanisms

“Equitable
access lens”
to speed up
progress

- country situation analysis
(indicator-based)
- action plan (results-oriented)

Good practices

Action Areas	Examples in the pan-European Region
Introducing strategic planning	The Portuguese Strategic Plan for Water and Sanitation, which includes coverage targets, investments required and tariff policies, has helped to focus the efforts of all stakeholders on priority actions
Improving consultation mechanisms	The French National Water Committee's working group on water access issues has led a review resulting in a new law that secures measures to support households that cannot pay their water debts
Empowering consumers	The Consumer Council for England and Wales uses consumer research and direct customer feedback to inform water policy making and implementation – such as on affordability issues
Involving NGOs	In Poltava oblast (Ukraine) public awareness was a key component of the policy response to acute nitrate poisoning, with civil society organizations such as MAMA-86 playing a key role
Involving service providers	In the Netherlands, drinking water companies are obliged by law to make an offer to anyone requesting access, to provide connections and to develop policies to avoid disconnection of small consumers

Reducing geographical disparities

Policy options

Closing access gaps

- Political attention to the rural gap
- Incentive framework for technical solutions
- Integrated approaches to service delivery
- Funding policy for investments in laggards

Closing price gaps

- Targeted national subsidy policy
- Cross-subsidization schemes
- Reform the organization of the sector
- Information tools

Good practices

Action Areas	Examples in the pan-European Region
Developing capacities in rural areas	FYR Macedonia is starting to address differences in water quality by increasing awareness and adopting an expanded and differentiated approach to water quality monitoring in rural areas
Investing in appropriate solutions	Ukraine's new rural water supply concept allocates EUR 290 million over 10 years for providing services to rural communities while widening the options – such as decentralized small scale systems
Targeting subsidies	Hungary, where decentralization of price setting led to wide price disparities between municipalities, targets its subsidy system to areas that face high cost of service
Enabling cross-subsidies	Spain's Aragon region has set up a concession and fee scheme for wastewater treatment where all users pay the same per m ³ treated, thus resulting in cross-subsidization from urban to rural residents
Introducing information tools	The Portuguese regulator ERSAR has developed a set of indicators to benchmark the performance of sector providers, including affordability, and is developing tariff guidelines

Keeping water and sanitation
affordable for all

Policy options

Tariff measures

- Progressive tariff systems (IBTs)
- Cross-subsidizing connections
- Cross-subsidizing fixed costs
- Preferential tariffs (income, family size)

Non-tariff measures

- “Preventive” measures
- “Curative” measures
- Disconnection bans
- Broader assistance programmes

Good practices

Action areas	Examples in the pan-European region
Cross-subsidies for connection	The Portuguese regulator ERSAR has recommended service providers to eliminate the connection charge for wastewater treatment and compensate it by gradually increasing the fixed part of the tariff
Social tariffs	The Polish operator AQUA SA introduced a reduced tariff for low-income households (at a cost of 1% of utility revenue) piggy-backing on the eligibility criteria used by the municipal social services
Preventive measures	The French city of Paris has set 3% of household income as affordability threshold and it allocates part of the city budget to fund water allowances that benefited 44,000 households in 2010
Curative measures	Belgium's Wallonia region has generalized by law the creation of water social funds to help households pay their water debts – 11,000 families benefit from this support
Broader support programmes	Ukraine has targeted housing subsidies to low income households – it provides support for families without “communal services debt” whose housing-related expenses exceed 15% of their income

Ensuring access for vulnerable and
marginalized groups

Different groups face different barriers to enjoy equitable access

Examples of vulnerable and marginalised groups	Examples of barriers for enjoying access
Persons with disabilities, persons with serious and chronic illnesses	Standard (private and public) water and sanitation facilities may not be adequate to their special physical needs
School children, hospitalized patients, detainees, refugees	Institutions on which they rely (schools, hospitals, prisons, refugee camps) may not have adequate water and sanitation facilities
Homeless people, nomadic and travelling communities	Public facilities (fountains, showers, toilets) on which they rely may not be available
Illegal settlers, illegal immigrants	Water and sanitation service providers may not serve undocumented persons or housing facilities located in untenured land
Indigenous people, persons belonging to ethnic or other minorities	Water providers and social services agencies may incur in unintended or intended discriminatory practices (service provision, allocation of aid, participation)

Targeted policy options

Action areas	Examples of policy options
Persons with special physical needs	Establish standards on accessible facilities Ensure that information on public facilities is understandable by people with common disabilities
Users of institutional facilities	Enhance inter-institutional coordination Allocate budgetary resources Introduce relevant provisions in facility management contracts. Establish complaints mechanisms.
Persons without fixed dwellings	Define responsibilities towards those users Provide public water and sanitation facilities and inform about them Develop specific hygiene promotion initiatives
Persons living in non-sanitary housing	Develop integrated programmes to address the symptoms and causes – including legal issues, urban planning, alternative technologies or innovative business models

Policy options

Cross-cutting policy options

- Ensuring non-discrimination
- Budgeting to address the needs of VMGs
- Collecting data on VMGs to set priorities
- Participation of VMGs in decision-making

Targeted policy options

- Persons with special physical needs
- Users of institutional facilities
- Persons without fixed dwellings
- Persons living in non-sanitary housing

Good practices

Action areas	Examples of policy options
Persons with special physical needs	The French city of Paris provides 350 public toilets adapted to the needs of disabled people, as part of a EUR 16 million/year programme of free access to public water and sanitation facilities
Users of institutional facilities	FYR Macedonia has allocated EUR 52 million to improve the unhygienic conditions of prisons and the Institute of Public Health regularly monitors the quality of drinking water in prisons
Persons without fixed dwellings	Belgium's Flanders region has established four transit areas for travelling communities with water and sanitation facilities -- each one can receive 10-25 families for a period of a few days
Persons living in non-sanitary housing	The Serbian city Belgrade has reduced the number of unhygienic Roma settlements combining investments in improved living conditions with access to social services

Can this be translated into mechanisms and targets under the Protocol?

1. Composition of coordinating mechanism to include representatives of vulnerable groups
2. Analysis of the “equity” of access could be a target
3. Focus on rural areas for targets on access to water and sanitation (targets can also cover governance and pricing aspects of WSS)
4. Focus on vulnerable groups for targets on access to water and sanitation
5. Focus on affordability issues for the targets on performance of WSS (introduction of tariffs/non-tariffs measures)