



## Launching event: Supporting progress to achieve equitable access to water and sanitation in Bulgaria

The UNECE-WHO/Europe Protocol on Water and Health

*18-19 January 2018, Ministry of Health, Stamboliyski Av. 39, Sofia*

### Report

The workshop agenda aimed to present in depth the rationale, objectives, process and expected outcomes of the project implemented under the framework of the Protocol on Water and Health to ensure early involvement of various stakeholders in the process of self-assessment using applying the Score-card exercise, as well as to give the floor to representatives of Parties to the Protocol and other countries to share their experience on the benefits of carrying out self-assessments of equitable access to water and sanitation applying the Equitable Access Score-card, as well as of implementing the Protocol on Water and Health.

Speakers came from UNECE-WHO/Europe Joint Secretariat of the Protocol on Water and Health, Ministry of Health, Earth Forever, Ministry of Environment and Water, BlueLink, states parties to the Protocol (Serbia, Hungary). One of the speakers presented via skype. Small group work during the 1<sup>st</sup> day gave opportunity to participants to exchange freely ideas and experience, as well as introduced the score-card methodology as self-assessment.

22 participants took part, among them 14 women: 2 deputy ministers (Ministry of Healthcare and Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works), the Chief State Health Inspector of Bulgaria, a Focal Point for the Convention for the Use and Protection of Transboundary Water Courses and International Lakes; experts from the Ministry of Healthcare, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works; Food and Forests; Ministry of Environment and Water; National Institute of Statistics; State Agency for People with Disabilities; National Ombudsman; association of mayors, NGOs, etc.

### Results and expected impact

The participants acknowledged the relevance of the priority areas of the project – assessment of the equitable access to water and sanitation, especially for vulnerable and marginalized groups of the society, and confirmed their commitments to provide input for this very new exercise in Bulgaria, as such approach will offer solutions badly needed at this moment.

All participants declared interest to continue being involved and readiness to support the project team with information and expertise.



Several stakeholders expressed motivation to collaborate on urgent and/or issues with very high significance:

- Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works on improvement and development of special section to the legislation addressing affordability of water and sanitation services for the poorest section of the society – Act on Sustainable management of water and sanitation sector (their deadline is April 2018);
- State Agency for People with Disabilities on finalisation of regulation on access of people with disabilities to public sanitation;
- Ombudsman on work meeting among project key experts and Ombudsman relevant experts (planned for 3<sup>rd</sup> week of February);
- Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forestry on promotion of the Protocol as an efficient regulation basis for better water and sanitation services for rural areas.
- National Statistics Institute on considering introducing specific questions for National Census 2020 on equitable access to water and sanitation and gender-disaggregated approach.

### **Background**

The workshop was jointly organized by the Ministry of Health of Bulgaria, UNECE for the joint Secretariat of the UNECE-WHO/Europe Protocol on Water and Health and Earth Forever. Ministry of Health hosted the event. Earth Forever assisted proposing the draft list of speakers and participants, dissemination of invitations, liaison with possible stakeholders, logistics support for speakers and participants, technical support whenever needed, etc. The workshop was founded by the French Ministry of Solidarities and Healthcare.