

Water Initiative

National Policy Dialogues on Water: taking stock of 10 years of progress in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia



Ten years since the launching of the European Union Water Initiative (EUWI), some 50 representatives of the countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia, as well as European Union (EU) member States and international organizations, are gathering in Geneva to discuss progress in implementation. In those countries the Water Initiative is implemented through National Policy Dialogues supported by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

The gathering offers a good opportunity to take stock of how National Policy Dialogues support reforms in the water sector in the countries with economies in transition, promoting best practices and standards embodied in EU legislation and international legal instruments, in particular the UNECE Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes.

For example, in the Republic of Moldova the National Policy Dialogue provides a platform for intersectoral cooperation to address the issue of poor water quality and related health consequences. It facilitated an agreement on targets and target dates in accordance with the UNECE/WHO-Europe Protocol on Water and Health and is now promoting the implementation of the targets set. In Tajikistan, the National Policy Dialogue supports a reform of the water sector that seeks to bring water management in the country in line with the basin approach and other principles of integrated water resources management. In Kyrgyzstan, the National Policy Dialogue fosters the development of a river basin management plan for the Chu River. In the nine countries currently participating, the National Policy Dialogues introduce international best practice and encourage integrated and participatory approaches to water management.

In addition to addressing the progress achieved and lessons learned, the sixteenth meeting of the EUWI Working Group will discuss and approve the workplan for the next year, including the launch of a new National Policy Dialogue in Kazakhstan and an increased focus on stakeholder involvement in the dialogue activities. □

For further information please visit: www.unece.org/env/water/npd.html
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Off the Press

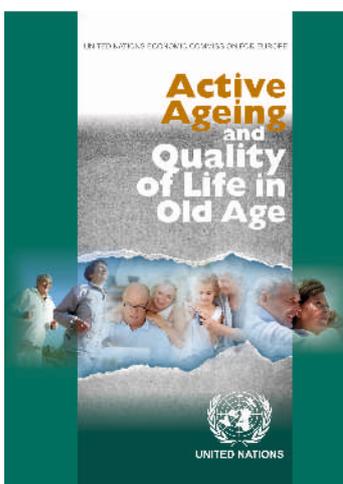
Active Ageing and Quality of Life in Old Age

Societies have a responsibility to invest in frameworks that allow individuals to live and age actively. Such investments can take place in the prevention and health care sectors, in education and labour markets. At the same time, in case of real need and frailty, citizens should be able to rely on an accessible supportive infrastructure.

By addressing these issues the publication **Active Ageing and Quality of Life in Old Age** provides a substantive contribution to expected elaborations during the UNECE Ministerial conference **Ensuring a society for all ages: promoting quality of life and active ageing** taking place in Vienna, Austria, on 19-20 September 2012. The Conference is the culminating event of the on-going 2nd review and appraisal of the implementation of the policy framework set out in the Madrid Plan of Action on Ageing and its Regional Implementation Strategy.

The publication results from an in-depth discussion based on an intervention prepared by Prof. Dr. Clemens Tesch-Römer, Head of the German Centre of Gerontology, for the 4th meeting of the UNECE Working Group on Ageing in November 2011. The publication can be accessed online at: <http://www.unece.org/population-unit/paupubwelcome/ageing.html>. □

For more information on the Ministerial Conference, please visit:
http://www.unece.org/pau/ageing/ministerial_conference_2012.html.



Public participation in environmental decision-making: focus on water and health

Ensuring effective public participation in environmental decision making, including on water and health issues, is a major challenge throughout the ECE region. To address these issues, a three-day joint event gathered more than 50 participants from across the ECE region, including government experts, international organizations, NGOs, academia and the private sector, to share experiences of public participation in decision-making in their countries under the frameworks of the UNECE Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention) and the UNECE/WHO-Europe Protocol on Water and Health.

Both the Aarhus Convention, which entered into force in 2001, and the Protocol on Water and Health, which became active in 2005, have already made a significant impact on the situation in the region, improving the rights of the public to participate in decision-making on the issues each instrument addresses. However, in this stock-taking year of Rio+20 it is clear that much more can still be done. By coming together at this joint event, Parties and stakeholders of both instruments had the opportunity to examine common issues of concern, to learn from each other's experiences and good practices, and to put these to use in the further development and better implementation of their own instrument.

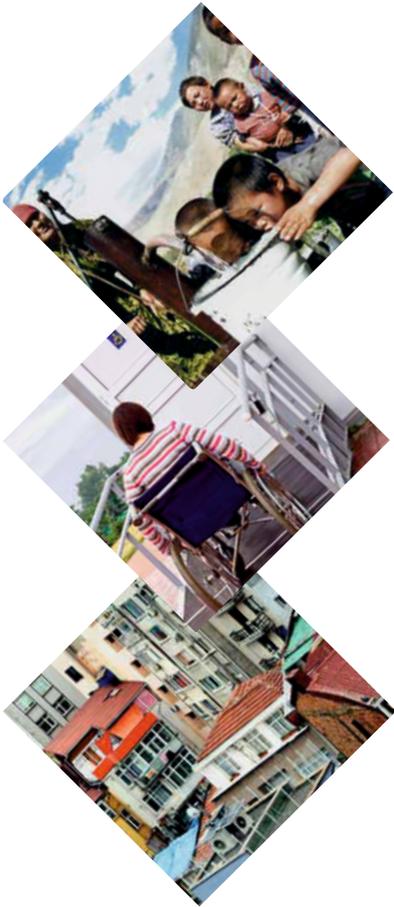
The three-day event covered a broad range of issues. Experts discussed whether the Aarhus Convention's step-by-step model for public participation could be useful for decision-making under the Protocol on Water and Health. They examined key obstacles, and possible solutions, to ensuring effective public participation at all levels of decision-making (national, provincial, local) regarding water and health issues. They also considered topical issues related to public participation under the Protocol on Water and Health, such as the setting of targets and target dates, the development of plans of measures to reach the targets, the assessment of progress and the preparation of national reports. They also explored a variety of structural and practical tools that might be used to develop the capacity of civil society/NGOs, public authorities and service providers to enhance public participation. A range of innovative methods, such as buzzing discussions and small working groups, were used throughout the event to ensure the discussions were as lively and interactive as possible.

The event played a key role in the development of two important products currently being prepared under each instrument. Participants had the opportunity to provide detailed input on the first draft of the Aarhus Convention's new recommendations on public participation regarding environmental matters. The elaboration of new guidelines on involving the public in consultations and decision-making processes under the Protocol on Water and Health was also launched.

On the final day, experts had an opportunity to discuss emerging issues in public participation in decision-making under the Aarhus Convention, including product-related decision-making, public participation in decision-making on new technologies with significant environmental effects, as well as the possible future development of the Convention's provisions on public participation. In parallel, selected experts took part in a drafting group to develop an outline for new guidelines on involving the public in decision-making under the Protocol on Water and Health.

The joint event was organized under the auspices of the Aarhus Convention's Task Force on Public Participation in Decision-making and the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on Water and Health, in cooperation with the Ministry of Environment and Forests of Romania and the NGO Women in Europe for a Common Future. The outcomes of the meeting are expected to help guide future work on public participation in decision-making under both the Aarhus Convention and the Water and Health Protocol. □

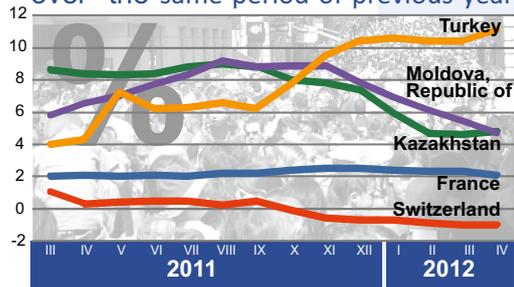
For more information on the meeting, please visit: http://www.unece.org/env/pp/meetings/tfppdm2_pwh.html or contact Fiona Marshall at: fiona_marshall@unece.org or Chantal Demilecamps at: chantal.demilecamps@unece.org.



Facts and Figures

Recent CPI data show a mixed year for UNECE member countries

Consumer price index, growth rate over the same period of previous year



Source: UNECE Statistical database www.unece.org/stats/data.

The developments in the Consumer Price Index (CPI) over the last year show large dispersions among UNECE's member countries. In the high end the 12-months percentage change of Turkey's CPI increased from 4 % to above 10 %, accompanying the relative high economic growth of the country. In the low end, since the end of 2011, Switzerland has experienced falling prices, known as deflation, linked to the continuing high value of the Swiss franc.

Throughout the same period the 12 months France's rate of change of the CPI has remained steady at 2-3 %, while Kazakhstan and the Republic of Moldova have seen a declining trend since late 2011 after reaching respectively 9 % and 9.2 % in August 2011. □