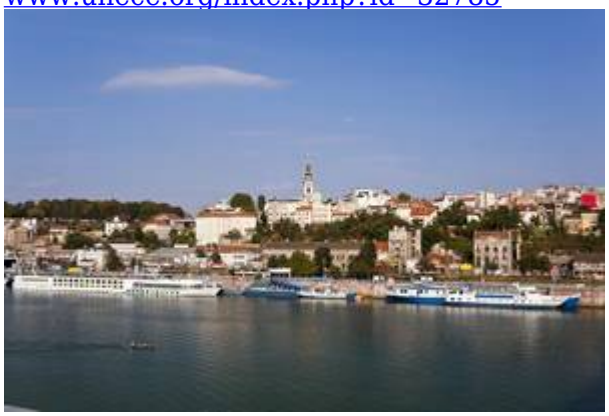
www.unece.org/index.php?id=32785



On 16 April Serbia became the twenty-sixth State to join the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)-World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe (WHO/Europe) Protocol on Water and Health to the UNECE Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes. The Protocol will enter into force for Serbia on 15 July 2013.

Along with some moderate improvements in the incidence of water-related diseases and the quality of drinking water in recent years, Serbia still faces challenges in closing the gap between access to improved water supply and sanitation for urban and rural residents. According to the most recent data, while 97. 5 per cent of the the urban population in Serbia has access to drinking water, only some 88 per cent of rural residents do. The difference is even more pronounced with regard to sanitation, with 93 per cent of city dwellers benefiting from modern sanitary facilities, as opposed to only 74 per cent of the rural population.

The national process of accession to the Protocol, which lasted two years and included broad consultations among different stakeholders, thematic workshops and awareness-raising and media campaigns, was important not only to inform the wide public about the benefits of accession, but also to motivate local communities and municipalities to participate in the future activities under the Protocol and, ultimately, to further improve access by the Serbian population to safe drinking water and sanitation.

The accession of Serbia to the Protocol is timely: at its third session (Oslo, 25-27 November 2013) the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol is expected to adopt a programme of work for the next triennium focusing on activities in areas of particular relevance to Serbia, including equitable access to water and sanitation, small-scale water supplies and sanitation and safe and efficient management of water supply and sanitation systems.

According to the provisions of the Protocol, the next step for Serbia as a Party will be to begin the process of setting water and health targets covering the entire water cycle.

For more information, please visit: http://www.unece.org/env/water.html

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Note to Editors:

The UNECE-WHO/Europe Protocol on Water and Health, which entered into force on 4 August 2005, is the first international agreement that, by linking water management and health issues, specifically ensures the adequate supply of safe drinking water and adequate sanitation. Serbia will join 25 other Parties to the Protocol, which include Albania, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, the Russian Federation, Slovakia, Spain, Switzerland and Ukraine.