Introducing the UNECE – WHO Regional Office for Europe Protocol on Water and Health

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Virtual Workshop on designing legal frameworks for transboundary water cooperation

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About the Protocol

Legally-binding agreement aimed at protecting human health and well-being through sustainable water management and by reducing water-related diseases

Obligation to set targets to ensure access to drinking water and sanitation for everyone (special focus on equitable access)

27 countries are Parties to the Protocol

UNECE and WHO/Europe provide joint secretariat services
Parties and States working within the Protocol framework
WASH and COVID-19

• Safe and sufficient water is key to protecting human health during infectious disease outbreaks

• Frequent and correct hand hygiene prevents COVID-19 infection

• Need for a continuous supply of safe water and sanitation systems that are operational, in all settings and under challenging conditions

• Need to reach the most vulnerable and marginalized

• Environmental surveillance in wastewater: early warning, and detection
What does the Protocol offer?

**Target setting and reporting mechanism** – brings together environment and health sectors to set specific objectives through an **accountable** and **participatory** process.

Concrete targets for **COVID-19 prevention, recovery and future preparedness** can be set on:

- Equitable access to water and sanitation
- WASH in schools and health-care facilities
- Environmental surveillance in wastewater
- Any other WASH aspect covered by Protocol target areas
International cooperation on water and health under the Protocol

- Article 11, Parties shall cooperate and assist each other:
  (a) In international actions in support of the objectives of this Protocol
  (b) On request, in implementing national and local plans in pursuance of this Protocol

- Article 12, Joint and coordinated action in relation to:
  (a) Commonly agreed targets, including on disease prevention
  (b) Indicators to monitor the prevention, control and reduction of water-related diseases
  (c) Establishment of joint or coordinated systems for surveillance and response to water-related diseases
  (d) Mutual assistance in responding to water-related diseases
  (e) The development of integrated information systems and databases
  (f) Notification in cases of outbreaks and incidents, or significant threats of water-related diseases
  (g) Exchange of information on effective means of disseminating to the public information about water-related disease.
Cooperation in transboundary waters

- Article 13, Parties to cooperate and assist each other to **prevent, control and reduce transboundary effects of water-related disease**.

- Parties to:
  
  (a) **Exchange information and share knowledge** about the transboundary waters and the problems and risks which they present with the other Parties bordering the same waters;

  (b) Endeavour to establish with Parties bordering the same waters **joint or coordinated surveillance and early-warning systems and contingency plans** for responding to outbreaks, incidents and significant threats of water-related disease

  (..)

  (d) **Consult** each other, at the request of any one of them, on the significance of any adverse effect on human health which may constitute a water-related disease.
International support for national action

- Parties shall consider how they can best help to promote:

  (a) Preparation of water-management plans in transboundary, national and/or local contexts and of schemes for improving water supply and sanitation;

  (b-c) Improved formulation of projects, especially infrastructure projects, and effective execution;

  (d) Establishment of systems for surveillance and early-warning, contingency plans and response capacities in relation to water-related disease;

  (e) Preparation of legislation needed to support the implementation of the Protocol;

  (f) Education and training of professional and technical staff;

  (g) Research into, and development of, cost-effective means and techniques for preventing, controlling and reducing water-related disease;

  (h) Operation of effective networks to monitor and assess the provision and quality of water-related services;

  (i) Achievement of quality assurance for monitoring activities, including inter-laboratory comparability
Thank you for your attention!

More information on the Protocol is available [here](mailto:protocol.water_health@un.org; euwatsan@who.int)