

in compliance with the Protocol on Water and Health by failing to effectively transpose, implement or enforce its obligations under the Protocol.

A “member of the public” means any natural or legal person, or group of people. A communication may also be filed by a non-governmental organization — including an environmental organization or a human rights organization. The person filing the communication is not required to be a citizen of the State Party concerned, or, in the case of an organization, to be based in the State Party concerned.

It is not necessary for the communicant to be represented by a lawyer or to have the communication prepared with legal assistance. However, a legally accurate communication might enhance the effectiveness of the subsequent proceedings.

A communication may address any combination of the following situations:

- General failure by a Party to take the necessary legislative, regulatory, institutional, administrative, operational, budgetary/financial, technical, infrastructural, management, enforcement or other measures necessary to implement the Protocol;
- Failure of such measures adopted to meet the requirements of the Protocol's provisions;
- Specific events, acts, omissions or situations which demonstrate a Party's failure to fulfil its obligations under the Protocol resulting in non-compliance;
- Specific instances of violation of rights of individuals under the Protocol.

## Guidelines on Communications from the public

To help general understanding of the compliance mechanism, the Compliance Committee has elaborated **Guidelines on Communications from the Public**.

## Compliance review

The compliance review mechanism, developed under the Protocol, is expected to provide an important stimulus for Parties to comply with their obligations.

The ultimate goal is to facilitate and assist Parties in resolving problems. The compliance mechanism itself and any measures undertaken in the course of or as a result of the compliance review procedure are meant to be non-adversarial, non-confrontational, non-judicial and consultative.

## Communications should be addressed to the Committee through the joint secretariat at the following address:

Co-Secretary of the Protocol on Water and Health  
United Nations Economic Commission for Europe  
Environment, Housing and Land Management Division  
Palais des Nations  
CH-1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland  
Tel.: +41 22 917 24 63  
Fax: +41 22 917 01 07

e-mail: [protocol.water\\_health@unece.org](mailto:protocol.water_health@unece.org)  
Clearly indicate:

“Communication to the Compliance Committee on the Protocol on Water and Health”

More information concerning the Compliance Committee and all relevant documentation is available at:  
[http://www.unece.org/env/water/meetings/documents\\_CC.htm](http://www.unece.org/env/water/meetings/documents_CC.htm).

United Nations Economic Commission for Europe  
World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe

# Protocol on Water and Health

## Improving compliance with the Protocol on Water and Health

At present, nearly 140 million people — 16 per cent of the population of the pan-European region — still live in homes that do not have a safe drinking water supply, and about 85 million people do not have access to adequate sanitation. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), more than 13,000 children in the region under the age of 14 die every day from water related diarrhoea, mostly in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. In recent years, more than 170,000 cases of water related disease have been reported annually.



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In 1999, the third Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health in London adopted the Protocol on Water and Health. The Protocol is the first international agreement adopted specifically to ensure an adequate supply of safe drinking water and adequate sanitation for everyone.

The Protocol was designed to complement the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes, signed in Helsinki in 1992.

The Protocol was adopted to effectively protect human health through the control and reduction of water-related disease, the improvement of water management and the protection of ecosystems.

The Protocol entered into force on 4 August 2005. From that date its provisions are legally binding on its Parties.

As of August 2010, there are 24 Parties to the Protocol: Albania, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Slovakia, Spain, Switzerland, and Ukraine. In addition, the following States have signed the Protocol: Armenia, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Denmark, Georgia, Greece, Iceland, Italy, Malta, Monaco, Poland, Slovenia, Sweden and United Kingdom.

## Aims

According to its Article 1, the objective of the Protocol is:

“To promote at all appropriate levels, nationally as well as in transboundary and international contexts, the protection of human health and well-being, both individual and collective, within a framework of sustainable development, through improving water management, including the protection of water ecosystems, and through preventing, controlling and reducing water-related disease”

The Protocol is remarkable among multilateral environmental agreements in many ways:

- It is the first legally binding agreement linking sustainable water management and reduction of water-related disease;
- It offers a holistic framework for addressing the whole chain of cause and effect, from environmental degradation to water-related health effects;
- It combines environmental protection with the promotion of human health and well-being, thereby uniting ecologists, conservationists and ecosystem managers with water, sanitation and health professionals;
- It brings a largely hidden problem to the forefront of public awareness and Government decision-making;
- It offers a framework for public participation and involvement in the pursuit of the basic human right to water and sanitation.

The Protocol recognizes that water has social, economic and environmental values, and should therefore be managed so as to realize the most acceptable and sustainable combination of these values.

## Approach and methods

The Protocol operates through two core provisions:

**Setting targets.** To accomplish its objectives, the Protocol requires Parties to set firm targets in areas covering the entire water cycle, as well as dates by which they will achieve such targets.

Targets should address issues related to the quality of drinking and bathing water; problems related to water supply, sanitation and wastewater; the reduction of water-related disease; the management of water resources; the control and clean-up of pollution; and the availability of information to the public.

Parties tailor the targets according to their national/local circumstances and available resources and must regularly assess progress made towards reaching these

targets. Parties also must demonstrate if such progress has helped to prevent, control or reduce water-related disease and they have to publish the results of that assessment. Moreover, every three years Parties are required to report to the Meeting of the Parties on implementation and progress achieved. The reports do not aim to compare the situation among Parties, but to measure and show an individual advancement within a Party.

**Surveillance.** Parties shall establish and maintain comprehensive national and/or local surveillance and early warning systems to prevent and respond to water-related disease, along with contingency and outbreak response plans.

## Ensuring compliance

The Protocol on Water and Health provides for a mechanism to review and facilitate compliance: the Compliance Committee composed of nine independent members serving in their personal capacity.

The Committee may be addressed by individual Parties having problems in implementing and complying with the Protocol or by Parties concerned by the record of compliance of other Parties.

Also, members of the public can make communications to the Compliance Committee concerning problems of compliance, even if they have not been personally affected by the situation about which they are bringing a complaint.

When a case of non-compliance by a Party is proven, the Committee may decide upon a number of measures. Most importantly, it can provide advice and facilitate assistance to the Party in question; request the Party to develop an action plan to achieve compliance; or invite the Party to submit periodic progress reports on compliance efforts.

## Communications from the public

A “communication from the public” is a documented assertion by a member of the public that a Party is not