

Protocol on Water and Health – Achievements and Challenges for the Compliance in Hungary

As it was outlined in the welcome speech of Mr. Kádár, Hungary has undertaken a leading role from the very beginning during the interim phase of the international implementation. By giving two consecutive Chairmen to the WG on Water and Health, by offering venue to a number of meetings of the Signatories and of the WG on Water and Health, all aiming at promoting enough ratification and a progress of the interim implementation, and by organising several technical meetings to assist in specifying the way of progress with regard to some key issues of the Protocol's provisions, Hungary completed its undertaking. Half of these events were organised in Hungary and have been made possible by the support of the Hungarian government realising the obligation of the lead country in the context of promotion of international cooperation with an estimated direct expenditure of 53,500 USD, not to mention the human efforts and labour costs.

Beyond our international activity, the compliance with the Protocol has also been a challenge for the country on the national level. The overall social-economic development of the past one-and-half decade has put its more or less pronounced expression on the field of water management and most of the subject matters concerned by the general provisions of the Protocol.

The single most prominent case for development has been the accession of the Republic of Hungary to the European Community, as it has assumed the obligation of complying with the *Acquis Communautaire*, but also by gaining the benefit of an unprecedented amount of development support.

The detailed information on the achievements and remaining challenges with regard to the provisions of the Protocol have been submitted to the Secretariat and is available for those interested in the information document No. 3 to this meeting. Just to mention the most important issues, by the end of 2005 the coverage by public water distribution is at 96,2 percent and 81,5 percent of the population is supplied with drinking water of adequate quality, assessed along the EHIS indicators WatSan_S2 and S3. The remaining almost 20 percent is still a major challenge, meeting which is being under strict EU scrutiny.

The relevant EU Directives pave the way also for implementing the pertinent Protocol provisions in the field of sewerage and sewage treatment and on the protection and

enhancement of security of drinking water resources. By now, about 65 percent of the dwellings is connected to public sewerage systems and 66,5 percent of the total amount of the collected sewage undergoes at least biological treatment. One of the major challenges is the coverage of all settlements over 15.000 PE with sewerage and secondary sewage treatment by the year 2013, as foreseen by the relevant development programme.

Compliance with requirements regarding to bathing waters and enclosed waters used for recreation is managed successfully in close co-operation with the competent authorities and covers all critical steps from the legislation to the control over implementation to reporting.

The importance of the progress of public information has been on the rise both technically and in policy setting since the early nineties. The Environmental Health staff has acted as a main source of data and assessments for the public and is constantly working on the development and wide coverage of public interests.

The presented overview on the implementation of the Protocol on Water and Health demonstrates the initial results and reflects the need to further significant development. Despite the presently prevailing economical difficulties, the government of Hungary is devoted to the fulfilment of the requirements of the Protocol and is ready to further support the related international activities.

Finally I wish a fruitful meeting and a good progress towards the compliance with the Protocol's provisions for all of us.