

An aerial photograph of a river meandering through a lush green landscape. The river flows from the top right towards the bottom left, forming several large, sweeping loops. The surrounding land is a mix of vibrant green grass and dense, dark green forests. The sky is a pale, hazy blue, suggesting a clear day. The overall scene is peaceful and natural.

UNECE Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes

**A unique framework for improved
management of shared waters**

Twelve countries in the UNECE region can be considered water-stressed, representing a third of the region's population

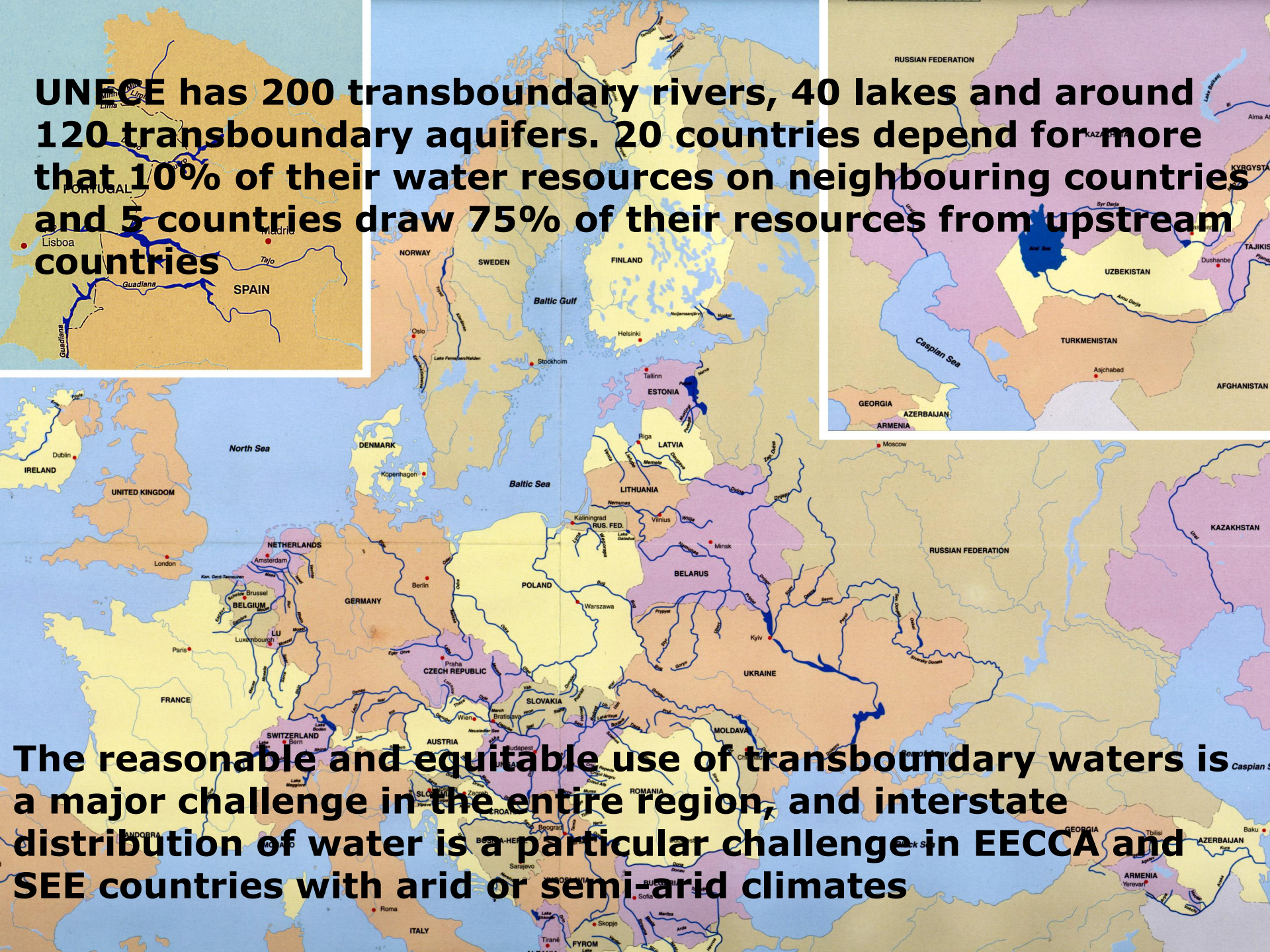


Since 2000, more than 100 major floods have caused at least 700 deaths, the displacement of about half a million people and at least EUR 25 billion in insured economic losses

An estimated 140 million people, i.e. one person in seven, do not have access to safe drinking water and adequate sanitation making them vulnerable to water-related diseases 13,500 deaths a year of children under 14 years of age in UNECE are due to poor water conditions

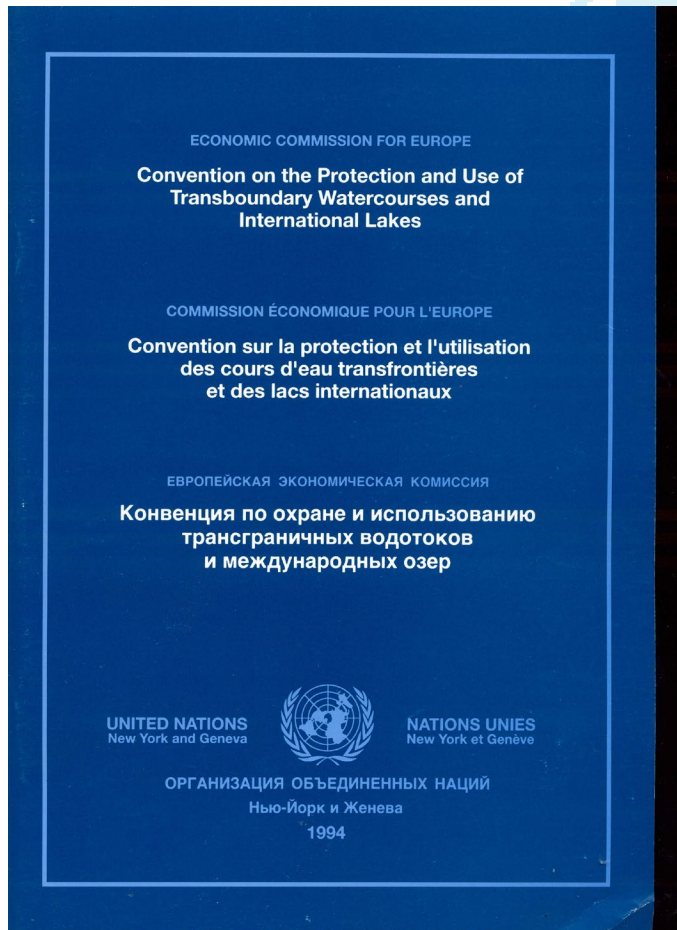


UNECE has 200 transboundary rivers, 40 lakes and around 120 transboundary aquifers. 20 countries depend for more than 10% of their water resources on neighbouring countries and 5 countries draw 75% of their resources from upstream countries



The reasonable and equitable use of transboundary waters is a major challenge in the entire region, and interstate distribution of water is a particular challenge in EECCA and SEE countries with arid or semi-arid climates

The Water Convention

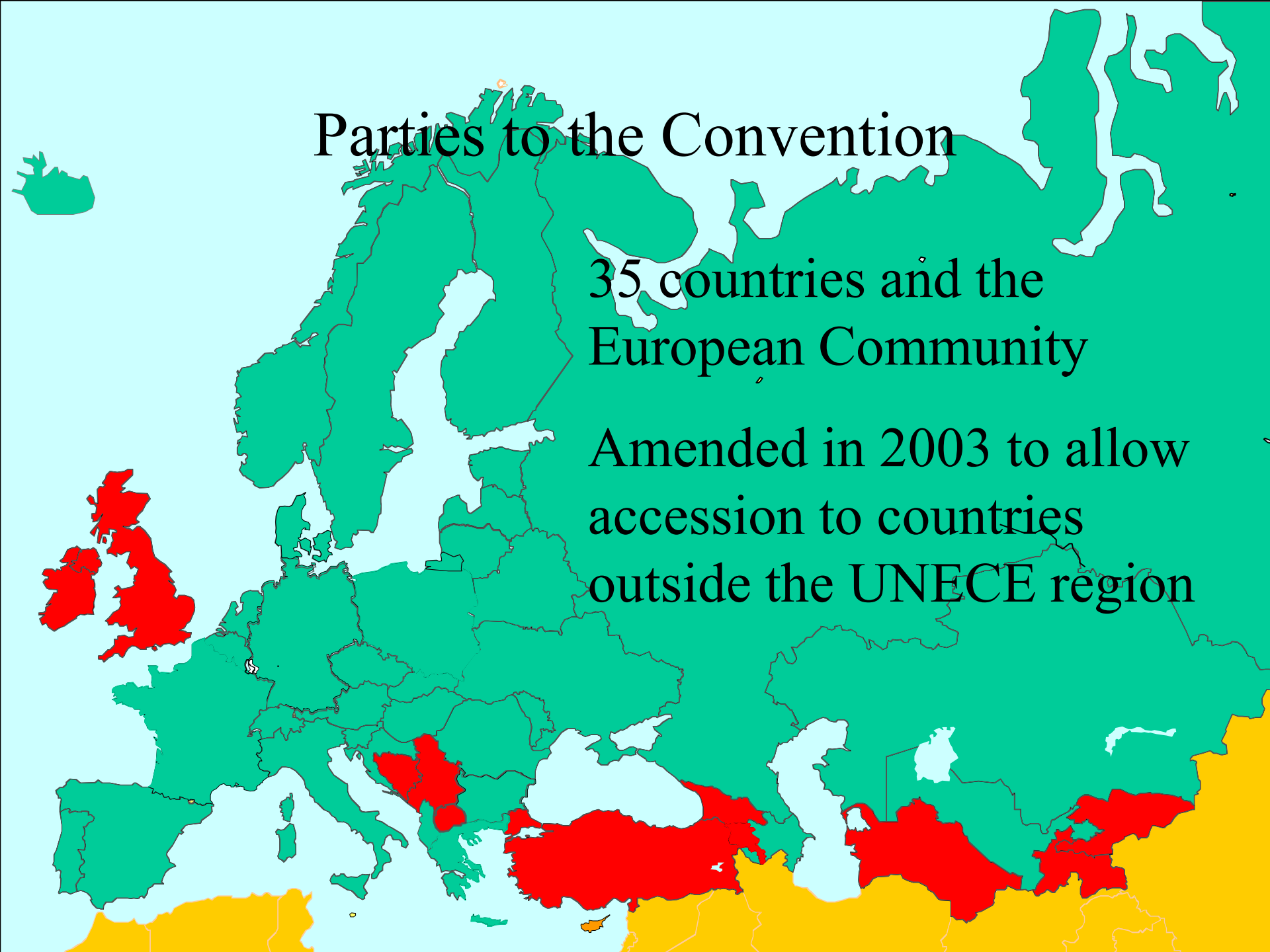


- Signed on 17 March 1992
- Entered into force on 6 October 1996

Parties to the Convention

35 countries and the
European Community

Amended in 2003 to allow
accession to countries
outside the UNECE region



Aims of the Convention



- Protection of transboundary waters by preventing, controlling and reducing transboundary impacts
- Ecologically sound and rational management of transboundary waters
- Reasonable and equitable use of transboundary waters ⇒ Conflict prevention
- Conservation and restoration of ecosystems

Main provision – Art. 2

Parties shall take all appropriate measures to **prevent, control and reduce any transboundary impact.**

Main provision – Art. 2

Transboundary impacts are adverse effects on the environment caused by a human activity, including effects on **human health and safety, flora, fauna, soil, air, water, climate, landscape and historical monuments or other physical structures** or the interaction among these factors.

Transboundary waters include **surface and groundwaters**

Provisions relating to all Parties

- Article 2: GENERAL PROVISIONS

Take all appropriate measures to prevent, control and reduce transboundary impact

Ensure conservation and, where necessary, restoration of ecosystems

Measures shall be taken, where possible, at source

Provisions relating to all Parties

- Article 2 (cont'd)

Parties shall be guided by the following principles:

- ✓ Precautionary principle
- ✓ Polluter-pays principle
- ✓ Principle of sustainable water management

Provisions relating to all Parties

- Article 2 (cont'd)

Parties shall cooperate . . . through bilateral and multilateral agreements in order to develop harmonized policies, programmes and strategies, covering the relevant catchment areas, or part(s) thereof . . .

Provisions relating to all Parties

- Article 2 (cont'd)

The application of the Convention shall not lead . . . to increased transboundary impact

The provisions of the Convention shall not affect the right of Parties . . . to adopt and implement more stringent measures. . .

Provisions relating to all Parties

- Article 3:
PREVENTION CONTROL AND
REDUCTION

Parties shall develop, adopt, implement . . . legal, administrative, economic, financial and technical measures to ensure:

Basic provisions of article 3 of the Convention

- Licensing of waste-water discharges by the competent national authorities and monitoring of authorized discharges
- Emission limits for discharges of hazardous substances based on BAT



Basic provisions of article 3 of the Convention

Impose stricter requirements – even prohibitions –
when the quality of the receiving water
or the ecosystem so requires

An aerial photograph of a large, circular wastewater treatment tank. The tank is filled with a brownish, turbid liquid. A complex metal walkway structure with railings is built across the top of the tank. In the background, there are hills and some buildings under a clear sky.

Basic provisions of article 3 of the Convention

At least biological treatment (or use of equivalent processes) for municipal waste water treatment

Basic provisions of article 3 of the Convention

Best environmental
practice for non-point
pollution sources



Basic provisions of article 3 of the Convention

Use of water-quality objectives



Basic provisions of article 3 of the Convention

- Sustainable water resources management, including the application of the ecosystem approach
- Use of environmental impact assessment



Basic provisions of article 3 of the Convention

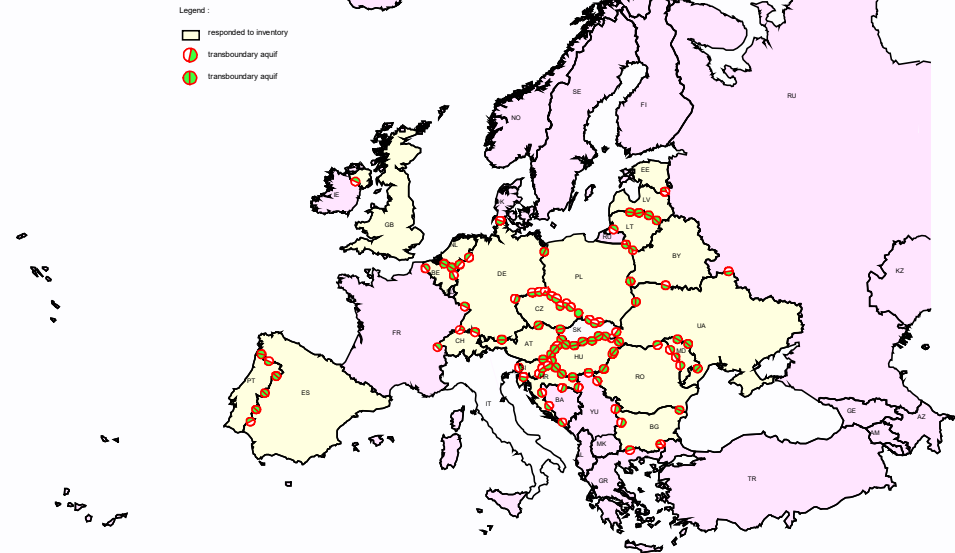
- Development of contingency planning
- Minimization of the risk of accidental water pollution



Basic provisions of article 3 of the Convention

Additional specific measures to prevent pollution of groundwaters

Inventory of Transboundary Groundwaters



Provisions relating to Riparian Parties

Parties bordering the same transboundary waters are obliged to conclude **specific bilateral or multilateral agreements** providing for the establishment of **joint bodies**

Examples: 1994 Danube River Protection Convention, the 2000 EU Water Framework Directive, Framework Agreement on the Sava River Basin.

Provisions relating to Riparian Parties

- Conclusion of bilateral and multilateral agreements
- Establishment of joint bodies
- Consultation between Riparian Parties
- Joint monitoring and assessment

Provisions relating to Riparian Parties

- Common research and development
- Exchange of information between Riparian Parties
- Warning and alarm systems (- - - > link to the Industrial Accidents Convention)
- Mutual assistance
- Public information

Institutional arrangements

Joint bodies (river commissions, . . . ,
meeting of Plenipotentiaries)

Tasks of joint bodies: identification of pollution sources,
concerted action plans, monitoring and assessment,
warning and alarm procedures, cooperation with other
joint bodies in the same basin, cooperation with coastal
States

What does the Convention do for countries?

- **Good water governance**
- **Support to Parties**
- **Implementation**

Good water governance

- Legally binding tools
- Policy guidelines (monitoring and assessment, flood management, public participation, interstate water distribution, ecosystem approach, climate change adaptation, etc.)



Support to Parties

- Workshops, seminars
- Capacity building programme



Implementation and assessment

- Pilot projects on transboundary rivers, lakes and groundwaters
- Advisory service (establishment of new agreements, of joint bodies, safety of dam in Central Asia, etc)
- Assessment of transboundary waters



More information

including guidelines, publications and information on activities under the Convention can be found at

<http://unece.org/env/water>