

EU Green Week
PARTNER EVENT

Protocol on Water and Health as a framework to increase climate resilience of water and sanitation

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#WaterWiseEU





What is the Protocol on Water and Health?

- International legally binding treaty adopted in 1999 and entered into force in 2005 – **29 Parties** as of May 2024, **2** at final stage of accession, over 40 countries in total cooperating
- **Objective:** protect human health and well-being through sustainable water management and by preventing and controlling water-related diseases
- **Unique characteristics:**
 - First and only treaty that focuses on water, sanitation, hygiene and health
 - Combines environmental protection with promotion of human health
 - Precursor and accelerator of SDG6
- **Scope:** entire water cycle – protection of water resources, drinking water supply chain from catchment to consumption, sanitation chain from collection and treatment of wastewater to discharge and reuse, water used for recreation
- **UNECE and WHO/Europe** jointly provide secretariat functions



Core provisions and obligations

Main obligations:

- Set national/local targets on water, sanitation, hygiene and health
- Every three years, submit national summary reports on progress
- Maintain and improve systems for surveillance and early warning of water-related diseases and ensure response capacity

Other provisions:

- Strengthen public awareness, education and training and ensure accessibility of public information
- Promote international cooperation – exchange and peer-to-peer support

Parties required to **take all appropriate measures to ensure:**

- Adequate supplies of safe drinking water for everyone, including water for personal hygiene
- Adequate sanitation for everyone of a standard that protects human health and the environment
- Protection of water resources used as sources of drinking water and their related ecosystems
- Sufficient safeguards for human health against water-related diseases



Work programme and strategic priorities

Improving governance for water and health	1 NO POVERTY	3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING	4 QUALITY EDUCATION	5 GENDER EQUALITY	6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION	9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE	11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES	12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION	13 CLIMATE ACTION	16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS	17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS
Prevention and reduction of water-related diseases		3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING			6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION				13 CLIMATE ACTION		
Institutional WASH		3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING	4 QUALITY EDUCATION	5 GENDER EQUALITY	6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION		11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES				
Small-scale water supply and sanitation	1 NO POVERTY	3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING			6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION				13 CLIMATE ACTION		
Safe management of water supply and sanitation systems		3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING			6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION		11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES	12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION	13 CLIMATE ACTION		
Equitable access to water and sanitation		3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING	4 QUALITY EDUCATION	5 GENDER EQUALITY	6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION		11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES				
Increasing resilience to climate change		3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING			6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION		11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES		13 CLIMATE ACTION		
Raising awareness on the Protocol and facilitating accession		3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING			6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION						17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS
Compliance procedure		3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING			6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION					16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS	



Programme area on equitable access to water and sanitation

- Countries supported in addressing equity aspects in policymaking processes
- Lead Parties and countries: France, Hungary, North Macedonia

Achievements and outputs:

- 13 countries applied Equitable Access Score-card to establish a baseline measure of the equity of access and have undertaken measures to address the situation



Current priorities and future outlook

- Revision of the Score-card to address the provision of WASH services in context of epidemics and other emergencies, **including climate**
- Supporting self-assessments and development of action plans or recommendations
- Promoting synergies between the Protocol and European Union Directives



Synergies between the Protocol and EU Directives

- The objectives of the Protocol and the EU Directives on water and sanitation are **consistent and mutually supportive**
- The Protocol **supports the implementation of the requirements of the revised Drinking Water Directive**, including in the area of access to water and risk assessment and risk management of the water supply
 - Recital 34: Member States could make use of the guidance documents developed under the remit of [the] Protocol to assess the policy background and the baseline situation on access to water and to define the actions necessary to improve equitable access for all to water intended for human consumption
 - Article 16: Access to water
- The consolidated text of the recast of the **Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive** adopted by the European Parliament in April 2024 also includes reference to the Protocol provisions (recital 39), in particular in relation to article 19 on access to sanitation.
- The Protocol strengthens **intersectoral cooperation, pools specific technical support, and promotes integrated data** collection on water, sanitation, hygiene and health, in line with global (SDGs) and EU monitoring frameworks
- The Protocol promotes **setting harmonized standards and international cooperation** between and with states that are in the process of acceding to the EU and other states that are not subject to EU law



Selected impacts of Protocol work and strategic priorities

- **Flexible tool** that can be used to address emerging threats in different socio-economic contexts
- Provides **pan-European platform** for intergovernmental and cross-sectoral exchange on water, sanitation, hygiene and health
- Triggered creation of **inter-sectoral working groups** in ~30 pan-European countries, national WASH targets set by 27 Parties and other States
- **Mandatory reporting system**: water and health data regularly collected (36 countries in 2022) & used in the monitoring of SDG 6.1 and 6.2 (JMP...), next reports due in 2025
- Fundamental in **accelerating regional implementation** of the 2030 Agenda, 2023 Budapest declaration & WHA resolutions on WASH in health-care facilities and COVID-19 response, and human rights on water & sanitation
- **Water Action Agenda** (UN 2023 Water Conference) includes a number of Protocol-related commitments

Strategic policy and technical priorities

- Aligning Protocol work with key global and regional priorities
- Increasing number of Parties in the pan-European region (and making tools available for other regions)
- Increasing climate resilience of water and sanitation sector
- Progressive realization of the human rights (access to water and sanitation and hand hygiene promotion)
- Prevention of and preparedness for epidemics of infectious diseases



Earlier work under the Protocol on climate resilience



Background Note on Increasing Resilience to Climate Change through the Protocol on Water and Health (2022)

- ✓ Guidance on how climate considerations can be streamlined within the Protocol framework
- ✓ Programme areas identified where climate change could be addressed, target setting for enhanced resilience
- ✓ Outlines the Protocol's aims to accelerate investment in enhanced resilience

→ *Describes linkages to international instruments e.g. NAPs, NDC as part of Paris Agreement (UNFCC, 2024)*

Guidance on water supply and sanitation in extreme weather events (2011)

- ✓ Provides guidance on hazards associated with climate change and extreme events
- ✓ Gives concrete recommendations to catalyze action

→ e.g. adaptation measures for droughts and floods, early warning systems, disaster response, rehabilitation



Enhancing the resilience of water and sanitation services through the Protocol



Key recent Protocol activities to support resilience include:

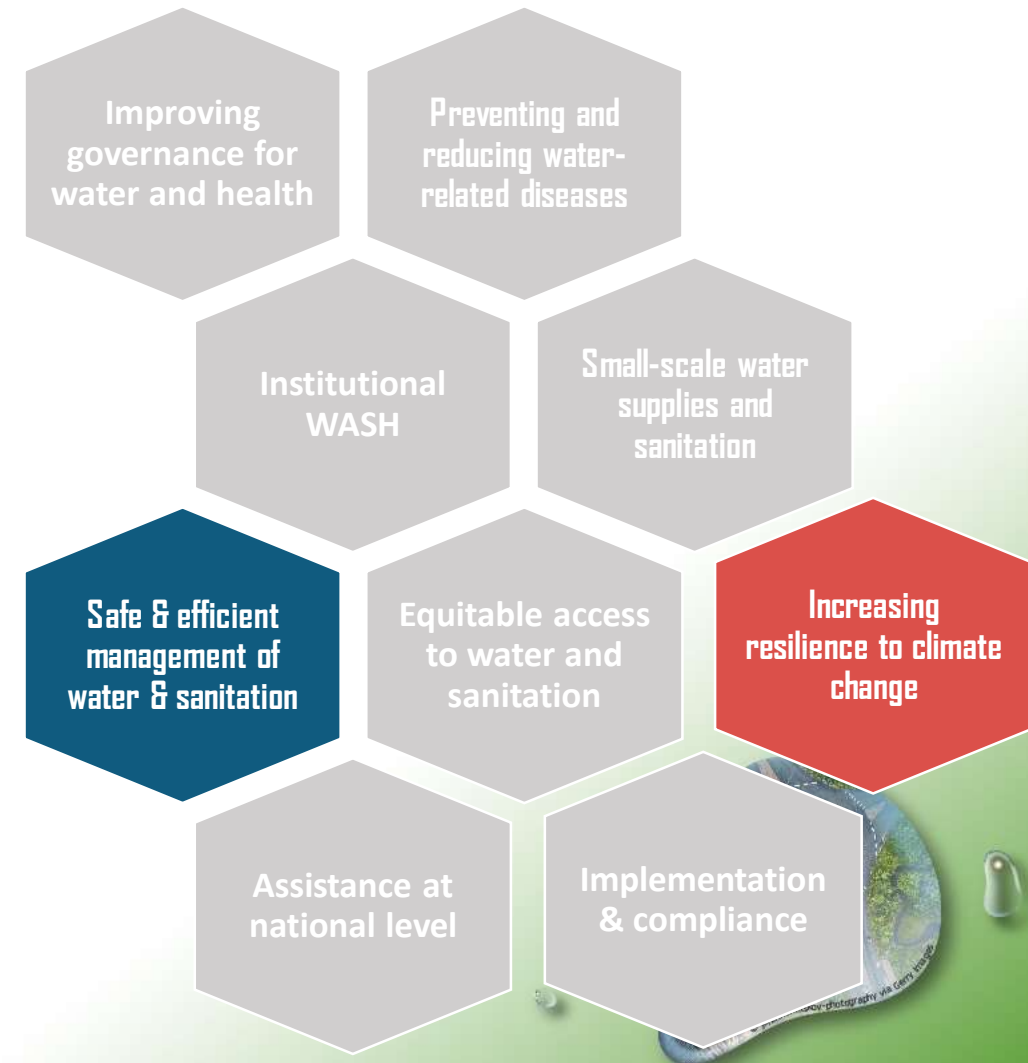
- ✓ Policy development that considers to climate action
- ✓ Increasing capacity to manage risks and respond to events
- ✓ Strengthening surveillance systems
- ✓ Supporting setting of climate sensitive targets



Focus on **safe management of water supplies and climate**



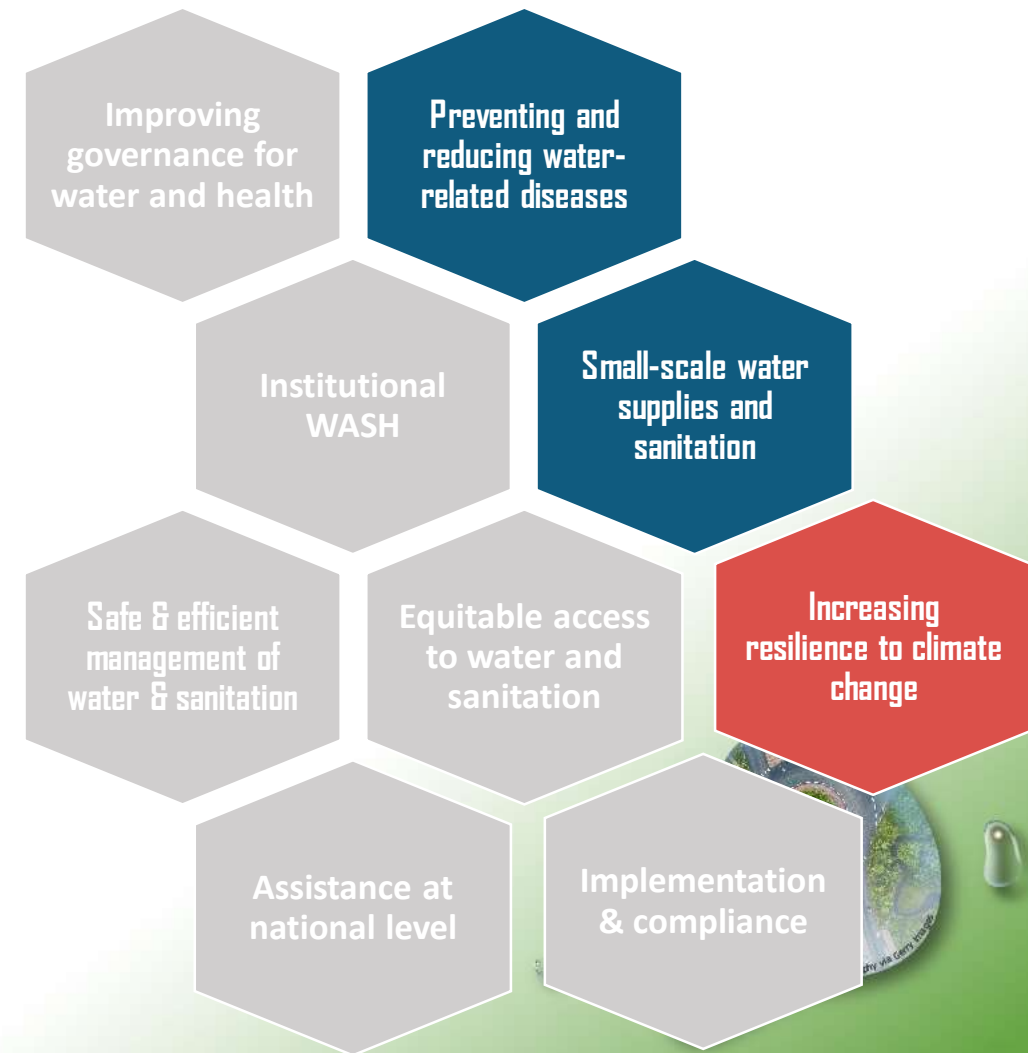
- ☑ Raising awareness of water safety plans (WSPs) as a mechanism to **manage climate risks**
- ☑ Sharing approaches to conduct robust **risk assessment and prioritization**, based on most likely climate change scenarios
- ☑ Ensuring due consideration on strengthening existing **management practices** and **no-/low-regret improvement actions**



Focus on drinking-water quality surveillance and climate



- ✓ Building the knowledge base for **risk-based surveillance** for enhanced resilience
- ✓ Raising awareness on the need for more **flexible and adaptive** regulations and monitoring
- ✓ Communicating the importance of **WSP auditing** and the **supportive role** of surveillance authorities
- ✓ Ensuring due attention to the challenges of **small water supplies** and **tailored support needs**





**Workshop on
WSP auditing
Croatia, May
2024**



**Risk-based surveillance meeting in Nordic-Baltic
countries *Estonia, April 2024***



Focus on institutional WASH and climate



EHP Partnership on Health Sector Climate Action

- ✓ Action-oriented mechanism to facilitate implementation of the commitments made in the Budapest Ministerial Declaration
- ✓ Includes a strong WASH dimension

Aims to catalyze meaningful health-sector climate action, foster research and innovation, share and promote good practices and solutions



Future directions



“updating policies to adopt a risk-based approach for the **safe and climate-resilient management** of drinking-water supply and sanitation supply chain”

“ensuring quality of care through **improved WASH in health care facilities**”

“implementing national strategies on universal **hand hygiene**...promoting effective **behaviour change**”

“establishing policies that promote **menstrual health** and access to affordable means for **menstrual hygiene**”

“to conduct periodic climate change and **health vulnerability and adaptation assessments** toward the development of a **health national adaptation plan**”

“to integrate climate data into **existing monitoring, early warning, surveillance, and data collection** systems”

“to invest in climate adaptation measures...including **early warning systems** ...and enhancing **emergency preparedness and response**”

“...development and implementation of **national action plans**...geared toward decarbonization and ensuring environmentally sustainable health systems, facilities”



Thank you for your attention!



Link to Protocol publications

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