

UNECE

Equitable Access to Water and Sanitation and affordability in the context of the Protocol on Water and Health

Workshop

Experiences in Women's Participation in Sustainable Water Management in EECCA region

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Outline

- The Protocol on Water and Health
- Equitable access to water and sanitation under the Protocol
- Affordability : what is it?
- General challenges related with affordability
- Policy options to address affordability
- Good practices to ensure affordability in the pan-European region
- How can the Protocol tools help?

The Protocol on Water and Health



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



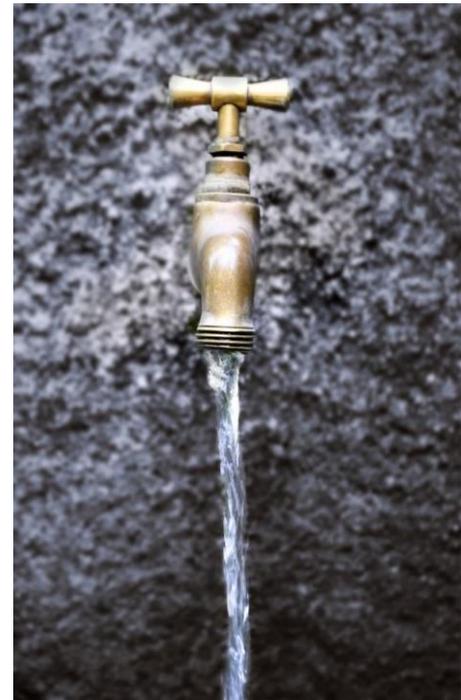
Equitable access to water and sanitation under the Protocol on Water and Health:



Equitable access is understood as an access **being similar** for all people **irrespective** of where they live, whether they belong to vulnerable or marginalized groups, and to the associated costs being **affordable** for all users.

*“Equitable access to water, adequate in terms both of quantity and of quality, **should be provided for all members of the population, especially those who suffer a disadvantage or social exclusion**” (art. 5 of the Protocol)*

To ensure equitable access to water and sanitation: not enough to ensure that the services are provided to the population and accessible to use but there is a need to ensure that **the price of those services is affordable.**



Affordability : what is it?



Affordability relates to whether a household has enough income to pay for water and sanitation services without forcing serious trade-offs in other essential goods and services .

- **Affordability** is driven by **five sets of variables**:
 - The **income level** and **income distribution** in a given country or area
 - The **costs of provision** in any given country or area
 - The **subsidy** policies
 - The **tariff** policies
 - The **individual behaviours** of users

General challenges related with affordability:

- Important to combine economic and human rights perspectives: ensure cost recovery of the services and find ways to ensure that all members of the population are able to pay for it.
- Tariffs tend to increase to ensure financial sustainability and reach water quality objectives.
- When water and sanitation prices are low, it results in a lack of access or low quality access for many countries and work against environmental objectives.
- Affordability is not just a water issue but also a social protection issue: to address it, there is a need to combine changes in tariff design with other measures which require a “social policy infrastructure”.

Policy options to ensure affordability

Tariff measures

- Progressive tariff systems (IBTs)
- Cross-subsidizing (connections/ fixed costs)
- Preferential tariffs/social tariffs (income, family size)

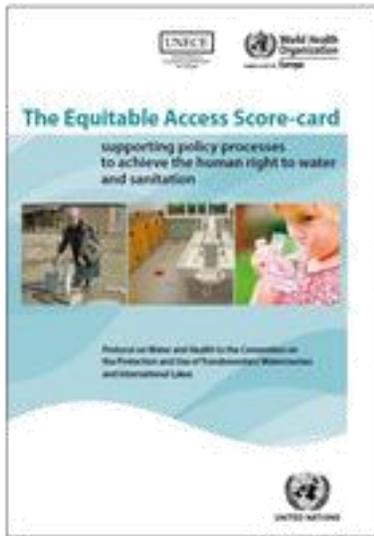
Non-tariff measures

- “Preventive” measures
- “Curative” measures
- Disconnection bans
- Broader assistance programmes

Good practices on affordability in the pan-European region

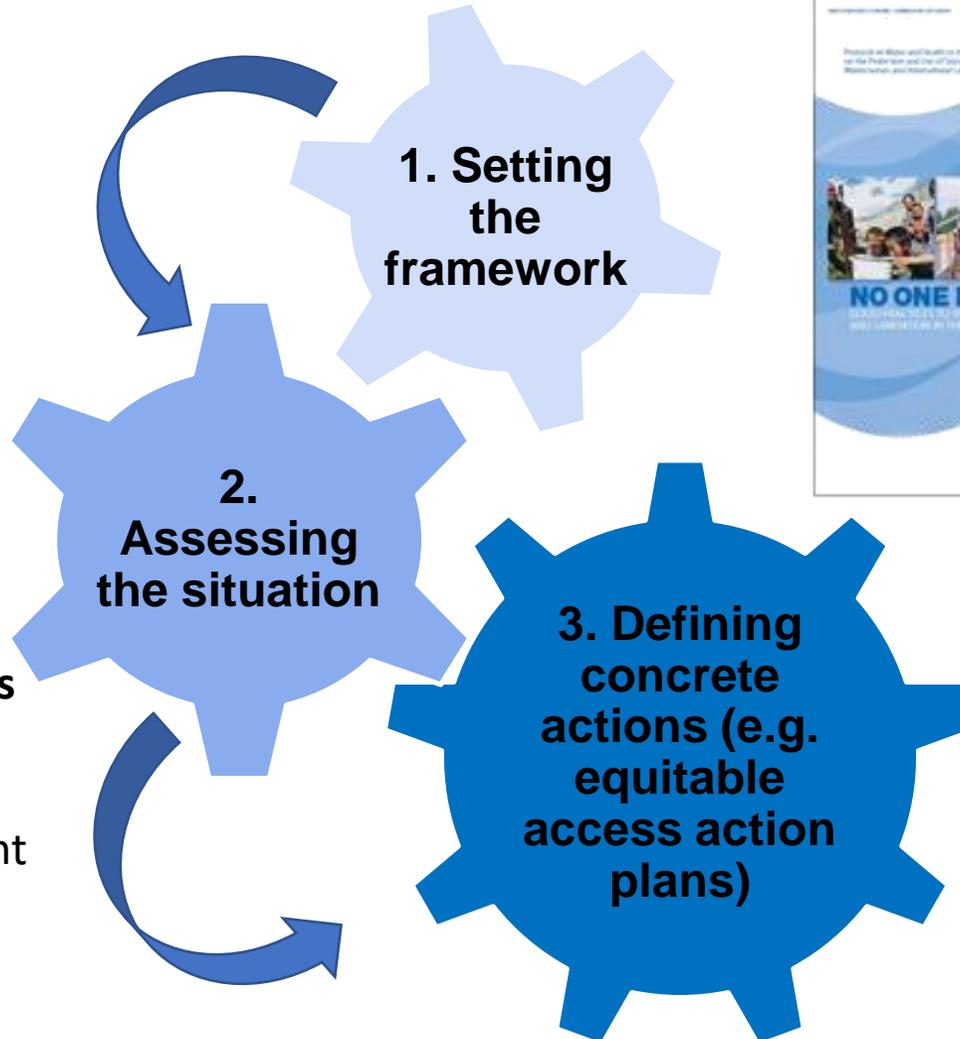
Action areas	Examples in the pan-European region
Cross-subsidies for connection	The Portuguese regulator ERSAR has recommended service providers to eliminate the connection charge for wastewater treatment and compensate it by gradually increasing the fixed part of the tariff
Social tariffs	The Polish operator AQUA SA introduced a reduced tariff for low-income households (at a cost of 1% of utility revenue) piggy-backing on the eligibility criteria used by the municipal social services
Preventive measures	The French city of Paris has set 3% of household income as affordability threshold and it allocates part of the city budget to fund water allowances that benefited 44,000 households in 2010
Curative measures	Belgium's Wallonia region has generalized by law the creation of water social funds to help households pay their water debts – 11,000 families benefit from this support
Broader support programmes	Ukraine has targeted housing subsidies to low income households – it provides support for families without “communal services debt” whose housing-related expenses exceed 15% of their income

How can the Protocol's tools can help to improve equitable access to water and sanitation, including affordability?

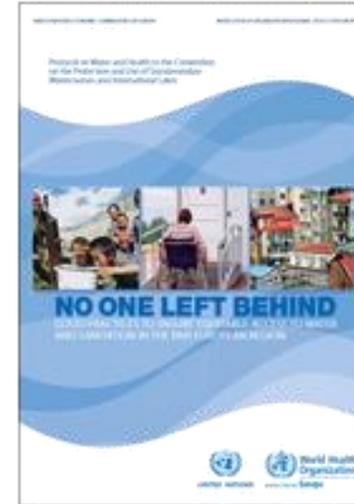


2. The Equitable Access Score-card

Identify “equity gaps” through self-assessment



1. Setting the framework

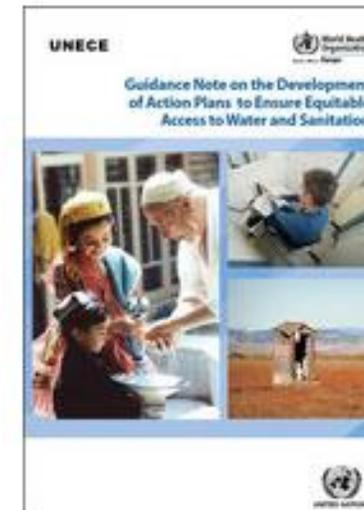


1. No-one Left behind

Understand and un-pack the concept of equity

2. Assessing the situation

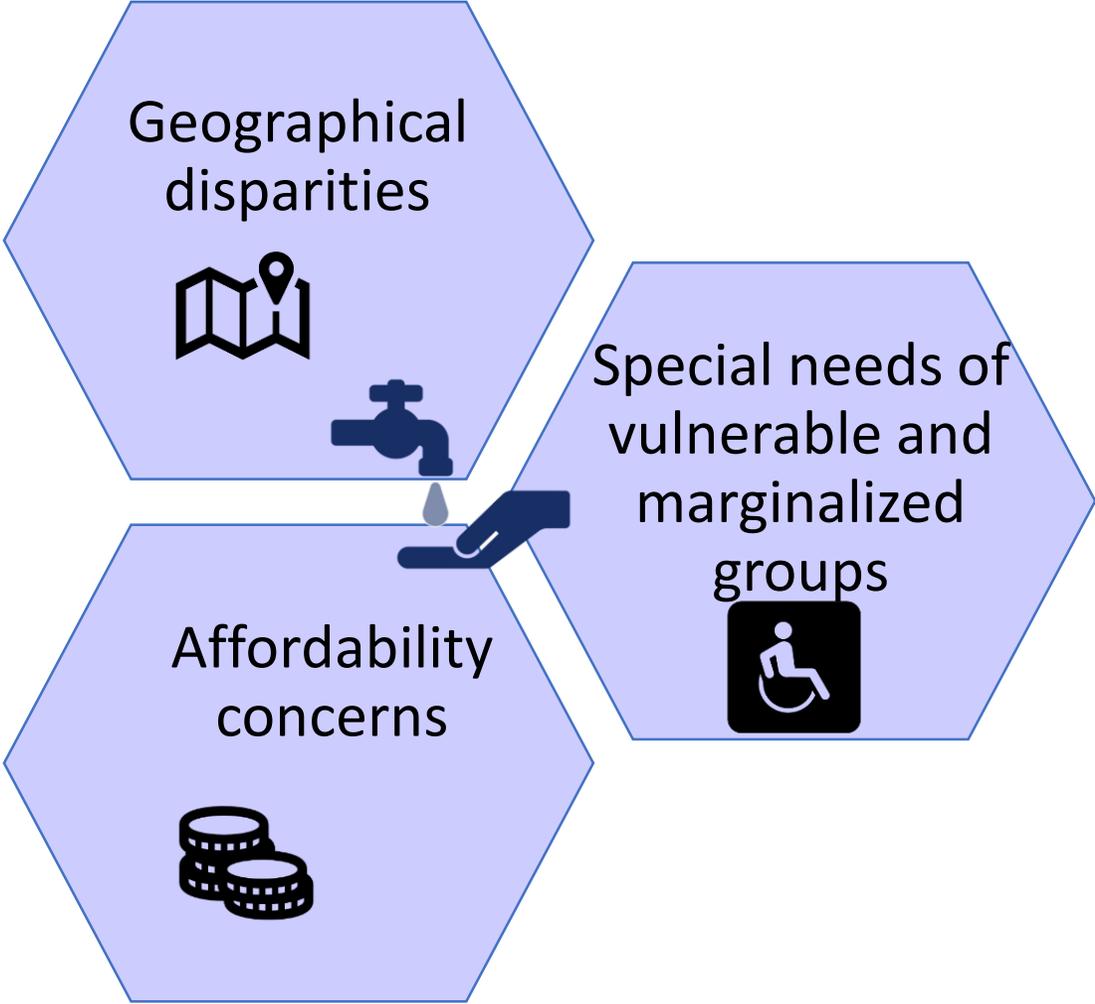
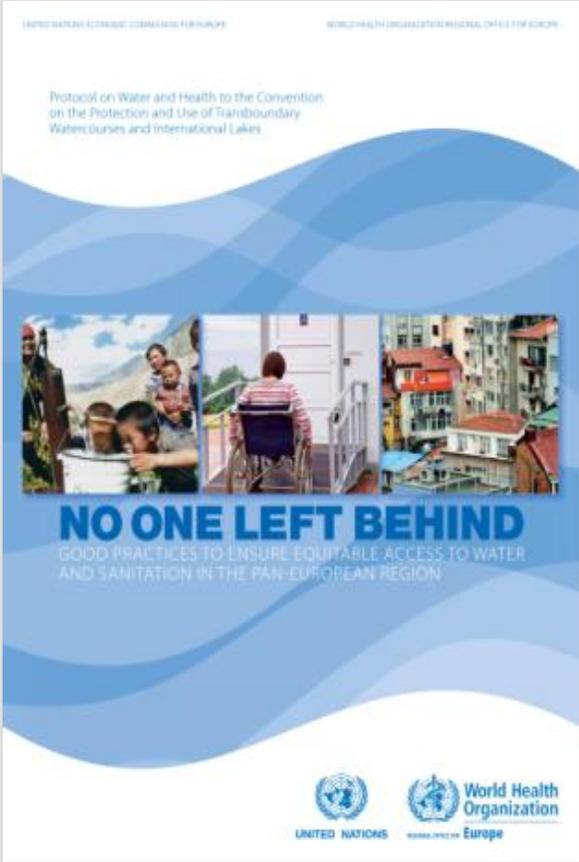
3. Defining concrete actions (e.g. equitable access action plans)



3. Guidance Note on equitable access action plans

Define action

Inequities in access to be fought on 3 fronts:



The equitable access score-card:

- **Self evaluation tool to:**
 - *Establish a baseline and collect information*
 - *Prompt discussions and engagement*
 - *Track progress*
- **Application in each country varies depending on:**
 - *The assessment scale*
 - *The stakeholders involved*
 - *The data available*



SECTION	AREA OF ACTION
Steering governance frameworks to deliver equitable access to safe drinking water and sanitation	1.1 Strategic framework for achieving equitable access
	1.2 Sector financial policies
	1.3 Rights and duties of users and right-holders
Reducing geographical disparities	2.1 Public policies to reduce access disparities between geographical areas
	2.2 Public policies to reduce price disparities between geographical areas
	2.3 Geographical allocation of external support
Keeping water and sanitation affordable for all	4.1 Public policies to ensure affordability
	4.2 Tariff measures
	4.3 Social protection measures

Summary sheet helps to identify **priority areas of action**: Where the country/region/city is lagging behind and where the information is particularly unreliable. It helps to build the case for concrete follow-up action.

How is affordability policy framework being assessed in the Score-Card?

Via both quantitative and qualitative questions analyzing:

- The public policies in place to ensure affordability;
- The existence of tariffs measures ;
- The existence of social protection measures.

AREA 4.1 PUBLIC POLICIES TO ENSURE AFFORDABILITY

Rationale. The cost of water and sanitation service provision, either by networks or by self-provision, and including wastewater treatment charges, may represent a high financial burden, particularly for the poorest households. Affordability is a common and increasing concern. However, in many cases, national local policies do not address this issue.

	YES	TO A LARGE EXTENT	TO A LIMITED EXTENT	NO
4.1.1 There is data on affordability of water and sanitation services				
<p>Score justification: (explain briefly and/or give examples that justify the answer)</p> <p>Means of verification used: (e.g. official documents, multi-stakeholder consultation, expert opinion)</p> <p>Reliability of the response: (high, medium, or low)</p>				
4.1.2 Water and sanitation policy includes affordable access as one of its objectives				
<p>Score justification: (explain briefly and/or give examples that justify the answer)</p> <p>Means of verification used: (e.g. official documents, multi-stakeholder consultation, expert opinion)</p> <p>Reliability of the response: (high, medium, or low)</p>				
4.1.3 Social policy addresses affordability of water and sanitation services				
<p>Score justification: (explain briefly and/or give examples that justify the answer)</p> <p>Means of verification used: (e.g. official documents, multi-stakeholder consultation, expert opinion)</p> <p>Reliability of the response: (high, medium, or low)</p>				

Specific actions on affordability taken by countries:

- **Awareness raising.** In Ukraine, the findings of the self-assessment for the city of Sevastopol furthered discussion among the different stakeholders on the options and costs of connecting households to the main sanitary sewer and on financing mechanisms that can ensure the affordability of water and sanitation for all users.
- **Connection fees.** In Hungary, since 2017, some administrative costs of connection to public utilities are free for individual consumers in order to ensure affordability.
- **Social pricing.** In France, since 2013, 50 municipalities or local authorities in public services for water have been experimenting with social pricing and municipal subsidies.

Other examples of measures taken by countries to address equity gaps identified through self-assessments:



FRANCE

Equitable access action included in the 2015–2019 National Plan on Health and Environment. New law adopted to improve the affordability of water and sanitation services.



SERBIA

Action plans (2019–2021) to ensure equitable access in the regions of Sumadija and Pomoravlje endorsed by the Inter-ministerial body.



HUNGARY

National Building Code amended to reflect the minimum requirements and standards for access to water and sanitation in buildings.



UKRAINE

Amendments regarding sanitation incorporated into the final version of the Drinking Water Law.



REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

Plumbing systems built to supply safe drinking water 24 hours a day to 67,000 villagers in rural areas.



AZERBAIJAN

Water supply established in 316 rural and urban secondary schools.



PORTUGAL

Affordability indicator included in the annual report of the water and sanitation regulator.



NORTH MACEDONIA

Ongoing improvement of facilities for menstrual hygiene management in cafés, bars and restaurants in Skopje in partnership with the professional union.



SPAIN

Seven public fountains installed in the city of Castelló to guarantee access to drinking water.



BULGARIA

Ongoing development of a regulatory framework for sanitation in schools by the recently established national working group under the Ministry of Health.



ARMENIA

National 2018–2020 Equitable Access Action Plan endorsed. Ongoing revision of Water Code to include the definition of vulnerable and marginalized groups.

Coming up work on equitable access to water and sanitation under the Protocol on Water and Health:

- 6th meeting of the Expert Group on equitable access to water and sanitation on 24-25 March 2021 (virtual meeting) where the new EU DWD and affordability issues will be discussed.
- Brochure on good practices to ensure affordability in access to water and sanitation to be developed in 2021-2022. Countries willing to share good practices are welcome!

Thank you for your attention!



More information on:

- The Protocol on Water and Health :

<https://unece.org/environment-policy/water/protocol-on-water-and-health/about-the-protocol/introduction>

- The equitable access to water and sanitation activities :

<https://unece.org/environment-policy/water/areas-work-protocol/equitable-access-water-and-sanitation>

- The Findings and lessons learned from the work on equitable access to water and sanitation under the Protocol on Water and Health in the pan-European region:

<https://unece.org/environment-policy/publications/human-rights-water-and-sanitation-practice-findings-and-lessons>

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