

The Human Rights to Water and Sanitation in Practice

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



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PREFACE

Since 2010, there is a growing momentum at global level towards achieving equitable access to water and sanitation. Access to safe drinking water and sanitation have been recognized as basic human rights and are therefore a legal obligation for Governments. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development makes explicit reference to human rights, equality and non-discrimination principles, and its Sustainable Development Goal (SDG 6) includes targets specifically addressing of access to equitable, safe and sustainable water and sanitation services.

In our pan-European region, Parties to the Protocol on Water and Health, serviced by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and the World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Office for Europe, committed to ensuring access to water and provision of sanitation for everyone, and specifically “for all members of the population, especially those who suffer a disadvantage or social exclusion”. For 20 years now, the Protocol on Water and Health has been supporting its Parties and other countries in securing provision of equitable access to water and sanitation services and has prompted extensive progress.

I am proud to introduce this publication, which demonstrates that realizing the human rights to water and sanitation is possible, and that the Protocol on Water and Health is a sound and efficient framework for translating them into practice. Under the Protocol, several tools and practical guidance were developed, and country-specific activities were carried out, to support Governments and other stakeholders in their efforts to improve equitable access to water and sanitation. This work has been driven by the countries’ desire for constant improvement and backed by the dedicated work of the Expert Group on Equitable Access to Water and Sanitation and continuous support from France.

This publication capitalizes on the experiences of the region, and particularly of eleven countries, including France, which have committed to improving equitable access within the framework of the Protocol. The publication maps out the lessons learnt from the Equitable Access Score-card-based assessments and analyses common trends, challenges and lessons learnt. These assessments have clearly given a boost to national and local efforts to improve equitable access to water and sanitation, sometimes by revealing access gaps which were not yet identified.

It is inspiring and thought-provoking to look at the examples of concrete technical and policy actions taken by those countries in the water, health, educational, social, construction... sectors to improve the equity of access to water and sanitation, aiming at ensuring that all groups of the population (including children in schools, homeless people, people with disabilities) have access, that services are affordable to the poorest and that people living in all areas, whether urban or rural, enjoy access.

I am confident that this publication can provide a source of inspiration and will contribute to galvanizing additional progress in the pan-European region by facilitating an understanding of the human rights to water and sanitation in practice through pragmatic examples, in achieving the commitments under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.



Agnès Buzyn,
Minister for Solidarities and Health, France

Girls Toilets



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