

Protocol on Water and Health Targets for progress

The objective of the Protocol on Water and Health is to protect human health through the improvement of water management, the protection of ecosystems and the prevention, control and reduction of water-related disease.

To accomplish this, Parties are required to set firm targets in the areas clearly defined by the Protocol's article 6. These areas cover the entire water cycle. In addition to the provision of water and sanitation, these targets should address: drinking water quality; reduction of water-related disease; performance of water supply and sanitation systems; protection of water sources for drinking, bathing, aquaculture or shellfish harvesting; management of wastewater; prevention, control and clean-up of pollution; and availability of information related to the Protocol, in particular to drinking water quality. These targets can be set at the national and/or local levels and should be based on countries' social, economic and environmental conditions, needs and priorities. Targets are to be periodically revised in the light of advances in scientific and technical knowledge. Parties are expected to make provisions for public participation when setting targets, within a transparent and fair framework, and to take account of the results of such participation.

Each Party shall establish and publish its targets and the dates for achieving them within two years of joining the agreement. Under the Protocol, Parties shall collect and evaluate data, report on steps taken to achieve the targets, and demonstrate how far that progress has contributed to preventing, controlling or reducing water-related disease. Each Party submits a report on progress achieved every three years.

The very process of setting targets brings benefits beyond their stated purpose. It creates a platform for various stakeholders and different levels of government, offers a step-by-step approach for achieving goals, and guides authorities in the allocation of resources. Through the target-setting process, the Protocol can support implementation of and compliance with international obligations. Setting targets under the Protocol can help countries comply with European Union (EU) directives, as well as facilitate progress in areas not regulated by the EU, in accordance with national priorities and resources available.



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Setting targets

The Protocol provides assistance in target-setting by offering recommendations, capacity-building and exchange of experience. At their first meeting in 2007, the Parties set up a Task Force on Indicators and Reporting for this purpose, in particular to develop guidelines on setting targets, evaluation of progress and reporting.

The guidelines recommend the following steps in target-setting under the Protocol:

- ▶ Identifying key stakeholders and setting up a coordination mechanism
- ▶ Carrying out a baseline analysis for each target
- ▶ Spotting problems and setting priorities
- ▶ Agreeing on draft targets, a programme of measures to meet them and indicators for judging progress
- ▶ Consulting broadly on the proposed targets, target dates and suggested measures
- ▶ Agreeing on final targets and communicating the results to all stakeholders, including the public and consumers
- ▶ Assessing and reporting progress, by collecting and evaluating data, revising the targets accordingly, publishing the data and completed evaluations, and submitting national summary reports to the Meeting of the Parties.

In addition to technical support, a system of assistance, including financial assistance, has been established under the Protocol (the Ad Hoc Project Facilitation Mechanism) to help Parties set and achieve their targets.



Hungary: broad cooperation

Hungary is a good example of broad, cross-sectoral cooperation for target-setting under the Protocol. In 2007, the Government established a technical committee of experts from all fields related to the Protocol – public health, environment, water management, agriculture, local government and regional development, economy and transport. It invited representatives of regions and municipalities, relevant waterworks associations, sewage works, pools and spas, the tourism industry, environmental NGOs and other interest groups to participate. The committee has a clear political mandate, operational resources and links with other governmental programmes and plans relevant to the Protocol. It is a formal body, but one flexible enough to make use of external experts and exchange information with other bodies, including scientific committees.

www.unece.org/env/water/



Czech Republic: wide variety

The targets set by the Czech Republic are among the most ambitious set so far. The target dates range from the present to 2015, and are designed to bring the country into compliance with the Protocol and various EU Directives including the Water Framework Directive. The many targets include: reducing violations of drinking water standards, publishing an updated booklet on wells, replacing lead pipes in homes; improving methodologies for assessing water-related epidemics, connecting suburban and village residents to the public water supply, completing sewerage and water treatment facilities and extending them to small settlements, eliminating or reducing hazardous substances in water, determining pollution risks for bathing areas and measures for improvement, and developing river basin management plans for eight districts.

Finland: full speed ahead

In Finland, an exceptional level of cooperation between health and environment administrations, coupled with vigorous dialogue between various authorities, has made for a fast and trouble-free process of target-setting. National targets and target dates were published in 2007, and hearings were held the same year with a wide variety of stakeholders – government, industry, agriculture and forestry, research institutes and NGOs. The targets were formally adopted in 2008 by a decision of the Minister of Health and Social Services.



www.euro.who.int/watsan/WaterProtocol/20030523_1