

## Additional Case Study // SDG 6

### Country Small-scale water supplies and sanitation under the Protocol on Water and Health Germany

#### Summary

The Protocol on Water and Health provides a platform for improvements particularly contributing to SDG 6, including through its activity area on small-scale water supplies and decentralized sanitation in the European Region. It provides tools, such as guidance on the safe management of small systems and on how to take action at the policy level, contributes to the collection of baseline data on small water supplies, and promotes the approaches and outcomes of pilot projects for data gathering and safe management of small systems. Projects and tools from this activity may inspire action taken in other countries, particularly within the European Region. Thus, the Protocol contributes to decreasing rural-urban disparities regarding access to safe services.

#### Situation

The main aim of the Protocol on Water and Health to the 1992 Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes is to protect public health from water-related diseases in the UNECE region. The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and the World Health Organization (WHO) provide the joint secretariat for the Protocol.

Parties to the Protocol are required to establish national targets to achieve or maintain a high level of protection from water-related diseases tailored to the national context, just as countries set national implementation priorities and targets to implement the Agenda 2030.

Small-scale water supplies and sanitation are one of the priority areas under the Protocol's workplans and Germany, together with Serbia, co-leads the activity on small-scale water supplies and sanitation, and background information on the situation, related challenges and possible improvements were published in the document [Small-scale Water Supplies in the pan-European Region](#).

#### Strategy

To get a better picture of the often prevailing rural-urban disparities with respect to access to safe drinking water and sanitation services, comprehensive data on small-scale water supplies in the countries of the European Region was collected and published in the document [Status of small-scale water supplies in the WHO European Region: results of a survey conducted under the Protocol on Water and Health](#).

In order to further improve the evidence base regarding drinking-water quality and prevailing risk factors, Rapid Assessments of Drinking-Water Quality (RADWQ) were conducted in [Georgia](#) and [Serbia](#).

An international group of experts developed the guidance [Taking policy action to improve small-scale water supply and sanitation systems. Tools and good practices from the pan-European Region](#) with recommendations for improving the situation of small-scale water supplies and decentralized sanitation.

Pilot projects on the application of the *Water Safety Plan-approach* (WSP) in small-scale water supplies are promoted to facilitate that these systems sustainably provide services that are safe and supported through providing [WSP field guidance for small systems](#). A [workshop on WSP in the EECCA region](#) and a [meeting of the International Small Community Water Supply Network](#) took place in 2014.

These activities support the SDGs idea of providing equitable access to these services – leaving nobody behind, including those living in rural areas, and contribute particularly to Targets 6.1 and 6.2 (safe and sustainable drinking water and sanitation), as well as to SDG 10 of reducing inequalities.

### Results and impact

The survey on small-scale water supplies in the region provides valuable baseline data at the outset of the 2030 Agenda, and showed that 23% of the population of the region are estimated to receive their drinking-water from small supplies. Compliance with microbiological parameters in sub-categories of small-scale water supplies ranged from 40-100%, showing possible areas for improvement to increase compliance rates.

The RADWQ conducted in small-scale water supplies in pilot districts in Georgia revealed amongst others that microbial contamination was a bigger issue than chemical contamination, and that disinfection was not or inadequately in place. The outcomes represent an evidence base and starting point for further development of the regulatory framework with respect to small-scale water supplies, including uptake of the WSP approach. The RADWQ conducted in small-scale water supplies in Serbia showed that compliance rates in small systems were generally lower than in urban systems, and identified priorities for improvement interventions and induced policy actions.

Countries across the region have taken a number of actions in order to improve the situation of small-scale water supplies, and the Protocol on Water and Health provides a good platform to collect data and share experiences on these systems. Documented policy tools address the areas of baseline analysis and target-setting, legislation, technical standards, surveillance, financing, education and qualification, awareness-raising, and cooperative arrangements, as well as good practices, including 42 case studies showing how these have already been successfully applied in countries from the region.

Countries' experiences with WSPs, success factors for their application in small systems as well as building blocks for successful implementation and scale-up are documented and shared in the outcomes' report of the [workshop on WSP in the EECCA region](#). The approach is applicable to all sizes of systems, and contributes to improving the safety of drinking-water supplies, including small ones.

### Challenges and lessons learned

A number of factors make the collection of data on small-scale water supply and sanitation systems challenging, including the remoteness, geographical spread and number of these systems.

At least at the national level sufficient data are not typically available in order to facilitate easy comparison of parameters analyzed and compliance levels throughout the region as indicators for the systems' safety. However, tools exist for gathering such data, for example through RADWQs or through taking risk-based approaches to surveillance. Especially in small systems, benefits can be gained from applying the WSP approach for their safe management and by supporting their operation through taking measures at the policy level to create an enabling environment. Implementation of the Protocol at national level, especially through its targets setting mechanism helps countries to prioritize SDG 6 in their national agendas and to achieve improvements towards aspirations of SDG 6, for example through improving the situation of small-scale water supplies and sanitation.

### Potential for replication

The collection of tools and good practices shows that many approaches to improve the situation of small-scale water supplies and decentralized sanitation have already proven in practice in the countries all across the region, which can inspire future action in other countries. A number of workshops was conducted under the Protocol e.g. in Albania, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan, Serbia and Uzbekistan in order to facilitate adoption of activities at the national levels to improve small

systems. Although the information presented is from the pan-European Region, similar approaches may also be applied outside this region.

The WSP approach is applicable to all kinds of water supplies, also in other countries, and may be implemented using the [WSP field guidance for small systems](#) developed within the Protocol context.

The approach taken for the RADWQs in Georgia and Serbia, as well as the outcomes are documented and can be used as a basis to implement similar surveys in other countries.

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