Key messages on hygiene and access to water and sanitation in the pan-European region (gaps and progress)

Márta Vargha
Hungary, National Public Health Centre
Water, sanitation and hygiene in the COVID-19 pandemic

• **Access to safe water** in sufficient quantity and **adequate sanitation** are the first line of defense against the new coronavirus.

• Good **hand hygiene** is considered the primary tool in infection prevention and control.

• Many global and regional commitments and instruments incorporate the goal of assuring **universal and equitable access** to water, sanitation and hygiene for all (e.g. HRWSD, SDG 6, Protocol on Water and Health, Ostrava/Parma declaration, EU DW).

  These initiatives receive an extra momentum from the COVID pandemic.

  • For efficient prevention, safe WASH should be accessible in **homes, schools, healthcare facilities, workplaces and public places**.

  • Increasing evidence shows that the pandemic hits the most vulnerable more severely – highlighting the importance of ensuring **equity**.

  • The **Protocol on Water and Health** aims to ensure safe WASH for everyone. It is a strong instrument for providing policy and technical support to countries in the pan-European region to take action on improving equitable access to WASH in homes and institutions.
Water, sanitation and hygiene in the pan-European region

- Though figures on access to basic water and sanitation services are high...
- We don’t know how many people have at least basic hand hygiene facilities at home
- No baseline data is available on WASH in HCF in the Region
- Almost 1 in 10 schools have no handwashing facility on premises
- Limited information on the inequities behind the regional/national averages: existing data shows large disparities
- Essential data are missing due to the lack of harmonised monitoring
- Need for intensified national action to address inequities in access to safe WASH
Progress under the Protocol in ensuring equitable access to water and sanitation

• In the pan-European region, **12 countries** have undertaken a self-assessment to take stock of the situation and identify equity gaps in access to water and sanitation - looking at the following aspects:

  - **Existing governance framework** in place to address equity
  - **Geographical disparities** in WASH access
  - **Barriers** faced by vulnerable and marginalized groups in WASH access
  - **Affordability** concerns in accessing WASH

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.

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

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

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

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**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.

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

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

• Pre-COVID situation: 9 out of 10 schools report handwashing facilities with water and soap within 5 m of the toilets

• COVID calls for additional measures (e.g. hand washing or disinfection station at the entrance)

• Tools developed under the Protocol assist awareness raising, situation analysis and improvement
Hygiene in healthcare facilities

• Hand hygiene is a primary tool for prevention of healthcare associated infection
• Basic service: handwashing with soap and water or handrub within 5 m of the toilets and at every point of care
• Baseline estimates for the European region are lacking, globally also limited
• Good hygiene practices are indispensable in HCF: “Five moments of hand hygiene”

• Countries where basic services are already achieved, should define national advanced indicators and targets
• Integrate hygiene indicators into national monitoring frameworks
Key messages: Country actions

| Challenges related to WASH in homes and institution prevail across the region, though they differ in nature – might hinder COVID defence |
| Address the specific needs of different vulnerable and marginalised groups in improving access to WASH services, especially under the current pandemic situation |
| Hand hygiene (HH) is critical: promote universal HH, provide public HH stations and make their use obligatory at the entrance of public or private commercial buildings and public transport facility. |
| HCFs are at the heart of outbreak prevention: All measures should be taken to improve access to hand hygiene facilities and practices in health care facilities. |
| Countries can make use of the existing tools and guidance developed UNECE and WHO – among others, in the framework of the Protocol on Water and Health |
Thank you for your attention