

Second Assessment of Transboundary Waters under the UNECE Water Convention: preliminary findings

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International River Basins of

EUROPE



Second Assessment of transboundary waters under the UNECE Water Convention

- Requested by the 6th Ministerial Conference “Environment for Europe”
- Covers more than 50 countries (European and Asian parts of the UNECE region)
- Assessed: more than 150 basins, 40 lakes and >200 aquifers /groundwater bodies, 30 Ramsar sites
- Aims to provide an up-to-date **overview of pressures, status & trends** in managing transboundary waters of the region, highlighting joint priorities → strengthened knowledge base for further action
- National experts play a key role in the provision of official information

Pressures & challenges: South-Eastern Europe

- Agriculture
- Impacts of economic development (hydropower and tourism)
- Mining: risk of potential accidents,
- Still areas/cities with very low wastewater treatment and collection
- Climate change impacts: one of the most affected region with growing scarcity

Pressures & challenges: Caucasus

- Past unsolved conflicts, low level of cooperation, exchange & harmonization
- Low monitoring & assessment capacity, little information exchange, no comparability of data at transboundary level, low IWRM application
- Need for reform of water sector & permit systems
- Mining pollution poses still risks
- Agriculture: increase agriculture production and irrigation after the post- Soviet Union drop
- Low treatment of wastewater
- Hydropower development plans

Pressures & challenges: Eastern Europe

- Different systems for water management across EU-Non/EU border(groundwaters!)
- Many transboundary basins not covered by an agreement
- Limited mandate, scope & enforcement capacity of institutions for transboundary cooperation
- Low application of IWRM and intersectoral cooperation
- Low wastewater treatment
- Agriculture pressure widespread, eutrophication (consequences for the Baltic Sea and Black Sea)
- Flood problems (aggravated by land management)
- Hydromorphological pressures (low awareness)

Pressures & challenges: Central Asia

- Gaps and challenges in cooperation in the Aral Sea Basin
- Security issues; Afghanistan
- Politization of transboundary cooperation
- Hydropower development
- Low water-efficiency in agriculture
- Ecosystem degradation, salinization
- Flooding risks (reservoir management)
- Climate change (increase in aridity & scarcity, melting glaciers)
- Hydrometeorologic data quality and reliability declined, gaps in monitoring

Pressures & challenges: Western & Central Europe

- comparability and inter-calibration provide challenges for transboundary monitoring
- water scarcity occurs widely in the southern parts
- Intensification of agriculture (diffuse pollution, fertilizers, heavy abstraction of groundwater)
- Urban & industrial pollution
- Varied impact from climate change predicted
- ageing infrastructure requires additional investment

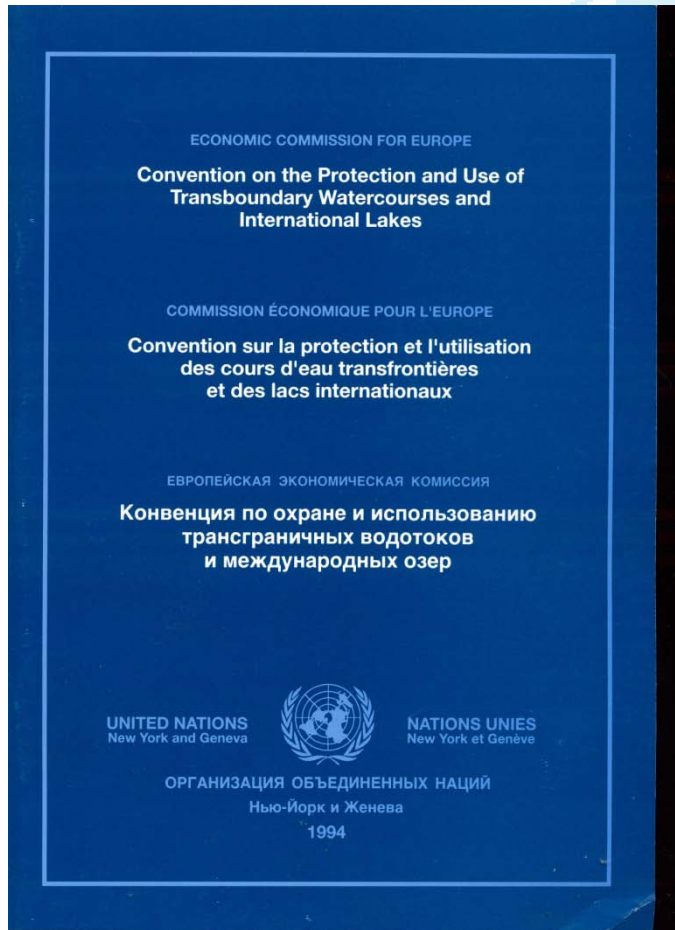
Solutions and approaches available?

- Transboundary water cooperation needs to be strengthened and not only rely on external assistance + strengthen frameworks for cooperation/joint bodies + improve exchange of information and joint monitoring and assessment
- Strengthen intersectoral cooperation and RBM plans
- Carry out joint environmental impact assessments, ensure “environment friendliness” of investments
- Where scarcity experienced: improve water use efficiency

Solutions and approaches available?

- Strengthen political will for cooperation, learn from positive experience, build on joint interests
- Strengthen and rationalize water management capacity and approach
- More long term support to transboundary cooperation
- Strict application of measures (good practices) to control and reduce pollution loads from intensifying agriculture
- Coordination and synergies in donor-supported activities; response to priority needs of the countries

The Water Convention

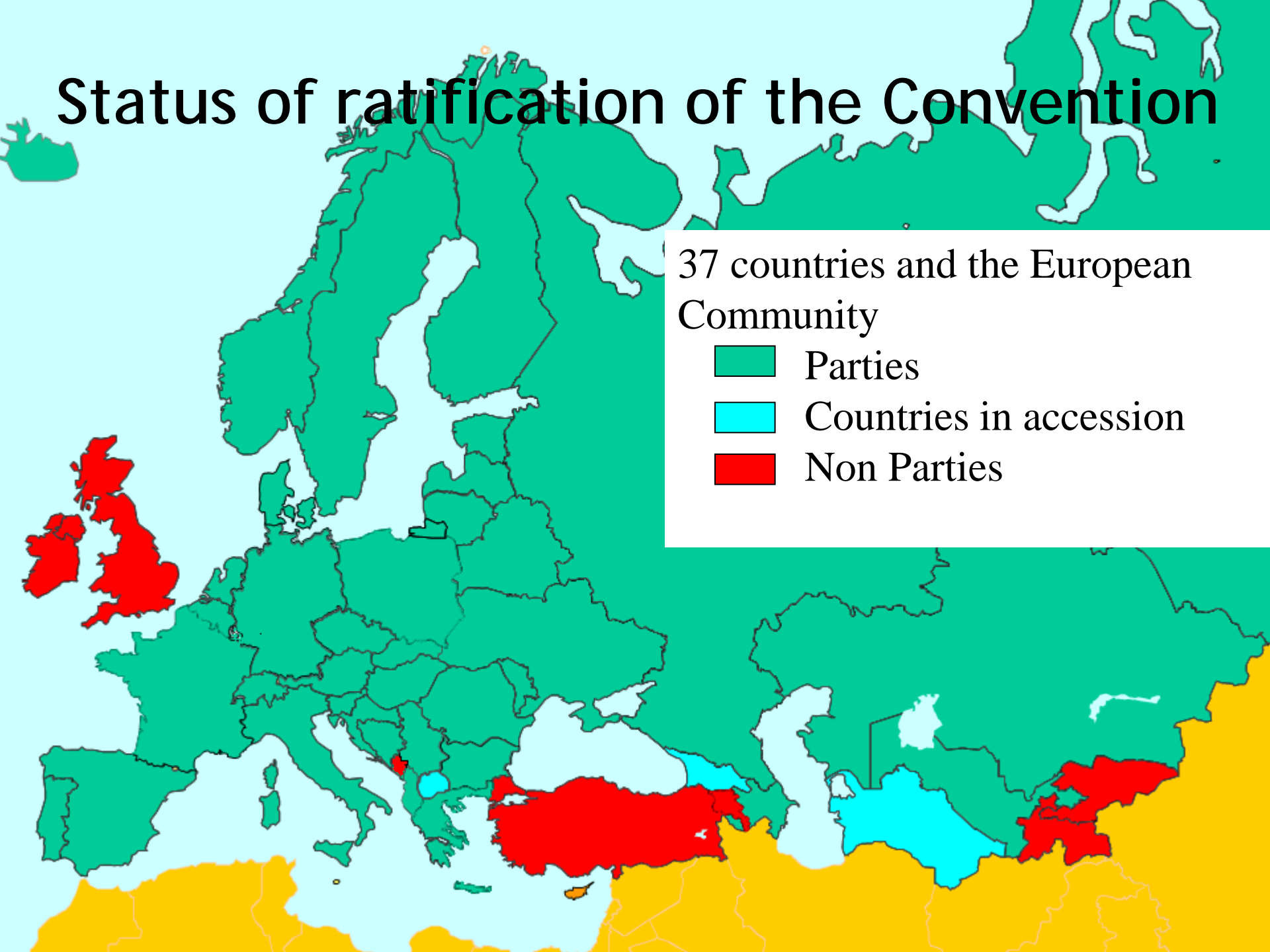


- Signed on 17 March 1992
- Entered into force on 6 October 1996
- Protocol on Water and Health adopted in 1999, entered into force in 2005
- Protocol on Civil Liability adopted in 2003

Status of ratification of the Convention

37 countries and the European Community

- Parties
- Countries in accession
- Non Parties



Main obligations under the Convention



- Protection of transboundary waters by preventing, controlling and reducing transboundary impacts
 - Reasonable and equitable use of transboundary waters
 - Obligation to cooperate through agreements and joint institutions
- => **Overall objective of sustainability**



Thank you!

More information

including guidelines, publications and information on activities under the Convention can be found on

<http://unece.org/env/water>
water.convention@unece.org