

Freshwater

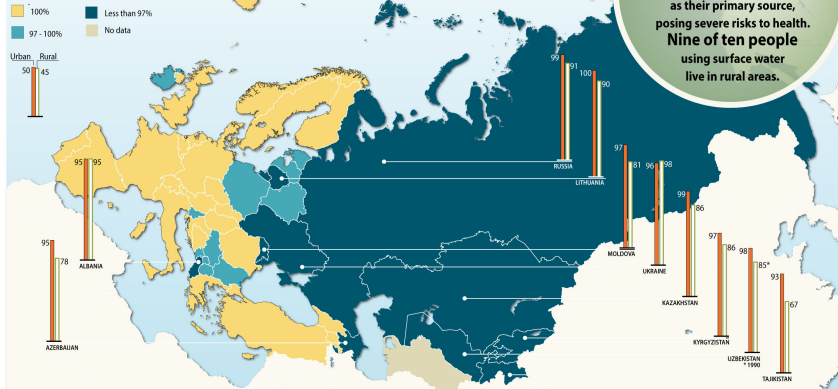
Providing access to safe and sustainable drinking water and sanitation is essential to protect human health

The water, sanitation and health agenda in the pan-European region remains unfinished. Every day 14 people die of diarrhoea due to inadequate water, sanitation and hygiene. More than 60 million people in the region lack access to adequate sanitation facilities and 14 million people do not enjoy access to basic drinking water. The growing impacts of climate change, population growth and urbanization represent additional challenges to ensuring access to water and sanitation for all.

More than 4.3 million people still rely on surface water from rivers, dams, canals, streams, lakes, ponds or irrigation channels as their primary source, posing severe risks to health. Nine of ten people using surface water live in rural areas.

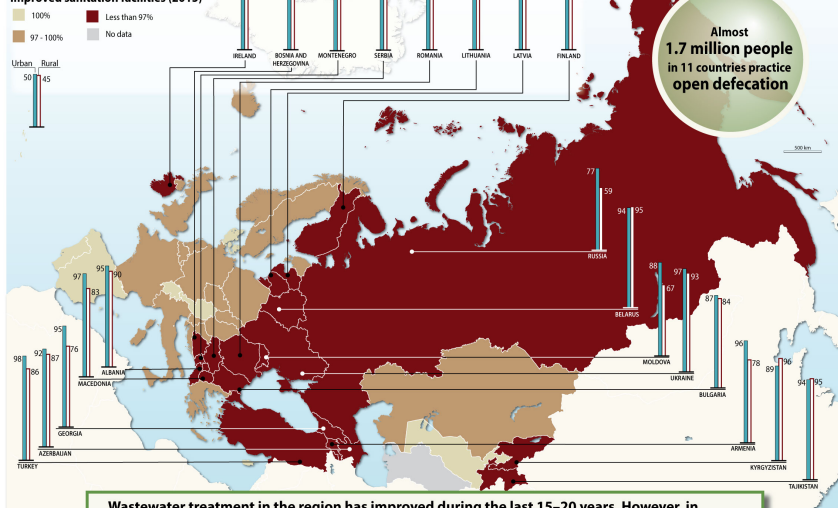
Drinking water

Percentage of population using improved drinking water sources (2015)



Sanitation

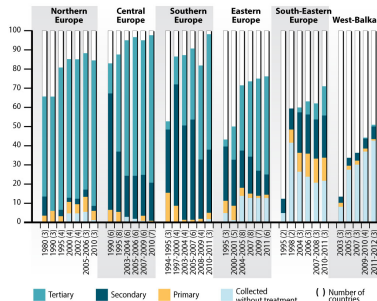
Percentage of population using improved sanitation facilities (2015)



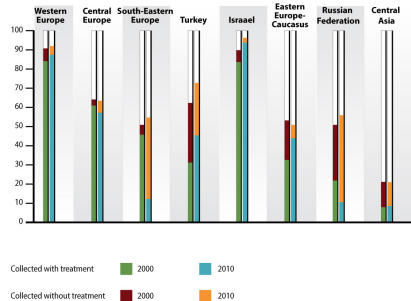
Almost 1.7 million people in 11 countries practice open defecation

Wastewater treatment in the region has improved during the last 15–20 years. However, in South-Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, the Russian Federation and Central Asia, significant volumes of wastewater are still collected and discharged without treatment.

Changes in wastewater treatment in the pan-European region between 1980 and 2012 (Percentage of total population)



Percentage of the population connected to sewage system and waste water treatment for the years 2000 and 2010



Addressing wastewater challenges

The Protocol on Water and Health to the UNECE Water Convention is a legally binding instrument that requires Parties to set national and local targets covering the entire water cycle, including sanitation. The aim is to protect human health and well-being through improved water management, including the protection of water ecosystems, and by preventing, controlling and reducing water-related diseases. The Protocol's forthcoming programme of work for 2017–2019 sets an objective to strengthen countries' capacities and scaling up risk-based management approaches in water supply and sanitation. The Protocol's cross-sectoral planning and accountability approach offers a practical framework to translate into specific national targets in order to achieve the ambitions of SDG 6, including notably target 6.3 to halve the proportion of untreated wastewater and to substantially increase water recycling and safe reuse.

Sources of information: UN Environment, World Health Organization, United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, UN Water, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, European Environment Agency.

