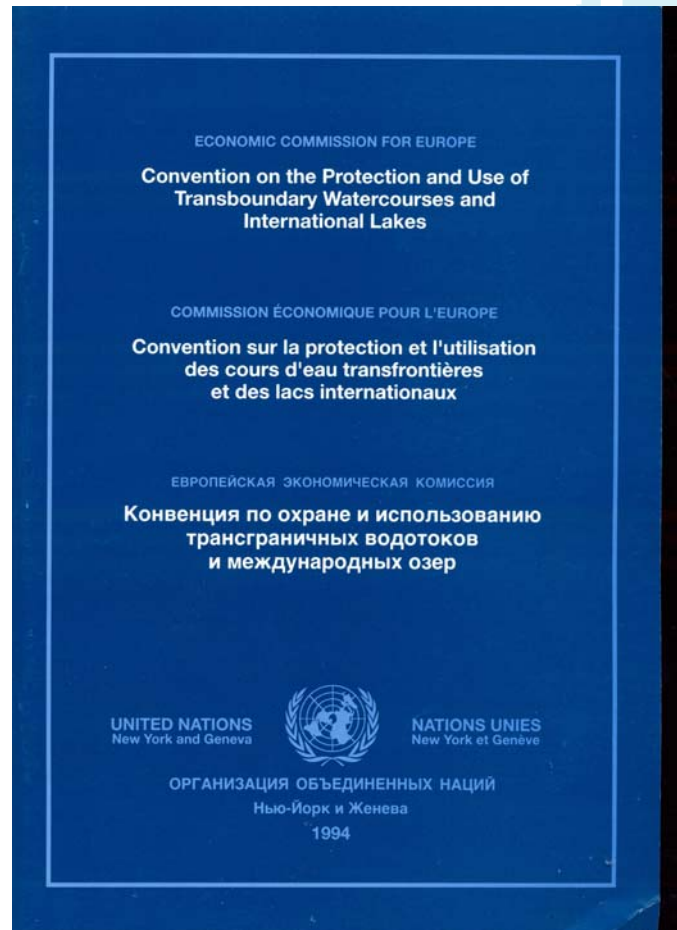




The UNECE Water Convention: a framework for cooperation between EU and non-EU countries

Francesca Bernardini, Secretary, UNECE

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

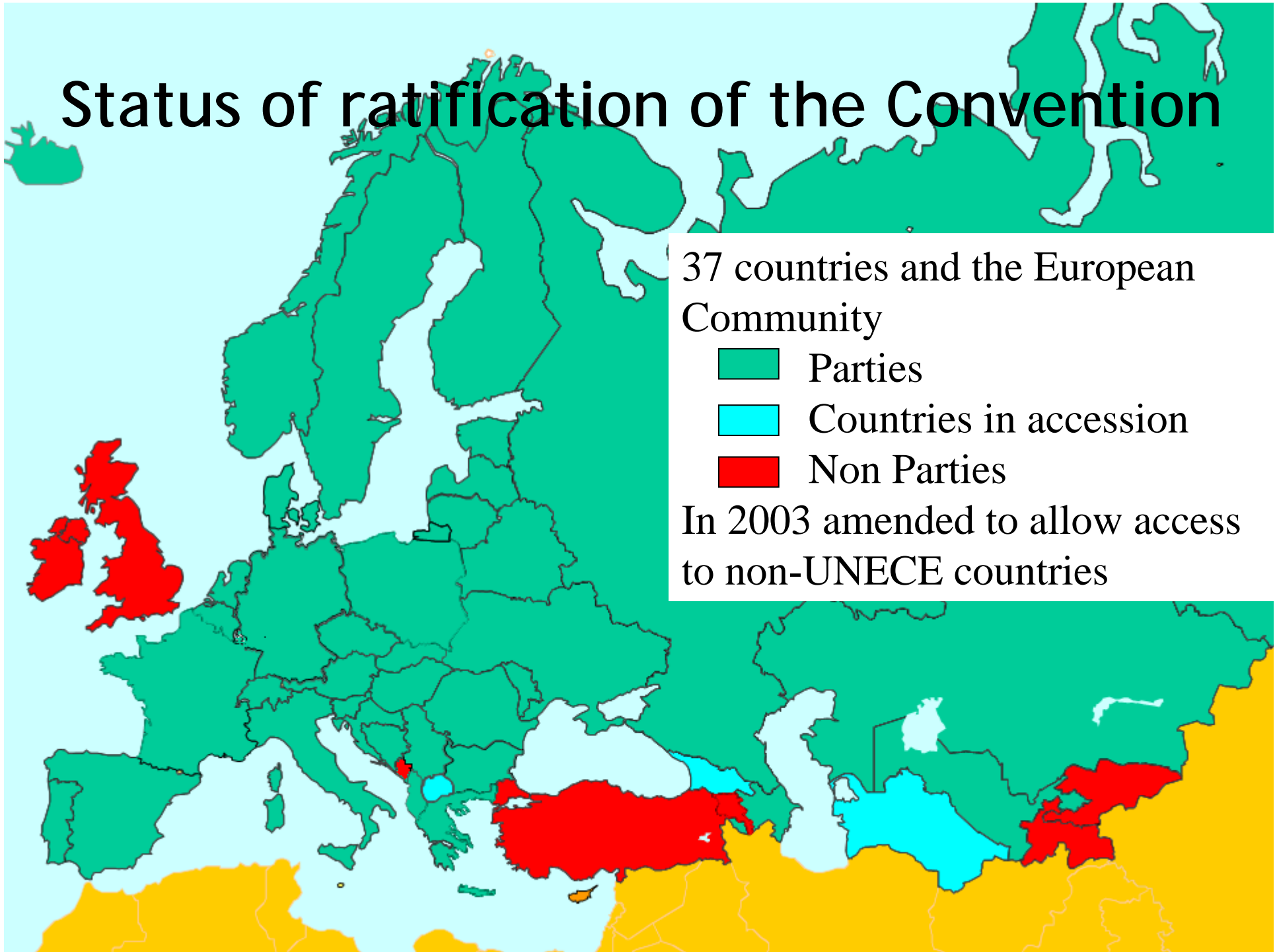
37 countries and the European Community

 Parties

 Countries in accession

 Non Parties

In 2003 amended to allow access to non-UNECE countries



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

Common features to the EU WFD and the UNECE Water Convention

- Apply to all waters (surface waters and groundwaters)
- Aim to achieve a good status for waters and related ecosystems
- Promote a “combined approach” to pollution control
- Promote a participatory approach
- Promote a river basin approach
- Are frameworks for water management

In practice, the Water Convention...

- Played a crucial role in the region in supporting cooperation
- Most of the existing agreements are modelled on the Convention (Danube, Sava, Bug, Lake Peipsi, also the WFD)
- Influenced the work of river commissions

How? A living instrument

- A collective framework
- Assistance to implementation
- Capacity building
- Projects in the field
- Action at national level
- Assessment of results



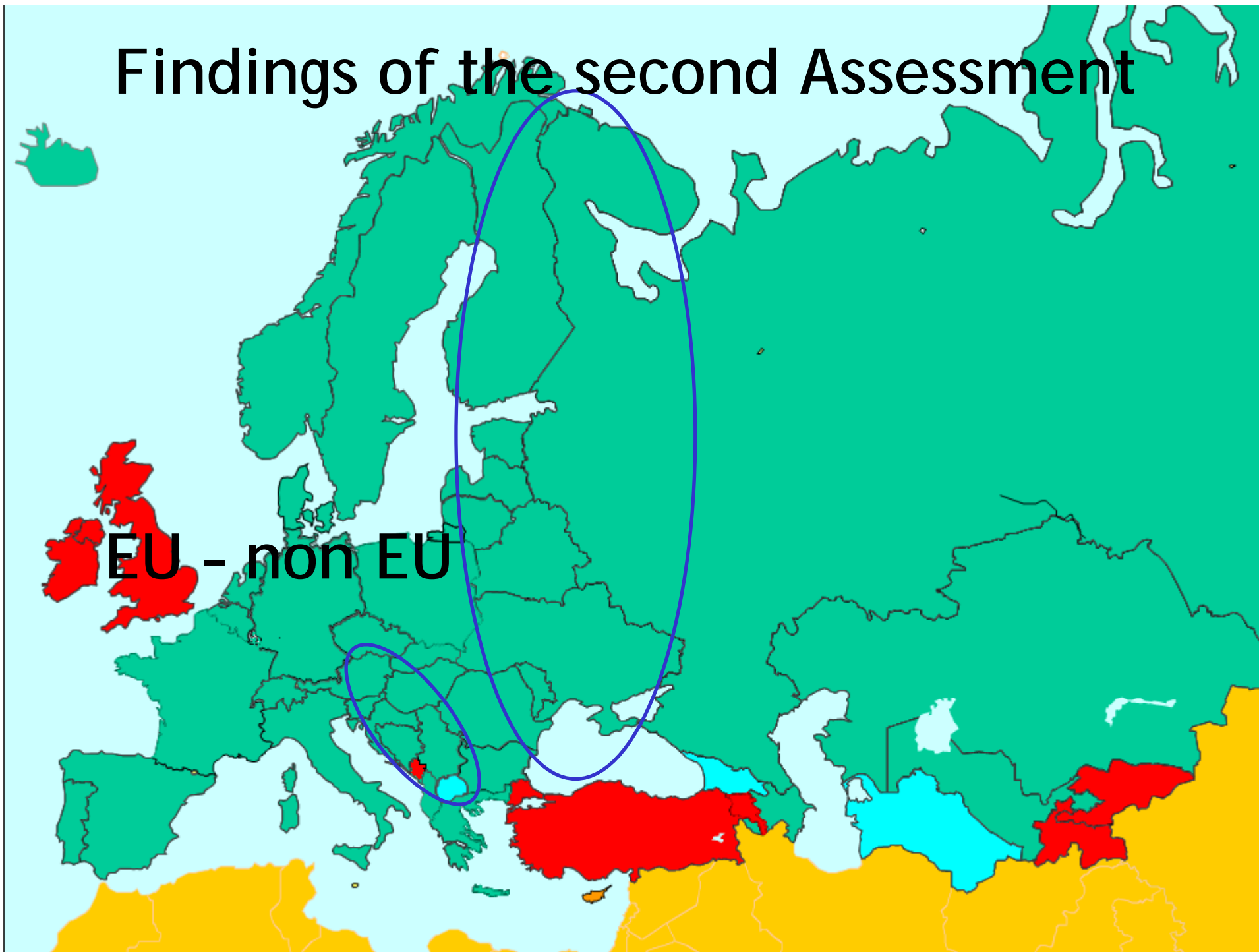
Assessing results



The first Assessment:

- covered 140 rivers, 30 lakes and 70 aquifers
- Involved more than 150 experts from 40 countries
- Illustrated major problems in the region
- Currently second edition under preparation: Central Asia will be a main focus, climate change a cross-cutting theme

Findings of the second Assessment

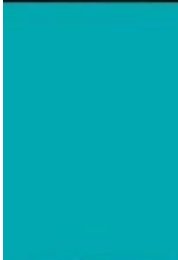




EU - non EU

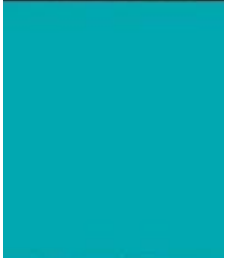
Legal and institutional framework

- Bilateral/multilateral agreements are being revised to take into account WFD. All have also as basis the Water Convention. Not all transboundary basins are covered by effective agreements
- Preparation of river basin management plans advanced in EU countries, depending on donor support in non-EU countries
- Preparation of joint plans with co-riparians across the EU border on the Danube and the Sava is positive.
- Importance of IWRM principles is acknowledged, but implementation in non-EU countries is limited



EU - non EU Monitoring

- Data exchange and harmonization of approaches need to be strengthened
- Across the EU border the different water quality systems make it difficult to compare and agree about water quality status.
- Physical-chemical monitoring emphasized; biological monitoring less developed.
- Some countries in Eastern Europe are revising their water quality standards commonly under international projects
- Recent floods have drawn attention to flood prediction to the need to cooperate with neighbouring countries



EU - non EU

Main problems, impact and status

- Discharges of non-treated or insufficiently treated municipal and industrial wastewaters is a major pressure and wide-spread.
- Agriculture is another major pressure factor in many transboundary basins (organic and nutrient pollution, water use), and practices need to be improved to reduce the impact.
- The impact from the diverse industries (food processing, pulp and paper, chemical, metallurgical etc) is variable, but includes heavy metal and hydrocarbon pollution. In some basins, mining is locally significant.
- Growing recognition of hydromorphological pressure driven by mainly flood protection and hydropower generation. Negative impacts on water-related ecosystems.



Thank you!

More information

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

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