FRESHWATER CENTRE

Relationships between Espoo and Helsinki Conventions

Special focus on Finland-Russia boundary

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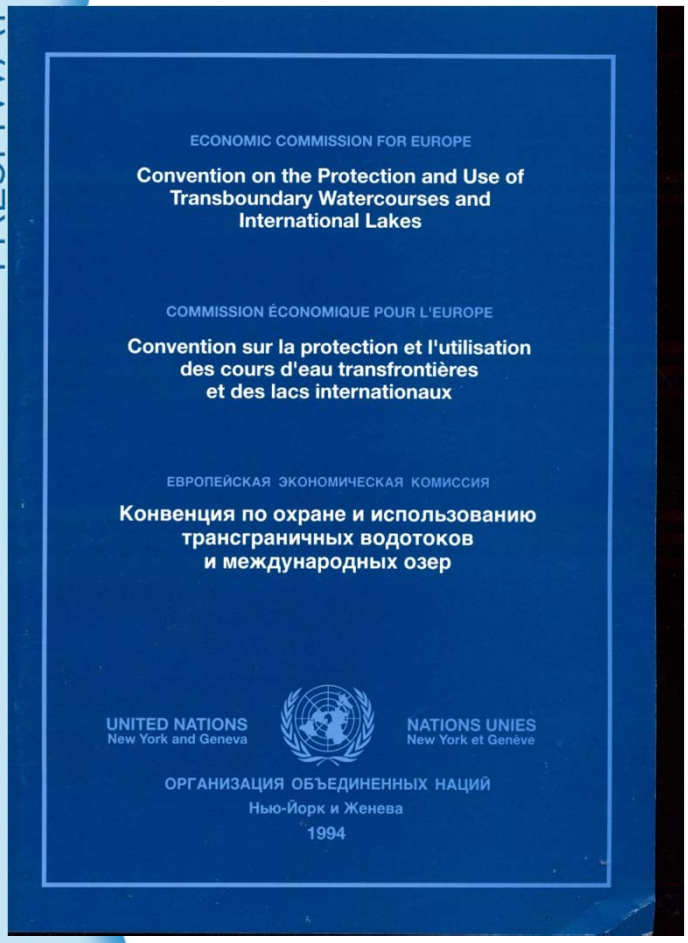
UNECE/Helsinki Water Convention (1992)



- Signed on 17 March 1992
- Entered into force on 6 October 1996
- Protocols:
  - Water and Health
  - Civil Liability
- Originally a regional convention (UNECE), but the Amendment in 2003 (entered into force 2013) allows any UN country to become a party

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Two Global Water Conventions in force

- Two based on the same principles, very similar obligations, need to be interpreted in light of each other, fully compatible, complementary
- 1997 UN Watercourses Convention
  - Negotiated by the International Law Commission and General Assembly
  - In force since August 2014
  - Currently without an intergovernmental framework
- 1992 UNECE Water (Helsinki) Convention
  - Negotiated by UNECE countries
  - In force since 1996
  - With an intergovernmental framework

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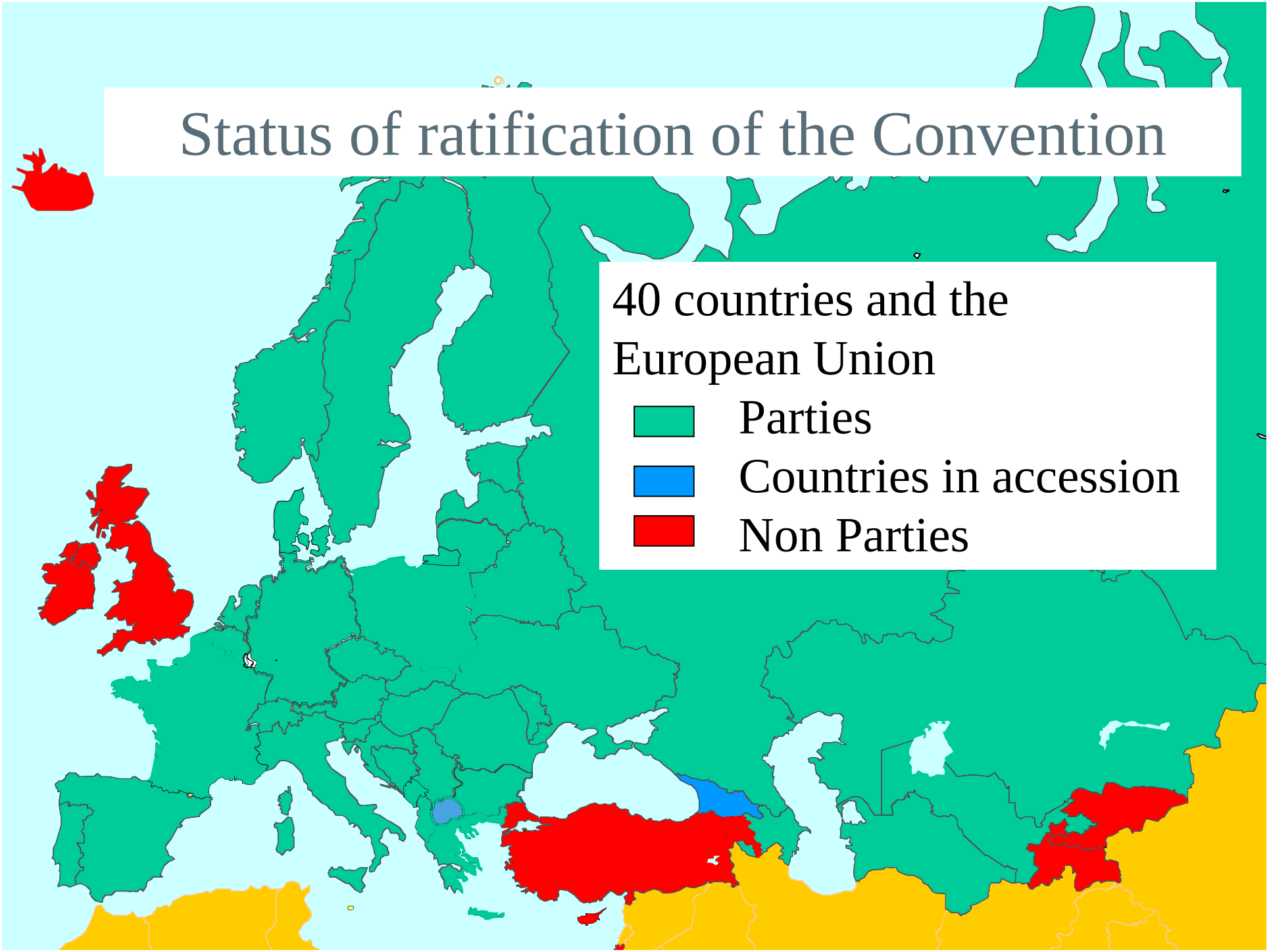
Status of ratification of the Convention



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The Water Convention was negotiated in Europe- but what is Europe?

- Not only EU, includes most ex-Soviet Union countries
- Not a peaceful continent
- Not a homogeneous continent in terms of economic development
- Not a water-problem free continent

= not really different from the rest of the world

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Helsinki Convention: Holistic approach

- Covers surface and groundwaters, and links to the recipient seas
- **Catchment area** concept => IWRM
- **Ecosystem approach**
- Diverse **transboundary impacts** considered: (significant adverse) effect on human health and safety, flora, fauna, soil, air, water, climate, landscape and structures, and socio-economic conditions resulting from a change ... caused by a human activity”

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1st category of obligations: General/for all Parties

- Licensing of waste-water discharges by the competent national authorities and monitoring of authorized discharges
- Best environmental practice for non-point pollution sources
- Minimization of the risk of accidental pollution
- Application of Environmental Impact Assessment

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2nd category of obligations: for Riparian Parties

- Conclude bilateral and/or multilateral agreements Cooperate on the basis of IWRM
- Establish joint bodies (e.g. river commissions)
- Consult and exchange of information
- Joint monitoring and assessment
- Elaborate joint objectives and action programme

=> the Convention does not replace basin agreements

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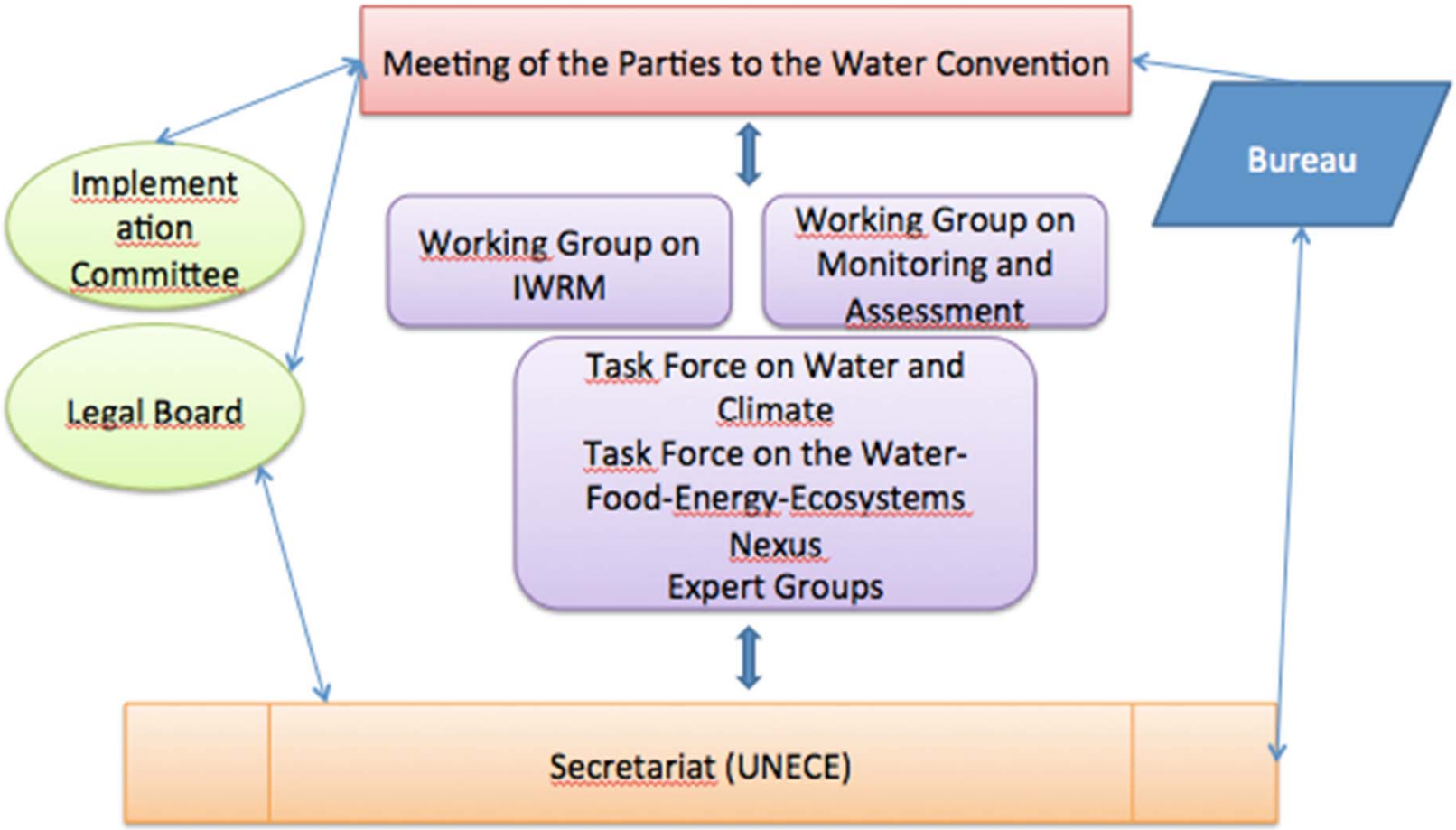
Institutional framework



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Helsinki and Espoo Conventions: Similar objectives

- Espoo Convention Article 2.1:
  - *'The Parties shall, either individually or jointly, take all appropriate and effective measures to prevent, reduce and control significant adverse transboundary environmental impact from proposed activities.'*
- Helsinki Convention Article 2.1:
  - *'The Parties shall take all appropriate measures to prevent, control and reduce any transboundary impact.'*
- Espoo Convention Article 3.1:
  - *'For a proposed activity listed in Appendix I that is likely to cause a significant adverse transboundary impact, the Party of origin shall, … notify any Party which it considers may be an affected Party as early as possible and no later than when informing its own public about that proposed activity.'*
- Helsinki Convention Article 6:
  - *'The Parties shall provide for the widest exchange of information, as early as possible, on issues covered by the provisions of this Convention.'*

EIA in Helsinki Convention (article 3)

- *'To prevent, control and reduce transboundary impact, the Parties shall develop, adopt, implement and, as far as possible, render compatible relevant legal, administrative, economic, financial and technical measures, in order to ensure, inter alia, that: '*
  - *(a) …*
  - *(b)…*
  - *'(h) Environmental impact assessment and other means of assessment are applied; '*
  - *(i)…*

Espoo Convention: Appendix 1

- Activities having potential water impacts
  - 2. Thermal power stations
  - 6. Integrated chemical installations.
  - 10. Waste-disposal installations for the incineration, chemical treatment or landfill of toxic and dangerous wastes.
  - 11. Large dams and reservoirs.
  - 12. Groundwater abstraction activities
  - 13. Pulp and paper manufacturing
  - 14. Major mining, on-site extraction and processing of metal ores or coal.
  - 17. Deforestation of large areas.
- Interestingly: no water management (except groundwater), no municipal waste water
- However, many such cases has realized

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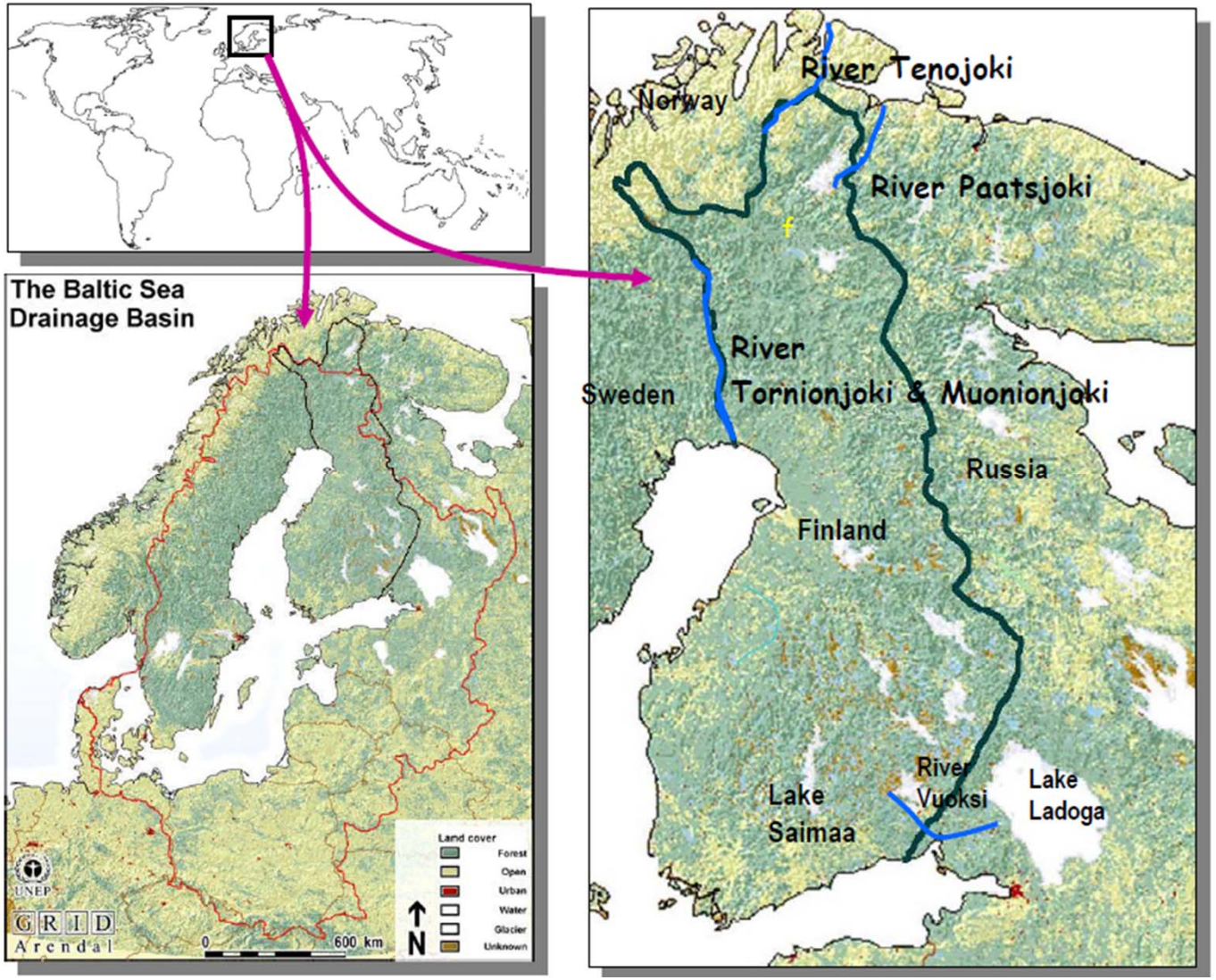
Finland's transboudary waters



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Finnish-Russia transboudary watercourses agreement

- The Agreement between Soviet Union and Finland was signed in 1964: 50th Anniversary in 2014
- Agreement covers all transboundary waters
- Covers the following issues:
  - Water flow and structural measures
  - Floods and water scarcity
  - Timber floating and navigation
  - Fisheries and fish migration
  - Pollution and water quality

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The River Vuoksi – Lake Saimaa system: the largest transboundary water system

- Catchment 70 000 km^2
  - Finland 77 %, Russia 23 %
- Lake Saimaa
  - surface 4 460 km^2
  - precipitation ~ 600 mm/a
- River Vuoksi natural discharge
  - mean 600 m^3/s
  - max 1170 m^3/s
  - min 220 m^3/s

City of Lappeenranta

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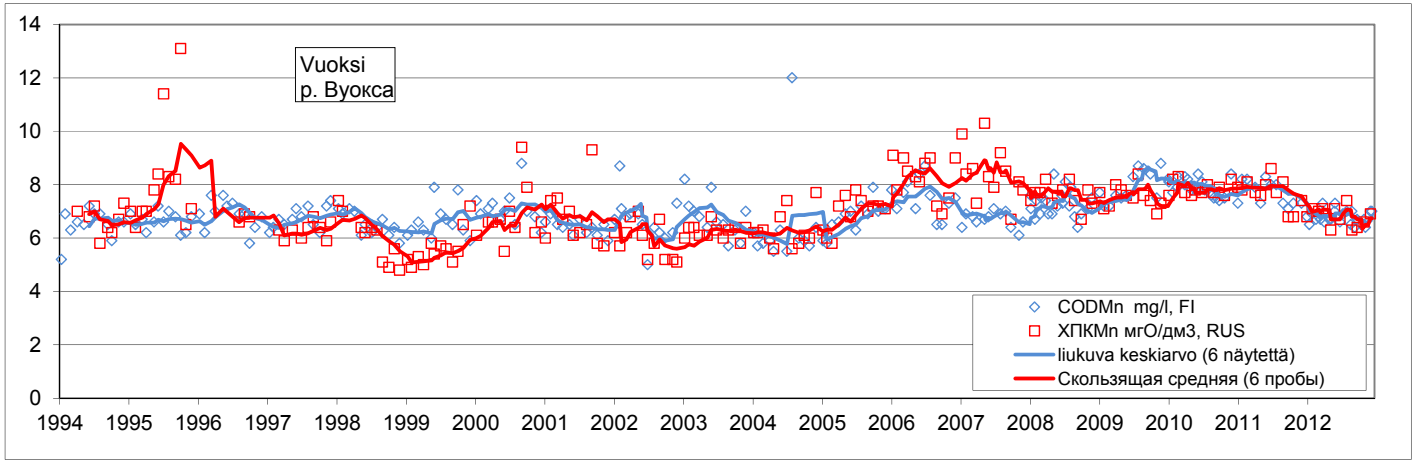
Institutional frameworks

- Joint Commission
  - Meetings once a year
- Working groups:
  - Water Protection
    - Water quality monitoring
    - Monitoring of pressures, particularly waste waters
    - Intercalibration of laboratory analytics
    - Information exchange on planned measures
  - Intergrated water management
    - Discharge management
    - Flood control and flood management
    - Hydropower
    - Fisheries, fish migration
    - Information exchange on planned measures
- No secretariat: Requires high commitment by national authorities

Information and data exchange – water quality monitoring

- Annual joint reports
- Water quality monitoring on both sides of the border



Vuoksi – COD Вуокса – ХПК

- Blue line and dots – Finnish results
- Red line and red dots – Russian results

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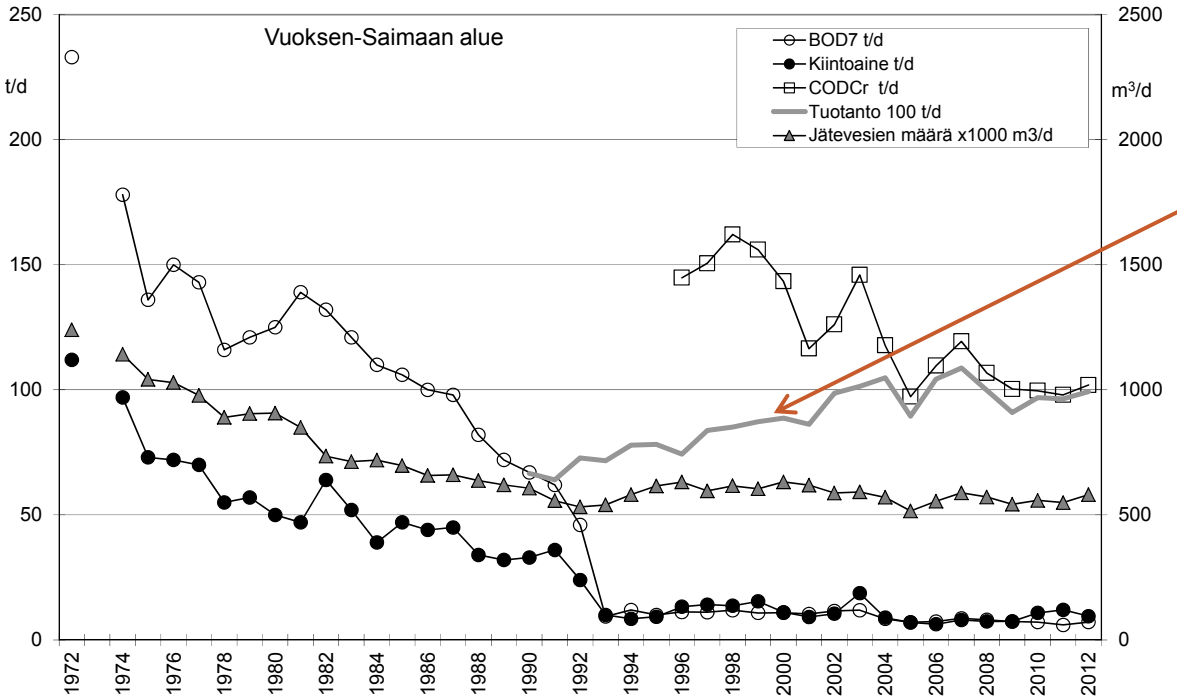
Information and data exchange – Pollution loads

- Joint report every year
- Pollution loads from the Finnish side to the Saimaa – Vuoksi system



Industrial production volume

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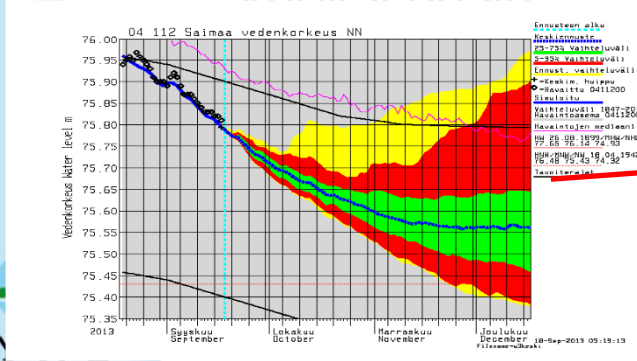
Seppo rekolainen, SYKE 7.10.2015

Information Exchange

- Water levels, discharges and other hydrological parameters available at Internet
- Stations at the Vuoksi basin



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Pohjavesi✠ ja ma
Heinävesi Särkelä
Ilomantsi Kuuksen

Information exchange – Planned measures

- Recent issues:
  - New waste water treatment plant at the city of Lappeenranta
  - Mining activities – two large planned mines in the north
  - Flood protection – common risk management plan
  - Improving fish migration

Information exchange – Planned measures

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Planned activities: How do we take into account both Conventions

- Russia has not ratified Espoo Convention
- However, we notify our activities to Russia accordingly
- We have had 3 cases which fall under both Conventions:
  - Lappeenranta waste water treatment plant
  - Apatite mine in Lapland
  - Gold mine in Kuusamo (eastern Finland)
- All notified according to Espoo Convention
- Information given also to Russian Party of the Finnish Russian Transboundary Water Commission

Lappeenranta case – new waste water treatment plant

- Espoo Convention: Russia informed which EIA options are not suitable and which option is the best for Russia
- Transboundary water Commission: Russia will follow permitting process and will continue discussion taking into account both Finland's and Russia's interests

Conclusions

- Early information exchange is important for mutual trust
- The two Conventions are complementary
- Overlapping of the two Conventions is not a problem – if relevant authorities in both/all countries coordinate their actions

Joint sampling by Russian and Finnish experts at the transboundary river Vuoksi

Thank you!

The River Vuoksi: Transboundary river between Finland and Russia
Painting by Victor Westerholm 1912