**Interview questions for** [**Professor Alistair Rieu-Clarke**](file:///C:\Users\RTorr\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\INetCache\Content.Outlook\LVURTRRZ\.https:\www.northumbria.ac.uk\about-us\our-staff\r\alistair-rieu-clarke\)**, Chair of Law, Northumbria Law School, Northumbria University.**

**Reporting to enhance implementation of the sustainable development goals and transboundary water cooperation**

Professor Alastair Rieu-Clarke, Chair of Law in Northumbria University's School of Law has been collaborating with the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) to implement the first reporting exercise under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) indicator 6.5.2 and the Water Convention.

UNECE, together with UNESCO, are co-custodian agencies for reporting under the SDG indicator 6.5.2, which forms part of the SDG framework of goals, targets, and indicators. 6.5.2 measures the number of transboundary rivers, lakes, and aquifers covered by operational arrangements.

Transboundary water cooperation is a precondition for sustainable development, peace, and stability. Transboundary waters create social, economic, environmental and political inter-dependencies. They not only sustain populations across borders but also connect economic sectors and ecosystems in the basins. Conflicting demands over shared waters can engender political conflicts and regional instability.

As the only target in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development explicitly referring to transboundary cooperation, target 6.5 can play a catalytic role across multiple SDGs and targets. It can generate multiple benefits relating to the protection of human health, renewable energy provision, sustainable agriculture, climate adaptation, ecosystem protection, and peace and security.

Professor Rieu-Clarke’s contribution related mainly to ensure that the reporting template and the application of the criteria were robust from a legal perspective. This involved ensuring that in the revision of the template any legal rules and principles were clearly and accurately reflected, and any ambiguities or scope for misinterpretation avoided.

He provided a similar contribution to the application of the criteria for determining whether an arrangement is operational or not. Such advice included determining the types of instruments that might be considered as an ‘arrangement’, as well as the scope and meaning of key terms such as ‘data and information’ and ‘joint bodies’.

There are also some methodological aspects to the analysis of the 109 responses and how that was synthesized to distill key policy recommendations on progress towards transboundary water cooperation. This was the first time that countries reported, and so the first time that their reports had been analysed.

The primary impact has been on policy development, but it is hoped that when the reporting becomes well-established it will have an influence on shaping transboundary water cooperation in countries and regions where such cooperation is lacking. This, in turn, is an important component/catalyst in ensuring that water and related resources are governed in a sustainable and equitable manner for the benefit of all.

In the future, Professor Rieu-Clarke plans to collaborate with UNECE during the second reporting cycle under the SDG 6.5.2 and the Water Convention. This would involve enhancing the process by which countries report, which in turn should enhance the value of the reporting exercise. The better the quality of national reports, the more likely that they will provide an evidence-based approach to decision-making related to transboundary water cooperation, e.g. negotiating new cooperative agreements between neighbors, or revising older ones that are not consistent with the principles of sustainable development and equity.