

PHASE IV WORK PLAN

Version as of December 2023

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INTRODUCTION

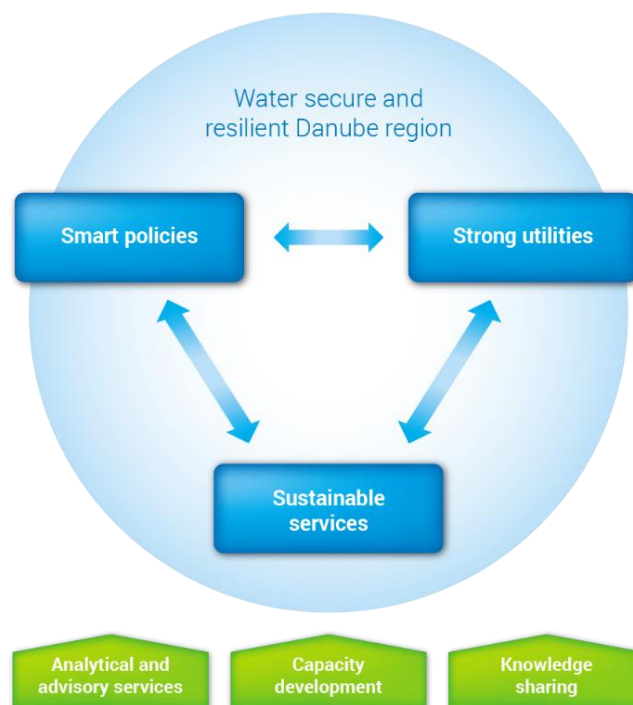
The Danube Water Program (DWP) is a policy and technical assistance program for water sector institutions and other sector stakeholders in countries of the Danube / South-East Europe region. The DWP original Development Objective is to support institutional capacity building and the development of regulatory and policy instruments in the water supply and wastewater (WSS) sector in countries of the Danube region. The first phase of the DWP was formally launched in 2013 in partnership with WSS line ministries, regulators, national water utility associations, and local government representatives of a dozen countries from South-East Europe. Given the strong demand for the Program's activities, two follow-up phases were approved, in 2015 with a focus on scaling up the activities, and in 2019 with a stronger focus on the sustainability of DWP developed activities and expanding the scope towards the broader Water Security agenda.

In 2021, the Government of Austria decided to finance a 4th Phase of the Danube Water Program via an additional contribution of EUR 4 million to the Danube Water Security Multi-Donor Trust Fund, which finances a Bank Executed (BETF) Component 1 and a Recipient Executed (RETF) Component 2. The Recipient Executed Component 2 is implemented by the International Association of Water Service Companies in the Danube River Catchment Area (IAWD).

This document presents the Work Plan for the DWP Phase IV for the period 2022-2025 as of December 2023. The overall objective of the DWP 4th Phase is to foster water security and resilient recovery of the water sector in the Danube region in a post-COVID environment by strengthening policies, institutions and efficiency of water sector delivery. Water-related institutions and utilities of the Danube region are supported by addressing aspects of a secure and resilient water sector, that could respond to potential future crisis and an array of shocks and stresses, including those brought by climate change. Further aspects which are addressed include fostering innovative approaches, strengthening and solidifying achievements in capacity development and performance improvement to ensure the stable and continuous delivery of benefits, as well as sharing experiences and lessons learned within and outside the region via extending established communication, outreach and knowledge spill-over activities.

As a continuation from the previous phases, the geographical landscape with eleven target and five participating countries is maintained under the 4th Phase. The latter can join program activities but cannot directly benefit from Program funding. Resources are targeted towards the most pressing needs and opportunities for reform and innovation. The Program in particular targets: (i) higher level government officials, water security policy makers and water sector regulators; (ii) senior technical and managerial staff of water supply and wastewater utilities, and (iii) representatives of professional associations, international organizations active in the region, relevant academic institutions and NGOs.

The Work Plan follows the Program's vision for *Smart policies, Strong utilities and Sustainable services*; it lays out a series of individual activities itself, which will be conducted at regional and national levels, through three main activities: analytical and advisory services, capacity development, and knowledge sharing.



This Work Plan is consistent with the Program's objective and revised results framework as prepared during the Phase IV preparation. An electronic version of this report for external audiences will be made available on the Program's website www.danube-water-program.org.

The document is structured as follows:

- ▶ The work plan itself is presented through the following sections:
 - *Overview of program activities* on page 6 provides a succinct overview of the planned activities and how they fit in the program's different areas of work (Advisory and Analytical Services, Capacity Development and Knowledge Sharing), and their geographical level (regional or national). The Country Activities Overview on page 7 presents all country-level activities, according to the main areas of work they correspond to.
 - *Budget Summary* on page **Fehler! Textmarke nicht definiert.** provides an overview of the budget by activity and component for both regional and national activities.
- ▶ *Results Framework Overview* on page 8 offers an overview of the Danube Water Program's revised targets and expected results.
- ▶ The *detailed regional activity sheets* starting on page 9 provide further details on each regional activity, including an objective, budget, short description, timeline, team composition, contribution to the Program's overall indicators, and current status.
- ▶ The *detailed country sheets* starting on page 46 provide the same information for country-level activities.

The Work Plan for Phase IV of the DWP does not commit more resources than currently available for the program. Particularly for D-LeaP activities, efforts will be made to obtain additional resources to increase the funding available for this activity.

OVERVIEW OF PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

The following **key areas of program activities** are addressed under the Danube Water Program 4th Phase: 1) Further expanding the program scope on Water Security and resilient recovery policy and regulatory support; 2) Continuation or completion of program involvement and securing long-term continuity of key products on support for the Water Supply and Sanitation sector regulation, policy and governance; 3) Regional capacity building activities for water utilities; and 4) Communication, outreach, and knowledge sharing. These are carried out in the form of (A) Analytical and advisory services; (C) Capacity development; and (S) Knowledge sharing at (R) Regional / Sub-regional and (N) National level.

Analytical and advisory cover both water security and water supply and sanitation services – both at regional and national level. Capacity development continues with D-LeaP Programs via regional hubs and national level activities, as well as support for national capacity development initiatives as needed. Knowledge sharing largely takes place at the regional level with the signature Danube Water Conference and Danube Water Forum, as well as KnowNow webinars and via the [Voice of the Danube](#) webspace, hosting as well the Danubis.org platform. Other knowledge sharing opportunities may arise at a bi-lateral or multi-lateral levels. The color code indicates the main implementing responsibility: **Joint / case-by-case**; **IAWD-led**; **World Bank-led**.

	R Regional / Sub-regional activities	N National activities
A Analytical and Advisory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RA.1: Regional Water Security Diagnostics • RA.2: Regional Drought Risk Assessment • RA.3: Water supply utilities drought risk assessment and prioritization of adaptation pathways • RA.4: State of the Sector Report - Update 2025 • RA.5: Danube transboundary drought risk management support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NA.I: Analytical and Advisory support at national level on Water Security topics (<i>refer to next page for detailed list</i>) • NA.II: Analytical and Advisory support at national level on WSS (<i>refer to next page for detailed list</i>)
C Capacity Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RC.1: IAWD strengthening support • RC.2: Danube Learning Partnership for sustainable WSS services (D-LeaP) • RC.3: Utility Benchmarking Program (UBP) • RC.4: Regional capacity building on water sector topics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NC: Capacity development support at national level (<i>refer to next page for detailed list</i>)
S Knowledge sharing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RS.1: Danube Water Conference and Danube Water Forum • RS.2: Voice of the Danube • RS.3: Water services awareness raising campaign [CANCELLED] • RS.4: DWP Annual Report 	

COUNTRY ACTIVITIES OVERVIEW

	NA Analytical and Advisory	NC Capacity Development
Albania		
Bosnia and Herzegovina	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NA.II.2: Water sector reform process support 	
Bulgaria		
Croatia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NA.II.1: Support to Croatia's water services sector reform 	
Kosovo		
Moldova	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NA.II.3: Policy and regulatory reform needs assessment for the EU Acquis 	
Montenegro	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NA.I.2: Montenegro Sediment Management Assessment • NA.I.3: Montenegro Water Information System Needs Assessment 	
North Macedonia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NA.I.4: Water governance and action plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NC.1: North Macedonia support for water services sector data collection and performance improvement
Romania	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NA.I.1: Romania Drought Risk Assessment 	
Serbia		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NC.2: Serbia support for water services sector data collection and performance improvement
Ukraine		

RESULTS FRAMEWORK OVERVIEW

PDO LEVEL RESULTS INDICATORS	Base-line		PHASE IV				Status
			2022	2023	2024	2025	
PDO: The Development Objective of the Danube Water Program Phase IV is to foster water security and resilient recovery of target and participating countries in the Danube region. This will be achieved by supporting the strengthening of water sector policies, institutional capacities, and efficiency of water sector delivery.							
Indicator One: [NUMBER] of target countries in which regulatory and policy recommendations for the water sector have been presented and discussed by decision makers	0	Planned	0	3	5	10	On track
		Actual	0	3			
Indicator Two: [NUMBER] of Hubs delivering a capacity building program	0	Planned	4	14	24	34	On track
		Actual	11	17			
Indicator Three: [NUMBER] of participating utilities that have improved their operational performance as a result of a capacity building program under the Danube Learning Partnership	28	Planned	33	43	53	63	On track
		Actual	39				
Indicator Four: Cumulative income generated by IAWD from the implementation of DWP activities (in EUR)	0	Planned	10,000	40,000	70,000	100,000	Exceeded
		Actual	22,600	104,895			

INTERMEDIATE LEVEL RESULTS INDICATORS	Base-line		PHASE IV				Status
			2022	2023	2024	2025	
Component One: Provision of Policy and Regulatory Support to National and Local Level Authorities and Support for Program Implementation (Bank-executed)							
Intermediate Result Indicator One: [NUMBER] of water supply and sanitation sector regulation and policy reviews conducted	45	Planned	45	45	45	55	On track
		Actual	45	45			
Intermediate Result Indicator Two: [NUMBER] of sector regulation and policy reviews conducted in water security topics	7	Planned	7	10	12	14	On track
		Actual	7	10			
Intermediate Result Indicator Three: [NUMBER] of policy makers, higher-level technical and managerial staff from target and participating countries that benefited from cross-country capacity building activities	415	Planned	415	445	470	500	On track
		Actual	415	480			
Component Two: Capacity Building for Water Supply and Wastewater Utilities and Institutions (Recipient-executed)							
Intermediate Result Indicator Four: [NUMBER] of policy makers, higher-level technical and managerial staff from participating countries that benefited from cross-country knowledge sharing and cross-country capacity building activities	1,194	Planned	1,234	1,274	1,314	1,354	Exceeded
		Actual	1,374	1,593			
Intermediate Result Indicator Five: [NUMBER] of female representatives that benefited from capacity building activities.	529	Planned	549	569	589	609	Exceeded
		Actual	687	799			
Intermediate Result Indicator Six: [NUMBER] of participating utilities that have completed an operational performance improvement program under the Danube Learning Partnership	161	Planned				200	On track
		Actual	176				
Intermediate Result Indicator Seven: [Number] of new members joining IAWD	9	Planned				21	On track
		Actual	13	18			
Intermediate Results Indicator Eight: Cumulative amount of co-funding received supporting the implementation of Danube Water Program activities (in EUR)	0	Planned	10,000	50,000	90,000	130,000	On track
		Actual	46,976	91,014			

RA - REGIONAL ANALYTICAL AND ADVISORY ACTIVITIES

RA.1: Regional Water Security Diagnostics	
Led by	World Bank
Objective <p>The objective is to develop and overview and to identify key current and future challenges around water security for the Danube region to inform a focused policy dialogue with Danube countries towards building a water secure world for the people, economy and the environment.</p>	
Target audience	Water and Environmental Ministries, International River Basin Organizations, sector professionals, water-related stakeholders
Description and outcomes <p>In the context of the Sustainable Development Goal No. 6 on Water, the World Bank, the European Commission, the United Nations (UN), the ICPDR and other international agencies are promoting an integrated approach to water resources management. The World Bank Water GP vision is to achieve a water secure future for the people, economy and the environment in the light of a rapidly changing region, with the objectives of sustaining and leveraging the water resources, delivering water services (beyond drinking water and wastewater management, including also water for agriculture and industrial use), and mitigating water risks (which are increasing considering global warming and climate change). This holistic approach to water sector development is also embedded in the Water Framework Directive of the EU and other directives such as the Floods Directive, with most of the countries in the region striving to achieve compliance.</p> <p>The Danube region is undergoing many demographic, economic, climate and technological changes. Although important work on integrated water resource management is ongoing since many years, an analysis from the aspect of water security is still lacking, which would, however, gain the opportunity to inform a focused policy dialogue towards building a water secure future for the Danube region.</p> <p>The objective of this activity is to develop a regional overview and to identify key current and future challenges around water security for the Danube region to inform a focused policy dialogue with Danube countries towards building a water secure world for the people, economy and the environment and aiming at the development of recommendations to be discussed in target countries. The activity is jointly implemented with the ECA Regional Water Security Initiative financed from GWSP. A consortium around the International Institute for Applied System Analysis (IIASA) has been contracted, supporting the work on the diagnostics.</p> <p>The activity builds on and takes into consideration results of other important analytical activities conducted by the World Bank and financed through other sources, including the Regional Water Security Diagnostic for the Europe and Central Asia Region (ECA), an analytical activity on the future of irrigation in the Balkans, as well as existing water security assessment conducted for Romania, Kosovo and Moldova. Furthermore, the results stemming from activities of other institutions are considered, including e.g. the River Basin and Flood Risk Management Plans elaborated by the ICPDR and ISRBC, studies conducted by the UNECE, etc.</p>	
Contribution to program indicator(s) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PDO Indicator One: [NUMBER] of target countries in which regulatory and policy recommendations for the water sector have been presented and discussed by decision makers 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intermediate Result Indicator Two: [NUMBER] of sector regulation and policy reviews conducted in water security topics
Team <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raimund Mair (Lead) • Camilo Lombana Cordoba (Lead) • Stjepan Gabric • Kathia Havens
Partners and responsibilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water and Environmental Ministries in the respective countries • IIASA contracted consulting firm • InterSus contracted consulting firm • Hydrophil contracted consulting firm • ICPDR and ISRBC • IAWD • Other relevant water security stakeholders
Timeline <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water Security assessments, including two national-level stakeholder consultation workshops each, conducted in Croatia and Serbia in 2022 • 1st round of national-level stakeholder workshops for Albania, Montenegro, and Bosnia and Herzegovina organized in December 2022 • 2nd round of national-level stakeholder workshops for Albania, Montenegro, and Bosnia and Herzegovina conducted in February 2023 • Regional Danube Water Security Report in final stage of elaboration • Complementary Public Expenditure Review (PER) for Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kosovo, North Macedonia, and Moldova added for assessment • Finalization jointly with ECA Water Security Initiative in spring 2024
Status <p>The study and approach were presented at the Danube Water Conference 2021, and the methodology for the assessment, including 81 core- and supporting water security indicators, has been endorsed for application. The approach follows different levels of depths of assessments. Six countries of the Danube region were selected for in-depth assessments in the frame of the initiative, including Croatia, Serbia, Albania, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as Ukraine. Due to the recent political developments, it was decided to put the roll-out in Ukraine on hold at the current stage. Furthermore, it was decided to apply the methodology first in Croatia and Serbia, where two consultation workshops with water sector stakeholders in each country have been organized in 2022 and water security assessments elaborated. Following a fine-tuning based on lessons learned, the methodology was applied in Albania, Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina, followed by the lighter assessments of the remaining countries and ongoing development of the regional narrative for the Danube region. The work will be finalized jointly with the ECA Water Security Initiative in spring 2024.</p>

RA.2: Regional Drought Risk Assessment	
Led by	World Bank
Objective The objective of the activity is to assess drought risk and vulnerabilities for non-EU countries in the Danube region and to create awareness to set the basis for future work to increase resilience.	
Target audience	Water and Environmental Ministries, International River Basin Organizations, sector professionals, water-related stakeholders
Description and outcomes <p>Droughts and water scarcity are an increasing problem in many parts of Europe. Climate change is expected to increase drought hazard, affecting both the frequency and magnitude of droughts. Changes in precipitation, combined with rising temperatures, will significantly worsen existing stresses on the quality and quantity of freshwater resources. Economic development, human health and ecosystems are inseparably linked to sufficient availability of freshwater.</p> <p>The severe droughts which hit Europe in 2022 demonstrated the increased exposure to such extreme events in the context of climate change. Within the newly established EU Ad-hoc Task Group on Water Scarcity and Droughts, important steps are taken at EU level to pay increased attention and to take measures to increase resilience against such events. One of the activities includes the modelling and assessment of droughts risks for EU Member States in the frame of the European Drought Observatory for Resilience and Adaptation (EDORA) project, which is conducted by the European Commission (DG Environment and DG Joint Research Centre) and aiming to improve drought resilience and adaptation throughout the EU.</p> <p>The objective of this activity is to extend the assessments for EU Member States in the frame of the EDORA project to the non-EU countries in the region, leading to harmonized results based on the established pan-European methodology. The outputs will inter alia feed into the ongoing development of the regional Country Climate Development Report (CCDR) for the Western Balkan countries conducted by the World Bank, as well as into work undertaken by other organizations on the subject, including the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR).</p>	
Target Indicator(s) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PDO Indicator One: [NUMBER] of target countries in which regulatory and policy recommendations for the water sector have been presented and discussed by decision makers • Intermediate Result Indicator Two: [NUMBER] of sector regulation and policy reviews conducted in water security topics 	
Team <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raimund Mair (Lead) • Natalia Limones Rodriguez • Chris-Philip Fischer • Kathia Havens 	
Partners and responsibilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • European Commission (Joint Research Centre and DG Environment) • Amsterdam University • CIMA Research Foundation (Italy) • International Institute for Applied System Analysis (IIASA) 	
Timeline <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data collection in spring 2023 • Modelling and assessment in summer 2023 	

- First results in autumn 2023
- Finalization in spring 2024

Status

In autumn 2022, discussions took place and partnerships established with the European Commission and members of the EDORA project consortium. The planned assessments were integrated into the project concept for the Western Balkans CCDR's in November 2022. Data collection was performed in spring 2023. First modeling results became available in autumn 2023 and were integrated into the ongoing development of the Western Balkans CCDR.

RA.3: Water supply utilities drought risk assessment and adaptation pathways	
Led by	World Bank
Objective To employ a framework for quantifying present day and future drought risk at a utility scale and explore adaptation measures across different options	
Target audience	Water supply utilities, Water and Environmental Ministries, sector professionals, water-related stakeholders
Description and outcomes Water utilities are key agents in the delivery of safe, reliable and affordable water supply. Drought-induced disruptions to critical water supply services can pose a risk to service delivery. However, a regional drought risk analyses for water supply utilities is largely lacking. This activity will support data collection of selected water supply utilities (with data on population served, service area, leakage losses and desalination capacity attributes) and employ a framework for quantifying present day and future drought risk at a utility scale. Applying this framework will allow to raise awareness and explore adaptation measures across options including leakage reduction, desalination capacity increase and storage capacity increase.	
Target Indicator(s) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PDO Indicator One: [NUMBER] of target countries in which regulatory and policy recommendations for the water sector have been presented and discussed by decision makers • Intermediate Result Indicator One: [NUMBER] of water supply and sanitation sector regulation and policy reviews conducted 	
Team <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raimund Mair (Lead) • Olivia Becher, PhD student, Oxford University • Katerina Schilling • Kathia Havens • Christopher Thoma 	
Partners and responsibilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oxford University • International Institute for Applied System Analysis 	
Timeline <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work on the assessments to be launched in March 2023 • Discussion on data needs and approach for data collection in spring 2023 • Presentation of planned initiative at DWC in June 2023 • Data collection from interested water utilities in autumn/winter 2023 • Assessments to be finalized in spring 2024 	
Status The methodology developed for a global drought risk assessment of water supply utilities and prioritization of adaptation pathways was presented and discussed with the DWP team. The initiative was presented to utilities and water sector stakeholders at the Danube Water Conference 2023. Work has been conducted on the refinement of data needs and approach for data collection from water utilities for the planned assessment. First results have been discussed and work is ongoing to obtain data from additional utilities from an increased number of countries.	

RA.4: State of the Sector Report – Update 2025

Led by

World Bank

Objective

The objective of this analytical activity is to update the state of knowledge on the water supply and sanitation sector in the Danube region, assess the progress achieved after ten years since the first State of the Sector Report from 2015, and to identify the remaining challenges and opportunities for the sector in the Danube region.

Target audience

Water and Environmental Ministries, water services sector regulators, water utilities, sector professionals, water-related stakeholders

Description and outcomes

This activity would finance the preparation of a 2025 State of the Sector (SoS) Report with the aim to update the state of knowledge on the WSS sector challenges and opportunities in the Danube region. The report would include the latest available data, building on the methodologies applied for the preparation of the State of the Sector Reports 2015 and 2018, considered as flagship analytical products of the DWP. The report will allow to assess the progress and identify the remaining challenges after ten years since the publication of the first SoS In 2015.

Target Indicator(s)

- **PDO Indicator One:** [NUMBER] of target countries in which regulatory and policy recommendations for the water sector have been presented and discussed by decision makers
- **Intermediate Result Indicator One:** [NUMBER] of water supply and sanitation sector regulation and policy reviews conducted

Team

- Stjepan Gabric (Lead)
- Raimund Mair
- Kathia Havens

Partners and responsibilities

- Consultant firm
- Water and Environmental Ministries
- National water utility associations
- IAWD
- CoE

Timeline

- Spring 2024: Development of approach for the assessment
- Autumn 2024: Launch of data collection
- 2025: Development of SoS Update 2025

Status

Work to be launched in early 2024.

RA.5: Danube transboundary drought risk management support	
Led by	World Bank together with ICPDR
Objective The objective of the activity is to improve capacities for drought risk management in the transboundary context of the Danube River Basin to increase climate resilience.	
Target audience	ICPDR and ISRBC Contracting Parties, Water and Environmental Ministries, sector professionals, water-related stakeholders
Description and outcomes <p>Droughts and water scarcity are an increasing problem in many parts of Europe. Climate change is expected to increase drought hazard, affecting both the frequency and magnitude of droughts. Changes in precipitation, combined with rising temperatures, will significantly worsen existing stresses on the quality and quantity of freshwater resources. Economic development, human health and ecosystems are inseparably linked to sufficient availability of freshwater.</p> <p>The International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR) recognized water scarcity and droughts as a Significant Water Management Issue of basin-wide importance. Hence, the issue is addressed in the frame of the ICPDR in a transboundary context, and coordinated actions need to be taken to strengthen capacities and increase resilience of the Danube River Basin as a whole. DWP support will allow to contribute with international experiences and World Bank expertise to the discussion process in the international Danube River Basin.</p>	
Target Indicator(s) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PDO Indicator One: [NUMBER] of target countries in which regulatory and policy recommendations for the water sector have been presented and discussed by decision makers • Intermediate Result Indicator Two: [NUMBER] of sector regulation and policy reviews conducted in water security topics 	
Team <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raimund Mair • Kathia Havens • Birgit Vogel and Adam Kovacs (ICPDR) 	
Partners and responsibilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ICPDR • Global Water Partnership • EU Strategy for the Danube Region • European Commission 	
Timeline <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spring 2024: Danube Drought Risk Management Workshop • Follow-up: Targeted support according to key topics to be addressed 	
Status In autumn 2023, discussions took place between the DWP team, the ICPDR Secretariat, as well as with GWP on the planned and ongoing activities on drought risk management in the Danube River Basin. It was agreed to join forces on the topic to strengthen capacities for drought risk management in the Danube River Basin. As next step, a Danube Drought Risk Management Workshop is planned to be organized, which will allow to discuss the specific follow-up actions and define further support needs.	

RC - REGIONAL CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

RC.1: IAWD strengthening support	
Led by	IAWD
Objective <p>The objective of this activity is to support the transition of IAWD into a financially self-sustaining organization financed out of public financial resources as well as membership fees and payment for services and projects.</p>	
Target audience	IAWD General Assembly; IAWD Board of Directors; IAWD President; IAWD Staff; IAWD supportive development partners (MoF, WB, SECO)
Description and outcomes <p>This activity will support the activities related to strengthening the IAWD to become a financially self-sustaining organization, through reviewing and improving the institutional set-up of IAWD, strengthening of the membership base, and identifying of external funding sources. It will also build on the restructuring process that has already happened in the course of 2022 and included among others the merge of the IAWD Technical Secretariat and IAWD Secretariat.</p> <p>More specifically, the activities will include consultancy services to support IAWD in improving its institutional set-up (e.g. the development of a Roadmap “Ensuring sustainability beyond the Danube Water Program”), the organization of consultation meetings with different governing structures of IAWD (general assembly, board), and the implementation of the institutional improvement actions.</p> <p>In addition, actions under this activity will include the development of a membership strategy, with the objective of enlarging the membership base in all its categories, while consolidating the relationship with existing members through enhancing the value proposition of IAWD.</p> <p>Lastly, actions under this activity will be focused around exploring new funding opportunities for IAWD, along with the exploration of new or strengthening of existing partnerships with relevant organizations as well as donors/IFIs.</p>	
Target Indicator(s) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PDO Indicator Four: Cumulative income generated by IAWD from the implementation of DWP activities (in EUR) • Intermediate Level Results Indicator Seven: [Number] of new members joining IAWD • Intermediate Level Results Indicator Eight: Cumulative amount of co-funding received supporting the implementation of Danube Water Program activities (in EUR) 	
Team <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elisabeta Poci (Lead) • Katerina Schilling • Walter Kling 	

Partners and responsibilities

- IAWD Governing Bodies
- IAWD Team
- WB (DWP Team)
- SECO
- Consulting firm(s)

Timeline

- Ongoing: membership recruitment
- January 2023: Launch of IAWD membership satisfaction survey and development of action plan for membership expansion and strengthening
- March 2023: Joint workshop with IAWD staff and Board to discuss IAWD development and sustainability
- May 2023: Donor's coordination meeting (pre DWC meeting)
- June 2023: Submission of RCDN+ project proposal including activities related to IAWD Strengthening
- July 2023: Development of IAWD work plan for the period July 2023 to December 2025
- September 2023: Approval of IAWD work plan by the IAWD Board
- Autumn 2023: Consultancy on IAWD Road Map "Ensuring sustainability beyond the Danube Water Program"
- December 2023: Kick-off meeting with Aqua Publica Europea to organize the peer-exchange on advocacy and lobbying towards the EU level
- January 2024: Launch of IAWD membership satisfaction survey
- May 2024: Presentation of Road Map at the IAWD General Assembly

Status

In March 2023, IAWD organized a Board meeting including a 1,5 day retreat with IAWD Secretariat and Board members in Sofia, Bulgaria. At the Board meeting, the Association Development Manager has presented (i) a review of the IAWD membership, (ii) potentials for expanding the membership base, (iii) options for increasing the membership revenues, (iv) the results of the membership survey and (v) different scenarios of an IAWD Budget post 2025 as a basis for follow-up discussions during the retreat. The scenarios highlighted that in addition to membership increase third-party funding will be needed to maintain the work of the Secretariat. At the retreat four main areas have been reviewed in varying formats, which are (i) IAWD Membership, (ii) Future Funding and Financing Strategy, (iii) IAWD Governance and (iv) Building Partnerships. The outcome of the retreat was consolidated in short-term and mid-term actions and were presented at the recent Board meeting on 31 May.

Based on the Board's approval of the retreat results an IAWD work plan was developed by the Secretariat for the period mid-2023 to end of 2025 outlining the activities guiding the association into a post DWP future and approved by the Board in September 2023. In the same meeting the Secretariat presented the Terms of Reference for a consultancy related to the development of a Strategic Plan with a clear focus on financial sustainability. The ToRs have been amended based on the input by the Board and were finally approved in the meeting in November 2023. The new objective is the development of a Roadmap "Ensuring sustainability beyond the Danube Water Program". Another activity is the revision and update of the IAWD Statutes, for which the Terms of Reference have been approved as well. Procurement for both activities is currently ongoing. Finally, IAWD has received a grant under the RCDN+ project, which also includes activities related to IAWD Strengthening, e.g. the establishment of a Customer Relation Management tool or a peer-exchange on advocacy and lobbying on EU level with Aqua Publica Europea.

RC.2: Danube Learning Partnership for sustainable WSS services (D-LeaP)

Led by IAWD

Objective

The objective of this activity is to consolidate D-LeaP, as one of the key legacy products of DWP, in order to make it financially self-sustainable through attracting more water utilities to join the D-LeaP Programs, as well as identification of additional funds that can be utilized to support the delivery of the programs at a larger scale.

Target audience Participating utilities in the region, national water utility associations

Description and outcomes

The major focus of this activity will be the solidification of the roll-outs of existing programs of D-LeaP, including the second cycle of the newly developed Utility Management Training (UMT) program (which is expected to be almost fully financed by participation fees and corporate support, and only 10% of the required funds are allocated under DWP funds). The new Access to Financing program is expected to be rolled-out in additional countries next to Bosnia and Herzegovina (interest was expressed from six associations during the last D-LeaP Committee Council meeting held on May 31, 2023 in Vienna). The specific Access to Financing Hubs that will be finally established are still to be defined after the delivery of the ToT at the end of 2023. Following the approval of the D-LeaP work plan for 2023 at the last D-LeaP Committee Council meeting, the DWP Work Plan has been updated with details on the programs that will be rolled-out by specific Hubs. The planning and allocation of funds to the Hubs this year was done following a set of pre-conditions and criteria for funding which were adopted by the D-LeaP Committee Council at their previous meeting in January 2023. The introduction of this set of criteria aims to ensure transparency and fairness in the distribution of funds.

Following the experiences with D-LeaP program delivery during the Covid-19 pandemic, actions under this activity will include the evaluation of each program by the respective Technical Partners, in order to identify a suitable mixture of virtual and physical training, including the e-learning components in an effort to reduce delivery costs for the programs.

IAWD will continue building on ongoing discussions with bilateral donors and IFIs to secure funding for participants from utilities receiving investment. Furthermore, IAWD will support the national Hubs/national water utility associations, in their efforts to strengthen their linkages with their respective national institutions, in order to receive support for the implementation of D-LeaP programs. Such support can include regular national roundtables of relevant actors such as government representatives, regulators, national donors and IFIs, local government associations and national water utility associations.

Resources scheduled under RS.3 are partially moved here, as the originally planned activity (Awareness Raising Campaign) has been restructured and will focus on the promotion of D-LeaP programs towards the government/regulators/donors/IFIs community. The format will include dedicated leaflets and/or presentations adjusted to the respective target audience as well as exchanges with the target audience in cooperation with the national associations at their annual events, e.g. ADKOM Conference, Joint Balkans Conference and Exhibition, etc.

Lastly, the actions under this activity include efforts to create synergies with other ongoing programs/initiatives to create opportunities for utilization of D-LeaP programs and at the same time identify and secure external funding that can support the implementation of the D-LeaP activities beyond the 4th Phase of DWP. One of these potential funding sources identified is the already ongoing RCDN+. IAWD has already signed a grant agreement with GIZ under RCDN+ including activities and resources to support implementation of D-LeaP programs as well as strengthening of D-LeaP. In the same way, the DWP Team is already exchanging with the WB Team leading the Utilities of the Future - Center of Excellence (UoF-CoE) to find complementary with the ongoing D-LeaP activities. Lastly, in October,

additional sources of financing were secured from GWSP to support the implementation of Access to Financing and Asset Management programs.

Target Indicator(s)

- **PDO Indicator Two:** [Number] of Hubs delivering a capacity building program
- **PDO Indicator Three:** [Number] of participating utilities that have improved their operational performance as a result of a capacity building program under the D-LeaP
- **PDO Indicator Four:** Cumulative income generated by IAWD from the implementation of DWP activities (in EUR)
- **Intermediate Level Results Indicator Six:** [Number] of participating utilities that have completed an operational performance improvement program under the D-LeaP
- **Intermediate Level Results Indicator Eight:** Cumulative amount of co-funding received supporting the implementation of Danube Water Program activities (in EUR)

Team

- Elisabeta Poci (Lead)
- Katerina Schilling
- D-LeaP Committee Council

Partners and responsibilities

- The national water utility associations will provide leadership and guidance to this initiative through the D-LeaP Committee Council
- Donors and IFIs (EIB, EBRD, KFW, SECO, World Bank)
- RCDN+
- UoF-CoE

Timeline

- January 2023: D-LeaP Committee Council Meeting and development of the D-LeaP Work Plan
- February 2023: Launching of the 2nd cycle of UMT
- March 2023: UN Water Conference, New York
- May 2023: D-LeaP Committee Council Meeting (pre DWC meeting)
- May 2023: Donor's coordination meeting (pre DWC meeting)
- October 2023: Additional sources of funding secured from RCDN+ and GWSP
- November 2023: Work started on developing the Quality Management Framework for D-LeaP, with funds from RCDN+
- November 2023: First D-LeaP promotional meeting in the frame of the Balkans Joint Conference and Exhibition organized as Stakeholder meeting jointly with IAWD members SHUKALB, SHUKOS and GIZ
- December 2023: RCDN+ Networking meeting in Vienna
- January 2024: D-LeaP Committee Council Meeting and development of the D-LeaP Work Plan for 2024

Status

The D-LeaP Work Plan 2023 has been already developed and was approved at the last D-LeaP Committee Council (CC) meeting organized as hybrid event on May 31st in Vienna, back-to-back with the Danube Water Conference. As presented at the D-LeaP CC meeting in May, the Secretariat ranked each roll-out submitted by the national associations based on the points collected during the evaluation against the criteria for funding. Based on this exercise where priority was given to the highest ranking roll-outs, the overall available funds for 2023 both from DWP Phase 4 as well as the collected D-LeaP Administration fees, and also the principle to support at least one Hub for association, the IAWD Secretariat developed the D-LeaP Work Plan for 2023.

Overall, fifteen Hub roll-outs have been planned for 2023, including the UBP and UMT program under the Danube Hub operated by IAWD and the two UBP Hubs of BWA and SHUKOS-SHUKALB (detailed

information on the UBP Hubs is provided below in the UBP section). Funds have been allocated accordingly as described in more detail below in the reporting for each D-LeaP program.

In the D-LeaP Work Plan 2023, it was pointed out that most of the Hubs would require additional sources of funding for delivery, and RCDN+ was identified as the major source of those additional funds. Thus, the Secretariat has been in continuous exchange with RCDN+ and the Hubs to coordinate the planning of Hub's funding of D-LeaP programs under their RCDN+ grant proposals. As part of this coordination the Secretariat has supported the Hubs in revising their Financial Models in order to reflect the RCDN+ support needed and to be submitted to GIZ for receiving support under the respective RCDN+ Grant Agreements. In addition, the Secretariat has prepared the respective Hub agreements to be signed with the Hubs. Overall, the implementation of the D-LeaP Programs this year has been delayed, as most of the national associations have delayed the securing of the additional funds needed by RCDN+. As of November 2023, only SHUKALB has an active grant agreement with RCDN+. The other associations are either expecting to get a signed agreement or are still under preparation of their project proposal with RCDN+.

In addition, IAWD under its recent RCDN+ grant is working closely with RCDN+ to coordinate the work on developing a Quality Control Framework for D-LeaP, utilizing its existing set of quality standards as well as those developed by RCDN. In December 2023, RCDN+ has organized a Networking meeting in the premises of the World Bank in Vienna and co-organised by IAWD to discuss the development of regional Quality Standards.

As part of its RCDN+ grant IAWD will also develop Trainer's Guides for each D-LeaP program, which is another contribution to enhancing the quality of D-LeaP.

Finally, the first D-LeaP promotional meeting took place in the frame of the Balkans Joint Conference and Exhibition and was organized as Stakeholder meeting jointly with IAWD members SHUKALB, SHUKOS and GIZ. The objective of the event was to facilitate the dialogue and ensure a better coordination among the stakeholders in the national and regional level on capacity development measures carried out in the water and sanitation services sector in Albania and Kosovo. Around 25 stakeholders were present and the summary report including key messages and next steps was submitted by SHUKALB to all participants.

RC 2.1: D-LeaP Utility Management Training program	
Led by	IAWD
Objective The purpose of the activity is to offer a Utility Management training program to support senior utility managers in developing and improving skills in managing their utility.	
Target audience	Senior managers of utilities
Description and outcomes The Utility Management Training (UMT) has been designed under phase 3 of the DWP as a two years master class to “equip” current and future water-sector managers with tools and techniques to support their decision making. The first roll-out has started in May 2021 and concluded successfully end of 2022. Based on the experiences collected under the first cycle, the eight modules have been reduced to six, which are delivered in a four-months period.	
Target Indicator(s) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PDO Indicator Two: [Number] of Hubs delivering a capacity building program • PDO Indicator Three: [Number] of participating utilities that have improved their operational performance as a result of a capacity building program under the D-LeaP • PDO Indicator Four: Cumulative income generated by IAWD from the implementation of DWP activities (in EUR) • Intermediate Level Results Indicator Six: [Number] of participating utilities that have completed an operational performance improvement program under the D-LeaP • Intermediate Level Results Indicator Eight: Cumulative amount of co-funding received supporting the implementation of Danube Water Program activities (in EUR) 	
Team <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Katerina Schilling (lead) • Rado Russev (UMT coordinator) • Elisabeta Poci • Emilija Milunovic 	
Partners and responsibilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participating water utilities • Sofia University • Water Utilities in the region hosting and supporting the UMT modules 	
Timeline <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fall 2022: Completion of the first cycle of the UMT • January 2023: Securing of GWSP funds for scholarships • January 2023: Contracting of technical partners for specific modules among which Energie AG and UTSVI • January 2023: Renewal of MoU with Sofia University to act as Academy Partner • February 2023: Launch of the second cycle of UMT • March 2023: Utility Economics, Finance and Regulation module in Sofia, Bulgaria • June 2023: Commercial Management and Customer Services module in Ceske Budejovice, Czech Republic • November 2023: Asset Management and Investment Planning module in Belgrade, Serbia • January 2024: Starting preparations for UMT cycle 3 • March 2024: Network Operations and Energy Efficiency module in Sofia, Bulgaria • June 2024: Efficient Plant Management module in Bulgaria, North Macedonia and Albania 	

- November 2024: Water Safety Planning and Business Continuity Management in Vienna, Austria

Status

The second cycle of the holistic Utility Management Training (UMT) was launched in February 2023 and is again supported by GWSP scholarships, covering up to 70% of the participation fee of the selected scholars. In total, 16 participants have joined the second cycle of UMT, out of which 10 have been selected by the selection committee to receive a GWSP scholarship. As one of the scholars dropped out, nine participants finally receive financial support.

The first module on Utility Economics, Finance and Regulation took place in March in Sofia with Sofia Water as utility host, while the second module on Commercial Management and Customer Services was hosted by Energie AG and CEVAK in Ceske Budejovice. November saw the successful completion of the third module on Asset Management and Investment Planning, which was organized in Belgrade in November, with Belgrade Water as a host and UTVSI in the role of the competence partner.

The three remaining modules are already scheduled for March, June and November 2024 and the team agreed to start the preparations of UMT cycle 3 in early 2024.

RC.2.2: D-LeaP Asset Management program

Led by IAWD

Objective

Create greater awareness about and improve asset management practices in leading utilities of the region including establishing a mechanism to secure long-term capacity to support and assist utilities in carrying out asset management related activities, in order to improve efficiency and transparency in managing water and sanitation infrastructure.

Target audience Interested utilities of the region; local government representatives; national water associations

Description and outcomes

The Asset Management program was developed under Phase 1 of DWP and it was further developed under Phase 2 with support from the SEEAM project, becoming one of the D-LeaP technical programs. The AM program was developed and implemented under the SEEAM project with the support of the Hydrocomp Enterprise as the technical partner. The program utilizes the EDAMS software and takes the utilities through a three stage process: (i) Silver level which is focused on setting up and maintaining a validated network geographical database, effectively performing proper Network Data Management, (ii) Gold level which is focused on setting up and maintaining a validated network geographical database, effectively performing proper Network Data Management, and (iii) Platinum level which is focused on enabling the remaining activities of Integrated Asset Management namely: Commercial Data Management, Water Quality Management, Distribution/ NRW Management, Rehabilitation/ Maintenance Planning and Infrastructure Planning. There are four AM Hubs covering the respective countries: UTVSI operating in Serbia, North Macedonia, and Montenegro, SHUKOS operating in Kosovo, SHUKALB operating in Albania, and AQUASAN operating in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The GIZ SEEAM came to an end in the summer of 2022 and with that the financial support that was provided to the Hubs. Two of the Hubs are completely on hold, AQUASAN and UTVSI, while the other two, SHUKALB and SHUKOS, are struggling to sustain themselves.

This activity will provide support to the Hubs in continuing their roll-out of the AM program.

Target Indicator(s)

- **PDO Indicator Two:** [Number] of Hubs delivering a capacity building program
- **PDO Indicator Three:** [Number] of participating utilities that have improved their operational performance as a result of a capacity building program under the D-LeaP
- **PDO Indicator Four:** Cumulative income generated by IAWD from the implementation of DWP activities (in EUR)
- **Intermediate Level Results Indicator Six:** [Number] of participating utilities that have completed an operational performance improvement program under the D-LeaP
- **Intermediate Level Results Indicator Eight:** Cumulative amount of co-funding received supporting the implementation of Danube Water Program activities (in EUR)

Team

- Elisabeta Poci (lead)
- Katerina Schilling
- Emilija Milunovic

Partners and responsibilities

- AM Hub for Serbia, Montenegro and North Macedonia operated by the Association for Water Technology and Sanitary Engineering (UTVSI) in cooperation with the Public Utility Company 'Belgrade Waterworks and Sewerage' (BWS)
- AM Hub for Bosnia and Herzegovina operated by AQUASAN Network
- AM Hub for Albania operated by SHUKALB
- AM Hub for Kosovo operated by SHUKOS

- Hydro-Comp Enterprises (HC) as Technical Partner

Timeline

- Summer 2022: End of the SEEAM Project
- July 2023: Hub Agreement signed with SHUKOS
- August 2023: Kick-off of Hub roll-outs
- September 2023: HUB agreement signed with SHUKALB
- October 2023: Secured GWSP funds for additional support to AM Hubs
- December 2023: Assignment of GWSP funds to the interested Hubs

Status

Three AM Hubs, SHUKALB, SHUKOS and UTSVI, prepared and submitted roll-out plans requesting financial support from D-LeaP in the beginning of 2023. Given the limited funds available, financial support has been provided only to SHUKALB Hub, with a combination of funds from DWP Phase 4 and the collected D-LeaP Administration fees. A more detailed status for each Hub is provided in here as well as in the D-LeaP Work Plan 2023.

- Although the SEEAM Project has been concluded, **SHUKOS Hub** has managed to continue work by getting the 7 RWC in Kosovo in October 2022 to renew their contracts with Hydrocomp Enterprises for the next three years 2023 – 2025. Until now work continued without any gaps of service by the Hub and Hydrocomp, and SHUKOS organized more than ten online meetings. While SHUKOS has managed to ensure continuity of the program, the challenge remains for the Hub to cover its own running costs in managing the program. So far the RWC are only paying to Hydrocomp the license fees, and no fee is being paid to the Hub to cover the coordination and training services provided by the Hub Staff. Thus, the Hub is in need for financial support in order to cover its expenses for running the program and to pay the D-LeaP Administration fees. SHUKOS AM Hub has already submitted a request for support to the IAWD Secretariat under the light of the newly secured GWSP funds. In addition, SHUKOS has requested some support from RCDN+ as part of its project proposal. The contract with RCDN+ is expected to be signed end of the year 2023.
- With the 2023 planned roll-out of the program **SHUKALB Hub** aims to reach ten water utilities. In addition to the funding requested from D-LeaP the Hub still needs to mobilize third party funding, in order to roll-out the program, and the utilities will have to pay their registration fee to Hydrocomp and SHUKALB. Right now, SHUKALB is only offering the full services to Tirana Water Utility, with which it has an active contract. SHUKALB is still looking to identify the additional source of funding that is needed for this program. Under these conditions, the Hub is revising the roll-out plan to make any modifications that can support the implementation of the program. The delivery has been postponed to the beginning of 2024.
- The roll-out plan prepared by **UTSVI Hub** builds on the experience of the Hub in implementing the AM Program and it aims at raising awareness on AM methodology and importance, improving the understanding and cooperation between Local Government Units (LGUs) and Public Utility Companies (PUCs), working on a top-down AM approach with LGUs involved, improvement the existing data and preparation of AM Action Plans as a future AM road map. The Hub needs financial support for roll-out. No funds from DWP Phase 4 or the collected D-LeaP Administration fees have been allocated and therefore the delivery was depending on securing the funds needed, which led to a delay of the roll-out. Under the recently secured funding from GWSP, UTSVI has submitted a roll-out plan for delivery of the AM program focused on one utility. The IAWD Secretariat is currently reviewing the application of UTSVI and will follow up with a Hub Agreement upon approval.
- Asset Management operated by **AQUASAN Hub** in BiH: after the successful delivery of several cycles, and the end of SEEAM project, and under the recently secured funding from GWSP, AQUASAN has submitted a roll-out plan for delivery of the AM program using it to create a dialogue platform for utilities and stakeholders. The IAWD Secretariat is currently reviewing the application of AQUASAN and will follow up with a Hub Agreement upon approval.

RC.2.3: D-LeaP Energy Efficiency program	
Led by	IAWD
Objective Create a long-term capacity in the region (through National Water Utility Associations) to assist water utilities in achieving energy efficiency improvements.	
Target audience	WSS utilities of the region; National WSS water associations
Description and outcomes <p>The Energy Efficiency (EE) program is another technical program of D-LeaP developed under Phase 2 of DWP, with ECONOLER as technical partner. The Program supports participating WSS utility companies in collecting, auditing and analyzing data related to their energy use and developing investment programs based on that data to support the reduction of energy costs and increase energy efficiency. The Program also assists in securing the financial resources to match the investments needs for energy efficiency. Three EE Hubs have been established: SHUKALB in Albania, WASS in Serbia, and AQUASAN in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Out of these three, only AQUASAN had the first roll-out in October 2018 in BiH.</p> <p>This activity will support the new as well as the existing Hubs interested to roll-out the Energy Efficiency program.</p>	
Target Indicator(s) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PDO Indicator Two: [Number] of Hubs delivering a capacity building program • PDO Indicator Three: [Number] of participating utilities that have improved their operational performance as a result of a capacity building program under the D-LeaP • PDO Indicator Four: Cumulative income generated by IAWD from the implementation of DWP activities (in EUR) • Intermediate Level Results Indicator Six: [Number] of participating utilities that have completed an operational performance improvement program under the D-LeaP • Intermediate Level Results Indicator Eight: Cumulative amount of co-funding received supporting the implementation of Danube Water Program activities (in EUR) 	
Team <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elisabeta Poci (lead) • Katerina Schilling • Emilija Milunovic 	
Partners and responsibilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical Partner (Econoler) • EE Hub in BiH operated by AQUASAN Network • EE Hub in Bulgaria operated by BWA 	
Timeline <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • July 2023: Hub Agreements signed with AQUASAN (second roll-out), BWA (first roll-out) • October 2023: Kick-off of AQUASAN Hub roll-out • December 2024: Contracting of AQUASAN Hub to provide support to BWA Hub in their first roll-out • January 2024: Kick off of BWA Hub roll-out 	
Status The Energy Efficiency program delivery is planned for the following two Hubs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AQUASAN plans to have a second roll-out of EE for Bosnia and Herzegovina, targeting ten utilities. The second delivery of this program was delayed due to the Covid-19 outbreak, as Energy Efficiency relies substantially on hands-on exercises carried out in face-to-face 	

workshops, which were not possible in the past years. The delivery is supported by a Supplementary Grant already disbursed under DWP Phase 3. AQUASAN Hub already kicked off the program delivery in October with an awareness raising and promotional workshop for the water utilities and will continue to roll-out the full program in 2024.

- **BWA** will be having the first roll-out of EE for Bulgaria for up to seven water utilities (after a promotional roll-out back in 2017). Although funds have been already allocated partly from DWP Phase 4 as well as the collected D-LeaP Administration fees (see D-LeaP Work Plan 2023), the roll-out has been delayed due to the lack of additional third-party funding. Recently, BWA has secured some funds from the Water and Sewerage Holding- VEKA Group Trader. Thus, the first delivery originally planned for 2023 is now under preparations. IAWD has also recognized the need of BWA for guidance with implementation, as this is the first full cycle roll out of the EE Hub, and for that reason in agreement with BWA is preparing to contract AQUASAN, as an experienced Hub, to act as Technical Partner. The role of AQUASAN is to provide support to BWA in preparing and implementing the EE program, while monitoring its implementation and ensuring the quality of delivery. This will speed up the start of the implementation by BWA which now is postponed to the beginning of 2024.

RC. 2.4: D-LeaP Commercial Efficiency program	
Led by	IAWD
Objective Establish a capacity among national water utility associations for delivery of support to utilities in commercial efficiency practices.	
Target audience	WSS utilities of the region; National WSS water associations
Description and outcomes The Commercial Efficiency (CE) program is another technical program of D-LeaP, developed under Phase 2, with technical partner Valu Add Management Services. The Program supports participating utility companies in collecting, auditing and analyzing data related to commercial efficiency and developing actions based on that data to support reduction of costs, increase revenue collection and overall commercial efficiency. It offers a standardized and detailed approach for business planning and provides tools and actions to improve commercial efficiency. Two CE Hubs have been established: SHUKALB for Albania and Kosovo, and ADKOM for North Macedonia. This activity will support the new as well as the existing Hubs interested to roll-out the Commercial Efficiency program.	
Target Indicator(s) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PDO Indicator Two: [Number] of Hubs delivering a capacity building program • PDO Indicator Three: [Number] of participating utilities that have improved their operational performance as a result of a capacity building program under the D-LeaP • PDO Indicator Four: Cumulative income generated by IAWD from the implementation of DWP activities (in EUR) • Intermediate Level Results Indicator Six: [Number] of participating utilities that have completed an operational performance improvement program under the D-LeaP • Intermediate Level Results Indicator Eight: Cumulative amount of co-funding received supporting the implementation of Danube Water Program activities (in EUR) 	
Team <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elisabeta Poci (lead) • Katerina Schilling • Emilija Milunovic 	
Partners and responsibilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical Partner Valu Add • CE Hub in North Macedonia operated by ADKOM • CE Hub in Romania operated by ARA 	
Timeline <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • June 2023: Hub Agreement with ARA signed • October 2023: Hub Agreement signed with ADKOM (third roll-out) • January 2024: Kick-off of Hub roll-out 	
Status According to the D-LeaP Work Plan the Commercial Efficiency program is planned to be rolled out in the following Hubs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ARA has planned to roll out for the first time the Commercial Efficiency program in Romania for five utilities in 2023. ARA had a pilot delivery of the program in the past and will have a full roll-out. The Hub Agreement has been already established. Implementation of the has been delayed to the beginning of 2024 due to various issues at the national level and other activities scheduled in the same period as the Hub's launch. 	

- **ADKOM** in North Macedonia plans to have a third roll-out of CE program for twelve utilities. Funds from DWP Phase 4 as well as the collected D-LeaP Administration fees have been already allocated but not to the full amount requested by the Hub. As the delivery depends on the availability of the rest of funds needed, and ADKOM does not yet have a contract with RCDN+, the implementation of the program has been delayed and is now expected to start beginning of 2024, upon the signing of their RCDN+ Grant Agreement.

RC.2.5: D-LeaP Water Safety Planning and Crisis Management: Business Continuity Essentials for Risk Management program

Objective

To create capacities among the national water associations for delivery of support to water utilities in the Danube region for developing and implementing water safety and business continuity planning in order to improve preparedness and build resilience of water and sanitation services to natural disasters (e.g., earthquakes, floods, drought).

Target audience

WSS utilities of the region; national water associations

Description and outcomes

The D-LeaP Water Safety Planning and Crisis Management program (WSP) was developed under the Phase 2 with the engagement of a consortium of technical partners led by Infraprotect. Through this program the utilities learn to identify potential hazards and how to plan and respond to these incidents for fast response and recovery in the event of a crisis disaster. In addition, practitioners receive practical scenario-based training for decision making under uncertainty. In 2020, under the 3rd Phase of DWP, the curriculum was updated to also incorporate the response mechanisms to a pandemic such as Covid-19.

Four Hubs have been already established: SHUKALB in Albania, SHUKOS in Kosovo, ADKOM in North Macedonia, and Energie AG in Czech Republic.

Target Indicator(s)

- **PDO Indicator Two:** [Number] of Hubs delivering a capacity building program
- **PDO Indicator Three:** [Number] of participating utilities that have improved their operational performance as a result of a capacity building program under the D-LeaP
- **PDO Indicator Four:** Cumulative income generated by IAWD from the implementation of DWP activities (in EUR)
- **Intermediate Level Results Indicator Six:** [Number] of participating utilities that have completed an operational performance improvement program under the D-LeaP
- **Intermediate Level Results Indicator Eight:** Cumulative amount of co-funding received supporting the implementation of Danube Water Program activities (in EUR)

Team

- Elisabeta Poci (lead)
- Katerina Schilling
- Emilija Milunovic

Partners and responsibilities

- Technical Partner Protectum Solutions
- WSP Hub in North Macedonia operated by ADKOM
- WSP Hub in Albania operated by SHUKALB
- WSP Hub in Kosovo operated by SHUKOS
- WSP Hub in Czech Republic operated by Energie AG
- WSP Hub in Serbia operated by UTVSI

Timeline

- September 2023: Hub Agreements signed with SHUKALB
- December 2023/ January 2024: Kick off of Hub roll-outs

Status

From the Hub submissions for the year 2023, the following three Hubs are planning to roll out the WSP program:

- **UTVSI** was planning the first roll-out of the WSP program in the fall of 2023, for a total of six utilities in Serbia. Funds from Phase 4 as well as the collected D-LeaP Administration fees

have been allocated, but not to the full amount needed by the Hub. As the delivery depends on the availability of the rest of funds needed and UTVSI does not yet have a contract with RCDN+, the implementation of the program is now expected to start beginning of 2024, upon the signing of their RCDN+ Grant Agreement. In addition, IAWD plans to provide Technical Partner support to UTVSI as this is the first-time roll-out of WSP in Serbia.

- **SHUKOS** is planning their second roll-out of the WSP program for the seven regional water utilities in Kosovo. Funds from Phase 4 and the collected D-LeaP Administration fees have been allocated, but not to the full overall amount needed by the Hub. As the delivery depends on the availability of the rest of funds needed and SHUKOS does not yet have a contract with RCDN+, the implementation is expected to start beginning of 2024, upon signing of their RCDN+ Grant Agreement.
- **SHUKALB** is planning the third roll-out of the WSP program for five regional water utilities in Albania. No funds from Phase 4 or the collected D-LeaP Administration fees have been allocated. The delivery will rely fully on the securing of the funds needed by the Hub. SHUKALB has already signed the grant agreement with RCDN+, as part of which it has planned some funding for the implementation of the Hub and has started with recruitment of utilities with delivery planned for beginning of 2024.

RC.2.6: D-LeaP Non-Revenue Water Management program	
Led by	IAWD
Objective Facilitate learning among utilities about non-revenue water actions through the exchange of positive experiences, knowledge, information, and best practices and to create long-term capability of support to utilities to be given by water utility associations.	
Target audience	WSS utilities of the region; national water associations
Description and outcomes <p>The Non-Revenue Water (NRW) program is one of the key technical programs of D-LeaP, that was developed under Phase 2. The technical partner in developing the program was Una Consulting. The NRW program raises awareness of physical and commercial water losses among the participating utility companies and of activities to be undertaken to decrease them to consequently improve the operational and financial performance. Furthermore, the program develops specific tools for diagnostic approach with the aim to increase understanding of where the losses are and how they can be tackled.</p> <p>There are two NRW Hubs established: AQUASAN in Bosnia and Herzegovina and UVCG in Montenegro. This activity will support the roll-out of existing and/ or new NRW Hubs.</p>	
Target Indicator(s) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PDO Indicator Two: [Number] of Hubs delivering a capacity building program • PDO Indicator Three: [Number] of participating utilities that have improved their operational performance as a result of a capacity building program under the D-LeaP • PDO Indicator Four: Cumulative income generated by IAWD from the implementation of DWP activities (in EUR) • Intermediate Level Results Indicator Six: [Number] of participating utilities that have completed an operational performance improvement program under the D-LeaP • Intermediate Level Results Indicator Eight: Cumulative amount of co-funding received supporting the implementation of Danube Water Program activities (in EUR) 	
Team <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elisabeta Poci (lead) • Katerina Schilling • Emilija Milunovic 	
Partners and responsibilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical Partner Una Consulting • NRW Hub in BiH operated by AQUASAN Network • NRW Hub in Montenegro operated by UVCG 	
Timeline <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • December 2024: Hub Agreements signed with UVCG • First quarter 2024: Kick off of Hub roll-out 	
Status <p>The NRW Hub in Montenegro was planning to have a second roll-out of the program in 2023, for six utilities in Montenegro. Funds from DWP Phase 4 as well as the collected D-LeaP Administration fees have been already allocated but not to the full amount needed by the Hub. As the delivery depends on the availability of the rest of funds needed and UVCG does not yet have a contract with RCDN+, the implementation of the program is now expected to start beginning of 2024, upon the signing of their RCDN+ Grant Agreement.</p>	

RC.2.7: D-LeaP Access to Financing: Financing Municipal Water Supply and Sanitation Services Program

Led by IAWD

Objective

To support the improvement of the overall financing frameworks in countries of the region by improving the knowledge, understanding and capacities of basic financial aspects related with the operation and management of WSS utilities on a financially viable path amongst different water and sanitation stakeholders, with a special focus on general and financial managers of WSS utilities or other relevant officials including key positions within local government units (municipalities) with administrative and decision making roles over WSS services , by fostering policy dialogue about need to work on improving performance, financial viability and credit worthiness of WSS utilities to access financing through national policies and programs.

Target audience WSS utilities of the region; National WSS water associations; Regulatory Agencies; Local Government officials; Line Ministries' officials. Other Water and Sanitation sector stakeholders.

Description and outcomes

The D-LeaP Access to Financing (AF) program was developed under Phase 2 with the World Bank as a key Technical Partner of IAWD, based on training materials developed by World Bank for global level adopted and improved to the local context to contribute to the modernization and turnaround of WSS participating utilities. The main goal of the program is to improve the skills of WSS utility representatives and other water sector stakeholders on basic financial concepts and management of financial aspects, which are essential to foster understanding on how to effectively manage the revenues and cover costs, including accounting practices, asset management, tariff setting, evaluating investments and accessing financing. The program has been already implemented once, as a pilot by the AQUASAN Hub in BiH, on 2021.

Based on the pilot delivery, this activity will support the Training of Trainers for all interested associations as well as provide support for roll-out of the individual Hubs..

Target Indicator(s)

- **PDO Indicator Two:** [Number] of Hubs delivering a capacity building program
- **PDO Indicator Three:** [Number] of participating utilities that have improved their operational performance as a result of a capacity building program under the D-LeaP
- **PDO Indicator Four:** Cumulative income generated by IAWD from the implementation of DWP activities (in EUR)
- **Intermediate Level Results Indicator Six:** [Number] of participating utilities that have completed an operational performance improvement program under the D-LeaP
- **Intermediate Level Results Indicator Eight:** Cumulative amount of co-funding received supporting the implementation of Danube Water Program activities (in EUR)

Team

- Elisabeta Poci (lead)
- Katerina Schilling
- Emilija Milunovic

Timeline

- August 2023: Contracting of Una Consulting as a Technical Partner for developing and implementing the Training of Trainers
- October 2023: Training of Trainers event in Podgorica, Montenegro
- October 2023: Secured additional Funds from GWSP and RCDN+ to support the implementation of AF program

- January 2024: Draft Roll-Out plans to be submitted by the interested Hubs prior to the D-LeaP Committee Council meeting

Status

So far Access to Financing has seen a pilot delivery in BiH in 2021 with 19 participating utilities. Under Phase IV, additional financial resources are mapped to allow for a delivery in additional countries. A dedicated presentation about the program has been provided at the D-LeaP Committee Council meeting. In addition, associations have been informed that a Training of Trainers is planned for autumn 2023, in order to roll-out the first Hubs in 2024. At the D-LeaP Committee Council Meeting held on 31st May, six Hubs indicated interest to send trainers to the ToT.

On October 23 to 27 the IAWD Secretariat organized the Training of Trainers (ToT) for the Access to Financing program. The ToT was delivered by the Technical Partner Una Consulting in Podgorica, Montenegro. In total, 11 participants from 4 national associations (SHUKALB, ADKOM, ARA, and UVCG) attended the ToT. The IAWD Secretariat will support the association in establishing AF Hubs, and in rolling out the AF program starting in 2024, by providing also the needed support from DWP and additional sources of funding available.

RC.3: Utility Benchmarking Program (UBP)	
Led by	IAWD
Objective <p>The objective of this activity is to continuously operate the UBP Hubs on a sustainable basis and expand this network further to engage not only more utilities, but also additional national Hubs to allow for exchange and comparison at the country level. In addition, the UBP will be fully integrated into the D-LeaP including the payment of the 20% D-LeaP Administration fee.</p>	
Target audience	Utilities focusing on performance improvement, national water utility associations
Description and outcomes <p>The Utility Benchmarking Program (UBP), which is designed as a foundation program under D-LeaP, has not only raised awareness on the importance of data collection for improvement among the participating utilities but has also created a network of utilities working on performance improvement collectively under the guidance of a national or regional UBP Hub coordinator.</p> <p>The typical UBP cycle includes (1) two workshops (kick-off workshop at the beginning and the final workshop at the end of the year), (2) data collection and validation via the IAWD Utility Benchmarking Platform (IAWD UBP) and (3) the development of the UBP report.</p> <p>This activity shall support the implementation of three benchmarking cycles (2023 – 2025) including the maintenance of the IAWD UBP. In addition, it will focus on enlarging the pool of participating utilities paying the registration fee, in order to guarantee the long-term sustainability of the program.</p> <p>In addition, cooperation with existing initiatives such as the NewIBNET will also allow for better promotion of the UBP and hopefully support the onboarding of new utilities.</p> <p>Finally, the linkages to existing investment projects as well as the use of the IAWD UBP in the course of these projects are further explored.</p>	
Target Indicator(s) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PDO Indicator Two: [Number] of Hubs delivering a capacity building program • PDO Indicator Three: [Number] of participating utilities that have improved their operational performance as a result of a capacity building program under the D-LeaP • PDO Indicator Four: Cumulative income generated by IAWD from the implementation of DWP activities (in EUR) • Intermediate Level Results Indicator Six: [Number] of participating utilities that have completed an operational performance improvement program under the D-LeaP • Intermediate Level Results Indicator Eight: Cumulative amount of co-funding received supporting the implementation of Danube Water Program activities (in EUR) 	
Team <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Katerina Schilling (Lead) • Elisabeta Poci • UBP Hub coordinators 	
Partners and responsibilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utility Benchmarking Hubs, i.e. Danube Hub operated by IAWD, Bulgaria Hub operated by BWA, Albania/Kosovo Hub operated by SHUKOS and Ukraine Hub operated by Danube Water Centre Ukraine (currently on hold) • D-LeaP Committee Council • NewIBNET team • Donors and IFIs (EIB, EBRD, KFW, SECO, World Bank) 	

Timeline

- January 2023: D-LeaP Committee Council meeting
- February 2023: Kick-off of the new benchmarking cycle (for 2022 data collection)
- February 2023: Letter of Intent signed with NewIBNET
- March 2023: virtual UBP Hub coordinators meeting
- May 2023: virtual UBP Hub coordinators meeting
- 30 May 2023: UBP Danube Hub workshop back-to-back with the Danube Water Conference
- 31 May 2023: D-LeaP Committee Council meeting
- May-July 2023: Start of data collection (depending on the Hub)
- June 2023: UBP Bulgaria Hub study tour
- October 2023: virtual UBP Hub coordinators meeting
- January 2024: D-LeaP Committee Council meeting
- May 2024: UBP Danube Hub workshop back-to-back with the Danube Water Forum

Status

In 2023, three Hubs are active, i.e. the Bulgarian Hub, the Albania/Kosovo Hub and the regional Danube Hub. The Ukrainian Hub is currently on hold due to the ongoing war in Ukraine, but IAWD is in constant exchange with the former Hub coordinator Victoria Iskova to identify a suitable time for a restart.

Virtual UBP Hub Coordinators meetings were held in March and May to discuss the status of the Hubs as well as the ongoing delivery. All three Hubs are fully integrated into the D-LeaP scheme and the respective Hub Agreements have been signed. Depending on the Hub the data collection starts in the period of May to July 2023. Recruitment is an ongoing process in all three Hubs.

The Danube Hub's concluding workshop of the 2022 cycle took place on 30th May back-to-back with the 2023 Danube Water Conference. 16 utilities have signed up for the 2023 cycle, with the water utility Banja Luka supported by the EBRD FOPIP project. The final event of the 2023 cycle will be organized back-to-back with the upcoming 2024 Danube Water Forum and probably also serve as the launch event of a new Water Operators Partnership (WOP) Platform for Central and Eastern Europe supported by GWOPA.

The Albania/Kosovo took the opportunity to organize its kick-off workshop attached to the 2023 Danube Water Conference and supported the participation of its Utility Coordinators in the DWP event. The IAWD Secretariat linked the Albanian/Kosovo UBP Hub with a currently ongoing FOPIP project in RWC Gjiilan, which is carried out by the IAWD member Hydrophil. As a result, RWC Gjiilan can use the Utility Benchmarking Platform to track the performance improvement in the course of the FOPIP and a presentation was made by Hydrophil in the context of the Hub's workshop in Vienna. In addition, the participation of the Regional Water Utility Shkoder in Albania is supported by the Water Sector Performance and Investment Programme (WPIP) Municipal Infrastructure Programme V (MIP V) jointly realized by KfW, EU and SECO. In total, 10 utilities are part of the program.

The Bulgarian Hub has organized a study tour in June to conclude its last year's cycle and has launched the 2023 cycle in October with six utilities participating.

Finally, IAWD cooperates closely with the NewIBNET team and has signed a Letter of Intent in spring 2023 to act as the face of data collection efforts for NewIBNET in the Danube region. The necessary mechanisms have been established and IAWD will also support the NewIBNET team with hosting a communication and outreach staff person paid under NewIBNET and employed as IAWD staff member. For this, IAWD will receive a dedicated contract with the World Bank.

RC.4: Regional capacity building on water sector topics	
Led by	World Bank
Objective The objective of the activity is to build capacity of water sector professionals in the Danube region via cross-country knowledge transfer and experience exchange.	
Target audience	Water and Environmental Ministries, water services sector regulators, water utilities, sector professionals, other water-related stakeholders
Description and outcomes <p>The activity will include topics relevant in the context of the resilient recovery, EU's zero pollution action plan and circular economy, and will provide support to the water sector in becoming more resilient, climate-friendly and aware of their footprint via actions from different entry points, including support in: (i) development of a climate resilient and adapted WSS sector (energy efficiency and reduction of greenhouse gas emission, reduction of water losses, water reuse (in line with EU Water Reuse Regulation from 2020)), (ii) transposition and implementation of updated EU Directives (new EU Drinking Water Directive, revised Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive, revised Sewerage Sludge Directive), (iii) rural water supply and sanitation and individual wastewater treatment solutions, (iv) circular economy in wastewater and sewage sludge management, and (v) financial sustainability and affordability of water and wastewater services.</p> <p>The activity will be delivered primarily through direct support provided through transfer of knowledge by regional experts and specific workshops, and between the participants themselves, bringing regional and European experiences to the individual countries.</p>	
Target Indicator(s) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intermediate Result Indicator Three: [NUMBER] of policy makers, higher-level technical and managerial staff from target and participating countries that benefited from cross-country capacity building activities 	
Team <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stjepan Gabric (Lead) • Raimund Mair (Lead) • Kathia Havens 	
Partners and responsibilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ICPDR as co-organizer of capacity building workshops • European Commission • Ministries, Regulatory Authorities and National Utility Associations • IAWD 	
Timeline <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning with partners, i.e. ICPDR, in 2023 • First capacity building workshop planned to be organized in spring 2024 	
Status Discussions took place with the ICPDR on relevant topics for the organization of targeted capacity development workshops. A first workshop will be organized in April 2024 on Rural WWT.	

RS - REGIONAL KNOWLEDGE SHARING ACTIVITIES

RS.1: Danube Water Conference / Danube Water Forum and DWP KnowNow series	
Led by	IAWD
Objective <p>The objective of the activity is to offer a platform for regional and cross-disciplinary dialogue on WSS sector challenges and solution in the Danube region on a yearly basis and support the regular virtual knowledge sharing activities.</p>	
Target audience	<p>National institutions (ministries, regulators); national water and municipal associations, local government and utilities from the Danube region; representatives from regional utility (IAWD) and municipality (NALAS) associations; representatives from regulatory agency platforms; representatives from river basin organizations; representatives from the EU, UNECE, GIZ, SDC, the World Bank and other bilateral donors and IFIs; Young Water Professionals; academia; private companies; NGOs, and others.</p>
Description and outcomes <p>Since its start, the Danube Water Program has been working on the establishment of an international network of water sector institutions and experts, becoming a well-known resource for vitally needed capacity building, knowledge sharing, analytical and advisory services. In that context, the bi-annual Danube Water Conference (DWC) and Danube Water Forum (DWF) have become signature events for the Program and the Danube region since its inception in 2013 and now rotate on a yearly basis since 2020. While the DWC is hosted in Vienna (Austria), the DWF is organised in the region with the support of a strong partner. Both events serve as an international platform convening sector professionals from the Danube region and beyond to discuss the latest challenges and opportunities in the Danube region water sector.</p> <p>A proof of concept for the Danube Water Forum, of which the first edition could only be delivered as a virtual event due to the pandemic, was delivered in June 2022, when the event was successfully hosted jointly with the Water Supply and Sewerage Association of Albania (SHUKALB) in Tirana, Albania.</p> <p>Funding from the DWP for the events has been gradually reduced year to year, while the payment of participation fees and the inclusion of corporate partner support has been encouraged. This positive trend will be further promoted, in order to achieve sustainability of the event for a post DWP era.</p> <p>Based on the success of the 2020 COVID-19 webinar series, the DWP team has developed and implemented the so-called “DWP KnowNow” webinar series covering relevant topics on demand, which was launched 2021. Each DWP KnowNow spans 75 minutes with a key expert presentation on a timely topic in the region followed by a panel discussion and Q&A. The successfully established DWP KnowNow series will remain an important building block within the virtual knowledge sharing and shall be organized on demand’s basis.</p>	
Target Indicator(s) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PDO Indicator Four: Cumulative income generated by IAWD from the implementation of DWP activities (in EUR) • Intermediate Level Results Indicator Four: [Number] of policy makers, higher level technical and managerial staff from target and participating countries that benefited from cross-country capacity building activities 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intermediate Level Results Indicator Five: [Number] of female representatives that benefited from capacity building activities • Intermediate Level Results Indicator Eight: Cumulative amount of co-funding received supporting the implementation of Danube Water Program activities (in EUR)
Team <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Katerina Schilling (Lead) • DWP team
Partners and responsibilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • interested IAWD members as cooperation and corporate partners • NALAS • Donors and IFIs (EIB, EBRD, KFW, SECO, World Bank)
Timeline <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • February 2023: DWP KnowNow webinar on the revision of the EU UWWTD • 31 May – 2 June: 2023 Danube Water Conference • October 2023: DWP KnowNow webinar on attracting and retaining talent in the water service sector • Spring 2024: DWP KnowNow webinar on access to financing for utilities • May 2024: Danube Water Forum • May 2025: Danube Water Conference
<p>The Danube Water Conference 2023 was held back-to-back with business meetings and the UBP Danube Hub workshop in Vienna, Austria from May 31 to June 2, 2023. With the title “Navigating Changing Waters – New ways to overcome emerging challenges of the water sector in the Danube Region”, the Conference convened 176 senior water sector representatives from 24 countries to discuss new challenges triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine, among others. The program included 8 sessions with a total of 20 presentations by expert speakers, covering a variety of topics such as the climate crisis, water utility practices and workforce struggles. Presentations and recordings have been shared via the event’s page. The conference report is available online.</p> <p>The 2024 Danube Water Forum will be hosted by IAWD member APA Brasov and the Romanian Water Association (ARA) in Romania on 29 to 30 May to explore synergies with the WB investment project in Moldova. Preparations for the logistics have started and the venue for both the conference as well as the conference dinner have been selected. In the latest mission the team agreed on the title of the Forum: “Riding the wave – Water Sector Innovations for a New Climate Reality” and outlined the structure and content of the sessions. The Forum will be held back-to-back with a number of additional meetings, i.e. the IWA Board of Directors meeting, the annual Utility Benchmarking Program Danube Hub Workshop and CEO dinner, the kick-off meeting of the newly established Water Operators Platform for Central and Eastern Europe and the regular IAWD/DWP Business meetings will be organized prior to the event. In addition, the team will work closely with the Utility of the Future Center of Excellence to include relevant content.</p> <p>in 2023 two DWP KnowNows were organized. On 22 February “Revised Regulation, Renewed Challenges: The EU Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive” was held with a total of 100 participants. The following KnowNow on the topic “Retaining staff and talent in the Water Services Sector” was finally organized on 11 October and brought together around 40 participants. The first KnowNow of the year 2024 is tentatively scheduled for March and will focus on the topic of access to financing for utilities. A title and panelists will be determined in January.</p>

RS.2: Voice of the Danube	
Led by	IAWD
Objective This activity will support the maintenance of the content and technical backend of the Voice of the Danube website including additional communication material necessary to promote the activities (co-)financed under the DWP.	
Target audience	IAWD members, DWP community, stakeholders in the WSS sector and beyond
Description and outcomes <p>Since its launch in 2020, the Voice of the Danube website including the related Social Media channels (primary LinkedIn) has grown into a well-known digital water service sector resource within the Danube region and beyond. The continuous support and growth of the website including the content development will not only allow to better communicate the success stories achieved under the Danube Water Program, but further build the Voice of the Danube community into a Community of Practice supported by regular virtual networking events, social media channels and promotional activities to increase outreach.</p> <p>In addition, the development of communication material necessary to promote the activities (co-)financed under the DWP will be covered (e.g. related to D-LeaP, the annual regional events etc.).</p>	
Target Indicator(s) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NA 	
Team <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Katerina Schilling (Lead) • Antonia Püspök • 	
Partners and responsibilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NALAS and national water utility associations 	
Timeline <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuous maintenance of the website content • Weekly updates to all registered users via the weekly digest (apart from Christmas and summer break) • January 2023: update of DWP logo in the context of the 10th anniversary and of the IAWD logo in the context of the 30th anniversary • January 2023: Introduction of the Member of the Month series • February 2023: Integration of Stripe into the VoD registration tool to be used as additional payment option • May 2023: DWP Annual Report 2022 and updated DWP leaflet • June 2023: Introduction of IAWD Membership Certificates • 29 June 2023: visual message of the DWP team to celebrate Danube Day • July 2023: Start of third party funded project with IAWD Member Mozaika using tools created under Voice of the Danube • December 2023: IAWD 30 Years Brochure 	
Status End of June 2023, 890+ users have subscribed to the Voice of the Danube website and receive regular updates via the weekly digest. Additionally, the website is promoted via social media on LinkedIn (1200+ followers) and Twitter (130+ followers).	

In January, both DWP and IAWD logos have been updated to acknowledge the 10th birthday of the DWP and the 30th anniversary of IAWD. Both anniversaries have been celebrated in the frame of the 2023 Danube Water Conference. The celebration will conclude with the launch of the IAWD 30 Years Brochure in December 2023. The brochure will be published on Voice of the Danube and also sent to all IAWD members.

Prior to the 2023 DWC the registration tool of the website has been upgraded by integrating Strip as additional payment method. Furthermore, the DWP Annual Report 2022 has been upgraded into a visually attractive document, which has been shared together with an updated DWP leaflet in the frame of the 2023 Danube Water Conference.

To acknowledge its founding members and strengthen the members' sense of belonging, the IAWD Secretariat has also launched the "Member of the Month" series, which introduces IAWD members on a regular basis. Until now, four founding members of IAWD have been introduced: Vienna Water, Belgrade Waterworks, Water supply St. Moritz, EVN Water, Water Works Association for the Triesting valley and the Southern Railway region, REWAG Regensburger Energie- und Wasserversorgung and Water Association Northern Burgenland. Additionally, four types of membership certificates (welcome, silver – 10yrs, gold – 20yrs and platinum – 30yrs) were developed by the Secretariat and awarded to the respective members on the occasion of the DWC conference dinner.

On 29 June, a short visual message of the DWP team was published in the context of Danube Day.

RS.3: Water services awareness raising campaign [CANCELLED]	
Led by	IAWD
Objective This activity will support the development and implementation of an awareness raising campaign to highlight the importance of water services in the Danube region among the stakeholders.	
Target audience	IAWD members, DWP community, stakeholders in the WSS sector and beyond
Description and outcomes <p>The original idea was to develop an awareness raising campaign in cooperation with relevant partners, such as NALAS and the national associations (both water utility and local government associations), to highlight the importance of water services in the Danube region among the stakeholders. Meanwhile a similar activity called “Just add water” has been implemented under IAWD's latest RCDN grant to support (i) the development of a structured awareness raising campaign in cooperation with relevant stakeholders, and (ii) the implementation of parts of the content of this campaign, e.g. a website under the umbrella of Voice of the Danube and a series of videos.</p> <p>Consequently, this activity has been restructured and will focus on the promotion of D-LeaP programs towards the government/regulators/donors/IFIs community. The format will include dedicated leaflets and/or presentations adjusted to the respective target audience as well as exchanges with the target audience in cooperation with the national associations at their annual events, e.g. ADKOM Conference, Joint Balkans Conference and Exhibition, etc.</p>	
Target Indicator(s) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NA 	
Team <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Katerina Schilling (Lead) • DWP team 	
Partners and responsibilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National water utility associations 	
Timeline <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summer 2023: Development of targeted promotional material • Fall 2023: Dedicated exchanges in the frame of annual events of national water associations 	
Status This activity will be cancelled as it was restructured to support the promotion of D-LeaP and was consequently integrated into RC.2.	

RS.4: Danube Water Program Annual Report	
Led by	World Bank
Objective This activity supports the development and publication of the Danube Water Program Annual Report in a revised and updated format.	
Target audience	Donors and IFIs, DWP community, stakeholders in the water sector and beyond
Description and outcomes As part of the Danube Water Program reporting requirements, a DWP Annual and Semi-Annual Report is regularly published, including information on the program, activities and results achieved. In order to improve the reach-out and make the report more interesting and appealing for a broader audience, the format of the report has been significantly improved. The DWP Annual Report is planned to be developed and printed based on the new format for the years 2022 – 2025.	
Target Indicator(s) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NA 	
Team <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kathia Havens (Lead) • DWP team 	
Partners and responsibilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NA 	
Timeline <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spring 2023: Publication of 2022 Annual Report • Spring 2024: Publication of 2023 Annual Report • Spring 2025: Publication of 2024 Annual Report • Spring 2026: Publication of 2025 Annual Report 	
Status With support from the 2022 DWP intern, a new format for the DWP Annual Report has been developed. The 2022 Annual Report was published in spring 2023 both, in electronic format online, as well as printed for distribution at the 2023 Danube Water Conference and 75 th Anniversary Event on the occasion of Austria joining the World Bank. Work on the development of the DWP Annual Report 2023 has been launched. The report will be finalized and published in March 2024.	

NA - NATIONAL-LEVEL ANALYTICAL AND ADVISORY SERVICES

NA.I: Analytical and advisory support at national level on Water Security topics	
Led by	World Bank
Objective Provide targeted analytical and advisory support to countries on Water Security topics for countries actively engaging on the regional level activities	
Target audience	Water sector opinion leaders, policy makers and sector professionals in the respective countries
Description and outcomes Refer to individual country activity descriptions (See Annex 1)	
Target Indicator(s) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PDO Indicator One: [NUMBER] of target countries in which regulatory and policy recommendations for the water sector have been presented and discussed by decision makers • Intermediate Result Indicator Two: [NUMBER] of sector regulation and policy reviews conducted in water security topics 	
Team Refer to individual country activity descriptions (See Annex 1)	
Partners and responsibilities Refer to individual country activity descriptions (See Annex 1)	
Timeline Refer to individual country activity descriptions (See Annex 1)	
Status Budget has been allocated to specific country activities - please refer to individual country activity descriptions for further details (Annex 1). The remaining amount has been placed under a placeholder to be allocated as the ongoing country dialogues advance and further priorities are identified.	

NA.II: Analytical and advisory support at national level on WSS	
Led by	World Bank
Objective Provide targeted analytical and advisory support to countries on WSS topics for countries actively engaging on the regional level activities	
Target audience	Water sector opinion leaders, policy makers and sector professionals in the respective countries
Description and outcomes Refer to individual country activity descriptions (See Annex 1)	
Target Indicator(s) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PDO Indicator One: [NUMBER] of target countries in which regulatory and policy recommendations for the water sector have been presented and discussed by decision makers • Intermediate Result Indicator One: [NUMBER] of water supply and sanitation sector regulation and policy reviews conducted 	
Team Refer to individual country activity descriptions (See Annex 1)	
Partners and responsibilities Refer to individual country activity descriptions (See Annex 1)	
Timeline Refer to individual country activity descriptions (See Annex 1)	
Status Budget has been allocated to specific country activities - please refer to individual country activity descriptions for further details (Annex 1). The remaining amount has been placed under a placeholder to be allocated as the ongoing country dialogues advance and further priorities are identified.	

NC - NATIONAL-LEVEL CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT

NC: WSS sector performance evaluation and improvement	
Led by	World Bank
Objective Support the creation or improvement of national WSS sector performance evaluation and benchmarking systems, and their linkages to the DANUBIS and IBNET activities.	
Target audience	National water associations; line ministries; regulators.
Description and outcomes This activity will focus on supporting the development or improvement of national performance evaluation and benchmarking systems, whether mandatory/regulatory or more focused on utility improvement, including the adoption of established standards, etc. It will be closely linked with the regional DANUBIS performance indicators system and utility-level benchmarking activities.	
Target Indicator(s) Refer to individual country activity descriptions (See Annex 1)	
Team Refer to individual country activity descriptions (See Annex 1)	
Partners and responsibilities Refer to individual country activity descriptions (See Annex 1)	
Timeline Refer to individual country activity descriptions (See Annex 1)	
Status Budget has been allocated to specific country activities - please refer to individual country activity descriptions for further details (Annex 1). The remaining amount has been placed under a placeholder to be allocated as the ongoing country dialogues advance and further priorities are identified.	

ANNEX 1: DETAILS ON NATIONAL-LEVEL ACTIVITIES

This annex presents country-per-country details of national-level activities, which fall under one of the two following categories:

- ▶ National-level analytical and advisory services
- ▶ National-level capacity development activities

An overview of all activities in each country is included under “Country Activities Overview”.

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

NA.II.2: Water sector reform process support	
Led by	World Bank
Objective <p>The objective of the activity is support the water sector reform process in Bosnia and Herzegovina by increasing awareness of the general public about challenges in the water services sector and needed changes.</p>	
Target audience	Local communities, water service providers, water sector decision makers, civil society
Description and outcomes <p>A reform process to improve the performance of the water services sector is currently ongoing in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This includes the preparation of a new Law on Water Services for both, RS and FBiH, whereas a whole set of new rules will need to be followed.</p> <p>The general public and relevant stakeholders, including decision makers, civil society, local communities and utilities, are not aware of the key challenges faced by the water services sector in BiH, its effects on people's daily lives and the cost of non-action which would need to be borne by the society as a whole. In support of the water sector reform process, a targeted campaign is needed to trigger an informed debate about the needs and the challenges of the water supply and sanitation sector, as well as the needs to ensure that service delivery meets people's needs.</p> <p>The activity is planned to include stakeholder mapping, opinion research, data collection showing the state of play, development of audiovisual materials for social media, curation of a public conversation through social and mainstream media, as well as the galvanization of stakeholders to hold utilities accountable.</p>	
Target Indicator(s) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PDO Indicator One: [NUMBER] of target countries in which regulatory and policy recommendations for the water sector have been presented and discussed by decision makers • Intermediate Result Indicator One: [NUMBER] of water supply and sanitation sector regulation and policy reviews conducted 	
Team <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Igor Palandzic (Lead) • Raimund Mair 	
Partners and responsibilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministry of Agriculture, Water Management and Forestry FBiH • Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management RS 	
Timeline <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • April 2024: Launch of activity • December 2024: Finalization 	
Status <p>The activity is in the early preparation phase.</p>	

CROATIA

NA.II.1: Support to Croatia's water services sector reform	
Led by	World Bank
Objective Support the Croatian Government in the process of restructuring of the water utility sector.	
Target audience	Ministry of Environmental Protection and Energy, Croatian Waters
Description and outcomes Having joined the European Union on July 1st, 2013, Croatia has committed to unprecedented level of investments in the water and wastewater sector to meet the EU <i>acquis communautaire</i> . The implementation of those investments, and the continued operation and maintenance of the resulting infrastructure after that, will require much stronger technical and financial utility companies than today. For that reason, the Government of Croatia, through the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Energy, Croatian Water and the Water Services Council, has started with implementation of a fundamental water utility restructuring reform focusing on merging the currently 158 municipal utilities into around 40 regional, more efficient utilities. This work builds on an in-depth study commissioned by Croatian Waters with World Bank financing, and completed in 2013, that provides a clear rationale for regionalization of utilities. The work was informed by the regional review of aggregation experiences.	
Target Indicator(s) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PDO Indicator One: [NUMBER] of target countries in which regulatory and policy recommendations for the water sector have been presented and discussed by decision makers • Intermediate Result Indicator One: [NUMBER] of water supply and sanitation sector regulation and policy reviews conducted 	
Team <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stjepan Gabric (Lead) • Raimund Mair 	
Partners and responsibilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water Services Council, Croatian Waters, Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development 	
Timeline <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • October 2014: policy workshop on water sector reform in the context of international experience on utility sector reform involving around 40 participants from utilities, various ministries and local governments discussing international good practices presented by Italian, Hungarian and Romanian counterparts, whose countries have gone through similar processes in recent years. • Following period of inaction, legislative framework for the reform prepared and adapted by the Parliament in July 2019 • Aggregation reform implementation started with Government decision in December 2021 and planned to last between 2023-2025. 	
Status In December 2021, the Government has adopted the legal framework for the utility aggregation and reform process, and the implementation has started in early 2022, with the initial objective of implementing a new regional water utility governance model in 18 months (process is currently on hold due to legal challenges by few utilities), that would result in a more efficient, stronger water utility sector able to efficiently operate newly constructed infrastructure. This activity aims to provide specific, targeted technical advice on issues related to the implementation of the utility aggregation process to the Government of Croatia, or specific utility/service area at Government request. The advice will be based	

on WB global experience in the implementation of water utility aggregation and findings of the World Bank toolkit on aggregation of WSS utilities from 2017. In 2022, a new EU funded project was launched, implemented by the World Bank, providing support to the country in building capacity and developing an action plan to reduce the excessive water losses in the water supply system. The project will be finalized by the end of 2023. Missions to Croatia, organized in June and September 2023, allowed for discussions on the ongoing reform efforts with water sector stakeholders in the country, including the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development and Croatian Waters. The mission allowed to sustain the ongoing dialogue and the DWP team will in the coming period discuss specific support needs and concrete proposals on possible forms of continued cooperation.

MOLDOVA

NA.II.3: Policy and regulatory reform needs assessment for the EU Acquis	
Led by	World Bank
Objective <p>The objective of the activity is to assess the degree of needs for adjustments of the policy and regulatory framework of the Republic of Moldova in the water supply and sanitation sector to meet the requirements of the Acquis Communautaire of the European Union.</p>	
Target audience	Montenegro Institutions involved in Benchmarking, utilities
Description and outcomes <p><i>Activity 1: Strategy review</i></p> <p>In the Republic of Moldova the legal framework concerning the elaboration of strategic planning documents has been amended. The new amendments establish the need to revise strategic planning documents if they are not prepared in accordance with the new provisions. Moreover, starting in 2021, with the reform of the government structure, the water supply and sanitation sector has been transferred from the Ministry of Environment to the Ministry of Infrastructure and Regional Development and a new sectoral reform has been launched. At the same time, starting from 2023, the Republic of Moldova has become a candidate country for integration into the European Union, therefore, an imperative requirement is to align the principles of planning and management of the water supply and sanitation sector in line with the experiences of European Union countries, taking into account the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Planning of water supply and sewerage infrastructure development processes in territorial profile; b) Proposals to stimulate the regionalisation of services; c) Examination and implementation of sectoral financing strategies and investment prioritization principles; d) Experiences in calculating agglomerations and identifying technical solutions for each agglomeration; e) Effective regulation of water supply and sewerage services. <p>The output of Activity 1 will be a report providing an ex-post review of the Water Supply and Sanitation Strategy 2014 – 2030 (approved by Government Decision no. 199/2014) and proposals for a new medium-term strategic planning document.</p> <p><i>Activity 2:</i></p> <p>A widely discussed topic in the reform process in the water supply and sewerage sector is the institutional role of the national regulator (National Agency for Energy Regulation) and the methodology for approving tariffs. In 2023, the Ministry of Infrastructure and Regional Development initiated the procedure for amending Law No. 303/2013 on the public water supply and sewerage service, and in the dialogue with all stakeholders, a priority issue was assigned to the methodology for determining, approving and applying tariffs for the public water supply, sewerage and wastewater treatment service. The positions of the actors involved in the examination of the existing situation regarding the methodology outlined above are diverse, with many experiences and examples of management of these issues being presented. Therefore, to ensure an efficient management of these activities and the proper functioning of service operators, it is imperative to make an analysis in relation to existing good practices in the European Union, with the presentation of proposals / recommendations that could be applied based on the experience and specificities existing in the Republic of Moldova</p>	

The output of Activity 2 will be a report providing an evaluation of the methodology for determination, approval and application of tariffs for public water supply, sewerage and wastewater treatment services (approved by the Decision of the National Agency for Energy Regulation No 489/2019).

Target Indicator(s)

- **PDO Indicator One:** [NUMBER] of target countries in which regulatory and policy recommendations for the water sector have been presented and discussed by decision makers
- **Intermediate Result Indicator Two:** [NUMBER] of sector regulation and policy reviews conducted in water security topics

Team

- Smita Misra
- Stjepan Gabric
- Dorin Andros

Partners and responsibilities

- Ministry of Infrastructure and Regional Development of the Republic of Moldova
- National Agency for Energy Regulation of the Republic of Moldova
- Public Institution National Office for Regional and Local Development
- Regional development agencies (North, Centre, South, Chisinau and Gagauzia)

Timeline

- The activity is planned to be accomplished in 2024

Status

The activity is in the early preparation phase.

MONTENEGRO

NA.I.2: Montenegro Sediment Management Assessment	
Led by	World Bank
Objective The objective of the activity is to provide technical support to the Government of Montenegro in setting a strategic direction for sediment management both, on the institutional and regulatory framework, but also providing guidance for the most urgent infrastructure actions.	
Target audience	Montenegro Institutions involved in Benchmarking, utilities
Description and outcomes <p>Rivers in Montenegro are heavily influenced and depending on sediment transport and a dynamic balance within its riverbeds. The formation of sedimentation deposits significantly reduces the permeability of the riverbed and connection with groundwater bodies in some profiles, impacting the hydrological regime with effects on water storage and flooding.</p> <p>More recently, uncontrolled gravel extraction e.g. from the riverbeds of the Morača and Tara, is causing a double negative impact. On one hand, such activities disturb the benthic flora and fauna which is of fundamental importance for the ecological status of the rivers, while on the other hand, the disturbed sediment balance negatively impacted the Bolje Sestre spring, which is a karstic spring, providing water for more than 100.000 inhabitants of the coastal area of Montenegro. Over the last fourteen years, the spring's minimum flow has decreased ten times, putting in danger the tourism sector in the country, which is mainly located at the coastal area and accounting for 25% of the Montenegrin GDP.</p> <p>In this regard, it is essential to elaborate an assessment and plan for the sustainable management of the sediment regime in Montenegro, including as a particular focus area the effects on the critical issue of the water supply of the coastal area.</p>	
Target Indicator(s) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PDO Indicator One: [NUMBER] of target countries in which regulatory and policy recommendations for the water sector have been presented and discussed by decision makers • Intermediate Result Indicator Two: [NUMBER] of sector regulation and policy reviews conducted in water security topics 	
Team <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raimund Mair (lead) • Igor Palandzic • Team of local experts • Team of international experts from DELTARES 	
Partners and responsibilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management • Ministry of Ecology, Spatial Planning and Urbanism • Water Administration • Montenegro Regulatory Agency for Energy and Water (REGAGEN) • Waterworks Association of Montenegro 	
Timeline <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summer/autumn 2023: Mobilization of team of international and local experts • Autumn 2023: Data collection and stock-taking mission • Winter 2023: Assessment • Spring 2024: Finalization of assessment 	

Status

The workshops organized in Montenegro in December 2022 and February 2023 the frame of the Water Security Initiative allowed for discussions on the challenges related to sediment management with institutions in Montenegro. As a follow-up, funds from the GWSP sediment facility were successfully mobilized, allowing to co-fund the planned assessment and development of an action plan. A team of international and local experts has been mobilized and the activity has been launched in October 2023. A fact-finding and data collection mission, including a field visit, took place in December 2023.

NA.I.3: Montenegro Water Information System needs assessment

Led by World Bank

Objective

The objective of the activity is to take stock of the existing water information system in Montenegro vis-à-vis the needs of the water sector, and to formulate actions and investment requirements to improve capacities for the sustainable management of the water sector.

Target audience Montenegro institutions involved in water management

Description and outcomes

The sustainable management of the water sector in Montenegro plays a crucial role in improving resilience against climate change, enhancing environmental sustainability, and ensuring water services delivery. The adequate functioning of a Water Information System, including the collection of relevant and accurate data, and making the data accessible for policy making, regulatory purposes and public scrutiny, is instrumental for the management of the sector. Furthermore, on its path towards EU accession, the country needs to fulfill certain reporting requirements towards the European Union in relation to the EU Water Acquis, but also towards international organizations like the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR).

The activity will support Montenegro with an assessment of the existing water information system in the country, the related needs for the management of the sector, and provide recommendations for investments and the improvement of capacities in terms of data collection and management. A potential study tour of Montenegro experts to a relevant country in the region is also under consideration.

Target Indicator(s)

- **PDO Indicator One:** [NUMBER] of target countries in which regulatory and policy recommendations for the water sector have been presented and discussed by decision makers
- **Intermediate Result Indicator Two:** [NUMBER] of sector regulation and policy reviews conducted in water security topics

Team

- Igor Palandzic (lead)
- Raimund Mair
- Team of experts

Partners and responsibilities

- Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management
- Ministry of Ecology, Spatial Planning and Urbanism
- Montenegro Regulatory Agency for Energy and Water (REGAGEN)
- Waterworks Association of Montenegro

Timeline

- Winter 2023: Mobilization of team of experts
- Spring 2024: Stock-taking mission
- Summer 2024: Assessment and finalization

Status

The workshops organized in Montenegro in December 2022 and February 2023 the frame of the Water Security Initiative allowed for discussions on the challenges of the water sector in the country. The collection and management of adequate water sector data was identified as an important issue which requires attention. As a next step, a team of experts will be mobilized for the launch of the activity in close coordination with relevant water sector institutions in Montenegro.

NORTH MACEDONIA

NC.1: North Macedonia support for water services sector data collection and performance improvement	
Led by	World Bank
Objective <p>The overall objective of the activity is to facilitate data collection, compilation, and analysis of utility performance data for the water services sector in the Republic of North Macedonia by using data and indicators established by the Regulator and improve the quality and ease of management of utility data in PUCs through the DANUBIS-DCM platform.</p>	
Target audience	Utility companies in North Macedonia, ADKOM (Association of Providers of communal services in Macedonia)
Description and outcomes <p>ADKOM started benchmarking activities back in 2015 when under the Danube Water Program, ADKOM has implemented a project where an IT platform (www.makbis.org.mk) for national benchmarking has been developed and put in a pilot operation stage. Additionally, in the period from July to October 2015 ADKOM implemented the Project "Data collection and training for support of national benchmarking in the Republic of Macedonia" in cooperation with IAWD - International Association of water supply companies in the Danube River catchment area and the Open Regional Fund ORF MMS - GIZ. DANUBIS-DCM as the Data Collection and Management System at National Level in the Republic of North Macedonia is already available since 2016 when ADKOM has been assigned by IAWD as the Managing Institutions (MI) of the DANUBIS-DCM. ADKOM supported by World Bank in the process of the establishment of the system and the preparatory activities for its use until end of December 2016, launched a set of regional trainings for the PUCs. Due to the different and ad-hoc approaches, until now no national benchmarking models and reports were developed.</p> <p>This activity will provide support to ADKOM in data collection and analysis, aiming to improve the efficiency of water services in North Macedonia. Building on the results achieved during the last phases of the DWP, the aim is to reach a financially and organizationally sustainable model for benchmarking of water utilities, as a tool to improve utility performance and service provision.</p>	
Target Indicator(s) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PDO Indicator One: [NUMBER] of target countries in which regulatory and policy recommendations for the water sector have been presented and discussed by decision makers • Intermediate Result Indicator One: [NUMBER] of water supply and sanitation sector regulation and policy reviews conducted 	
Team <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stjepan Gabric (Lead) • Raimund Mair 	
Partners and responsibilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ADKOM • Regulatory Agency • IAWD 	
Timeline	

The first phase of the activity began in July 2015 and was completed by collecting data for 2015-2021. The second phase is expected to start in 2024.

Status

Consultations in spring of 2020 identified the potential for continuing and expanding the previous program and resulted in the preparation and delivery of a Pilot National Benchmarking of water services in the Republic of North Macedonia with Danubis-DCM (2021), that was delivered in 2022. This provides the foundation for the future development of a water utility benchmarking program, building on the principles of sustainability and self-sufficiency, in cooperation between ADKOM and the Regulatory Agency. The World Bank and IAWD will also engage the newly developed Regulator in a dialogue about overtaking the system in the future and will define the modalities of further support in line with DWP goals and national objectives.

NA.I.4: Water governance and action plan	
Led by	World Bank
Objective The objective of the activity is to develop an Action Plan in support of the implementation of the approved Water Strategy for North Macedonia.	
Target audience	Representatives of Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy, Ministry of Transport and Communications
Description and outcomes <p>The team is planning to engage a consultant to review the current Water Strategy and existing Water Sector Investment Plan in detail. The Strategy itself consist largely of a set of regulations. What is therefore needed is a complementary list of actions that would translate this strategy into priority projects. Utilizing the completed Governance and Green and Resilient Growth reports, the consultant will prepare an Action Plan to lay out the next steps for the Government in addressing the challenges in the Water Sector. The draft Action Plan is planned to be discussed in the frame of a workshop before finalization.</p> <p>Looking ahead, expenditure for water supply and sanitation needs to increase significantly if North Macedonia intends to comply with EU Water Directives and to enhance the efficiency of water supply systems and wastewater treatment, respectively. Also, to be able to increase the irrigated and drained area, North Macedonia needs to increase the investments in the construction of new facilities and rehabilitation and reconstruction of existing water management facilities.</p>	
Target Indicator(s) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PDO Indicator One: [NUMBER] of target countries in which regulatory and policy recommendations for the water sector have been presented and discussed by decision makers • Intermediate Result Indicator Two: [NUMBER] of sector regulation and policy reviews conducted in water security topics 	
Team <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trandelina Baraku and Zhimin Mao (lead) • Sven Schlumpberger • Bekim Ymeri 	
Partners and responsibilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning 	
Timeline <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • November 2023: Water Governance Workshop in Skopje • Winter 2023/2024: Mobilization of consultants • Spring 2024: Workshop, discussion and finalization of Action Plan 	
Status The team has been working with Client in assessing the Water sector needs and opportunities. In November 2023 two reports on water sector in North Macedonia have been shared with Client and discussed at a Water Governance Workshop. The need to attach an Action Plan to the already approved Water Strategy was triggered by the Counter part – being Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning.	

ROMANIA

NA.I.1: Romania Drought Risk Assessment	
Led by	World Bank
Objective <p>The objective of the activity is to assess the past and potential future drought damages and risks in Romania, and to identify action pathways to reduce risks, increase resilience and to support the country in its efforts to adapt to climate change.</p>	
Target audience	Water and Environmental Ministries, Apele Romane, water-related sector professionals including agriculture, water services and energy
Description and outcomes <p>Romania is amongst the countries which was severely hit by the droughts in 2022 on the European continent. The activity includes the preparation of a detailed inventory of the damages of the 2022 drought in the country to obtain a comprehensive picture of the economic, social, and environmental impact of droughts. Furthermore, an assessment of current drought risk management in Romania will be conducted and recommendations and guidance developed to improve the Drought Management System. The assessment will build upon internationally recognized frameworks and partnerships. The lessons learned for drought risk management in neighboring countries and beyond will be considered. The activity will also allow to gain experiences on the subject in Romania, to be shared with other countries in the Danube region.</p>	
Target Indicator(s) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PDO Indicator One: [NUMBER] of target countries in which regulatory and policy recommendations for the water sector have been presented and discussed by decision makers • Intermediate Result Indicator Two: [NUMBER] of sector regulation and policy reviews conducted in water security topics 	
Team <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chris-Philip Fischer (Lead) • Raimund Mair • Natalia Limones Rodriguez 	
Partners and responsibilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • European Commission Joint Research Centre • Consortium around the EU funded EDORA project • International Institute for Applied System Analysis (IIASA) • National level stakeholders 	
Timeline <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • December 2022: Hydroclimatic characterization of the drought 2022 • Spring 2023: Drought impacts inventory with ground data from sectors and analysis of Romania's response to the 2022 drought • Summer 2023: Deep-dive EDORA methods and drought preparedness opportunity analysis • Autumn 2023: Drought vulnerability assessment and analysis of climate change effects • Winter 2023/2024: Finalization of assessments 	
Status <p>The kick-off meeting for the activity with national level stakeholders was organized in December 2022, which was followed by data collection on drought impacts on different water-related sectors. The initial results of the drought risk and resilience assessment were presented and discussed with water sector</p>	

stakeholders in Romania in June 2023. Following, a deep-dive assessment based on the EDORA methodology, and a drought vulnerability assessment and analysis of climate change effects, with a focus on the water services sector, has been conducted. The results were presented and discussed in the frame of a Workshop on Drought Risk Management in Romania and Europe, which was organized on 30-31 October 2023 in Bucharest. The results of the assessments, workshop discussions, and development of recommendations is currently under finalization.

SERBIA

NC.2: Serbia support for water services sector data collection and performance improvement	
Led by	World Bank
Objective <p>The objective is to sustain the dialogue and provide support on advancing performance indicator data collection and benchmarking activities in Serbia and provide support for performance improvement.</p>	
Target audience	Serbia water utilities and Government of Serbia
Description and outcomes <p>The Ministry of Construction, Transport and Infrastructure (MCTI) and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Serbia (CCIS) have signed a cooperation protocol that defines the cooperation in data collection and analysis concerning the situation in the sector of water supply and the sewage in Serbia and in making corresponding reports. Data collection is being done through the MCTI's questionnaires. The questionnaires for data collection have been developed in 2015 and have been sent to water utilities in Serbia in years from 2016 to 2021.</p> <p>The World Bank and the IAWD, through the Danube Water Program (DWP), have supported the Association for Water Technology and Sanitary Engineering (UTVSI-AWTSE) in recent years in the development of utility performance data collection and analysis. For the upcoming period it is expected that in addition to annual water utility data collection, UTVSI will be piloting the use of the Data Collection and Management platform (DCM) developed under the DWP in volunteering utilities. Furthermore, the sector will be supported in the process to move towards a self-sustaining model.</p>	
Target Indicator(s) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PDO Indicator One: [NUMBER] of target countries in which regulatory and policy recommendations for the water sector have been presented and discussed by decision makers • Intermediate Result Indicator One: [NUMBER] of water supply and sanitation sector regulation and policy reviews conducted 	
Team <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stjepan Gabric (Lead) • Raimund Mair 	
Partners and responsibilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministry of Construction, Transport and Infrastructure • UTVSI (Association for Water Technology and Sanitary Engineering) • Serbian Chamber of Commerce 	
Timeline <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spring 2023: National benchmarking report using 2021 data to local governments and their Public Utility Companies, and organization of workshop for key stakeholders presenting the results • Autumn 2023: National benchmarking report using 2022 data to local governments and their Public Utility Companies, and organization of workshop for key stakeholders presenting the results, as well as discussing the future of water sector benchmarking in Serbia • 2024: National benchmarking report using 2023 data 	
Status <p>Important progress has been achieved since the start of the activity in 2015, resulting in the collection of a comprehensive amount of PI data from Serbian utilities, delivery of annual- and multi-annual benchmarking reports for Serbia, and reporting of the data to IBNET and Danubis.org. In spring 2023,</p>	

the national benchmarking report with 2021 data was delivered. Follow-up steps include the preparation of the benchmarking reports with 2022 and 2023 data, as well as discussions focusing on ensuring the sustainability of data collection and analysis and building ownership within the Government of Serbia.



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The World Bank / IAWD Danube Water Program supports smart policies, strong utilities, and sustainable water and wastewater services in the Danube Region by partnering with regional, national and local stakeholders, promoting an informed policy dialogue around the sector's challenges and strengthening the technical and managerial capacity of the sector's utilities and institutions.



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