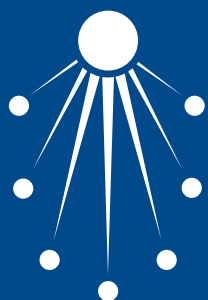


JULY - DECEMBER 2021

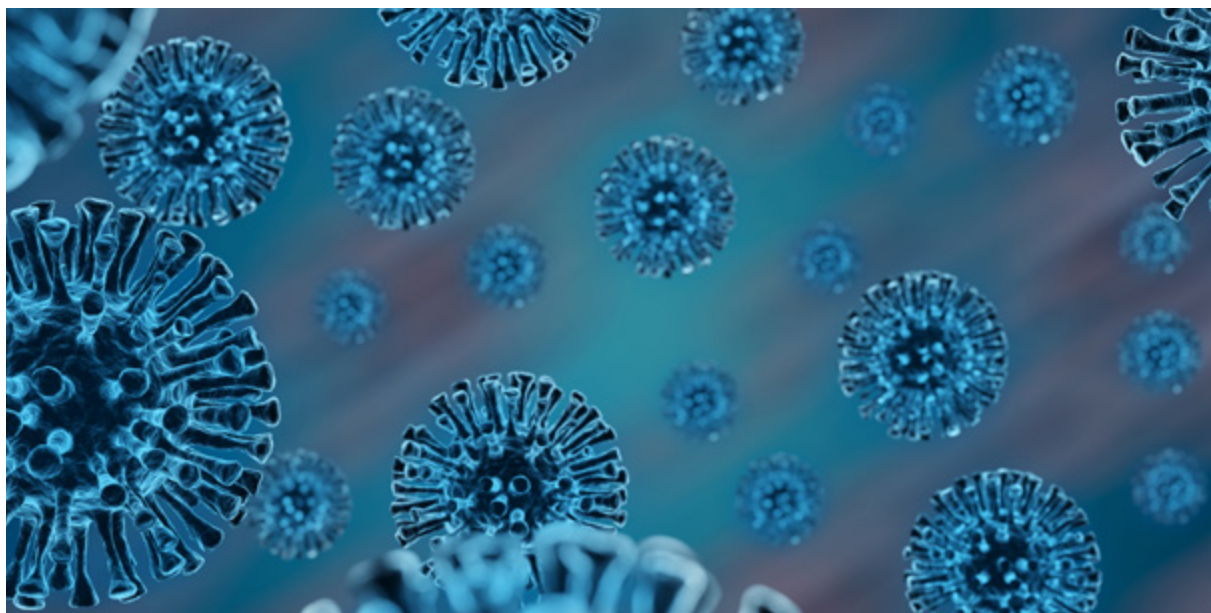
BULLETIN

ADKOM

Association of public utility
services providers



TRAINING PROGRAM “MANAGING THE BUSINESS CONTINUITY OF THE PUCS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC”



The COVID-19 pandemic is likely to endure on a global scale, which means that the public utility companies (PUCs) in the Republic of North Macedonia will continue to provide their services in times of crisis, while being vulnerable to other risks as well. Hence, the establishment of a human resources system (HR) and the development of institutional capacity for risk and crisis management in the PUCs, related to COVID-19 is one of the key aspects for delivering effective and efficient service to end users, i.e., the citizens.

It is important to know that the Republic of North Macedonia a crisis management system has been established whereby prevention, early warning and dealing with all risks and dangers are its main functions. The bodies of the local self-government units and their public utility companies have been assigned significant roles in the crisis management system.

Therefore, according to the Law on Crisis

Management, the PUCs, as part of the crisis management system in the Republic of North Macedonia, have a legal obligation to prepare for their roles, i.e., tasks for crisis prevention and management. To this end, for the effective prevention and early warning of a potential crisis, the PUCs should assess the risks and hazards, identify the needs, and plan the resources, but also, they have an obligation to participate in training, exercise, and other activities to prevent and deal with crises.

In addition, the PUCs should implement the following European standards:

- MKC EN 15975-1: 2011 + A1: 2016 (Security of drinking water supply - Guidelines for risk and crisis management - Part 1: Crisis management)

- MKC EN 15975-2: 2013 (Security of drinking water supply - Guidelines for risk and crisis management - Part 2: Risk management)

Having in mind the legal obligations for the PUCs – water supply providers and the need to strengthen the capacities of the PUCs for risk and crisis management, ADKOM plans to start implementing the training program on “Managing the business continuity of the PUCs during the COVID-19 pandemic”.

The overall goal of the program is to strengthen the resilience of PUCs, and thus to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of providing water-supply services during the COVID-19 pandemic.



THE SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES OF THE PROGRAM ARE:

- Assess the conditions and needs of PUCs for managing the business continuity of the PUCs: water safety planning and crisis management
- Strengthen the capacities of ADKOM for conducting trainings related to Water Safety Planning and Crisis Management by increasing the number of trained people from the PUCs
- Familiarize PUC with the standards:
 1. MKC EN 15975-1: 2011 + A1: 2016 (Security of drinking water supply - Guidelines for risk and crisis management - Part 1: Crisis management)
 2. MKC EN 15975-2: 2013 (Security of drinking water supply - Guidelines for risk and crisis management - Part 2: Risk management)
- Increase the knowledge and capacities of the PUCs on business continuity: Water Safety Planning and Crisis Management of the water services during the COVID-19 pandemic.

PILOT NATIONAL BENCHMARKING OF WATER SERVICES IN THE REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA WITH DANUBIS-DCM

The general goal of the Pilot Project for National Benchmarking of Water Services in the Republic of North Macedonia, using the Danubis-DCM platform as a tool, is to facilitate the data collection and analysis of data on the performance of PUCs for water-supply services in the Republic of North Macedonia by using of data and indicators established by the Energy and Water Services Regulatory Commission (ERC).

ADKOM started with the benchmarking activities in 2015, with the project for development of an IT platform (www.makbis.org.mk) for the implementation of national benchmarking, as part of the DANUBE Water Program.

Additionally, in the period from July to October 2015, ADKOM implemented the Project “Data Collection and Training to Support National Benchmarking in the Republic of North Macedonia” in cooperation with IAWD – International Association of Water Service Companies in the Danube River Catchment Area (<https://www.iawd.at/eng/about/iawd/>) and the Open Regional Fund ORF MMS – GIZ.

Danubis-DCM (<https://www.danubis-dcm.org/>) as a data collection and management platform developed by IAWD, has been available nation-wide in the Republic of North Macedonia since 2016. During that period, ADKOM was supported by the World Bank in the process of establishing the system and the preparatory activities for its use and by the end of December 2016 realized a series of regional trainings for the PUCs through which 191 employees from 44 PUCs received certificates for different roles related to the functioning of the platform: data importers (data users, controllers, or supervisors).

In 2016, with the Law on Setting the Prices for Water Services, the Regulator for water services was established within ERC.

ERC, ADKOM and other stakeholders in the water sector are aware of the need for establishing a National Water Services Benchmarking System, which will provide data and information to various stakeholders through an appropriate data collection and reporting platform for individual data and indicators.

Having in mind all the efforts made so far by ADKOM for the establishment of the performance management systems within the PUCs – water service providers, the implementation of this activity is a logical step, in order to maintain the already achieved progress in the PUCs, and on the other hand to strengthen the cooperation between different stakeholders in the implementation of the benchmarking at national and local level.



THE OBJECTIVES OF THE PILOT PROJECT ARE:

Upgrading of the established infrastructure for data management on the platform in the PUCs- water services providers

Providing training for the appointed employees by the PUCs for data management on the platform

Developing a template for the annual national benchmarking reports in coordination with ERC

Developing a template for the multi-annual national benchmarking reports

Preparation of a one-year and multi-year pilot-national benchmarking reports using the data for 2019 and 2020, based on the data and indicators set by ERC

Strengthening the cooperation between ADKOM, ERC and other stakeholders

Defining indicators to be applied based on the definition for indicators of the ERC

Presentation of the pilot national benchmark reports with data for 2019 and 2020, to the local self-governments, PUCs- water service providers and national institutions.

TRAINING PROGRAMS FOR COLLECTION, DRAINAGE, AND TREATMENT OF WASTEWATERS

There are 19 operational wastewater treatment plants (WWTP) in the country, with more than 78 million euros invested in the sector, and a dozen more projects under preparation for collection, drainage, and treatment of wastewaters, including the largest construction project of the WWTP in Skopje in the amount of EUR 136 million. Hence, it can be concluded that the topic of wastewater is one of the main topics in the Republic of North Macedonia.

In addition, wastewaters are not important only in the country, but also this topic has been identified as a new challenge throughout the Western Balkans and is in line with the priorities of (governments of the countries in the region) international financial institutions and donors.

ADKOM, as a member of the SEE Regional Capacity Development Network (RCDN), which is jointly funded by the Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) and the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), participated in a detailed assessment of training needs on the topic of wastewaters. This assessment consisted of three steps:

1	conducting generic research to assess needs in the region,
2	visits and interviews with wastewater treatment plant staff in the Republic of North Macedonia, mainly funded by SECO and EU and
3	organizing events for peer exchange for further specification and validation of the findings from the generic research.

After the detailed assessment of the training needs, a report was prepared in which all the needs were noted and shared with the stakeholders. Based on the detailed assessment, and in order to develop the capacities, increase the skills, as well as raise awareness in the region, RCDN developed three trainings on the topic:

- 1A - "Introduction to Wastewater Systems for Decision Makers"
- 1B - "Introduction to Wastewater Systems for Managers and Engineers" and
- 2A - "Improvement of the technical capacities of the public utility companies (PUCs) for operation and maintenance of the wastewater systems",
- of which for now only 2A will be implemented in the country, as a pilot program.

PROGRAMME 2A: ENHANCEMENT OF TECHNICAL CAPACITIES OF PUBLIC UTILITY COMPANIES (PUCs) FOR OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE OF WASTEWATER SYSTEMS

is planned to be implemented during 2022 and its participants should be the technical staff of the PUCs, as well as the staff in the municipalities that work with PUCs.



The main goal of the training is to offer PUCs a comprehensive program for capacity building (CB) which consists of a series of CB modules based on well-established national, regional, and international courses and peer exchange, as well as collaborative internet (online) elements. The participants will be able to classify different wastewater systems and describe strategies for improving existing systems at the organizational and practical level.

The program is planned to be implemented in 5 modules, specially designed according to the needs of each of the participants.

As an added value, during the development of these three trainings 1A, 1B and 2A, the fourth, i.e., the 2B program was developed:

2B PROGRAM – “OPTIMIZATION OF THE WWTP OPERATION”

This program is specific and technical, so its main goal is to provide transfer of knowledge (Peer exchange) in the most practical way and to create a community of practitioners among the WWTP employees in the Republic of North Macedonia.

During 2021, ADKOM started implementing the 2B program and in cooperation with EBP, delegated by SECO to provide expertise, as well as RCDN involved in order to support ADKOM in all phases of the training, conducted two peer exchanges on “Energy Efficiency” and “Sludge Management”. The third one will be held in 2022.

Representatives of PUCs, municipalities and relevant ministries took part in the peer exchange. Prior to the workshops, the Swiss expertise from EBP, through the development of several good practices – and other materials, made a direct and practical peer exchange for handling specific problems on specific topics. On the peer exchange workshops special emphasis was placed on the preparation of action plans that each of the present PUCs prepared, in order to determine the current situation, their needs and to note the next steps for improvement. The workshops were positively evaluated by the participants, emphasizing the need to conduct this type of trainings on other topics related to the operations and maintenance of WWTP systems.

ANALYSIS OF THE SITUATION IN THE WATER SERVICES SECTOR IN THE REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA

In the period July–December 2021, with the support of a grant from the Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning (MoEPP), ADKOM worked on preparing an analysis of the situation in the Water Services Sector in the Republic of North Macedonia (RNM).

The focus of the analysis was on the following topics:

1	Legislation and policies for development of water services
2	General data on the water services sector of RNM
3	Current plans and activities in the area of development policies and / or reforms in the water services sector at central and local level
4	Plans and activities for development of the water services sector in the local self-government units (LSGU)
5	Recommendations

The purpose of this Analysis is to point out the most important aspects, shortcomings, legal obligations and needs in the water services sector in RNM and to provide recommendations for further reforms in the sector, for cooperation between stakeholders and for improvements in the performance of public utility companies (PUCs) – providers of water services, with the goal of improving the services of PUCs to the citizens.

The analysis is an important source of data for all stakeholders in the water services sector (ADKOM, PUCs, LSGUs, ZELS, MoEPP, Energy and Water Services Regulatory Commission (ERC), the donors, the business sector, and the academia) and will provide guidance and recommendations for adapting the current or creating new measures and activities in the sector.



SOME OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS ARE ENCLOSED:

- Taking over and managing rural water supply systems
- Strengthen the network of cooperation with all stakeholders
- Building a system for planning the necessary investment projects and other development plans
- Harmonization of the reform process at all levels of decision-making
- Intensifying the cooperation with international organizations and institutions
- Amending the Law on Setting the Prices for Water Services, by supplementing and clarifying the competencies and obligations of all stakeholders
- Building a system for organizing and systematizing the work processes
- Strengthening the database and records, generating data based on multiple elements of analysis and improving such tools
- Training of the technical staff in accordance with the current needs of the system
- Prioritizing the capacity building of water service providers

WORKING GROUP FOR PUBLIC UTILITY ACTIVITIES OF ADKOM

ADKOM, the local and central government established a working group for public utility activities and assumed the role of the coordinator. The aim of the working group is to ensure better coordination between the public utility companies (PUCs).

The working group consists of representatives of the PUCs, line ministries and relevant institutions. And its main goal is for the members to invest in solving the problems that are part of the functioning and operations of the PUCs.

The working group already held three meetings since its establishment. At the meetings, the members were introduced to the documents prepared by ADKOM, such as the document on legal obstacles in the PUC operations and were informed that an analysis of the situation in the Water Sector is underway as well as the preparation of a position papers on the Legal obstacles.

In accordance with the adopted conclusions, ADKOM will organize a round table to which stakeholders will be invited in order to discuss and define a framework for drafting a collective agreement for the public utility activities.

The Executive Office will be requested to nominate members from ZELS and the Ministry of Local Self-Government in the working group, in order to strengthen and raise the level of cooperation and coordination between the central and the local government.



INFORMATION ON THE ENFORCEMENT OF THE OBLIGATION TO CHARGE FOR SHOPPING BAGS IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE NEW LAW ON AND PACKAGING AND WASTE MANAGEMENT



The Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning reminded the public that from December 1, 2021, the obligation to charge for shopping bags in accordance with the new Law on and Packaging and Waste Management is in force.

This Law stipulates that:

- It is prohibited to release plastic bags for shopping on the market in the Republic of North Macedonia.
- It is prohibited to release plastic packaging for single use in catering facilities on the territory of the protected areas in the Republic of North Macedonia.
- As an exception, the Law stipulates that for a fee paid by the end users, it is allowed to place on the market biodegradable bags for shopping, if such bags are produced in accordance with the prescribed standards for biodegradability, except for the very light plastic bags for (of thickness less than 15 microns).
- The fee to be paid by the end users for the biodegradable bags for shopping is 15 denars per piece and it is paid to the retailer (the fee includes VAT).
- The purpose of this Law is to deter users from using disposable bags and to stimulate the use of reusable bags, based on the “polluter pays” principle.
- Plastic bag manufacturers can continue to operate, but in compliance with the prescribed biodegradability standards. The biodegradability standards were introduced in the previous Law and stipulated in 2013.



Source: <https://vlada.mk/node/27107>

CLARIFICATION OF THE BAN FOR USE OF PLASTIC BAGS

Since 2013, with the Law on Amendments to the Law on and Packaging and Waste Management (Official Gazette No. 6/2012) the placement of bags for transport of goods made of polymers of ethylene, poly (vinyl chloride) and / or other plastics on the market has been prohibited and allows the placement of biodegradable bags produced in accordance with properly prescribed biodegradability standards. A Rulebook on biodegradability standards for shopping bags, their release on the market and use was adopted in February 2013, which prescribed the standard for oxo-biodegradability ("Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia "No. 19/13).

According to the new Law on and Packaging and Waste Management, from December 1, 2021, it is prohibited to release plastic shopping bags for single use on the market in the Republic of North Macedonia. The only allowed placement of biodegradable shopping bags is of those that are produced in accordance with the prescribed standards for biodegradability published in the Rulebook on biodegradability standards to be met by bags for carrying goods, the manner of placement of biodegradable bags by the retailers, as well as the form and the content of the template for keeping records ("Official Gazette of RNM" 265/2021).

TO WHICH BAGS DO THESE PROVISIONS APPLY?

- Plastic bags for shopping for which a fee of 15 denars is charged and must be biodegradable are the bags that are given daily at the cash register (at the point of sale) when buying in mini markets, supermarkets, groceries, small grocery stores, bakeries, kiosks, fast food kiosks, green markets, gas stations with mini markets.
- "biodegradable" refers to a period until June 1, 2023, when oxo-biodegradable bags (MKS 1009) may be placed, and which were mandatory from 2013.
- After June 1, 2023, only the placement of bags made of degradable material (as well as any organic material from water, carbon dioxide and biomass - standard MKS EN ISO 17556: 2020) will be allowed.
- Very light plastic bags for shopping are completely banned. These are bags which are less than 15 microns thick. Lightweight plastic bags are difficult to collect for recycling, they are usually mixed with other waste - so they remain in the soil, in the water, air and are a serious threat to the human health, but also to the survival of the wildlife in general.
- In this initial transitional phase, the plastic bags for which the fee of 15 denars does not apply and the biodegradability standards are those that are given to the consumers at the cash register (at the point of sale) in shops that sell goods, which are not for general daily use, such as books, clothes, shoes, tools, electrical and electronic equipment, furniture stores, craft shops, souvenir shops, art galleries, cosmetics, pharmacies (agricultural, medical devices, etc.). It is recommended



that these bags be thicker (over 50) so that they can be reused and disposed of in plastic containers (yellow container) from where they can be recycled to local recycling companies and to the plastic bag manufacturers, where they can be used for making new bags.

- Garbage bags are not shopping bags and are not covered by these measures.
- Very light plastic bags with 15 microns thickness or less, so called packaging bags, which are needed for hygienic purposes and are given as primary packaging for food that is not compact or in a liquid state and thus prevent food from being thrown away, can be used by retailers without charging the 15 denar fee. For these bags there are other provisions of the Law that refer to the primary packaging.

The idea of these initial measures is to cover those entities that trade in goods for daily mass consumption, and later to apply it to other points of sale.

STRATEGY FOR THE PUC OPERATIONS IN MUNICIPALITIES WITH UP TO 10,000 POPULATION EQUIVALENT

The Strategy for operation of the public utility companies (PUCs) up to 10,000 population equivalent, will aim at defining the current situation in the PUCs, in order to understand the problems they face in their operations (material, financial, legal, spatial conditions, human resources, etc.) and to provide vision, solutions and recommendations for improving the operations and cooperation with the local community and the municipality towards raising the level of services to end-users.

The strategy should offer a long-term strategic orientation for the PUCs for meeting the provisions of the environmental legislation (water, waste, air, etc.), as well as meeting the needs and expectations of citizens and other beneficiaries of the services of the PUCs.

It will also focus on the modernization of the internal organization of the PUCs, on solutions for gradual improvement of the structure of employees, by continuous improvement of the quality systems for employees, but also it will provide for raising of the public awareness regarding the importance of preserving and care for all aspects of the environment.



MANUAL FOR PUC DIRECTORS



After the local elections ADKOM decided to prepare a manual to facilitate the newly appointed directors of the public utility companies (PUCs).

The manual will help the newly appointed directors to get acquainted with all their responsibilities easier and faster, but also with the challenges they will face during their operations. The manual will contain the necessary laws, instructions, deadlines for submission of documents, etc., related to the work of the PUCs.

The manual will be presented to the PUCs in January 2022.³

PUC ACTIVITIES





ЈП КОМУНАЛНА ХИГИЕНА - Скопје NP HIGJENA KOMUNALE - Shkup

In the period FROM January - October 2021, the teams of the PUC "Komunalna Higijena" Skopje picked up and transported a total of 139,207 tons of municipal waste from the households in Skopje, as well as from almost 600 businesses in the urban and rural areas of the City of Skopje.

In the same period, on the area of the City of Skopje, the teams of PUC "Komunalna Higijena" Skopje removed approximately 10,500 m³ of waste from illegal landfills, created as a result of negligent disposal of waste by individuals and legal entities, and several large illegal landfills were cleaned which are located in the municipalities of Chair, Kisela Voda and Saraj.

In May 2021, the Company organized the collection of the bulky waste in all Skopje municipalities, and thereby collected a record 650 m³ of disposed furniture and waste from electronic and electrical devices.

The PUC "Komunalna higijena" Skopje is permanently improving the working conditions in its premises, and therefore, in June 2021 opened eight new points located in the municipalities of Aerodrom, Centar, Chair and Shuto Orizari.

During 2021, the PUC "Komunalna higijena" Skopje procured 47 new special utility vehicles for collection and transport of waste and maintenance of hygiene and cleanliness of public and traffic areas in the City of Skopje. The vehicle fleet of the PUC has been expanded for 25 trucks, 10 sweepers, 5 tanks, 5 forklifts and 2 dump trucks, which have already been put into operation and significantly contribute to the efficiency of the PUC.

According to the Monitoring Report the Agency for Protection of the Right to Free Access to Public Information, the PUC "Komunalna higijena" Skopje is the runner-up in the country for the transparency of its operations. At the same time, according to the renowned Center for Civic Research, the PUC is also the runner-up among all state institutions concerning its transparency of operations, and is evaluated as "excellent" with the highest increase in transparency for 2020.

PUC VODOVOD I KANALIZACIJA – SKOPJE

NEW LABORATORY FOR MOLECULAR MICROBIOLOGY WITH REAL-TIME PCR DETECTION

The Sector for Sanitary Control with the PUC “Vodovod i Kanalizacija” Skopje (PUC for Water Supply and Sewage Skopje), performs regular microbiological and chemical control of the quality of the drinking water which is distributed to the citizens of the City of Skopje. The laboratories that are part of the Sector for Sanitary Control are accredited according to the ISO 17025 standard and are the first in the country of this type.



The microbiological laboratory performs analyzes with the latest classic processing methods, and therefore the identification of microorganisms present in the water sample takes from 24 to 48 hours.

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“The continuous progress of technology combined with the constant increase of the population in the City of Skopje, requires of us, as a company that provides for distribution of safe drinking water to the citizens, to have microbiological analysis of the water in shorter periods of time. Therefore, a new molecular biology laboratory has been established within the Department of Microbiological Laboratory, which provides evidence for the quality and microbiological control of the drinking water with a real-time PCR technique. It is typical for the molecular biology to use the DNA technology for identification”- said Dushko Veskovski, General Manager of PUC “Vodovod i Kanalizacija” Skopje.

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“Real-time PCR detection has become one of the most widely used techniques, due to its dynamic range, huge sensitivity and accuracy of the results obtained in a relatively short time. Therefore, the results obtained with this specific and modern type of molecular, microbiological analysis is used as proof for the quality and technical correctness of the drinking water that the PUC “Vodovod i Kanalizacija” Skopje delivers to its customers and thereby guarantees for its safety on a daily basis - said Biljana Petrovska, Head of Sector for Sanitary Control.

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PUC “KOMUNALEC” IN BITOLA PROCURED TWO NEW ELECTRICAL SWEEPING VEHICLES



PUC “Komunalec” from Bitola procured two electrical vehicles for sweeping of public traffic areas. The Mayor of the Municipality of Bitola, Natasha Petrovska and the director of the PUC “Komunalec” Pande Bogoevski were present upon the arrival of the vehicles, procured from the project “For a Cleaner Bitola!”.

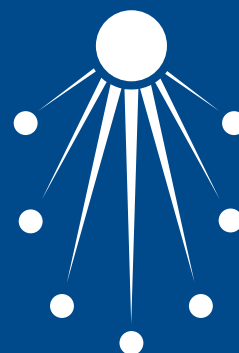
The expert team explained the process, and the planned activities with the newly procured vehicles.

The replenishment of the fleet with the new electric sweeping vehicles, as well as the recently purchased new vehicle for sweeping and street washing, with a capacity of 5.5 m³, will greatly contribute to the care and protection of the environment and the degree of maintenance of public cleanliness in the city.

UPCOMING INTERNATIONAL EVENTS:

MONTH	DATE	NAME	LINK	LOCATION
January	25/01/2022 - 26/01/2022	Introduction course to EU Water Policy and Legislation	click here	Online
	25/01/2022 - 27/01/2022	DWA-Training: The German Water Sector	click here	Online
February	03/02/2022	Financial sustainability of wastewater management in Danube region	click here	Online
March	08/03/2022	EWA Innovation webinar: Hygienic and Safe Wastewater Reuse	click here	Online
	21/03/2022 - 26/03/2022	9th World Water Forum, Dakar 2021	click here	Dakar, Senegal
	27/03/2022 - 02/04/2022	LET2022- The 17th IWA Leading Edge Conference on Water and Wastewater Technologies	click here	Reno, Nevada
April	10/04/2022 - 13/04/2022	Wastewater, Water and Resource Recovery Conference	click here	Pozan, Poland
	17/04/2022 - 21/04/2022	Singapore International Water Week 2022	click here	Singapore
	27/03/2022 - 02/04/2022	LET2022- The 17th IWA Leading Edge Conference on Water and Wastewater Technologies	click here	Reno, Nevada
June	19/06/2022 - 22/06/2022	Water Loss 2022	click here	Prague, Czech Republic
	22/06/2022 - 24/06/2022	International Conference for Water Safety Planning 2022	click here	Narvik, Norway
October	18/10/2022 - 20/10/2022	IWA Conference on Sustainable Sludge Management	click here	Beijing, China

ADKOM
Association
of public utility
services providers



Address:
st: Jane Sandanski n.112/2-2
1000, Skopje

Phone number:
+ 389 2 2461-971

E mail:
adkommk@gmail.com

www.adkom.org.mk