



**EQUAL
AQUA**

What is the “Secret Sauce”? How to Attract and Retain the Talent You Need in Water

*Danube Know How Webinar Series
October, 11, 2023*

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Water Global Practice, World Bank



GWSP

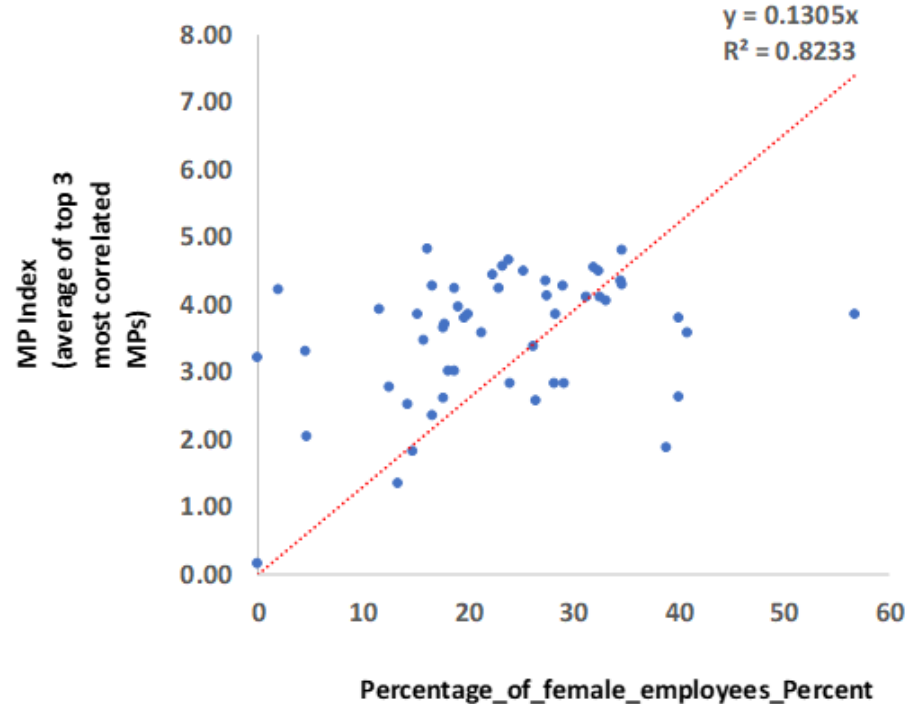
GLOBAL WATER
SECURITY & SANITATION
PARTNERSHIP



WORLD BANK GROUP
Water

Why do we need “the sauce”?

Figure 1b: Female employees vs MPs Index



- The more gender equity between male and female staff in a water utility, the higher score on Management Practices
- Management Practices correlate strongly with objective performance indicators (for example, in terms of non-revenue water).
- Earlier analysis (2020) showed correlation between other key indicators (% customers with interruptions, % chlorine tests passed, hours of water outages, water quality tests, hours service per day) for larger (250+) utilities.

Source: World Bank staff calculations using NEW IBNET data based on 90 utilities that participated in the beta version.

Why do we need “the sauce”?

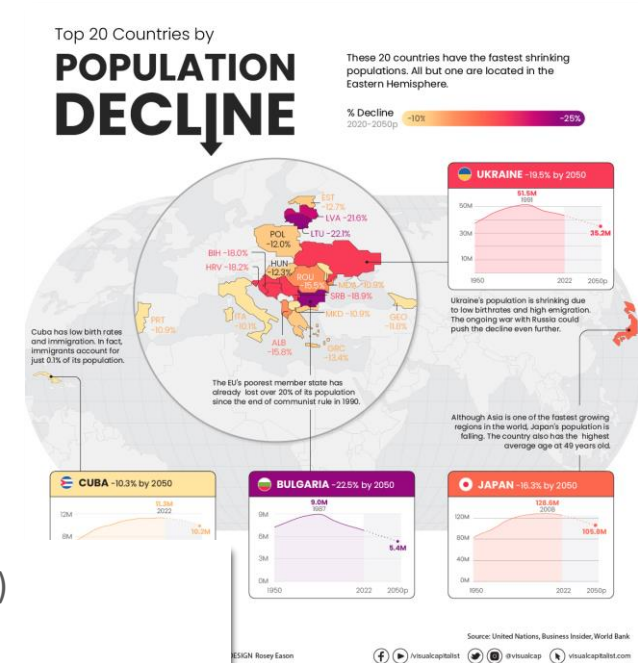
Youth in Danube Water Institutions

Rationale: The new technologies (AI) and innovations needed for circular economy, water and climate demand younger workforce

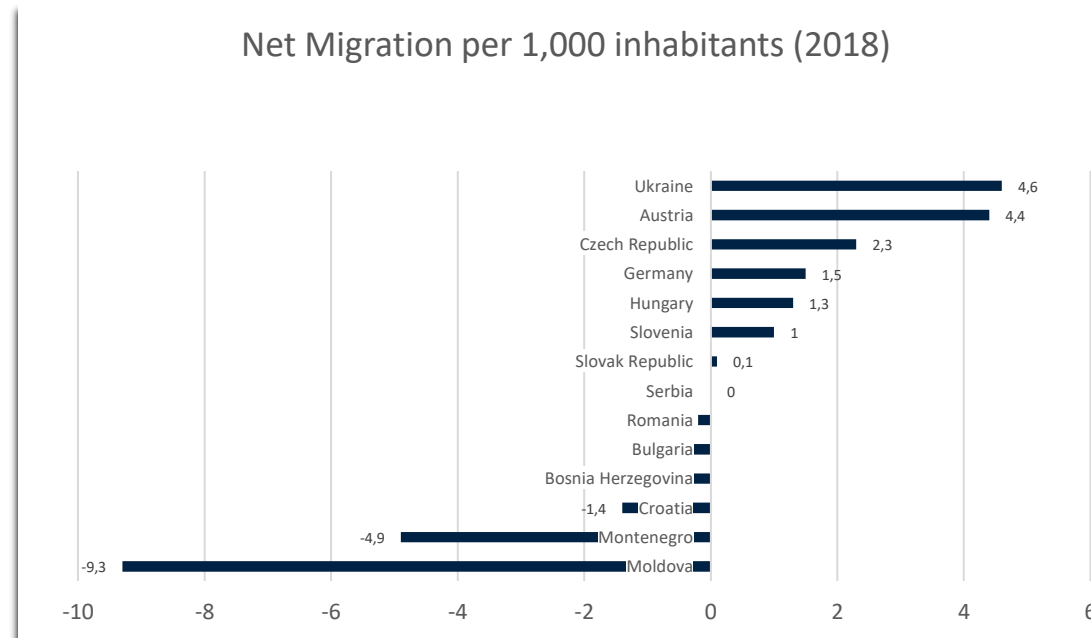
Challenges:

=> Declining Population in Danube countries = Aging workforce + In some countries, further exacerbated by net outmigration

- West Balkans expected to lose 1 million youth in next decade
- Since 1990:
 - Serbia has lost 9% of its population
 - Northern Macedonia 10%
 - Bosnia and Herzogovenia 24%
 - Albania 37%

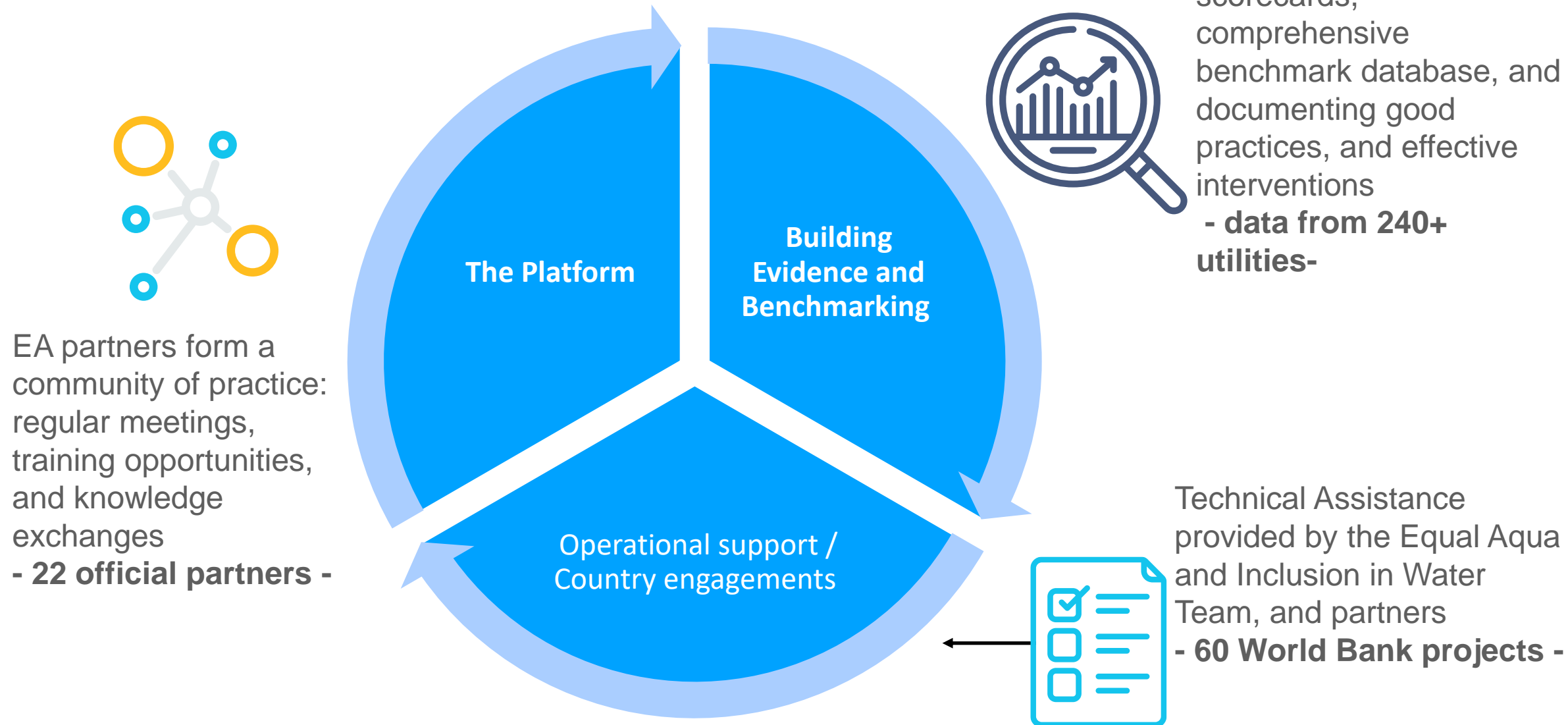


Net Migration per 1,000 inhabitants (2018)



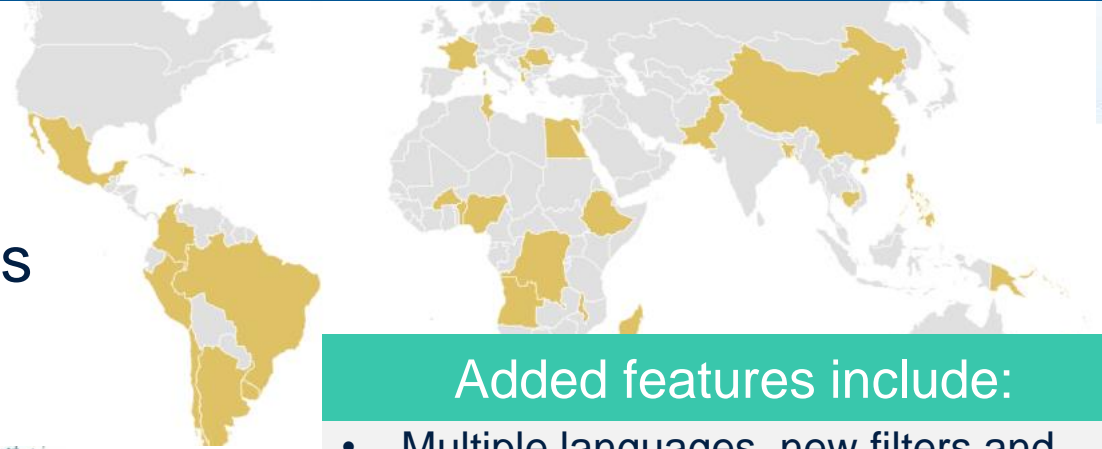
EQUAL AQUA | Pillars

Equal Aqua is guided by three interlinked pillars





Data is aggregated and fed into public database for insights into gender inclusion in water institutions



240+
utilities

48
countries



Added features include:

- Multiple languages, new filters and categories and interactive features
- Added labels and information for a more user-friendly experience



CLOSING GENDER GAPS IN WATER JOBS

Water is a crucial source of jobs, both directly, as an employer in water services, and indirectly, through the economic opportunities that depend on water. Women remain an untapped resource for the water sector - only 1 in 5 utility employees are female. Greater diversity is linked to higher financial performance, innovation and customer satisfaction.

This dataset illustrates gender gaps in employment drawing on survey results from [Women in Water Utilities: Breaking Barriers report](#), and additional surveys collected as part of Equal Aqua platform. Utilities can use it to compare their performance to other utilities in their region and globally.

<https://wbwaterdata.org/breakingbarriers/home/>

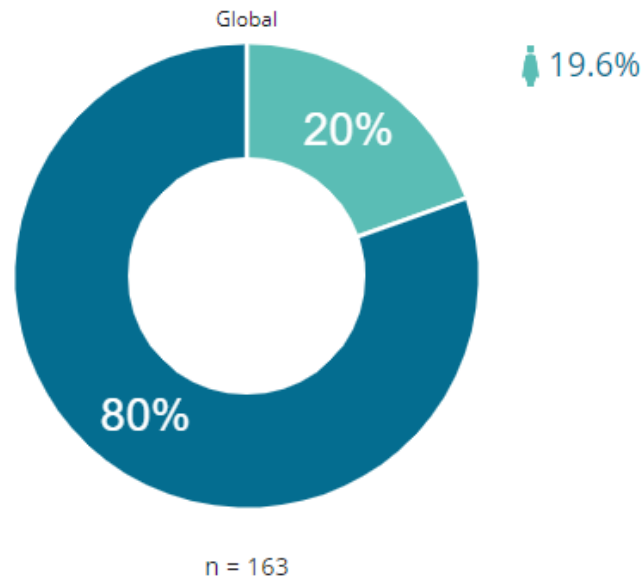
[Explore the Tool](#)

[About the Data](#)

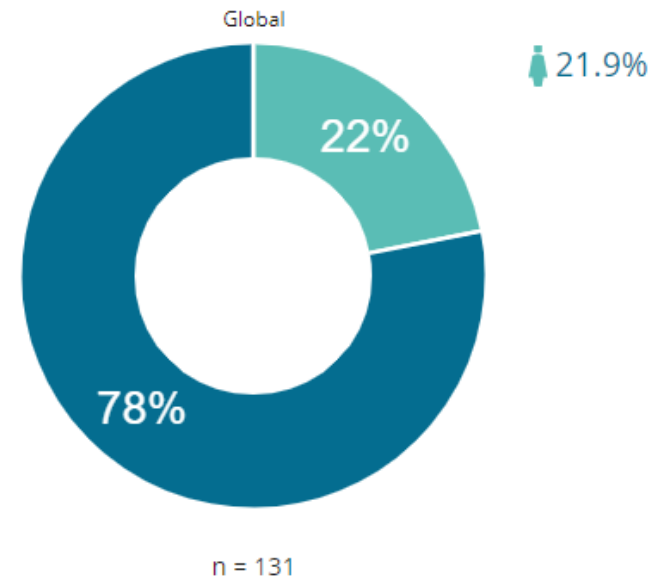
Women are underrepresented in water and sanitation utilities

SHARE OF SALARIED EMPLOYEES IN THE AVERAGE INSTITUTION

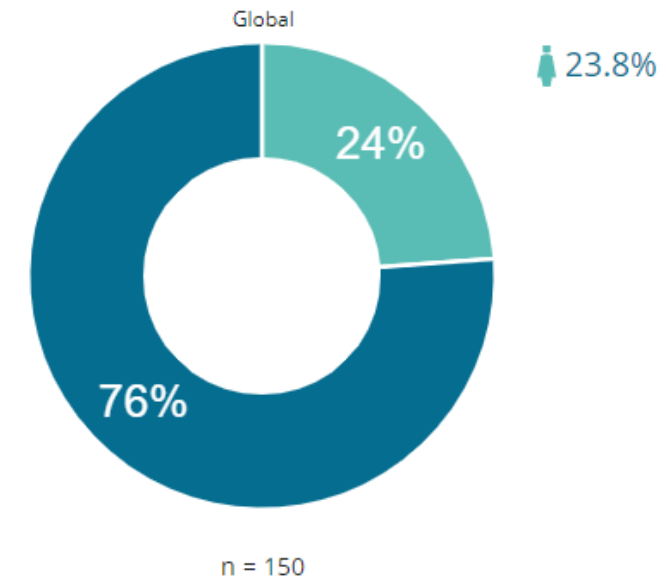
% OF EMPLOYEES THAT ARE WOMEN ⓘ



% OF ENGINEERS THAT ARE WOMEN ⓘ



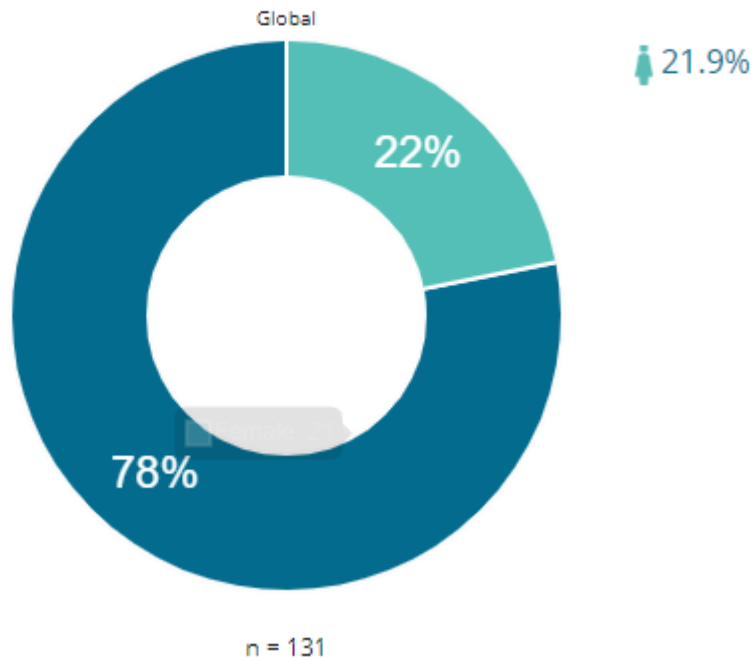
% OF MANAGERS THAT ARE WOMEN ⓘ



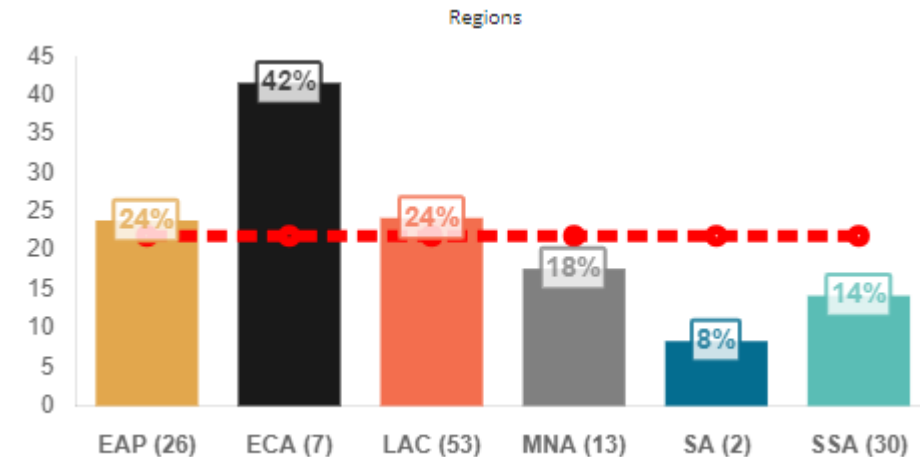
A diverse workforce brings numerous benefits, including increased financial productivity, greater innovation, and improved customer satisfaction.

Share of engineers who are women is around 22% in a utility globally

% OF ENGINEERS THAT ARE WOMEN ⓘ



There are stark regional variations



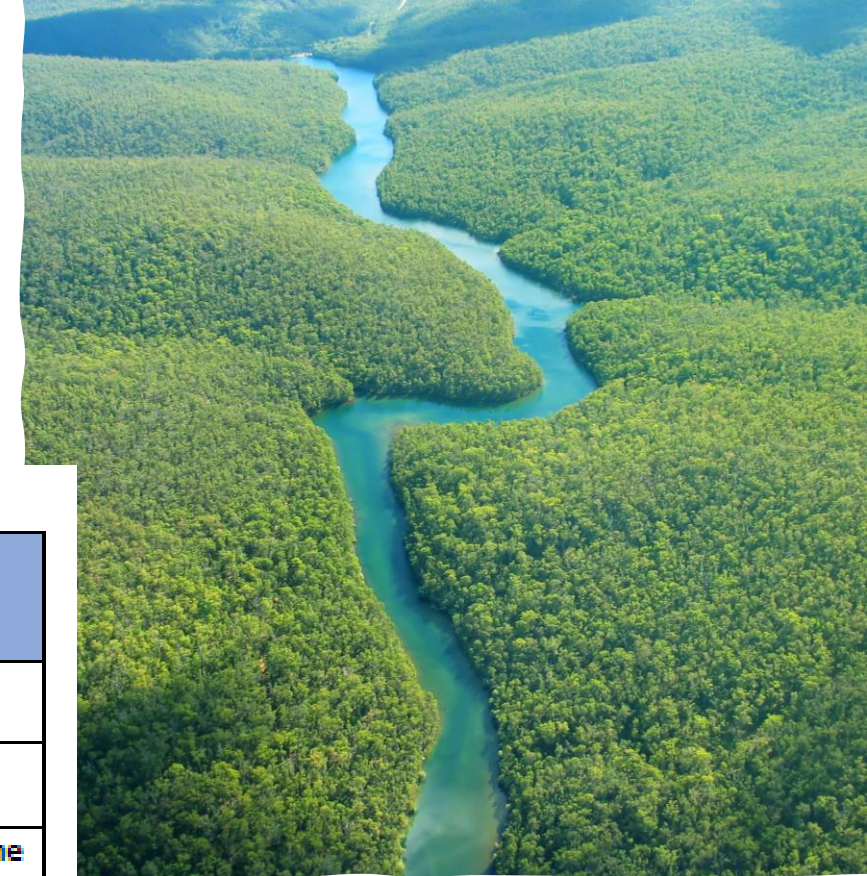
Women are often concentrated in administrative positions and are excluded from technical occupations. But occupational segregation is costly.

Water Institutions - Beyond Water Utilities

Table 14: Gender composition of the personnel in each Water Basin Agencies

Gender composition Water Basin Council	Number of members	Men %	Women %	Conclusion according to the defined quotas from Law no. 9970 "On gender equality in Albania"
Drini River Basin	23	72 %	8% 😊	Women representation is really low
Mati River Basin	15	100%	0% 😞	Women are not represented in Water Basin Council
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Vjosa River Basin	27	83.4	16.6% 😊	Men dominate in the Water Basin Council

From "Gender Agenda and Action Plan for Water Supply and Waste Water Sector in Albania 2019-2030", German Federal Ministry of for Economic Cooperation and Development, GIZ, REC-Albania.



Gender composition of the personnel in each Water Basin Agencies

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The “Recipe”...

At each stage of an employee’s career cycle, women face barriers as well as opportunities.
Different utilities will have different issues to address.



DIAGNOSIS

HR survey
Scorecards
Database



ATTRACTION

- Gender roles marked through social norms
- Divisions of labor
- STEM graduates
- Role models



RECRUITMENT

- School-to-work transition
- Targeting candidates/job advertisements
- Hiring process



RETENTION

- Work-life balance
- Family-friendly policies
- Fair wages
- Work environment
- Sexual harassment
- Work facilities and amenities



ADVANCEMENT

- Training, mentorship, and networking opportunities
- Opportunities for leadership



EQUAL AQUA

Several challenges affect the representation of women in the water sector, but there are also tremendous opportunities to achieve gender parity.

Attraction:

BARRIERS

- Stereotypes and social norms
- Occupational segregation
- Low levels of female graduates in technical fields
- Lack of role models

OPPORTUNITIES

- Career talks, role models, and other outreach campaigns
- Bring your daughter to work day
- Scholarships for women in STEM studies

Recruitment:

BARRIERS

- School-to-work transition bottlenecks
- Female graduates are not targeted as candidates
- Gender biases in the hiring process

OPPORTUNITIES

- Women engineers recruited directly from universities
- Inclusive job advertisements
- Gender-balanced hiring committee

Retention

BARRIERS

- Lack of work-life balance
- Inadequate family-friendly policies
- Unsupportive workplace environment
- Wage gaps
- Sexual harassment

OPPORTUNITIES

- Maternity, paternity, and parental leave policies
- Separate sanitation facilities for men and women
- On-site lactation rooms
- Regular pay gap assessments

Advancement

BARRIERS

- Fewer training, mentorship, and networking opportunities
- Exclusion from opportunities for advancement and leadership

OPPORTUNITIES

- Transparent promotion process Awards to recognize female leadership in the field
- Equal access to technical and managerial training for all

Where are we in the Danube?

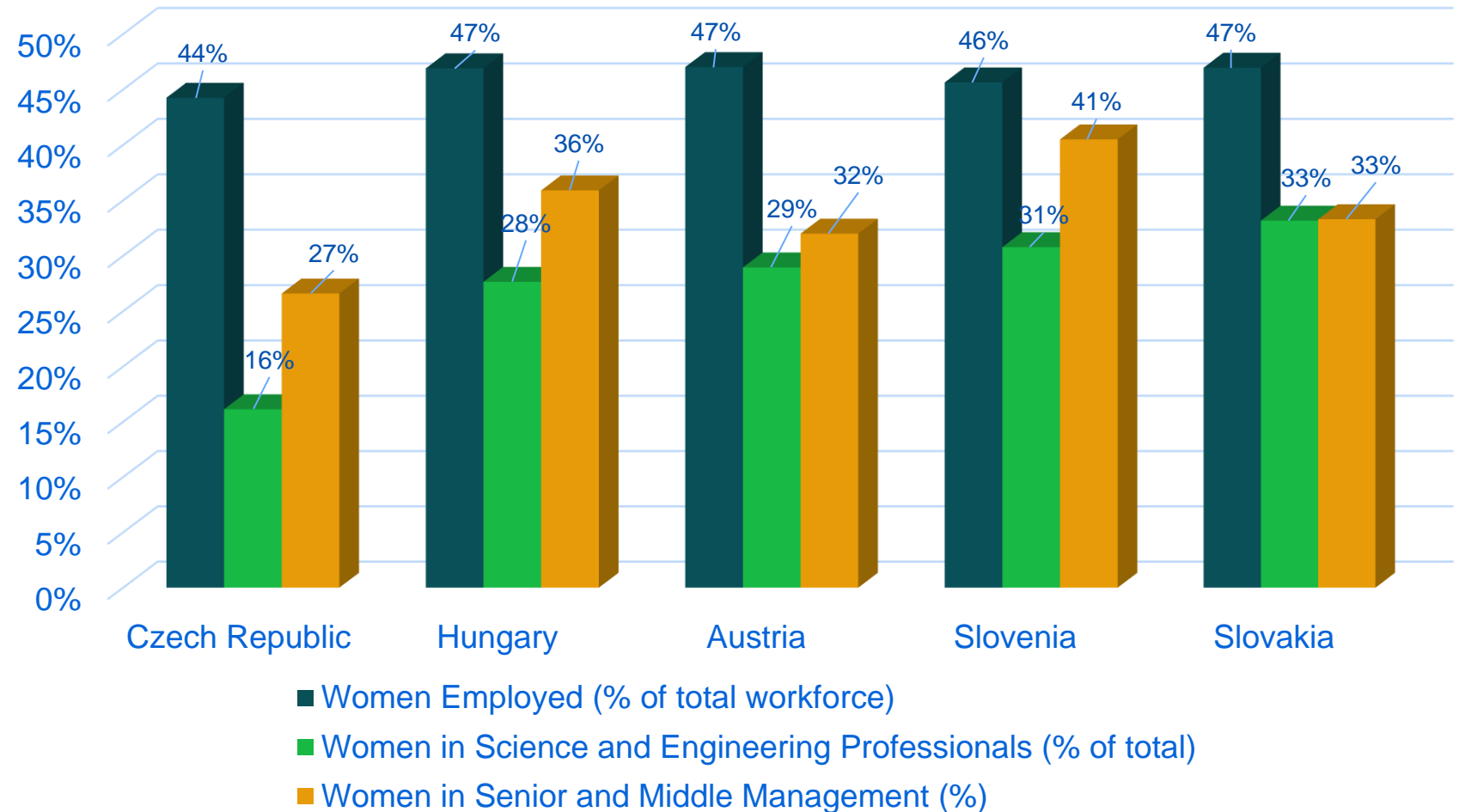


ATTRACTION

- Gender roles marked through social norms
- Divisions of labor
- STEM graduates
- Role models

Diverse contexts: In some countries rates of female employment are very low = competition for scarce female employees
- > **Invest in attraction**

Danube Participating Countries: Context



Note: Source of data : ILOSTAT. This is not comprehensive of all technical fields. This includes engineers, physicists, biologists, statisticians, actuaries.

Where are we in the Danube?

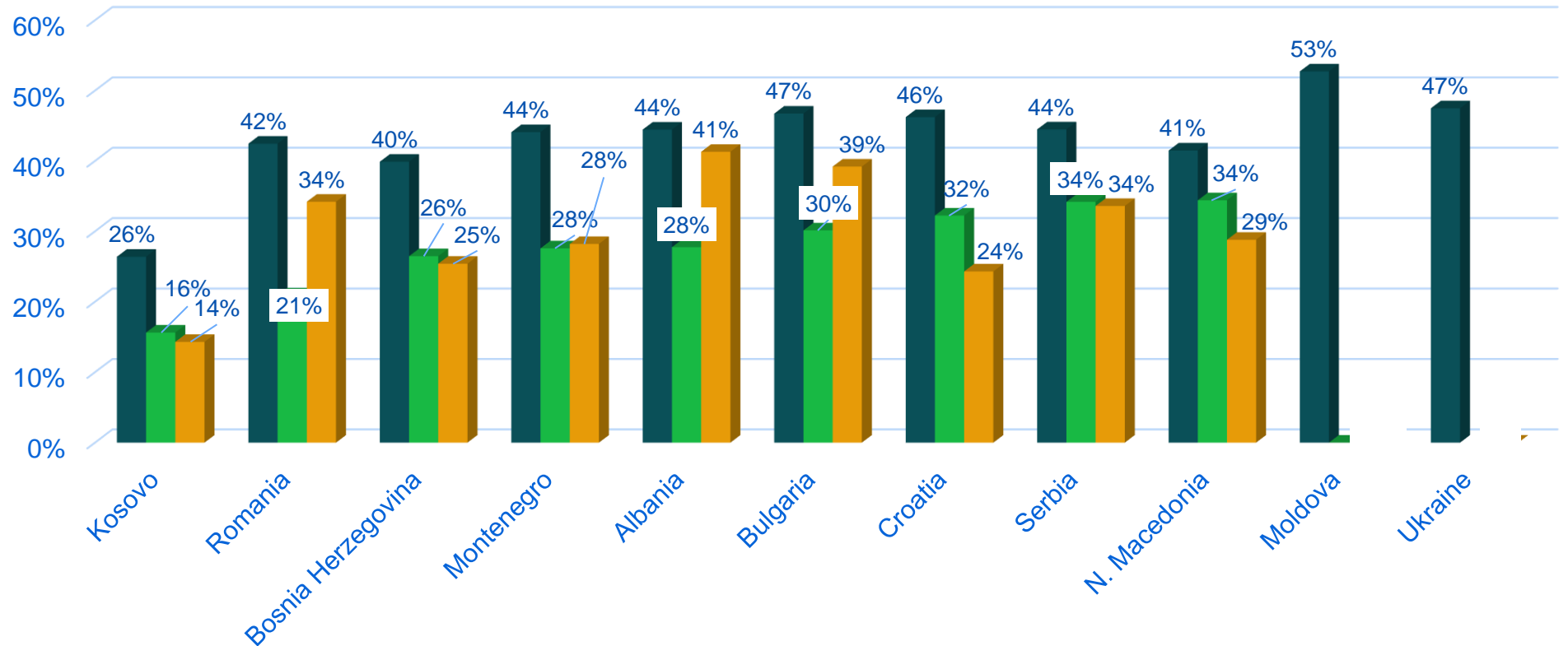


ATTRACTION

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Diverse contexts: In some countries rates of female employment are very low = competition for scarce female employees
- > **Invest in attraction.**

Danube Target Countries: Context



- Women Employed (% of total workforce)
- Women in Science and Engineering Professionals (% of total)
- Women in Senior and Middle Management (%)

Note: This is not comprehensive of all technical fields. This includes engineers, physicists, biologists, statisticians, actuaries.

“How many kids dream of working in the water sector?”



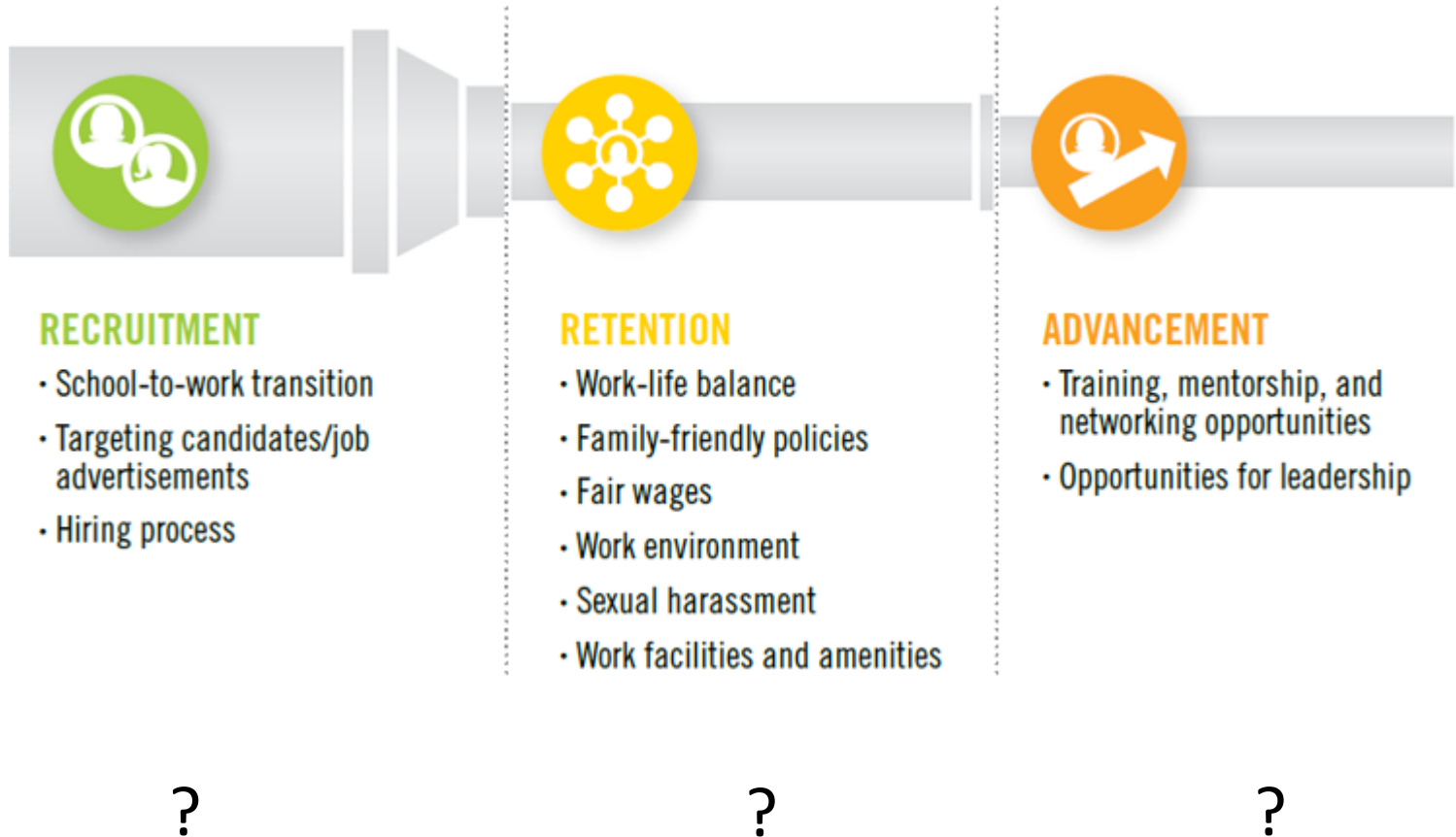
ATTRACTION

- Gender roles marked through social norms
- Divisions of labor
- STEM graduates
- Role models

- Competition for young, female talent is keen – more so, in countries with high emigration and the sector may not be as highly remunerated as others (i.e. energy)
- Think outside the box:
 - Shift perceptions & inspire : “water is life,” recent groundwater findings, or even consider advertising together with other water organizations
 - Start young – partnerships + interactive curriculum in schools/citizen science
 - Articulate “water journeys,” in terms of pathways (research, diplomacy, machine learning, engineering, business development etc.)
 - Leverage partnerships + networks (Danube, 303030, IWA, etc.)
- Evaluate effectiveness of outreach (for example, how many kids decide to pursue a career in water after a sensibilization event at a high school)?

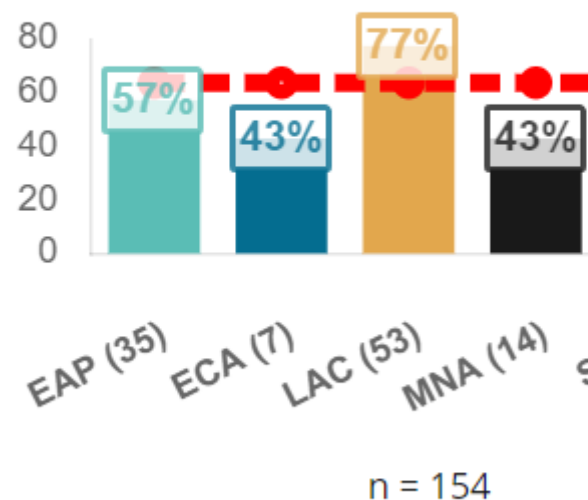
Where are we in the Danube Water Institutions?

Danube Countries Comparative
Data

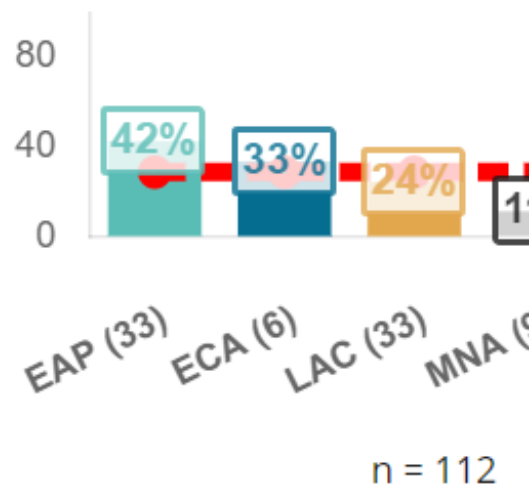


Where are we in the Danube Water Institutions?

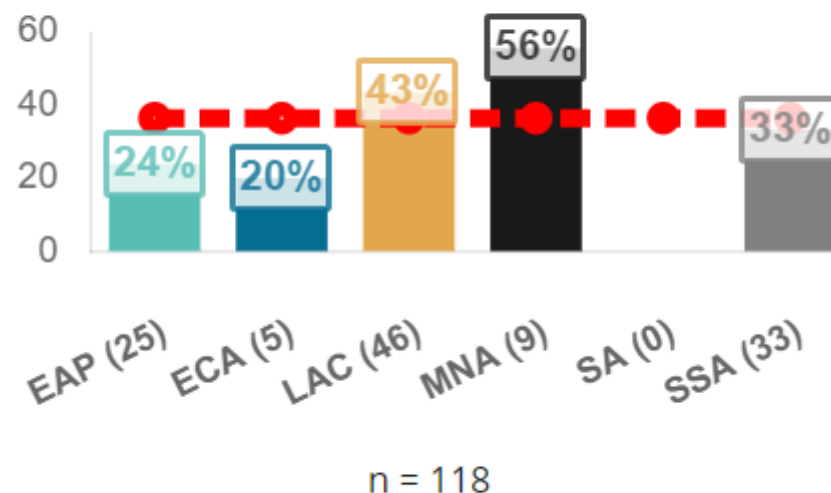
POLICIES TO PREVENT SEXUAL HARASSMENT ⓘ



% WITH MENTORSHIP PROGRAMS ⓘ

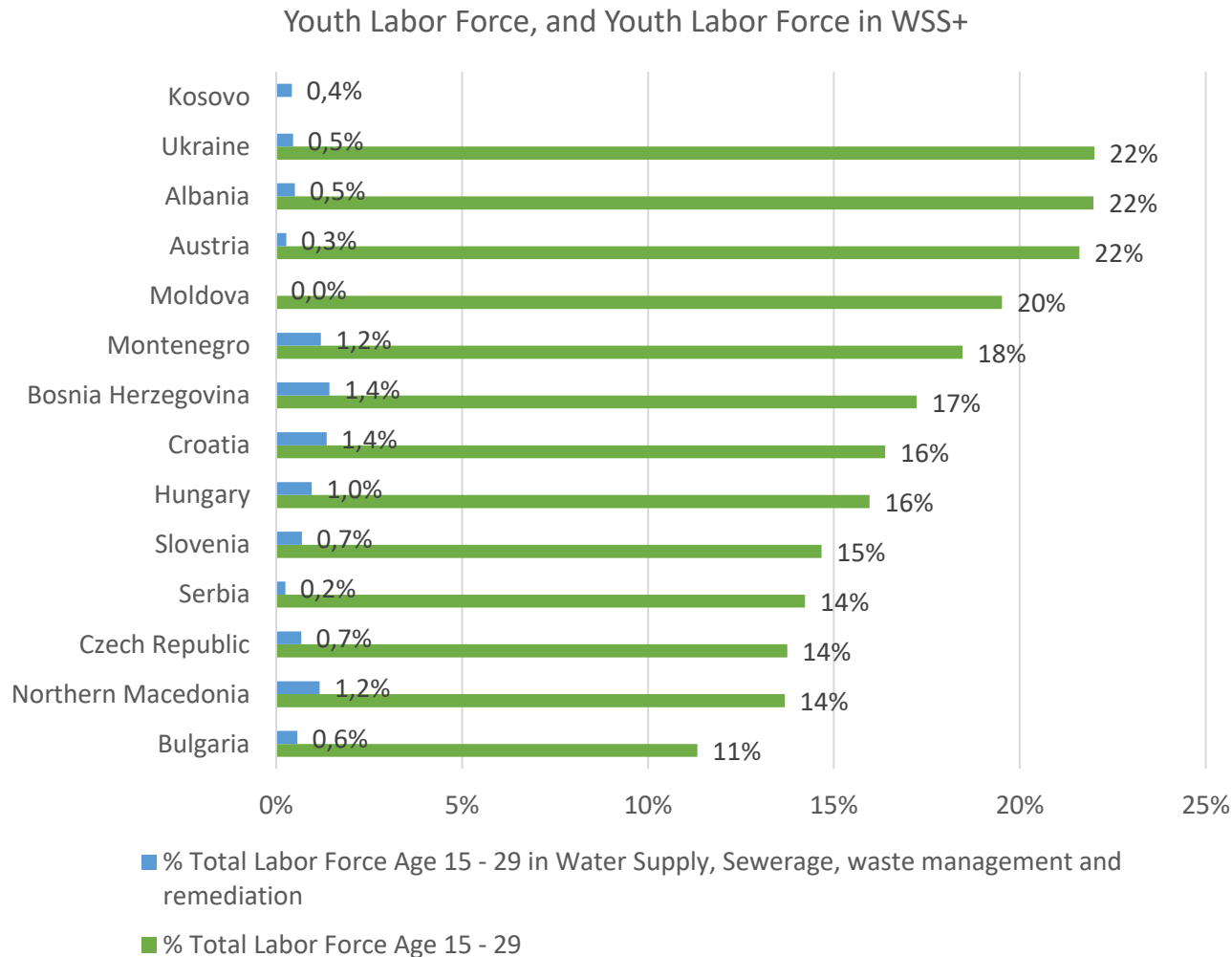


% WITH FLEXIBLE WORKING ARRANGEMENTS ⓘ

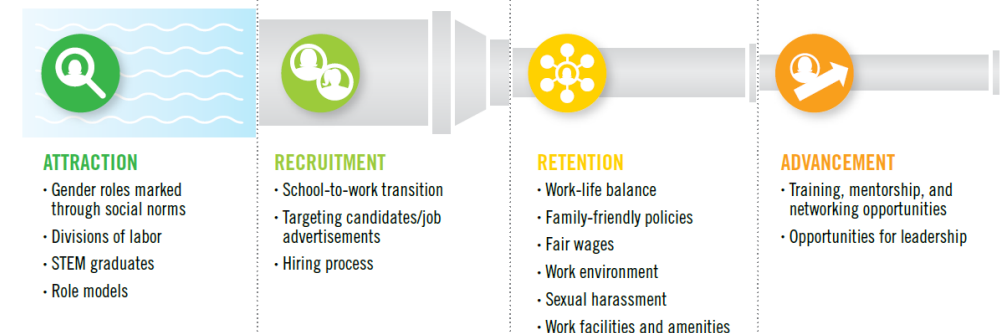


Even among these 7 utilities, some important gaps remain.

Diversity in the Labor Force: Youth in Danube Water Institutions



- Systematic data on youth from water institutions (and on age of water workforce) is lacking



Diversity in the Labor Force: Youth in Danube Water Institutions

Considerations Looking Forward

- Many initiatives
 - Danube Youth Council
 - Youth Policy Forum
 - Western Balkans Platform on Education and Training
 - Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia have introduced dual education systems
 - Youth Guarantee program (Western Balkans)....
- Bringing it together
 - Use framework to better track whether efforts to attract, recruit, promote and retain young workers are working
 - Benchmarking, diagnostics at water institution level and across countries on workforce age
 - Integrate lessons from youth organizations, scale up mentorships (including reverse mentorships!), efforts at attraction early on

Thank You!

Extra Slides

ATTRACTION

Barriers:

- Social norms/ stereotypes
- Occupational segregation
- Low levels of female graduates in technical fields
- Lack of role models

Promising approaches:

- ✓ Career talks, role models, and other outreach campaigns
- ✓ Presentations at schools, colleges, and the community
- ✓ or scholarships for women in STEM studies, are just a few examples.

"The utility is so male dominated, that within weeks of joining the utility, most women want to leave! The utility needs to hire more women so that a culture is created where everyone feels comfortable."

—Female water quality officer, Ghana



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RECRUITMENT

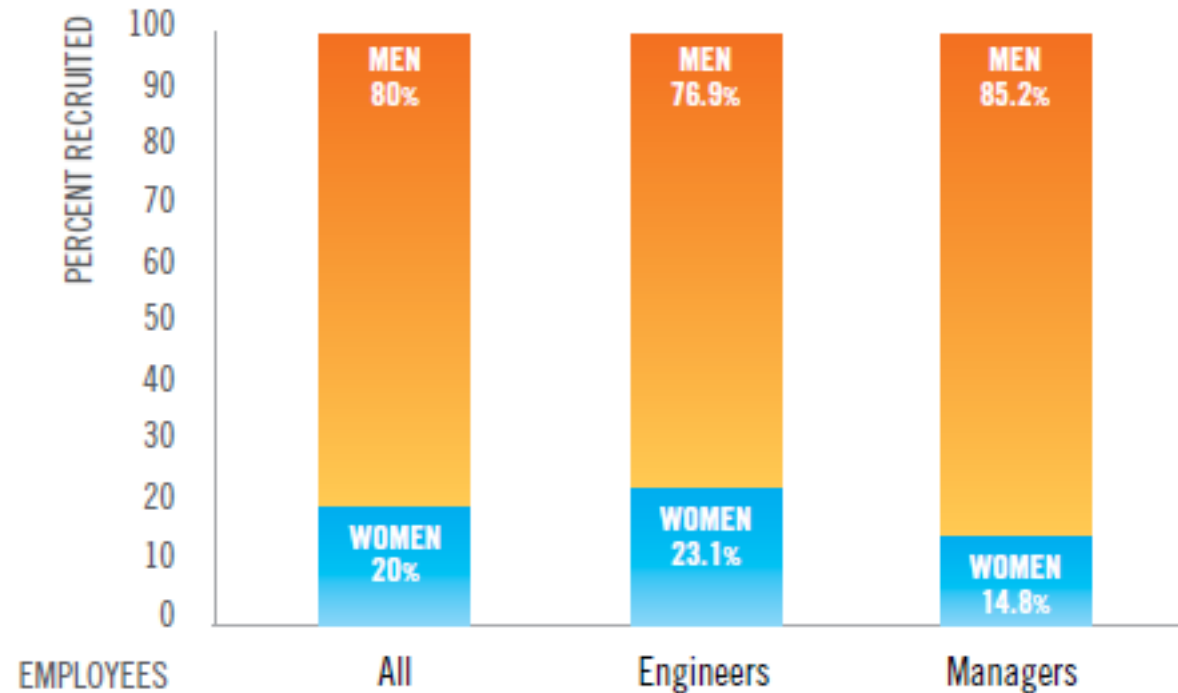
Barriers:

- School-to-work transition-bottlenecks
- Female graduates are not targeted as candidates
- Gender biases in the hiring process

Promising Approaches:

- ✓ Women engineers can be recruited directly from universities
- ✓ Internships that have gender-balanced participation
- ✓ Inclusive job advertisements
- ✓ Gender-balanced hiring committee
- ✓ And having targets to expand gender diversity

Recruitment of Men and Women in Water Utilities in the Past 12 Months, 2018



Source: Responses to utility survey (N: 44 water utilities)

"It could be helpful to ensure women are aware that there is a potential to apply to these positions—that positions are open, and that they are just as suited to apply."

—Female employee, Kosovo

RETENTION

Barriers:

- Lack of work-life balance
- Inadequate family-friendly policies
- Unsupportive workplace environment
- Wage gaps
- Sexual harassment

Promising Approaches:

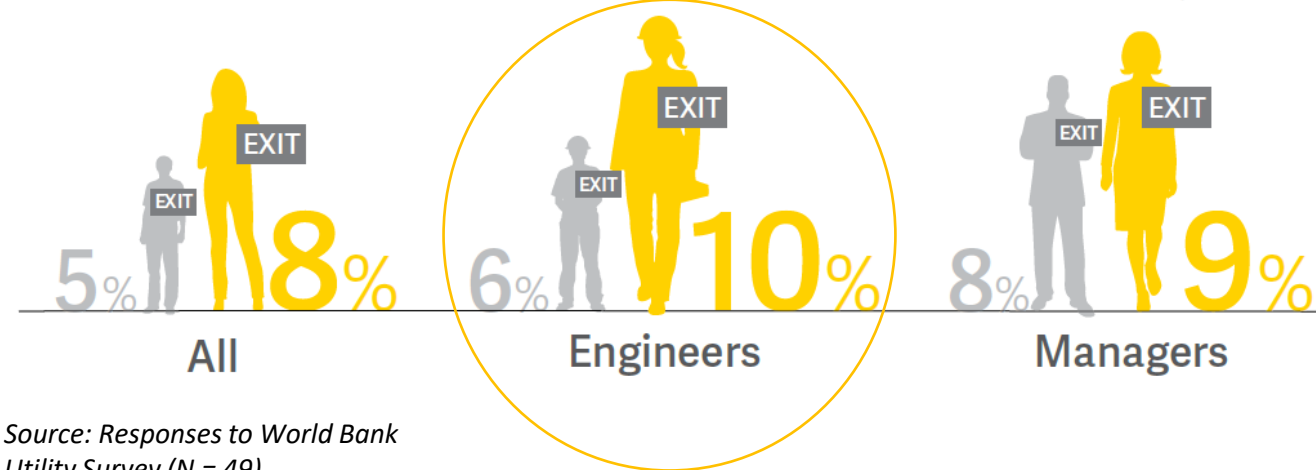
- ✓ Maternity, paternity, and parental leave policies
- ✓ Separate sanitation facilities for men and women
- ✓ On-site lactation rooms
- ✓ Anti-sexual harassment policies
- ✓ And regular pay gap assessments



WORLD BANK GROUP
Water

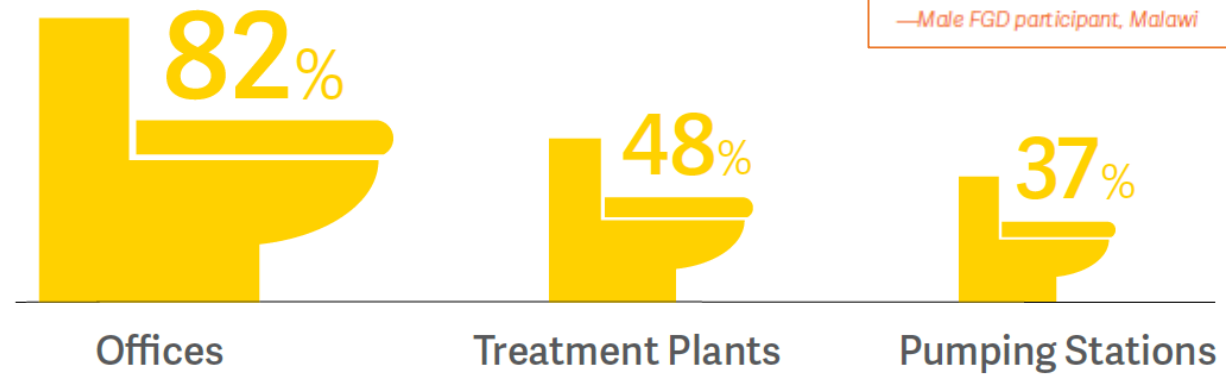


MALE AND FEMALE EXIT RATES IN WATER UTILITIES IN THE PAST 12 MONTH, 2018



Source: Responses to World Bank Utility Survey (N = 49).

TOILETS FOR WOMEN IN WATER UTILITIES



"The utility has no washrooms or changing rooms for men and women, so women change their clothes to work-suits at an open place in the presence of men."

—Male FGD participant, Malawi

Source: Responses to World Bank Utility Survey (N = 60)

ADVANCEMENT

Barriers:

- Fewer training, mentorship, and networking opportunities
- Exclusion from opportunities for advancement and leadership

Promising approaches:

- ✓ Equal access to technical and managerial training for all
- ✓ Mentorship programs and female-run professional networks
- ✓ Transparent promotion process and promotion criteria
- ✓ Or targets for gender composition in leadership positions








"I had to go back and forth daily from Zagazig to Cairo for the training because I could not be away from home and the children."

—Female FGD participant, Egypt

CORE INDICATORS: Performance



 Water Operations	 Sanitation Operations	 Commercial Operations	 Financial management	 Human Resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Drinking water coverage (%)• Continuity (hr/day)• % customers 24/7 supply• NRW (l/Conn./hr or %)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sanitation coverage (%)• Continuity (hr/day)• Wastewater Collected and Treated (%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Collection rate• % of Metered connections• Service complaints resolved• Drinking water quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Operational cost coverage (%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Number of employees per 1000 connections• Percentage of female employees

For specific communities the core indicators will be expanded in the next phase:

- Indicators on sanitation after consultation with CWIS
- Regional subsets of dashboards for partners such as IAWD, PWWA, ESAWAS
- Standard reports on performance improvement
- Change in KPIs over time

CORE INDICATORS: Management Practices



Commercial & Customer Relations

Meter Reading
Payment Methods
Communications channels



Operations

Asset Management
Infrastructure Maintenance
Non-revenue water



Financial

Operational cost recovery
Financial planning and forecast
Infrastructure life cycle



Organization & Strategy

Balance and timing of targets
Performance tracking
and Review



Human Resources

Attracting and managing Talent
Promotion and retention
mechanisms



Climate Change

Water Savings
Water Sources Conservation
Green Infrastructure



Integrity

Transparency
Disclosure
Procurement Protocols

Next phase considerations

- Change in Management Practices over time
- Standard reports on Management Practices
- Overviews of performance per practice area



WORLD
Water



Intelligent Utilities
NEW IBNET

Albania – Gender Representation in WRM

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Excellent example. Need to scale up cross-country data.

Some other regions just starting to leverage regional river basin organizations to scale up benchmarking on gender diversity.

Vjosa River Basin	27/27	40% 😊	balanced representation of both genders.
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From "Gender Agenda and Action Plan for Water Supply and Waste Water Sector in Albania 2019-2030", German Federal Ministry of for Economic Cooperation and Development, GIZ, REC-Albania.

Diversity in the Labor Force: Youth in Danube Water Institutions

- Systematic data on youth in water institutions (and on age of water workforce) is lacking

Annual Labor Force by % 15 - 25 Years

Old
No data (water)

