

DANUBE WATER FORUM

DATA TRANSPARENCY: THE VALUE OF PERFORMANCE INDICATORS FOR MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENTS AND THE GENERAL PUBLIC

All that was said, shown and asked: The summary report on another exciting session, dealing with the value of performance indicators for municipal governments and the general public.

IAWD's Philip Weller and Jelena Janevska led through a lively program which set out thematically from the Forum's host city Banja Luka, with Miodrag Babic, former Technical Director at Vodovod a.d. Banja Luka presenting the city's benchmarking and data collection program, established in 2013 in cooperation with IAWD and the World Bank and supported by GIZ and SDC.

Benchmarking in Banja Luka

From 2014 on, data on the water supply and sewerage network were collected, analyzing and reporting a total of 550 technical and financial variables to form a centralized database. The effort resulted in a much clearer picture of performances and therefore better planning, and also better communication between authorities and water utilities. Mr. Babic reports measurable business improvement, easier decision-making on the management level, low data collection costs, and improved transparency as a safe basis for successful negotiations with investors and regulators.

“Data help managers to make decisions more easily,”

he concludes.

On the national level, a steadily growing number of utilities organized in the water utility association of the Republika Srpska joined the benchmarking program, with altogether more than 200 participants attending workshops in the period between 2017 and 2019.

Improved databases improve performance, and improving performance improves lives on a daily basis.

Sombor: New infrastructure, including latest monitoring software

Antonio Ratkovic, mayor of Sombor, Serbia, subsequently introduced the city's ambitious energy, water and wastewater infrastructure program striving at using renewable energy sources like solar and biogas to achieve full energy independence of the city's wastewater plant. The investment program includes the application of latest information software in the municipal water supply systems to monitor performance.

Green Cities: the 1.5 billion Euro Framework

Damir Cengic, Principal Banker at the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, presented the bank's Green Cities program, a €1.5 billion framework to support cities to identify, benchmark, prioritize and invest in Green City measures to improve urban environmental performance through strategy and policy support, Green City infrastructure investments and building capacity of city administrators and key stakeholders. Damir Cengic points out:

“In 2050, 68% of 9.7 billion people will live in cities.”

To date, the program covers 43 cities with populations over 100,000 who commit to a Green Action Plan and initiate “trigger” infrastructure projects, targeting a 20% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, energy or resource consumption or pollution or promise significant climate resilience benefits.

An exemplary project is Banja Luka Water Phase 1/Phase 2, with total investments of EUR 10m by EBRD and EUR 2m by the City, aiming at improved quality and reliability of the water supply, and extended sewage collection, and subsequent measures to improve the operational efficiency of the company. – Which lead the session content back to where it started: Banja Luka, the intended host city of the first Danube Water Forum.