

Regional Capacity Development Network for Water and Sanitation Services in South-East Europe (RCDN+)

The Challenge

The countries in the Western Balkans thrive to meet The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 6 to achieve availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation by 2030. While a large share of the urban population is connected to sewer networks, municipalities (local governments) and public water utilities face major challenges in providing access to safely managed water supply services across the region. Operational wastewater treatment plants are often lacking, and the coverage of safely managed sanitation services remains low.

The lack of skilled workforce, that will manage and operate the water and sanitation infrastructure in a professional and financially sustainable manner, as well as the lack of opportunities to strengthen the human resource capacities, is identified as key challenge for the sector. Associations of municipalities (local governments) and Associations of public water utilities have an important role in addressing the training needs of their members' municipalities and utilities and are typically more stable than government agencies in the Western Balkans countries.

Consequently, collaboration between municipalities and water utilities is critical for the adequate prioritisation of, and resource mobilisation for, water and sanitation services. Introducing management or service delivery standards and making utilities transparent and accountable for the quality of water and sanitation services requires a prior understanding of water sector goals and priorities. Improvements in water and sanitation services cannot be achieved without a sound collaboration between utilities and municipalities.

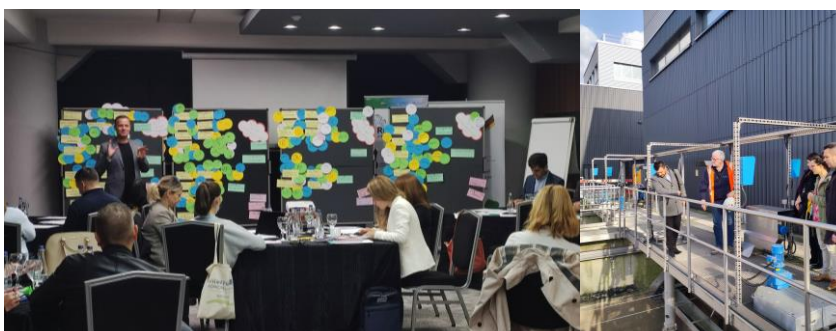
Capacity development requires long-term, continued efforts to overcome the challenges of the sector. There is a need and an opportunity for continuous capacity strengthening efforts to achieve sustainable water sector improvements in the Western Balkans.

Project name	Sub-project: Regional Capacity Development Network for Water and Sanitation Services in South-East Europe (RCDN+)
	Open Regional Fund for South-East Europe – Modernisation of Municipal Services
Commissioned by	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)
	Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO)
Project region	Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia
Duration	04/2023 – 03/2028
Budget	1.500.000 EUR (BMZ contribution) 5.000.000 EUR (SECO contribution)

Our Approach

The Regional Capacity Development Network (RCDN+) empowers Associations of public utilities and of local governments in the Western Balkan countries to intensify their cooperation and jointly conduct policy dialogue, to strengthen their institutional capacities, and to offer high-quality capacity development services and advocate for the interests of their members.

Substantial progress has been achieved during the RCDN first phase (05/2017 – 03/2023), but capacity development requires long-term, continued efforts and some challenges remain. A solid basis for cooperation has been established in the past five years, and an extensive portfolio of high-quality training materials is available. There is a need and an opportunity to continue



L. to r.: RCDN+ Follow-on Phase: Validation Workshop;

Study visit to deepen showcase of VSA (Verband Schweizer Abwasser- und Gewässerschutzfachleute) for institutionalization

capacity strengthening efforts to achieve sustainable water sector improvements in the Western Balkans, which is why a follow-on phase of the RCDN, referred to as “RCDN+” was approved.

RCDN+ contributes to creating a skilled workforce for the water sector and indirectly helps utilities and municipalities in the Western Balkans to improve their performance for the delivery of safe and sustainable drinking water and sanitation services to the population, in line with international standards.

Four key outcomes will contribute to achieving the RCDN+ objective: (1) Stronger associations - Associations of public utilities and of local governments in the 6 Western Balkan countries are capable to perform their organisational functions in line with their mandate; (2) Adequate capacity development offer - Associations of public utilities and of local governments in the 6 Western Balkan countries are capable of responding satisfactorily to the water sector-related capacity development needs and requests of their members; (3) Policy dialogue led by associations - Associations of public utilities and of local governments in the 6 Western Balkan countries are recognised by competent national agencies, able to establish strategic collaborations, and to facilitate policy dialogue in order to advocate for the interests of their members; and (4) Regional services - Regional capacity development services address the needs and requests, and add value to the capacity development offer of associations of utilities and of local governments in the 6 Western Balkan countries.

RCDN+ will embrace institutional and capacity development support to 15 national associations of water utilities and of local governments, as well as two regional associations, namely the International Association of Water Service Companies in the Danube River Catchment Area (IAWD) and the Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South-East Europe (NALAS), and two associations of professionals, Association for Water and Environmental Protection Sector “Aquasan Network in BiH” and the Association for Water Technology and Sanitary Engineering in Serbia (UTVSI).

The project will continuously work on identifying options to synergize the planned activities with Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (KfW), GIZ, EU, World Bank and other Donors’ and National projects active in the area of municipal water and sanitation services sector in the 6 Western Balkans countries.

RCDN+ is jointly funded by the BMZ and the Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO).

The benefits

The inhabitants of the Western Balkan region will benefit from access to improved water supply and wastewater management services due to stronger utilities. The project has a positive impact on living conditions by improving access to water, enhancing health, and protecting the environment. Additionally, the project adopts a regional collaborative capacity development approach that promotes cooperation and joint action across borders.

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Published by Deutsche Gesellschaft für
Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH
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As at 04/2023

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GIZ is responsible for the content of this publication.

On behalf of Federal Ministry for Economic
Cooperation and Development (BMZ)

Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO)