



RCDN Knowledge Management Newsletter

AT THE SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE






Dear readers,

We are happy to share with you the first edition of our Knowledge Management Newsletter: *At the Source of Knowledge*.

The Regional Capacity Development Network (RCDN) for Water and Sanitation Services connects local government units (LGUs), public water utilities (PUCs) and their associations from South East Europe (SEE) to work together on developing capacities in the water and sanitation service (WSS) sector.

This is a huge knowledge base that can provide valuable support to the RCDN partners in their capacity development, advocacy and association development efforts. We have established RCDN Knowledge Management System, collecting, organising and systematising the knowledge and making it accessible to our community. This Newsletter will bring some of the elements of this system closer to you. We hope you enjoy it and take the advantage of the RCDN at the source of knowledge.

Below, you can find:

-  Successful cooperation between the LGA and APUC in addressing water and sanitation sector issues: The case of Montenegro (page 2)
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We wish you enjoy, learn and apply!

Your RCDN team

SUCCESSFUL COOPERATION BETWEEN THE LGA AND APUC IN ADDRESSING WATER AND SANITATION SECTOR ISSUES: THE CASE OF MONTENEGRO

By: Jelena Janevska, RCDN Knowledge Manager

Strengthening the ability of the RCDN partner associations for collaborative capacity development delivery and joint action in addressing water and sanitation sector challenges is the core of the RCDN methodological approach. Through the years, RCDN designed and offered a comprehensive set of capacity development measures that provided plenty of great opportunities for the associations and professionals to meet, learn and exchange.

What started as an enthusiastic collaboration between two RCDN Focal Points in Montenegro, in less than three years has grown into a promising institutional cooperation that already bares its fruits. Below, we present the inspiring story of the Union of Municipalities of Montenegro (UoMM) and the Association of Waterworks of Montenegro (AWM), talking to their RCDN Focal Points, Ms. Jelena Borozan and Mr. Andrija Simović.





THIS IS HOW IT STARTED

JJ: When did the good cooperation start, who initiated it and how?

J&A: In 2018, our two associations became members of the regional network – RCDN. This is where our more intensive cooperation has begun, after which the need for its strengthening as well as setting a good example to our members became more and more visible.

JJ: Relationships start, but one needs to invest and nurture them. What were the key phases in the development of the relationship between your two associations?

J&A: The first key step taken by the associations, at our initiative as RCDN focal points, was signing the Memorandum of Cooperation. The Memorandum formalises the already initiated good cooperation, it defines goals and activities in its implementation.

This document is the result of the expressed need to improve cooperation, both, between our associations in the water sector, but also among our members – local government units, as founders and owners of water utilities, and water utilities themselves. The associations undertook in the Memorandum that cooperation in all phases of activities will be implemented according to the principles of openness, transparency and mutual trust.

RCDN brought them together, the first activities have shown that the collaboration is the right way to go, the Memorandum institutionalized it.

GREAT COOPERATION AND EVEN GREATER RESULTS

JJ: What is the result of this cooperation? What are you especially proud of?

J&A: For this relatively short period, many activities could be mentioned as a good result that we can be proud of.

First of all, the above-mentioned **Memorandum of Cooperation**, which, we can say, is considerably implemented in practice, and serving as an example to our colleagues and associations from the region.

One of the major joint events is **Montenegro Water Conference (MWC)**, first of which took place in 2019 and which gradually becomes traditional. The success of the first joint conference is planned to be replicated, thus MWC 2021 will take place **13-15 October** this year.



One of the most important activities is the adoption of the **Joint Advocacy Strategy** of AWM and UoMM for the water and sanitation sector. The two partner associations agreed that within this document, one of the three key topics is – Strengthening cooperation between LGUs and PUCs. Besides, Non-Revenue Water Management and Asset Management have been identified as key topics.

In the previous period, the associations worked intensively on creating conditions for the implementation of the **Non-Revenue Program in Montenegro**, within IAWD D-LeaP. We have provided donor funds for the implementation of the Program, and trained five future trainers that will implement the program in Montenegro. In addition, it is planned to pay special attention to raising awareness of the importance of this issue, especially among decision makers in local governments.



Montenegro Water Conference, Joint Advocacy Strategy, implementation of the Non-Revenue Program and numerous joint trainings and workshops are only part of the collaborative work of the two associations.

Numerous joint trainings, workshops and other events were organised, mainly within the RCDN project: trainings such as “Competence Development of Municipal Elected Officials for Water Services” and “Capital Infrastructure Investment Projects in the Water and Sanitation Sector”, workshops regarding Project Cycle Management and project development for applying for EU funds, etc.

What is important to emphasise is that our cooperation was not jeopardised even during the problematic epidemiological period we all faced, we managed to face the problems and adapt to the new situation, mainly through providing online services to our members.

What is common to all activities related to the water sector is that they are not implemented without mutual consultations between the associations. Also, all RCDN activities are jointly implemented.

THE VISION FOR THE FUTURE

JJ: What are your joint ideas for the future?

J&A: In the coming period, we certainly plan to continue implementation of joint activities, and we will adduce some of them.

Besides the upcoming **Montenegro Water Conference**, which we expect to be interesting, not only to the local participants, but also to colleagues from the region and beyond, we plan a number of



other activities. **The implementation of the Joint Advocacy Strategy** will be a priority. Also, **number of trainings and workshops**, will be organised in the new UoMM Training Centre, equipped with the support of RCDN.

Certainly, one of the issues that requires joint action with the aim of improving the water sector, is the **legislative framework** in Montenegro regarding this area.

In addition, we work together on a **new project** regarding replacement of the old asbestos cement pipes. So far, ToRs have been prepared for all our members, and currently we work on the preparations for the main project. The main objectives of this project are: reduction of water losses in water supply systems; increasing the security of water supply, health protection, enabling a significant increase in the economics of water utilities, but also meeting EU requirements, which is in line with Chapter 27. Ultimately, it aims to improve the quality of life of local people and collective awareness of the importance of quality water supply in Montenegro.

2021 Montenegro Water Conference, implementation of the Joint Advocacy Strategy, number of trainings, legislative changes, and a new project are in the pipeline of this great team.



A MESSAGE FOR PEERS

JJ: What would you recommend to your peers throughout the region when it comes to LGA-APUC cooperation?

J&A: It is not possible to improve the water sector with parallel approaches and actions. Only good communication and synergy of associations representing municipalities and water utilities can significantly contribute to the progress.

Let us be an example to our members. Good communication and cooperation are the key to success.

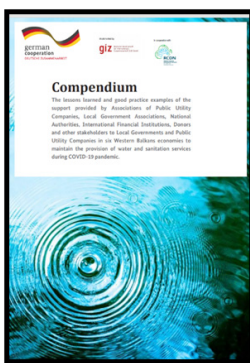
The successful collaboration between the associations sets a great example for their members, the municipalities and Public Utility Companies to follow.

RCDN LIBRARY: YOUR READING PARTNER

RCDN Knowledge Management System collects the existing knowledge about the WSS sector, capturing and accumulating all public documents (reports, laws, research, strategies, analysis, etc.) of relevance for the sector. They are one click away, at our **Source of knowledge** for the region.

This is an illustration of what you can find in RCDN Library:

2021



Compendium on lessons learned and good practice examples of the support provided by Associations of Public Utility Companies, Local Government Associations, National Authorities, International Financial Institutions, Donors and other stakeholders to Local Governments and Public Utility Companies in six Western Balkans economies to maintain the provision of water and sanitation services during COVID-19 pandemic



Report on assessing the financial impact of COVID-19 on the operation and performance of PUCs in six Western Balkan economies



Position Paper For a Better Integration of Capacity Development into Capital Investment Plans



Position Paper: Application of Asset Management Products and Capacity Development for Local Governmental Units/Public Utility Companies

2020



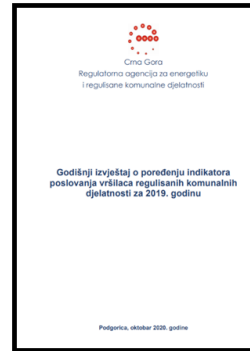
Compendium on good practices and lessons learned of the response of Local Government Associations and Public Utility Companies in six Western Balkans economies to maintain the provision of water and sanitation services during COVID-19 pandemic



Practical Guide: Establishing and Running a Training Centre

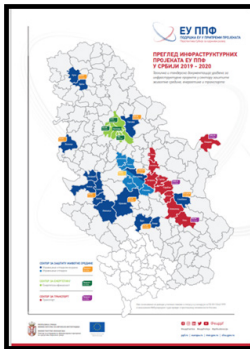


Standard operating procedures for reducing water losses and energy efficiency in water companies, Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina



Montenegro Benchmarking report 2019

2019



1. *Report on public utilities, Montenegro*
2. *Communal wastewater management plan, Montenegro*
3. *Programme for building collectors and WWTPs, Montenegro*
4. *WWT project map overview, Serbia*
5. *Stakeholder engagement plan, Kosovo*

RCDN PARTNER ASSOCIATIONS BENEFITED FROM A NUMBER OF ASSOCIATION DEVELOPMENT MEASURES – YOU CAN ALSO LEARN FROM THEIR EXPERIENCE

At the beginning of the cooperation, all RCDN partner associations undergo the process of Association Needs Assessment (ANA), determining their priority needs and developing an action plan for strengthening their organisational capacities. In the past two years, RCDN supported the partners to implement number of these actions and achieve tangible organisational improvements.

You do not always need to reinvent the wheel! Within the RCDN Knowledge System, in the **Toolbox section on Podio**, we have created an overview of all ANA measures implemented by partner associations. Check it out, contact your peers, and exchange materials and know how on tasks and issues. This can also inspire you to initiate peer exchanges on specific issues and topics.

Also, here you will find the documents included in the overview, based on the RCDN partner Association's openness to share them with the other RCDN partners, for learning purposes.

If you are interested in details on how an Association has implemented any of these activities, we encourage you to exchange among each other. For doing this, you can use the benefits of the RCDN Association Development Programme (for more info [HERE](#))

RCDN Association Development Programme: **A TAILOR-MADE SUPPORT TO PARTNER ASSOCIATIONS TO EXCHANGE WITH AND LEARN FROM PEERS**

Are you amazed by an excellent practice or capacity of one of the RCDN partner Associations? Do you feel tempted to learn more and apply the knowledge in your Association? This is the opportunity you are looking for!

In its efforts to strengthen the capacities of partner associations for development and joint delivery of capacity development measures for improving water and sanitation services, RCDN is offering an additional tailor-made support through the Association Development Programme.

The programme aims to:

- ✦ Support the implementation of recommendations of ANA reports and CD plans developed for the RCDN partner associations;
- ✦ Enable tailor-made, individualised and peer-to-peer based Capacity Development of the RCDN partner associations.

The programme supports individualised learning through:

- ✦ Peer Exchange
- ✦ Shadowing/Mentoring/Coaching

All RCDN partner Associations are eligible for using the Programme, on demand basis.

Both the peer exchange and the shadowing/mentoring/coaching shall meet the needs identified in the ANA report and be related to at least one of the following areas:

- ✦ Association's CD function/ Training Centre/ CD Product Delivery;
- ✦ Certification of CD programmes;
- ✦ Implementation of CD standards;
- ✦ Promoting Reforms; Advocacy and Lobbying;
- ✦ Communication, promotion and selling;
- ✦ Monitoring and Evaluation;
- ✦ Membership and Service delivery;
- ✦ Organisational functions (financial management, HR management, fundraising, communications, etc.);
- ✦ Associations' committees;
- ✦ Specific water-related issues.

You are invited to use this opportunity as soon as tomorrow! For more information, please check the complete documentation available [HERE](#).



Coming soon:

RCDN WASTEWATER PROGRAMMES

Did you know?

The **Wastewater (WW)** topic is defined as a key priority in each economy in the Western Balkans and the European Union (EU), and most certainly among the International Financial Institutions (IFIs) and donors.



Why is WW a key priority topic?



- ◆ In North Macedonia there are **19 operational wastewater treatment plants (WWTPs)** and it is estimated that more than **78 million euros have been invested in the wastewater treatment sector.**
- ◆ In Albania there are **11 operational WWTPs**, with an additional one ready to work and the WWTP in Tirana which is interrupted, and it is estimated that more than **135 million euros have been invested in the wastewater treatment sector.**
- ◆ In Bosnia and Herzegovina there are **25 operational WWTPs** and it is estimated that more than **113 million euros have been invested in the wastewater treatment sector.**



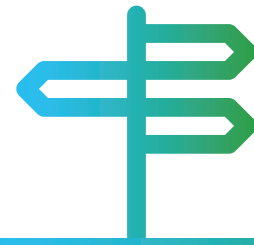
While you are reading this, throughout the region many other projects for collection, drainage and treatment of wastewater are in preparation, such as: in **North Macedonia** the project for construction of WWTP in Skopje, in amount of **136 million EUR**, in **Bosnia and Herzegovina** WWTP for the City of Gradiska in amount over **14 million EUR** and WWTP for the City of Zenica in amount over **19 million EUR**, and in **Albania for the construction of WWTP in Himarë in the amount of 1.1 million EUR.**



RCDN, bringing together the knowledge of **16 national associations** of LGUs and PUCs from **six economies** (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia) has assessed the following:

- ◆ The process of preparation, development and implementation of capital infrastructure investments projects for collection, drainage and treatment of wastewater is characterised by lot of challenges, even many failures.
- ◆ Currently, the focus of the municipalities and public utility companies is mostly on the investment and construction works while the importance of the operation and maintenance (O&M) of WWTPs is often neglected or postponed.
- ◆ Consequently, the municipalities and their PUCs face even more challenges once the WWTPs are built, especially in the area of their O&M.
- ◆ Last by not least, there is no adequately trained staff capable of carrying activities in all three phases of preparation, construction and O&M of the WWTPs.





Still, there are many **opportunities** that can change this situation:

- ◆ Over the past decade significant funds were provided in a form of grants, as well as credit support for the construction of the WWTPs by the national institutions, EU, IFIs and the donors in all countries of the Western Balkans.
- ◆ PUCs and the municipalities clearly expressed the need for trainings in this area. Capacity development will enable the PUCs and municipal employees to efficiently carry the required activities in preparation, construction and O&M of the WWTPs.
- ◆ The efficient WWTPs are key stones for environmental protection and public health thus they are great possibilities for awareness raising among institutions, and citizens.
- ◆ Moreover, WW as a topic at the same time stimulates the collaborative approach among associations of municipalities and the associations of public utility companies, which is one of the unique features of the RCDN as a regional network.

Considering all these and **aiming to increase effectiveness and efficiency of the water utilities in the SEE**, RCDN started to develop **three wastewater programmes** for:

Introduction to WW systems for LGUs and PUCs that are in the process of planning and implementing WW infrastructure projects

- 1. Programme 1A: Introduction to WW systems for decision makers**
- 2. Programme 1B: Introduction to WW systems for Managers and Engineers**



Enhancement of technical capacities of PUCs for Operation and Maintenance (O&M) of WW systems for PUC and LGUs which have finalised and operating WWTPs

- 3. Programme 2A: Enhancement of technical capacities of PUCs for O&M of WW Systems**

These three programmes will be piloted in North Macedonia, Bosnia and Hercegovina and Albania in the period of 2021-2022.

Content: Jelena Janevska, NALAS, Lea Pavlovikj, GIZ

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