

Danube Water Program in Full Swing

The Danube Water Program was officially launched in May 2013 with the intention to support policy dialogue and capacity development to achieve Smart Policies, Strong Utilities, Sustainable Services in the water supply and wastewater sector in the Danube Region. The program is jointly run by the World Bank and IAWD, the International Association of Water Supply Companies in the Danube Catchment Area, and was created with funding from the Government of Austria. This newsletter updates readers on the activities and progress under the program. A complete, updated Program Work Plan has just been released and is available on the Programs website ([download here](#)). The Work Plan describes all regional and national activities promoted under the Danube Water Program.



At the launch event of the program in May 2013 c. 100 representatives of governments, water utility associations, municipalities, water utility operators and regulators met in Vienna to discuss the challenges in the water sector within the Danube region.

The participants concluded that “many utilities in the region suffer from chronic problems of overstaffing, poor financial performance, insufficient service quality, and tariff structures that fail to recover costs. It was also agreed that many governments in the region needed to better “define and implement policies on topics such as reforming utility management, better targeting subsidies to low income groups, restructuring tariffs, improving regulation, professionalizing staff, and improving recovery”.

Policy Workshop

At a Workshop in September 2013 in Bucharest participants in the program identified and addressed some of the major challenges to the water sector in the region, in particular in light of on-going EU Accession processes.

The policy workshop, themed “Smart policies for strong utilities and sustainable services”, brought together over 30 representatives of line ministries, regulatory authorities, and national water associations for three days of learning and discussion on sector policies and networking. The inputs received at the workshop allowed the team to design further policy support activities in select countries

A summary report and all presentations are available on the Program’s website ([click here](#)).

Benchmarking event

Also taking place in September in Bucharest, a convening of utility experts and public officials deliberated for two days on the importance of utility data to be collected, made available and used for policy making and utility performance improvements. As a conclusion of that meeting, participants advised the Danube Water Program should promote two complementary benchmarking activities:

- The development of a regional utility performance indicator platform allowing for regional comparisons, on the basis of existing national systems (see separate story below).
- The launch of a formal benchmarking exercise with a few selected utilities interested in exchanging on their good practices, based on the approach developed by the European Benchmarking Cooperation.

A summary report and all presentations are available on the Program’s website ([click here](#)).

Analytical activities started

The Program is conducting a regional comparative analysis of the State of the Sector in all Program countries, as well as additional countries within the Danube region. The review will provide uniform sector performance and sector organization information for all countries, and highlight key national regional challenges. Data collection is on-going with the support of experts in each country and intermediate outputs will be validated with Program participants. Early results will be presented in the annual Danube Water program conference in May 2014 in Vienna.

In addition, at the request of several program countries the program has also launched analytical studies focused on exploring: (1) actual efficiency gains resulting from aggregation of water utilities in a few countries of the Danube Region; (2) assessing household data on access to services and sector performance; and (3) reviewing social impact of tariff increases on poor households.

Follow-up assistance has also been provided to some countries to support national policy dialogue and sector modernization efforts of national institutions.

Competitive Grants Issued

The Danube Water Program has announced that 14 applications from the 71 received have been chosen to receive a Competitive Grant from the program. The grant awards (up to 75,000 Euro) will be provided to applicants from 10 different countries ([see Link](#)).

The quality of the applications for the Competitive Grants was very high and the applications extremely good. The Danube Water Program thanks all the applicants who submitted grant applications for their interest in the Program. The Program Secretariat remains committed to working with the applicants for projects not accepted for funding under the program to be considered for involvement in other relevant Danube Water Program activities.

Regulator Workshop

With the assistance of the Florence School of Regulation, persons involved in Regulatory Authorities from the 6 Danube countries with Regulators met to share experience and discuss strategies for improving their activities.

The regulatory workshop in Florence was designed and delivered specifically to regulators. The workshop made it possible to develop professional connections among regulators, which resulted in subsequent independently organized peer-to-peer exchanges between regulators in Albania, Portugal, Romania, and Ukraine, as well as between regulators in Bulgaria and Kosovo. All presentations and a summary of the event are available at the Program's website ([click here](#)).

Regional Utility Performance Indicators Platform Launched

A regional Performance Indicator system for information on Water Utilities (DANUBIS) will be launched in order for country and utility performance data to be compared. The System would make available key water and sewerage utility performance information using common definitions to support policy makers in water management decisions, allow utility managers to improve utility performance, and to provide the public with an overview of the situation in water service delivery in the Danube region.

The System which will be made available on a data base managed by the IAWD will include all countries of the Danube and is initially targeting data from 2010 to 2013. The system will include a data validation tool and build upon the indicators already being used in the IB-Net system. A steering group involving representatives from each of the countries of the program has been formed and initial data collection efforts are underway.

Training Programs Offered

The Danube Water Program is focused on providing results based training programs for improving utility efficiency and is currently launching the first three such programs targeted at Energy Efficiency, Asset Management and Commercial Utility Efficiency and Business Planning.

Energy Efficiency

An 18 month program of assistance and capacity building on improving efficiency in around 40 water and sanitation utilities in Bulgaria, Croatia, Serbia, and Ukraine has been launched with a focus on helping those utilities developing energy audits and then converting these audits into energy efficiency improvement plans that will be taken to the market for financing and implementation.

The most promising utilities will receive **additional support to secure financing** from commercial banks, national energy efficiency programs or other financing sources, in order to turn the energy efficiency plans into reality.

Information on the program can be found on the program website ([klick here](#)).

Commercial Efficiency and Business Planning

A 15-month Program providing training of water utility staff coupled with targeted technical assistance and capacity building on commercial efficiency and business planning is to be launched in spring 2014. The focus is on helping utilities develop and carry out improvements focused on revenue collection and customer service. Water and sanitation utilities in Kosovo, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, and Ukraine will be eligible to participate in the program, and receive assistance in developing business plans and improving their business viability.

Information on the program **will** be found on the Program website **shortly**.

Asset Management

An IAWD knowledge hub for Asset Management has been created at the Belgrade Water Works (BWS) to assist and guide leading utilities in the region (Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia) in carrying out asset management practices. 15 utilities will be participating in the program which will involve the training of key staff in each utility in Asset Management methodologies and tools and then using that training (together with operational and software support) to complete Management Reports aimed at combining and processing information from both the commercial and technical departments of the utilities.

The objective of the project is to create awareness of Asset Management procedures, principles and methodologies and to carry this out in the 15 utilities. The products from the Asset Management program will be made available for further dissemination to other Danube Water Program Partners. For further information

A call for applications to participate in the program has been made and details can be found on the program website ([klick here](#)).

Annual Meeting

The Annual meeting of the Danube Water Program focused on sharing information on the water utility sector in the Danube region will be held **May 8-9, 2014** in Vienna. The meeting will bring together government officials, regulators, municipal and utility association representatives, as well as persons directly involved in the management and operations of utilities and municipal services.

Cooperation and Additional Funding

The Danube Water Program has also been active in ensuring that the activities of the program are aligned with and ensure synergy with other initiatives in the region. Based upon recognition of mutual interests a cooperation agreement with the OPEN REGIONAL Fund/GIZ and SDC has been signed and additional funding support to program initiatives in communication, Asset Management and Benchmarking have been realized. Through the Open Regional Fund cooperation with the organization NALAS has also been enhanced.

Further joint activities with a number of partners such as the Energy Sector Management Assistance Program (ESMAP); the Water Partnership Program (WPP) and other actors have also been agreed.



Signage of the MoU

Walter Kling, IAWD - Secretary General, Philip Weller, IAWD-DWP Programm Coordinator, Christoph Di Marco ORF/GIZ

Danube Water Program website launched

The Website for the Danube Water Program was launched in September 2103 and is developing as a regional dialogue platform on water utilities in the Danube region. Information about program activities and offers can be found there as well as information about events and activities throughout the region related to water utilities. [The web address of the site is danube-water-program.com](http://danube-water-program.com)

Kontakt:

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