WAVES OF PROGRESS:

EXPLORING SUCCESSES AND INSIGHTS FROM INTEGRATED WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT IN KOSOVO

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Waves of Progress: Exploring Successes and Insights from Integrated Water Resources Management in Kosovo

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FOREWORD

Dear readers,

Welcome to this publication summarizing the key achievements of the IWRM-K Program in Kosovo. This initiative aims to transform water management in one of the most water-stressed countries in Southeast Europe.

In 2020, Kosovo embarked on a coordinated effort to introduce Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) principles, with the goal of alleviating pressures on water bodies, reversing degradation trends, and unlocking economic potential.

This groundbreaking initiative, known as IWRM-K, is a 12-year transformational program led by the Government of Kosovo and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation. Implemented by the Consortium of Skat Consulting Ltd., based in St. Gallen, Switzerland, and the Environment Agency Austria, the IWRM-K Program marks a significant step forward for Kosovo, paving the way for sustainable water management by fostering collaboration, enhancing legislation, and raising awareness for a water-resilient future.

As you will read, over the past four years, we have achieved numerous milestones. From developing the first-ever National-level Water Balance Study, which not only charted new waters but also catalyzed change by spearheading upgrades to River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs) and kickstarting reforms in water financing, to championing sustainable crop farming practices that optimize agrochemical and irrigation water use, preserve natural resources, and bring economic benefits.

Additionally, the Program has introduced initiatives focused on cleaner technologies, enhancing institutional capacity for integrated water resources management, and advancing transboundary cooperation.

One remarkable success of the Program is the support provided for the establishment of a Master of Science Program on Integrated Water Resources Management (MSc-IWRM) led by the Universities of Pristina and Peja. Furthermore, the Program facilitated the establishment of the First-Ever Young Water Professionals Kosovo Group, paving the way for the development of future leaders in water management.

The Program also played a key role in establishing the first-ever stakeholder participation mechanisms for IWRM, while identifying, strengthening, and supporting the IWRM-related activities of numerous CSOs.

This publication aims to showcase the many waves of progress made by the IWRM-K Program in reshaping water management practices in Kosovo and fostering a sustainable and resilient future for all. We hope you find this report insightful and inspiring.

Sincerely,
IWRM-K Team

IWRM-K in numbers

Component 1: Plans and Measures

Main intervenaton	Key result statistics	Event statistics
Water Balance Study	1 report on national-level water availability and demand assessment under different climate scenarios 1 report on economic analysis of national-level water resources management 1 report on design of national-level meteorological and hydrological monitoring system 2 up-to-date long-term data series of meteorological and hydrological data Numerous datasets, GIS and other resources 3 simulation models (WEAP, HEC-HMS, and SWAT) 10 professional staff trained in application of advanced models (SWAT)	A total of 57 workshops, consultation and coordination meetings, and training sessions
River Basin Management Plans	3 RBMPs for Ibër, Lepenc, and Morava e Binçës 3 Pressure and Risk Assessment Reports 3 Programmes of Measures 1 report on water quality monitoring system design Numerous methodological guidance documents Numerous datasets, GIS and other resources	
Pilot monitoring programme	12-month monitoring programme 50 sampling locations (30 for surface water and 20 for ground water quality monitoring) and over 72 parameters covered 12 local staff specializing in water monitoring according to EU standards 7 local experts engaged in chemical monitoring 4 experts engaged in biological monitoring 30 pieces of modern laboratory and other supporting equipment provided	4 large-scale sampling campaigns combining field and laboratory training
Implementation of sustainable farming practices	130 apple and raspberry farmers trained and provided with soil analyses 90 grants provided to farmers More than 200 hectares of land under sustainable farming practices App. 50% reduction in irrigation water use in pilot farms	4 six-day classroom training sessions 12 field training sessions
Improving manure management practices	33 animal farms provided with manure storage facilities and manure handling equipment 12,800 tons per year of manure diverted from direct disposal on the ground to safe management in manure septic tanks App. EUR 100,000 annual savings from substituting artificial fertilizers About 50% reduce the physical labor of livestock farmers	2 three days training sessions 2 workshops 2 focus group meetings 10 working meetings
Reducing industrial pollution through cleaner technologies	7 industrial operators from various food sectors implemented measures to improve technological operations, wastewater treatment, and water use efficiency thanks to grants 1 large-scale energy operator (Kosovo Energy Corporation - KEK) provided with integrated environmental permit 3 professional staff specializing in environmental permitting	5 meetings on integrated emissions management / integrated pollution prevention and control 8 meetings related to permitting of KEK operations

Component 2: Legislation, Institutions & Knowledge

Main intervenaton	Key result statistics	Event statistics
Water financing	1 concept paper on water financing reform 1 model for determining water charges	Numerous meetings 1 training session 1 workshop
Organizational development	1 comprehensive training and coaching package designed and delivered 4 training modules 6 Junior Water Professionals provided to three water-related MESPI departments 1 Intern provided to water inspection	16 training and coaching sessions for 20 MESPI staff 38 Young Water Professionals completed 2 organizational development and communication courses
Institutional development	1 detailed strategy on institutional development 1 scenario planning for smooth implementation of institutional strategy 7 juniors employed in 4 MESPI water units	25 meetings/interviews 3-days training sessions 2 workshops 5 Juniors participated in 6 study visits
Transboundary water resources management	1 detailed concept paper on transboundary cooperation between Kosovo and North Macedonia on Lepenci River Basin	1 workshop 1 training session Numerous meetings/interviews
Water monitoring & meteorology	1 Acoustic Doppler Current Profiler (ADCP) 1 professional drone 7 Hydro-meteorological Institute staff trained in water monitoring 1 updated strategy for enhancing hydro-meteorological monitoring services 1 strategy on further developing the meteorology sector in HMIK Enhanced meteorological monitoring network with automatic stations	28-days training sessions 3 international study visits
Water Information System	1 fully functional WIS 1 quality assurance policy 1 data sharing agreement 1 database architecture assessment and design 1 improved database structure 1 report on data quality improvement 1 new administration instruction on WIS 1 report on coding	2 study visits 5 training modules accessed by 25 MESPI and YWP-K staff
IWRM training	1 certified state-of-the-art IWRM training programme comprising 8 modules 10 certified IWRM trainers Over 70 stakeholders successfully attended the training programme	4 days training for trainers 16 days training sessions for trainees Numerous meetings, and workshops
M.Sc. IWRM programme	1 accredited M.Sc. programme granting access to 60 students in three cycles 20 students enrolled in the first year 2 laboratories equipped for water quantity and quality monitoring 1 computer room fully equipped Multiple collaborations with international universities 3 software/modeling packages	Numerous meetings, workshops, and lectures

Component 2: Legislation, Institutions & Knowledge

Main intervenaton	Key result statistics	Event statistics
Water research	3 water research grants provided to three different faculties 28 people engaged in research project implementation 7 research papers submitted for publication in scientific journals and/or conferences 5 master's and/or PhD theses using new research data	Numerous meetings, workshops, lectures, training sessions, and conferences
Young Water Professionals – Kosovo	50 active members of YWP-K (from 12 initial) 1 set of strategic, management, and regulation documents 1 office refurbished and adapted 1 successfully implemented grant 6 MoUs signed with national and international partner institutions.	1 successfully organized international conference (AquaInnovate) 2 study visits to the Czech Republic and UK 1 successfully implemented grant to develop software platform for Regional Water Companies Numerous meetings, workshops, lectures, training sessions, and conferences
Gender streamlining	Proposal for gender inclusion to water protection developed	Numerous meetings 2 workshops

Component 3: Stakeholder Involvement & Awareness

Main intervenaton	Key result statistics	Event statistics
Stakeholder participation mechanisms	3 first-ever basin scale stakeholder participation mechanism 1 first-ever national-level multi-stakeholder platform Over 200 people from over 20 stakeholder groups and sectors involved in the stakeholder participation processes 10 reports on the establishment and the functioning of the mechanisms	4 large-scale consultation meetings related to the establishment of the stakeholder participation mechanisms 4 series of roundtable discussions attended by app. 150 people each 1 international study visit
Civil society involvement	Representatives from 70 CSOs dealing with a range of environmental, social and economic issues attended training sessions on IWRM 22 CSOs received and successfully implemented grants Over 10,000 people across Kosovo benefited from the grants programme for CSOs 26 Municipalities benefit from CSO-implemented projects Over 10 awareness campaigns implemented by CSOs	27 information meetings held with municipalities and CSOs
Communication and awareness raising	1 Communication Strategy and Action Plan developed and fully implemented. 2 Sociological surveys conducted at the outset and the closing of Phase 1. 4 contests for school students on literature and visual arts related to environment/water. 8 newsletters published and widely disseminated among stakeholders 4 short videos featuring Program successes in agriculture, educational programs, and CSO-implemented projects	Numerous awareness raising events, training sessions, consultation meetings, and stakeholder workshops

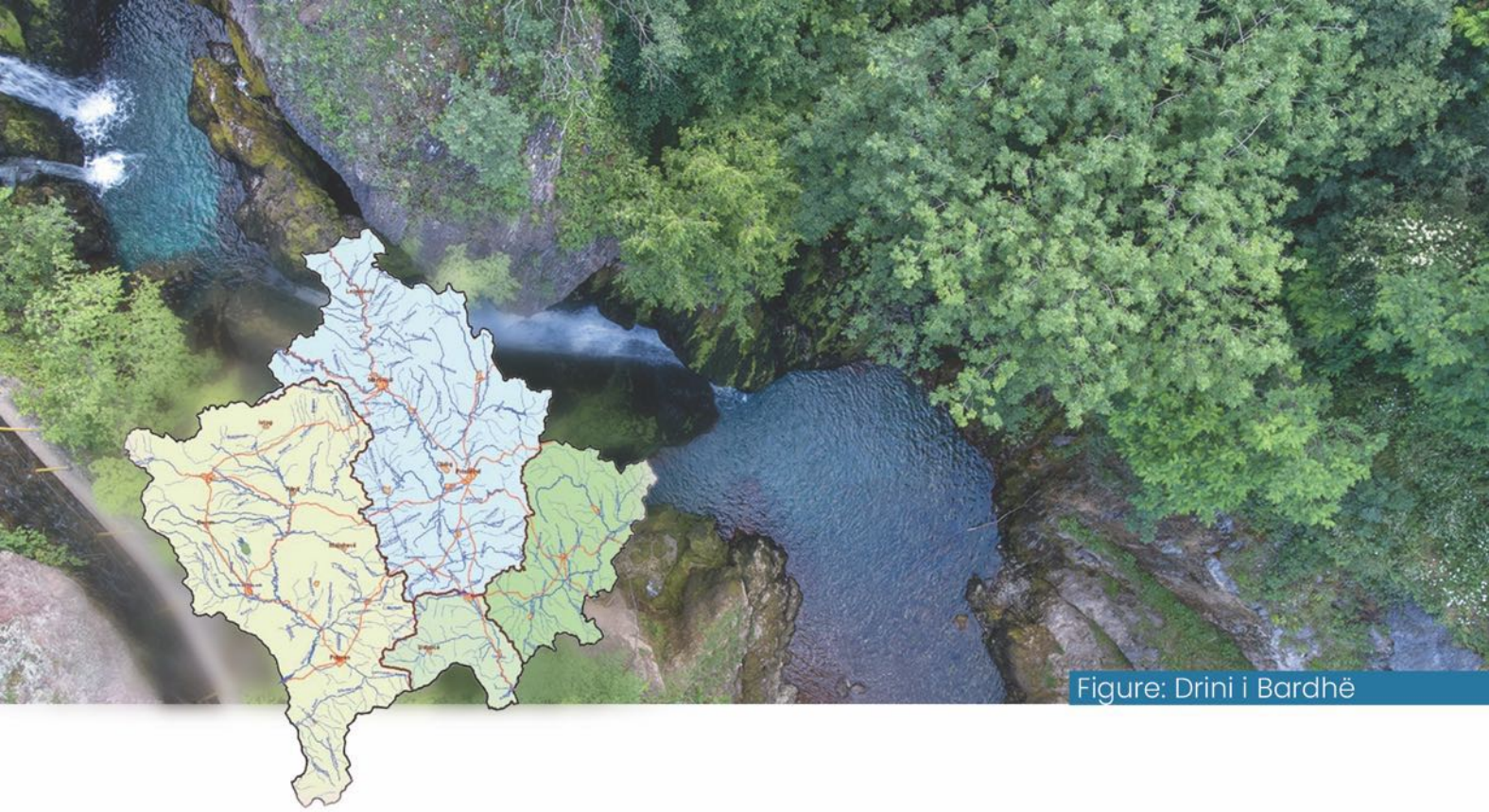


Figure: Drini i Bardhë

What is Integrated Water Resources Management?

It is a way of managing water that looks at the whole picture. Instead of just dealing with one aspect of water, like drinking water or irrigation for crops. IWRM considers everything related to water: where it comes from, how much there is, who uses it, and how to make sure it's clean and available for everyone who needs it.

Imagine a big puzzle with many pieces. Each piece represents something connected to water: rivers, lakes, farms, cities, industries, and more. IWRM tries to fit all these pieces together so that water is used wisely and fairly, without harming the environment or leaving anyone without enough water.

It involves planning ahead, managing resources carefully, involving everyone who has a stake in water (like farmers, communities, businesses, and governments), and finding ways to use water sustainably for future generations, always having into consideration interconnection between social, economic and environmental factors.

Why is Integrated Water Resources Management Important for Kosovo?

Kosovo is among the most water-stressed countries in Southeast Europe. Its need for fresh water has long exceeded supply because of a lack of investments in water infrastructure, inefficient use of water in agriculture, and high levels of pollution. Kosovo's water resources are at heightened risk, and climate change is increasing water-related risks.

The management of water resources in Kosovo is complex as it shares its four river basins (Drini i Bardhë, Ibër, Morava e Binçës, and Lepenc) with neighboring countries.

Institutions did not have sufficient capacities to fulfill their roles and responsibilities, and they did not have a coherent framework for planning the management of water resources. There was also very little pressure from citizens and civil society to address environmental degradation.

Kosovo has made significant progress over the past years by working on new legal and institutional frameworks and formulation of water strategies and action plans. However, more investments and coordinated action were needed to ensure a sustainable water future for all the citizens.

Transforming Water Management: The IWRM-K Program in Kosovo

In 2020, Kosovo embarked on a coordinated effort to introduce Integrated Water Resources Management principles, aiming to alleviate pressures on water bodies, reverse degradation trends, and unlock economic potential. This groundbreaking initiative, known as the IWRM-K Program, is set to reshape water resources management in Kosovo.

It is a 12-year transformational program of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and the Government of Kosovo. Implemented by the Consortium of Skat Consulting Ltd., based in St. Gallen, Switzerland, and the Environment Agency Austria, the IWRM-K Program marks a significant step forward for Kosovo, paving the way for sustainable water management by fostering collaboration, enhancing legislation, and raising awareness for a water-resilient future.

The Program is implemented in close partnership with the Kosovo Ministry of Environment, Spatial Planning and Infrastructure (MESPI), particularly its water-related departments such as the RBDA, KEPA, HMIK, Water Division, Environment/Water Inspectorate, alongside numerous other national and local stakeholders.

The Program will be implemented in three consecutive Phases, 2020 – 2024 (4 years), 2024 – 2029 (5 years), and 2029 – 2031 (3 years).

WHAT WE WANTED TO ACHIEVE IN THE FIRST 4 YEARS?

Overall goal	AN INTEGRATED WATER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK FOR THE PROTECTION, QUALITY, SUSTAINABLE USE, AND EQUITABLE ALLOCATION OF WATER RESOURCES		
Outcomes / Components	1) Develop Plans and Kick-start Measures	2) Improve Legislation, Institutions & Knowledge	3) Increase Participation & Awareness
Outputs	1.1) Prepare expert studies & River Basin Management Plans 1.2) Implement priority measures to protect waters and reduce water use	2.1) Improve legislation and institutional capacity 2.2) Upgrade water monitoring and introduce Water Information System 2.3) Invest in water education and training	3.1) Involve stakeholders in water resources management 3.2) Raise awareness on water challenges and solutions

HIGHLIGHTS BY COMPONENTS

Outcome 1 - Plans & Measures:

First Ever National-level Water Balance Study

The first ever National-level Water Balance Study marked a significant milestone, providing decision-makers with pivotal data for smarter water resource management. This groundbreaking initiative not only charted new waters but also catalyzed change by spearheading upgrades to River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs) and kickstarting reforms in water financing. The study's findings and analyses are expected to have a lasting impact, guiding future strategies and policies in water resource management.

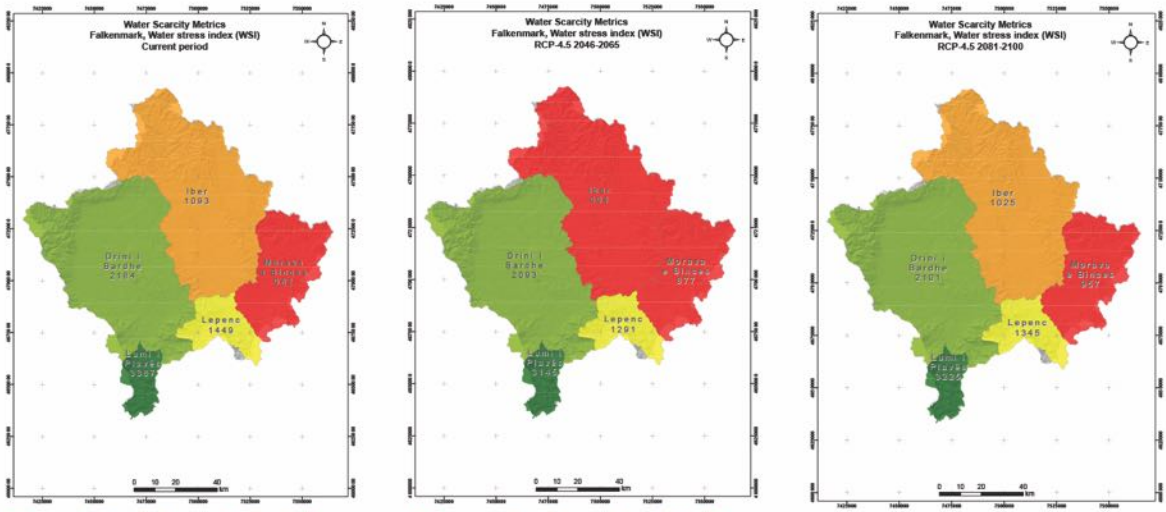


Figure. Study's projected changes of the water stress level in Kosovo:
a) current, b) 2046-2065, and c) 2081-2100

The study's recommendations led to substantial investments in Kosovo's water monitoring networks. With EUR 400,000 from the World Bank's FLOWS project and EUR 750,000 from the Government of Kosovo via IWRM-K, the hydrological and meteorological monitoring systems were upgraded. This state-of-the-art infrastructure positions Kosovo as a leader in the region, providing critical data for future water resource planning.

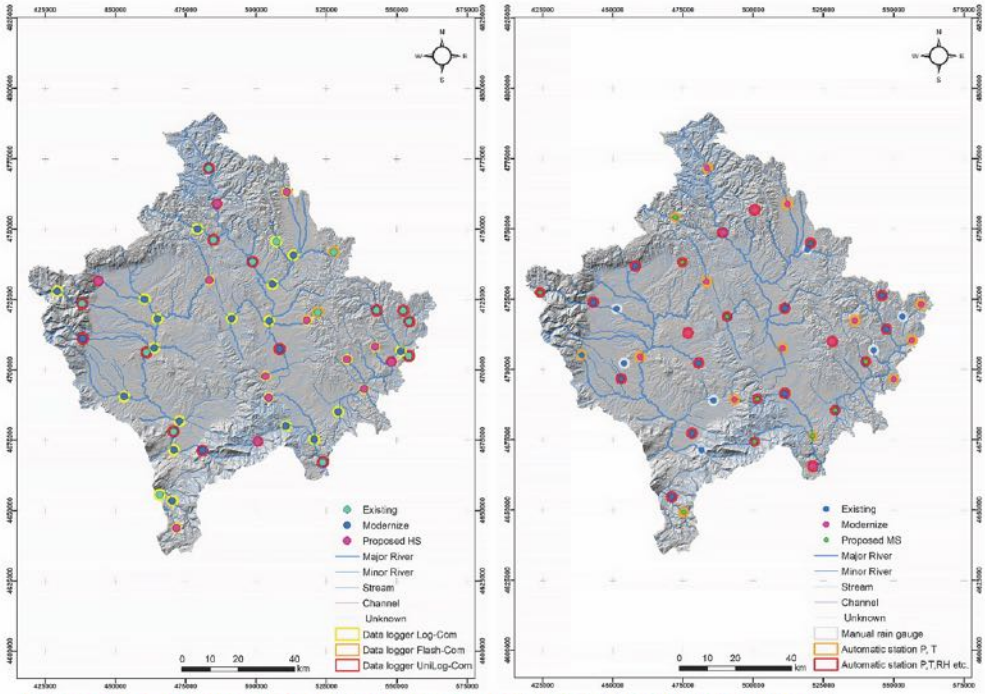


Figure. The existing and proposed upgraded water monitoring networks:
Left – Hydrological monitoring network; Right – Meteorological monitoring network

Development of 3 River Basin Management Plans

The development of three RBMPs for Ibër, Lepenc, and Morava e Binçës represents foundational work in establishing effective water resource management. These plans follow a data-driven approach, integrating diverse datasets including meteorological and hydrological data, pollution trends, and water quality assessments into the Water Information System (WIS). This integration enhances the accessibility and usability of critical information for decision-makers, ensuring informed and effective management strategies.

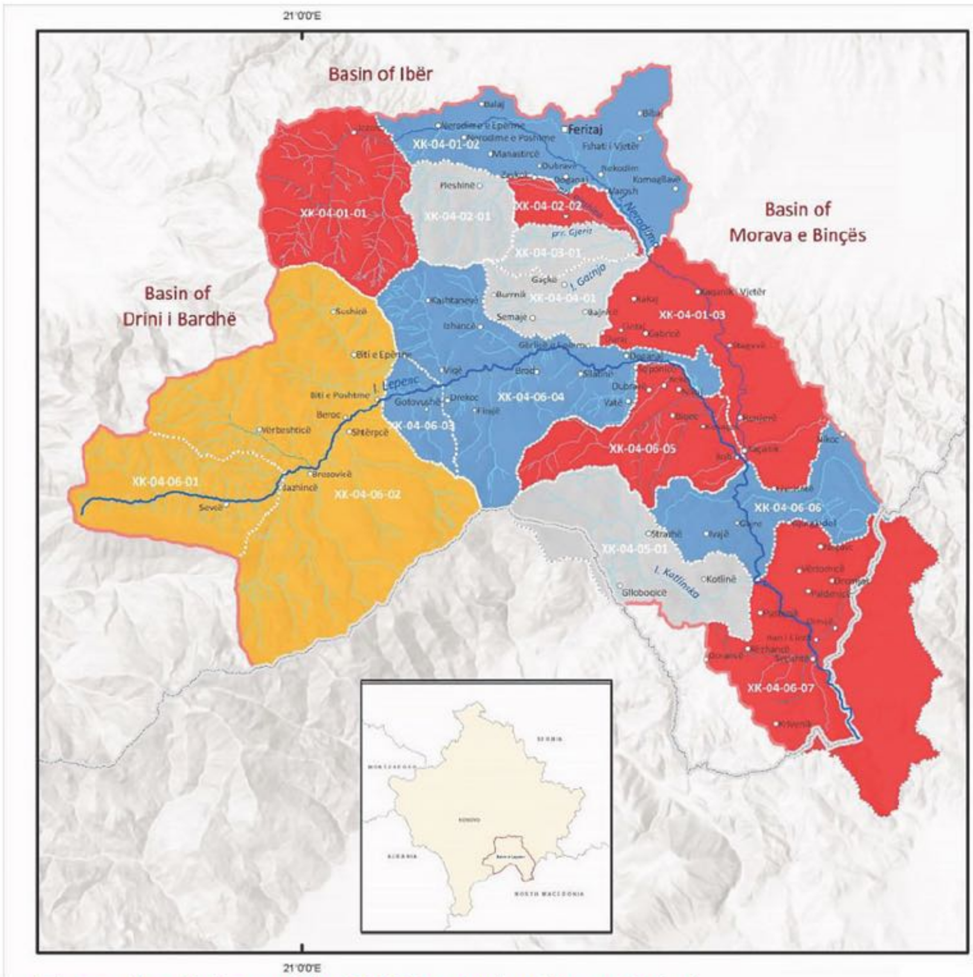


Figure. The findings of the RBMP regarding the ecological status of waters in the case of Lepenci

To empower robust RBMP development, more than 50 technical experts were engaged in producing essential technical reports. These reports offer comprehensive insights to guide the development of robust RBMPs. Additionally, over 100 stakeholders were involved in consultations, reflecting diverse perspectives and priorities for effective water management.

Quote:

"The River Basin Management Plans have been instrumental in enhancing our understanding of water resources. The involvement of technical experts and stakeholders has not only improved decision-making but also ensured that our water management strategies are comprehensive and effective", said Naser Hafizi, Head of RBDA at MESPI.

Implementation of a comprehensive (pilot) monitoring programme

Figure. Field sampling and laboratory

In collaboration with the Kosovo Hydro-meteorological Institute, the Program has developed and supported the implementation of the first-ever comprehensive (pilot) water quality monitoring programme, fully compliant with European directives.

As part of the programme implementation, 12 local water monitoring experts and technicians underwent specialist training.

Their newly gained knowledge and skills elevate field and laboratory capacities, thereby improving the efficiency of monitoring initiatives and facilitating informed decision-making in water resource management.

Championing sustainable crop farming practices

The IWRM-K Program championed sustainable farming practices in an area of over 200 hectares by optimizing agrochemical and irrigation water use, preserving natural resources, and bringing economic benefits. Through training, soil testing and equipment provision, apple and raspberry farmers enhanced water, fertilizer, and pesticide use efficiency, with some reporting up to 50% water savings.

Over 130 farmers benefited from training, and soil analyses, and 90 of them who scored highest in the knowledge tests received modern equipment to improve farming practices. The Program promoted inclusivity, supporting women and minority farmers for a greener, more resilient agricultural sector.

Figure. Implementation of sustainable farming practices

Transforming Agriculture: A Success Story of Sustainable Farming Practices

In the heart of Kosovo, a transformative initiative has been unfolding, reshaping the landscape of agricultural practices. Through the implementation of sustainable farming techniques, the lives of farmers and the health of the environment have been positively impacted.

One such farmer, Avni Krasniqi, shared his experience, "Before, we used to apply fertilizers and pesticides without much thought. Now, with the training and support from the program, we have learned to use them more efficiently, reducing costs and environmental impact."

Supported by the Program, Avni and over 130 other farmers were trained and 90 were equipped with tools to reduce water usage and enhance productivity through precision agriculture techniques. The impact was significant, with farmers reporting substantial savings in water usage and improved
crop yields.

Another beneficiary, Lirije Gashi, expressed her gratitude, stating, "The Program not only helped us improve our farming practices but also provided us with a sense of pride in contributing to a greener future."

In addition to practical training, the program emphasized inclusivity, ensuring that women and minority farmers had equal opportunities to participate and benefit. This approach empowered farmers like Lirije to make positive changes in their communities.

The success of the Program extended beyond individual farms. Through strategic measures such as training on good agricultural practices, coupled with the provision of cutting-edge equipment, farmers were able to optimize their use of water, fertilizers, and pesticides. This not only enhanced farm productivity but also fostered eco-conscious practices, setting the stage for a more sustainable agricultural future in Kosovo.

Transforming manure management

In a groundbreaking initiative, a comprehensive training program and grant scheme were introduced to encourage environmentally friendly manure management practices among livestock farms throughout Kosovo. Thirty-three such farms received grants for essential manure storage facilities and equipment, benefiting a total of 715 heads of livestock.

This initiative successfully diverts 12,800 tons of manure per year from direct disposal on the ground by 33 grant-winning animal farms, preventing potential water source pollution. Instead, the manure is safely managed in septic tanks, reducing environmental pollution, and improving soil health. By substituting artificial fertilizers with safely collected and matured manure, these farms generate approximately EUR 100,000 in annual benefits. Furthermore, the newly implemented practices reduce the physical labor of livestock farmers by 50%.

These experiences provide a roadmap for effective manure management to mitigate pollution while capitalizing on economic potential.

Figure. Introducing sustainable manure management practices in livestock farms

Cleaner Technologies Initiative

Our Program aimed to highlight practical initiatives aimed at reducing raw material and energy consumption, promoting waste recycling and reuse, and explored innovative ways to utilize potential waste materials. The focus was on fostering cleaner technologies to address pollution at its source. With the support of awarded grants, seven industrial operators from various food sectors, such as dairy, ice cream, meat processing, and poultry farming, effectively implemented a range of measures.

These measures included improvements in technological operations and processes, as well as enhancements in wastewater treatment and water use efficiency. Collectively, these efforts resulted in significant positive impacts on both the environment and the economy.

Details regarding implemented measures and achieved effects are outlined in Annex1. In summary, the combined effects of all implemented measures include but are not limited to:

- Water Use Reduction: Overall water use has been significantly decreased across the board, with reductions ranging from 30% to 65%, resulting in substantial conservation of water resources.
- Wastewater Treatment Improvement: Wastewater treatment processes have been enhanced, with increased capacity and remarkable efficiency in removing contaminants. Organic pollution removal rates of up to 95% have been achieved, leading to improved water quality and reduced environmental impact.
- Resource Recovery: Beneficial resources such as butter and blood have been recovered from waste streams, resulting in both environmental benefits and economic savings. For example, the collected fat is reused for biodiesel production, contributing to sustainability goals and generating additional revenue streams.
- Pollution Reduction: Significant reductions in pollutants organic matter, nitrogen, and phosphates have been achieved, leading to improved water quality and compliance with environmental regulations. This has also resulted in fewer breakdowns and lower maintenance requirements for machinery, enhancing operational efficiency.
- Compliance and Business Opportunities: Compliance with environmental regulations has been supported, opening new business opportunities and enhancing companies' reputation for sustainability and responsible environmental stewardship.

Outcome 2: Legislation, Institutions & Knowledge

Modernization of water financing

The Program streamlined water financing methods to meet EU standards, incorporating principles like 'polluter pays,' 'cost recovery,' and 'affordability.' This comprehensive approach included developing key components: a concept paper outlining the blueprint for water financing reform, an innovative model for determining water charges, integration and analysis of data, and capacity building and knowledge transfer to empower stakeholders in navigating the evolving water financing landscape.

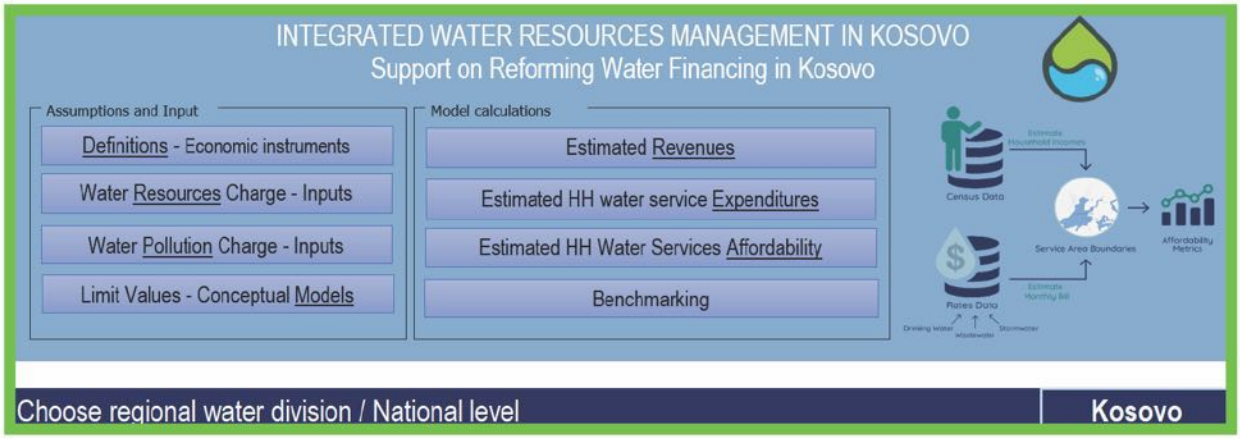


Figure. The newly developed model for calculating charges for different water uses

Enhancing Organizational Development and Capacity Building in MESPI

A comprehensive training and coaching package aimed at addressing identified gaps within MESPI's key departments has been successfully implemented. This initiative focused on enhancing the leadership and technical skills of MESPI staff through four modules: Leadership & Soft Skills, Organizational Culture & Communication, Human Resource Management, and Project Cycle Management/Work Processes Mapping.

Moreover, a thorough evaluation of key HR functions has been conducted, with outcomes and recommendations integrated into MESPI's Organizational Development Working Groups and Human Resources Division. Notably, the drafting and implementation of the "on-boarding" function Manual signifies a substantial step forward in HR management.

Furthermore, internal capacity strengthening of key Program partners, RBDA, KEPA, and HMIK, has been achieved through the deployment of six Junior Water Professionals and one intern. The success of this model has generated interest from institutions, indicating potential expansion to meet MESPI's evolving capacity development needs.

Enhancing Institutional Capacity for Integrated Water Resources Management

Institutional development aspects have been integrated into all Program interventions. This included a combination of structured and on-the-job training tailored to the key functions of IWRM. In this regard, the Program's key partners benefited from technical and organizational capacity development through advanced training and thematic study visits to European countries like Switzerland, Austria, Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, among others. This enhanced capacity enables them to better manage valuable water resources, including the introduction of improved financial mechanisms.

Figure. Knowledge exchanges during study visits in Bosnia and Hercegovina on WIS, supported by the Program

As an important milestone in the institutional development journey, the Program conducted a comprehensive study to define strategic development paths for key water-related institutions. This study involved a detailed examination of the current institutional landscape to pinpoint areas for improvement and optimization in line with IWRM principles. The goal was to fully integrate IWRM functions within these units. The analytical reports and study drafted as a result of this initiative serve as a roadmap for strengthening institutional capacities and effectiveness in IWRM.The study offers recommendations concerning the optimal number and profiles of staff members within these institutions, considering the diverse skill sets and expertise necessary for effective IWRM implementation. Additionally, the study guided functional allocations to prioritize key focus areas within each institution, ensuring that resources and efforts were strategically directed towards activities with the greatest impact on water management outcomes.

Lastly, the study provided financial insights to support the implementation of recommended changes and improvements, as well as identifying potential funding sources and investment opportunities.

Advancing transboundary cooperation

Through collaborative efforts with key stakeholders, significant progress has been made in promoting transboundary cooperation between Kosovo and North Macedonia, particularly regarding the Lepenc River Basin.

The advancement began with the development of a comprehensive concept paper outlining the process for enhanced cooperation. This paper was validated by technical representatives from both countries. Subsequently, on-the-job capacity development support was provided through transboundary exchanges of data, knowledge, and lessons. These exchanges have been instrumental in developing and implementing the Lepenc River Basin Management Plan, as well as other planned investment projects with potential transboundary effects.

Boosting Monitoring Capacities: Advances in Meteorology, Hydrology, and Water Quality

The Program has significantly improved Kosovo's monitoring capabilities in meteorology, hydrology, and water quality through its support to HMIK.

Figure. Using ADCP to improve water resources management

This support included providing advanced hydrological monitoring equipment (e.g., Acoustic Doppler Current Profiler – ADCP), updating monitoring strategies, and implementing pilot monitoring programs. Additionally, the acquisition of a professional drone by RBDA has facilitated more effective water inspections and surveys. These efforts have led to enhanced monitoring services andcapacity building for HMIK, resulting in better water resource management in Kosovo.

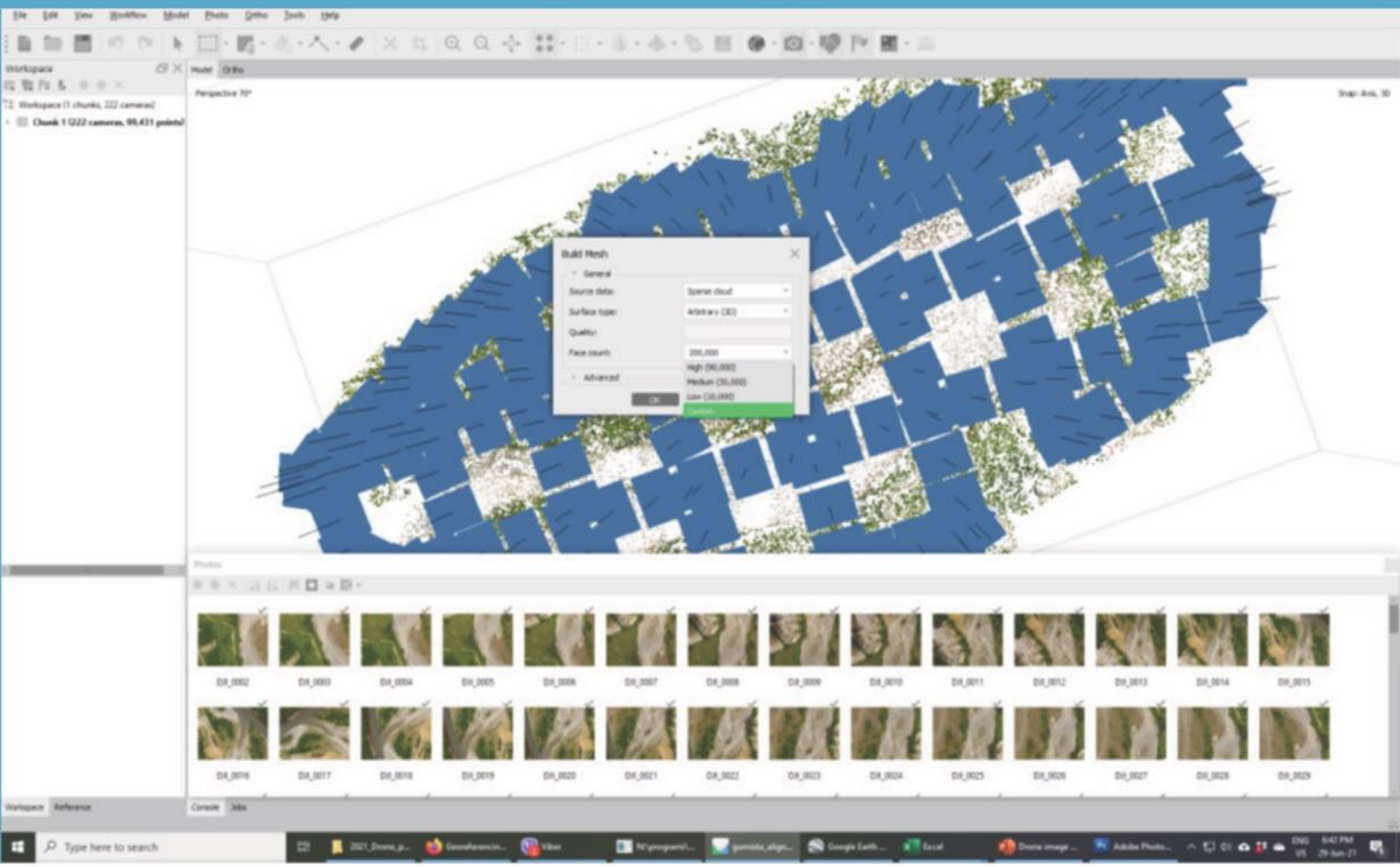


Figure. Manipulating with areal-based imagery (drone)

The Program has also provided support for equipment servicing, calibration, and data processing in accordance with International Standard Methodologies. Training sessions on water quality monitoring have been conducted both at EAA, University of Zagreb, and on-the-job at HMIK. Particularly valuable has been the knowledge and experiences gained through the pilot monitoring program implementation led by HMIK.

Additionally, a strategic vision for enhancing national-level water monitoring services has been developed within the updated 'Strategy for Enhancing Hydrometeorological Monitoring Services in Kosovo'.

Advancing Water Information Systems

Figure. The interface of the updated WIS for Kosovo

The Water Information System (WIS) has seen significant progress under the Program, particularly in advancing the (re)activation/upgrade roadmap. Crucial guidance documents and protocols, such as data quality policies, data sharing agreements, and new regulations on WIS management, have been formulated to ensure future operational effectiveness. Collaboration with MESPI and the Kosovo Agency for Information (ASHI) has been instrumental in achieving consensus on these key documents.

Efforts have also been focused on redesigning and implementing comprehensive WIS software and related solutions in Kosovo. This included tasks such as data modeling, normalization, indexing, and enhancing the user interface to improve usability and reporting capabilities. All enhancements were aligned with the National Water Law, EU Water Framework Directive (WFD), and EU Reporting Guidance, ensuring compliance with EU policies and international obligations such as EEA/EIONET (WISE5). The WIS platform was enriched with updated data from various donor projects, including RBMP, to ensure its relevance and currency.

Capacity-building initiatives remained a priority, with training provided on Geographical Information System principles and the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) for MESPI junior professionals and young water professionals seeking to expand their skill set.

As part of capacity development, key MESPI WIS staff participated in a study visit to Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, where advanced WIS systems are in place.

Introduction of a certified training program on IWRM

The Program, in partnership with the Kosovo Institute of Public Administration (KIPA), helped introduce a certified training program on IWRM. Ten local experts have successfully completed the rigorous training program developed by international experts, earning certification as IWRM Trainers. Their proficiency was underscored by their success in a tailor-made exam.

A comprehensive training plan has been devised by the Program targeting stakeholders at national, river basin, and local levels. Under the auspices of KIPA, the IWRM trainers conducted a series of training sessions during Phase 1, engaging more than 70 participants. These sessions included interactive workshops, field visits, and hands-on exercises.

These achievements represent significant steps in building capacity and fostering collaboration in water resource management.

The certified trainers are actively contributing to other projects and initiatives beyond KIPA, amplifying the impact of their learning efforts.

Figure. Certified up to date IWRM training available long-term for Kosovo's water stakeholders

Program Support Spurs Success of MSc-IWRM Program at Universities of Pristina

The Program supported the establishment of the Master of Science Program on Integrated Water Resources Management (MSc-IWRM) led by the Universities of Pristina and Peja, resulting in remarkable success. An important milestone was achieved with the accreditation of the MSc-IWRM for a three-year period, enabling 60 prospective students to access a cutting-edge curriculum.

The first group of 20 enrolled students already benefit from state-of-the-art facilities, including water quality and quantity monitoring laboratories, as well as a dedicated computer room for practical modeling and research activities, all generously provided by the Program. Moreover, the Program has equipped students with two supplementary software applications and an extensive collection of international literature aligned with the MSc-IWRM curriculum.

Overall, the Program's support is creating a comprehensive and globally relevant educational experience in Integrated Water Resources Management, empowering students to effectively tackle water management challenges.

The Program has engaged esteemed lecturers from various countries, including Switzerland, Germany, Poland, Italy, Croatia, and North Macedonia. Notably, TH Köln has played a significant role by delivering lectures for three courses and supporting processes related to the conceptualization of up-to-date research methods, internships, and master's theses. This collaboration underscores the Program's commitment to offering students a comprehensive and globally relevant educational experience in the field of IWRM.

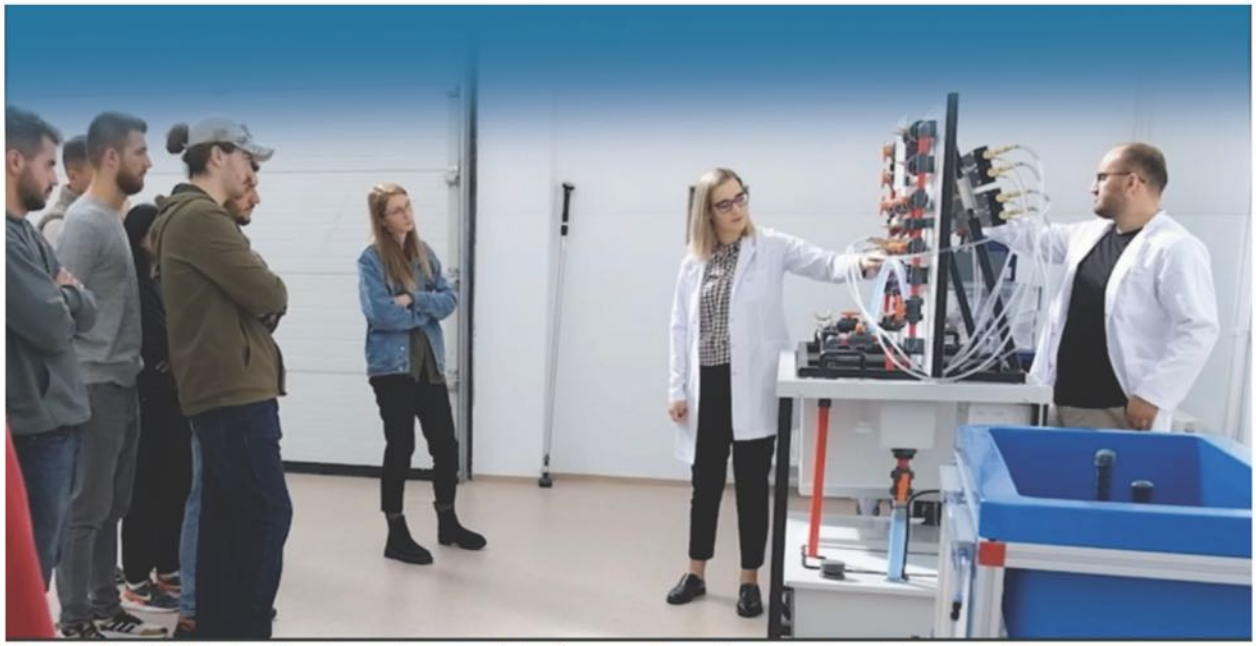


Figure. MSc-IWRM educational experience provides Kosovo with cutting-edge knowledge and skills

Quote:

"The MSc-IWRM program supported by the IWRM-K Program has transformed my educational journey. The cutting-edge curriculum, state-of-the-art facilities, and international lecturers have provided me with invaluable insights and skills to address water management challenges effectively.

I am grateful for this opportunity to be part of such a forward-thinking program", said Burim Seferi, one of the first students enrolled.

Advancing water research

Selected through a competitive process, three Kosovo-based faculties were actively involved in conducting research projects funded by the Program – the University of Pristina's Faculty of Civil Engineering, the University of Pristina's Faculty of Biology, and the International Business College – Mitrovica. These projects are primarily focused on conducting comprehensive chemical and biological monitoring of surface water and groundwater within the three river basins prioritized by the Program.

The preliminary findings from these research projects have been compiled, organized, and presented to key stakeholders in the water sector. Additionally, research papers are being prepared for publication in scientific conferences and academic journals. This demonstrates a concerted effort to advance knowledge and understanding in the field of water management and environmental conservation.

Figure. Advancing water research is crucial to future IWRM in Kosovo

Establishment of the First-Ever Young Water Professionals Kosovo Group

Figure. International water youth conference and the interface of the software for RWC developed by YWP-K

The Program played a pivotal role in capacitating the first-ever Young Water Professionals - Kosovo Group (YWP-K). Over the past years, this group has achieved significant milestones, including its successful consolidation as a formal entity. This process involved drafting strategic, management, and regulatory documents, as well as establishing their own office.

Their professionalism and dedication were recognized by the International Water Association (IWA), which acknowledged YWP-K as part of its network, inviting other YWP country groups to learn from YWP-K.

The group prioritized internal capacity building through training sessions and successfully secured funding for projects.

YWP-K has been further supported by an IWRM-K grant (part of CSO grants under Component 3) aiming at developing a software application targeting the Regional Water Companies (RWC) and organizing an international water youth conference. In developing the software application YWP-K has closely collaborated with the RWCs to access data and co-create a platform that will assist them in fulfilling their data collection, analysis, planning, and reporting needs and responsibilities toward MESPI, Water Services Regulatory Authority (WSRA).

Hosting the international AquaInnovate attended by over 60 people from 6 countries showcased excellent networking ability and overall capacity growth.

Additionally, the signing of several MoUs with various stakeholders, including Kosovo water institutions, universities, and other YWP groups, facilitated knowledge exchange. These accomplishments highlight YWP-K's dedication, collaborative spirit, and growth, positioning them as leaders in water management and sustainability initiatives locally and regionally.

Feature story: Empowering Future Leaders

In the realm of water management and sustainability, the Young Water Professionals Kosovo Group (YWP-K) has emerged as a beacon of innovation and collaboration, thanks to the support and guidance of the IWRM-K Program. What began as a nascent idea has blossomed into a dynamic entity, achieving remarkable milestones along the way.

"YWP-K has been instrumental in fostering a new generation of water professionals in Kosovo," says Ylberina Baliu a member of the group. "Our journey from inception to becoming a recognized entity has been transformative, both personally and professionally."

Central to their success was the formalization process, where YWP-K transitioned from an idea to a structured organization. This involved drafting strategic, management, and regulatory documents, culminating in the establishment of their own office. Their commitment to professionalism and excellence during this phase earned them recognition from the International Water Association (IWA), which welcomed YWP-K into its network.

"We are proud to be part of the IWA network, as it opens up a world of opportunities for collaboration and knowledge sharing," notes Erdonita Humolli Vitija, another member of YWP-K.

Internal capacity building has been a cornerstone of YWP-K's growth. Through a series of training sessions and workshops, members honed their skills and expertise, ensuring they were well-equipped to tackle complex water management challenges.

"YWP-K's dedication to learning and development is truly inspiring," remarks Vera Muhaxhiri from Skat Consulting/IWRM-K. "Their commitment to continuous improvement sets them apart as future leaders in the field."

Securing funding for projects was another significant achievement for YWP-K. This enabled them to implement innovative solutions and make a tangible impact in the water sector. Hosting an International Conference was a testament to their growing influence and showcased their ability to drive meaningful change.

YWP-K's collaborative efforts extended beyond their group, as evidenced by the signing of MoUs with various stakeholders, including Kosovo water institutions, universities, and other YWP groups. These partnerships facilitated knowledge exchange and paved the way for future collaborations.

"Our partnerships have been crucial in our journey," says Head of YWP-K, Albert Salltakaj. "Together, we are stronger, and we are excited to continue working towards a sustainable water future."

"As we look to the future, we are confident that YWP-K will continue to grow and thrive," concludes Vera Muhaxhiri from Skat Consulting/IWRM-K. "Their passion, dedication, and collaborative spirit are a testament to the bright future of water management in Kosovo and beyond."

Outcome 3 Stakeholder Involvement & Awareness

Decentralizing and democratizing Water Resource Management

The IWRM-K Program, in collaboration with the River Basin District Authority (RBDA), has developed a groundbreaking model for stakeholder engagement, leading to the establishment of the Multi-Stakeholder Participation Mechanism. This innovative approach was crafted based on Kosovo's unique conditions and best practices from other countries, ensuring effective participation and engagement in water management activities.

This mechanism, comprising both institutional and non-institutional parties, provides a structured platform for all interested stakeholders. Through this mechanism, the Program has conducted 27 information meetings with municipalities and civil society organizations (CSOs) across three river basins

Additionally, four series of roundtables and training sessions were organized, with approximately 150 participants in each session. Moreover, the Program facilitated four consultation meetings related to the RBMPs, involving around 35 participants per meeting. Regular meetings with RBDA and other water authorities have also been conducted to ensure continuous engagement and collaboration.

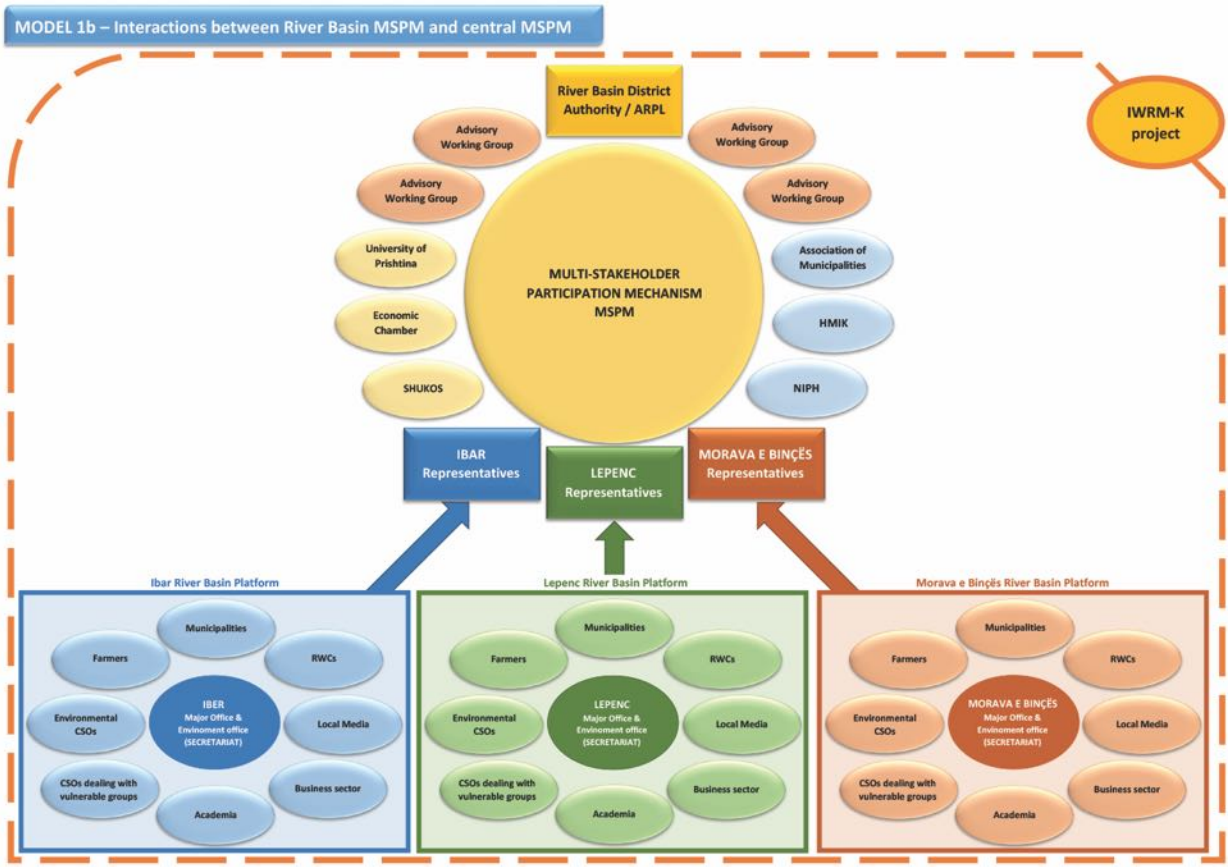


Figure. Stakeholder participation model & stakeholder engagement in IWRM

A notable achievement of the Stakeholder Participation Mechanism is its gender composition, with 40% women and 60% men participating in all meetings and information sessions. Furthermore, efforts have been made to address minority representation, with two Serbian CSO representatives actively involved in the mechanism for the Ibër River Basin.

Grant Scheme for CSOs

In a significant move towards enhancing civil society's role in water resource management, the IWRM-K Program has partnered with 22 CSOs through a specially designed Grant Scheme. This collaboration marks a crucial step in involving and strengthening the role of CSOs in Kosovo's democratic water resources management.

The selected CSOs have demonstrated exceptional commitment, innovative ideas, and creativity in addressing water resources and environmental issues at the local level. Their projects target various communities and groups, aiming to raise awareness among the local population and beyond.

The Grant Scheme has had a wide-reaching impact, benefiting 26 municipalities primarily in the fields of water, education, and environment. Among the 22 NGOs, seven are led by women, highlighting the Program's commitment to gender inclusivity. Projects funded through the scheme have been implemented across different river basins, with 12 projects in the Ibër River Basin, six in the Morava e Binçës River Basin, and three in the Lepenc River Basin.

One project has been implemented in all three river basins, showcasing a comprehensive approach to water resource management.

Overall, the projects have had a significant reach, benefiting over 10,000 individuals. The interventions have included awareness campaigns with students and communities, promoting women's involvement and education in IWRM and nature protection, supporting municipalities in drafting local strategies and plans, implementing Standard Operational Procedures (SOP) for the water sector, investing in water chlorination, providing access to clean drinking water through clean wells, improving hiking trails, raising awareness about natural heritage, conducting capacity-building activities with farmers and fishermen, training municipal officials and communities, developing innovative applications for water data modernization, and organizing activities for cleaning premises, rivers, and spaces around rivers.

Additional details regarding the achievements of the CSO grants program are provided in Annex 2.

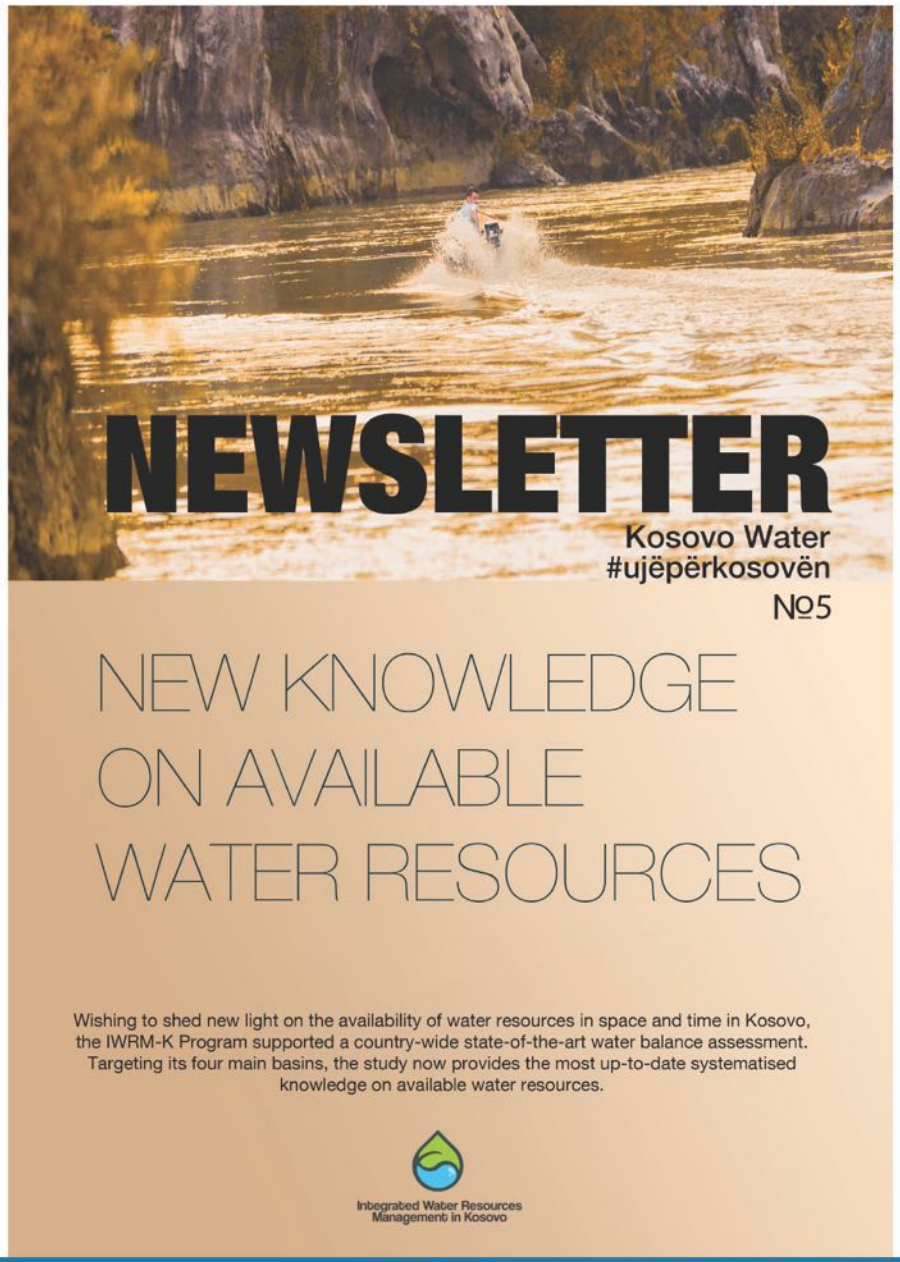
Figure. CSO grant - learning about water resourses and ecosystem of Batllava Lake

Effective Communication and Awareness Building

A robust Communication Strategy and Action Plan were developed to engage citizens, civil society, and international supporters. The Program launched the first-ever water newsletter in Kosovo, highlighting important water issues and providing a platform for expression. Social media, newsletters, video clips, seminars, and events were utilized to inform and engage the public, particularly Kosovo's youth.

The Program's efforts have laid a strong foundation for sustainable water management in Kosovo. By engaging stakeholders, empowering civil society, and raising awareness, the Program has set a precedent for inclusive and participatory water resource management practices.

A comprehensive sociological survey conducted at the beginning and conclusion of Phase 1 revealed an increase in awareness andunderstanding of water management issues among Kosovo's population, attributable to the efforts of IWRM-K and other partner initiatives



Key transversal Issues

1. Good governance

The IWRM-K Program has been a positive force for water governance, prioritizing equitable and sustainable management of limited water resources, ensuring basic human rights such as access to clean water, hygiene, food, and a healthy environment. By addressing key governance challenges, the Program has helped clarify roles and responsibilities for government, civil society, and the private sector in effectively managing water resources.

The Program empowered stakeholders by providing policy and technical support, enhancing knowledge, and building institutional capacity in areas such as water management, transboundary waters, climate change adaptation, integrity, gender equality, and human rights.

These efforts aimed to create a solid foundation for effective water governance and ensured sustainable management of Kosovo's precious water resources.

2. Social Inclusion and Gender Mainstreaming

The Program embraced a multi-faceted approach to inclusivity, placing emphasis on participation, empowerment, and leadership among diverse stakeholders, including women and vulnerable groups. Its goal was to ensure that the needs and perspectives of all genders and social statuses were considered at every intervention level, from national to transboundary contexts. By strengthening skills, providing access to information and technology, and promoting leadership opportunities, the Program sought to balance power dynamics and foster democratic spaces for increased inclusion. Additionally, it prioritized the collection and analysis of gender-disaggregated data and implemented specific measures tailored to different gender groups to address varying impacts.

Adopting an integrative and holistic approach rooted in the concept of IWRM, the Program aimed to generate positive societal impacts at both macro and micro levels, ultimately enhancing the country's position in transboundary water resource management initiatives.

The Program remained committed to promoting social inclusion and gender equality across its strategies and activities. It strived for balanced representation of women and men in its research and development efforts. Through workshops and partnerships with organizations like MESPI, the Program worked to raise awareness and build capacity on gender equality and women's empowerment among government and NGO partners.

One significant workshop, conducted in collaboration with MESPI's Unit for Gender Equality, focused on gender mainstreaming in IWRM. This event brought together diverse stakeholders, including researchers, policymakers, NGOs, and young professionals, to discuss the importance of gender-responsive strategies in water resource management. Participants shared insights and committed to shaping future initiatives aimed at addressing gender disparities in water management.

Figure. Workshop on gender mainstreaming in IWRM

3. Advancing Political Economy Analysis for Integrated Water Resources Management

The Program has been guiding Political Economy Analysis (PEA) efforts by engaging experts and stakeholders in consultations. These initiatives have moved forward smoothly, emphasizing fine-tuning the design of the next phase of the Program and streamlining permitting procedures crucial to the success of IWRM. These efforts will influence critical aspects like water use, wastewater discharge, and river sediment utilization, intersecting with diverse political and economic interests.

WHAT'S NEXT?

As Phase 1 of the IWRM-K Program draws to a close, it's important to reflect on the progress made and chart the course for Phase 2, spanning from May 2024 to April 2029.
In its initial phase, from May 2020 to April 2024, the Program embarked on an ambitious journey to usher in IWRM principles in Kosovo.

The objectives were clear: alleviate pressure on water bodies, harness water resources for economic growth, mitigate water-related risks, and bolster river basin capabilities for societal benefit. The successful execution of Phase 1 signaled a significant transformation in Kosovo's water management landscape, aligning it more closely with EUstandards.
Now, as we venture into Phase 2, the focus is on leveraging the achievements of the past and addressing Kosovo's lingering water management challenges while embracing sustainable development prospects. Operationalizing IWRM and implementing RBMPs will be at the forefront, building upon the groundwork laid in Phase 1. The monitoring mechanisms established earlier will evolve into dynamic systems, intricately woven into the fabric of IWRM.
Critical to Phase 2's success is the gradual transition of funding responsibility to the Government of Kosovo, signifying a deeper commitment to sustainable water management. Pilot initiatives to tackle pollution sources will be scaled up, with an emphasis on replication and expansion. Concurrently, capacity-building efforts within water-related institutions will be intensified to provide the necessary support for IWRM implementation.
Moreover, Phase 2 will foster local and municipal IWRM capacities and bolster transboundary water cooperation endeavors. It will serve as a platform for professional training, academic support, and the introduction of Nature-based Solutions (NbS) concepts, aligning Kosovo's practices with global sustainability imperatives.
Phase 1 laid the groundwork for stakeholder engagement, a cornerstone that Phase 2 seeks to build upon. CSOs will play an expanded role in implementation, ensuring broader participation and ownership of water management initiatives.
Looking ahead, Phase 2 envisions harmonizing Kosovo's IWRM framework with EU standards, revising RBMPs, and aligning sectoral policies and plans accordingly. It's not just about short-term gains; Phase 2 aims to consolidate sustainability requirements in preparation for Phase 3 (2029 – 2031). As external support diminishes, national institutions will be empowered to spearhead long-term water governance goals, adapting interventions to reflect evolving priorities.
In essence, Phase 2 of the IWRM-K Program represents a critical milestone in Kosovo's journey towards sustainable water management. By building upon past achievements, fostering collaboration, and embracing innovative solutions, we pave the way for a future where water is not just managed but cherished as a vital resource for generations to come.

Annex 1. Summary of measures and effects implemented in selected industrial operators

Industrial operator	Implemented measures	Environmental and Economic Effects
Bylmeti	- Fat removal system and upgrade of contact tank with a hyperboloid mixer. - New settling tanks with a floatable surface aerator. - A cooling tower for water recirculation.	- 30% reduction in water use and wastewater discharge - wastewater treatment capacity increased for 30% - 95% removal or organic pollution in wastewater - Nearly 25,000 EUR annual savings
Weng Fat Poultry	- A fat collection system comprising pumps, pipes and a tanker. - High-quality shelve units to control fat spillages.	- Nearly 100% efficiency in fat collection - 95% purity of the cleaning water achieved - 30-35% reduction in overall water usage - Reuse of the collected fat production biodiesel production
Eurolona	- Implementation of in-process measures - Design and construction of a wastewater treatment plant. - New cooling tower allowing for reuse of cooling water.	- 65% reduction in water use - 24% reduction of organic pollution - Reduction of treatment costs, reduction of energy needs, and improved material use efficiency.
Magic Ice	- A water treatment plant equipped with a chlorine dosing system and UV lamp, a sand filter, and a carbon filter. - The plant also reduces hardness and iron concentration in water.	- 20-30% reduction in overall water use - Nearly 100% reduction in water hardness - Fewer breakdowns and less maintenance of machines
Apetit Group	- A 5000-liter capacity blood storage tank - Harnessing the “waste heat” from the refrigeration system to improving water cleaning capacity	- About 85% reduction of pollution in wastewater - 45% reduction in water consumption - Potential use of the collected blood as a resource
Koral Corporation	- Installation of new WWTP. - Preparation of a technical study supporting the acquisition of an environmental permit, and a water discharge permit.	- 98% reduction in organic pollution in wastewater - 85% reduction of nitrogen and nearly 100% phosphate removal - Full compliance with the environmental regulations
Konsoni	- Installation of active sludge treatment system.	- Significant organic and nutrient pollution reduction from wastewater management - Full compliance with the environmental regulations

Annex 2. Summary of achievements of the CSO grants programme

No:	CSO	Project name	Location (Basin)	Main achievements
1.	Alternativa Rinore – Viti	Capacity building program and awareness campaign for Morava e Binçes River Basin	Morava e Binçës	- Installation of waste collection traps in the Morava e Binçës river. - Training sessions and lectures for over 200 students. - Training of municipal officials
2.	Young Water Professionals – Kosovo	Innovation in water resources management	All basins	- Creating a web-based application to help water companies gain insights into water usage patterns, enabling them to optimize distribution, reduce wastage, and improve overall operational efficiency. - Organization of the YWP-K conference, "AQUAINNOVATE KOSOVO: Young Professionals Shaping the Future of Water"
3.	Ekovizioni	Mainstreaming of plans and strategies with the IWRM priorities, and awareness raising of pupils on freshwater ecosystem biodiversity and values in the Podujevë Municipality	IBRI	- Training of over 240 students, teachers, and municipal officials on the importance of biodiversity, freshwater, and fauna around Batllava Lake.
4.	ACDC- Advocacy Center for Democratic Culture (ACDC)	Strengthening the environmental awareness in northern Kosovo	IBRI	- Comprehensive plans for effective management of waters in the municipalities of Northern Kosovo. - Implementation of four waste clean-up campaigns in various locations within the northern municipalities.
5.	Qendra Rinore Gjilan	Awareness campaign and stakeholder engagement in Morava e Binçes River Basin.	Morava e Binçës	- Planting trees at selected schools. - Hosting an exhibition featuring young artists from the School of Visual Arts at the Youth House. - Creating a documentary in collaboration with the LumiPress portal. - Conducting a waste clean-up campaign. - Conducting a water awareness campaign in schools.
6.	Water for Life	Upgrading Existing Wells in Rural Areas (Skenderaj)	IBRI	- Improving access to water for 25 low-income families
7.	Gjethi	Enjoy the Rivers of Lepenci Basin	LEPENCI	- Identifying wastewater and solid waste pollution hotspots. - Preparation of a Local Environmental Action Plan (LEAP). - Conducting 12 environmental awareness sessions with high schools. - Preparation of a brochure
8.	SDK	Civic and institutional engagement in the protection and conservation of water	IBRI	- Water Strategy and Action Plan for the Municipality of Shtime. - Establishment of a working group and organization of several workshops
9.	SHPRK	Functional Analysis of municipal capacities in river basin of Morava e Binçes and Legal Assistance for the implementation of the Law on Waters	Morava e Binçës	- 7 Standard Operation procedures - SOPs approved by Mayors of the municipalities benefiting from the project. - 34 direct beneficiaries of the project. - Workshops in each municipality

Annex 2. Summary of achievements of the CSO grants programme

No:	CSO	Project name	Location (Basin)	Main achievements
10.	IKC- Initiative for Kosovo Community	Save the River	LEPENCI	- Design and implementation of a "Water Pollution from Agriculture" training program among farmers. - Promotion of the project through participation in activities and shows on TV media, publications on social networks, agricultural fairs, distribution of brochures, and bags with a message about water conservation.
11.	PEN - Peer Educators Network	Youth for Iber	IBRI	- Several training sessions for students in the lower secondary level of elementary schools in the Municipality of Mitrovica. - Awareness campaigns were carried out, involving all partners at the local level: municipality, students, officials, and the general public. - Creation of a phone app allowing citizens to access information regarding water.
12.	Gjeomjedisi	Research of near-surface waters in the Morava Bincit water reservoir	Morava e Binçës	- Sampling and laboratory analysis of 40 parameters in water. - Construction of a groundwater monitoring well.
13.	LAG-GLV Vitia	Chlorinating drinking water at the Water Factory in Letnica-Viti	Morava e Binçës	- Installation of a chlorinator providing more than 10,000 residents of the Vitia Municipality with safe drinking water
14.	Qendra Rinore Obiliq	Water management by raising awareness among women	IBRI	- Promoting good water management practices through awareness-raising among women. - Involvement of MESPI, the Municipality of Obiliq, public enterprises, and other local organizations. - Preparation of an informative brochure distributed among schools in Obiliq.
15.	REC-SHPSR Ibri	Zero waste initiative	IBRI	- 6 stakeholder workshops attended by 111 people, producing around 50 recommendations integrated into the water management regulations. - 13 training workshops/lectures related to water protection.
16.	Quality Kosova	Mobilization and community awareness	IBRI	- A complete set of research papers and legislation related to the existing water management situation in the Iber River basin. - Multiple meetings with key stakeholders such as businesses, farmers, academia, CSOs, institutions at the central level, the Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning, and the Hydro-Meteorological Institute of Kosovo. - More than 230 people benefited. - The data, findings, and recommendations derived from the project were presented at UBT University.

Annex 2. Summary of achievements of the CSO grants programme

No:	CSO	Project name	Location (Basin)	Main achievements
17.	NOPM	Supporting Local Initiatives for Sustainable Water Use and Storage	Morava e Binçës	- Prepared a policy paper on how to improve the role and responsibilities of the Municipality of Kamenica in water management. - Meeting of the thematic working group on water preservation discussing alignment of municipal strategic plans. - Raising awareness among local communities. - Gender mainstreaming integrated into plans/projects. - Advocacy meeting held with civil society activists and citizens.
18.	AJRI	Clean Water, Clear Mind.	LEPENCI	- Organizing a workshop on protecting water and promoting healthy behaviors to reduce pollution and contaminants. - Creation of various shareable materials, including documentaries, reports, handbooks, brochures, and promotional materials.
19.	Perspektiva Energjetike	Clean Water and Sustainable Environment	IBRI	- Conducted clean-up activities along the Sitnica, Drenica, Graqanka, and Mati rivers, organized visits with chemistry students from the "Bahri Hoxha" Professional School to water treatment plants in Shkabaj and TC Kosova A (KEK), and presented campaign results via a digital platform at a round table at the "Europa House of Kosova.
20.	Opea BARDHA	Women united for clean environment	IBRI	- Provided training to 30 businesses on enhancing the impact of women's businesses in environmental and water management, conducted capacity building for five major textile manufacturers on international environmental standards, and trained 30 women in environmental and water management.
21.	Let's do it PEJA	Community Mapping	IBRI, Lepenci, Morava e Binçës	- Prepared a community mapping report on clean water access, identified 20 communities with water challenges, and conducted capacity-building training on the right to clean water access.
22.	Ujmani	Organic waste after food waste	IBRI	- Procured fishing equipment for sports competitions, conducted river clean-up campaigns in Mitrovica region, and performed water sampling and analysis to assess pollution's impact on the fishing industry.

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Integrated Water Resources Management in Kosovo

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ENVIRONMENT AGENCY AUSTRIA

The IWRM-K is a Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and Government of Kosovo (GoK) Program, implemented by Skat Consulting Ltd. (Switzerland) in consortium with the Environment Agency Austria (EAA)