

# 2023 A YEAR OF CELEBRATIONS



International Association  
of Water Service Companies  
in the Danube River  
Catchment Area

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## IAWD 2023 AT A GLANCE

8

Board members

4

Staff members

54

IAWD members  
in

14

Countries

7

Webinars, workshops,  
and events  
with

778

Participants

23

D-LeaP Hubs  
with

86

Participants trained

11

Publications





**Walter Kling**  
IAWD President

Looking back at 2023, we see international tumult, economic challenges, widespread unease – in short, interesting times. We also see a resilient, creative, focused IAWD community celebrating, and getting celebrated, in recognition of decades of hard work to give the water service sector in the Danube region a weighty voice.

On World Water Day 2023, IAWD and the Danube Water Program enjoyed an amazing moment in the international spotlight. During the first UN Water Conference since 1977, we took the stage, presenting to a worldwide audience the Danube Water Program as a lighthouse example for regional cooperation to improve water and sanitation services. It was a proud hour for our community.

Not much later, during the 2023 Danube Water Conference in Vienna we took to a riverboat on the Danube to celebrate three decades of IAWD and ten years of Danube Water Program. That night, we toasted not only the past, but also the future, represented by the strong conference participation of the Young Water Professionals network. It is encouraging to see the next generation take the stage.

But those who rest on their laurels are wearing them in the wrong place, and 2023 was also a year of hard work. The Danube Water Program, now in phase IV, is in full swing. We launched the second cycle of D-LeaP's Utility Management Training, continued the popular DWP KnowKnow Webinars, and succeeded with a project proposal for the first grant period of the Regional Capacity Development Network RCDN+, helping to finance future activities such as a peer exchange with Aqua Publica Europea, and further improving D-LeaP's architecture.

IAWD is a community on a mission, and we try our best every day to live up to it. But celebrating success means celebrating those who made it is possible. Means celebrating you, our members, friends and partners. Thank you for your support, and may we always have well-earned successes to celebrate!



# STRENGTH THROUGH COOPERATION

## YOUR IAWD MEMBERSHIP

Our network is steadily growing, because those who understand the water sector also realize that joining the IAWD means becoming part of something important: **IAWD, the International Association of Water Service Companies in the Danube River Catchment Area, is the prime association of water and wastewater utilities in the Danube region.**

IAWD welcomes all utilities, utility associations and institutions with a stake in the water sector of the Danube and Balkan region, and we especially appreciate the fact that five new members decided to join our community in 2023 - for mutual benefit: **We believe in strength through cooperation, a strength that grows with every new member.**

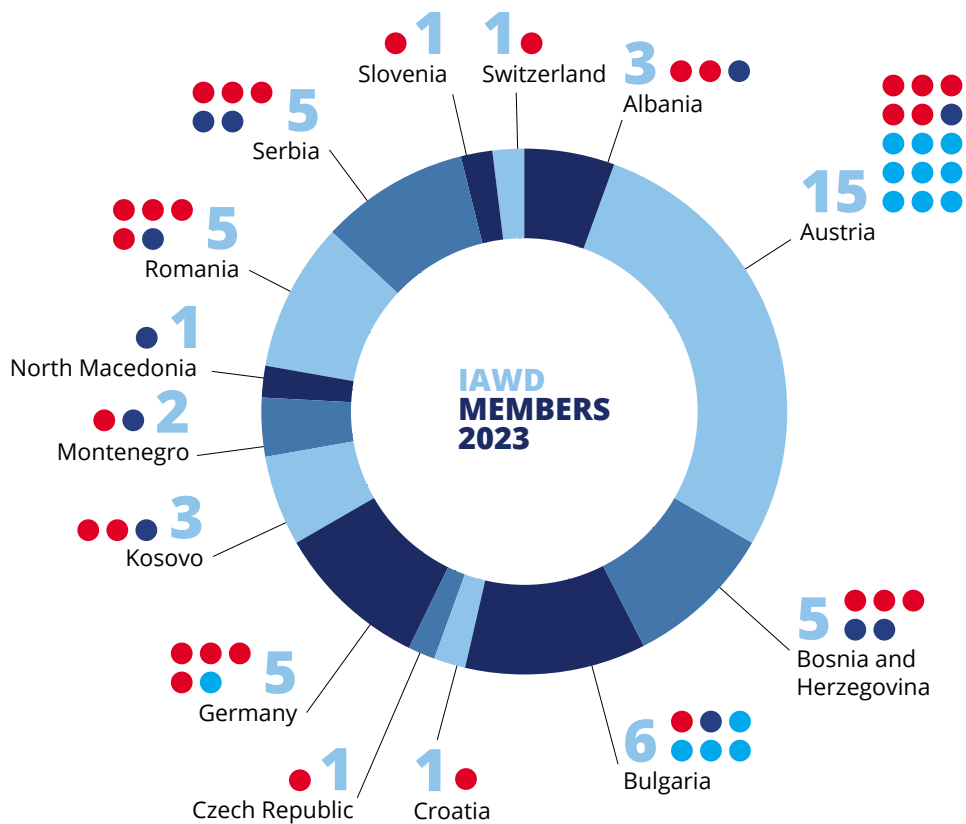
Together, we create a strong voice that promotes the ongoing improvement of water services and utility operation in the Danube region - **the Voice of the Danube.**

IAWD is an international network with a shared vision, a shared mission, and a shared approach: **Our vision is safe, reliable, affordable access to water services for all in the Danube region, because improving water services improves lives.**

**Our mission is to act as the Voice of the Danube, strengthening our members in delivering sustainable water services through cooperation, capacity development and knowledge exchange.**

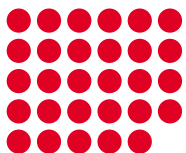
**Our approach is to communicate, to connect and to capacitate.**





**U** Utility Members

29



**New in 2023:**

Maribor water supply (Slovenia)  
JP ViK d.o.o. Gracanica (Bosnia and Herzegovina)

**A** Association Members

11



**New in 2023:**

Association of Water Utilities in Republika Srpska (AWRS)

**I** Institutional Members

14



**New in 2023:**

Mozajka (Bulgaria)  
UNIHA (Austria)

## SPECIAL HONORS FOR FOUNDING MEMBERS

A special bow to our long-standing members were an important part of the IAWD's 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebrations during the 2023 Danube Water Conference. That evening, we invited them all on the stage to receive certificates of honor. The word "All" is important here, because with IAWD's activity focus mainly on Central Eastern Europe, one could almost forget IAWD's founding members upriver, i.e. Austria and Germany: Among them are the municipal utilities of Passau and Regensburg that joined the IAWD as founding members, and have stayed on ever since. Honoring this long connection, IAWD President Walter Kling traveled to Germany in spring to renew a decades-old partnership and to personally invite the Passau and Regensburg utilities to the upcoming celebrations.

"Going back to the roots has certainly been a pleasure", comments Mr. Kling. "After all, IAWD is first and foremost about networking, and the anniversary has presented an excellent occasion to renew connections to long-standing friends and partners, especially those that started it all. This was the first such trip, but certainly not the last one."



# IAWD MISSION AND VISION IMPROVING WATER SERVICES TO IMPROVE LIVES

Over three decades, IAWD has steadily built its cooperation network in the water sector of the world's most international river basin, reaching out beyond national, cultural and linguistic borders with an ever-growing number of programs and activities to create a strong voice for improving water services and utility operation in the Danube region: The Voice of the Danube.

IAWD works with national water utility associations and individual utilities, helping to secure the water quality of the Danube and its tributaries, promoting sustainable utility services, representing the water sector's interests and providing donors with an established, attractive platform that covers the entire region.

IAWD is aware that in the face of climate change and all related challenges only joint action, joint standards and universally binding regulations will safeguard the quality of water resources and services in the Danube region. It is therefore IAWD's common concern to show solidarity in managing water services and ensuring their high quality.

IAWD entered its fourth decade driven by a promising vision, an important mission and a stronger sense of urgency than ever:



## OUR VISION

Safe, reliable and affordable access to water services for all in the Danube region, because improving water services improves lives.



## OUR MISSION

Aware of the importance of information, communication and cooperation in the water service sector, we act as the Voice of the Danube, strengthening our members in delivering sustainable water services through cooperation, capacity development and knowledge exchange.



## WHO WE ARE

IAWD is the International Association of Water Service Companies in the Danube River Catchment Area. We are an independent, non-profit organization of water and wastewater utilities, national water utility associations and other stakeholders engaging in the provision of safe and reliable water services for over 80 million people living in the Danube region. Join the Voice of the Danube community and support building a safe water future for the Danube region.



## OUR STRATEGIC APPROACH

Communicate with our members, our supporters and the interested public on a comprehensive range of channels, with a strong focus on digital services.

Connect the Danube region's water sector by a program of conferences, meetings and webinars to enable peer-to-peer networking.

Capacitate water sector professionals by supporting knowledge exchange, mutual support networks, access to resources and the capacity building activities of the Danube Learning Partnership.

# OUR PROUDEST MOMENT: IAWD AT THE UN HEADQUARTERS IN NEW YORK

World Water Day 2023 marked a once in a lifetime event: For the first time in 46 years, the United Nations held a Water Conference - and IAWD enjoyed its moment in the international limelight.

World Water Day 2023 was titled "Accelerating Change", underscoring the need for speed and commitment to meet the UN Sustainable Development Goal 6. The way forward is set in the Water Action Agenda, launched at the UN Water Conference 2023.

This event also provided IAWD and the World Bank with a stage in the UN Headquarters to present the success story of the Danube Water Program, financed by the Austrian Ministry of Finance: The Austrian Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Regions and Water Management, World Bank, IAWD, SHUKALB and AQUASAN hosted the conference side event "Regional cooperation as a key to accelerate SDG 6 implementation - The Danube Water Program as lighthouse example to improve water and sanitation services within the Danube region".

It treated an international audience to experiences and best practice examples from two participating countries, demonstrating how their activities contribute to SDG 6 implementation. Speakers representing the Austrian Government, the World Bank, IAWD, the Water Supply and Sewerage Association of Albania, and the AQUASAN Network in Bosnia and Herzegovina presented approaches and experiences in a successful regional cooperation, and ways of making them applicable for green, resilient, inclusive water service delivery elsewhere in the world. The interest was huge. As was the honor.



# PARTNERSHIPS FOR PROGRESS

IAWD operates in an environment of record-setting complexity: The Danube is the planet's most international river, with shores in ten nations and the whole river system covering altogether 19 different countries with vastly different political, cultural and economic backgrounds. For us, this does not constitute an obstacle, though. On the contrary: Reaching out across borders, cooperating regionwide and beyond, building a network with local, national, regional and global touchpoints, and bringing all players with a stake in the water sector together is both the vision that stood at the cradle of IAWD and the secret of its success. In 2023, IAWD has expanded its outreach, signing Memorandums of Understanding (MoU) with a number of other important water sector networks and initiatives, with Aqua Publica Europe the most prominent new partner.

## AQUA PUBLICA EUROPEA

Aqua Publica Europea (APE), the European Association of Public Water Operators unites publicly owned water and sanitation services and other stakeholders, working to promote public water management at both European and international level. APE is an operator-led association that looks for efficient solutions that serve public interests rather than corporate ones. IAWD and APE share common ground as non-profit organizations with a strong commitment to promote and support efficient, sustainable high-quality water services and the protection of water resources. Within the MoU a wide range of opportunities for cooperation includes joint PR and lobbying efforts, the development of joint position papers and targeted cooperation on annual events, webinars and workshops. IAWD is proud to announce this MoU as a result of dedicated strategic outreach to potential partners.



EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION  
OF PUBLIC WATER OPERATORS

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# PROJECT POWERING PARTNERSHIPS

In 2023, the worldwide water sector was forced to face the inconvenient truth that reaching the UN Sustainable Development Goal SDG 6 - Availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all – cannot be reached without enormous additional efforts, investments, and huge amounts of innovative thinking.

Granted, innovating yourself out of unsurmountable challenges can only go so far, but in the technologically very conservative water sector there is a lot of room for improvement. Therefore IAWD expands its outreach activities, adding a new strategic category: Project Powering Partnerships are cooperations with members who engage in innovation and improvement projects that hold a promise for the sector. IAWD will gladly support such projects with network contacts, reporting and expertise.



2023 saw the launch of such a Project Powering Partnership, and it concerned a spectacularly exciting project: IAWD member Mozaika Humanizing Technologies Lab, a Bulgarian data science company, had landed a contract with the European Space Agency, entering a project named “Deployment of Information System for Monitoring of Water Resources for Sustainable Exploitation of Rivers and Dams using Earth Observation and AI (ISMoSeDe Deploy)”. Behind this somewhat unwieldy title, lies the promise of a brighter future for river, dam and water resource management: Mozaika explores the viability of a combination of Earth Observation data with Artificial Intelligence in river dynamics and hydrology forecasting, comparing predictions and results of different models and techniques on two rivers in the region, the Danube and the Arda – with very promising results, by the way.

IAWD gladly provides Mozaika with inside knowledge, contacts, and publishing progress reports on this and numerous other related innovative projects. Encouraged by the outcomes of this first Project Powering Partnership we invite members to approach us with their projects, and hope that we can report on more partnerships in the next Annual Review.

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# COMMUNICATE CONNECT CAPACITATE IAWD ACTIVITIES

IAWD acts as a regional platform for information exchange, peer-to-peer networking and knowledge sharing. The wide range of activities in this network builds on three principal pillars: communicate, connect, and capacitate.

**Communicating to keep you informed**, IAWD provides Voice of the Danube as a multi-purpose web platform for information exchange, complemented by digital newsletters, reports and direct member contacts. We encourage everybody with a stake in the region's water sector to register as a Voice of the Danube user. It is free of cost, does not carry any obligations and keeps you up to date on news, activities, business and career opportunities, and everything that is going on in the water sector of the Danube region.

**Connecting you with the Danube region's water sector**, IAWD has built a strong, far-reaching peer-to-peer network of stakeholders such as governments, regulators, utilities, donor agencies, businesses supporting the water industry, and water utility associations. For a lively, productive exchange, IAWD co-organizes conferences and events including its signature events, the Danube Water Conference and the Danube Water Forum, to connect the sector's stakeholders in the Danube region.

**Capacitating you on the professional level**, IAWD has created a wide variety of activities and programs designed to support knowledge exchange among water and wastewater utilities and strengthen their technical and managerial capacities, including the Danube Learning Partnership (D-LeaP) aiming at improving water services and utility operation in the Danube region.

## EVENTS ORGANISED IN 2023



### COMMUNICATING to keep you informed:

Stay up to date on news, activities, business and career opportunities, and everything that is going on in the water sector of the Danube region.



### CONNECTING you with the Danube region's water sector:

Join a far-reaching strong peer to peer network and connect with the water sector's stakeholders, such as governments, regulators, utilities, donor agencies, businesses supporting the water industry, and water utility associations.



### CAPACITATING you on the professional level:

Benefit from a wide variety of IAWD programs including the Danube Learning Partnership (D-LeaP) that aim at improving water services and utility operation in the Danube region.

# IAWD ACTIVITIES 2023 COMMUNICATE

IAWD enters its fourth decade operating a multi-channel communication landscape that has proven its value as a multifunctional information and exchange toolbox. At its core is the Voice of the Danube website, launched in summer 2020. Voice of the Danube is publicly available, but to access the full spectrum service, readers need to complete a registration. This is cost-free, carries no obligations whatsoever and provides access to the full event schedule, latest water-related news, business and career opportunities, a comprehensive collection of reports, studies and background information in the Danube Library, and vital services like Benchmarking and D-LeaP capacity building support in the Danube Toolbox.

Following the Voice of the Danube launch, the digital toolbox has expanded further to include a weekly newsletter service, social media services on LinkedIn, webinars and videoconferencing – and, last but not least, the IAWD Annual Review, first issued in 2020, downloadable in the Danube Library, and right now in front of you with the 2023 edition.



**46,166**  
Page views



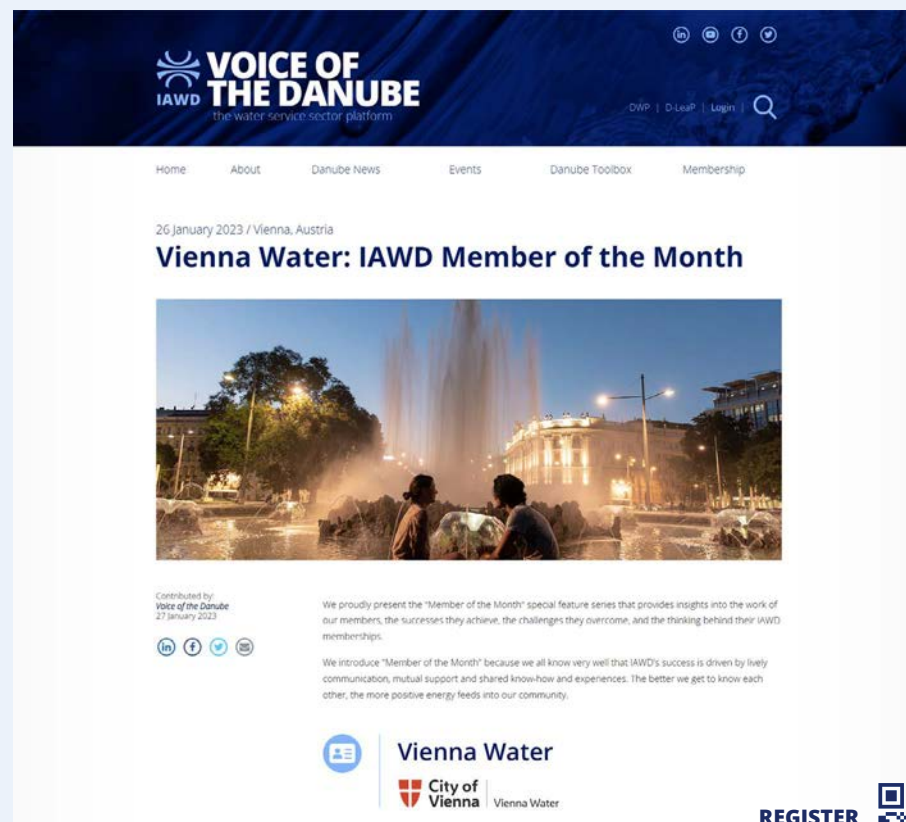
**869**  
Registered  
VoD users



**148**  
Countries



**1100+**  
LinkedIn  
follower



**REGISTER  
FOR FREE**



## NEW ON VOICE OF THE DANUBE: MEMBER OF THE MONTH SECTION

IAWD is a growing network operating across multiple language barriers and national borders. Our work involves thousands of people, and the better we know each other, the faster we reach our shared goals.

This motivated the IAWD Secretariat to introduce the “Member of the Month” portrait series in the news section. In the anniversary year 2023, mostly IAWD’s founding members were put into the spotlight. We will continue Member of the Month in 2024, presenting IAWD’s members and their contributions to the success of our community.



# IAWD ACTIVITIES 2023 CONNECT

Events that bring together all the important players to discuss sector-relevant issues are the lifeblood of the IAWD community, and after two years plagued by pandemic-related restrictions, 2023 marked a joyful return to full normal.

A legacy of the crisis years remains: The KnowNow webinars, introduced as a response to travel restrictions, have proven so popular that they are now a pillar of IAWD's outreach activities.

Yet, nothing can replace eye-to-eye contact, and from 31 May to 2 June, a record-sized audience gathered in Vienna for the 2023 Danube Water Conference. The venue was the Austrian Federal Academy of Finance, perfectly sized and equipped, in close vicinity of Vienna's main station public transport hub, and one of the Austrian Federal Ministry of Finance's very valuable contributions to the event's success. "Navigating Changing Waters" was the conference title, with the program focused on the multiple current and future challenges for the sector, including economic turbulences, climate change-related risks, aging workforces and lackluster public support. The good news takeaways ranged from the introduction of the "Utility of the Future Centre of Excellence" in Tirana, Albania to the strong presence of Young Water Professionals who supported the event organization with a huge amount of enthusiasm, giving reason for optimism that the ongoing generation change will be smoother than expected.

The social highlight was the conference dinner and celebration of 30 years IAWD and ten years Danube Water Program during a riverboat cruise on the Danube. We thank everybody who attended and invite those who were not there to turn to the Danube Library for a full conference report – and the 30 Years IAWD anniversary booklet that gives an overview of three amazing decades of growth and success.

## DWP KNOWNOW

### TAPPING TALENT - HOW TO ATTRACT AND RETAIN A QUALIFIED WORKFORCE IN THE WATER SERVICE SECTOR OF THE DANUBE REGION



**Ms. Sarah Keener**  
Senior Social Development Specialist, World Bank, US (Presenter and Moderator)



**Ms. Louise McSorley**  
Strategic Resourcing and Skills Manager, Scottish Water, UK (Panelist)



**Ms. Fjolla Lasku**  
Head of WWTP, RWC Gjakova, Kosovo (Panelist)



**Mr. Florian Kretschmer**  
Senior Scientist, University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Austria (Panelist)

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### REVISED REGULATION, RENEWED CHALLENGES: THE EU URBAN WASTEWATER TREATMENT DIRECTIVE



**Prof. Dr. Enkelejda Gjinali**  
Polytechnic University of Tirana (Panelist)



**Ms. Sanja Barbalic**  
Head of Water Management Institute, Croatian Waters, Croatia (Panelist)



**Mr. Csaba Bauer**  
Water Treatment Manager, Compania Aquaserv S.A., Romania (Panelist)



**Mr. Michel Sponar**  
Deputy Head of the DG-Environment, European Commission Belgium (Panelist)



**Mr. Raimund Mair**  
Senior Water Resources Management Specialist, World Bank (Moderator)

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180

Participants



17

Young Water Professionals

# 2023 Danube Water Conference



7

Sessions



1

Roundtable discussion



1

Gala Dinner on the Danube river



# IAWD ACTIVITIES 2023

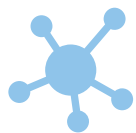
## CAPACITATE

IAWD's most prominent initiative to strengthen technical and managerial capacities in the region's water sector is D-LeaP, the Danube Learning Partnership.

Although the Danube region enjoys a high level of basic access to water and sanitation services, the effectiveness and efficiency of the related services does not always meet international standards. In 2015, a State of the Sector report issued by the World Bank identified room for improvement regarding the capacity of professional staff working in the sector in several countries in the region, often due to limited professional development and training opportunities.

IAWD in cooperation with its members, the national water utility associations, has therefore established the Danube Learning Partnership (D-LeaP) as a regional, integrated, sustainable capacity building initiative. Covering 16 countries, D-LeaP provides a comprehensive curriculum for the management and technical staff of water and wastewater utilities in the Danube region. Overall, 23 D-LeaP Hubs have been established so far in the Danube region.

### D-LEAP ACTIVITIES 2023



5

Hubs



12

Active countries



55

Utilities trained



3

Programs delivered



MORE ABOUT D-LEAP





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### TAKING THE PLUNGE: UMT 2ND CYCLE KICKOFF IN SOFIA

On 13 March, back to back with an IAWD Board meeting and subsequent strategy retreat, D-LeaP's Utility Management Training kicked off its second training cycle with sixteen water professionals from six countries participating. UMT is a comprehensive 360° professional training course that is a mainstay of the D-LeaP capacity building initiative. Combining residential weeks with supported homework, and with training modules that cover both the technical and the commercial aspects of utility management, it provides water professionals with latest tools and techniques to improve the performance, safety, and service quality of the region's utilities.



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### BUILDING THE TEAM: "ACCESS TO FINANCING" TRAINING OF TRAINERS

Financial sustainability is an important prerequisite for keeping up and improving water services. Therefore, the Danube Learning Partnership has introduced a dedicated "Access to Financing" training program. To meet the considerable demand, D-LeaP gathered selected candidates from four countries for a five-day intensive Training of Trainers in Podgorica, Montenegro. Most participants brought a background in economic and financial management. All of them were dedicated professionals with long experience gathered in water utilities, municipalities and/or private consulting firms. Everyone left Podgorica with a set of skills that qualifies them to hold "Access to Finance" trainings for utilities and municipalities. And you may meet them soon during a training near you.



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