

Declaration

on Regional Capacity Development Network in water and sanitation sector in SEE

We, the Mayors and elected representatives of the local and regional governments of South-East Europe united in NALAS through our national associations, as well as the leadership of the water public utility companies united in IAWD, meeting together in Vienna, Austria on 17-18 May 2017 on the occasion of the Danube Water Conference have agreed upon the following Declaration:

Confirming our commitment for a better South East Europe (SEE), developed based on the principles of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, as outlined in the SEE2020 Strategy, and taking the advantage of regional cooperation for addressing common challenges,

Considering that municipalities and their municipal water supply and sanitation service providers from the SEE and the broader Danube Region, where both NALAS and IAWD operate face major challenges in providing sustainable services to the entire population and meeting the European Union (EU) environmental acquis communautaire,

Noting that regulatory, organisational, managerial, and technical modernisation of the water sector is essential for ensuring the provision of high quality, cost-efficient and inclusive water and sanitation services,

Recognising the UN Sustainable Development Goal 6 on Water and Sanitation that aims to guarantee access to clean drinking water and sanitation facilities for all can only be implemented through good local governance and efficient technical management of natural resources,

Having in mind article 6 of the European Charter of Local Self-Government, focusing on appropriate administrative structures and resources for the tasks of local authorities where the high-quality and competent staff shall be guaranteed through provision of adequate training opportunities and career prospects,

Bearing in mind the Pillar 5 Governance for Growth of the Regional Cooperation Council's SEE 2020 Strategy which states that professionalization through continuous improvement of the competence of public officials is an imperative for effective public services,

Emphasising the necessity of fostered regional dialogue and cooperation between the local authorities and operators of the water service utility companies and their Associations from the Danube Region and South-East Europe countries to develop effective and sustainable approaches to water and waste water management, stated in the Memorandum of Understanding signed between the International Association of Water Supply Companies in the Danube river catchment area - IAWD and the Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South East Europe – NALAS,

Taking advantage of the synergy between NALAS and IAWD in the joint efforts for the establishment of a self-sustaining Regional Capacity Development Network (RCDN), a platform to build upon and integrate the existing capacity development activities at the regional (D-Leap¹ and LLSEE²) as well as national level, providing the municipalities and water utilities access to an affordable and quality training offer and best practices that will contribute to the long-term improvement of the water supply and sanitation services in the Western Balkans,

Expressing gratitude to the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs of the Swiss Confederation (SECO) and Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) of the Federal Republic of Germany for their generous financial support and technical assistance necessary for the establishment of the RCDN, through the project implemented by GIZ Open Regional Fund – Modernisation of Municipal Services in partnership among NALAS, IAWD and Aquasan.

¹ D-LeaP - Danube Learning Partnership, facilitated by IAWD

² LLSEE - Local Leaders in South East Europe: Lead for Change", implemented by NALAS.

We, the Mayors and elected representatives of the local governments and the leadership of the Public utility companies of South-East Europe, members of NALAS and IAWD:

Being aware that implementing the public administration reform requires modernisation of the municipal management structures pursuing involvement of central government stakeholders guided by national legislation which complies with the EU requirements,

Emphasising the permanent efforts of the Local Governments Association in building capacities of their members - the local self-governments supporting the process of decentralisation in the SEE region

Invite Central Governments of the South East European countries and their line Ministries and institutions responsible for capacity development of the local governments in water and sanitation sector to:

Take active participation in the multi-stakeholder forums organized within the Regional Capacity Development Network and aiming to initiate informed policy dialogue, networking and sharing of good practices for capacity development and scaling-up of the capacity development measures in water and sanitation sector,

Commit to enhance the national capacity development frameworks for better capacity development product delivery, particularly in the water and sanitation sector,

Allocate adequate funds for sustainable national and regional capacity development schemes for the water and sanitation sector,

Support the RCDN's capacity development quality assurance and standards (including accreditation and certification of both training providers and programs) compatible to the national training quality standards and training strategies,

Promote the Regional Capacity Development Network and its measures among local authorities and their water and sanitation public utilities and encourage all stakeholders to actively involve vulnerable groups, women and youth.

We appeal to the International Financial Institutions and donors to:

Share information on the specific needs for capacity development in their field of work;

Establish partnership arrangements for the sustainability of the network and capacity development measures delivery,

Take active participation in the RCDN Community of Practice ensuring continuous consideration of needs emerging in the context of infrastructure investment projects and corresponding improvement of service delivery,

Support joint identification of opportunities for scaling-up of the capacity development measures proposed by the network as well as harmonising capacity development initiatives in SEE water and sanitation sector.

NALAS and IAWD, as regional networks bringing together SEE associations, local governments and public utility companies and working towards sustainable development of the water and sanitation sector that provides high quality and affordable services to all citizens, remain committed to make this vision a reality.