



Network of Associations of Local
Authorities of South-East Europe

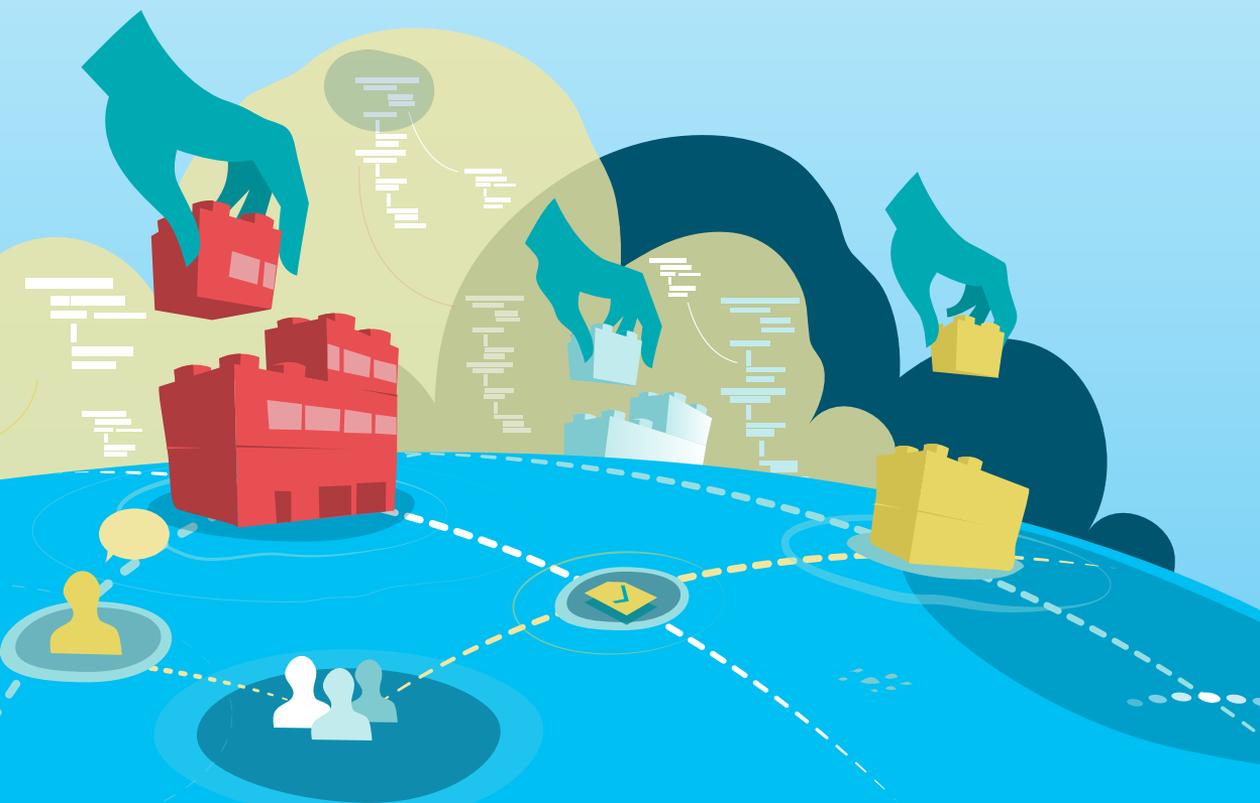


RCDN Regional Capacity
Development Network
for Water and
Sanitation Services

SETTING THE STANDARD

GUIDELINES

for the establishment and
effective operation of
LGA's sectoral committees





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Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South East Europe (NALAS)

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Introduction

Well-structured, effective, and efficient Committees for Water and Sanitation Services (WSS committees) can play a crucial role in mapping the situation in the sector, addressing the challenges, shaping sector-related policies, and guiding Local Government Associations' (LGAs) work in WSS.

Several NALAS member LGAs from the Western Balkans, involved in the Regional Capacity Development Network for Water and Sanitation Services (RCDN) are working on strengthening their role in water and sanitation management, and thus are either establishing or enhancing their committees covering water and sanitation services. Regional cooperation has been identified as a great support to the national processes going on in each of the associations, so they requested the support of NALAS and peer LGAs in the important mission ahead of them. These Guidelines are the starting point, followed by training, peer exchanges and technical assistance to operationalise strong and influential WSS committees.

To ensure the success of these committees, one has to start with clear procedures and guidelines related to the establishment and functioning of the WSS committees, such as nomination and selection of members, optimal organisational and membership structure, key responsibilities and functions, active participation in the decision-making process of the LGA, contribution to advocacy and policy-making, communication, and collaboration with relevant stakeholders, etc.

These Guidelines outline the main elements, principles and methods for establishing and managing successful LGAs' WSS committees, which would significantly contribute in advancing LGAs' activity in improving WSS services. The Guidelines were developed based on LGAs' staff and committee representatives' contributions collected during a workshop organised in January 2024, and amended after the training for LGAs' committees held in October 2024, both within RCDN. These Guidelines focus on WSS committees, but the principles are the same and they can be applied for any other LGA's sectoral committee.





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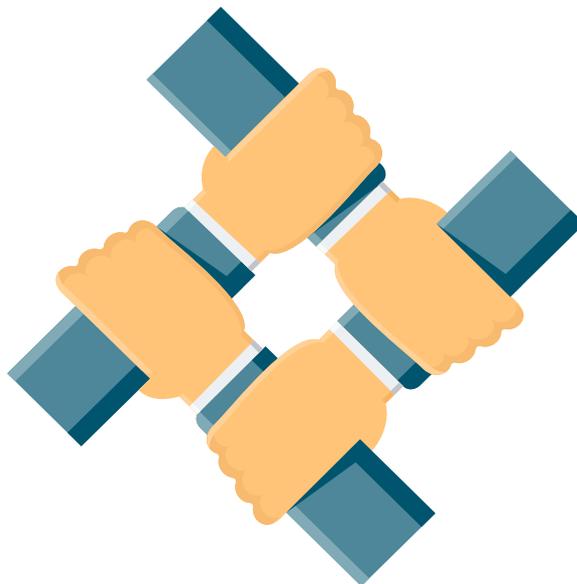
The structure and role of WSS Committees

1.1. Nomination and selection of WSS Committee members

- ◆ **Clearly define the role** of the WSS committee and the role **and the expectations** from its members. This can be a simple document, such as Terms of Reference (ToR), outlining the objectives of the committee, scope of work, tasks and responsibilities of the committee members, professional requirements, communication, and coordination. For motivation, do not forget to list the benefits that the committee members get, such as capacity development, peer learning opportunities, national and international exchanges, etc. Chapters 1.3, 1.4 and 1.5 of these Guidelines might be particularly helpful in defining the ToR.
- ◆ Establish a **clear and transparent nomination and selection process** for committee members.
- ◆ Announce an **open call for nominations** that gives equal chances to all interested LGs to apply.
- ◆ Define clear **criteria for selection** including relevant experience and specific expertise in the sector. Also, ensure fair representation of association's members in the committee, promoting **diversity and inclusivity** across geographical regions, different sizes of municipalities, different types of municipalities like urban/rural, gender, etc.
- ◆ Provide **the right balance** between the required expertise and fair representation of members. On one hand, expertise ensures informed and evidence-based advocacy and policy-making, while on the other hand, fair representation of members ensures that the WSS committee's decisions consider the unique needs, priorities, and challenges of different municipalities.



Note: The committee must represent the LGA, as a joint voice of all LGA's members. This can be ensured: (i) by inviting all municipalities to participate in the Committee (like in the case of the Collegia of the Association of Kosovo Municipalities), (ii) by ensuring regional representation in economies with larger number of municipalities, (iii) by creating informal networks of experts from all municipalities that will provide inputs for committee's work.

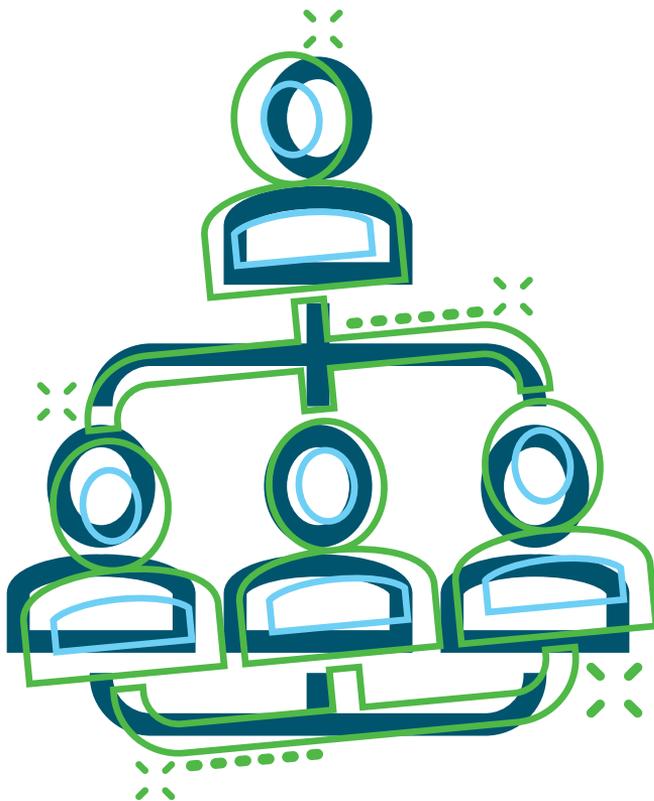


1.2. Optimal organisational/membership structure

- ◆ In principle, **formal members** of the LGA's WSS committee should be representatives of **municipal administrations** and **LGs' public utility companies**.
- ◆ Inviting the **associations of public utility companies (APUCs)** to join the WSS Committee as associate members, on topics of common interest, will additionally boost the expertise of the Committee and enhance the collaboration.
- ◆ The work of the WSS committee can be further enhanced by **involvement of partners, decision-makers, and individual experts** to bring a comprehensive range of perspectives and expertise to the committee's discussions.
- ◆ Implement a **systematic approach** that includes preparation of the WSS committee's **strategy and annual work plans**, followed by monitoring, evaluation and reporting of the impact and influence of its work.
- ◆ Establish clearly defined **working procedures** for the committee to safeguard that members understand their roles and responsibilities within the committee, as well as the communication channels, consultations, decision-making, etc.
- ◆ Ensure decision-making that allows **all members to actively contribute** to discussions and provide their expertise.
- ◆ In case of a larger number of WSS committee members, **subcommittees or smaller working groups** could be formed with clearly designated tasks and scope of work (for example conducting sectoral analysis, raising specific advocacy initiatives, etc).



Note: The WSS committee structure should include a chairperson and vice-chairperson, who are responsible for (i) coordinating the work of the committee, and (ii) advocating LGA's policy positions and policy statements in the sector before relevant institutions and in media, as delegated by the LGA. Considering this important role, it is crucial to pay special attention to the selection of the chairpersons, as they will be "the face" of the committee and the LGA in this thematic area. The work of the committee should be supported by LGA's secretariat staff, i.e. committee coordinator, administrator, or secretary.



1.3. Key responsibilities and functions of WSS Committees

- ◆ **Assessing and analysing** the current situation and development trends in the WSS sector.
- ◆ **Initiating improvements of the regulatory framework** by identifying gaps, proposing amendments, and collaborating and coordinating with relevant stakeholders.
- ◆ Providing opinions and proposing **policy recommendations** that reflect the LGA's position on draft regulations, reforms, or the state of the sector.
- ◆ Actively participating in **advocacy processes** initiated by the LGA, by: leading or taking part in dialogue platforms, closely monitoring the developments, engaging in negotiations with central governments, public outreach, etc.
- ◆ **Monitoring** the implementation of LGA's proposed solutions and recommendations by tracking the progress of adopted proposals, and addressing any challenges that may arise during the implementation phase.



- Preparation of **models of municipal regulations** in line with sectoral laws and policies by creating standardised templates that can be adapted to local circumstances.
- Contributing to determining the **thematic priorities** of the **LGAs' training centres**.
- Supporting the work of the LGAs' training centres as **resource persons, trainers**, etc.
- **Evaluating the impact** of the LGAs' capacity development measures in WSS and **proposing new measures and approaches**.

1.4. Participation in LGA's decision-making process

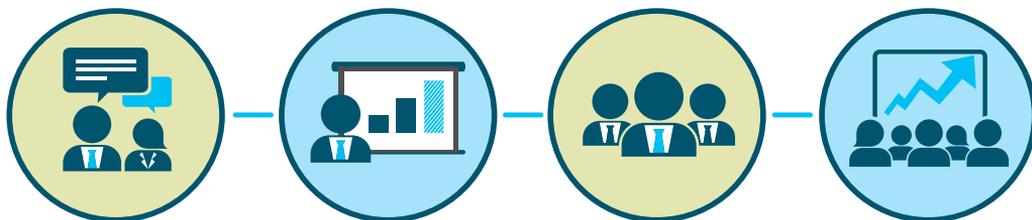
LGA's committees are not stand-alone bodies, they are a vital part of the LGA and thus it is very important to establish clear relations between their work and the decisions and the actions of the LGA overall. A procedure or mechanism for active participation of the WSS committee in the decision-making processes of the LGA might include, but is not limited to:

- Organising **regular consultation meetings** between the management of the association and the WSS committees' chairpersons and/or members, to discuss important decisions, strategies, and initiatives.
- Appointing a representative of the WSS committee to **sit in the LGA's governing bodies or decision-making bodies** when deciding on sector-related issues. This formalises their role and influence in the overall governance structure of the association.
- Delegating responsibility for representation, negotiation, and decision-making in **intergovernmental working groups, committees**, etc.
- Mobilise committee members to advocate for policies by **meeting with national policymakers**, ministries, and other stakeholders on behalf of the LGA.
- Involving the WSS committees in the **strategic planning of the LGA** so that they can contribute to the overall mission and objectives of the association. In addition, they should be involved in the development of annual work plans to incorporate the key sectoral issues that need to be addressed.
- Facilitating **collaboration and communication among various committees and working groups** within the association to integrate cross-cutting topics and priorities into LGA's work programs and strategic plans.



1.5. Encouraging pro-active participation of WSS committee members

- ◆ Ensure that all committee members understand their tasks and responsibilities, and the potential **impact of their work**. Highlight how their contributions directly affect municipalities and local governance.
- ◆ Strategies, workplans, rules of procedures and monitoring tools to be **jointly developed** by the committee members.
- ◆ Have **regular, meaningful meetings**.
- ◆ Set up **clear communication channels and mechanisms within the LGA**, to ensure that all members provide inputs and feedback and have a voice in the LGA's decision-making processes.
- ◆ Provide **capacity development opportunities** to enhance committee members' skills in policy making and advocacy, training provision, as well as sector expertise.
- ◆ **Acknowledge and promote success stories** and results of the committee.
- ◆ Regularly **acknowledge members' efforts**, formally and informally, through certificates, awards, or public commendations during meetings or events.
- ◆ Provide **opportunities for members** to participate in prestigious events, study visits, or international delegations to motivate and reward their engagement.





2

Policymaking and advocacy role of the WSS Committee

LGA's committees play significant policy-making and advocacy role in various areas crucial for effective regulatory framework, efficient service delivery and good governance at the local level, as well as strengthening the role and position of the association at national and international level. Considering this important role, it is essential to create procedures and environment within the LGA that will fully utilise the expertise and the work of the committee.

2.1. Method/procedure of preparing joint policy proposals

-  Conducting **research and analysis** to identify key issues and priorities within the sector (through different methodologies, such as: questionnaires for LGs, PUCs, and other relevant stakeholders, review of legislation, review of strategic documents, comparative experiences from the region, etc.).
-  Identifying the **critical policy issues** requiring attention and agreeing on the priority issues to be addressed in a certain time frame (annual work plan).
-  Developing **solutions and policy proposals** (policy statements, initiatives, suggestions and amendments to the laws, etc.) to ensure that they reflect the interests and priorities of local communities. Making sure that the particular needs and challenges of each local government are fully considered. Aiming to reach a consensus of all committee members on proposed solutions.
-  Ensuring that the appointed member of the committee (president or vice-president) participates in **presenting policy proposals to the governing bodies of the LGA** for their approval.
-  Delegating specific roles and responsibilities to committee members to represent and promote policy proposals when **interacting with the national government** and in **public appearances**.
-  **Sharing updates with all members** regarding the progress of the proposal within higher decision-making bodies.
-  Establishing **response mechanism** to inform members about developments or additional requirements.



3

Capacity development and knowledge sharing

It is important that the LGAs invest in and strategically develop the capacities of their committees, as a key driving force of the LGA in the thematic areas. The committees can be used as platforms for knowledge exchange and learning for all the local governments. The LGA shall develop a calendar of capacity development measures and knowledge sharing activities, that can include:

- For onboarding committee members, LGAs' training centres can organise **introductory/orientation trainings** on the role of the committee and on advocacy.
- Besides the in-house trainings, the LGA should identify **external capacity development opportunities** for its committees, coming from different donors and partners, such as the ones provided by RCDN+ Academy, in leadership, strategic management, advocacy, monitoring and evaluation, capacity development, etc.
- Organise **peer exchanges and networking meetings at national level**.
- Participation of committee members in **peer exchanges and networking meetings at regional and international level**, seizing the opportunities deriving from LGA's international cooperation (such as RCDN, NALAS, CEMR, IAWD, different European projects, etc.)
- **Joint meetings of different committees** on compatible topics might motivate them to learn from each other and address issues from a multidisciplinary perspective

On the other hand, WSS committee members should not only be recipients of training, but also **actively participate in identifying the capacity development needs, designing the programme of LGA's training centre, as well as have an active role in the delivery process**. LGAs should use the expertise and practical experience of the WSS committee to enrich their training offer by introducing **new training programmes** that address challenges in the WSS sector. Also, with the professional experience they bring from the field, enriched with their work in the committee and the capacity development opportunities, committee members can grow into **excellent trainers** that will further influence improvements of WSS, via the LGA.



4

In conclusion – The key steps for an “ideal” WSS Committee

- Develop a detail description of the **objectives, tasks, and responsibilities** of the committee.
- Set up transparent procedures for the **nomination and selection** of committee members with clear selection criteria that ensure the right balance between required expertise and fair representation of member municipalities.
- Develop **Book of Procedures** for the committee, prepare **strategy, work plans, and monitoring tools**.
- Enable the participation of the committee in the **decision-making process of the LGA**, advance their role in **policy-making, advocacy, and capacity development** activities of the LGA and consult them in preparation of Strategic and Action Plans of the LGA.
- Enable **collaboration and communication** with other committees and working groups within the association to integrate cross-cutting topics and priorities into LGA's work programs and strategic plans.
- Continuously **develop committee's capacities** and support peer exchanges, networking and learning from each other.
- Ensure **recognition and promotion** of committee's work.

Through strong advocacy, informed decision-making, and a commitment to transparency and inclusivity, the committee ensures that the voices of local communities are heard and translated into solutions that respond to practical needs of local communities. Ultimately, the success of an LGA sectoral committee lies in its ability to contribute and achieve public sector improvements, reflected in the life quality of the local communities.

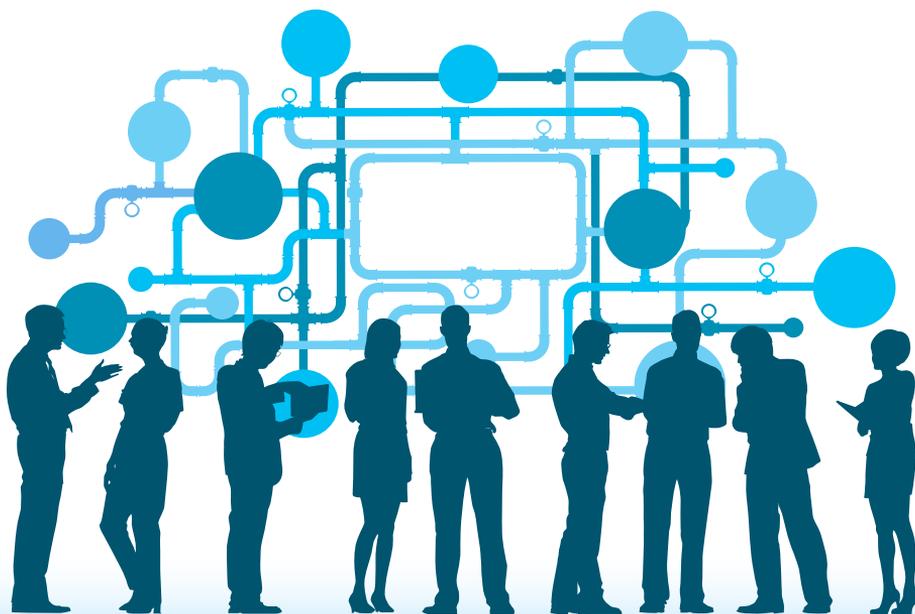


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How RCDN+ can support the process?

For RCDN+, strengthening LGAs' WSS committees is one of the key priorities, in the direction of institutionalising adequate capacities in the LGAs for advancing WSS at national level. Therefore, LGAs can benefit from a wide range of activities in support of their WSS committees, such as:

- ◆ Individual support to each partner LGA, with a set of activities determined by the baseline assessment and set in the sub-grants. This, based on the individual needs, might include support in establishing the committee, developing workplan, policies and procedures, advocacy activities, etc.
- ◆ Continuous technical assistance and mentoring in operationalising and developing the WSS committees.
- ◆ Number of capacity development opportunities via the RCDN+ Academy and beyond.
- ◆ Opportunities for regional peer exchanges and networking meetings.
- ◆ Supporting committee members grow into WSS trainers.





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