



**RCDN** Regional Capacity  
Development Network  
for Water and  
Sanitation Services



Network of Associations of Local  
Authorities of South-East Europe



# RCDN Knowledge Management Newsletter

**AT THE  
SOURCE OF  
KNOWLEDGE**

August 2022 | Issue 2

## Dear readers,





We are happy to share with you the second edition of the RCDN Knowledge Management Newsletter: At the Source of Knowledge.

The Regional Capacity Development Network (RCDN) for Water and Sanitation Services connects local government units (LGUs), public water utilities (PUCs) and their associations from South East Europe (SEE) to work together on developing capacities in the water and sanitation service (WSS) sector.

RCDN knowledge grows each and every day and provides valuable support to the RCDN partners in their capacity development, advocacy and association development efforts, enabling them do a better job in addressing the key issues of the WSS sector.

This Newsletter will present some of the knowledge and good practices that the Network has generated in the past months. As knowledge is the only thing that multiplies by sharing, we encourage you to take the advantage of anything that you learn from the Network and unselfishly share your knowledge for the next issue of RCDN: At the Source of Knowledge.

Below, you can find:

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-  RCDN Wastewater Programmes become reality  
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**We wish you enjoy, learn and apply!**

**Your RCDN team**

# RUNNING A SUCCESSFUL TRAINING CENTRE: THE CASE OF SHUKALB

By: **Jelena Janevska**, RCDN Knowledge Manager

RCDN invests a lot in developing the capacities of its partner Associations – Local Government Associations (LGAs) and Associations of Public Utility Companies (APUCs) to help them grow into the key Capacity Development (CD) providers for their members when it comes to water and sanitation management.

SHUKALB, the Water Supply and Sewerage Association of Albania, is one of the leaders in providing comprehensive, tailor-made CD programmes targeting all categories of employees in the water utilities.

Since 2007, when they launched their first trainings, SHUKALB has grown into a recognised training provider at national and regional level, today offering 46 training courses organised in four pillars: Management, Water Supply and Treatment, Wastewater Collection and Treatment, and Cross Cutting topics.

In this edition of the Newsletter, we will present the inspiring experience of SHUKALB in running a successful training centre, talking to Ms. Jonida Ahmeti, SHUKALB's Manager of Training and Professional Development and RCDN Focal Point.



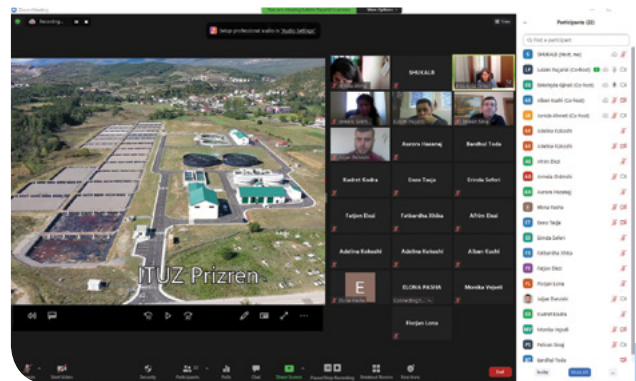


## KEY INGREDIENTS OF SUCCESS

**JJ: Since 2007, when you launched the first trainings, SHUKALB has grown into a recognised training provider. What were your key ingredients of success?**

**JA:** The essential ingredients for building into being a recognised training provider throughout the years have been the following key factors:

- ◆ **Clear and defined training and professional development goals aligned with organisational mission objectives.** It has been essential for the organisation to have a clear vision, mission objectives which were further translated into strategic business plans as the key roadmap and plan to achieve the key objectives.
- ◆ **Leadership support and advocating for training.** The leadership of the organisation represented by the Board of the Directors and the Executive Director understood the importance of training for increasing the water utility operations and services, and have been the main advocates for training by supporting such activities.
- ◆ **Skilled and effective training program management.** SHUKALB understood the importance of having on board qualified professionals to manage the training program and has attracted in the organisation different professionals not only from the environmental engineering but as well human resources, marketing and finances. The diverse skills ensured a better training program management.
- ◆ **Regular Assessments of the training needs of the utilities.** SHUKALB was following very good training standards, very early on has established regular assessments of the training needs of the utilities which were analysed and based on those needs the trainings were provided on annual base.



- Identified and developed pool of trainers.** The pool of trainers was not built over night, but rather was a long process of collaboration with young and senior experts from academia, consulting companies, water utilities as well as other experienced professionals in the sector. They trusted the organisation, working closely on both developing and delivering training on different subjects.
- Goals and metrics that show training effectiveness.** The road to effectively manage training programs including measuring progress as well as establishing clear milestones to keep track were developed as well as the portfolio of the training activities expanded and their management became more complex. Therefore, over time, the monitoring and evaluation instruments were applied rigorously to track and measure the quality of the trainings offered.
- Continuously refine program in response to feedback.** At the end of the annual training programs, SHUKALB makes sure that the programs are refined for the upcoming year, related to the training topics, financial resources, trainers, etc.
- Ongoing marketing to encourage participation in the trainings.** The promotion and selling efforts have been ongoing efforts, and all the possible communication channels were deployed keeping in current with new developments.
- Up to date and relevant learning content.** Even though the range of training offer is very rich and diversified and is being regularly updated, SHUKALB keeps an eye on knowledge gaps that are important for the water utilities and need to be covered with new products.

#### **JJ: How many trainings do you offer, on which topics and for which target groups?**

**JA:** SHUKALB has developed, and owns, 46 training courses that target the operation and maintenance, performance of services, as well as management issues of water supply and sewerage companies. The training program is organised in four main pillars: Management, Water Supply and Treatment, Wastewater Collection and Treatment, and Cross Cutting topics. The target group for such trainings are across the high, middle management as well as operator levels in operation and maintenance, performance of services, management of water supply and sewerage companies.



**MANAGEMENT**

1. Management
2. Supervising
3. Personal and Professional Skills
4. Ethics for Water and Wastewater Professionals
5. Financial Management for Non-Financial Managers
6. Crisis and Emergency Management
7. Customer Service and Public Relations
8. Financial Statements and their Role in Decision Making

**WATER SUPPLY AND TREATMENT**

1. Water Treatment Plant Operation and Maintenance
2. Water Sources and Intake Structure
3. Small Water Systems
4. Introduction to Water Treatment
5. Water Quality in the Distribution System
6. Sampling and Laboratory Procedures for Water and Wastewater
7. Water Meters, Valves and Fire Hydrants
8. Fundamentals of Water System Hydraulics
9. Wells Operation
10. Water Mains and Storage Facilities
11. Applied Mathematic for Water Treatment Operators
12. Pre-treatment, Taste and Odor
13. Metals Control

**CROSS CUTTING**

1. Asset Management
2. Performance Management through Benchmarking
3. Guidelines for Advisory Council Members
4. Business Planning for Performance Improvement
5. Water Loss Management I
6. Water Loss Management II
7. Leakage Control
8. General Safety for Water and Wastewater Professionals
9. Equipment maintenance – Motors, pumps and valves for Drinking Water and Wastewater Professionals
10. General Mathematics for Water and Wastewater Professionals
11. Energy Efficiency in Water and Wastewater Utilities
12. SCADA System Overview for Water and Wastewater Professionals

**SEWERAGE AND WASTEWATER TREATMENT**

1. Operation and Maintenance of Wastewater Collection System I
2. Operation and Maintenance of Wastewater Collection System II
3. Repair and Rehabilitation of Wastewater Collection System
4. Overview of Wastewater Treatment
5. Safety for Wastewater Professionals
6. Preliminary and Primary Wastewater Treatment
7. Secondary Wastewater Treatment – Ponds, Lagoons and Wetlands
8. Secondary Wastewater Treatment – Fixed Film Methods
9. Secondary Wastewater Treatment – Activated Sludge Methods
10. Sludge Treatment and Bio solids Management
11. Mathematics for Wastewater Treatment Professional
12. Nutrient Removal – Biological and Chemical
13. Sampling and Laboratory Procedures for Wastewater

Furthermore, SHUKALB is part of regional networks, such as the Danube Learning Partnership (D-LeaP) initiative of national water utility associations and the International Association of Water Service Companies in the Danube River Catchment Area (IAWD) and the Regional Capacity Development Network for Water and Sanitation Services (RCDN). These programs target various managerial levels including technical, financial, commercial and administrative functions, mainly from water utilities, but also central institutions WRA, AKUM and municipalities.

- ◆ Under the D-LeaP Programmes SHUKALB has been implementing CD Programmes: Benchmarking, Commercial Efficiency, Asset Management, Water safety and Crisis Management.
- ◆ Under the RCDN, SHUKALB has been implementing: Training on Capital Infrastructure Investment Projects in the WSS Sector, Training on Introduction on Integrated Asset Management for LGUs, Peer exchanges on Successful Projects on Wastewater Collection and Treatment Projects.

**JJ: How do you measure your success, when, it comes to capacity development, do you follow how your participants transfer the training to their workplace? Any bright examples?**

**JA:** SHUKALB has specified the key performance indicators in order to track and measure the effectiveness of the training program, over the years mainly through identifying success stories which are documented and general feedback from participants from different meetings. There are many good examples of positive changes and knowledge transfer on the utility level. For example, as a result of specific trainings organised by us, Standard Operating Procedures were developed for the laboratory in the Wastewater Treatment Plant in Durrës, the defects were found and calculated better as a theoretical formula was applied in the water supply network in Korçë. Furthermore, Integrated Asset Management Programme benefited Cërrik Utility as asset management practices were established and utilised.

*“Leadership support, clear strategic plans, application of quality standards, attraction of committed professionals, regular needs assessment of water utilities, measuring impact of trainings and continuous relationships with CD Staff and Clients are part of SHUKALB’s key ingredients to success.”*

However, with the new regional water companies created, SHUKALB intends to review its M&E tools and spend more effort and have more follow up activities to monitor the outcomes or impact on the utility level.

## DIFFICULT TIMES ASK FOR BOLD ACTIONS

**JJ: During the two years of COVID-19, SHUKALB demonstrated its adaptation capacity. How did you transform your capacity development services to meet the needs during the crisis?**

**JA:** During COVID-19 crisis in order to meet utilities’ needs, SHUKALB quickly conducted surveys to measure the crisis impacts and delineated concrete measures to support them. Stakeholder dialogue meetings were organised to discuss the challenges and identify best practices. Additionally, the Water Safety and Crisis Management Program was implemented to support utilities with concrete plans in place, as well as other capacity development products which continued uninterrupted, just shifted in an online format.

## REGIONAL COOPERATION

**JJ: Your activities go beyond the borders of Albania. One of the examples is the successful cooperation with SHUKOS, the joint water conference, joint trainings... How do you see regional cooperation when it comes to capacity development for the water sector?**

**JA:** The successful cooperation with SHUKOS, related to the Balkan Joint Conference, marks its 10 years this year and we are very proud. Similarly, we have collaborated together with having a joint training program; with the implementation of training and test-based certification program for both countries a stronger collaboration is expected in the near future.



Regional cooperation is essential and we are committed to continue working with partner association and water institutions in the region to further engage them in discussing joint priority issues that are important for the water sector, and collaborate for further capacity development in the water sector.

**JJ: What would you recommend to your peers throughout the region – how to establish and run a successful training centre?**

**JA:** Most of the important aspects were already mentioned, I would just stress again the importance of leadership support, clear strategic plans, application of quality standards, attraction of committed professionals, regular needs assessment of water utilities, measuring impact of trainings and continuous relationships with CD Staff and Clients.

## A LOOK INTO THE FUTURE

**JJ: How do you see the future of SHUKALB?**

**JA:** The future of SHUKALB is established in its vision which is being an acknowledged leader in advancing quality performance and sustainability in the water sector, as well as its core mission objectives based on advocacy of the collective interests of professionals in the sector, serving as a leading resource for knowledge, professional development and networking, building awareness and attracting future generations in the water sector and collaboration and regional partnerships.

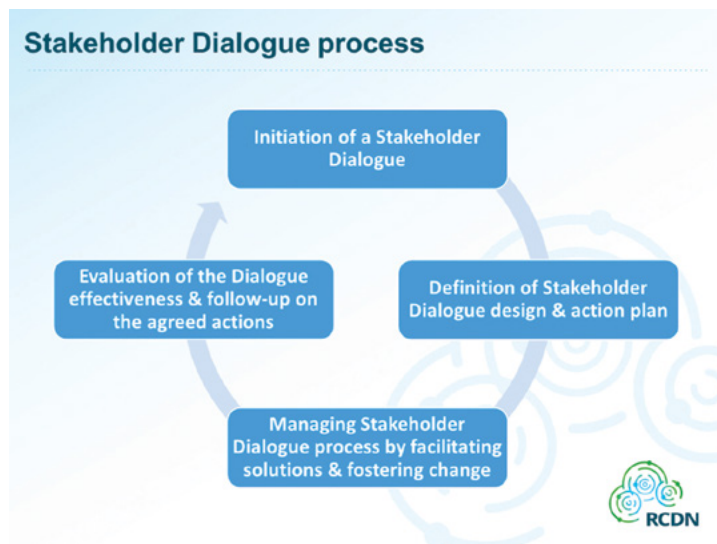
The efforts of SHUKALB will be focused on delivering on those key promises that has made in a consistent, qualitatively, and innovative way and ensuring that we are adding value to our members and we are improving the management of the Water Supply and Sewerage Sector in Albania.

*“Regional cooperation is essential and we are committed to continue working with partner association and water institutions in the region to further engage them in discussing joint priority issues that are important for the water sector, and collaborate for further capacity development in the water sector.”*

# RCDN QUALITY STANDARDS FOR STAKEHOLDER DIALOGUE

Improving the quality of water and sanitation services is a long-term process that involves a number of different stakeholders that need to collect data, analyse, discuss, plan and implement various actions. Bringing them all at the same table and having a productive exchange is often a challenge. Knowing this, RCDN offers a solution, a set of standards and templates that guide partner associations in all steps from initiating, through managing, up to evaluating stakeholder dialogue.

RCDN defines Stakeholder Dialogue as a method for managing change processes through cooperation, realised in a structured and facilitated manner. It is not a stand-alone event, but a series of events building on each other to achieve objectives of mutual interest and cooperation.



## The Stakeholder Dialogue process compiles:

- Initiation of a Stakeholder Dialogue;
- Definition of the Stakeholder Dialogue design and preparation of an action plan;
- Managing Stakeholder Dialogue process by facilitating solutions and fostering change;
- Evaluation of the Dialogue effectiveness and follow-up on the agreed actions.

## The RCDN Quality Standards for Stakeholder Dialogue include:

1. Analysis-based initiation;
2. Structuring frame and key process elements;
3. Solution-focused content;
4. Process-oriented design, enabling exchange;
5. Competence development through collaborative approach methods;
6. Adaptive process moderation;
7. Enabling logistics;
8. Inclusive participation;
9. Reflective evaluation.



The RCDN Quality Standards for Stakeholder Dialogue include 22 standardised templates

to assure quality of their implementation at various stakeholder events.

*For all the details about RCDN Quality Standards for Stakeholder Dialogue, please check [HERE](#).*







# RCDN WASTEWATER PROGRAMMES BECOME REALITY ACROSS THE REGION

RCDN intensified the implementation of the Wastewater (WW) Capacity Development (CD) programme for Public Utility Companies (PUCs) and Local government units (LGUs) employees. The pilot delivery of WW CD Programme 2A “Enhancement of technical capacities of PUCs for operation and maintenance of wastewater systems” commenced. The Module 1: “Introduction to WWCT and O&M” was conducted 28-29 June 2022 in Kochani, North Macedonia as a pilot country for this CD Programme. During this module 14 participants were trained, from nine different PUCs, four municipalities and three from the business sector. These three came from the renowned pharmaceutical company Alkaloid AD Skopje, which expressed interest to train its staff responsible for treatment and management of wastewater resulting from the production processes.

As part of the preparations for the pilot delivery, RCDN strengthened the capacities of the WW Local Experts, part of the RCDN Pool of Trainers, Moderators, Advisors and Resource Persons from North Macedonia, Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina. A specific training of trainers (ToT) for the WW CD Programme 2A was organised 17-20 May 2022, in Skopje, North Macedonia, including 11 local experts, out of which six from North Macedonia, two from Albania and three from Bosnia and Herzegovina.

A specific ToT for the pilot delivery of the WW CD Programme 1B “Introduction to Wastewater Systems for managers and engineers” was organised in Tirana, Albania, 7-10 June 2022, including 16 trainers and moderators from Albania (9), Bosnia and Herzegovina (4) and North Macedonia. (3).

The specific ToT for the WW CD Programme 1A: “Introduction to Wastewater Systems for decision makers” will be organised in Bihac, Bosnia and Hercegovina 6-9 September 2022. 20 Trainers and Moderators from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania and North Macedonia are expected to be trained to deliver this CD Programme.

To enhance their trainers’ and moderators’ skills, and ensure alignment with the RCDN Quality Standards, NALAS conducted two generic ToTs for the trainers from the three countries, on 26-27 May and 17-18 August 2022, in Skopje.





The WW CD programmes will be piloted during September - December 2022, with the following schedule of delivery:

Country	Module	Period
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Module 1	26-28.09.2022
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Module 2	29.11-01.12.2022
Albania	Module 1	22-23.09.2022
Albania	Module 2	12-14.10.2022
Albania	Module 3	09-11.11.2022
North Macedonia	Module 2	14-16.09.2022
North Macedonia	Module 3	26-28.09.2022
North Macedonia	Module 4	18-20.10.2022
North Macedonia	Module 5	02-04.2022

The pilot delivery of the WW CD Programmes and capacitation of the trainers was preceded by a Validation Meeting with RCDN partners aiming to validate the set of RCDN CD WW Programme material to be contextualised for pilot delivery. The validation meeting was organised as an online event on 26.04.2022 with participation of the RCDN partners from the three pilot countries.





The comprehensive set of materials is structurally organised into the following CD programmes:

- ◆ Introduction to WW systems for LGUs and PUCs that are in the process of planning and implementing WW infrastructure projects
  - CD Programme 1A: Introduction to WW systems for Decision Makers (Module 1-2), and
  - CD Programme 1B: Introduction to WW systems for Managers and Engineers (Module 1-3).
- ◆ Enhancement of technical capacities of PUCs for O&M of WW systems for PUCs and LGUs which have finalised and operating WWTPs
  - CD Programme 2A: Enhancement of technical capacities of PUCs for O&M of WW Systems (Module 1-5).

The CD programmes 1A and 1B aim to train PUCs and LGUs employees that are in a process of preparation and design of projects for establishment of WWTPs while the 2A CD programme is targeting the employees from PUCs which are having operational WWTPs.



## KNOWLEGDE NEWS FROM RCDN PARTNERS



### ALAA uses the RCDN Association Development Programme to learn from SCTM's vast experience in establishing and running a training centre

In the last edition of the RCDN Knowledge Management Newsletter you had the chance to learn more about the RCDN Association Development Programme, a tailor-made support to partner associations to exchange with and learn from peers.

Today, you will read about the inspirational exchange the **Association for Local Autonomy of Albania** (ALAA) had with the **Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities** of Serbia (SCTM).

As the most recent RCDN partner, ALAA has a very ambitious agenda for its organisational development, as well as for the capacity development services it provides to members. In the past years, supported by RCDN and in cooperation with the Association of Albanian Municipalities, they have delivered series of high-quality trainings for the staff and decision-makers in Albanian municipalities and public utility companies.

For ALAA, this is only the beginning – being equipped with the RCDN Quality Standards and having skilled staff, they have a vision to develop a professional training centre for local government employees. Thinking how to operationalise this vision, SCGO logically came as one of the bright examples to follow.

With the support of the RCDN Association Development Program and NALAS as their umbrella, ALAA and SCTM conducted a peer exchange in March 2022, in Belgrade, Serbia. The peer






exchange focused on SCTM's Capacity Development (CD) function, as well as overall association's management. The two-day agenda included the following sessions:

- ◆ Introduction to the SCTM functions and structure with focus on CD measures;
- ◆ Introduction to the national training system for LGs and current SCTM's role in the system;
- ◆ Focus on the training methodology;
- ◆ Presentation of other relevant SCTM's CD services as well as approaches during COVID-19;
- ◆ Presentation of the SCTM training facilities and equipment (for in-vivo trainings and webinars).

*"This was undoubtedly an impressive and very motivating experience for us as a representative association of local government in Albania", says Ms. Adelina Farrici, Executive Director of ALAA. "The reception from SCTM was extraordinary and all ALAA staff had a very satisfying experience through which we believe we have received enough information to understand what our next steps should be. The presentation of the history of the association, including the difficulties encountered during the process of setting up the training centre, the methodology used as well as with the facilities and tools, created a complete and detail idea of the concept and model that ALAA would like to implement", concludes Ms. Farrici.*

***"This was undoubtedly an impressive and very motivating experience for us"***

***For more information about the RCDN Association Development Programme, please check [HERE](#).*** 


In the upcoming six months, based on the experience with SCTM and the RCDN Practical Guide-Establishing and Running a Training Centre, ALAA plans to set the basis of its training centre.

## **Albania: Policy Position Paper on Improving the Regulatory Framework for Asset Management at Local Level**

Developed by SHUKALB, this Position Paper aims to guide central institutions on improving the regulatory framework for asset management at the level of WSS utilities, which will contribute directly to improving their performance. It will also help central level institutions to make decisions based on a more complete information framework on the status of utilities, be it for the approval of tariffs by the Water Regulatory Authority, or for the distribution of subsidies or the planning of capital investments by the National Agency for Water Supply and Sewerage and Waste Infrastructure.

In order to raise the importance of this issue, SHUKALB organised series of Stakeholder Dialogue meetings and consultations with various stakeholders, including Government institutions. During this process, the stakeholders provided their input and contributed to the development of the Policy Position Paper.

The key message from this Policy Position Paper is that Integrated Asset Management remains one of the weak points in the water supply and sewerage sector, not yet directly addressed by relevant stakeholders. Its standardisation through the improvement of the regulatory framework will lead to the improvement of the performance of these utilities and the quality of the data collected at the central level to plan towards the distribution of subsidies and support with capital investments.

***The Position Paper is available at [RCDN Library on Podio, on the following LINK.](#)*** 

## North Macedonia: A Dialogue Platform to address the challenges for the water sector related to the energy crisis

The services of Public Utility Companies (PUCs) significantly depend on electricity for their (often outdated) electromechanical equipment, such as water supply pumps, etc. Over the last year, the global energy crisis has caused enormous increase in electricity costs in all PUCs, resulting with massive problems in paying their electricity bills, which often exceeds their monthly revenues, while the rest of the operating and maintenance costs simply cannot be covered. Hence, the issue of liquidity and the financial aspect of the PUCs' operation have been raised as emerging topic, as well as their potential support by the municipalities has been questioned.

ADKOM, a member of RCDN, recently conducted a survey among PUCs to collect data and better understand the impact of the electricity crisis at the local level, by collecting information on their electricity costs. The survey revealed evident lack of monitoring of specific energy consumption data, such as by type of service, etc.). As a result, first-aid interventions and recovery strategies cannot be planned in more substantial manner. To address this, an expert was hired to (1) support the analysis of the research, (2) facilitate identification of the critical gap(s) and (3) identify key short- and long-term actions to overcome this situation.

The conducted analysis should create a basis for ADKOM and possibly ZELS to further position themselves towards national authorities, public and the donor community as trusted and responsible organisations. The experiences will be shared further horizontally vertically in the society, to further deal with the crisis more effectively and create resistance to such shocks in the future.





As an added value, ADKOM, supported by GIZ, initiated a Dialogue Platform in order to trigger the first discussions on the current challenges related to the energy crisis.

As an initial step of the Dialogue Platform a working group was established and held their first meeting in June 2022. The working group, which will also expand in the future, included: ADKOM, the Energy and Water Services Regulatory Commission, the EU Delegation and GIZ. The members of the Dialogue Platform demonstrated willingness to cooperate and provided a great contribution and ideas for overcoming the key challenges.

It was agreed that the next meeting will be organised in September 2022, focusing on the draft analysis and recommendations for dealing with the crisis.



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