

Fifth session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on Water and Health

High-level session: “The Protocol on Water and Health:
catalysing sustainable development in the pan-European region”

Panel 2: Cooperating to ensure safe, sustainable and equitable water and sanitation services

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Your excellencies, ministers, distinguished delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen

Bosnia and Herzegovina is a country rich in water resources. According to the World Bank (WB) data, BiH is the country with the largest amount of drinking water in the region, the seventh in Europe. Taking into account that the key commitment of BiH is to integrate into the European Union, the reform and priorities in the water sector are focused on the application of European legislation, that means harmonization of domestic legislation with the European one. BiH adopted a countrywide sector strategy in the sector Environment and Climate Action, namely the Environmental Approximation Strategy (EAS). The main challenges of water management are related to the proper implementation of the objectives of the Water Framework Directive, the Drinking Water Directive, the Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive and other Directives as well as implementation of other requirements on the international agreements and obligations such as Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG6, Water Convention, UNECE Protocol on Water and Health, Convention for Protection of Danube River Basin, Framework Agreement on Sava River Basin, etc.

In accordance with EAS it is estimated that the costs of transposition and implementation of EU legislation in the BiH water sector account for about 54% of the total costs in the field of environmental protection, which means that huge financial resources for further development and reform of the sector, development of legal, institutional and infrastructure capacities. Further reform and development of water sector relies on legal and institutional capacity developments as well as on related infrastructure development.

Some basic facts show us in what direction we should focus our initiatives. Around 75% population of Bosnia and Herzegovina has access to public water service, while about 41% is covered by waste water services. Only 15% of the population is connected to waste water treatment plants (WWTP). The quality of water services is registering a negative trend due to a decrease in the quality of drinking water caused by pollution and high losses in the water supply network. The average value of non-revenue water in BiH is about 55%.

b) In order to overcome these challenges in water sector, in the past 10 years a significant number of institutional and infrastructure projects have been implemented or are under implementation. Projects are financed through various financial arrangements (loans, grant support, budget financing,

etc.) Key external partners involved in financing projects in the water service sector in BiH are: EC (European Commission), EIB (European Investment Bank), EBRD (European Bank for Reconstruction and Development), KfW (KfW Development Bank), WB (The World Bank), SIDA (Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency) etc.

The most important ongoing projects are:

Regulatory framework for setting tariffs for water and sanitation services in Bosnia and Herzegovina (UNDP - GoA/WaSH)

Municipal Environmental and Economic Governance Project (UNDP - MEG)

Water quality protection project

Waste water treatment and collection in Bihać

Sarajevo Waste Water

WATSAN (Water and Sanitation)

Overall objectives of WATSAN project are focused on improving current living conditions of the population in both entities (Republica Srpska and Federation of BiH), securing adequate hygienic conditions in the area of water supply and sanitation, and implementation of environmental protection measures, in line with the obligations of EU accession and harmonization with EU Legislation.

Purpose of the Project is to ensure, through funding, implementation of measures which contribute to the improvement of infrastructure and service provision that ensures adequate (qualitative and quantitative) water supply and waste water disposal and their treatment in the municipalities involved in the Project.

Project activities are financed by credit funds (EIB Loan), as well as from the other sources such as budgets of local communities, IPA funds and funds from the other bilateral donors. 48 municipalities from both entities are included in project implementation. Up to now in water supply, sewerage and waste water treatment services through this project was invested about 220 million EUR in both entities. The final date of project implementation is 31 December 2021, and the final deadline for withdrawal of the last tranche of the loan is 30 June 2021.

This Action under IPA 2018 would therefore provide support to finalize implementation of on-going and ready-made project activities within WATSAN projects in selected municipalities by contributing to grant component.

Direct investments will speed up finalization of infrastructure development projects in local communities. Eligible projects will be those that are ready for immediate implementation, those that are already in implementation but with limited resources or those that would increase their efficiency of operations of treatment facilities. Effects will be measured by increasing the number of population who will have access to the services, increase of waste water treatment and reduction of pollution in water courses

However, in addition to large investments, there are still problems in the sector. The WATSAN project is an example of a success story dealing with problem solving, especially in the field of water services at the local level, but the problem requires systematic solution and implementation measures and aims already prescribed in strategic and planning documents at all levels in BiH.

