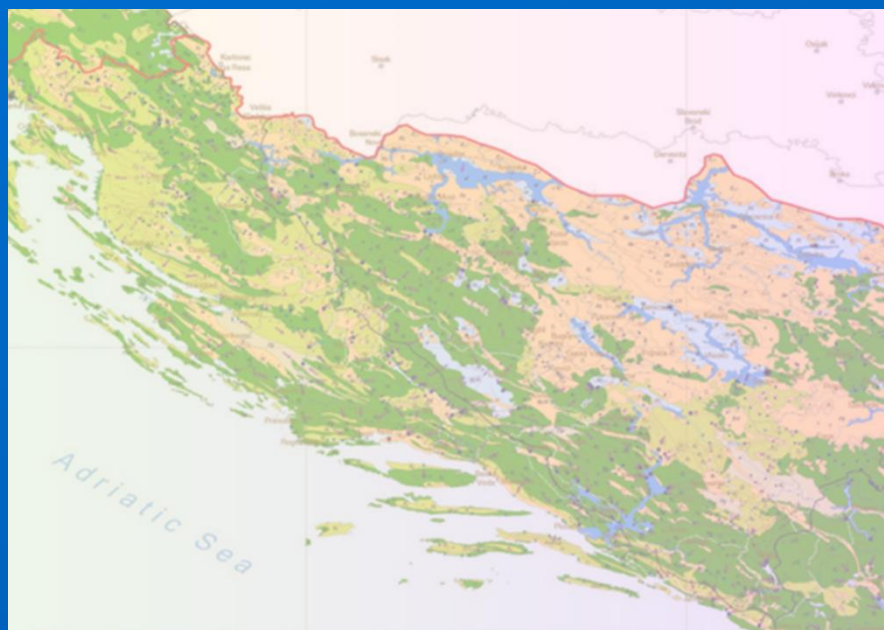


DIKTAS II

Implementation of the strategic action program (SAP) of the Dinaric karst aquifer system:
improving groundwater governance and sustainability of related ecosystems.



2nd in-person EXPERT MEETING

10-11 November 2025

Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina



Gender Analysis of Water Sector Governance in the Dinaric Karst Region (Albania, Bosnia, Croatia & Montenegro)

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International Expert



Regional Diagnosis: The Policy-Practice Paradox

| Topic | Regional Picture (All 4 Countries) | Key Data Points |
|-----------------------------|--|---|
| Common Challenge | The Policy-Practice Paradox: All nations have robust constitutional and legislative frameworks for gender equality, yet policy implementation in the specialized water sector is systematically weak and inconsistent. | Policy Integration Gap: In Montenegro, only 26.8% of public policies address gender equality. |
| Underlying Challenge | Ingrained Traditional Norms: Deeply rooted patriarchal norms persist, prioritizing women's care roles, which limits their economic independence and prevents them from accessing power positions. | Care Burden: Croatia records the largest gender gap in the EU for time spent on unpaid care work. Albanian women spend 24.7% of their time on unpaid care, vs. 3.5% for men. |
| Result | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender equality commitments often remain unfunded and unenforceable aspirations. • They lack sufficient institutional resources for effective implementation. • There is often insufficient political will to uphold and act on these commitments. • As a result, legal mandates fail to translate into operational reality. | BiH women's political representation is only 19.1% of parliamentary seats (lowest point since 2010). |

Common Structural Gaps: Governance (Water as a Space)

| Topic | Regional Structural Gaps in Water Governance |
|--|---|
| 1. Institutional Fragmentation | Management of the water sector is complex and fragmented across multiple ministries, regulatory agencies, and local utilities (e.g., BiH, Montenegro). |
| 2. The "Engineering Bias" | Technical institutions (like water utilities) focus heavily on large-scale infrastructure and engineering, causing social issues (gender) to be viewed as "irrelevant or marginal". |
| 3. Exclusion from Decision-Making | Women are systematically underrepresented in technical, managerial, and high-level decision-making bodies (utility boards, basin agencies) across the region. |

Common Economic Barriers (Water as an Asset)

| Topic | Regional Economic Disadvantage & Exclusion | Key Data Points |
|------------------------------------|--|---|
| 1. Occupational Segregation | Women are clustered in lower-paying administrative and finance roles within the water sector, while men dominate technical, engineering, and managerial positions. | In Montenegro's water sector, women represent less than one in five workers. |
| 2. Economic Penalties | Interrupted work patterns (due to care burden) and occupational segregation result in chronic wage and pension gaps. | BiH records a substantial 22% to 24% gender pay gap. Croatia faces a gender pension gap of 24.8%. |
| 3. Lack of Asset Control | Women have a profound lack of control over productive assets, particularly land, limiting their access to credit and influence over water-linked agriculture. | Only 8% of women own land in Albania. Only 13% of family farm holders are women in Montenegro. |

Foundational Barrier: Data and Accountability Deficit

| Topic | Common Accountability Failures | Impact on Equality |
|--|--|---|
| 1. Pervasive Data Deficit | Lack of legally mandated, routine collection of gender-disaggregated data concerning water use, time burden, employment, and land ownership. | Invisibility of Inequality: Policymaking remains "gender blind," and progress cannot be monitored or funded based on evidence. |
| 2. Accountability Failure | Legislation lacks explicit provisions for sanctions for non-compliance, and Gender-Responsive Budgeting (GRB) is not legally mandated or implemented. | Policies become unfunded mandates, and institutional inertia is rewarded, ensuring that technical infrastructure investments receive priority funding over social equity measures. |
| 3. Intersectional Vulnerabilities | The failure to collect intersectional data means policies bypass the most vulnerable populations, such as poor women in rural areas and ethnic minority women. | Compounded Disadvantage: Roma women, rural women lacking land titles, and war survivors face magnified exclusion from water services and economic opportunities. |

Unique National Insights & High-Potential Practices

| Country | Unique Insight / High-Potential Practice |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Croatia | Higher Environmental Consciousness: Women exhibit a significantly higher degree of environmental consciousness and pro-environmental behavior than men. |
| Albania | High Political Representation Proxy: Achieved high descriptive representation (e.g., 44.4% of Ministers) but failed to translate this to technical sectoral influence. |
| Bosnia & Herzegovina | Severe Engineering Bias: Gender issues are explicitly labeled "irrelevant or marginal" due to the technical focus in the water sector. |
| Montenegro | Nuance in Service Delivery: Data shows 61% of men are primarily responsible for physical water collection in unserved households. |

Common Strategic Recommendations: The Way Forward

| Priority Area | Action-Oriented Recommendation (Area of Improvement) |
|--|--|
| 1. Accountability & Funding | Mandate GRB and Sanctions: Legislatively mandate Gender-Responsive Budgeting (GRB) across all water sector bodies and amend Gender Equality Acts to include binding sanctions for non-compliance. |
| 2. Evidence-Based Policy | Enforce Data Systems: Establish and fund routine systems for collecting, analyzing, and publicly utilizing high-quality gender-disaggregated and intersectional data. |
| 3. Economic Empowerment (Asset) | Targeted Career Advancement: Implement programs for targeted recruitment, skills training, and mentorship to promote women into technical, engineering, and managerial positions in water utilities. |
| 4. Intersectional Equity | Integrate Intersectionality: Water governance and investment strategies must adopt an intersectional lens to ensure resources counteract historical marginalization of rural and ethnic minority women. |

Thank you

