

# DIKTAS II

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



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# ALBANIA GROUNDWATER GOVERNANCE DIAGNOSTIC ANALYSIS (CGGDA)

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# Guidelines for the development of GGDA

	Key elements for GGDA implementation
Phases	Implement GGDA in two phases: (1) national-level analyses in each country, (2) regional/transboundary synthesis.
Purpose of national GGDA	<b><i>Conduct a comprehensive stocktaking of groundwater governance, including institutions, legal frameworks, policies, knowledge, enforcement, gaps, and opportunities.</i></b>
Alignment	Ensure consistency with EU Water Framework Directive (WFD) and Groundwater Directive (GWD).
Scope of national GGDA	<b><i>Evaluate institutional actors, legal instruments, strategic plans, enforcement capacities, and public awareness.</i></b>
Methodology	Use harmonized criteria across countries to enable comparison and regional integration.
Focus areas	Identify strengths, gaps, and opportunities, especially in vulnerable regions (e.g., karst areas).
Reference framework	Follow the “Global Framework for Action to Achieve the Vision on Groundwater Governance” (GEF/FAO GGP).
Indicators for TBAs	Define a common set of indicators applicable to all Transboundary Basin Areas (TBAs) for future assessment.
Regional analysis outcome	Inform pathways for effective and responsive groundwater governance and support regional cooperation.

- **National Council of Territory and Water (NCTW)**, which serves as the highest policy-making authority for water management.
- The **Water Resources Management Agency (WRMA/AMBU)** supports the NCTW by overseeing the implementation of policies and coordinating actions at the river basin level.
- At the subnational level, **River Basin Councils** are responsible for issuing water permits, managing basin-level planning, and ensuring local implementation of water policies
- Several **sectoral ministries**—including those responsible for **Environment, Agriculture, Infrastructure, Health, and Defense**—contribute to groundwater management through their regulatory mandates, monitoring activities, and investment programs.
- **Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) Strategy 2018–2027** establishes the vision:  
*“By 2027, Albania shall ensure efficient use of water through integrated and operational water resources management, supported by a comprehensive monitoring system and effective management of flood risks and water scarcity.”*
- **Integrated Policy and Management Group for Integrated Water Management (IPMG-IWM)**: Chaired by the National Council of Territory and Water (NCTW), overseeing policy development, implementation, and evaluation.
- **Institutional capacity**: National bodies and local entities, often face financial and operational constraints, especially for karst aquifers and needs strong strategic and technical capacity.

Albanian Water Legislation is in alignment with EU directives: with its general Negotiation Position, *Albania commits to full alignment by the time of accession, however*

- In the *area of water quality* Albania requests *transitional periods for a number of Directives* to exempt from the full implementation for specific articles of the *WFD, recast UWWTD, DWD, ND, GWD, FD*.
- Two key laws—on *water resources* (Law no 29/2024) and *marine waters* (Law no 15/24) were adopted in 2024, further advancing the regulatory framework.
- Twelve bylaws (DCMs) and other legal instruments have been developed and will be adopted to ensure the *full transposition* of the Water Quality Directive's requirements by 2025.
- **Policy coherence challenges:** Although *Albanian's water policies align with EU objectives*, operational coordination across sectors (water supply, agriculture, tourism, energy) is limited, *hindering integrated groundwater management and protection*.
- **Financial instruments for sustainability:** The state budget and international donor funds, *provide crucial support for the modernization for integrated water resources* governance and management.  
*State budget allocations for groundwater management remain limited*, and a broader integration of groundwater objectives into sectoral strategies is needed.
- **Need for improved public awareness:** Institutional understanding of groundwater issues is high, *but public awareness remains low*. In this contest *targeted education and participatory governance initiatives is required*.

- **Monitoring scope and gaps:** Groundwater/Surface water monitoring includes: **water quality, abstraction volumes, ecological flows, and biodiversity indicators.**
- **No unified GWDE database:** There is no centralized national database for groundwater-dependent ecosystems (GWDE), which hampers integrated planning and ecological risk assessment.
- **Data exchange and institutional coordination:** Environmental and water-related data are shared among different central and regional institutions, but **further strengthening of coordination frameworks - particularly between public authorities (central and local one) and private stakeholders** - would enhance data accessibility, interoperability, and support more integrated groundwater management.
- **Socio-economic pressures in karst areas:** Illegal waste disposal, and seasonal tourism peaks, pose significant risks to groundwater, particularly in karst regions.
- **Cross-sectoral coordination deficiencies:** Despite groundwater's importance for drinking water, energy, agriculture, and tourism, intersectoral coordination among sectors in central level and local implementation is hindered by limited technical capacity.
- **Economic importance of groundwater:** Groundwater is a vital economic resource in Albania, **supporting drinking water supply (more than 75%),** tourism and agriculture, particularly in karst regions.
- **Investment and infrastructure gaps:** Sustainable groundwater management requires **increased investment in monitoring systems,** wastewater infrastructure, and remediation of legacy pollution sites, especially in rural and karst areas.

## Strength

- Existing River Basin Management Plan in majority of rivers.
- Existing local and regional water management institution.
- Still good groundwater condition.
- Existing communication with transboundary countries.
- There is no intensive groundwater abstraction in karst water basin.

## Weakness

- Missing continuing groundwater monitoring.
- Lack of formally designated protection areas.
- Enhanced national and regional cooperation on transboundary waters.
- Insufficient long-term ecological / biological datasets
- Multinational extension attitude of groundwater.
- Illegal groundwater abstraction.
- Data not fully aligned with EU WFD standards.
- Insufficient integration of climate change considerations.
- Limited public disclosure / data accessibility

## Opportunities

- Participation of regional countries in several common international water resource management projects (DIKTASS II, etc).
- Development of transboundary River Basin Management Plans.
- National good willing cooperation in general and in water management transboundary issues in particular.
- Understanding that water resource management is common resource for transboundary country which need strong cooperation for better utilisation.
- Standardisation of dataset.

## Threats

- Worsening of environmental and ecological condition in general and the groundwater condition in particular
- Reducing water availability for different water use sector.
- Dilution of water resource availability for different economic sectors.
- Increasing the price of water use.
- Worsening/lowering population standard of living.

- **Limited vertical coordination** – Interaction between WRMA and municipalities is often confined to formal processes (reporting and permitting). Monitoring and control of private wells and groundwater use remain fragmented.
- **Inefficient horizontal cooperation** – While the National Water Council exists, cross-sectoral decision-making is frequently dominated by sectoral priorities (e.g., agriculture, energy), with groundwater protection receiving limited attention.
- **Lack of integrated data systems** – Albania lacks a unified, accessible database on groundwater quality and quantity that can be shared across institutions.
- **Insufficient local capacities** – Municipalities generally lack hydrogeologists or trained staff to conduct groundwater monitoring, limiting their ability to enforce legal provisions.
- **Weak implementation of water legislation** – Although Albania's legal framework is largely aligned with EU practices, implementation remains partial, especially in formulation of required bylaws, onsite inspections, compliance monitoring, etc.

- **Strengthening WRMA's coordinating role** – Establish mandatory mechanisms for reporting and data exchange between municipalities and sectoral institutions.
- **Digitalization of the Water Cadastre** – Develop a national online system for registering wells, water licenses, and groundwater quality monitoring.
- **Capacity building at central and local level** – Train municipal staff and encourage closer cooperation with universities and hydrogeology experts.
- **Strengthening horizontal mechanisms** – Ensure the National Water and Territory Council adopts transparent and balanced decision-making procedures across sectors.
- **Community and civil society involvement** – Engage the public in monitoring and transparency initiatives related to groundwater use and pollution.
- **Cross-border cooperation** – Establish regular collaboration with neighboring countries for sustainable management of transboundary water resources, in line with international environmental standards.

# Thank you

