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| **Summary report**  | **8th Strategy Forum of the EUSBSR in Berlin 13 – 14 June** |

**Seminar: The Baltic Sea Needs Smart Water Sector - Capacity Building and Cross-border Cooperation for Successful Technology Transfer**

**Time:** Tuesday, 13 June, 17:00 to 18:30 hours, Rathenau-Saal

IWAMA as a EUSBSR flagship project together with Policy Area Nutri Coordinators organized a seminar “**Smart water sector**” that focused on capacity building and cross-border cooperation approaching them as contributing factors for the successful technology transfer in the water sector.

The seminar consisted of expert presentations and a discussion round among the panelists. Various groups working in the water field joined the session: from European level organizations to national knowledge centres and specific water companies and associations. Invited speakers provided various perspectives on the importance of the capacity development in water sector.

Thus, among other topics, Jaakko Henttonen from European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) stressed the significance of international cooperation as an essential counterpart for organisations where upgrade of employees’ knowledge is not necessarily a primary goal of the managerial level. “Oftentimes the impulse must come from outside” said Mr. Hentonen.

Ensuring correct maintenance of existing investments and making right decisions when selecting the new ones require highly skilled personnel and thus good training programs.

With Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland, remarkable results were achieved for water protection already by 2000, whereas in Russia and Belarus developments were slower, but notable results can be visible now, in particular in St. Petersburg and Kaliningrad Region.

The technical side of the smart water sector was approached by Stefan Rettig, the researcher at the Technical University of Berlin. Starting with challenges the Baltic Sea is facing, and going through the examples of the wastewater management, Mr. Rettig put the emphasis on the growing need of having educationally updated personnel that could efficiently operate smart technologies. One of the most important actors in educating WWTP´s personnel are considered to be the national water associations which provide specific trainings for their members.

However, not in all Baltic Sea Region countries systematic lifelong learning programs are applied. Meanwhile, efficient operation entail regular upgrading of abilities, skills and knowledge.

As a good practice example, Mirosław Lewandowski representing SAUR Neptun Gdańsk introduced his company´s strategy for employee´s skills and competence development. The SAUR Group is active in several countries in Europe, Asia, Africa and North America, and has broad range of experiences with managing water resources. Following the theme of the session, SAUR Neptun Gdańsk presented their Training Centre that provides employee regular learning and coaching in various formats. Mr. Lewandowski, the manager at the company, emphasized that the program for the training course is prepared every year and based on the current needs of operators supported by targeted surveys. Mirosław Lewandowski pointed out: “Always read analysis, survey reports. Ask your team about their expectations. Do your best to make your employees happy.”

Concluding perspective was presented by the Baltic University Programme, a network among more than 200 universities and institutions in the Baltic Sea Region with the Finish National Center headquarters in Åbo Akademi, Turku. Paula Lindroos, the director of the Programme, highlighted the importance of lifelong learning at all levels of education and gave examples on how it can be organized in the context of the water management. She challenged the audience with the questions related to responsibilities, roles and required competences when building lifelong learning programs. She also expressed an interest in sharing the IWAMA training materials package within the network.

In the panel discussion, it has been stressed that there are certain bottlenecks in lifelong learning practices in each country and those should be tackled both on national and international level. Those are often connected to lack of clear division in responsibilities and overall coordination of capacity development efforts on national level. Language was also mentioned as a certain barrier in sharing of good practices and technological solutions across the sector.

The session “Smart water sector” highlighted several subjects crucial to the efficient and harmonized water management. Naturally, it simultaneously raised many questions and discussions on the exact approach to developing this sphere according to the current needs and interests of the personnel and managing structures as well optimal use of existing smart technologies. There is a strong need for comprehensive lifelong learning programmes for water management staff to utilize the full potential of investments. Successful capacity building and cross-border cooperation will foster modernization of labour market leading to smart inclusive growth and reinforcing innovation-based water sector. The seminar addressed the EUSBSR sub-objective: ‘Clear water in the sea’.