

The International Hydropower Association (IHA), the Albanian Power Corporation (KESH) and the Swiss Government's State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) launched a new initiative in the Western Balkans designed to support authorities, investors and developers to implement international good practices in hydropower development.

Starting in early 2021, the three-year initiative will see IHA Sustainability, the organization's non-profit subdivision, work with project developers, alongside regulators, investors and civil society organizations from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia. Alain Kilajian, Senior Sustainability Specialist at IHA, said that one of the main outcomes of this program of support will be to ensure local stakeholders from the Western Balkans are better equipped with the necessary tools to understand and assess the sustainability performance of hydropower projects in line with internationally recognized guidelines. Reaching key decision-makers as well as non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the training program will strengthen institutional capacity and widen awareness about the good practice requirements expected of all hydropower projects and provide a common language to discuss important sustainability concerns in the region. Kilajian noted that the aim is to ensure hydropower projects comply with the Hydropower Sustainability Tools, a set of guidelines and assessment tools developed by governments, industry and social and environmental NGOs. These tools are aligned with lending criteria used by international institutions such as the World Bank and International Finance Corporation. The training program will examine all aspects of project development, including siting and design, community consultation, biodiversity and environmental risk management. With a combination of face-to-face workshops, e-learning and webinars, in-country and remote support, participants will become proficient in using the Hydropower Sustainability Tools and will participate in an assessment of a hydropower project in Albania.