



FROM CONCEPT TO KICK-OFF
- AN INTERMUNICIPAL INITIATIVE TO WATER
COLLABORATION

WORKSHOP REPORT



Workshop: From concept to kick-off
– an intermunicipal initiative to water collaboration

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



**Integrated Water Resources
Management in Kosovo**



The workshop: From concept to kick-off– an intermunicipal initiative to water collaboration was organized within the project: Acqua Ambassadors: Building a water-smart community implemented by Organizata për Mbrojtjen e Mjedisit Gjethi.

The project is supported by the Integrated Water Resources Management in Kosovo (IWRM-K), a Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and Government of Kosovo Program, implemented by Skat Consulting Ltd. (Switzerland) in consortium with the Environment Agency Austria (EAA).



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Appreciation notes:

To all participants from the Municipalities of Kaçanik and Ferizaj for their active contribution in the workshop and their inputs in addressing the challenges of managing water resources in Kosovo.

Organizata për Mbrojtjen e Mjedisit Gjethi (OMM Gjethi)
Culture Centre, Sali Bajra nn, Kaçanik, Kosova
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BACKGROUND

OMM Gjethi, founded in 2016, emerged as a necessary initiative to address environmental degradation in Kosovo. The organization operates nationwide with a strong emphasis in the south-eastern region, covering Ferizaj, Kaçanik, Shtime, Viti, Shterpce, and Hani i Elezit, while maintaining a broader mandate to support national environmental objectives. Guided by the motto “We are the Identity,” Gjethi seeks to balance environmental integrity with socio-economic development to advance sustainable outcomes for local communities and longer-term resilience across Kosovo.

Over the years, Gjethi has implemented a diverse portfolio of projects that advance accessible, well-managed public spaces and environment/ climate-responsive planning, with a clear emphasis on community involvement and local governance. Notable initiatives include:

- Regulating the pedestrian and hiking pathway to Luboten Peak (pathway regulation, resting places, signage, and related amenities);
- Regulating the pedestrian pathway and public space at Korbliq waterfalls (pathway regulation, a dedicated viewing platform, resting places, signage, etc.);
- Improvements to the public space at te Çami (landscape enhancements and accessibility improvements);
- Integrated planning of seven school yards in Kaçanik (design of school yards, greenery installations, and student/community engagement);
- “Enjoy the Rivers of Lepenci Basin” (revitalizing the public space Rrafshi i Lepencit, ecological restoration initiatives; drafting the Environmental

Action Plan of Kaçanik with climate action components and digital promotion.

Gjethi has consistently worked to raise environmental issues and advocate for stronger protections, including opposition to environmentally degrading small hydropower plants, poor waste management, illegal dumpsites, and broader nature degradation. The organization supports both local and central government through technical inputs, monitors the implementation of green projects, fosters inclusive public consultations, and contributes to policy and planning processes to improve environmental governance.

As of August 2025, Gjethi is implementing the project “Acqua Ambassadors: Building a Water-Smart Community,” following a successful project proposal and positive appraisal by IWRM-K. This flagship initiative underscores Gjethi’s ongoing commitment to governance, community engagement, and sustainable water management as core drivers of Kosovo’s environmental and socio-economic resilience.

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WORKSHOP SUMMARY

Venue, date and participation

Venue: Restaurant Uda, Kaçanik

Date: October 28, 2025

Number of participants: 49

Participant groups:

- Representatives from the Municipality of Kaçanik including the Deputy Mayor, Director of Urbanism/ Environment Protection, environment officer and waste management officer.
- Representatives from the other local public institutions (red cross, etc.),
- High schools' administration and teachers,
- Representatives from the public water company "Bifurkacioni" sha,
- Community representatives from Kaçanik and Ferizaj Municipalities living nearby water bodies and from diaspora,
- Civil society representatives from Kaçanik, Ferizaj, Prishtina, Peja and Drenas,
- Representatives from financial institutions,
- Youth representatives,
- Environmental enthusiasts,
- Representatives from the US Peace Corps,
- Kosovo Police Units,
- KFOR Liaison and Civic teams
- Democracy Plus staff
- OMM Gjethi staff,

Goals and objectives

The purpose of the workshop is to frame the project's approach, align on objectives and establish a framework for cross-municipal collaboration utilizing Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) principles and green infrastructure concepts. This activity aims to clearly

present the project's purpose, highlight the main objectives, update the stakeholders list and stimulate discussions about green initiatives.

The event goal is also aligned with Gjethi's strategic targets for climate resilience, community empowerment, measurable environmental outcomes, and a defined advancement of community collaboration and ownership.

Objectives:

- Build a shared, actionable understanding of IWRM and local water governance aligned with strategic targets.
- Prepare for a concrete Recommendation Paper and a clear next-step roadmap.
- Advance within-community and other stakeholders' collaboration for sustainable impact.
- Validate the project rationale against impact-oriented targets.
- Identify intermunicipal priorities, initial actionable spaces and partner schools' potential for green infrastructure improvement and water efficiency.

Methodology

The workshop was delivered through a targeted mix of interactive presentations and facilitated discussions designed to maximize participant engagement, knowledge sharing, and actionable outcomes. Each session combined concise expert input with structured opportunities for participants to reflect, question, and contribute to co-created solutions.



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OPENING THE WORKSHOP

Moderator: Sami Stagova, Program Manager, OMM Gjethi

The opening remarks clearly stated the workshop's goals, followed by a thorough walkthrough of the agenda. We then extended heartfelt thanks to the broad and diverse group of participants for their attentive engagement, thoughtful input, and collaborative spirit.

SUPPORTING SPEECH

Mr. Sabedin Vishi, Deputy Mayor, Municipality of Kaçanik

"I extend my sincere thanks to OMM Gjethi for organizing this event and for the spirit of collaboration that has brought us together. This partnership between OMM Gjethi and Kaçanik Municipality exemplifies the shared commitment we have to safeguarding our environment and water resources for current and future generations.

Kaçanik has been actively working to improve water management at the local level. We have pursued initiatives aimed at strengthening governance, enhancing service delivery, and promoting responsible stewardship of our valuable water resources. In our ongoing work, we have been in regular contact with a wide range of counterparts at both local and central levels. This has enabled us to identify opportunities for coordinated responses to water-related challenges. The exchange of ideas and information has been instrumental in shaping priorities, securing support, and identifying concrete pathways for improvement.

Looking ahead, we are eager to continue this collaboration and amplify our joint efforts. The combined knowledge, resources, and energy of our partners will be pivotal as we advance water governance, invest in green infrastructure, and empower communities through capacity building and stewardship."

WELCOME SPEECH

Mr. Valon Raka, Executive Director, OMM Gjethi

Mr. Valon Raka began with a warm acknowledgment of the strong network that has supported our work, highlighting that we have invited such a diverse group in recognition of the valuable collaboration we've built on prior projects. He noted that this broad participation—across municipalities, civil society, youth, education, and international partners—is essential to brainstorm effectively and agree on a clear way forward for addressing our shared water challenges.

We know you have supported us in previous work, which is why you are joined by such a large and diverse body to brainstorm together on this important issue and agree on the way forward. While the project goal and activities will be explained later, he reassured participants that the intervention will address the issue at both planning and on-the-ground levels, including green infrastructure and water efficiency initiatives. He emphasized that these efforts will involve future generations, through high schools participating as the Acqua Ambassadors within our program.

From the CSO perspective, the message reiterated the commitment to integrative work at both sub-topics and participation processes, ensuring that the voices of civil society, youth, educators, and community stakeholders guide planning and field activities. The speaker closed with renewed appreciation for the continued collaboration and a pledge to foster ongoing dialogue, learning, and joint action to advance IWRM in Kaçanik and Ferizaj.



PRESENTATIONS AND STAKEHOLDERS' DISCUSSIONS

MORNING SESSION

Presentation/moderation (Valon Raka)

Water management issues in Kosovo (Southeast focus)

The presentation delivered an integrated view of Kosovo's water governance in the Southeast region, focusing on the ongoing IWRM program and its impact on local water infrastructure. Key points included the expansion of water supply and sewerage coverage, with several municipalities investing in new treatment plants and associated infrastructure. Notable projects highlighted are the local plant in Prizren (22 million euros serving about 50,000 residents), the Pejë plant (about 22 million euros serving around 60,000 residents), and the Gjakovë plant (16.8 million euros), with other plants continuing or awaiting completion.

The content also covered regional water resources and challenges focusing in Lepenc basin, including unique resources such as the Nerodime bifurcation, unique Lepenci, Korbliq waterfall, and Pranvera Lake, as well as concerns about industrial pollution, wastewater treatment gaps, erosion, and flood risk. Mini-hydropower projects and their environmental impacts were discussed, along with ongoing efforts to strengthen legal frameworks, urban and environmental planning expertise, and civil society engagement.

Important part of the presentation was the IWRM-K Program, a 12-year initiative funded by SDC and the Kosovo Government and implemented by Skat Consulting in cooperation with the Austrian Environment Agency, aimed at moving from fragmented, traditional approaches to a holistic, basin-wide management model. The approach emphasizes inclusive participation, cross-sector collaboration, and the empowerment of local communities through initiatives like the Acqua Ambassadors.

Overall, the session underscored the importance of integrating IWRM principles at policy level, expanding green infrastructure and water efficiency, improving service coverage, and fostering strong partnerships among municipalities, civil society, the private sector and international partners to deliver sustainable water improvements for current and future generations.

Stakeholders' discussions

Ibrahim Dalloshi and Xhemil Tusha (community representatives from Soponica village, Kaçanik):

In the community level, we have been engaged against HC Soponica, including lawsuits in court, while we seek the strongest possible support from the municipal authorities to prevent the construction of this plant. However, as long as the case is in court and not concluded, this could be problematic.

We also demand the cessation of river pollution because in the past, as children, we used to swim in Lepenci during the summer, whereas now our children cannot do this.

Sabedin Vishi (Deputy Mayor of Kaçanik):

Municipal authorities have stood with you continuously and will continue to be against the construction of the mentioned HC.

Regarding river pollution, we have built and are in the process of building sewerage collectors that would eliminate dispersed discharges of sewage into the rivers. And this would significantly reduce the pollution of Lepenci and nearby watercourses. Regarding Nerodime, as Valon mentioned earlier, this also depends on the Municipality of Ferizaj.

Valon Raka: We are now at a stage where we can identify water-related issues, including the identification and involvement of

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stakeholders. Your comments and inputs are welcome.

Remzi Reka (OMM Gjethi): We are aware that sewage treatment plants are missing due to the cost involved, but the municipal administration should work harder on constructing sewerage collectors in Kaçanik. The lack of a designated waste disposal site for construction/demolition waste is also a problem, which externally contributes to water pollution.

In general, regarding the rule of law, why are environmental degradations allowed, where are the inspectorate and the activities of competent authorities? More work is needed in this regard.

Maintenance of projects and public spaces is also lacking. This summer, some of the cherry trees that OMM Gjethi planted have withered due to the lack of irrigation

Valon Raka: Regarding the maintenance of projects, it's clearly an issue and it's not being adequately worked in this regard. Even some of the cherry trees that Gjethi planted, although watered several times, have withered. Municipal authorities should have established ongoing maintenance programs for projects. The deputy mayor present here has promised to work more in this regard, and we hope for improvements in the future.

Sabedin Vishi (Deputy Mayor of Kaçanik): In recent years we have identified two potential spaces as construction/demolition waste dumps, but in both cases, we have been unable to finalize the procedures for various reasons, including the refusal at the central level.

On the other hand, together with PC Pastërtia, of which we are a shareholder, we continuously clean illegal waste dumps, but at the same time new ones are created. Nevertheless, there is progress and their number is decreasing. In this context we also need awareness-raising activities. Citizens can also help us with information about such locations so that we can clean those dumps.

Sami Stagova: A combination of efforts by OMM Gjethi, more conscious citizens and the municipality through more engagement and more intensive inspection would impact the reduction of waste dumping and the creation of illegal waste dumps.

Arijeta Jusufi (Director of KEP Trust, Kaçanik): There is a need for better management of waste collection because often in the city (Kaçanik) the containers are full, and citizens have nowhere to throw the waste.

Selim Reka (community representative, city area, Kaçanik): Citizens should be more active in organizing local meetings and public debates. Organizers, including the municipality, should take citizens' proposals more into account so that trust is built and proposals are discussed and potentially considered if they are reasonable.

Question for the Deputy Mayor: Does Kaçanik Municipality have any specific plan for improving water supply in the city and rural areas?

Sabedin Vishi (Deputy Mayor of Kaçanik): Water supply and sewage management are handled by the responsible body, the Public Company Bifurkacioni sha. Beyond the company's investments through the Government of Kosovo and the donor (SDC), the Municipality has continually invested in increasing water quantity and improving the overall system (400,000 Euros during this mandate only), assets that have been handed over to the public company. In this entire process, the extent of the area and the number of inhabitants supplied with water has increased. However, we are facing difficulties in convincing the public company to include other resources in the system due to the challenging justification of pollution control, including some identified surface waters. Perhaps this would enable us to have a larger amount of water for general consumption but not for drinking during peak times. We are trying to help all the time, but

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we are not responsible for managing this system.

At the same time, according to calculations, water volume and inflow is more than enough in Kaçanik but they are largely wasted through non-rational use. More work is needed in this regard, especially by Bifurkacioni sha. Rational use of water is felt and applied only on summer rainy days, which also eliminates reductions.

Sami Stagova: While Bifurkacioni sha is responsible for reducing water losses through technical repairs and stopping theft, it is the municipality's responsibility to prevent the misuse of water and its rational use through inspection and based on the developed policies.

Valon Raka: The management of the water supply system and the integration of new water sources into the system is very specific, considering maintaining water quality within Kosovar and EU standards for drinking water, and funds that must be invested by the regional company as the relevant body and other funds that come from the government and donors. We hope that in the future we will succeed in integrating several water sources found during the Prishtinë-Hani i Elezit highway construction, because in Kaçanik we have a problem during the summer season, including during diaspora periods.

Dijesa Morina (NGO EcoZ, Pristina): I would want to relate with the Deputy Mayor when he emphasized that rains in the summer do not influence the growth of the water quantity of the water-supply sources. In fact, in Kosovo water sources are fed by rainfall and since we have very limited capacities to utilize water, our resources go outside Kosovo approximately within an hour.

Sami Stagova: I think in this case the Deputy mayor was misunderstood. It is true that Kaçanik Municipality is supplied with water from the sources that are filled exclusively through atmospheric precipitation (snow and rain). But since they are natural water sources

and not surface water, it takes longer and requires more rainfall to fill them. On the other hand, a single rainy summer day in Kaçanik completely eliminates water reductions for a short time and not due to an increase in quantity from rain. This is because it eliminates the need for irrigation of gardens and washing of yards/streets.

Agim Mjaku (Professor, Professional High School, Kaçanik): Are there identified businesses that use the water supply outside the approved consumption lines such as car washes, etc.? Can the Bifurkacioni sha share this information with us?

Sami Stagova: Unfortunately, representatives of Bifurkacioni sha at this workshop are not responsible for sharing this information with us.

Valon Raka: We should also note that the European Commission's progress report has repeatedly emphasized little or no application of the polluter-pays principle. The environment degraders in general and water polluters in particular do not receive the deserved penalties, among other, because citizens do not report these violations. On the other hand, OMM Gjethi has filed a case with the police when a person has damaged a public space.

Sami Stagova: Although it is discouraging for citizens to report environmental degradations due to administrative/judicial delays, OMM Gjethi invites them to do so despite a case where a judicial procedure in which we were invited as witnesses, has been dragging since 2018 and is not yet concluded.

Remzi Reka: It should also be mentioned the unequal distribution of the budget and grants by central government in relation to the municipalities. Kaçanik Municipality has been heavily discriminated in this respect, which negatively affected the management of water resources. I urge the municipality not to stop claiming its share because we are talking about money from our taxes.

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Sabedin Vishi (Deputy Mayor of Kaçanik): It is true that receiving grants from the central government has been very minimal during this term, but not due to our lack of effort. The same Mayor is now in his third term, while in

previous terms we were more successful. Moreover, success in consistently obtaining donations show that there has never been a lack of effort.

Presentation/moderation (Valon Raka)

Stakeholder roles, bottlenecks, and co-decision-making for IWRM at the local level

The presentation explored stakeholder roles, bottlenecks, and co-decision-making for Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) at the local level. It outlined a comprehensive stakeholder list and the approaches used to engage them, highlighting how municipalities, civil society, communities, youth, water utilities and the private sector collaborate within the IWRM framework. The session also identified outreach challenges, such as limited participation, information gaps, and coordination obstacles, and paired them with

co-decision opportunities to enhance local governance. Key takeaways emphasize inclusive, multi-stakeholder dialogue, clear role definitions, and shared decision-making processes to accelerate concrete improvements in water supply, wastewater management, and basin-wide resilience.

Stakeholders' discussions

Sami Stagova: As part of the project, the partner schools will be selected together with community representatives, local governments and school administrations.



AFTERNOON SESSION

Presentation/moderation (Sami Stagova)

Project rationale, objectives and Ferizaj/Kaçanik link

The presentation included an overview of the Water Ambassadors project, a vital initiative by OMM Gjethi aimed at transforming water management practices in Ferizaj and Kaçanik. The project's core goal is to fully integrate Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) principles into both local policy frameworks and community engagement. This is achieved through strategic objectives such as developing green infrastructure (e.g., raingardens and bioswales) to mitigate flood risks, promoting water efficiency measures, and cultivating long-term environmental responsibility among the participants.

The implementation strategy focuses on three main pillars. First is Water-Sensitive Planning, which involves workshops with local government officials and stakeholders to produce a Letter of Recommendation for integrating IWRM into municipal policies and investment plans. Second, the Water Ambassadors Program targets high school students, training them in conducting scientific water audits and analysis, thus transforming them into active community stewards. Third is the implementation of Water Efficiency improvements, such as installing low-flow fixtures and rainwater harvesting systems directly in schools, providing tangible examples of sustainable practices.

The expected outcomes are significant and aim for long-term sustainability. These include improved local governance resulting from enhanced IWRM knowledge among policymakers, verifiable reductions in pollution and water consumption, and the establishment of a scalable, community-led model for water management that can be replicated across other municipalities. Continuous engagement and documentation are maintained through platforms like

www.gjethi.org to ensure transparency and facilitate the sharing of best practices.

Stakeholders' discussions

Diana Luzha (activist and podcast creator, Kaçanik): How were the choices and activities in schools with students made; how was the selection of schools done? It might have been good to include other age groups as well (grades 9 and 8) besides the high school (grades 10, 11, 12).

Sami Stagova: Certainly, we will try to involve students from different age groups and schools during events and project engagements to ensure broad representation.

Atdhe Neziri (Director of the Professional High School, Kaçanik): Consider including the Professional High School in the project because there is a branch of water supply/sanitation installations, and students could help with installing of water efficiency devices.

Sami Stagova: Given the successful collaboration we have had so far and with the water efficiency activities anticipated within the project, we will also try to involve Professional School. As you noted, we agree that involving your students will also help us in other activities.

Valon Raka and Sami Stagova: Regarding identifying potential public spaces for improvements within this project, we encourage you to help with proposals because in previous projects, the initial choices and ideas came exclusively from community members.

Flamur Sallahu (OMM Kaça, Ferizaj): We will support OMM Gjethi to identify potential public spaces in Ferizaj.



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CONCLUSION AND WAY FORWARD

The workshop concluded by thanking the diverse group of participants for their valuable input and active engagement. The commitment to continued collaboration was solidified by announcing the immediate next steps:

- Recommendation Paper: The project will engage both Kaçanik and Ferizaj counterparts in preparing a Recommendation Paper on IWRM for local policy integration.
- Pilot Site Identification: Final identification of potential public spaces in Ferizaj and Kaçanik for improvement

of green infrastructure using IWRM principles.

- Water Efficiency Implementation: Implementation of water efficiency improvements in two selected schools.

Furthermore, participants and other stakeholders were encouraged to continue sharing their input for better water management and proposing potential public spaces by utilizing the online channels provided: the OMM Gjethi webpage and Facebook page (www.gjethi.org; <https://www.facebook.com/ommgjethi>).

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ANNEX: INVITATION AND AGENDA



Integrated Water Resources
Management in Kosovo



ACQUA AMBASSADORS - Building a water-smart community

INVITATION

*Workshop: From concept to kick-off
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Dear Madam/Sir,

You are cordially invited to participate in the workshop "From concept to kickoff – an intermunicipal initiative to water collaboration" organized by Organizata për Mbrojtjen e Mjedisit Gjethi (OMM Gjethi). The purpose of the workshop is to frame the project's approach, align on objectives and establish a framework for cross-municipal collaboration utilizing Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) principles and green infrastructure concepts. This activity aims to clearly present the project's purpose, highlight the main objectives, update the stakeholders list and stimulate discussions about green initiatives

This project is supported by the Integrated Water Resources Management in Kosovo (IWRM-K), a Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and Government of Kosovo Program, implemented by Skat Consulting Ltd. (Switzerland) in consortium with the Environment Agency Austria (EAA)

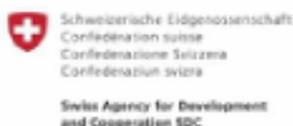
The workshop will be held on **28.08.2025**, from **09:30 to 15:00**, at **Restaurant Uda, Doqanaj, Kacanik**. Further details can be found in the attached agenda below.

Please confirm your attendance by emailing ommgjethi@gmail.com or calling +383 44 368 340 no later than 25.08.2025.

We look forward to your participation and valuable contributions to this collaborative effort.

Sincerely,

Valon Raka,
Executive Director
Organizata për Mbrojtjen e Mjedisit Gjethi



skat Swiss Resource Centre and
Consultancies for Development

ENVIRONMENT
AGENCY AUSTRIA **umweltbundesamt**

The IWRM-K is a Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and Government of Kosovo Program, implemented by Skat Consulting Ltd. (Switzerland) in consortium with the Environment Agency Austria (EAA).

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AGENDA

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Time	Topics of interest	Person in charge
9:30 - 10:00	Welcoming participants and registration	-Sami Stagova Program Manager -Representatives from the Municipalities of Ferizaj and Kaçanik -Representative from IWRM-K
10:00 - 10:30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Opening remarks — Workshop purpose, expected outcomes, ground rules — Brief introductions (name, org, role, interest in water resources) 	
10:30 – 11:00	Morning session: Water management issues in Kosovo (Southeast focus) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — National water governance context and IWRM basics — Southeast challenges: surface water, rainfall variability, urban flood risk, irrigation, pollution, watershed stress — Local governance context: policy levers, financing, cross-municipal coordination — OMM Gjethi activities to date 	Valon Raka Executive Director
11:00 – 11:45	Q&A and discussion (café-style)	
11:45 – 12:15	Stakeholder roles, bottlenecks, and co-decision-making for IWRM at the local level <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Stakeholder list and engagement approaches — Outreach challenges and co-decision opportunities 	Valon Raka
12:15 – 13:15	Lunch break	
13:15 – 14:00	Afternoon session: Project rationale, objectives, and Ferizaj/Kaçanik link <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Problem framing and anticipated results — Objectives aligned with IWRM, green infrastructure, community mobilization, and stewardship — Connection to Ferizaj and Kaçanik: local priorities, potential sites, governance pathways — Overview of planned activities — Initial site/school selection framework (criteria and process) 	Sami Stagova
14:00 – 14:30	Q&A and café-style discussion	
Wrap-up and next steps		
14:30 – 15:00	Wrap-up and next steps <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Recap identified spaces and partner schools with rationale — Outline feasibility checks, stakeholder consultations, and drafting a short Recommendation Paper — Tentative calendar for follow-up workshops 	Sami Stagova

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