

REPORT ABOUT THE LAKE OHRID WATERSHED REGION

AUGUST 2004

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1. Introduction to the Area

The Region of Ohrid and the Prespa Lakes, situated in south-eastern Europe (40°40'- 41°2N latitude; 20°23'-21°16'E longitude), extends across the borders of Albania, Greece, and Macedonia. Lake Ohrid and Prespa Lakes belong to a group of Dasseretes basins that originated from a geotectonic depression 2 to 3 million years ago on the western Dinarides. Worldwide, there are only a few lakes with similarly remote origin. Because of the karstic underground a large amount of water of Prespa Lakes seeps into the soil, drains away through a network of underground fissures, and supplies the springs located on the shore of Lake Ohrid. Lake Prespa is therefore considered to be a part of the Lake Ohrid Watershed (LOW). The total area of LOW amounts 3,921 km² of which 1,402 km² belong to the Lake Ohrid sub-watershed and 2,519 km² to the Prespa Lakes sub-watershed. The Prespa Lakes are shared by Albania, Greece and Macedonia. Of the total water mirror surface, 190 km² belong to Macedonia, 84.8 km² to Greece and 38.8 km² to Albania. The Macro Prespa Lake is divided between Albania, Greece and Macedonia. The Micro Prespa Lake is shared only between Greece (138 km² drainage area; 43,5 km² water mirror surface) and Albania (51 km² drainage area; 3.9 km² water mirror surface).

Lake Ohrid is so old and isolated by surrounding hills and mountains that a unique collection of plants and animals has evolved. These include a number of relict species, or "living fossils", and many endemic species, found only in Lake Ohrid. For example, 10 of the 17 identified fish species of the Lake Ohrid are endemic, as are many of the lake's snails, worms, and sponges. The lakeshore reed beds and wetlands provide critical habitat for hundreds of thousands of wintering water birds, including rare and threatened species such as the Dalmatian pelican, ferruginous duck, spotted eagle, and imperial eagle. Because of their high biodiversity and unique cultural heritage, Lake Ohrid and the Prespa Lakes are lakes of tremendous local, regional, and international significance.

The town of Ohrid is one of the oldest human settlements in Europe. The ancient name of Ohrid was *Lichnidos*, based on a stone inscription found that reported of King Philip's II take over of the city in 353 BC. The earliest evidence of the current name of the town is from 879.

In the central part of Varosh was discovered a theatre in 1935, and additional archaeological excavations took place between 1959 and 1960. According to the analysis of the inscriptions found in the theatre, it is presumed that it was constructed in antiquity, and was used for theatre performances - plays, and after the Roman conquest of the town, the theatre was turned into an arena for gladiator fights. It was adorned by numerous sculptures and reliefs that are preserved to the present day. However, since the modern city of Ohrid is built on the grounds of the ancient *Lychnidos*, these buildings cannot be excavated. Apart from a theatre, *Lychnidos* also possessed other buildings such as an agora, a gymnasium, a boulevard, a civil basilica and temples. Under Roman rule *Lychnidos* developed into a typical Roman city and an important transit point on the road *Via Egnatia*.

The city flourished during late antiquity. Several Christian basilicas were built, of which the central one, the cathedral, was probably the polyconchal basilica at Imaret (Plaoshnik), built during the second half of the 5th century. The four-leaf clover-shaped basilica at Plaoshnik was a richly decorated early Christian temple, as can be seen from the preserved floor mosaics with images of the flora and fauna of the Ohrid area.

Built mostly between the 7th and the 9th century, it has the most ancient Slav monastery, St. Pantelejmon, and more than 800 icons of Byzantine style, painted between the 11th and the end of the 14th century, which are considered to be, after those of the Tretyakov Gallery in Moscow, the most important collection in the world.

In the 9th century, the Christianity spread among the southern Slavs from Ohrid. Here, Ss. Clement and Naum of Ohrid, continued the education mission of the Salonika brothers Sts. Cyril and Methodius. It was here, where St. Clement of Ohrid, laid the foundations of the first Slavic university and established the Archbishopric of Ohrid. St. Clement's University was located in the old part of Varosh, in the Plaoshnik area. St. Clement was the first writer among the Macedonian

Slavs. St. Clement of Ohrid is also considered to be the first Slavic composer and music teacher. Over 3,500 students received their education in his university, after which they set out to spread Slavic literacy all the way to Russia. Until recently, the tomb of St. Clement of Ohrid was in the church of Mother of God Perivleptos, one of the oldest Slav churches where beautiful frescoes and a rich collection of old icons can be found.

In 10th and 11th centuries it was the capital of the Macedonian state of Tsar Samoil. The walls of this 16 meters high fortress still rise above the city. Currently, the Ohrid citadel has 18 towers, three of which are semi-circular and 15 square-shaped, and four main gates. The fortress was renovated on numerous occasions, as can be seen from the numerous marble tablets with Greek and Roman inscriptions used to fortify the Upper Gate, which originate from the local ancient sites.

The Church of St. John of Kaneo from the 13th century, stands beautifully on the cliff overhanging Lake Ohrid. The famous Cathedral St. Sofia (Holy Wisdom) containing magnificent frescoes (10th century) is located in the old city center. The cathedral was the seat of the Archbishopric of Ohrid for several centuries and is the oldest surviving church in Ohrid. Unfortunately, the interior has preserved little of its original splendor due to the fact, that St. Sofia was probably transformed into a mosque in the second half of the 15th century, soon after the arrival of the Ottomans.

Not far from Ohrid, The Monastery of St. Naum from the 9th century is located in the southern end of Lake Ohrid, surrounded by beautiful natural environment. The church contains the grave of St. Naum. Numerous pilgrims come annually to visit the grave of St. Naum. One of the most famous frescoes in the Monastery is that of St. Methodius and his students; it includes St. Naum, St. Clement, as well as St. Sava, the founder of the Orthodox Christianity among the Serbs.

The Prespa area has been settled since the bronze and Neolithic ages. Although the area was inhabited during early antiquity, archeological evidence from this period is rather scarce. During the Roman Empire, the road *Via Ignatia* passed here, which led the development of numerous settlement in the area. *Sciritania*, one of the larger settlement at the time, is the predecessor to Resen. Ruins of numerous Roman necropolae, villae, and temples of the old city have been unearthed. Additionally, *Via Epitica*, the road from and to Epyrus also passed here.

In the Middle Ages, Tsar Samoil built on the Prespa Island mal Grad an old fortress and the Church of St. Achilles, which is today part of Greece. On the Macedonian side of the lake, however, is the other island, called Golem Grad (Large Town), which is substantially bigger than mal grad (appropriately mining Small Town). Golem Grad has remains of a monastery dedicated to St. Peter from the 14th century of the Middle ages. Today, both islands are uninhabited.

The most interesting cultural monument in the area is the Church of St. George in the village of Kurbinovo, with frescos from 1191.

After Samoil, Resen is mentioned in 1337 under the name of *Rosne* in the Lawbook of the Serbian Emperor Dushan. The town did not seem to have a major importance in Dushan's Empire. With the fall of the Serbian Empire, the Ottomans invaded Prespa in 1385, and remained there until the beginning of the 20th century. The most interesting monument from this period is a monastery from 1606 in the village of Slivnici near Kurbinovo.

The Balkan Wars that followed split the Prespa region between the Kingdoms of Serbia, Greece and Albania.

In 1980, UNESCO declared the Macedonian side of Lake Ohrid as a "site of cultural and natural values of the global patrimony". In 1994, the World Bank, in cooperation with the Republics of Albania and Macedonia, began preparation for a Global Environment Facility (GEF) grant to fund the incremental costs of a Lake Ohrid Conservation Project. A Feasibility Study for the project was funded by Switzerland and carried out in 1995 (Ernst Basler and Partners 1995). On 20 November 1996, in Tirana, representatives of the governments of Albania and Macedonia concluded a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) concerning the Lake Ohrid Conservation Project. The MOU established a joint Lake Ohrid Management Board (LOMB) that was "responsible for the preparation of the regulations related to its activities" and authorized to approve projects "based on the previously prepared Feasibility Study."

The Parties agreed to "coordinate and adopt laws and regulations necessary for the protection of Lake Ohrid with regard to pollution prevention, water use and fisheries management, etc.;" to

follow appropriate international pollution prevention regulations and standards; to develop a long-term plan to establish separate monitoring facilities; and to strengthen and develop protection institutions. The Parties also agreed carry out the activities needed to implement the Lake Ohrid Conservation Project (LOCP).

New environmental laws and regulations are being developed and implemented in both nations. Water quality and biological monitoring programs are also underway in both nations.

At the end of 2002, a comprehensive "State of the Environment Report," the first to combine Macedonian and Albanian data in a single analysis, was released.¹

1.1. The Watershed and Socio-economics of the Basin

Lake Ohrid has 87.5 km of shoreline and covers an area of 358.2 km². Although the average depth of the lake is 164 m, it has a maximum depth of 289 m. The watershed of Lake Ohrid includes steep mountains, as well as both Macro and Micro Prespa Lakes. The total area of the watershed is about 3,921 km². A little less than half of the water in Lake Ohrid comes from its tributaries. On the Macedonian side, the Sateska and Koselska Rivers are the largest contributors. On the Albanian side, river flow is substantially less, but the Pogradec and Verdova Rivers are the largest contributors. The remaining inflow comes from the springs that flow into the southern part of the lake, at St. Naum, Drilon and Tushemisht. These springs are fed by water flowing out of the porous karst mountains to the east, Galicica and Mali i Thate. Over thousands of years, holes and channels have formed within the mountain rock. These channels carry water that originates in the Prespa watershed to Lake Ohrid. Because Lake Prespa sits about 150 m above Lake Ohrid, its waters run "downhill" to Lake Ohrid through the channels in the karst.

Macro and Micro Prespa Lakes are filled mostly by the rivers flowing into them. About every 11 years, all the water in Lake Prespa is replaced by new water. In contrast, it takes about 70 years for all the water in Lake Ohrid to be replaced. Water flows out of Lake Ohrid near Struga, into the Black Drim River. This river eventually runs all the way to Lake Skhodra and the Adriatic Sea.

Population, Income and Employment Statistics

There are about 106,000 residents in the Macedonian part of the watershed, about 61,000 residents in the Albanian part of the watershed, and about 25,600 residents in the Greek part of the watershed. This population is 5 or 6 times as large as it was at the end of World War II. Most residents live in several large towns – Ohrid, Struga, and Resen in Macedonia and Pogradec in Albania, but there are also many small villages and communities scattered throughout the watershed in all three countries.

According to the World Bank (using IMF estimates), the GDP per capita in 2001 was \$1,196 in Albania and \$1,678 in Macedonia. Internal figures in both countries show relatively steady upward growth in these figures over the last several years.

Employment statistics are kept differently in each country, but it is clear that unemployment and/or underemployment are high in both nations. In Albania, according to data compiled by the Albanian Institute of Statistics in 1998, between 28 and 46% of the working age population in the Ohrid basin is practically unemployed. In Macedonia, employment data collected by the Macedonian Institute for Statistics for the working age population in 1994 suggested that more than half the population in the administrative units of Ohrid, Belcista, Kosel, Meseista, Resen, and Struga may be unemployed or underemployed (working in seasonal or other positions without benefits).

¹ *Lake Ohrid, Macedonia and Albania Management Experience and Lessons Learned Brief*, Draft Final, 29.12.2003, Prepared by (in alphabetical order): Oliver Avramoski, Macedonian Project Implementation Unit, LOCP Sandri Kycyku, Albanian Project Implementation Unit, LOCP Trajce Naumoski, Hydrobiological Institute, Ohrid, Macedonia Dejan Panovski, Macedonian Project Implementation Unit, LOCP Veli Puka, Hydrometeorological Institute, Albania Lirim Selfo, Ministry of Environment, Albania Mary Watzin, University of Vermont, USA.

Land Use in the Basin

There are 27,323 hectares in the watershed in Albania. Land use in this area is approximately as follows:

- Arable land 2,500 ha
- Pasture 1,367 ha
- Forest 10,248 ha
- Economic enterprises 1,396 ha
- Built land (building, roads) 672 ha
- Water 11,140 ha

Land use data on the Macedonian side are incomplete. According to the Macedonian Institute for Statistics and information provided by the forest enterprises, the land area in forest, pasture and agricultural uses in the six municipalities in the watershed are approximately as follows:

- Arable land 53,303 ha
- Pasture 27,319 ha
- Forests 61,225 ha
- Water (lakes only) 41,000 ha

In Albania, about 55% of the GDP comes from agriculture. Fruit (orchards and vineyards), wheat, corn and vegetables are the primary agricultural products. The pastureland in Albania is used for a variety of livestock, most importantly, sheep, goats, and cattle, as well as for harvesting valuable medical plants. There are about 100 species of plants that are gathered for medical uses.

In Macedonia, only about 12% of the GDP comes from agriculture. About 60% of the arable land is used to grow wheat and corn, and about 25% is used for orchards and vineyards. The remainder is used for vegetables, tobacco, and other crops. The pastureland in Macedonia is also used for a variety of livestock, including sheep, goats, and cattle.

Land use data were not available for the Greek portion of the watershed, but the agricultural activities in this part of the watershed include intensive been cultivation and animal husbandry.

In Albania, the forest has experienced heavy damages from cutting and fires. Most of the cutting is for fuel wood although lumber is also produced. In the hills above Pogradec, chestnuts are harvested from the remaining forests. There is almost no reforestation after cutting, and erosion is a serious problem in much of the forest. The use of the forest for pasturing goats has also contributed to the erosion problem by overgrazing the understory vegetation.

The forests in Macedonia are in generally better condition. Cutting is regulated and the land must be left in good condition for regeneration. The volume of timber harvest has varied significantly from year to year through the last decade, from as much 100,000 m³ to as little as 30,000 m³ (Macedonian Institute for Statistics 2001). About 130-300 has are reforested each year, but unfortunately, much of this reforestation is with an exotic American pine because its growth rate is 4-7 times faster than the native species. Because of the reforestation requirements, erosion in Macedonian forests is not as great as in the Albanian portion of the watershed, but there are still bare areas that require attention, especially in the Sateska watershed.

Statistics about the extent and condition of the developed land surface are incomplete on both sides of the watershed. In other areas of the world, studies have shown that catchment areas that have greater than 7% impervious surface contribute the highest load of pollutants to surface waters, including nutrients, petroleum products and a variety of trace metals and other contaminants that come from building materials. In the future, a more complete delineation of land use could be used to estimate the magnitude of this problem in the Lake Ohrid watershed.²

² *Lake Ohrid, Macedonia and Albania Management Experience and Lessons Learned Brief, Draft Final, 29.12.2003.*

1.2. Problems Specific to the Area

Fertilizer and Pesticide Use on Farmland

The farmland in the basin is likely a significant source of pollution to the Prespa Lakes and Lake Ohrid as fertilizers, soil particles, and pesticides wash into rivers and streams and eventually to the lakes. Much of the farmland in the watershed is irrigated, which increases the load to the lake. In Albania, about 1500 ha of cultivated land are irrigated using water from both the Drilon River and Lake Ohrid. Most of the drained water discharged directly or indirectly into the lake. In Macedonia, about 50% of the arable land can be irrigated. The extent of irrigation each year depends on weather conditions and on the economic conditions because the irrigation tax is high. The water used for irrigation comes from Lake Ohrid, Lake Prespa and the Koselska and Sateska Rivers.

In both Albania and Macedonian, fertilizer use is high, averaging 160-200 kg/ha/yr in the 1990s. A variety of pesticides are also used, including copper sulfate, lindane, organophosphates, synthetic fungicides, and other chemicals. In 2001, 8,901 kg of pesticides were applied in the Pogradec district of Albania. In Macedonia, agrochemicals are regulated, but many banned substances are readily obtained illegally and used within the country. Specific data on pesticide use are not available.

Around Macro Prespa Lake, agriculture is a particular problem. In part because of intensive irrigation, the fields are widespread, the lake level is dropping, and the cultivated land extends right down to the edge of the lake.

Sewerage

In Albania, human waste and wastewater is currently not treated in the watershed. In Pogradec, the waste generated by about 30% of the town is collected but it is simply discharged into Lake Ohrid near Tushemisht. Because Pogradec has been growing, the volume of wastewater is also increasing. In 2001, the Pogradec Water Supply, Sewerage and Drainage Management Project was implemented to design and construct a sewerage system for the city. The German Government through the Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (KfW) and the Swiss Government through Staatssekretariat für Wirtschaft (SECO) provided the necessary funds for the execution of the project. Project planning and final design is almost complete and construction will begin in 2004. Construction should be completed in 2005 or 2006, and the system is currently to go on line in 2006.

In Macedonia, the Regional Sewerage System for the Protection of Lake Ohrid collects wastewater from about 65% of the Ohrid-Struga region, and delivers it to the treatment plant Vranista. After treatment, the wastewater is discharged into the Black Drim River. The first phase of the plant, which has the capacity to treat the wastes produced by about 120,000 people, has been operating since June 1988. In 2001, a general development plan for the regional sewerage system through 2025 was made. In two additional construction phases, 44 km of sewer, which will treat most of the shoreline on the Macedonian side of the lake, will be added to the system. The German DfW is financing these extensions.

In the Lake Prespa region, only the town of Resen has a sewerage collection and treatment facility. The wastewater treatment plant Ezerani has the capacity to treat the wastes of about 12,000 residents and serves about 80% of the town.

Problems of Industrial Origin

Industry also contributes pollution to the lake in many forms. In Pogradec, the metal parts factories discharge wastes to the lake without treatment. To the northwest of Pogradec, there are a number of old mines that used to produce chromium, nickel, iron, and coal. Only one of these remains in operation, but at the mining sites, many large piles of waste material remain and are a source of pollutants to the lake each time it rains. Industries in Macedonia include automobile spare parts, electrical parts, and textile, ceramic and metal processing plants. All of these industries produce waste that may be contaminating the Sateska, Velgoska, Koselska, and Golema Rivers. Food processing plants that discharge waste such as apple pulp are a significant problem in the Prespa watershed.

Negative Impact of Tourism

A healthy tourist industry requires hotels, restaurants, and other appropriate services for the tourists. Because the tourists come to experience the water, many of these developments are right along the shoreline. The tourists also produce wastes that must be treated and disposed of properly.

Both the Macedonian and Albanian shorelines are tourist destinations, and both have suffered from the political instability in the wider Balkan region since 1991. In the town of Ohrid, the number of foreign tourist overnight stays has been reduced up to 70%. As the political situation improves, Ohrid is uniquely positioned to appeal to the growing market in cultural tourism, with the many historic sites, monasteries, and other national treasures in the area. Lake Ohrid could also be promoted within the ecotourism market, but an essential prerequisite for this kind of tourism is a healthy and unpolluted environment, with clean water.

Solid wastes

Solid wastes can be a source of contamination to the lake if they are not disposed of properly. As this waste material breaks down, highly contaminated liquids can seep down into the underground water and adjacent streams and make its way to the lake. None of the landfills in Albania or Macedonia are lined or have drainage systems to collect and treat the contaminated waste.

Eutrophication

One of the most serious threats to the sustainable use of Lake Ohrid and the Prespa Lakes comes from nutrient loading. Lake Ohrid and the Prespa Lakes are being fertilized by nutrients in detergents and human and animal waste, and by nutrients in runoff from the land. As a result, the lakes are becoming more eutrophic. Historically, Lake Ohrid was known as an "oligotrophic" or clear water lake. It is likely that Lake Ohrid may have "aged" by thousands of years in just the last few decades because the actions of people have greatly accelerated eutrophication.

The Monitoring Component of the LOCP has been tracking the eutrophication rate in Lake Ohrid and Macro Prespa Lake, starting by measuring the concentration of phosphorus in the lakes. The concentration of phosphorus in Macro Prespa Lake shows that this lake is already eutrophic. The concentration of phosphorus in the middle of Lake Ohrid is still low enough for this lake to be considered "oligotrophic," but the amount has been increasing over time. The concentration now may be 3 or 4 times the concentration measured before World War II. Considering the very large volume of water in Lake Ohrid, this is a very significant change. If this trend is verified by additional monitoring, Lake Ohrid can be expected to change dramatically in the next few decades.

The water in the area around Pogradec represents the single largest source of phosphorus, as untreated sewage flows directly into the lake. The new sewerage system being developed for the Pogradec area will treat the wastewater of about 60% of the homes and businesses in the region. A possible extension after 2010 would add a second plant and would allow the treatment of all the wastewater produced in the Pogradec area.

The total phosphorus load delivered to the treatment plant from all sources when it opens in 2006 is estimated to be 166 kg P/day, or about 60.6 tons/year. The treatment plant has been designed to remove about 80% of the phosphorus that is delivered to it (about 48.5 tons), therefore, the annual load to Lake Ohrid after treatment would be reduced to 12.1 tons.

In 1999, representatives of the Macedonian and Albanian governments signed a joint statement endorsing the plans for the Pogradec wastewater treatment project. Although the Macedonian delegation would have preferred that the wastewater be pumped outside of the Ohrid Basin, this option was not judged feasible in the first phase. The parties agreed that if the necessary improvements in the water quality of Lake Ohrid do not occur after the new system has come on line, then both parties will join their efforts to find additional funding for the construction of additional measures to take the waste outside the catchment area. The parties further agreed that the discharge of treated water shall comply with European Community discharge requirements for treated wastewater in sensitive water bodies (EU 91/271/EWG). These requirements specify a discharge concentration < 2 mg/L, which is the current design specification. Preliminary estimates of the total load of phosphorus to Lake Ohrid made in 1995 suggest that the lake's total load may

be 3-5 times greater than it should be to keep Lake Ohrid in an oligotrophic state (Ernst Basler and Partners 1995), therefore, other sources of phosphorus loading will also require reduction to protect the lake. On the Albanian side of the lake, other important sources of phosphorus include the Cerava and Pogradec River basins, and Drilon Springs. On the Macedonian side, the Velgoska, Koselska, and Sateska Rivers and the springs at Saint Naum deliver the most phosphorus to Lake Ohrid. The load of phosphorus coming from the Sateska River may be about the same as that currently coming from the sewerage of Pogradec.

The rivers in the Prespa basin, including Golema, Brajcinska, and Kranska, also carry very high phosphorus loads. Because of all the nutrient loading, the oxygen concentration in the Prespa lakes decreases dramatically in summer. The waters in much of the lakes are also green with phytoplankton in the summer. Submerged plants also grow thick in the nearshore zone. This situation will not change until the phosphorus inputs to the lakes are reduced substantially. The near shore waters of Lake Ohrid adjacent to Pogradec and Tushemisht also show obvious phytoplankton and aquatic plant growth in the summer. In fact, in many near shore locations on both the Albanian and Macedonian sides of the lake, these plants have been responding to fertilization by phosphorus. In the last several years, both Albanian and Macedonian scientists have documented a shift in the composition of the plants to favor those species that grow well in more eutrophic conditions. Species that prefer oligotrophic conditions are becoming less abundant. These changes provide further evidence that the Lake Ohrid ecosystem is changing and underscore the need to reduce the phosphorus inputs to the lake.

Bacterial Pollution

One of the biggest potential risks to human health for the communities living along Lake Ohrid is contamination with disease-causing bacteria and viruses that enter the lake in human sewage. In 1988, the first phase of the sewage collection and treatment system was completed along the shoreline in Ohrid Bay, Macedonia. After this system began operating, there were dramatic improvements in the water quality in Ohrid Bay. The number of harmful bacteria in the water decreased one thousand fold. The water in Ohrid Bay is now generally safe for both drinking and swimming. These improvements make a strong case for continuing to implement sewage treatment systems along the entire shoreline of the lake.

On the Albanian side of the lake, the highest level of bacterial pollution occurs near the town of Pogradec, where raw sewerage flows directly into the lake. Large numbers of harmful bacteria have been found up to 200 m from the shoreline. In the years 1996 to 2000, Albanian scientists found an increase in the abundance of harmful bacteria in Lake Ohrid waters close to shore. This is probably because the population has been increasing in Pogradec. This situation will not improve until the sewerage collection and treatment facility is constructed for the town. But once the system is completed, the improvement along the Pogradec shoreline should be rapid, mirroring the improvements found in Ohrid Bay in the late 1980s.

Away from the major towns, bacteria pollution is most commonly found where streams and rivers discharge into the lake. These streams carry human waste and animal waste from the inland villages to the lake. All of these sources must be considered in order to keep Lake Ohrid waters clean for everyone's use and enjoyment.

Metal Pollution from Old Mining Sites

In addition to eutrophication, Lake Ohrid also shows metal pollution near the sites of the old chromium, iron, nickel and coal mines outside Pogradec. The preliminary samples that Albanian scientists have collected at the Guri i Kuq mine show concentrations of metals in the near shore lake water that are very high. It is likely that the muds and sands in these near shore locations are also contaminated, and this may pose a risk to the invertebrates, fish and birds living in this section of the lake. People who catch and eat fish in the area may also be at risk and it is possible that local drinking water sources have been contaminated. Long-term exposure to elevated levels of chromium, copper, cobalt, nickel, and other metals have been shown to have harmful effects on human health.

Zones of Pollution and Habitat Destruction Along the Lake Shoreline

Because the littoral zone receives the direct impacts of the population living along the shoreline, it tends to be the most impacted environment in most lakes. Lake Ohrid is no exception to this pattern. The habitat destruction and water quality impairment is most severe in the littoral zone, especially in those areas adjacent to the population centers in both Macedonia and Albania.

In Albania, the littoral zone adjacent to the town of Pogradec is heavily impacted. Impacts are also apparent to the northeast, to Tushemisht, and to the west and northwest to Lin. In the region around Pogradec, the nutrients and bacteria in the untreated sewage that is discharged directly into the lake compromise the water quality and threaten the health of all who use the water. The shoreline around Pogradec is also the prime area for tourism on the Albanian side of the lake, so the water pollution from sewerage has significant economic, as well as ecological impacts.

Evidence of the ecological impacts of human activities is apparent in both the aquatic plant community and the phytoplankton in the near shore waters. In the region of Pogradec, phytoplankton densities are much higher than elsewhere along the shoreline, and the submerged plant community has high densities of pollution tolerant taxa. In the mining area of Memelisht and Guri i Kuq, these plants show evidence of metal contamination and stunted growth. The population in the Pogradec areas has been growing rapidly, and as this growth continues, the pressures on the lake will continue to increase. To accommodate this growth, and the economic development necessary to improve the quality of life in the region, aggressive management actions will be needed. A coordinated approach that manages urban growth, agricultural impacts, and industry must be developed.

In Macedonia, problems in the littoral zone are evident in the regions of Struga, Ohrid, and the shoreline to the south to Saint Naum. Impacts are also apparent where the larger tributaries discharge into the lake, especially the Sateska, Velgoska, and Koselska Rivers. Where nutrient inputs are high, the growth of submerged plants is much greater. At the mouth of the Sateska River, sedimentation is filling in the littoral zone.

The plankton and benthic invertebrates also show altered communities in these developed littoral zone areas. Both the phytoplankton and the zooplankton species compositions are changing to ones dominated by mesotrophic and eutrophic taxa. These changes will have significant impacts for the rest of the biota in Lake Ohrid that depend on the plankton as food.

The shoreline of Lake Ohrid once contained long stretches of reeds, but it has been greatly altered by the human populations living around it. Historically, the reeds were used for many purposes. One of the best-known uses was for roofing material for houses. Despite the changes in lifestyle and the predominance of new materials and technology, the reeds continue to be used in a variety of ways in the modern era. They are also simply burned or cut away to provide better views and to provide beaches and easier recreational access to the lake. Around Lake Prespa, old land practices such as grazing, cutting and burning the reeds have also had impacts. In all these areas, sediment erosion and loss of wildlife are common. Several laws passed between 1973 and 1996 now protect the reed zones on the Macedonian side of the lake, but there are no such laws on the Albanian side of the lake. Population growth and socioeconomic pressures are leading to continued destruction of the reeds, especially in the areas around Pogradec and Tushemisht village. The importance of these environments for both wildlife and human welfare is still not reflected in economic planning and decision-making.

Significant Declines in the Fish Catch from Lake Ohrid

It is very clear that the fisheries in Lake Ohrid are in immediate danger and rapid management action is required. All the data suggest that the trout populations are severely stressed and the bleak and carp populations are also threatened. Overfishing seems to be the major cause of the decline of the trout population. The socio-economic pressures that have led to overfishing have impacted the trout more than other fish stocks because of the greater demand and higher economic value of this fish.

Although the overall catch of trout has only declined slightly in the last several years, there has been a dramatic shift in the harvest. Beginning in 1992, the landings in Albania increased dramatically, while those in Macedonia began to fall. The differences in fishing pressures in the two countries are the results of differences in the social and political situation in each country and the fishing regulations in each country.

While there have been limits on the catch in Macedonia for the last decade through concessions and licenses granted by the government, in Albania, such limits have just begun with the establishment of the Association for Fishery Management in Pogradec in 2002.

In addition to harvest pressures and habitat loss, especially of the reed beds, the native fish of Lake Ohrid are also threatened by the introduction of non-native species into the lake. Rainbow trout represents a particular concern because it may displace the native trout. Although this fish was first introduced in the 1970s, the development of fish farms in the basin offer new potential threats.

There is also some preliminary evidence that the pesticides used by farmers in the watershed may threaten fish in the lake. These pesticides have been found in the tissues of fish collected from the lake. Not only are these pesticides harmful to the fish themselves, but they also pose hazards to the people who eat the fish, especially women of childbearing age and small children.

Altered Flow of the Sateska River

Before 1961, the River Sateska flowed into the Black Drim River, about 3 km beyond its outflow from Lake Ohrid. In 1962, it was diverted to drain the Struga marshland, which is used for farming, and to make use of Lake Ohrid water for hydroelectric power generation. The diversion of the Sateska increased the size of the Lake Ohrid subwatershed by about 174%. It drained about 2500 ha and regulated the course and slope of Black Drim River through the town of Struga and the agricultural area around the town. An overflow structure that controls the flow of water out of Lake Ohrid and into the Black Drim River was constructed in Struga, and water flows were controlled in order to develop the potential of the "Globocica" and "Spilje" electrical power generation stations in Macedonia.

Currently, extraction of sand and gravel from the riverbed is uncontrolled. This extraction influences water flow and the sediment load, and the resulting erosion of riverbed is substantial. When the Sateska was diverted, antierosion measures intended to reduce sediment suspension in the river and the input of sediment to Lake Ohrid were put in place. These measures were initially effective, but they were later terminated. Since then, sediment has since accumulated in the constructed riverbed, the channel has degraded, and shoreline vegetation has been lost. The suspended load into Lake Ohrid is large and a delta has formed in the receiving waters. The load also includes a lot of organic material. Decomposition of this organic matter has reduced the dissolved oxygen concentrations in the receiving waters and changed the distribution of flora and fauna in this section of the lake.

In 1988, a study to investigate the impacts of sediment from the Sateska on Lake Ohrid, on the lowlands in the vicinity of Struga, on the Black Drim River channel, and on the power stations on the Black Drim River was undertaken by the Institute of Energetics in Skopje. This study looked at rediverting the River Sateska back into the Black Drim and the "Globocica" Reservoir. Implementation of the project would both improve the ecological health of the river and reduce the impacts on Lake Ohrid.

Based on this work, the Water Development Institute of the Republic of Macedonia has prepared a project proposal for restoration of the River Sateska. Although it is currently unclear as to when or if the full rediversion project might be implemented, some erosion control measures were implemented in the Sateska River bed in November 2002 as part of the LOCP. This reforestation is designed to stabilize the riverbanks and reduce the sedimentation rate in the middle reaches of the Sateska.

The ecological integrity of the LOW region is currently threatened by inappropriate land and natural resource use, which can be broken down into a:

- in-existent or inappropriate water management;
- large-scale forest destruction and erosion;
- overgrazing;
- over-exploitation of medicinal plants, fisheries and other natural resources;
- ecologically unsound irrigation practices;
- water and soil contamination from uncontrolled use of pesticides, raw sewage disposal and lake siltation;
- uncontrolled urban and other forms of development;
- pressure from increasing and uncontrolled tourism development.

The threats to the LOW ecosystem identified above have been caused as a result of the following underlying or root causes, which are affecting all or parts of region:

- lack of integrated planning and weak inter-sectoral co-ordination;
- limited management and enforcement capacity;
- lack of financial and technical resources for ecosystem management and conservation;
- regulatory frameworks and policies not harmonized or co-ordinated among sectors and between the three countries;
- lack of co-ordination among the three countries to address transboundary issues and management needs of the region as an integrated ecosystem unit;
- limited income generation opportunities leading to unsustainable use of natural resources and pressure on the ecosystem;
- limited incentives or disincentives to prevent or control environmentally unsustainable practices;
- lack of awareness among key stakeholders and general public about the ecological values of the region, their potential, and the corresponding need for their preservation.³

1.3. Policy, Legislative and Institutional Reforms to Address the Threats

From the beginning, one of the principal goals of the LOCP was to establish an appropriate legal framework for better management of Lake Ohrid and its watershed. The Institutional Strengthening Task Force focused its activities on assessing what legal and institutional reforms were needed and on mobilizing stakeholder support for these reforms. Both the government of Albania and Macedonia recognized the extraordinary opportunity that the LOCP provided for integrating their separate legal and institutional approaches with international agreements that would strengthen transboundary cooperation.

In 2000, a preliminary draft "Agreement for the Protection and Sustainable Development of Lake Ohrid and its Watershed" was developed and both Ministries began working to present a mutually acceptable refined version for adoption by their respective Governments. The intent of this agreement is to acknowledge very explicitly that Lake Ohrid and its watershed constitutes a single ecosystem and thus must be managed jointly by all the jurisdictions in the watershed. The draft agreement calls for international management through a "Lake Ohrid Management Agency" that would cover the whole watershed area, including, in the future, Greece, as a full partner in

³ *Integrated Ecosystem Management in the Transboundary Prespa Park Region*, Concept Paper in preparation of a full GEF Project Submitted to the GEF Secretariat by UNDP on behalf of the tri-national Prespa Park Co-ordination Committee (PDF-B application to GEF)

the management regime. This draft Agreement is now in final review in the Ministries in Albania and Macedonia and should move forward into the bilateral policy dialogue soon.

Both countries are also drafting and/or implementing new Environmental Impact Assessment legislation that will create the infrastructure for more systematic enforcement of environmental legislation. In January 2003, the Albania Government adopted its new Law on Environmental Impact Assessment. This law aims to provide:

- 1) a general, integrated and timely assessment of environmental impacts from proposed projects or other activities in order to prevent or mitigate the negative impacts on the environment; and
- 2) a process of open assessment, managed with equitability, through participation of central and local authorities, the public, NGOs, and representative of the project. Plans for energy, mining, industrial, transportation, agricultural, forestry, waste management, and other natural resources projects are subject to the EIA process. Decisions based on the EIA will be made by the Ministry of the Environment.

Both countries need land use planning initiatives urgently. These are the only tools that might stop inappropriate development and the destruction of natural habitats and non point source pollution that can result from that development. Unguided development can also threaten other goals, such as designation as a UNESCO World Heritage site of significance. In Albania, an international consultant recently submitted a legal analysis and draft "Law on the Preparation of a Land Use Plan for the Lake Ohrid Watershed Region". Both the report and the draft law will be submitted to the appropriate Ministries for comments. On May 17, 2003, the Territory Adjustment Council of the Municipality of Pogradec adopted Terms of Reference for preparation of a new Urban Plan for the Central Area of the town of Pogradec. This plan will include 55 ha, more than 50% of the total area of the town. The increasing eutrophication of Lake Ohrid is a major management concern and water current mix nutrients across the international borders, negotiations and commitment concerning the loadings reductions needed to protect the water quality of Lake Ohrid are needed to mitigate this threat. These negotiations have not yet begun. Likewise, for Lake Prespa, negotiations about not only pollutant loads, but also water withdrawals are urgently needed to protect this lake.

Coordinated fisheries regulations are urgently needed to deal with the decline in the fisheries of Lake Ohrid. Controls on the number and size of fish must be implemented and coordinated on both sides of the lake. As the fish in the lake are one single, linked population, they must be managed collectively, with similar requirements in both Macedonia and Albania.

Government officials and fisheries experts in both countries have agreed to a unification of some of the fisheries regulation; in 2001, both countries agree to keep the same allowable net size. In Macedonia, the fishing industry is managed through five-year concessions granted by the government to fishing companies. A company that is granted a concession must restock the lake through an approved plan and must pay 10% of the wholesale value of the catch to the government for the purposes of improving the fishing conditions on the lake. Fishing inspectors in the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Water Works enforce the fishing regulations.

In Albania, the fishing industry is the process of being organized into fishing associations by village. An Association has been formed in Pogradec, and others will be formed in Lin, Hudenischt and Tushemischt.

The regulations that will govern these associations are still being developed. In 2002, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food gave permits through the Association for Fishery Management in Pogradec to only 137 boats.

To set appropriate fishery limits, stock estimates based upon a jointly conducted, independent sampling effort must be prepared. Discussions about how to conduct this stock assessment are underway. It must include an evaluation of the spawning population and as well as the forage base available to support the trout population. With this information a sustainable level of harvest might be estimated and the harvest regulations in both Albania and Macedonia can be

harmonized to ensure that these levels are achieved. Vigorous enforcement of the appropriate regulations will also be necessary.

Both countries have pursued implementation of appropriate international environmental conventions, which bring international credibility, and support the core objectives of the LOCP. Albania is a party to the UNECE Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes and the UNECE Convention on Transboundary Accidents. Both Albania and Macedonia are signatories to the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants. The Macedonian side of Lake Ohrid has been designated as a mixed cultural/natural world heritage site by UNESCO's World Heritage Committee, and Macedonia is working to preserve this designation. Albania is hoping to add old town Pogradec to this designation. Although Albania signed the Aarhus Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making, and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters in 1998, and ratified it in 2000, Macedonia has not yet done the same. Both countries are still struggling with public access to information and public input, but as new laws are implemented, hopefully this situation will improve. The new Law on Environmental Impact Assessment in Albania has specific provisions that emphasize public and NGO participation in all steps of the environmental impact assessment process, including decision-making.

Both Albania and Macedonia are working towards future admission into the European Union (EU). In Albania, new environmental legislation has been prepared based on the EU Directives. For example, the new Albanian Law on Air Protection from Pollution has been based on the emission standards in the EU Directives for new industrial activities. A new draft law on Environmental Management of Urban Wastewater is being prepared, and the discharge limits for the new sewage treatment plant in Pogradec were specified based on the EU Standards for Sensitive Waters. In Macedonia, a review of the capacities of the Ministry of the Environment and Planning are underway to meet EU requirements. A draft version of a new Law on Waters, which has been prepared based on the EU Water Framework Directive, is under review. According to this draft law, all waters in Macedonia will be managed on a watershed or river basin level. Also, changes in the Law on Air and the Law on Nature provide a basis for qualitative management of these natural resources.⁴

⁴ *Lake Ohrid, Macedonia and Albania Management Experience and Lessons Learned Brief, Draft Final, 29.12.2003.*

2. Legal Framework, Territorial Division & Administrative Units

2.1. ALBANIA

A. Territorial Division & Administration

After almost half a century of an extremely centralized government, Albania started on a path of political decentralization with the first local democratic elections held in 1992. Despite the significance of this initial political move towards increased democratic representation, the local administrative and fiscal autonomy remained very weak. However, the decentralization process received a second boost in the late 1990s. Between 1998 and 2000 the country formally ratified the European Charter of Local Self-Government, incorporated its key principles into the new Constitution, and passed legal reforms for local self-governments.

Within the context of a territorial-administrative reform in the year 2000 a new organic local government law associates responsibilities with the theoretical concept of benefit areas, and it is broadly consistent with the practical principle of subsidiarity adopted by the European Union (i.e., local governments are assigned responsibilities for services that benefit the local jurisdiction, so that authorities will be accountable to their own local constituents). However, the law assigns only generic responsibilities to local governments according to three categories of public functions: exclusive, shared, and delegated functions.

Exclusive functions are those in which the local jurisdiction is the main beneficiary of the public services. These include mainly local infrastructures and public utilities, but also some areas of social services, housing, recreation, sports and cultural activities, as well as local traffic regulation, public transportation, public sanitation, civil security, and local development planning. Shared functions are understood as those in which major externalities may occur in the provision of the public service (i.e., the benefit area is likely to extend beyond the local jurisdiction that provides the service). The following are broadly defined as shared functions by the organic law: pre-school and pre-tertiary education, emergency/primary health care, public health protection, social assistance and poverty alleviation, public order and civil protection, and environmental protection. Nevertheless, the precise definition of competences to be attributed to local authorities is still pending further specific regulation.

Finally, delegated functions are those for which the state (the principal) can attribute, by means of law or agreement, to the local authorities certain competences (e.g., delivery of services, payment of benefits) according to prescribed standards, in which case the local government essentially acts as an agent in the delivery of the specified services.

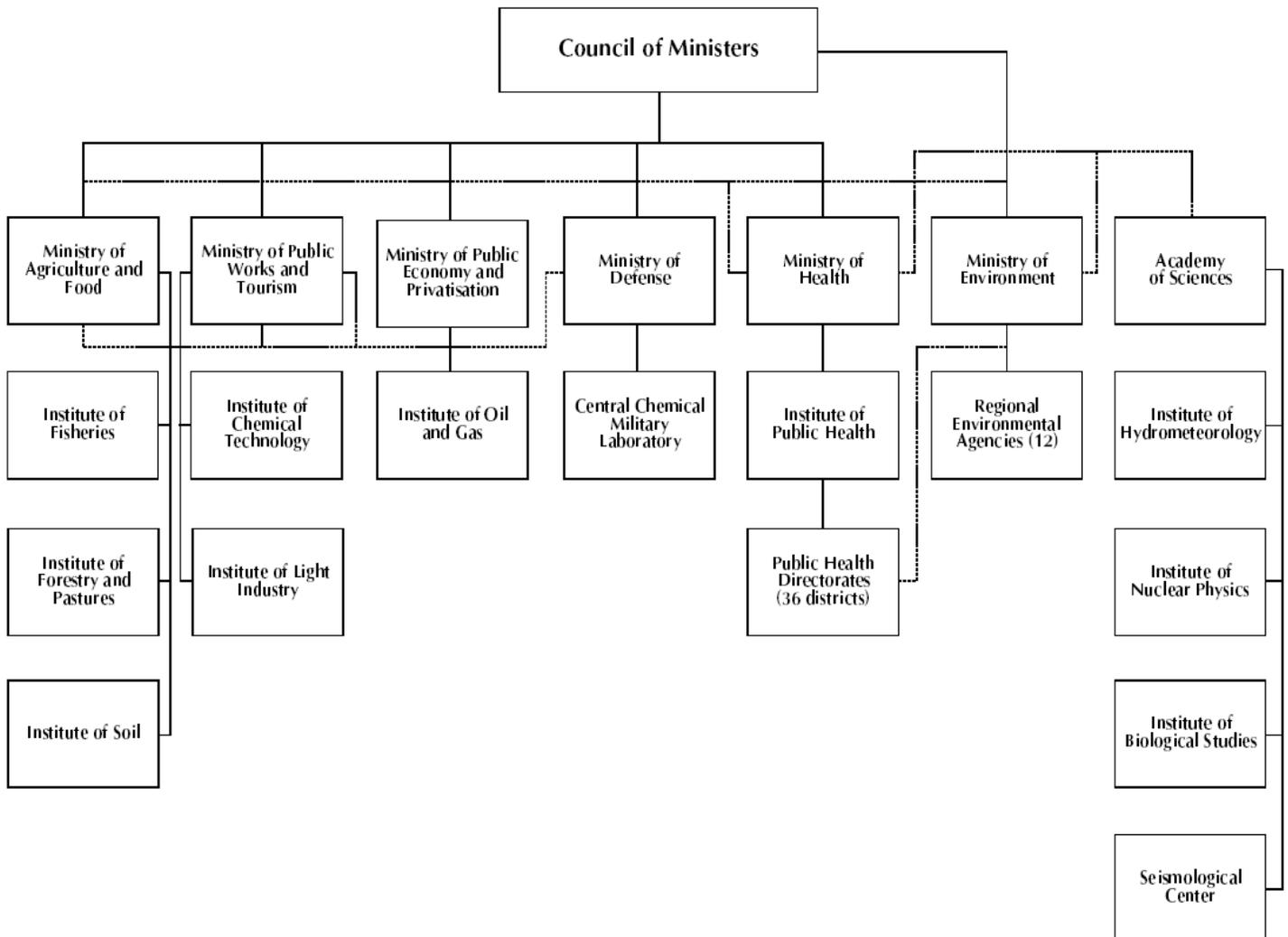
To the Regional Councils the law assigned the exclusive functions of planning and coordinating actions of regional interest and of delivering public services which could be delegated to them by the central government or the constituent municipalities or communes. In practice, however, the local regional government concept has as yet been perceived as an “empty box,” since the functions of the Regional Councils are still poorly defined, the Councils can count on no fiscal autonomy, and the central government and first level local governments are reluctant to delegate functions to the Councils.⁵

⁵ World Bank Report, *Albania: decentralization in transition* (2002)

Albania is divided into 12 prefectures, 36 districts, 74 towns and 310 municipalities. The mayors, municipal and regional councillors are directly elected; the prefects are appointed by the Council of Ministers.

The only relevant Albanian county/prefecture (“qark”) in the lake Ohrid-Prespa region is Korca. Within this county the three relevant districts: Pogradec (Lake Ohrid), Korca and Devoll (Lake Prespa) - (respectively 71000, 194000 and 35000 inhabitants).

B. Albanian Environmental Monitoring Network



C. Conventions

- The Convention on Biological Diversity was ratified Jan.5, 1994, and came into force April 5, 1994.
- The UNFCCC has been ratified on 3 October 1994.
- Elaboration of National Environmental Action Plan in 1993, and a NEAP update completed in 2001.

- Approval of National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan in 2000.
- Albania is a party to the Ramsar Convention, which entered into force February 29, 1996. At present there are 2 Ramsar sites, total surface area: 33,500 ha.
- Albania is a party to the Convention to Combat Desertification (CCD).
- The World Heritage Convention (WHC) was ratified on July 10, 1989.

2.2. THE FYR OF MACEDONIA

A. Territorial Division & Administration

According to the 1991 Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia, the Republic of Macedonia is a unitary state, having de-centralized state power. We speak of a de-centralized unitary state.

Governance in Macedonia is projected on two levels: central and local level. The first level is realized through the central state bodies, and the second through the local self-government.

The central governance is realized through the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia as legislative body, and through the Government of the Republic of Macedonia and the President of the Republic of Macedonia as executive bodies. In this regard, the effective executive power belongs to the Government of the Republic of Macedonia.

The Government of the Republic of Macedonia exercises the executive power. It proposes almost all laws; it concludes numerous international agreements; it implements in practice the laws; it has also significant competencies in the field of defense and security of the country. It consists of 14 Ministries as well as several Agencies and Institutes in capacity as state bodies.

The local governance is realized on two manners: through the local units of the Ministries and through the local self-government. De-concentration of the power is achieved through the local units of the Ministries, while de-centralization of the power is achieved through the local self-government.

According to the 1991 Constitution and new amendments to it passed in November 2001, the local self-government has the following powers of local significance: the public services, the town and village planning, the protection of the environment, the local economic development, the local financing, the public utilities, the culture, the sports, the social and child care, the education and health care.

The local self-government has also functions transferred from the central government (This transfer being done by law). In practice, however, the central government has not shown any willingness to transfer some of its functions to local level. On the contrary, the central government has shown desire to maintain the whole power in its hands.

Municipalities as local communities are financed by their own sources of revenues defined by law and by funds from the Budget of the Republic of Macedonia. In the 1991-2001 period municipalities had very small amount of funds at their disposal. Thus, these are one of the poorest municipalities in Europe. Such was not the case in the pre-transition period.

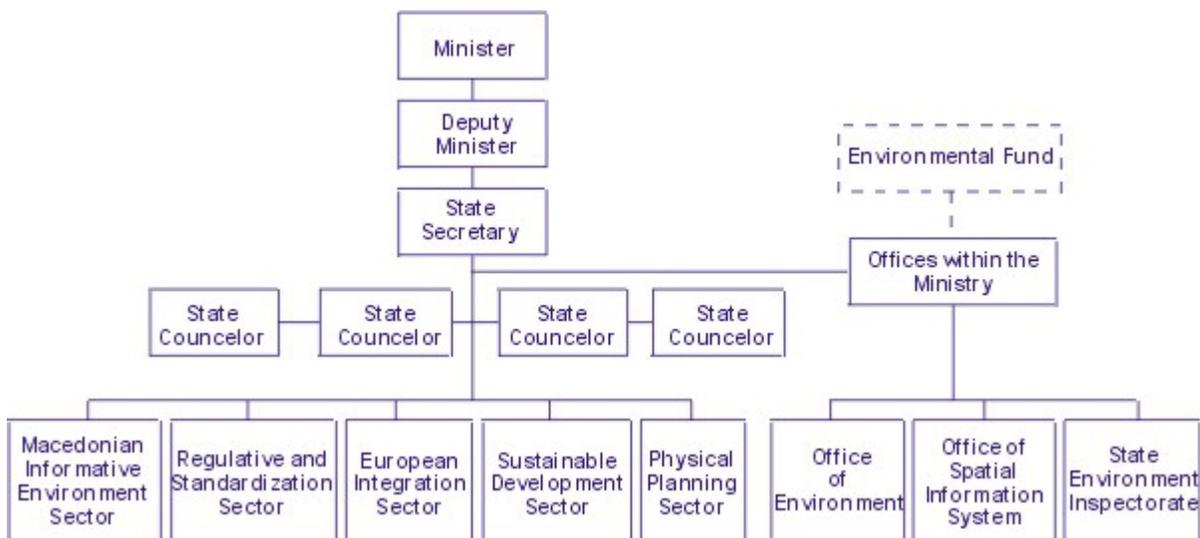
The FYR of Macedonia is a centralized state with 123 communes (Territorial Subdivision Act of September 1996, Local Government Act of 24 January 2002)
From the 123 municipalities (opstini, singular - opstina) in the FYR of Macedonia three are located in the Lake Ohrid-Prespa region: Resen, Ohrid and Struga.

B. The Macedonian Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning

Article 122-a of the Law on Amendment and Supplement of the Law on Administrative Bodies defines the Ministry's following responsibilities:

- monitoring of the state of the environment;
- proposing measures and activities to protect waters, soil, air and ozone layer, protection against noise and radiation, protection of biological diversity, geological diversity, national parks and protected areas;
- rehabilitation of polluted parts of environment;
- cooperation with scientific institutions for the purpose of developing standards, norms, rules of procedure to regulate the environment protection;
- development of a system of self-financing from independent sources, types and amounts of environmental compensations and other charges;
- cooperation with civil associations, civil initiatives and other forms of civil activity;
- inspection supervision within its scope of activity;
- carries out other activities specified in the law.

The present Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning (Law on Organization and Work of the Administrative Bodies, "Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia" No.58/2000) is organized into five departments: Department of Regulation and Standardization, Department of Sustainable Development, Department of European Integration, Environmental Information Center and Department of Physical Planning. It also includes two units for project implementation: unit responsible for the implementation of the Ohrid Lake Conservation Project based in Ohrid and unit responsible for the implementation of the Doyran Lake Salvage Project based in Star Doyran, as well as three organs functioning within the Ministry: State Environmental Inspectorate, Agency of Environment and the Fund for Environment and Nature Protection and Promotion.



C. Conventions

- The Convention on Biological Diversity was ratified by the parliament through Law 54/97 in 1997 and entered into force March 2, 1998.
- The UNFCCC has been ratified on January 28, 1998.
- The Ramsar Convention was legalized by the Act for Succession, Sept. 8, 1991. At present there is only one Ramsar site, total surface area: 18,920 ha.
- The National Environmental Action Plan was elaborated in 1995 and approved in 1996.
- The Convention to Combat Desertification (CCD) was ratified in 2000.
- The European Landscape Convention was signed on January 15, 2003, ratified on November 18, 2003 and came into force on March 1, 2004.
- A National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan is under development since 2000.
- The World Heritage Convention (WHC) was signed on April 30, 1997.

2.3. GREECE

A. Territorial Division & Administration

The political system of Greece is that of a parliamentary democracy. The Prime Minister and the cabinet are at the top of the executive power and the government presupposes the majority in the parliament.

The Government consists of the cabinet, which is made up of the prime minister and the ministers, alternate ministers, and deputy ministers. The cabinet, along with the General Secretaries, is collectively responsible for the general policy of the government, which, in turn, lays down the country's general policy in accordance with the terms of the Constitution and the law. Currently, there are 19 government departments corresponding to the respective ministries.

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According to the Greek Constitution, which organises the state on the basis of the principle of decentralization, the administration of local affairs is carried out by local government bodies. Therefore, a structure of first and second level local authorities and regional administration has been established. According to this system, the central services (except for special functions) coordinate and supervise the regional organs, whereas the latter have effective control over matters that concern their respective regions, implementing domestic and European policies for the economic and social development within their geographical scope of competence.

Nowadays, there are 13 administrative regions throughout the country. The government appoints a representative (periferiarchis) to run every region and ensure the implementation of its policies. He/she also supports the central state services and the government for the elaboration of regional development policies.

The first level local authorities include the municipalities, which are responsible for the administration of local matters. These bodies, are traditionally viewed upon as the cornerstone of

democracy in the Greek political system, as they allow the participation of the citizens in the local and public affairs. Their competence includes the overall responsibility for the administration of local matters and the care for the promotion of social, financial, cultural and spiritual interests of their citizens. The mayors, as opposed to the aforementioned decentralized units, are elected by the people through a universal and secret ballot.

As for the second level of local government, the Greek state is organized in 54 prefectures being headed by the prefectural councils and the prefects who are (since 1994) elected also directly by the people. The second level local authorities exercise responsibilities only to the extent that a particular subject does not fall within the responsibilities of a municipality or a community.

Greece is divided into local authorities, towns and prefectures with limited powers of self-government. The relevant prefecture/county (nomoi, singular - nomos) in the Lake Prespa Region is Florina (located in the region of Makedonia).

B. Ministry for the Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works

Greece applies an integrated policy for sustainable development. The concept of sustainable development has now been introduced in the development policies of the country and sustainable practices have been incorporated in sectors such as energy, tourism, transport and agriculture.

In order to activate the participation and further the cooperation of all responsible Ministries and organisations, the Ministry for the Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works has developed a coordinating mechanism so that the concept of sustainable development is incorporated in their actions and their activities.

The Ministry, as the main body for handling environmental policy, has launched a broad range project to deal with the problems that concern the quality of life. Thus, apart from the well-known and widely discussed problems, such as atmospheric and water pollution, noise problems and waste disposal management, issues such as physical and urban planning and cadastre, will also be addressed by implementing the necessary measures for integrated and sustainable development.

The objectives, guidelines, proposals and options for a National Project for the Protection of the Environment, the preservation of the Ecological Balance and the upgrading of the quality of life, which are incorporated in the Project and Planning Strategies of the 3rd European Union Support Framework, include:

- Integrating the economy with the environment and incorporating principles, values, ecological awareness and priorities for sustainable development.
- Implementing physical and urban planning systems and completing of the national cadastre.
- Improving the urban environment with a focus on atmospheric pollution and noise control in major cities as well as the integrated and proper management of municipal waste and industrial toxic waste through the recycling of raw materials and eventual waste disposal on landfills.
- Conserving and recovering balance, harmony and diversity in Greek Wildlife and ecosystems (protection of forests, reforestation and planting of trees in State Areas). The chart of Greek biodiversity, the formation and implementation of Management Plans for the protection of national parks, wetlands, marine parks, coasts and monuments of nature and sensitive areas.

- The integrated and rational management and control in the protection of the quality and quantity of water resources of Greece as water is a natural commodity, a renewable natural resource, useful and irreplaceable in the balance of ecosystems, for the water supply of the cities and communities or agricultural irrigation, for industrial and tourist development and as an alternative, for the support of energy resources.
- Developing Environmental Education - updating and increasing ecological awareness through training.

Cooperating with Organisations and Ecological, Environmental and Life Quality Movements as well as motivating all citizens to participate creatively and play an active role in activities

C. Conventions

- The Convention on Biological Diversity was ratified by the parliament through Law 2204 in 1994.
- The UNFCCC was signed on April 29, 1998 and ratified on May 31, 2002.
- The Ramsar Convention entered into force on December 21, 1975. At present there are 10 Ramsar sites, total surface area: 163,501 ha.
- The European Landscape Convention was signed on December 13, 2000.
- The World Heritage Convention (WHC) was ratified on July 17, 1981.

2.4. CONVENTIONS' OVERVIEW

Conventions	Albania	The FYR of Macedonia	Greece
Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)	Ratified 1994	Ratified 1997	Ratified 1994
United Nations Framework of Climate Change Convention (UNFCCC)	Ratified 1994	Ratified 1998	Ratified 2002
United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)	Signed	Ratified 2000	Ratified 1997
Ramsar Convention	Entered into force 1996 (2 sites)	Legalized 1991 (1 site)	Entered into force 1975 (10 sites)
European Landscape Convention	NO	Ratified 2003	Signed 2000
World Heritage Convention (WHC)	Ratified 1989	Signed 1997	Ratified 1981

3. Parks and Protected Areas in Ohrid-Prespa Region

3.1. Transboundary Prespa Park

Prespa is situated at the borders of Albania, Greece and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. The area consists of two lakes, Micro Prespa and Macro Prespa, and the surrounding forested mountain slopes. It is best known for its natural beauty, its great biodiversity, and its populations of rare water birds -including the largest breeding colony of the Dalmatian pelican in the world- but it is also remarkable for its cultural values, including Byzantine monuments and examples of traditional architecture. In Prespa, the harmonious co-existence between Man and Nature over the centuries has shaped and preserved a wealth of natural and cultural values that account for the area's international importance.⁶

The people living in Prespa and the organisations working for its conservation and sustainable development have come to realise that the only way to overcome these barriers and create a better future for all is cross-border co-operation and joint planning. As a result, on the 2nd of February 2000, on the occasion of the World Wetlands Day, the Prime Ministers of Albania, Greece and FYR of Macedonia jointly declared the establishment of the transboundary Prespa Park, a new protected area including parts of all three countries, what is in fact the first transboundary protected area in the Balkans.⁷ Following on the Declaration of Prespa Park, Albania, Greece and Macedonia in 2001 established an interim 'Co-ordination Committee for the Prespa Park' (PPCC). In 2001 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), on behalf of PPCC submitted to the GEF secretariat a concept project proposal entitled 'Integrated Ecosystem Management in the Transboundary Prespa Park Region'.

Description and Physical features

The Prespa region is a high-altitude basin including two inter-linked lakes, Macro Prespa and Micro Prespa and the surrounding mountains. The Macro Prespa lake has a surface area of 253.6 km, Micro Prespa is 47.4 km and the total area of the combined drainage basins and lakes is 2,519 km.

The two Prespa Lakes are situated at an altitude of 850 m above sea level. The highest peaks of the surrounding mountains reach about 2,600 m above sea level. The Baba Mountain Range borders the lake basin to the east, with Pelister Mountain as its highest peak (2,600 m asl). To the north, the Plakenska (1,998m asl) and Bigla (1,656 m asl) are the highest peaks. Micro Prespa Lake on the Greek side is bordered to the south by the Triklarion Mountains rising to 1,750 m asl. The two Prespa Lakes are separated to the west from Ohrid Lake by an elongated calciferous mountain block comprised of Galicica and Mali i Thate mountains (rising to 2,287 m asl). The mountains to the east and south of the watershed are comprised of silicate rock, producing soils and growing conditions that differ significantly from the soils resulting from the calciferous mountains to the north and west of the watershed. The calciferous rock facilitates underground water flow from the Prespa Lakes to the lower Ohrid Lake, where water surfaces in mighty springs at Drilon (in Albania) and Sveti Naum (in the FYR of Macedonia).

Until the end of the 1960s the Maliqi Lake in Albania formed an integral part of the region's lake system. The Maliqi Lake was bordered by extensive marshlands of several 100 has, fed by the Devolli River that originates in south-eastern Albania. The Devolli river was channelled at the end of the 60s resulting in subsequent draining of the Maliqi Lake and the desiccation of the swamp. Subsequently, the Prespa watershed was artificially and considerably enlarged by the Devolli River in the south, which was channelled and partly diverted into Micro Prespa Lake.

⁶ Prespa Park, Fact sheet

⁷ Prespa Park, Fact sheet

The climate of the Prespa region is subject to Mediterranean and continental influences and may be characterised as continental-central European. It is characterised by winters with long periods of high rainfall, snow and low temperatures and warm but moderate summers. Mean monthly temperatures in the Prespa region average 9-10° C. The average annual rainfall is approximately 647 mm.⁸

Biodiversity

There is high habitat diversity in the Prespa basin, with a flora of more than 1500 species. Indigenous fish species are all endemic, endangered mammals include brown bear *Ursus Arctos*, wolf *Canis Lupus*, chamois *Rupicapra Rupicapra Balcanica* and European otter *Lutra Lutra*. The area is especially important for waterbirds, notably the largest breeding colony of Dalmation Pelicans *Pelicanus Crispus* (listed by IUCN and Birdlife International as vulnerable) in the world as well as a substantial number of white pelicans *P. Onocrotalus* and pygmy cormorans *Phalacrocorax pygmeus*.⁹

3.2. Galicica National Park

The National Park Galicica is situated on Mount Galicica, that is a part of the mountain range of Sara-Pind. Due to its exceptional natural beauty and extremely opulent and endemic flora and fauna, in 1958 the Macedonian section of the mountain was proclaimed a National Park. The Park covers an area of 227 km² between the Lakes of Ohrid and Prespa, and it stretches in a meridian direction.

Description and Physical features

The main geological surface on the major part of Mount Galicica are Paleozoic metamorphic silicates covered with 500-550 m horizons of massive limestone that have spongy structure and are highly porous.

The massif has developed relief with large and deep valleys and a vast mountain crest that in the southern part of Galicica reaches the altitude of more than 2,000 m. Galicica enjoys moderate continental climate influenced by a large quantity of water from both Lakes and the hot Sub-Mediterranean influences that break through the relatively low mountain saddles in Albania.

Biodiversity

The flora in the National Park Galicica covers more than 800 species, among which there are numerous relict and endemic forms whose farthest limit of distribution is Mount Galicica itself. The presence of eleven local endemic forms discovered so way is quite remarkable. These forms exist only on the slopes of the Mount Galicica, and are clear evidence of the specific floral structure of the mountain. It should be underlined that there is an on-going intensive research of the flora in the Park. There are indications of an even greater number of endemic forms.

The fauna on Galicica is also prolific and diverse. There are no precise data about the number of invertebrate species. Vertebrates are present with 170 species: 10 amphibians, 18 reptiles, 124 birds, and 18 mammals.

⁸ *Integrated Ecosystem Management in the Transboundary Prespa Park Region*, Concept Paper in preparation of a full GEF Project Submitted to the GEF Secretariat by UNDP on behalf of the tri-national Prespa Park Co-ordination Committee (PDF-B application to GEF)

⁹ WWF case study

3.3. Pelister National Park

Due to its special natural beauty, as well as the historical and scientific importance of the forests and the forest areas of the mountain Pelister, an area of 12.500 ha was proclaimed as a national park in 1948. This was the first protected natural space in Macedonia.

Description and Physical features

Pelister is distinguished among other mountains as one of the tenth highest mountains in the Balkans. It is characterized by a large number of peaks and hills higher than 2000meters and separated by deep valley. The peak of Pelister (2601m) plays the leading role. From this location you can see Solunska Glava to the north, Kajmakcalan to the east Prespa Lake and Galicica to the west, Jablanica Mountain to the Northwest, and the view to south and southeast spreads to Greek-Albanian areas.

Biodiversity

The rich flora of the park includes 88 tree species, representing 23 families. High mountainous vegetations is consisted of 19 plant associations, 11 unions and 7 lines that means half of the mountain vegetation in Macedonia can be found on Pelister National Park. Wild fauna, that is only partly investigated, is represented by 62 species, including the bear (*Ursus arctos*), wolves (*Canis lupus*), lynx (*Lynx lynx*).

The management plan of the park distinguishes three zones: a) strictly protected zone (15 km²); b) tourist-recreational zone (42 km²); and c) meliorative zone (63 Km²) (Pelister National Park 1998).

3.4. Ezerani Natural Reserve

Bird Sanctuary Ezerani borders the northern section of Macro-Prespa Lake. In 1995, through a proposal of the Society for studying and birds protection in Macedonia (DPZPM) and National Ramsar Community together with the ornithological locality Erezani, nominated Prespa Lake for the World Ramsar List (International Ramsar Bird Certificate, Ramsar Convention Wetlands, 1995).

In 1996, the Parliament of the Republic of Macedonia declared this significant ornithological locality as the first strict natural reserve in the Republic of Macedonia. The declaration followed the valorisation of the natural values by eminent scientific institutions.

In 1997, the Government of the Republic of Macedonia presented a decision by which DPZPM was nominated for "Erezani" management. The same year, the Minister authorised for Environment has brought a PRAVILNIK for measure enforcement for the strict natural reserve "Erezani" protection.

In 1995-1997 period, DPZPM and the German Environmental Organization EURONATUR, undertook an international project for the ornitofauna protection of Prespa Lake, where the ornitofauna of the strict natural reserve "Erezani" was also encompassed (included) (Report on Project Implementation, Project manager Micevski B., 1997; Brochure and poster about the project - in edition of DPZPM, RINRP and EURONATUR, 1996).

Description and Physical features

This part of Lake Prespa is located on the site between villages Sirhan and Asamati. This part is characterised by a wide zone of very shallow coast, sand spruces that extend along the lake shore and the mud coast and with a wide reed belt.

Biodiversity

A great number of birds nest, feed and shelter themselves in this area. Near the village Ezerani there is an inundated forest "Korija" represented by willow trees (*Carici elongatae - Alnetum glutinosae*). The shore on the site that stretches from the village Asamati to the Krani Village boasts rare reeds and the coast near the village Krani and the Greek border is characterised by mud vegetation as well as a narrow reed belt.

Ezerani Reserve is characterised with a great variety of ornitofauna representatives. Today, 96 species of birds are known to inhabit Prespa Lake. This information refers only to the species that are bound to the water community for whole their life. Sixty-one species from this number, or 63,5% are on the list of strictly protected species; three species (*Pelecanus crispus*, *Pelecanus onocrotalus*, *Haliaeetus albicilla*) are on the list of the most strictly protected species with international importance. Three bird species (*Pelecanus crispus*, *Phalacrocorax pygmaeus*, *Haliaeetus albicilla*) from Prespa Lake are on the European "Red List" of globally endangered animal and plant species. Seventeen bird species (or 35,4% of the total number (48) are under permanent protection by the Republic Institute for Cultural Monuments Protection-1965) can also be found on Prespa Lake.

4. Projects and Actors in the Area

4.1. Main projects

4.1.1. Integrated Ecosystem Management in the Trans-boundary Prespa Park Region

Brief description

The overall objective of the project is to promote integrated ecosystem management of the Trans-boundary Prespa Park Region with the participation of all stakeholders, and by enhancing cooperation among the three participating countries (Albania, Macedonia and Greece). Specific objectives are: to elaborate the technical basis of the full sized project; to establish the project's management structure and coordination mechanisms; and to put in place the stakeholder participatory mechanism required for the successful future implementation of the full-sized project. Design of a full-sized GEF Project Brief is the ultimate objective of this phase of the project.

Executing Agency: Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning

Budget: Total: \$US 938.782
Global Environmental Facility: \$US 376.000
KfW: 434.782 \$US
Others: 128.000

Co-financing:

UNDP Albania; UNDP Macedonia; Government of Albania; Government of FYROM; Government of Greece

In-kind contribution:

Government of Albania; Government of Macedonia; NGOs (PPNEA, MAP, SPP); Municipality of Resen (MK); Prespa National Park Authority (AI); Municipality of Prespa (Gr)

Duration: 01/11/2003 — 01/11/2004

Partnerships:

Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning of Macedonia
Ministry of Environment of Albania
Municipality of Resen, FYR of Macedonia
Municipality of Prespa, Greece
Prespa National Park, Korca, Albania
Prespa Park Coordination Committee
MedWet Initiative
WWF Greece

Implementation Arrangements:

UNDP National Execution
Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning of Macedonia
Ministry of Environment of Albania

Regions Covered:

Macedonia
Republic of Albania
Greece

Target Beneficiaries:

Vulnerable people in Albania;
Local authorities in high risk regions;
Civil Society actors;
Line-ministries involved in disaster management;
Ministry of Local Government;
General Directorate for Civil Emergencies

Project Objectives:

- Establish project participation and coordination mechanisms.
- Determine project area boundary
- Improve required baseline information base
- In-depth threats definition and root causes analysis
- Trans-boundary Diagnostic Analysis
- Socio-economic conditions and trends
- Actual and alternative livelihoods
- Environmental/biodiversity awareness
- Legislative/ regulatory and policy base, including compliance and enforcement options and mechanisms
- Integrated Hydro-geological study – Water resource management plan
- Institutional arrangements for a trans-boundary park management authority
- Social infrastructure investment needs
- Strengthen the protected areas' management and management plans
- Identify and mobilize co-financing sources
- Prepare GEF Project Brief and draft Project Document

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4.1.2. Lake Ohrid Conservation Project (LOCP)

Brief description

First, in 1996 the governments of the Republic of Albania and the Republic of Macedonia, with an assistance of the World Bank, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) of The Lake Ohrid Conservation Project (LOCP) that established the Lake Ohrid Management Board (LOMB) as a joint body for long-term basin management and protection of Lake Ohrid. In December 1998, LOCP was launched as a joint effort between the governments of Albania and Macedonia and the World Bank as an implementing agency of the \$US 4.4 million grant from the Global Environment Facility (GEF). The project development objective is to conserve and protect natural resources and biodiversity by developing and supporting effective cooperation between Albania and Macedonia for the joint environmental management of the Lake Ohrid watershed, including the Prespa Lakes (GEF and World Bank 1998). LOCP takes a holistic, integrated and watershed based approach in management of Lake Ohrid. It includes the Prespa Lake watershed, considered to be a sub-watershed of Lake Ohrid Watershed (LOW). Because of this, it would be expected for LOCP to be a tri-lateral project, including Albania, Greece and Macedonia. However, due to the political disputes between Greece and Macedonia at that time, Greece was not included in the preparation phase of the project. For the same reasons the Feasibility Study on the Lake Ohrid Conservation Project (FSLOCP) does not provide any data on the Greek part of LOW.

Implementing Agency: World Bank

Region: Albania and Macedonia

Focal Area: International Waters

GEF Allocation: US\$4.4 million

Co-financing: US\$0.27 million (Governments of Albania and Macedonia)

Total Financing: US\$4.67 million

Duration : June 1998–June 2002

Environmental Problems

Lake Ohrid, which lies between Albania and Macedonia in a mountain valley, is one of the world's oldest lakes and one of the largest reserves of biodiversity in Europe. It possesses unique flora and fauna that are extinct elsewhere; ten of seventeen fish species are endemic. Lake wetland areas are important habitat for various aquatic birds and spawning grounds for fish.

The lake's shores have long been settled. Today, with three shoreside cities and high numbers of summer visitors, the lake is experiencing increasing pollution from both agricultural runoff and wastewater discharges either into rivers that feed the lake or directly into the lake itself.

Less than 25 percent of wastewater in the lake's catchment is treated. Unfortunately, inflow and outflow of water in the lake is slow, and the lake's water is exchanged only once every sixty years. Pollution of the lake, therefore, is increasing. Runoff has led to increase in the lake's phosphorus content; if nothing is done, the lake could eventually become eutrophic.

Overall the main environmental problems concern limited treatment of wastewater and uncontrolled agricultural runoff as well as other non-point source pollution, threatening unique biodiversity and ecosystems of transborder lake.

Project Goals

- Develop the institutional, legal, and regulatory framework for environmental management of the lake
- Develop water quality and ecosystem monitoring
- Formulate, in a participatory process, an operational watershed management program

The Project

This project objective is to conserve and protect the natural resources and biodiversity of Lake Ohrid by developing and supporting an effective cooperation between Albania and Macedonia for the joint environmental management of the Lake Ohrid watershed. Key performance indicators for the development objective are:

- Average lake nutrient concentrations below the critical level which sustains the lake oligotrophic state;
- Reduced nutrient and microbiological loads in the lake's tributaries and inflows;
- Key ecosystem health and stability indicators maintained within safe limits;
- Actions taken by the LOMB to promote and support government's conservation and protection policies.

Activities

The LOCP consists of four components:

- *Component A: Developing the Institutional, Legal and Regulatory Framework for Environmental Management in the Lake Ohrid Watershed*

This component will establish a Lake Ohrid Management Board (see Table 1) to promote permanent cooperation between the two countries. The board will agree on common objectives, operating rules, and procedures; review project implementation; and discuss fund-raising strategies to implement an environmental program for the lake. The component will also support technical training; work to harmonize laws, regulations, and standards between the two countries; and strengthen management and enforcement of municipalities bordering the lake.

Table 1: The Composition of the Lake Ohrid Management Board

Albania	Macedonia
Deputy Minister of the Ministry responsible for the Project	Deputy Minister of the Undersecretary of the Ministry responsible for the Project
Chairmen of the Committee for Environmental Protection	Assistant or Advisor to the Minister responsible for the Project
Major of the Municipality in Progradec	Major of the Municipality of Ohrid
Chairmen of the District Council of Progradec	Major of the Municipality of Struga
One expert from a local NGO	One expert from a local NGO
Project Coordinator	Project Coordinator

- *Component B: Lake Ohrid Monitoring Program (LOMP)*
This component will support a well-coordinated monitoring program by purchasing monitoring equipment and developing a monitoring system to track water quality, discharges into the lake, and other data.
- *Component C: Participatory Watershed Management Approach Program (PWMAP)*
This component will aim to mobilize the groups within the watershed to transform the strategic program developed in the feasibility study into an action plan.

- ***Component D: Public Awareness and Participation Program (PAPP)***
This component will, (i) increase public awareness of environmental issues related to Lake Ohrid; and (ii) increase community participation in activities to conserve and protect Lake Ohrid and its watershed.

Benefits

- Protect the Lake Ohrid basin by establishing an effective international framework for long-term basin management, and by undertaking some priority actions to control the major sources of pollution and watershed degradation
- Establish basis for cooperation between Albania and Macedonia and provide basis for preparing regional development strategy serving both countries.

Problems of the lead agency in the case of LOCP

Though the Project Implementation Plan (PIP) of LOCP nominates the Ministry of Public Health as the responsible for the implementation of the project, the National Environmental Agency (NEA) acted as the lead agency on the Albanian side (World Bank 1998). Later, despite the fact that in 2001 NEA was transformed into the Ministry of Environment of Albania (MEA), there was no retribution of responsibility for LOCP. Initially, the Ministry of Urban Planning, Construction and Environment (MUPCE) held the responsibility for the implementation of LOCP in Macedonia. However, after the project was endorsed in 1998, this role was entrusted to the newly established Ministry of Environment (MoE) and later to the expanded Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning (MoEPP). In the case of the PP, currently the lead agencies are MEA, the Ministry of Environment, Spatial Planning and Public Works of Greece (MESPPW) and the MoEPP of Macedonia.

In Albania, at the top of the management hierarchy of LOCP was the Head of NEA, and in Macedonia was the Minister and/or the Deputy Minister. In Contrast to Albania, the director of PIU in Ohrid was employee of the Ministry.

The role of government agencies was to a great extent influenced or even share by the World Bank. It was only the work of LOMB that was under complete control of the lead agencies.

The complexity of Lake Ohrid Watershed (LOW) in terms of geography, hydrology, socio-economic context, jurisdiction as well as the politics proved to be difficult to deal with. Since the very beginning LOCP failed to cover the Greek part of LOW. The LOMB membership neither includes Greek representatives nor has attempted to remedy the situation over the lifetime of the project. There are no documents that indicate what were the reasons for excluding Greece from LOCP. The establishment of PP have put different light on the issue of the problem of (non) participation of Greece in LOCP. This problem was discussed during the World Bank supervision mission in November 2001 and May 2002.

LOMB membership includes the mayors of the cities around Lake Ohrid, but neither the mayor of Resen on the Macedonian part nor the mayor of Commune of Liqenas (or the District of Korce) on the Albanian side if Lake Prespa sub-watershed are included. The public officials of Ohrid and Struga do not see much of the connection between the two lakes in terms of the necessity for joint action in environmental management.

The project proposal for Integrated Ecosystem Management in the Transboundary Prespa Park region prepared by UNDP on behalf of the PPCC makes reference to LOCP: "The project will establish linkages with and build on the lessons learned from the GEF/World Bank Ohrid Lake Conservation Project. The joint Macedonian-Albanian Ohrid Management Board that was created for this project is central to the management of the Ohrid Lake region" (UNDP 2001).

It is also worth of mentioning that the GTZ, that provided financing available to NGOs in the region as a whole, including both sub-watersheds, have put emphasis on the transboundary cooperation, preferably projects that involve partners from all three countries (PPCC 2001).

"In relation to the proposed establishment of a Biosphere Reserve encompassing the Prespa and Ohrid areas, Mr. Kouvelis expressed the Greek Government's reservations mainly due to the

mandate contained in the Prime-ministerial Declaration of 2 February 2000, which was limited to Prespa basin. This initiated a long discussion on the desirability of such a development.

Several speakers expressed their support, at least in principle, to the idea, including Mr. Dedej (NEA, Albania), Mr. Micevski (MAP), Ms. Sieburger, and Mr. Nastov (NFP for Ramsar Convention, FYR of Macedonia); whereas others expressed concern, including Mrs. Malakou (SPP), Mr. Dimovski, Mr. Germanidis (Mayor of Prespa, Greece), Mrs. Nikuseva (DEM/MAP), and Mr. Salathé (Ramsar Bureau)” (PPCC 2001).

“Mr. Dedej subsequently said that his Government is very much interested in pushing the issue of designation of a Prespa/Ohrid Biosphere Reserve and Ms. Sukova concurred. Mrs. Roumeliotou reminded the Committee of the reservations expressed by the Greek side when the idea was first put forward in the Skopje meeting. Mr. Papayannis agreed that the Greek side must be given some time to consult on this issue on the basis of the SAP recommendations and Ms. Sukova said they could prepare information on the procedure to be followed for establishing the Biosphere Reserve for the next meeting of the Co-ordination Committee” (PPCC 2002).

The membership of the WMCs may be considered fairly representative of the public with respect to the geography except for the catchment of River Sateska on the Macedonian part of lake Ohrid sub-watershed. The watershed of River Sateska is of particular interest because of the predominantly non-point character of the sources of pollution and the significant impact they have on the water quality of lake Ohrid.

In Macedonia one of the most discussed issues in this respect was the exclusion of Lake Prespa sub-watershed in the activities of the Public Awareness and Participation Program (PAPP). It was only during the last grant session in 2002 that the Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe (REC) decided to invite the NGOs from Lake Prespa sub-watershed to apply.

Similarly, in Albania, in Lake Prespa sub-watershed there were practically no activities organised by LOCP. The NGO sector in this area is very weak and the director of the Prespa National Park in Albania is the only person being active in LOCP. In Albania the only NGOs involved in the PP is the Association for the Protection and Preservation of Natural Environment in Albania (PPNEA) based in Tirana. Finally, there is no representative of the catchment of River Devoli.¹⁰

4.2. Stakeholders

ALLCOOP (Alliance for Lake Cooperation in Ohrid & Prespa)

ALLCOOP is a non-governmental organization that promotes transboundary cooperation in the Region of Ohrid and Prespa Lakes, bordered by Macedonia, Albania and Greece. ALLCOOP was established on January 15th, 2000. The organization was formally registered in June 16th, 2000.

The Assembly of ALLCOOP adopts the policy and the strategy upon a proposal of the Presidency developed by an Advisory Board. The presidency of the organization consists of five members and is responsible for the implementation of the Program of Activities adopted by the Assembly at its annual meetings. ALLCOOP has also established an Advisory Board consisted of representatives of different institutions and NGOs in the region:

- Project Implementation Unit of Lake Ohrid Conservation Project ministry of Environment and Physical Planning of Republic of Macedonia;
- Lake Ohrid Watershed Management Committee for Macedonia;
- Lake Ohrid Watershed Management Committee for Albania;
- Galicica National Park;

¹⁰ Avramoski O., *Analysis of participation practices in ecosystem approaches to environmental management in the Region of Ohrid and Prespa Lakes*, Thesis submitted to the Department of Environmental Sciences and Policy of Central European University, Budapest, July, 2002.

- Association "Tourism and Environment", Pogradec, Albania (grassroot NGO);
- The local coordinator of ALLCOOP in Albania;

Main ALLCOOP projects:

Current:

- "Establishing financial mechanisms for conserving biodiversity in the Balkan region: sustainable development through eco-tourism and environmental education in protected areas" (with "Children of the Earth" - Bulgaria and "Tourism and Environment" - Albania sponsored by "The Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe -REC");
- "Grafting our future onto the Old Roots: a community-based in-situ conservation of traditional fruit tree varieties and the associated traditional agricultural landscape in the Region of Ohrid and the Prespa lakes (Albania, Greece and Macedonia)".

Finished:

- "Public participation and NGO involvement in transboundary water management: implementing the international standards" (with "Peipsi CTC" - Estonia, sponsored by "Charity Know How" - UK);
- "Strategies for public participation in the management of transboundary waters in countries in transition: Lake Ohrid and Lake Peipsi case studies" (with "Peipsi CTC" financed by "East-East" program of "Open Society Institute");
- "Save transboundary Cherava River: development of Cherava River basin management plan" (with "Tourism and Environment" - Albania, ALLCOOP - Albania and "Peipsi CTC" - Estonia, financed by "Open Society Institute").

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EURONATURE (European Natural Heritage Fund)

The European Nature Heritage Fund (EURONATUR) is an independent German conservation foundation with an international brief. It was founded during the European Year of the Environment 1987. It was initiated by the Bund für Umwelt und Naturschutz Deutschland e.V. (BUND, German Federation for the Environment), the Deutsche Umwelthilfe (DUH, German Environmental Aid) and the Naturschutzbund Deutschland (NABU, German Society for Nature Conservation).

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EAWAG (Eidgenössische Anstalt für Wasserversorgung, Abwasserreinigung und Gewässerschutz - Swiss Federal Institute for Environmental Science and Technology)

EAWAG's task as the national research center for water pollution control is to ensure that concepts and technologies pertaining to the use of natural waters are continuously improved. Ecological, economical and social water interests are brought into line. The organisation's main areas of intervention are research, teaching, consulting for the environment. Multidisciplinary teams of specialists in the fields of Environmental Engineering, Natural and Social Sciences jointly develop solutions to environmental problems. The acquired knowledge and know-how is transmitted nationally and internationally by publications, lectures, teaching, and consulting to the private and public sector. EAWAG's head office is located in Duebendorf, near Zurich. The Limnological Research Center in Kastanienbaum, near Lucerne, also forms part of EAWAG. The EAWAG is a Swiss Federal Research Institute which reports to the Board of Management of the Swiss Federal Institutes of Technology (FIT Board).

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GTZ (Deutsche Gesellschaft fuer Technische Zusammenarbeit)

The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) GmbH is an international cooperation enterprise for sustainable development with worldwide operations. In more than 130 partner countries, GTZ is supporting c. 2,700 development projects and programmes, chiefly under commissions from the German Federal Government. GTZ's aim is to improve the living conditions and perspectives of people in developing and transition countries. It provides viable, forwardlooking solutions for political, economic, ecological and social development in a globalised world. GTZ promotes complex reforms and change processes, often working under difficult conditions. Its corporate objective is to improve people's living conditions on a sustainable basis. GTZ is a federal enterprise based in Eschborn near Frankfurt am Main. It was founded in 1975 as a company under private law.

The German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) is its major client. The company also operates on behalf of other German ministries, partner-country governments and international clients, such as the European Commission, the United Nations or the World Bank as well as on behalf of private enterprises. GTZ works on a public-benefit basis. Any surpluses generated are channelled back into its own international cooperation projects for sustainable development.

Website: <www.gtz.de>

Hydrobiological Institute (Ohrid)

The Hydrobiological Institute, established in 1935, is devoted to the research of the quality and living world of the freshwater resources, particularly of that of Lake Ohrid. This was the first research institute of its kind to be established on the Balkan Peninsula.

Since its establishment the Hydrobiological Institute has been stocking Lake Ohrid with artificially produced larvae and offspring of Ohrid trout and European eel.

The result of the research of Lake Ohrid are over 600 published scientific studies. Today, the Institute comprises several research units, as follows: physical and chemical properties of the water research unit, aquatic microbiology unit, phytoplanktonic and zooplanktonic research unit, macrophytic vegetation, benthonic fauna (animals living on the bottom) and chub-like fish, fish diseases and practical fishing with spawning sites.

The Institute of Hydrobiology is a public scientific organization that is open for cooperation with all related institutes, organizations and individuals involved in freshwater research and protection.

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IUCN (World Conservation Union)

IUCN is a unique Union. Its members from some 140 countries include 77 States, 114 government agencies, and 800-plus NGOs. More than 10,000 internationally-recognised scientists and experts from more than 180 countries volunteer their services to its six global commissions. Its 1000 staff members in offices around the world are working on some 500 projects. For more than 50 years this 'Green Web' of partnerships has generated environmental conventions, global standards, scientific knowledge and innovative leadership.

KfW (Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau, German Development Bank)

Germany's development bank provides funds and expertise. It gives loans and grants to support projects and programmes in developing countries. This way it advances their economic and social development. With its subsidiary it promotes the private sector in developing countries. The DEG makes long-term loans and invests in enterprises in developing countries. One of the most important instruments which the German government employs to reach the objective of improving the economic and social conditions of people in developing countries is "Financial Cooperation" (FC). FC steps in where long-term capital is lacking, where the market fails or does not yet function adequately. The KfW development bank is called upon:

-as the German Development Bank it supports developing countries with investments in infrastructure, financial systems and environmental protection. This way it encourages the introduction of technical, economic and institutional innovations.

-its financing operations are not directed at isolated projects with limited local effects. KfW Entwicklungsbank (KfW development bank) supports its partners in overcoming structural obstacles and initiating an economically sustainable and socially just development.

Related Project Interventions supported through KfW in the Prespa Region:

Location	Title	Short description	Budgets in US\$	Duration
1. Prespa lake, the FYR of Macedonia	Environmental Protection L. Prespa-Sewerage Project	Reduction of (mainly) organic effluents into L.Prespa by rehabilitation & extension of existing wastewater facilities	7 Mio Grant	In preparation
2. Prespa region (Albania & FYR Macedonia)	Prespa trans-boundary Reserve	Same approach as project outlined in concept paper-baseline (focusing on mgt. Plans & subsequent civil works measures/equipment supply)	4 Mio Grant	" "
3. Prespa lake, the FYR of Macedonia (in part)	Social Infrastructure I & II	Rehabilitation/construction of small-scale social/economic infrastructure (water, sewerage, solid waste, rural roads etc.) on participatory basis for 13 communities in the FYR of Macedonia	~ 1.5 Mio Grant (regional share)	2001- 2003
4. Prespa region, Albania	Social Investment Fund II – "Prespa Component"	Rehabilitation/construction of small-scale social/economic infrastructure on participatory	0.3 Mio Grant	2001 - 2002

		basis, specially for communities adjacent to Albanian Prespa NP, in co-ordination with conservation authorities & NGOs; with Albanian development Fund (ADF) as impl. agency		
Budget Total			~ 12.8 Mio	

Websites:

<<http://www.kfw-entwicklungsbank.de/EN/Inhalt.jsp>>

<<http://www.kfw-foerderbank.de/EN/Inhalt.jsp> >

MAP (Macedonian Alliance for Prespa)

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PPNEA (Protection and Preservation of Natural Environment in Albania)

This is the only Albanian NGO involved in the Prespa Park. It increases public awareness on environmental problems emphasizing conservation, restoration and rational use of natural resources. Furthermore it lobbies the Government and promotes environmental education.

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Ramsar Convention - MedWet (Mediterranean Wetland Initiative)

The Convention on Wetlands is an intergovernmental treaty which provides the framework for national action and international cooperation for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources. It was adopted in the Iranian city of Ramsar in 1971 and came into force in 1975, and it is the only global environmental treaty that deals with a particular ecosystem. The Convention's member countries cover all geographic regions of the planet.

The Medwet Initiative is a long-term, collaborative effort towards the conservation and wise use of Mediterranean wetlands, guided by the Mediterranean Wetlands Committee (MedWet/Com) and governed by the rules and procedures of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands.

MedWet was founded in 1991 and since then has developed a strong and diverse programme of activities throughout the Mediterranean region. Today it constitutes a formal part of the Ramsar Convention and operates under its rules and procedures, while it is guided by the Mediterranean Wetlands Committee (MedWet/Com). The latter consists of representatives from all 25 Mediterranean countries, the Palestine Authority, the United Nations Environment (UNEP) and Development Programme (UNDP), the European Commission, 3 international Conventions, 4 international NGOs and 4 Wetland Centres.

The Mediterranean basin hosts a multitude of wetlands of high ecological, social, cultural and economic value. This natural wealth, nevertheless, suffers a constant pressure by human the Ramsar Strategic Plan in the Mediterranean, interventions.

By mobilising partners and resources and by implementing the Ramsar Strategic Plan in the Mediterranean, MedWet's ambition, in addition to the inventory and protection of the natural capital of the Mediterranean wetlands, is to bridge contradictions between the existing needs for economic development and the conservation of ecosystems and their natural resources. Therefore MedWet, by creating the prerequisites for sustainable management of wetland resources, strives to contribute to the improvement of the quality of life in these areas, and

consequently, to the levelling of social and economic discrepancies in the Mediterranean basin, with particular emphasis on the developing countries.

Basic parts of MedWet activity are conservation actions at wetlands of major importance (especially Ramsar Sites) and the promotion of national wetland policies. MedWet also provides a forum of regional exchange of experience at a technical level and published a range of wetland management methodological tools.

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REC (Regional Environmental Centre for Central and Eastern Europe)

The Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe (REC) is a non-partisan, non-advocacy, not-for-profit international organisation with a mission to assist in solving environmental problems in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). The center fulfils this mission by promoting cooperation among non-governmental organisations, governments, businesses and other environmental stakeholders, and by supporting the free exchange of information and public participation in environmental decision-making. The REC was established in 1990 by the United States, the European Commission and Hungary. Today, the REC is legally based on a charter signed by the governments of 28 countries and the European Commission, and on an international agreement with the government of Hungary. The REC has its head office in Szentendre, Hungary, and country offices and field offices in 16 beneficiary countries which are: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, the FYR of Macedonia, Poland, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovakia, Slovenia and Turkey.

Recent donors are the European Commission and the governments of Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Canada, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Japan, Latvia, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States, as well as other inter-governmental and private institutions.

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SPP (Society for the Protection of Prespa)

The Society for the Protection of Prespa (SPP) is a non-profit civil society, which was established in 1990, thanks to the initiative of the World Wide Fund for Nature and to the Friends of Prespa. The Society for the Protection of Prespa consists of the following non-governmental organisations:

- Friends of Prespa
- Hellenic Society for the Protection of Nature
- Hellenic Society for the Protection of the Environment and the Cultural Heritage
- Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, United Kingdom
- World Wide Fund for Nature - Greece
- Hellenic Ornithological Society
- Danish Ornithological Society, Denmark
- Foundation of Tour du Valat, France
- Goulandris Museum of Natural History
- Arctouros

The aim of the Society for the Protection of Prespa is the protection and preservation of the natural and cultural values of Prespa, as well as the promotion of sustainable development in the area.

The SPP's main objectives are:

1. Conservation of wildlife and biodiversity of Prespa;
2. Preservation of Prespa's natural environment and cultural heritage through the promotion of sustainable development activities;
3. Increase of public awareness of both visiting and local population groups.

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Tourism Research Institute

The Board of the Faculty of Tourism and Catering, aiming at the more efficient research work, set up the Institute of Tourism and Catering on 27th December 1985. The Institute is an independent working unit which is open for scientific resolution of issues arising in the field of tourism in the Republic of Macedonia. The work of the Institute includes activities such as: defining problems arising from the relations in the sphere of tourist activity; organization of expert discussions, meetings and seminars devoted to certain issues incorporated in the scientific disciplines dealing with the tourism; public presentation of research findings; publication of scientific and expert studies and scientific findings from the field of tourism and catering.

The Institute has published a number of monographic works. It also participated in the publication of more than 30 textbooks and supplemental material.

In the course of its research activity, the Institute carried out several projects, including "Conditions and Organization Structure of Tourist Marketing in the Republic of Macedonia",

“Environmental and sociopsychological Aspects of Tourism”, “Conditions and Potentials for the Development of Tourism in Macedonia”.

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UNDP (United Nations Development Programme)

In the field of environment protection UNDP helps countries in seeking out and sharing best practices, providing innovative policy advice and linking partners through pilot projects that help poor people build sustainable livelihoods. UNDP’s support to the environmental sector in Macedonia focuses on two areas: (a) strengthening the policy framework for environmental management and sustainable development, and (b) providing support for the implementation of priority policy goals at the local level. In addition, UNDP has been working to assist the Government in meeting commitments which stem from international conventions. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Albania opened in 1991 and currently employs 39 people at the UNDP Country Office and 65 people in various projects (including United Nations Volunteers). UNDP delivers nearly \$4 million per year in development and technical assistance and represents 23 other UN agencies not stationed in the country. The country office also provides program support services to those agencies.

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UNEP (United Nations Environmental Programme)

UNEP's Regional Office for Europe promotes intergovernmental policy dialogue and regional cooperation, increases national capacity for environmental management and response emergencies, raises awareness and enhances information exchange, and translates global policies into regional action.

The main activities of UNEP/ROE include:

- Presenting global environmental policies in the region and enlisting support for them
- Supporting regional environmental processes
- Promoting national action on international environmental conventions
- Awareness-raising and networking in Europe
- Facilitating the Geneva Environment Network

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World Bank (GEF Implementing Agency)

The World Bank Group's mission is to fight poverty and improve the living standards of people in the developing world. It is a development Bank which provides loans, policy advice, technical assistance and knowledge sharing services to low and middle income countries to reduce poverty. The Bank promotes growth to create jobs and to empower poor people to take advantage of these opportunities.

FYR Macedonia joined the World Bank and the International Development Association (IDA) in 1993. Since then, the World Bank has helped to promote private sector development in the country, support structural reforms through adjustment lending and analysis, strengthen the social safety net, and improve infrastructure.

On September 9, 2003, the World Bank adopted its new Country Assistance Strategy (CAS) for FYR Macedonia for 2004 - 2006. The CAS is the World Bank's work plan in a country and defines the level and type of assistance to be provided, usually for a period of three years. The strategy is developed in close partnership with the government and in consultation with representatives from broad segments of civil society. Accordingly, the strategy is in line with the priorities of the government and the people of the country. The current strategy presents a program of support which seeks to build on the country's improved macroeconomic management and progress on implementation of structural reforms.

Since 1993, the World Bank has approved US\$600 million for 25 projects in the country. These projects have provided support in agriculture, health, education, private finance as well as other sectors. The projects have also leveraged considerable grant funding from other donors, which the World Bank helps in implementing. As one of the major development partners of Macedonia, the World Bank coordinates and integrates the Bank's program with those of its partners. Furthermore the World Bank has conducted a broad range of analytical and advisory work in the areas of public expenditure, public procurement, and tackling unemployment.

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GEF (Global Environment Facility) is an independent financial organization that provides grants to developing countries for projects that benefit the global environment and promote sustainable livelihoods in local communities. GEF projects address six complex global environmental issues:

- Biodiversity
- Climate Change
- International Waters
- Land Degradation
- The Ozone Layer
- Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs)

GEF projects are managed by GEF Implementing Agencies:

- the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)
- the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
- the World Bank

Seven other international organizations, known as GEF Executing Agencies, contribute to the management and execution of GEF projects. Since 1991, the GEF has provided \$4.5 billion in grants and generated \$14.5 billion in co-financing from other partners for projects in developing countries and countries with economies in transition.

Website: <www.gefweb.org>

WWF (World-Wide Fund for Nature)

The geographical scope of the WWF Mediterranean Programme includes all countries bordering the Mediterranean as well as Jordan, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Portugal. The WWF Mediterranean Programme Office is based in Rome, Italy, the Across The Waters capacity building programme in Barcelona, Spain. WWF works in close collaboration with WWF offices in France, Greece, Italy, Spain and Turkey, and runs several projects in partnership with national and local NGOs in Croatia, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Portugal, Algeria, and Tunisia.

WWF develops conservation programmes in ecoregions not covered by WWF National Organizations. In areas where WWF National Organizations are involved, they work in collaboration with them. One of the four Mediterranean ecoregions they work in are the western Balkans.

The Organizations Priorities in the region are:

- Conservation of forest, freshwater and marine ecosystems, promoting the establishment of protected areas and resource use practices that maintain biodiversity and ecological functions
- Promoting a sustainable fisheries regime in the entire basin

- Preventing nature loss from mass tourism
- Ensuring that the EU Mediterranean policy is ecologically sustainable and socially equitable
- Improving and implementing measures against pollution through the Barcelona Convention
- Supporting the development and growth of environmental NGOs
- Communications and advocacy to inform people, to raise awareness and to persuade decision makers and stakeholders to act.

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Concluding Remarks

Firstly, it seems important to us to emphasise the fact that our work is principally based on information available on the Internet. Therefore many sources are basically official communications of intergovernmental organisations and NGOs. Nonetheless we do also owe much to online publications of academic research.

In June 2004 Prime Ministers of Macedonia and Albania signed an “Agreement for Protection and Sustainable Development of Lake Ohrid Watershed”. This agreement gives opportunities and responsibilities to both sides and could result in joint management and environmental protection providing the conditions for sustainable development in the region. Furthermore all the parties agree that additional measures like updating regulations, educating the public about key legal provisions and an appropriate enforcement of agents in their respective areas (justice, administration, education, NGOs, and others) are needed.

It results from our research that there is an important lack of coordination between the numerous actors on the field. Though the latter seem to pursue, in broad lines, the same objectives (the sustainable development and the long term preservation of the natural heritage) most are too much centred on their specific field of intervention without pursuing a general design and considering the Prespa-Ohrid territory as a whole. Basically, one of the main problems appears to be a somewhat antiquated methodological approach because a global and long-term vision is too often missing.

While a wide range of local stakeholders, not the least the municipalities, show an evident interest, only limited authority is given to local governments. Moreover weak environmental regulations in both Albania and Macedonia threaten the important work that is done for preserving the natural heritage by the numerous actors in the region. The variety of legislative reforms decentralizing the environmental enforcement functions within each country have only given limited authority to the local governments.

However there are strong reasons to believe that if an effort of synergy at the local level is made positive results in the field of protection of the natural heritage could be reached.

One major positive aspect is that much scientific research has been carried out, especially throughout the last decade and it seems there is a good basis to build environmental policies on. Unfortunately too often intergovernmental organizations do not cooperate with each other and do not show a great interest in involving local stakeholders and/or giving them responsibilities in the implementation of projects. This results in frequent overlapping, waste of energy and precious knowledge. Therefore, a coherent policy, that could give the many projects carried out in the region an overall coherence, is missing.

At the time there is no joint committee monitoring the numerous activities in the Ohrid-Prespa Region as a whole. We suggest a trans-national advisory board involving experts in various fields. The latter might be responsible for providing up-to-date information and data to a powerful management board of the LOW (created by the fusion of the management board of LOCP and the PPCC). It seems to us that UNESCO could, in this context, play the role of a catalyst by promoting a more sensitive exploitation and a sustainable use of the potential of this unique area.

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www.ctc.ee (Peipsi Center for Transboundary Cooperation)

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