

**Pilot Upstream Project
“Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Ohrid Region”**

Lake Ohrid Scoping Mission Report



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Acknowledgements

The mission team would like to express its profound gratitude to the Albanian authorities for their support provided during the mission. Their support was instrumental in allowing IUCN and ICOMOS experts to get acquainted with the Albanian side of Lake Ohrid and its heritage, and to receive first-hand information on the issues and challenges that the State Party and local communities are facing in their pursuit to ensure a better protection of the Lake Ohrid's exceptional environment.

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1. Objectives and Terms of Reference

The mission was organised by the World Heritage Centre in cooperation with Albania as a first step in the implementation of the pilot project “Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Ohrid Region” proposed by the State Party in the framework of the Upstream Process in support of World Heritage nominations, established on an experimental basis following Decisions of the World Heritage Committee (see particularly 34 COM 12 and 35 COM 12). The aims of the upstream process are to provide transparent and systematic support in the nomination process in the very early stages of their preparation as well as to test more cooperative working methods among the State Parties, the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies with the broad aim of improving protection and management of World Heritage properties.

The specificity of this Pilot Project is that it considers an extension of an inscribed mixed site – the Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Ohrid Region (Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) – therefore the objectives of the mission were to assess the feasibility and appropriateness of an extension of the already inscribed site, including but not limited to the extension into Albania and to clarify the differences between the natural and cultural heritage perspective.

The Terms of Reference agreed for the ICOMOS and IUCN experts include:

1. Obtain information from the State Party of Albania on cultural heritage along the lake shore in general and on the proposed scope of the land extension;
2. Identify the vulnerabilities of the proposed extension in terms of development along the lake shore and how vulnerabilities are being addressed, and what protection and management arrangements would be appropriate;
3. Compile an overview of ecological information available about Lake Ohrid and the surrounding landscape, its conservation values and the threats to these values.
4. Compile an overview of past and existing management and conservation efforts in Lake Ohrid, including trans-boundary efforts and of past and current projects in support of conservation and natural resource management.
5. Carry out a situation analysis and institutional stakeholder analysis and identify potential partners involved.
6. Consider how trans-boundary collaboration between the two States Parties might be achieved more particularly for the definition and overall management of a potential extended trans-boundary property.
7. Contribute to a two-day workshop gathering representatives of the two States Parties with a focus on the protection and management of World Heritage properties in general terms.
8. Prepare a report jointly on the findings of the mission that will inform on the potential for a second phase of the Pilot project and its modalities including, if deemed necessary, recommendations for the draft of any further International Assistance requests.

2. Background information

The World Heritage property “Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Ohrid Region” has been inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1979 initially as a natural property, under natural criterion (iii), today criterion (vii). In 1980 the site was extended and became a mixed property under criteria (iii) and (iv).

A joint UNESCO-ICOMOS-IUCN monitoring mission was carried out in September 1998 for the first time since the inscription of the site on the World Heritage List in 1979. The mission observed that the

authorities undertake great efforts for the preservation of the natural and cultural heritage of the site. However, economic and demographic developments have posed threats to the values of the site that can only be addressed through an integrated approach and protective measures that link the cultural and the natural heritage preservation.

In 2009, at its 33rd session, the World Heritage Committee approved a minor boundary modification that slightly reduced the boundaries of the property to the north and to the west. Within this process, the creation of a buffer zone was encouraged by the Committee. On this occasion, the Committee also recommended that “a trans-boundary extension of the property to include the Albanian part of Lake Ohrid and its watershed be considered in order to strengthen the value and integrity of the property”. The present Upstream Pilot Project finds its origins within this context.

In September 2011, the State Party of Albania has submitted a tentative list format as a first step in the process of proposing this extension on the basis of the same cultural criteria of the inscribed property but proposing also criterion (ix) in addition to criterion (vii), formerly natural criterion (iii).

From a cultural perspective the preliminary proposal focuses on historic centre of the city of Pogradec, the triconch church of Lin with its mosaics and the traces of the Via Egnatia in Qafe Thana, which are considered the main attributes demonstrating the importance of this region along the centuries. Pogradec is a town located by the lakeshore at a site with a long history of occupation, as attested to by the archaeological findings and the remains of a fortified settlement dating back to the 5th century. The values of Pogradec would reside in the 19th- 20th vernacular architecture of its historic centre that would convey the atmosphere of that epoch. The aesthetic and landscape values of the historic cultural setting of the lakeshore are also underlined. The justification for inscription, however, revolves uniquely around the remains of the paleo-Christian church in Lin and the mosaics, which are compared to those in Butrint and considered as the work of the same masters operating in Ohrid. The State Party also mentions among possible relevant attributes the Tombs in Lower Selca, an important Illyrian settlement excavated in 1960s-70s and included in the tentative list of Albania since 1996.

Even though the description and justification of Outstanding Universal Value of this proposed property do not contain any particular reference to its natural features, the description of criteria does. Under criteria vii the emphasis has been given to the origin, age, and structure of rocks of Lake Ohrid, stating that Lake Ohrid “is the oldest lake in Europe and one of the oldest in the world. His origin is tectonic, and it is suggested to be created 4-10 million years ago... The bedrock structure of the watershed area includes rock masses of various types, compositions and age, going all back to the Paleozoic, Mesozoic and Cenozoic eras. In the Albanian Side of Lake Ohrid there are several nature monuments such as caves, springs, special geological features etc.” When it comes to criteria ix, the State Party states that “Ohrid lake continues to have a great collection of plants and animals which are unique in the world. It includes numerous of relict forms; alive fossils” and a lot of other endemic species that are found only in this lake. The Lake Ohrid fish fauna include 17 native species, of which 10 are endemic (two of which belongs to Salmonide family). Littoral zone is characterized by considerable communities of the plant and animal species. The red belts at this part of the lake have a big ecological importance as biotopes for a lot of other organisms, places for fish reproduction, and bird nesting place.” This extension is logically based on the existing World Heritage property in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and follows clear and undoubted ecological reasoning. Yet, adding new criteria to the existing ones would mean reconsideration and re-nomination of the existing World Heritage property which assumes a different nomination process than the proposed extension. This has to be taken into account in the course of the nomination process.

Early this year the State Party of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia submitted to the World Heritage Centre the draft retrospective Statement of Outstanding Universal Value for the

inscribed property for evaluation by the Advisory Bodies and approval by the World Heritage Committee. Although not yet approved by the Committee, the document represents a useful reference for the purpose of this mission. In 2010 the authorities of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia also submitted a Management Plan for the Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Ohrid Region World Heritage Site for review by the Advisory Bodies. The comments of the IUCN and ICOMOS experts were shared with the both States Parties in 2011.

3. Mission programme

The mission was composed of bilateral meetings, site visits, and a two-day workshop on World Heritage nomination that was attended, apart from stakeholders from the States Parties, by a representative of the World Heritage Centre, IUCN and ICOMOS experts. This chapter provides detailed information on the meetings held during the mission.

2 April 2012

Upon our arrival in Hotel Millennium, Pogradec, we met Mr Arian Meroli, an Albanian representative of the bilateral Lake Ohrid Watershed Committee, with whom we detailed the programme for the following days. Mr Meroli also made some first brief explanation on how the Lake Ohrid Watershed Committee operates. In the late afternoon we met Mr Artan Buso, Director of the Regional Directorate of Korça for National Culture and Mr Florenc Cenolli, archaeologist at the Archaeological Museum of Korça-Institute of Archaeology. Mr Buso offered his support to the mission team and explained that the documentation concerning the heritage of the area could be accessible at the Directorate headquarters, in Korça, (40 Km south of Pogradec – 1h trip). A tentative visit to his office was scheduled for the following day. Eventually it was agreed that Mr Cenolli would deliver a presentation during the workshop, since a visit to Korça would have occupied no less than 3 hours.

3 April 2012

In the morning Mr Meroli, Mrs Mariela Hoxha, Boris Erg and Luisa de Marco met the Mayor of the Commune of Buçimas. The Mayor explained that Pogradec and nearby communes have been identified at the national level for tourism development, therefore the master plan foresees the development of the lakeshore, through the creation of green areas, improvement of the road network, waste management. Apparently the master plans for Communes are developed and approved at the central level, although some further clarification is needed in this regard. He explained that currently the main economic base of the population of the villages is agriculture and tourism, whilst industry is virtually absent from his Commune. In his view, the area with tourism potential expands also beyond the lakeshore and may be coupled with the sustenance of local agricultural activity and of small – medium family run tourism accommodation facilities. The mayor looks positively at the strengthening of trans-boundary cooperation with the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, especially in the tourism sector, for which most development potentials for the Commune lie with.

Among the top priorities he mentioned the completion of the wastewater treatment system and solid waste management, which, in his view, should be accompanied by a change of mentality of the local people.

Immediately after this meeting, the mission team met Mr Ilirian Mimini, Director of the wastewater treatment plant Pogradec and his team. In his introductory words, Mr Mimini explained the scope, objectives and the state of implementation of the wastewater treatment system set up for the area within the framework of a project for environmental protection of Lake Ohrid, which includes two major lines of action: water supply and sewage management.

As for the sewage management, the project was articulated into three phases. The first phase included: the collocation of the main collector, the construction of the pumping station and of the treatment plant. The second phase comprised the connection of Pogradec to the treatment system. The first two phases have been completed to date, whilst the third, comprising the completion of the connection of Pogradec to the treatment plant, the increase of the capacity of the plant and the addition of chemical phase to the mechanical and biological ones for the water treatment are yet to be done.

At present not all villages are connected to the wastewater treatment plant. The area that is yet to be connected to the system comprises villages along the shoreline north of Pogradec. The total amount of this milestone environmental investment is worth more than EUR 25 million. It has brought significant improvement to the area in terms of water quality, yet the system has to be completed in order for the wastewater to be treated in all segments. The quantity of phosphorus in the lake is still high and that can be resolved only by adding a chemical treatment component to the existing wastewater treatment scheme. The existence of the wastewater plant does not abate the problem of solid waste though.

In the late morning, after two meetings, we were accompanied by Mrs Mariela Hoxha, Mrs Ronela Cuku and Marsela Plyku, from the Albanian Institute of Monuments of Culture, to visit the remains of the Paleo-Christian basilica with its mosaics and the hamlet of Lin.

While the rest of the team had continued with its visits to cultural sites, Boris Erg, accompanied by Mr Arian Meroli visited the trout hatchery north of Lin. A counterpart hatchery exists on the Macedonian side of the lake nearby village Shum. The aim of the hatcheries is to replenish the lake's fish stock. Even though the maximum capacity of the hatchery in Albania has not yet been reached, the average annual release of fry into the lake is estimated at 1-2 million specimen. On the way to the hatchery numerous small size land units have been observed along the shore, primarily serving subsistence agriculture for the local inhabitants. A certain amount of litter was present, too.

In the afternoon, a visit to an historic district of Pogradec, dating back to the late 19th -early 20th century, was organised. Mrs Mariela Hoxha explained that the process to establish its formal protection under the national legislation was underway. However, no map of the boundaries of the area to be protected was shown.

The Castle of Pogradec was not visited due to the time constraints of the planned schedule for that day and the difficult road access to the site. As well, no plans were made to visit the Tombs of Lower Selca which are also mentioned in the tentative list format, for their even farther location. No recent photographs or documentation were made available to us for these two sites.

It was not possible to locate the mosaics in Tushemisht. Apparently, during the political transition in the 1990s, a new church was built over the archaeological site.

In the late afternoon Mr Arian Merolli, Mr Boris Erg and Mrs Luisa de Marco met Mr Vexhi Cinari, Head of Nature Protection Unit at the Forestry Service Pogradec, responsible for management of Pogradec Protected Landscape (see Annex C, Image 2), which is protected under category V according to IUCN's classification. Category V protected landscapes/seascapes include areas "where the interaction of people and nature over time has produced an area of distinct character with significant ecological, biological, cultural and scenic value" (IUCN, 2008). Main land use practices in the protected area are forestry, agriculture, and fishery. Forests have been transferred to the communes by the law in terms of ownership and management, yet, the communes do not have sufficient management experience. The forest authority is providing expert support in that respect to the communes. The main problem is the state of the forests and their conversion into high value forests. Agriculture is characterized by low intensity, with limited use of pesticides and mechanic equipment, and includes

crop production and livestock breeding. The forest authority is also responsible for law enforcement, with two inspectors controlling the area. There was, however, no particular information provided or discussion held on management of biodiversity of the area. There is no overall management plan for Pogradec Protected Landscape, even though cooperation with the communes and some sectoral management plans (e.g. forest management plan) exist. No evidence on trans-boundary cooperation between protected area authorities could have been verified.

4 April 2012

A workshop on World Heritage nominations was held on 4-5 April in Hotel Lychnidas near Pogradec. The workshop was attended by numerous participants from Albania representing various stakeholder groups, as well as representatives from the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. The workshop was introduced by Mr Sajmir Hoxha, Director of Biodiversity at the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Water Administration, who summarised the aims of the workshop of the mission as well as their expected outcomes.

The workshop was structured as a two-day event: first day was dedicated to introductory presentations on nomination procedures, comparative analysis, delivered by Alessandro Balsamo (WHC), criteria for selection, conditions of integrity and authenticity, protection and management requirements, delivered by Boris Erg (IUCN) and by Luisa De Marco (ICOMOS), whereas day two was split into two major sessions: presentations on protection and management requirements followed by work in groups.

Mr Alessandro Balsamo described the entire nomination process focussing on the most delicate aspects of any nomination, i.e. the documentation and its use, the right detail of a nomination, the definition of appropriate boundaries of the property and of its buffer zone and of their clear representation. In a separate presentation he focused on the rationale and function of the comparative analysis.

Mrs Luisa de Marco delivered one presentation on the integrity and authenticity requirements for cultural properties, focusing on the role of the attributes, of the boundaries of the property and of its buffer zone in qualifying both integrity and authenticity and on their relation with the OUV and the selected criteria. Specific consideration was given to the understanding of integrity and authenticity requirements in the case of property extensions.

Mr Boris Erg delivered a presentation on the criteria and integrity requirements for natural properties with particular focus on property boundaries and buffer zones. A special emphasis was given to the importance of proper definition of boundaries in securing effective management of the nominated property. Some examples of natural World Heritage properties were given to illustrate the requirement for integrity with respect to effective management.

The day before, the mission team had proposed to the Albanian hosts that also some presentations on the cultural and natural heritage of the Albanian region around the Lake Ohrid could have been useful for the discussion. Therefore, these were inserted into the schedule of the workshop.

With regard to the natural heritage, Mr Meroli gave an introductory presentation on the state of management of Lake Ohrid. This included a brief summary of the Lake Ohrid Conservation Project (LOCP) and the subsequent establishment and work of the Lake Ohrid Watershed Management Committee. This transboundary management body represents a breakthrough in joint management efforts around Lake Ohrid, with transboundary monitoring programmes and periodical reporting as major achievements. He also stressed the importance of recent improvements stemming from the wastewater treatment project.

As for the cultural heritage, two presentations were delivered by Marcela Plyku, specialist in restoration at the Department of Ancient and Medieval Architecture and by Mr Florenc Cenolli, archaeologist at the Archaeological Museum of Korça-Institute of Archaeology, introduced by Mrs Mariela Hoxha, Head of Unit, Institute of Cultural Monuments.

Mrs Marcela Plyku outlined the history and the cultural significance of the monuments and of the archaeological remains and traces located along the Albanian lake-shores and in their vicinity that were selected as the most relevant to justify the potential for the trans-boundary extension of the World Heritage property Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Ohrid Region to the Albanian shores of Lake Ohrid. The most important monuments that could be found in the wider region of Pogradec were also mentioned, however, only a few out of 27 protected monuments/sites were considered, due to their close location to the area considered eligible for extension. In summary, the presentation referred to the document on the cultural heritage of the region that was previously provided by the Albanian authorities and did not provide much additional information than already submitted.

An updated version of the document containing information on the cultural heritage of the area which was submitted along with the Tentative List for the extension in the Albanian territory of the "Cultural and Natural Heritage of the Ohrid Region" with the full list of the monuments of the region containing general information about each protected monument and their relevant epochs was requested following the presentation to complete the already provided documentation, This updated document should be accompanied by a map showing their location.

Mr Cenolli gave a thorough presentation on the archaeological heritage and sites studied and excavated in the Korça region over the last decades with particular reference to the most recent ones, carried out within the framework of the KoBaS project (Korça Basin Survey, initiated in 2005 in cooperation with the Albanian Rescue Archaeology Unit and the Institute of Archaeology of the Albanian Academy of Sciences). He explained that 83 archaeological sites have been located and a good part of them also studied. The presentation by Mr Cenolli during the workshop made clear that a more profound knowledge of the archaeological heritage of the Korça region exists in respect to Pogradec area. This disparity is possibly due to the fact that in former times two different offices were responsible for the protected cultural heritage in the Pogradec and Korça regions: one – for Pogradec - was based in Tirana, whilst the second was already based in Korça. Recent administrative changes have brought to include the territory of the Pogradec municipality and nearby villages under the responsibility of the Regional Directorate for National Culture of Korça.

However, this evidence in fact provoked some discussions among the local stakeholders, who were keen to demonstrate the importance of the cultural heritage of Pogradec area.

5 April 2012

Mr Boris Erg and Luisa de Marco gave a second batch of presentations on effective protection and management requirements. The presentations aimed at providing a general overview of management requirements within the World Heritage context. A special emphasis was given to clarifying that often the type and form of existing protection regimes and measures may not be the most adequate to guarantee the proper sustenance of Outstanding Universal Value, that appropriate measures should be set up, preferably on the grounds of existing legal and planning instruments. Steps towards meeting protection and management requirements were also illustrated by providing several examples. Apart from explaining basic management principles for World Heritage properties, some further guidance on management planning process has been given, emphasising the importance of adaptive management planning cycles.

Following the two IUCN and ICOMOS presentations, a first approach to SWOT analysis in the form of a one-hour brainstorming session was carried out. Participants were divided into two groups, dealing with cultural and natural heritage respectively. At the end of the workgroup session one member for each group presented the results of the exercise, giving the opportunity to the participants to take actively part in the workshop and discuss among each other issues and options.

It is worth noting that the 'cultural' group mentioned, among the major strengths of the region, its natural values. The draft summary of the results of this exercise is provided in Annex A to the present report and some topics identified by the participants have also been incorporated into the final recommendations.

6 April 2012

In the morning a brief meeting with the Vice Prefect of Korça County was held at his office. He expressed his appreciation for the project and offered his full support to achieve the pursued results. Immediately after, a meeting with the Deputy Mayor of Pogradec was also organised. We briefly explained the tasks of the mission and the general requirements for world heritage properties and the commitment required to national and local authorities. Both representatives were supportive of this mission and the process in general.

After the meetings, Mr Meroli accompanied us to visit the small district corresponding to the oldest part of Pogradec, which comprises buildings dating back as early as 18th – 19th century and where the Orthodox Church of Pogradec is located. The church suffered heavy dilapidation and abandonment over the central decades of the 20th century and was reconstructed in the 1990s. Mr Meroli informed us that the district enjoys a special regime within the Pogradec master plan aiming to safeguard the traditional character of the area. A few buildings appeared restored.

Later we met a group of representatives of local NGOs and the secretary of the Forum of the NGOs with whom we discussed their activity and the role that NGOs may play in the nomination and management process of a property.

4. Overview of current situation

4.1 Information on the natural heritage of the area and its conservation status

Lake Ohrid in Albania and its surroundings share similar ecological features as the area extending in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. As stated in many previous documents, Lake Ohrid is one of the oldest lakes in the world. It was formed 2-3 million years ago, in the Tertiary period. In contrast, most other lakes across the globe are only 10,000-45,000 years old, having formed in the last glacial period. Located at an altitude of 695 m and encircled by mountains exceeding 2000 m in height, Lake Ohrid, has 87.5 km of shoreline, and covers an area of about 358 km², of which 249 km² belongs to Macedonia and 109 km² to Albania. The coastline of Lake Ohrid in Albania is 56 km. The lake has an average depth of 164 m and a maximum depth of 289 m. About two-thirds of the lake is in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and one third in Albania. The watershed of Lake Ohrid covers well over 2000 km² and includes Lake Prespa. At 845 m, Lake Prespa sits above Lake Ohrid and its waters drain into Lake Ohrid through the very porous karst mountains of Galicica and Mali i Thate. The Big and Small Prespa Lakes covers an area of about 301 km² and are much shallower than Lake Ohrid, with a maximum depth of only 52 m. Lake Prespa is shared by Albania, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Greece. It is, therefore, that the Lake Ohrid watershed area embraces a much bigger area shared between three countries; Albania, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Greece. It is stretching from the peaks of the Karaoman in north, following in east on the peaks of Ilinska,

Plakenska, Baba (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia). On the southern side the Lake Ohrid watershed stretches from the peaks of Goroec (Greece) and Mali i Thate, (Albania), following in west on the peaks of the Mokra mountain (Albania) that lies parallel to the lake between Pogradec and Lin. The most important inflows to Lake Ohrid on Albanian side are Tushemisht springs, the Çerava River, Pogradec River and Verdova River.

Because the lake is so old and has been isolated by surrounding hills and mountains, a unique collection of plants and animals have evolved. Some of these plants and animals were common species millions of years ago but they are now considered relics or “living fossils” because they only persist here in Lake Ohrid as live organisms. Many other species in Lake Ohrid are endemic, meaning they are only found in this lake. Ten of seventeen identified fish species of the Lake Ohrid are endemic, as are many of the lake’s snails, worms, and sponges. The benthic fauna of Lake Ohrid are characterized by a high degree of richness and diversity of archaic, endemic and relics forms that origin from Tertiary period. The rounded sponge *Ochridospongia rotunda* is a famous endemorelict form that is only found in Lake Ohrid. The highest diversity and the highest percentage of endemism are present in class *gastropoda*; about 86% of the 50 known species of gastropods are endemic. Other classes with high degree of endemism include *Tricladida* (80.5%), *Oligochaeta* (47.2%), *Hirunidea* (52.4%), *Ostracoda* (71.4%), *Amphipoda* (60%), *Isopoda* (75%). The endemism is present also in the microalgae species. About 90 species of the 550 species of diatoms are rare, tertiary relict, or endemic species. 146 endemic species have been identified. Endemism among these species is 90% of snails, 88% of parasitic infusoria, 71% of flat worms, 66% of small crabs and 60% of fish. Five of the endemic species are restricted even within the lake to micro-ecosystems. Ten of the lake’s 17 fish species are endemic. They include the salmonid Ohrid trout *Salmo letnica* (VU – Vulnerable according to the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species) and belvica *Acantolingua ohridana* (VU). To date 125 vascular plant species, both terrestrial and aquatic, have been identified, including the reed belt that serves as spawning ground for many fish species and an important wintering site for tens of thousands of birds of more than 20 bird species (migratory) that populate the area. The highest number of individual birds was observed in 1999, with 64,948 birds of 23 species on Lake Ohrid. The avifauna of the lake includes Dalmatian Pelican *Pelecanus crispus* (VU), Great White Pelican *Pelecanus onocrotalus*, Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo sinensis*, Small Cormorant *Phalacrocorax pygmeus*, Mute Swan *Cygnus olor*, Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis*, Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*, Red-crested Pochard *Netta rufina*, Common Pochard *Aythya ferina*, White-eyed Duck *Aythya ferruginea*, Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula* and Corncrake *Crex crex*. The shoreline between Pogradec and the border of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia is the richest habitat for shorebirds on the Albanian side of Lake Ohrid.

Lake Ohrid is recognized at the international level as an important site for biodiversity conservation. Lake Ohrid has been given the status of an Important Bird Area (IBA) both in Albania and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and is part of the European Green Belt initiative, one of the most comprehensive transboundary conservation initiatives in Europe. It is therefore no surprise that the lake itself and its surrounding area are populated with protected areas. In Albania those are Pogradec Protected Landscape and Prespa National Park, while in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia two other protected areas are designated – Lake Ohrid Protected Landscape (covering the lake surface) and the Galicica National Park, in part overlapping with the existing World Heritage property “Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Ohrid Region”. Pogradec Protected Landscape (IUCN Category V) was designated in 1999 by the Decision of the Council of Ministers across 27.323 ha spanning Mali i Thate mountain and Lake Ohrid in Albania. The protected area is managed by the Directorate of Forest Service Pogradec. The Prespa National Park (13,500 ha) was established with the

same decision of the Council of Ministers in 1999. The entire territory of Lake Prespa in Albania is surrounded with the Prespa National Park, which extends from the mountain massif of Mali i Thate to the south and east toward Mikri Prespa Lake bordering with Greece. The Prespa National Park is under the jurisdiction of the Directorate of Forest Service Korça. Both protected areas are important transboundary sites not only for their ecological features but also for the rich cultural heritage and local tradition. Incorporated in the national and regional forestry service structures, both protected areas, even though with dedicated individuals, are represented by limited number of staff in need of knowledge and skills for proper protected area management. In that respect, a five-year project “Transboundary Biosphere Reserve Prespa – Support to the Albanian Prespa National Park” has been launched with the aim of improving management of the Prespa National Park and the establishment of a Transboundary Biosphere Reserve around Prespa Lakes. A similar support to Pogradec Protected Landscape would be beneficial both for the Protected Area authority and local communities.

Due to its ecological features, there is a clear need for transboundary cooperation around Lake Ohrid that may also extend to adjacent Prespa Lakes. It is difficult to expect proper conservation and effective management of biodiversity of Lake Ohrid without coordinated action on both sides of the border and high involvement of major stakeholder groups – protected area authorities, local authorities, local communities, water management authorities, fishing associations, forest services, etc. Apart from the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Water Administration, the main stakeholders in the area are the Directorate of Forest Service Pogradec, Municipality of Pogradec, Communes of Buçimas and Tushemisht, and the Lake Ohrid Watershed Committee.

All conservation efforts for Lake Ohrid have to have a strong emphasis on transboundary conservation. From scientific and managerial points of view, there is no reason for having different designations and management regimes over the same ecological area in neighbouring countries. This in particular pertains to water bodies. Therefore, an extension of the existing World Heritage property “Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Ohrid Region” on to the territory of Albania would help strengthen the overall management of Lake Ohrid and help secure its integrity.

4.2 Information on the cultural heritage of the area and on its conditions

As stated earlier,, , on the basis of what was presented during the workshop, it seems at present that there is a much clearer understanding of the dynamics of the human occupation in the area in prehistoric and proto – historic times in the territory around Korça than around Pogradec. The documentation provided on the cultural heritage of the Pogradec and adjacent communes along the Albanian lakeshore would demonstrate either the survival of little physical evidence of the cultural heritage in the area or a rather outdated and imprecise knowledge. The uneven level of knowledge and documentation for the two areas - much greater for the Korça region – is possibly due to the past organisation of peripheral branches of the Directorate of Cultural Heritage as well as to a different approach to research on the part of the Tirana and Korça branches of the Institute of Archaeology. Also, it is possible that the Korça region conserves a richer heritage than Pogradec area. Historically, Korça played an important role since the 15th century, which increased in the second half of the 18th century, when the city of Moscopole declined.

It should be noted that no academic or researcher with specific knowledge of the area was included in the participants to the workshop.

The site visits allowed to assess in a preliminary manner the consistence and conditions of the potential cultural attributes conveying the cultural value of the proposed extension.

Basilica and village of Lin

The remains of the structures of the basilica are located on the top of a peninsula formed by a hilly outcrop close to the lakeshore connected to the mainland through a stretch of lowland, today converted into arable land. Thanks to this location, the site enjoys an open and spectacular view over the lake. The site is fenced, one staff member from the Regional Directorate of Korça for National Culture is responsible for opening to visit the site. The mosaic is remarkable and apparently well preserved (only a portion of it was uncovered), protected by sheets of polyethylene and a layer of sand to prevent that rainwater may damage it. Although currently this layer represents probably the best way, given the available means, to protect the mosaic, if the State Party intends to open it to visit, a different solution should be envisioned to prevent exposure of the mosaics to the weather and at the same time facilitate its appreciation.

At the foot of the promontory on its northern side, lies the hamlet of Lin, inhabited by farmers/fishermen. It retains a number of traditional, simple rural houses; its streets are partly paved with modern coloured concrete bricks and partly still unpaved. For its location and conformation, the whole of the outcrop with the village retains some aesthetic landscape qualities that deserve to be safeguarded from improper urban development, which is already taking place with the construction of a number of new, out-of-scale buildings at the western edges of the village.

Pile-dwelling archaeological site

South of Lin, near Bukezë, the remains of a pile dwelling settlement was documented. No precise information about its location and consistence could be provided by the representatives of the State Party.

Pogradec Castle

It was not possible to ascertain its consistence and conditions because the visit was initially postponed and eventually cancelled due to time constraints, bad weather and unknown conditions of the road to reach the site on a hilltop dominating the town.

As already mentioned, the mosaic in Tushemisht has been probably lost.

Pogradec historic centre

The two historic neighbourhoods visited in Pogradec are rather small and isolated and, although presenting some interesting features, do not exhibit an adequate level of urban complexity and architectural quality and integrity to justify consideration for inclusion in the extension of the property. Contrary to Ohrid or Korça, until the 1930s, Pogradec had been a small town and its road network, urban density and surviving traditional architecture still clearly attest to the former almost rural character of this town.

Curiously, it seems that the older surviving part of Pogradec, with interesting examples of traditional houses with a mixed stone and wooden masonry structure (see photographs n. 22-26 in Annex B), and covered by special planning provisions is not included in the district that the Albanian Directorate for Cultural Heritage is in process to protect formally as a national monument (see photographs n. 18-19 in Annex B). A short visit to both areas would suggest that it would be reasonable to protect as a registered monument also the ensemble that apparently is only covered by planning protection measures (Annex B).

The archaeological remains of the basilica with the mosaic pavement (see photographs n. 7-9 in Annex B) are probably the only attributes that could be credibly enclosed in the extension of the property. Consideration could also be given to the peninsula itself and to the village of Lin as part of

the immediate setting of the basilica. The traces of the pile – dwellings could also be considered - as a counterpart of the pile dwelling settlement found near Struga - but some information on their consistence and conditions is necessary.

In the wider Pogradec region, the State party has identified as additional, possibly relevant heritage resources also:

- the Illyrian necropolis of Lower Selca, located in the mountains east to Pogradec, dating back to the IV – II centuries BC, inserted in the Tentative List of Albania since 1996;
- the villages of Llëngë and Niçë: in the first lies the monastery of St. Marena, dating back to the 18th century, protected as national monument whilst in the second St Mary Church can be found;
- traces of the via Egnatia, connecting Rome to Constantinople have been detected in different areas of Albania and, in the Region, the State Party mentions Qafë Thana (situated in the hills overlooking the lake along the road connecting Lin to Elbasan).
- in this regard, ICOMOS notes that systematic research has already commenced, i.e. by the International Centre for Albanian Archaeology (ICAA), which has surveyed the area between Elbasan and Qukës, yielding promising although preliminary results (see <http://www.icaa.org.al/>, section Field projects).

As mentioned before, a list of 27 protected monuments located in the Pogradec region exists but no map with their location or images of their actual consistence were provided. A brief search on the web through “Google map” suggests that most of these monuments are quite isolated one from the other, located rather far from the lake and partly outside the perimeter of the protected landscape of Pogradec. Therefore it appears difficult to assess the contribution of these monuments to the justification of the Outstanding Universal Value.

During the workshop, representatives of local NGOs mentioned cultural heritage items that were not included in the Institute’s list and discussed with the Institute’s representatives the possibilities to extend the protection to further sites or immovable properties.

In summary, from the information provided during the mission by the State Party representatives, the documented cultural heritage resources of the immediate and wider area surrounding the Albanian shores of the Lake Ohrid appears a collection of unrelated isolated objects. However, they suggest that the area witnessed human occupation since prehistoric and proto-historic times. To obtain a clearer picture of the historic – cultural development of the area and of its cultural significance also in relation to the inscribed property, the current mapping of its cultural resources needs to be updated, deepened and integrated into a wider historic- territorial perspective of the region. This objective requires a medium to long-term effort, depending on the data and information already available to the State Party, through its administrative branches, scientific institutions, universities, NGOs.

As a first step to clarify the ‘state of the art’ of the current knowledge of the cultural heritage in the region, the representatives of the institutions for cultural heritage protection were suggested to prepare a list of the protected or documented monuments existing in the Pogradec area accompanied with their related, updated bibliography. The elaboration of a topographic map in an adequate scale with all known cultural and archaeological sites clearly mapped was also recommended.

Additionally, with the aim of beginning to reflect on the real possibilities and limits of the extension of the property across the Albanian border, the Albanian authorities were asked to clarify if the end-points of the boundary of Pogradec Protected Landscape in Albania creates a continuum with the boundary of the existing World Heritage property in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

During the workshop and in separate talks during the site visits and lunch breaks with the representatives of the authorities responsible for the cultural heritage, the elements to be considered for defining the scope and the rationale of the extension on the base of cultural values were also discussed. The good knowledge of the inscribed property, the justification for inscription and the relevant attributes as well as of the cultural heritage and historic development of the Albanian lakeshore was underlined as a necessary step to define the scope of the extension and to delimit its boundaries and those of the buffer zone. Consideration was also given to the different aspects and range of values highlighted in the nomination dossier of the inscribed property and in the ICOMOS evaluation, so as to help select the relevant attributes of the extension that could match with and further express the Outstanding Universal Value of the inscribed property.

4.3 Vulnerabilities and threats to the area

Unplanned urban development

The town of Pogradec has rapidly grown from 16.000 inhabitants to more than 40.000 after the independence of Albania. This is partly due to inland migration from the villages in the surrounding hills and partly caused by the increasing tourist vocation of Pogradec area. Multi-stories buildings have been erected along the lake promenade, substituting the fabric of individual cottages and villas that represented the building type of the first tourist season experienced by Pogradec. Only a few of them survive to bear witness to the town's historic season. Several new buildings are being constructed but a number of unfinished ones can also be detected. Several medium-sized hotels lie along the lakeshore, although, in the town, the immediate lakeshore is almost completely free from buildings except for some kiosks and other small service structures.

The quality of building components and finishes (i.e., plasters, railings and banisters, shutters, gutters, etc.) is overall inappropriate or poor. Many unfinished constructions are scattered both in the built and in the rural areas. Urban regulations seem to be applied more effectively in certain areas than in other, although, in general, they do not succeed to orient the quality of small interventions (fencing, maintenance, component replacement, technical installation and upgrading, etc.). However, it is evident that the municipality is making efforts to improve the quality of the built environment of the town and of its open spaces.

Despite the regulations for the Protected Landscape of Pogradec which would impose a no-construction regime over a 300 m-wide strip of the lakeshore (information provided by Mr A.Meroli), a number of multi-stories large buildings have been built and continue to be erected, especially along the road from Pogradec to Lin. Additionally, the architectural and construction quality of new buildings – be they illegal or legal - is generally unsatisfactory, with the exception of a few recent examples in Pogradec, which exhibit some improvement in the architectural design compared to most of the buildings constructed in the recent decades.

Tushemisht is a small village located to the east of Pogradec which conserves its rural character although even in this case, only a few traditional buildings survive intact, the majority having been heavily altered with inappropriate extensions, materials and finishes. The streets are unpaved. This smaller reality makes evident the problems that affect the area: outdated or lack of infrastructures, waste management problems, informal building activity. Apart from having a negative impact on the consistency of traditional architecture and on aesthetic values, uncontrolled urban development poses a risk on the environment of the area. The shoreline offers suitable habitats for various species with favourable conditions for feeding and reproduction. The alteration of these habitats (e.g. reed beds) caused by land transformation and urban development has a direct negative impact on the populations that inhabit these habitats. In addition to a direct negative impact on the state of

environment by habitat alteration, fragmentation, and eventually destruction, uncontrolled urban development (especially for touristic purposes) has manifold indirect negative impacts such as increased pollution, disturbance, additional pressure on land use, etc.

Waste

Waste represents one of the biggest environmental problems in the area, affecting not only nature but all aspects of life. The waste problem primarily pertains to the wastewaters and solid waste. Solid waste can be observed in the lake and across the land. The problem of local household waste is coupled with the fact that the tributaries can carry a significant amount of waste and bring it into the lake and around its shores. Apart from the local inhabitants, additional pressure is brought by tourists, especially during seasonal peaks. The number of inhabitants during the peak seasons is not clear; however, weekend tourism is already growing and it will further increase after the completion of the new road from Tirana to Elbasan, when the Tirana – Elbasan travel time will be reduced to one third of its current 1.5-2 hours.

Considering the anticipated increase of visitors, there is an urgent need to complete the connection of all settlements in the plain with the wastewater management plant and to upgrade its capacity, if necessary. A solution should also be found for the other settlements that cannot be connected to the existing plant but are nevertheless comprised within the watershed of the lake.

A second, not less important matter is the management of solid waste. Although efforts are being made, they appear completely inadequate to address effectively the problem. We were informed that a dumping ground or a landfill is being currently constructed near Maliq, 30 km from Pogradec, more garbage containers will be distributed and garbage collection will be improved. However, these measures will not gain immediate effectiveness and need to be accompanied by education and sensitisation campaigns among the population.

Infrastructure development

The upgrading of the means of communication between Tirana, Elbasan, Pogradec, Korça towards the Greek border is part of the wider programme for the realisation of the VIII PAN European Corridor, a multimodal axis connecting Southern Italy with Albania, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Bulgaria and Greece.

In this regard, we were informed that the long-distance road under construction from Tirana to Korça would avoid the city of Pogradec and the lake, in that it would be built beyond the ridge of mountains delimiting the lake itself. Nevertheless, it should be noted that, along the road connecting Lin to Pogradec, evident traces of earth movements and land arrangements for a doubled road-bed could be seen. Apparently, these works are meant to upgrade and enlarge the current road, which would be meant to carry only local traffic.

Additionally, the VIII Pan European Corridor foresees also the strengthening of the railway line connecting Durrës with Sofia (Bulgaria) through Tirana, Elbasan, Lin, Struga and Skopje (the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia), which between Lin and Struga, would imply the construction of a new line, currently non-existent.

No documentation was shown concerning these large projects and their impact is currently unknown. Therefore, it would be very important that the State Party provides detailed information about the entire programme of infrastructure upgrading and construction foreseen in the framework of the VIII PAN European Corridor, with maps identifying the main road route, as well as of the related roads that will be improved or constructed, accompanied by a textual and visual description of the road and rail section types and dimension, to obtain a clear picture of the possible impacts of these

works on the area considered for extension. A similar request has already been made in December 2011 to the State Party of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, who should be reminded about it, especially in view of the fact that the rail corridor is planned to connect Lin to Struga, across the territory of the World Heritage property Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Ohrid Region.

Mining

The area was rich in chromium, nickel, iron ore and coal which were mined in past decades. Evident legacy of this activity is the large coal mining complex located between Pogradec and Lin, as well as the pollution caused by mining activity. Apparently, some of these mines will be reactivated. This could pose further threats from the environmental point of view. A total of six mines are located in the vicinity of Lake Ohrid in Albania, posing serious threats to the inhabiting communities and biodiversity through water and soil pollution. The mines were established to exploit deposits of chromium (Cr), iron (Fe), nickel (Ni) and coal. The mines have polluted the lake through the mining activity itself, through the discharge of untreated wastewater from the extraction and production process, and as a result of the runoff from the huge mineral-rich stockpiles of residues that remain at the sites. The mines operated in full capacity until the beginning of the 1990s. However, the traces of all the extracted metals could be monitored to date in the waters of Lake Ohrid. This is the result of the open slag piles left after the mines were closed, exposed to drainage and run-off waters. This represents a significant ecological risk with direct toxic effects on the lake's biodiversity. Apart from direct contamination, the another risk stems from the fact that metals can be accumulated in fishes or birds, which in a longer run poses a risk to the people who eat these animals. These metals might also directly pose a risk to the human population of the area through contamination of the local drinking water sources. Several specimens of wild Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus* were observed as caught and offered to sell along the main road north of Pogradec. The mission was told that the birds serve for food.

Despite the fact that the mines are not operational any longer, the situation with mines remains somewhat unclear so that further explanation on the state of and future plans for the mines should be provided.

Fishing and habitat alteration

Several pressures on species populations have been documented. Certainly the biggest pressure is on fish species used for commercial purposes. The human pressures on fish population of Lake Ohrid are high, especially with respect to the Ohrid Trout. This fish is considered as delicacy and easily finds its place on food markets. Therefore, the population of this species is in decline driven by overfishing. While there is a ban on fishing endemic species in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, fishing in Albania, although limited, is widespread. There was an important attempt to reverse this down spiral trend by creating two hatchery centres, one in Albania and one in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, which help improve the condition of the trout population by means of fry production and release into the lake. However, fishery remains one of the issues to be tackled in the future as it requires better management and law enforcement. The status and management of fish populations has to be considered together with other pressures on lake resources, such as alteration of habitats, infrastructure development, water pollution and subsequent eutrophication, disturbance, etc. Another noteworthy phenomenon is bird poaching that could have been observed during the mission. Wild birds such as Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus* and Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo* are caught and exhibited along the main roads in the area.

Despite the widespread and active unplanned development that the lakeshore is undergoing, with out-of-scale buildings, tracts of the lakeshore are still natural, intact and preserved and maintain their rural character, in particular in the area to the east of Pogradec and along the Western side of the lake shore from Pogradec to Lin. Here, unspoiled shoreline, tracts of reed beds, ordered cultivated fields dotted with fruit trees features the gentle slopes bordering the lake: the view of these fields with Mountain Mali I Thate in the background constitutes a scenic panorama, which can be enjoyed from the public road and from the hamlets located in the foothills. From a cultural perspective, the aesthetic quality of this scenery should not be underestimated and represents probably the most significant value of this place which therefore deserves the maximum effort to ensure its preservation through careful and strict regulation of building activity, urban development and infrastructure upgrading.

Whilst the local authorities seem rather aware of the problems posed by wastewater and solid waste management, they do not appear prepared to tackle uncontrolled urban development and with the consequences of a rapid increase of tourism, which the upgrading of the road network will contribute to. Awareness does not mean preparedness but represents already a good step forward to overcome a problem. Therefore it is our opinion that the issue of unregulated urban development will not be solved in the short term, despite the legislation reforms passed by the State, also because the economic prospects that a faster and easier connection with the capital and with Elbasan, a major industrial city located 85 km north-west to Pogradec, will only increase the pressure on the free, non-urbanised land.

In addition, integrated management of biodiversity and natural resources seems to be left aside when it comes to planning at the local level, with the protected area manager unable to bring it to the attention of the local authorities. The recent transfer of land tenure from the central to the local level brought some concerns over the capacity of local authorities to effectively manage the forest resources.

5. Protection and management

5.1 Current protection and management

At present, the Protected Landscape of Pogradec (IUCN category V) established in 1999 provides a legal basis for the protection of Lake Ohrid and the surrounding area, that, from the cultural perspective, includes certain attributes proposed by the State Party as possibly relevant to the extension. The protected area encircles the lake surface, adjoining lowland around the lake, extending to the slopes and ridges of the surrounding hills. The protected area comprises the Municipality of Pogradec (<http://www.bashkiapogradec.gov.al>) and Buçimas and Tushemisht Communes, as well as the villages of Lin and nearby hamlets. The protected area is managed by the Directorate of Forest Service Pogradec, within which operates a unit responsible for the protected area. The unit is small and counts around 10 staff including managers and rangers. The staff, however, includes mainly forestry experts and lack specific conservation expertise.

According to IUCN (2008), protected landscape/seascape (Category V) is “a protected area where the interaction of people and nature over time has produced an area of distinct character with significant ecological, biological, cultural and scenic value: and where safeguarding the integrity of this interaction is vital to protecting and sustaining the area and its associated nature conservation and other values”. Therefore, the objectives and requirement for management of category V protected areas, the selected category for this protected landscape, would ideally be adequate also to protect and manage the cultural aspects and associated cultural values of the area, particularly the aesthetic and

traditional values and land use that still survive and qualify the landscape surrounding the lake and the lowland to its south.

Additionally, the individual monuments identified as relevant attributes to justify the extension of the property are also covered by a formal layer of protection.

The main issue concerns the effectiveness of management established with the formal designation of the area as a protected landscape and their appropriateness to cover also the cultural dimensions of this landscape. We were informed that several sectorial plans exist for fishing, hunting, forestry, etc. and these are coordinated by the management sector but a comprehensive management plan does not exist. The plans already in place do not include nature conservation considerations as well as those of the cultural aspects of this protected landscape, which, for its specificities and on the base of the selected IUCN category, would in fact require that also the cultural values of these areas be protected and managed.

Besides, the relation among the different planning levels (regional spatial plans, master plans, protected areas management plans, etc.) is not clear, therefore an effort to clarify the hierarchy of the different plans covering the protected area as well as to identify their objectives, measures and land use regimes is necessary to understand the overall planning framework for the area that would possibly be included in the extension or in the buffer zone.

Technical staff for protected cultural heritage at the county level

The Regional Directorate of Korça for the National Monuments has a staff of 17 professionals. The Directorate is articulated in the following sectors: architecture, art and maintenance; archaeology; technical archive; administrative and territorial management; management of the historic centre of Voskopoje. The Directorate oversees and manages 160 sites. Four cultural sites under the directorate's responsibility have some forms of visitor service: Voskopoje, Vithkuq, Liqenas e the Basilica in Lin. The administrative branch represents legally the institution and exercises the control over the territory according to the provisions of law, whilst the other branches have prevalently technical tasks, including communication and promotion of the cultural heritage of their respective competence in cooperation with the tourism sector (Voskopoje branch).

5.2 Protection and management requirements

As a general observation, effective protection and management require a strong coordination and cooperation among the different levels and branches of administrative institutions. In this case, this represents a priority for the Albanian authorities. In addition, due to the social, cultural and natural characteristics of the area a special emphasis has to be given to transboundary cooperation and joint management of shared natural and cultural heritage.

When it comes to its natural features, the area contains some exceptional values despite the high scale of human interventions; therefore it could have been considered another category than category V in the process of designation. Nevertheless, the existing area designation is a good starting point for elaborating management objectives and mobilizing resources at the local and regional level. Given the transboundary nature of Pogradec Protected Landscape – it is adjacent to the neighbouring Lake Ohrid Protected Landscape in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, transboundary cooperation is a prerequisite for effective management and conservation of the valued resources of Lake Ohrid.

With regard to the cultural aspects of the area, , formal protection appears acceptable. at this stage, although it could be useful to clarify whether the perimeter of the 'historic centre' of Pogradec which is going to be declared as a monument of national importance includes also the district located to the north of Rruga kajo Karafili, and delimited to the west by and artificial channel and to the east by the

Orthodox Church (see Annex C). As mentioned above, this area contains a number of traditional buildings dating back to the 18th- 19th century and its overall character has been retained to certain extent, thus conveying the sense of what was Pogradec in past epochs.

The first and major issue to be addressed in management is achieving effectiveness of protection measures, in particular with regard to species and habitat conservation, the regulation of building activities. It is also important to ensure that urban development does not occur in an unregulated manner, through the clear delimitation of areas set aside from development for their cultural and natural values and through the strict enforcement of regulations to prevent their violation. Illegal constructions pose problems not only for their visual impact on the landscape but also because they are not connected to the sewage system nor is their connection being planned. Therefore these connections should be envisaged within the programme of waste management upgrading.

Waste management should be the other main priority of the national and local authorities of Albania. This requires not only technical and logistical solutions, which are however fundamental, but also a strong educational campaign addressing all strata of the population, be they inhabitants or tourists. At the local level, NGOs may play a topical role as a communication channel between the public administrations and the civil society.

Measures to sustain small size farming activity, with particular regard to those that grow biological products would also be important to ensure that agricultural activity do not decline at the expenses of tourism industry, which is growing fast. This programme may be associated to the promotion of rural tourism and rural itineraries that could enrich the tourist offer of the area, prevalently concentrated on the beach tourism.

Light improvement of the road network and promotion of alternative means of transportation to private cars (i.e. bicycles) and the establishment of an organised public or public/private collective transportation service (i.e., eco-buses, boats, etc.) may contribute in the medium-long term to the quality of the living environment and to avoid congestion during the peak periods of the vacation season. Organised collective transportation may also become a topic for trans-boundary cooperation with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

Increase of the technical staff of the Regional Directorate for the National Monument would also be advisable, i.e. the archive branch could be strengthened to ensure the updating of the inventory of cultural heritage, to ensure the proper functioning of the Basilica of Lin as a site open to public, where at least one more person would be needed (one for ticketing and guided visits, and one for maintenance).

5.3 Transboundary cooperation potential

The first area where cooperation is to be developed concerns the protection and management of the property, since the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention* require that any World Heritage property should be managed as a whole and recommend that, in case of trans-boundary properties, a joint management committee be established to this purpose.

Experience in this respect has been built with the creation of the Lake Ohrid Watershed Management Committee for the Ohrid and Prespa lakes. The Committee has been established as a result of the Lake Ohrid Conservation Project (LOCP). The LOCP represents one of the major headways in transboundary cooperation of Lake Ohrid. In 1996, representatives of the governments of Albania and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) concerning the Lake Ohrid Conservation Project providing necessary political commitment to its commencement. The project set the scene for transboundary cooperation, helping set-up a joint Lake

Ohrid Management Board. The main objective of the LOCP was to conserve and protect the natural resources and biodiversity of Lake Ohrid by developing and supporting an effective cooperation between Albania and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia for the joint environmental management of the watershed. Despite some obstacles, the LOCP to date remains the biggest joint conservation and management effort in the Lake Ohrid region. The project was strongly supported by the international community and has managed to leverage a number of changes at the local level.

Following the success of the LOCP, the Prime Ministers of Albania and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia signed the *Agreement for the Protection and Sustainable Development of Lake Ohrid and its Watershed* in June 2004. This Agreement, ratified by the parliaments of both countries in 2005, established a bilateral Lake Ohrid Watershed Committee, and included the Prespa Park Coordinating Committee and other subcommittees as joint Bodies under its overall structure. The body to coordinate the work of the Lake Ohrid Watershed Committee is the Secretariat. The Committee has the status of an intergovernmental body, with explicit authority to develop relationships with donors to implement the Agreement. The Agreement has three main objectives:

1. Assure an equal and integrated protection and sustainable development for Lake Ohrid and its watershed.
2. Work toward gaining the status of a World Cultural and Natural Heritage and Biosphere Reserve for Lake Ohrid and its watershed.
3. Lay ground for designating the Prespa-Ohrid area as a Euro-region.

Other objectives of the Agreement are to prevent and control pollution, protect biodiversity, ensure sustainable use of resources, avoid damage to the cultural values and natural landscapes, and in general prevent any damaging activities in the watershed. So far the Lake Ohrid Watershed Committee has been successful in the monitoring of the state of Lake Ohrid, communication and awareness raising, thus proving to be one of the most important stakeholders when it comes to transboundary cooperation. On the other hand, its limited mandate prevents the Committee to play a major role when it comes to lake management and law enforcement.

This offers a good base for strengthening transboundary cooperation between the two State Parties in the management of the lake basin and opening further opportunities of cooperation in the fields of cultural heritage research, conservation and promotion as well as in the tourism sector with the aim of diversifying the offer (cultural, eco, rural tourism, trekking, archaeological trekking, astronomy, speleology, etc.).

Steps to activate transboundary cooperation in the cultural area should be undertaken by Albania from the early stages of this pilot project. Such approach would bring a number of advantages in several fields. Establishing scientific and research cooperation would contribute to shed further light on the historical and cultural relations and fortunes along the centuries within the Lake Ohrid region, eventually reinforcing the case for the extension of the World Heritage property from a cultural perspective. In the protection and management areas, early cooperation between the two States Parties would ensure that common principles and objectives for the management of the property are established to facilitate the creation of the required joint management framework for the property. Additionally, Albania could profit from the experience accumulated in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in the conservation and management of the property. In this regard, areas of fruitful collaboration may include urban and archaeological conservation, heritage promotion, diversified tourism strategy, alternative accommodation solutions (charming houses, bed and breakfast, rural tourism, etc.). As mentioned above, the development of joint collective transportation would also mean the facilitation of visits to the area as a whole and could be part of a common sustainable tourism strategy. A further area that will require close cooperation in case the extension is approved is

the monitoring of the property with regard to both its natural and cultural values. In this sphere, much work is needed and the cooperation among Albania and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia may provide valid solutions also for data collection, management and storage.

6. Summary

6.1 Potential for the extension of the property

Lake Ohrid remains to be an exceptional place for its natural and cultural heritage, aesthetic and spiritual values, and the interaction between these key aspects of the area. From an ecological point of view, there is enough scientific evidence which suggests that a broader region of Ohrid and Prespa lakes should be considered as one, integral ecological area. The prominent feature of the Albanian lakescape is the evocative view of Mount Mali i Thate, which rise on the south eastern side of the lake and can be seen from almost any place along the Albanian lakeshore. The western side of the lake coast is rather steep, although millennial accumulation of debris from the mountains have formed at their foot small plains that today are occupied by cultivated fields and dotted by small hamlets. The view that can be enjoyed along this part of the lakeshore conserves particular scenic qualities that need to be preserved.

However, the recent developments impede the integrity and intactness of the area. The urban development of the town of Pogradec along the lakeshore has undermined its visual intactness, which otherwise would have been considerable. The urban development has been so far limited to Pogradec, in fact the territory comprised in the adjacent commune towards the border of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia has remained almost free from new large constructions.

It would be crucial that the areas along the shore that still retain a rural character be maintained by limiting building activity and keeping it away from the shore. Removal of a few out of scale buildings, apparently built illegally, should be considered.

On the base of the documentation presented by the State Party and the site visit, the potential for the extension of the property under a cultural perspective appears considerably limited compared to the natural one. Although the Albanian side of the lake shared with the side of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia the same geo-historical context for long periods, the documented cultural heritage that survives on the Albanian side that can attest to this common past seems less evident than the attributes selected to justify the cultural criteria of the inscribed property. However, the archaeological remains of the paleo-Christian church in Lin with its floor mosaics stand out in this respect.

As for its natural aspects, it is difficult to assume that fully integrated management can be achieved without having the lake in its entirety recognized under the same designation process. A transboundary World Heritage property would be an example of it. In light of integrity and effective management, there are numerous arguments for comprising the entire lake within one transboundary property. However, the question of lake management, in particular in view of shared management objectives and practices, remains open and requires further strengthening. This pertains both to strengthening existing governance and management structures in Albania, cross-sectoral cooperation, and improvement of knowledge and skills of relevant stakeholders. Another issue that requires further consideration is the delineation of the nominated property. In this particular regard, two compatible guiding principles could be applied – one that takes into account ecological, geomorphological and hydrological features of a broader area that provide for ecological integrity, and the other one looking into existing designations in the area in order to ensure coherent management of the nominated property. Both aspects have to be considered in their transboundary context. As for its boundaries, any

potential extension should aim at encompassing at least the lake surface in order to secure a minimum of integrity requirements, yet the decision on property boundaries and buffer zones remains open and requires further thorough discussion based on various considerations, and not limited to the ecological ones.

The mission made evident that much work is needed to achieve the adequate level of inter-institutional, cross-sectoral cooperation and capacity that is necessary to undertake and to address successfully the requirements that a process for a trans-boundary extension imply. This represents probably the major challenge.

From a natural point of view, any further activity on the World Heritage extension should aim at increasing the existing knowledge on natural values of the area and their status, biodiversity mapping, valorisation of goods and services the lake provides to a broader community, capacity building, and strengthening of cross-sectoral and transboundary cooperation.

From a cultural perspective, much work is needed to understand the current level of knowledge of cultural heritage in the area. Re-organization of available bibliographical and archival information as well as further research and investigations may contribute to shed further light on the historical – cultural development of the whole Lake Ohrid region, of the role played within this geo-cultural basin along the centuries by the today Albanian side of Lake Ohrid and eventually of its specific cultural significance.

At present, the most evident value of the Albanian side of Lake Ohrid and of the protected landscape of Pogradec rests in its aesthetic and scenic beauty and the aesthetic and traditional values of the protected landscape of Pogradec would be appropriately protected by including them in a buffer zone. Overall, the perimeter would be, at this stage, adequate for the purpose of the protection of the visual qualities of the lake.

6.2 Recommendations for the follow-up of the pilot project

Any second phase of the project as well as further International Assistance requests would require the commitment and active and shared institutional engagement of the State Party to implement the project. As a matter of fact, the project cannot rely only on the enthusiasm of highly motivated individuals: to succeed a critical mass of commitment needs to be built.

All relevant decision makers at the central and peripheral level, to begin with the different branches of the central administration that have responsibilities in development, planning, etc. need to be informed on the project since the early steps and involved in the process at the proper stage.

International Assistance from UNESCO may also result in a strengthened Tentative List of the State Party.

Third parties' international assistance could be usefully channelized to help develop and implement a comprehensive sustainable conservation and development strategy for the entire area, possibly considering the whole Ohrid and Prespa Watershed, which will have to focus not only on natural values but also on the historical, cultural and social 'grain' of this territory, also with a view for a further stage for the extension of the property and its buffer zone to include the entire lakes' watershed. An integrated assessment, inventory and participatory planning are much needed for this area.

Any financial support should be accompanied by an active commitment of the State Parties to build a shared institutional responsibility among all institutional stakeholders. Requisites for successful international assistance imply the establishment of a clear comprehensive framework, broken down into phases based on priorities, thematic action lines, and rigorous monitoring of the achieved results.

Additionally, on the base of the information and documentation made available – little and little organized – a number of ‘technical’ recommendations have been provided that address actions needed to sustain the progress of the project. They could be usefully implemented as preparatory steps for any second phase of the pilot project. These are listed below, organized in thematic areas.

Research and documentation:

- Elaboration of an updated picture of the cultural heritage in the Pogradec area by integrating the information contained in the inventory of protected immovable cultural heritage and existing bibliography on other cultural resources of the area into topographic cartography at an appropriate scale (no less than 1:50.000) and identification of all protected monuments, sites, areas, with the precise representation of their boundaries;
- Assessing the needs and priorities for possible further research on the cultural heritage of the region considered under a historical- territorial perspective, with the aim to provide a clearer picture of the patterns of human occupation of the Lake Ohrid region along the centuries;
- Inventory of relevant planning provisions and regulations that cover Pogradec and nearby villages with particular reference to the area included in the Protected landscape of Pogradec but not limited to this;
- Inventory of programmes and projects that may have an impact on the natural and cultural values of the region;
- Further biodiversity research of the state and trends of the populations of endemic and indicator species;
- Habitat mapping and zonation proposal for Pogradec Protected Landscape, with particular emphasis on the transboundary nature of the protected area.

Protection and management:

- Activation and where appropriate strengthening the cooperation with the authorities of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, with particular regard to biodiversity conservation and cultural heritage protection and management sectors, and exploring potential for cooperation in the field of scientific research and monitoring;
- Development and implementation of a capacity building programme to ensure improved management of the region’s natural and cultural heritage, including relevant themes such as biodiversity conservation, protected area management, protection and management of cultural heritage, participatory planning, transboundary conservation, etc;
- Building regulation enforcement to avoid that the type of urban development that took place in and around Pogradec does not extend to the adjacent communes to retain the remaining tracts of the lake coast in a natural state and free from constructions;
- Involvement of all relevant national and local stakeholders in the nomination and management process, with particular regard to relevant decision-makers (i.e. the Territory Adjustment Council of the Republic of Albania – TACRA, responsible for the approval of regional urban studies, master plans, studies for the development of tourist zones, or the district and municipality territory adjustment councils);
- Assessment of the possible impact of project and planning provisions, beginning with those for the creation of the VIII Pan European corridor, on the values of the properties;

Valorisation and promotion:

- Socio-economic analysis on the benefits a broader community enjoys from the vast resources of Lake Ohrid;
- Verification of the provisions for tourism development in national and regional documents in relation to the carrying capacity of the area;
- Elaboration of a strategy for tourism management based on the respect and communication of the natural and cultural values of the region which also take into account already existing activities (i.e. creating an integrated, transboundary visitor card integrating entrance tickets and transportation fees for the cultural sites and natural heritage of the whole property, etc.);
- Development of a strategy for sustainable mobility in the area (a possible transboundary project).

Annexes

Annex A. Summary of the SWOT analysis brainstorming exercise

The table below represent the result of a SWOT analysis brainstorming exercise by the participants of the stakeholder workshop on World Heritage procedures held near Pogradec on 4-5 April 2012. Here are the results of the work of two working groups:

NATURE WORKING GROUP

Road map for the preparation of a nomination form for the “Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Ohrid Region” property in Albania

No	Category of information	Actual (existing) documentation	Gaps	What is needed TO DO
1	Water	- Law for Monitoring of surface water - Water balance, (inventory) - Periodic reports for water quality - Structure for the water quality control	- Part of lake shore is out of collection of waste water and treatment - Lack of equipments for local monitoring laboratory - Lack of local data	- Construction of waste water treatment plant for Udenisht Commune - New equipments for Monitoring Laboratory in Pogradec
2	Biodiversity - Protected Area - Flora - Fauna	Complete legislation, (Low – DCM – Rules & and local orders – Structures, (capacity)	Lack of a General Management Plan	- General Management Plan - Collaboration and coordination between local and central structures -Enforcement (capacity and infrastructure
3	Forest & Pasture	-Complete legislation, (Low – DCM – Rules & and local orders – Structures, (capacity) -Complete legislation, (Low – DCM – Rules & and local orders – Structures, (capacity)	-On going privatization process -Local administration capacity - Staff capacity-building -Lack of Infrastructure	-Amendment of the actual legislation - Complication of actual low , (low – DCM – local orders) Build & appropriate infrastructure
4	Agriculture area	-Complete legislation, (Low – DCM – Rules & and local orders – Structures, (capacity) -Database	-Bad management -Lack of “land use plan”	Preparation of “Land Used Plan” study -Orient the cultivation of Bio products
5	Urban area	-Low for territorial Plan, -Local structure	Territorial management plan for all unit around lake shore	Approval of the regional Master Plan

Priorities

- Water - preservation; management; monitoring and control;
- Biodiversity - preservation; management; monitoring and control;
- Forest & Pasture - preservation; management; monitoring and control;

Next steps

1. Establishment of a working group (with international experts)
2. Comparative analysis of the existing documentation
3. Evidence of the real situation and what TO DO in the future (action plan)

CULTURE WORKING GROUP

Road map for the preparation of a nomination form for the “Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Ohrid Region” property in Albania

ISSUE/GAPS

	KNOWLEDGE	Institutions/Stakeholders	Coordination
	- Lack of shared info for planning provision - Lack of awareness - Lack of capacity building training for stakeholders	Lack of cooperation central-local government	- Uncertainty of continuity political commitment - poor collaboration between central-local government
	PROBLEM	LEGISLATION MANAGEMENT	PLANNING
	-Fe/Ni mine will be put in function, (currently not in use) Coast guard police lack baywatch	-Poor implementation of existing legislation	-Lack of infrastructure (roads) (some monuments) - Poor sewage system - Constructions around lake shore (same times illegally)

Strength

	KNOWLEDGE	Natural & Cultural resources	Touristic Development
	Flora & fauna Protected area since 1999 Climate Gastronomy & Tradition of Hospilaty Cultural heritage in school curricula Touristic guide Active NGOs	- Tombs of Selca - Traces of Egnatia road - Bridge in Golik village - Basilica of Lin - Castle of Pogradec - Castle of Gradishte, Udenisht Commune - Castle of Bllaca village - Prehistoric village of Zagradaia	- Summer (sun & sand) - winter (snow) - hunting - accommodation possibilities

PRIORITY

- Preparation of a GENERAL Urban Plan according to the Management plan of the area
- Preparation of Management Plan
- A strategy for the monument intervention
- Update of the information regarding cultural-natural resources
- Landfill of Maliq (implementation) 30 km from Pogradec.
- Introduction in the school programs of knowledge for the environment issues
- Citizens awareness process

- Complete information picture
- Law reinforcement
- Updating the archaeological map of Pogradec
- Coordination of the action plan between MoTCJS/ MOEFWA

OPPORTUNITIES

- Construction of a new road (deviation of head traffic along the shore), reduces the noise
- Cross-border activities (cultural exchange)
- Cooperation between two countries & cities (governmental NGOs)
- Water transportation
- Economic development
- Railroad delimitation up to Lin village
- Traditional cultural activities (promotion)

Annex B. Photo documentation



Picture 1. View of Mt. Mali i Thate



Picture 2. Birds resting along the shore



Picture 3. Fishing on the lake



Picture 4. Agriculture and railway infrastructure



Picture 5. Alteration and fragmentation of shoreline habitats



Picture 6. Land use expansion at the expense of natural habitats



Picture 7. Lin. Archaeological remains of the Basilica



Picture 8. Lin. Mosaic of the



Picture 9. Lin archaeological remains of the partly excavated structures of the basilica



Picture 10. Lin. View over the village from the basilica site



Picture 11. traditional houses in Lin



Picture 12. Rural house in Lin



Picture 13. development in Lin



Picture 14. Fields near Lin. Road bed building site in the foreground



Picture 15. fields along the road between Lin and Pogradec



Picture 16. the lake shore between Pogradec and Lin



Picture 17. The surviving structures of the coal mine



Picture 18 - 19. Pogradec. Houses in the district the formal protection of which is underway



Picture 19. Pogradec



Picture 20. Pogradec. Surviving villa along the lakeshore



Picture 21. Pogradec. Surviving old building along the lakeshore



Picture 22. Pogradec. Historic district under special planning protection regime



Picture 23. Pogradec. House in the historic district under special planning regime



Picture 24. Pogradec. Street in the Historic district under special planning regime



Picture 25. Pogradec. The first school



Picture 26. Pogradec. Restored house in the historic district under special planning regime

Annex C. Upstream Project Mission Report

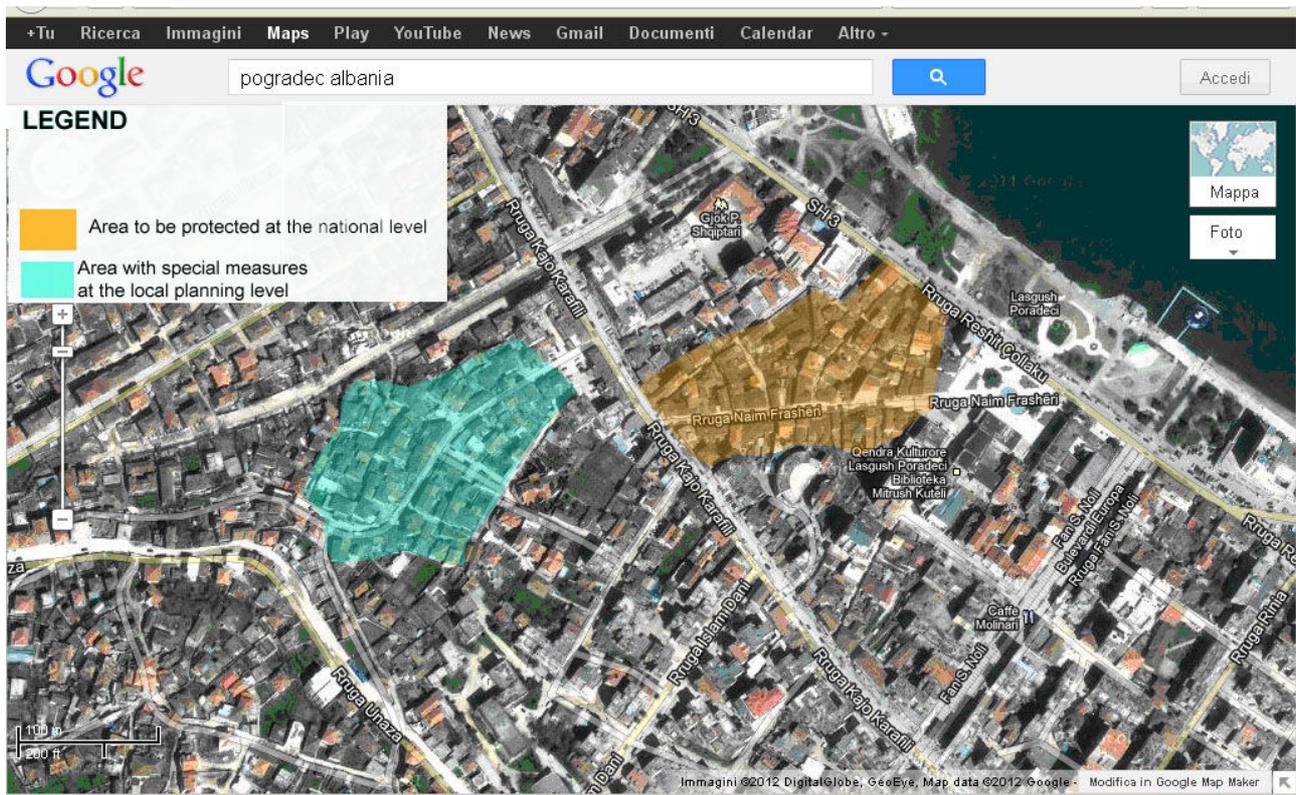


Image 1. Historic districts in Pogradec. The delimitation of the boundaries is based on the verbal description of the Albanian participants to the mission.

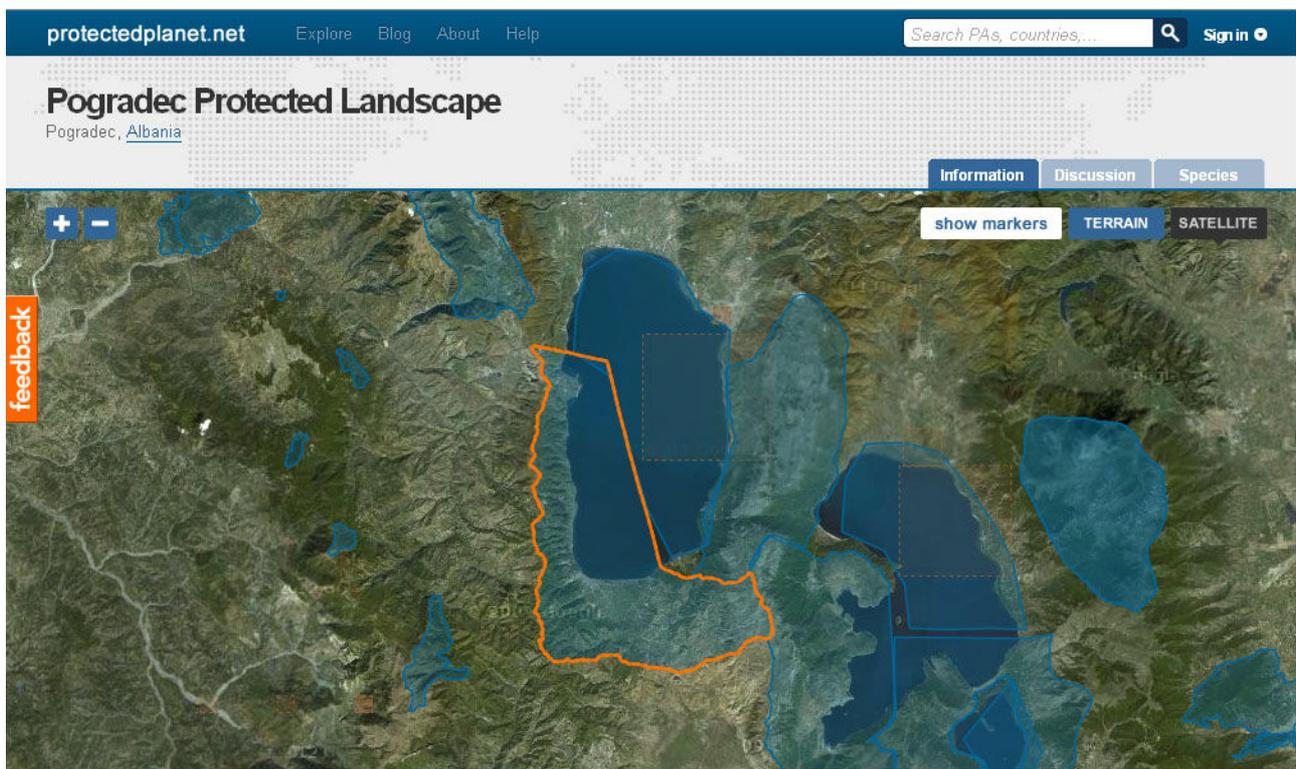


Image 2. Delimitation of Pogradec protected landscape. Taken from the web site www.protectedplanet.net accessed on 14th April 2012.

Annex D. Participant List Training Workshop

Pilot Upstream project: “Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Ohrid Region” Stakeholder Training Workshop

List of participants

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10.	Vexhi Cinari	Head Of Administration of Lake Ohrid Protected Area	
11.	Bardhi Kastrati	Head of Regional Environment Agency	
12.	Muhamet Muca	Head of River Basin Agency	
13.	Erion Vesho	Vice/Mayor of Pogradec Municipality	
14.	Durim Tosku	Mayor, Commune of Udenisht	
15.	Roshi Tollozhina	Mayor , Commune of Bucimas	
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