Dear readers!

The Lake Ohrid region has a unique cultural and natural heritage of Outstanding Universal Value, enabling its inscription in 1979-1980 on the UNESCO World Heritage List for the Macedonian part of the region. Macedonians are making constant efforts to permanently protect and preserve the property. In this regard, several laws and regulations at the national level have been adopted, governing the way, conditions and opportunities for protection of the region’s natural and cultural heritage. Having World Heritage status is a great privilege, but it places duties and responsibilities on the whole of society. It requires us to maintain a consistent application of international standards in the preservation and protection of values recognised and celebrated around the world.

Since the start of the project ‘Towards strengthened governance of the shared transboundary natural and cultural heritage of the Lake Ohrid region’, the Macedonian Ministry of Culture, the Cultural Heritage Protection Office and the Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning, through their representatives, have been actively involved in all project activities, giving maximum support to the successful realisation and implementation of the project in the period that lies ahead. Saving Lake Ohrid, a treasure house for endemic species of flora and fauna and one of the best ecosystems in the world, is a goal that we share with our neighbour the Republic of Albania. We believe that with joint efforts we will achieve successful implementation of this process, resulting in an effective and efficient integrated management of the Lake Ohrid region.

Aware of the necessity of dealing with and minimising the challenges that adversely affect the natural and cultural heritage of the region, above all, with issues of excessive and uncontrolled urbanisation, sewage treatment, and over-exploitation and destruction of natural values and a lack of knowledge of the values of this region, we welcome the contribution of UNESCO and the Advisory Bodies to the World Heritage Committee ICCROM, ICOMOS and IUCN, which by means of their engagement in this process allow us to better identify and address these challenges.

Considering the exceptional importance of the Lake Ohrid region, our Government, through its national institutions, will continue to selflessly care for its well-being, a responsibility that belongs not only to the institutions, but also to each individual. This unique place, created by humans and nature, deserves to be protected as a whole and, undoubtedly, the moment has arrived. This process is only the beginning of what is to come: the joint management and the establishment of an integrated system for managing the natural and cultural heritage of the Lake Ohrid region for ourselves and for the generations to come.

Yours sincerely,
Lydia Topuzovska
General Secretary of National Commission to UNESCO of the FYR of Macedonia
Lake Ohrid is an exceptional beauty. It is the deepest and the oldest lake in Europe, with a unique ecosystem and home of many endemic species. The whole region owns a rich cultural heritage, which everyone living around it, should be aware of. To highlight the beauty and values, as well as to raise awareness and engage its community in sharing memories, thoughts, and stories about the Lake, a photography competition was organised in the framework of the project “Towards strengthened governance of the shared transboundary natural and cultural heritage of the Lake Ohrid Region” funded by the European Union and the Albanian government. #OurLakeOhrid Photo & Story Contest took place through Instagram and the project’s Facebook page. The contest was open from 7 March to 7 April 2016. More than 450 photos were posted by participants throughout the competition. At the close of the competition, the top 50 photos were selected by UNESCO World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies: ICCROM, ICOMOS and IUCN. Then, partners from the Albanian government, Albanian institutions and the European Union, as well as other regional partners casted their votes and selected the top ten photos based on the selection criteria of the contest. Through the people, the lights and colors, the places, the shapes and the stories captured, we can see ever so clearly the uniqueness of Lake Ohrid’s both natural and cultural heritage: heritage we more than ever need to protect so that our Lake Ohrid can be passed on to future generations. The top ten winning photos were posted from: Adnan Beci, My Best Souvenir - Teodora Krasimirova Koleva, Betim Berisha, Ardian Fezollari, Elena Nikolovska, Slavica Panova, Marijana Pipe Pipileva, Stefanija Vidovski, Nikola Naumoski and Marko Blazevski.

**Winners of #OurLakeOhrid photo contest**


**Awards Ceremony**

An awards ceremony was held in the Palace of Culture, Pogradec, on 10 May 2016 to announce the ten winners of #OurLakeOhrid Social Media Photo Competition. The social media competition attracted a wide range of participants mainly from Albania, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Bulgaria, as well as international visitors of Lake Ohrid who shared their memories, stories and emotions. Three of the winners made the journey to attend the ceremony in Pogradec. The organisers took this opportunity to share the news and officially congratulate the winners. The winners were given certificates and project gift bags. During the ceremony, one of the winners from Pogradec, Mr Fezollari said: “I am not here to talk as a photographer, but as a citizen. We didn’t compete for the prize, but as a chance to contribute something towards our Lake Ohrid. We owe it to our lake.” The high number of entrants demonstrated the interest and enthusiasm from the citizens and visitors alike toward the values and beauty of Lake Ohrid. Another competition will be held at a later stage, and the panel of voters will include the top ten winners from this competition.
The third Transboundary Platform Meeting of the project ‘Towards strengthened governance of the shared transboundary natural and cultural heritage of the Lake Ohrid region’ took place on 7 March 2016 in the city of Pogradec, Albania. Representatives from the Ministry of Culture and Ministry of Environment, from the National Agency of Protected Areas, representatives from the local governments around the lake, representatives from the Advisory Bodies ICOMOS and IUCN as well as UNESCO discussed the establishment of a viable cooperation platform. This Transboundary Platform Meeting aimed more specifically to present and discuss opportunities in managing existing transboundary processes for the monitoring of the environment and biodiversity which contribute to the safeguarding and the management of the Lake Ohrid region. With ongoing local, bilateral and multilateral support for numerous individual infrastructure, training capacity building, education, awareness building, marketing and promotion initiatives in the Lake Ohrid region, perhaps the most significant contribution of this project would be to assist in bringing them together under one umbrella strategy and management structure.

Collaborative and Integrated Management of Protected and Heritage Landscapes Training

Collaborative and Integrated Management of Protected and Heritage Landscapes Training, a two-day course part of the project ‘Towards strengthened governance of the shared transboundary natural and cultural heritage of the Lake Ohrid region’ took place on 31 March – 1 April 2016 in the Lin Peninsula, Albania. This short course gathered representatives of all the main stakeholders to explore how to develop an integrated and cooperative approach to managing complex landscapes. The course focused on interactive learning, with an emphasis on group work, practical exercises, case studies and field work. Management of the potential extension of the World Heritage property ‘Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Ohrid region’ (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) to the Albanian part of Lake Ohrid. Through extensive group work, the workshop had a thematic focus on all the components of the Master Plan for the Municipality of Pogradec, b) the Lin Peninsula, c) the Drilon Springs, d) the Memelisht site and its surroundings, and e) the ecological and physical environment of Lake Ohrid region and elaborated and discussed a number of priority actions that need to be addressed in the short and medium term by the relevant authorities.

Fourth and fifth Management Planning Workshop of the Lake Ohrid region

The Fourth Management Planning Workshop took place in Tushemisht, Albania, on 12 and 13 May 2016. The management planning workshop series is part of the project ‘Towards strengthened governance of the shared transboundary natural and cultural heritage of the Lake Ohrid region’ funded by the European Union and the Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Albania. The workshop presented the progress to date on the development of the management planning document required for the preparation of the extension file to the World Heritage property ‘Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Ohrid region’ (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonian to the Albanian part of Lake Ohrid). Through extensive group work, the workshop had a thematic focus on all the components of the Master Plan for the Municipality of Pogradec, b) the Lin Peninsula, c) the Drilon Springs, d) the Memelisht site and its surroundings, and e) the ecological and physical environment of Lake Ohrid region and elaborated and discussed a number of priority actions that need to be addressed in the short and medium term by the relevant authorities.

The training course ‘Promoting nature, culture and World Heritage in the Lake Ohrid region’ took place in Pogradec and Tushemisht, Albania, on 10 and 11 May 2016. The training course provided participants with the necessary tools and approaches available for the promotion and interpretation of assets of collective importance to humankind, whilst increasing appreciation of shared heritage values among existing and new audiences in a way that enhances the achievement of the shared management objectives for the heritage place. The training contributed indirectly to the progress in the management planning process in view of the proposed Albanian extension to the World Heritage property ‘Natural and cultural heritage of the Ohrid region’ (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) with ideas that will address the need to build unique narratives around a common identity for this potential mixed feature/cultural transboundary World Heritage property. In accordance with the 2011 World Heritage Capacity Building Strategy, the training aimed at achieving a broader capacity building of heritage practitioners, institutions, organizations, communities and networks for heritage management and conservation in the Lake Ohrid region through people-centred changes. The training offered conceptual background, real world case studies and group exercises dedicated to the entire Lake Ohrid region. Participants were able to gain good understanding of the role of cultural and natural heritage in sustainable development: sustainable tourism, audience development, data gathering and strategic planning. The course included a hands-on exercise on how to brand the entire Lake Ohrid region and its values.

The fifth and final Management Planning Workshop took place in Udenisht, Pogradec area, Albania, on 22 and 23 June 2016. The workshop focused on concept of governance, requirements under the World Heritage Committee for a management system, and the Management Committee for protected areas in Albania. Additionally, the workshop identified priority themes, targets and actions concerning sustainable development options in the Lake Ohrid region in Albania. This Fifth Management Planning Workshop concluded the series of five workshops. The outcomes of the group work and conclusions of the panel discussions contribute to the elaboration of the management planning document required as part of the extension file for the World Heritage property; the management planning document is being elaborated by a Technical Working Group in autumn 2016 and will be presented for public consultation at the end of 2016. The commitment and professional input from the various authorities in Albania and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia have been crucial to the success of this management planning process.
How is the project 'Towards strengthened governance of the shared transboundary natural and cultural heritage of the Lake Ohrid region' going? The cross-border project for integrated management of Lake Ohrid has now entered its final stage. While the lead ministry is the Ministry of Environment, the Ministry of Culture, through its General Directorate of Heritage and Culture Diversity, and other institutions under the ministry, such as the Institute of Cultural Monuments and Regional Directorate of Culture in Korca, have been fully committed in preparation of all the recommendations resulting from all the meetings held in the project framework. The aim is to finalise on time a nomination file for extending the existing UNESCO World Heritage property Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Ohrid region to the Albanian part of Lake Ohrid.

What are the duties and responsibilities of the Ministry of Culture with regard to cultural heritage in this project? Following recommendations of ICCROM, ICOMOS and IUCN our experts are working to ensure the protection and integrity of cultural heritage values of the area for it to be included on the UNESCO World Heritage List. By a decision of the Minister of Culture, in March 2016, the Paleo-Christian basilica and its mosaic in Lin Village have been entered for inscription on the List. Meanwhile, the Law on Cultural Heritage Monuments protects the area by banning any kind of construction work. In addition, a group of international experts from Advisory Bodies ICOMOS and IUCN as well as national experts from the Albanian Institute of Cultural Monuments, the national and regional agencies of Protected Areas, the Albanian Institute of Archaeology and the Municipality of Pogradec held a field mission on 29 and 30 March 2016. Following the mission’s recommendations, the National Council for Restoration defined a buffer zone extending the World Heritage property Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Ohrid region to the Albanian part of Lake Ohrid.

Is Albania ready to manage and protect such heritage in cooperation with its Macedonian counterparts? Albania has an experience of more than 20 years in managing Outstanding Universal Value of World Heritage properties. The Ministry of Culture in the last two years has shown maximum engagement and readiness to fulfil and complete all its responsibilities toward membership of the World Heritage Convention and follows ICOMOS recommendations. While there are improvements seen in achieving good results, a lot more remains to be done. This is our next challenge, together with our obligation to coordinate the work between all our Albanian institutions, locally and nationally as well as our counterparts in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Preserving and protecting cultural heritage values in our time, when the pressure from urban development is high, is a constant challenge for the governments on both sides of the lake, the Albanian and Macedonian counterparts. Responsible institutions, not only those for culture heritage, are now treating Lake Ohrid region as a common space that not only has benefits, but also responsibilities and duties for its protection.

When will the nomination file of the Albanian part of Lake Ohrid be ready for submission to the World Heritage Centre? We believe that the nomination file will be finalised by January 2017 and officially submitted to UNESCO in February 2017. Even though we are working very closely with groups of experts from well-known international and national organisations in the field of culture heritage and environment, thanks also to the valuable support of the EU and the UNESCO, this project is a major initiative and commitment for both States Parties to the UNESCO World Heritage Convention, and it does not end with the finalisation of the nomination file.
Struga is a town in south-western part of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. It lies on the shores of Lake Ohrid at the source of the River Drini (Drimi in Slavic). Struga is a quiet city. The houses are beautiful and decorated. An old well-known saying goes: “There is no other place like Struga” and this still holds true today! Crn Drim flows gently through the town, as if it does not want to disturb the visitors walking along its banks. There are other places that show the beauty and culture, like the Old Bazaar, the century old churches and mosques. Struga Poëtry Evenings is the most important event in the town. It has been held by the Bridge of Poets in the second half of August for more than 40 years. The event gathers poets, writers and artists from across the world. Two awards are presented: one for lifetime achievement, and one for young poets.

What to See?
The Struga of today is quite modern. One can enjoy a pleasant walk through the town, along the river and by the lakeshore. One top destination is the Old Bazaar - a lively market lined with traditional houses, cafés and shops. Nearby is the crossroads and the Church of St. George, built in 1835 on the foundations of an older sacred object and an excellent example of the revival architecture period. The iconostasis is unique, the lower part made of stone, the upper part from wood, with a detailed woodcarving. Halveti Teke, the religious building founded by Hasan Baba (Asan Dede) at the beginning of the 18th century, is a classic example of Ottoman architecture, protected by the Macedonian Cultural Memorial Institute, while other interesting examples of Ottoman architecture can be seen along the streets of Braka Miladinovci and Niko Nestor near to the Bazaar. Close to the River Drin stands the Girl Going for Water: a statue that symbolises the tradition of young girls and brides carrying water from the fountain to their home. Struga Natural History Museum houses more than 10,000 examples of flora and fauna from the Lake Ohrid and Lake Prespa region. Meanwhile, the Struga Museum hosts 150 items of folk costumes from throughout the country, including several complete costumes, items of jewellery, and 80 pieces of furniture, tools and other household objects, as well as a large collection of photographs. The Church of St. Dimitrija is a small church dedicated to St. Dimitrija (Demetrius) in the western part of the town.

What to do?
You can enjoy a daytrip from Ohrid by boat, combining a visit to the villages along the west coast of Lake Ohrid where a major feature, aside from the lovely quiet beaches, are the cave churches. Struga is a flat town, spread around the Drin River, and is a great place to relax with a cup of coffee. It is small and easy to get around by foot. A 15-minute walk along the lake will take you to Kalitsha Village and the cave monastery. For those seeking a little more adventure and outdoor activities, hiking or biking, there are no limits in Vodno Mountain forest. Before sunset you can enjoy three different types of beaches: Male beach, “Female beach” and Galeb (“Gull” Beach), located by the source of the River Black Drin.

The Women of Tushemisht

The Women of Tushemisht was a short film for which the director and scriptwriter, Asst. Prof. Dr. Erjon Cukaj, was awarded as the best film at the 56th Montreux Film Festival in Switzerland. It is a film that portrays the daily life of two women from the village of Tushemisht - one from the city, Ollga, and another who was born in the village, Meli. The film is a story of ancestral hospitality, tradition, and love. The story is inspired by the tradition of hospitality in Tushemisht, a small village near Pogradec in Albania.

The Women of Tushemisht was the title of the film, and it tells the story of two women from the village of Tushemisht. The film was directed by Erjon Cukaj and produced by the Albanian Film Board. The film was the first Albanian film to be shown at the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival and was nominated for the Grand Prix at the Montreux Film Festival.

The Women of Tushemisht was a film that raised awareness about hospitality and tradition in Tushemisht. The film was a success and was praised for its beautiful setting and storyline. The Women of Tushemisht was a film that captured the essence of the Albanian culture and tradition, and it was a film that was enjoyed by audiences from around the world.

The Women of Tushemisht was a film that was made with passion and dedication. The film was shot in the beautiful setting of Tushemisht, and the film was a tribute to the beauty of the Albanian culture. The film was a film that was enjoyed by audiences from around the world, and it was a film that will be remembered for many years to come.

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Albania hosted its fourth successive Environment Film Festival. The festival was held from 22 May-5 June 2016 across eight locations: Shkodra, Tirana, Vlora, Skrapar, Permet, Erseke, Gjirokaster and Valbona. Ecology, culture, economy, migrations, wars and social issues, among many others, provided the essence to this festival, aimed at sharing and exchanging common and future concerns. More than 70 films from more than 40 countries were shown at EFFA. Five of them featured stories about lakes around the world and importance on protecting their ecosystem and wildlife, such as the one about 'Lonely lake' (Iran); Lake Skadar (Montenegro and Albania), Lake Maggiore (south side of the Alps, between Italy and Switzerland), Maracibo’s Lake (Venezuela) and Lake Cavazo (Italy). The festival’s goal is screening the best environmental movies and documentaries, both international and Albanian, in order to involve the majority of the Albanian society, from different ages, backgrounds and places. The Vjosa Story, a movie about protecting the wild river of Albania, was selected the Best Film in the International Long Movie category. The film sends a clear and strong message about why we should fight for one of the last remaining wild rivers in Europe. This festival was organised by the Albanian Ministry of Environment and the Delegation of the European Union to Albania, in collaboration with embassies and NGO partners in the country. The Environment Film Festival, Albania, holds and defends the idea that the right to environment is a right for everyone, a common good that has a great relevance and importance in our daily life and for the planet on which we live.

Lake Ohrid Day

21st June is Lake Ohrid Day. This decision was taken 16 years ago on February 2000 by the Joint Lake Ohrid Management Board. This is a day when all the communities living on the shores of Lake Ohrid Region remember the unique values of Lake Ohrid. Local communities should teach their children to love and protect this natural treasure. On this occasion, every year on a rotational basis three municipalities around Lake Ohrid, Ohrid, Pogradec and Struga organize many festive activities. This year the day was celebrated in Ohrid City, where a number of cultural and sportive activities were organized by the Ohrid Municipality. An exhibition with children’s paintings inspired by Lake Ohrid was opened on the day. At the end of the activity, in symbolic way, the Mayor of Ohrid Mr Nikola Bakracheski and the Mayor of Pogradec Mr Eduard Kapri signed a document expressing the commitment of their municipalities to save and protect the world’s unique ecosystem of Lake Ohrid. They put the ‘document’ in a bottle which was taken to the Lake by a canoe boat. Lake Ohrid Day brought together the three municipalities from main cities around the Lake, enabling them to join forces and unify their policy and action towards ensuring a complete and long term protection. The symbolic day engages also the community and helps at raising awareness about protecting Lake Ohrid. 
Protecting Lake Ohrid

This is a quarterly newsletter published by the project "Towards strengthened governance of the shared transboundary natural and cultural heritage of the Lake Ohrid region".

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