TOWARDS STRENGTHENED GOVERNANCE OF THE SHARED TRANSBOUNDARY
NATURAL AND CULTURAL HERITAGE OF THE LAKE OHRID REGION
Dear readers,

The Ministry of Culture is the lead governmental institution responsible for the protection, conservation, improvement and promotion of cultural heritage in Albania. In line with its institutional competences the ministry had taken several important initiatives, programmes and projects to protect and promote cultural heritage, develop and support public-private partnerships and strengthen and intensify regional and international cooperation.

The Ministry’s new vision, approach and policy towards cultural heritage is reflected in the decision-making processes related to the country’s cultural heritage. Starting from the period 2015-2016, the protected areas of cultural monuments were expanded, new historic centres were approved by Decisions of the Council of Ministers and several major rehabilitation projects implemented successfully or are still in progress. The new vision and approach of the Ministry towards cultural heritage in this period have been put into practice in the important project “Towards strengthened governance of the shared transboundary natural and cultural heritage of the Lake Ohrid region”.

Since the beginning of the project the Ministry, the Institute of Cultural Monuments and the Korca Regional Directorate of National Culture have participated in all project activities and actively contributed to the preparation of the required documentation in line with the recommendations of ICCROM, ICOMOS and IUCN. The National Restoration Council has acted promptly by approving the proposed boundaries of the potential World Heritage property and the protected area of the early Christian church on the Lin Peninsula. In June 2015, by proposal of the Ministry of Culture, the historical centre of Pogradec was approved by Decision of the Council of Ministers. Currently, our experts are working on the finalisation of a draft management plan, while at the same time a group of specialists -mainly architects- are involved in the preparation of the guidelines for the maintenance and rehabilitation of the traditional build heritage on the Albanian part of the Lake Ohrid region. The preparation of the nomination file for the World Heritage inscription of the Albanian part of the region is the final objective to be achieved within this project.

This project has contributed not only in improving transboundary cooperation with our Macedonian partners, but also in sharing knowledge, experiences, challenges and difficulties jointly faced in protecting and safeguarding the cultural and natural values of the Lake Ohrid region.

World Heritage status, as the final objective of this project, does not mean only prestige and advantage: World Heritage sites belong to us all, irrespective of the territory on which they are located, which means also responsibilities, challenges, difficulties and issues to be dealt with. Aware of the importance of this status and taking into account the distinctive natural and cultural values that makes this region unique, the finalisation of this project will open a new long-term process jointly managed by the responsible institutions and communities living in the Lake Ohrid region.

Yours Sincerely,

Mirela Kumbaro Furxhi
Minister of Culture, Albania
The Fifth 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 9th and 10th of February 2017, in Pogradec, Albania. This fifth meeting was part of a joint European Union and UNESCO initiative in close cooperation with the Albanian and Macedonian authorities to strengthen transboundary cooperation in the management of the Lake Ohrid region’s natural and cultural heritage.

Representatives of the Albanian Ministry of Culture, Environment and Physical Planning, and Albanian National Agency on Protected Areas participated. The Albanian representatives of the Lake Ohrid Watershed Committee and local officials from three municipalities, Ohrid, Struga, and Pogradec, joined it. The Macedonian representatives of the Macedonian Ministry of Culture, Environment, and Physical Planning, and Macedonian ministries of culture and representatives of Macedonian Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning, and Macedonian National Agency on Protected Areas participated. The Albanian representatives of the Lake Ohrid Watershed Committee and local officials from 3 municipalities, Ohrid, Struga, and Pogradec, also joined in the meeting. The specific objectives of this meeting were to strengthen integrated approaches to natural and cultural heritage management, advance improved information sharing and facilitate the coordination of activities for the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) consultation process taking place in both countries.

Within this meeting, the presentation of the two draft management planning documents was made. The documents were subsequently examined by the participants of the meeting, divided into four working groups: cultural heritage, natural heritage, governance, and the group on sustainable development options. The groups identified and discussed on how the synergies among the actions proposed in the two draft plans can be strengthened, as well as how to mitigate incompatible and conflicting actions. If any, or integrate missing actions. Define priorities in terms of feasibility/important. The groups noted that there was an uneven number of actions in each plan and that the level of detail varied: The Macedonian draft plan included more general actions, while the Albanian plans' general actions were noted that both objectives and actions or spheres of action are quite similar with each other which should facilitate transboundary cooperation. Other priority actions were identified such as awareness raising campaign together with the preparation of promotional material related to the status of the World Heritage list. Adoption of the action plan for sustainable tourism and development of a general tourism strategy for the Lake Ohrid region. TheSEA consultation process for the World Heritage Supplement to the Management Plan for Pogradec was another important topic discussed during the meeting. After the presentation from the SEA Department of the Albanian Ministry of Environment, the possibility to take into consideration within the SEA process the impact on cultural heritage was discussed. It was stressed that this would be in line with the EU Directive on SEA which considers the protection and safeguarding of cultural and natural heritage as an integral part of the environment and of forms of development that could be considered sustainable.

The next transboundary meeting will be held in mid-September 2017 with a focus on the results of the SEA process and presentation of the draft World Heritage extension file for the nomination of Albanian part of the lake as a WH property.

Management Planning Process is continuing

One key requirement for achieving World Heritage status is the presence or establishment of a management plan to ensure protection of the site and its values. The management planning process was initiated in March 2015 with a workshop held in Korca, and continued over the next two years with four additional workshops. The last of which took place in June 2016. Each workshop was attended by around 25 participants, of whom 44% women, representing a wide range of Albanian and Macedonian stakeholders. Attention was paid to harmonising the developed WH Supplement with other planning documents for the area, in particular the General Local Plan for Pogradec Municipality and the management plan for the existing World Heritage Property. A special Technical Working Group was established in April 2016, bringing together representatives of the key stakeholders to finalise the first draft of the WH Supplement under the guidance of an experienced international management planning expert. The final draft is expected to be ready by very soon, taking into account the input from the transboundary meeting that took place in Pogradec on the 9th and 10th of February. In the following months the draft WH Supplement will be subject to a Strategic Environmental Assessment that will include a strong public consultation component.
Training in Conservation and Management of the Lake Ohrid Region Ecosystem

A successful World Heritage Nomination must demonstrate that the property is effectively protected and managed, with a legitimate management plan and an effective legal, financial and institutional framework to ensure successful implementation. To that end, the project supported the development of a World Heritage Supplement (WH Supplement) to the existing Management Plan for the Pogradec Protected Landscape that encompasses entirely the proposed extension of the existing WH property in Albania. Effective implementation of the plan will require collaboration of a large number of stakeholders with interests in the area. A two-day training course on collaborative management of protected and heritage landscapes was delivered to all the main stakeholders in March 2016, indicating the ways to ensure a harmonious balance of nature, culture, landscape and development. Once the first draft of the WH Supplement was completed, the capacity for collaborative management was enhanced through a training course entitled ‘Nature Management for the Proposed Extension of the World Heritage Property: Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Ohrid Region’, which took place in Tushemisht on the 6th and 7th of December 2016. The learning group included representatives of Pogradec Municipality, the Regional Administration for Protected Areas, and local NGOs, researchers, farmers, fishermen, as well as Albanian and Macedonian experts and practitioners in cultural heritage management. By combining presentations with indoor and outdoor practical exercise simulations the workshop participants built awareness of the natural values of the Lake Ohrid region, gained an understanding of the main elements of the management plan and the proposed conservation actions for the area, and identified ways in which the main stakeholders can contribute to the implementation.

Tourism map of Lake Ohrid Region now available

Published in three languages: English, Albanian and Macedonian, the tourism map of the Lake Ohrid region invites the visitors to explore the area. This region harbours among the oldest human settlements in Europe. People have been drawn to its dramatic and beautiful setting for thousands of years, for spiritual and religious contemplation, fishing in rich waters, or growing crops in the fertile surrounding soils. Evidence of past settlements can be seen in churches, monasteries and basilicas, in particular around Ohrid and Lin Peninsula. Multiple layers of intangible cultural heritage including songs, dances, cuisine and festivals reflect how the local culture has adapted and continues to enjoy a vibrant life around this enduring lake. The map indicates all must-see places around this oldest lake in Europe, such as Pogradec, to explore its green parks and lakeside promenade, or the villages of Elshani, Vevchani and Velestovo, which offer a rural experience. Hiking is suggested to the Old Castle Grounds, camping on the Lin Peninsula, and walking around Drilon Springs and the Bay of Bones. The calm atmosphere in Ohrid’s churches and monasteries offers a unique experience. For breath-taking natural panoramas, Galicica National Park and Guri i Kamjes are highlighted as top destinations.

Sustainable Development Strategy document

The strategy document identifying sustainable development opportunities is now translated into Albanian and is ready to be a valuable mean in the EU-UNESCO project implementation. The preparation of the Strategy document identifying sustainable development opportunities is comprised in the technical assistance provided, within the framework of the project, to the Albanian authorities. It was prepared jointly by IUCN and ICOMOS in a sequence of phases by means of desk research, field visits, workshops, and in-depth discussions. The document was prepared referring to UNGA resolutions that promote ‘the inclusion of culture in the sustainable development model, since culture ultimately shapes what we mean by development and determines how people act in the world’. It aims to help developing, in a sustainable way, the main local key sectors, such as agriculture, fishing, forestry, local tourism and heritage, by recommending short and long term actions to be undertaken. The document is also available in Albanian and is now ready to be an important tool in the sustainable development activities, in the local and regional level.
The latest International Waterbird Census indicates the presence of more than 160,000 birds in the wetlands of Albania, represented by more than 65 waterbird species. Among these, around 16,074 birds were recorded for the Albanian side of Lake Ohrid, from Lin to Tushemisht. This result indicates an improvement in the status of biodiversity in the Lake Ohrid region, since the estimated number is 6,000-7,000 larger than that the year before. The yearly Waterbird Census was undertaken on 14th and 15th of January by twelve national and international experts. Supported by the EU-funded project NaturAL, this was a great opportunity for the rangers to learn more about the management of natural resources within and around the protected areas they safeguard. All offices of the Regional Administration for Protected Areas were involved, participating as bird counters or observers in the Census, and providing logistical support to the participants. In preparation for the Census, one-day training was delivered by Dr Spase Shumka, Dr Taulant Bino and Myrian Topi to the rangers on 12th January in Pogradec, Kune-Vain, and Orikum respectively. The Census covered 18 selected sites and the findings will be made available to the public and the scientific community through the BioNNA database. The results will guide the Ministry of Environment and the National Agency for Protected Areas in their work on the formulation of policies and strategies for conservation of nature and biodiversity, and protection of ecosystem services. Wetlands are the most important habitats for migratory birds. Each species contributes to global biodiversity and consequently to the ecosystem services that nature provides to all living things. In joining this international initiative, Albania has once again confirmed its important role in the protection of global biodiversity. The efforts put in place jointly by the Regional Administration of Protected Areas and the National Inspectorate are fundamental to ensure the safe transit of migrant species, their continued existence and contribution to ecosystem balances.

Albania Applauded at the 13th Conference on Biodiversity in Cancun, Mexico

Albania is making progress toward achieving global objectives to protect biodiversity. The country was praised for its efforts in this direction at the 13th meeting of the Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity that took place in Cancun, Mexico, from 4-17 December 2016. According to the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity, by 2020, 196 states who signed the convention should have 17 percent protected areas in their territory and be able to manage them. At the conference Albania presented progress made in expanding its protected areas, plans for management of these areas and implementation in practice, in order to ensure protection of biodiversity. Almost one fifth (16.61%) of the Albanian territory is protected. Natural reservoirs, national parks, nature monuments are part of the National Strategic Plan for Protected Areas, covering 417,000 ha, of which 22,000 ha are sea areas. The United Nations General Assembly declared 2011-20 the United Nations Decade on Biodiversity (Resolution 65/161). The UN Decade on Biodiversity serves to support and promote implementation of the objectives of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, with the goal of significantly reducing biodiversity loss. To implement the management plans on protected areas the Albanian Ministry of Environment is being assisted through some projects from the EU and the UN Programmes for Environment and Development. In order to achieve the objective for protected areas, which includes six percent of sea areas, the Albanian ministry will propose two new protected areas: the Natural Sea Park of Porto Palermo and the National Park of Alps in the north of the country. UNDP Albania supported the participation of Albania in this conference to present its progress and future objectives.
How is FYR of Macedonia protecting the natural and cultural heritage of Lake Ohrid?

The FYR of Macedonia is making continuing efforts to protect the natural and cultural heritage of Lake Ohrid region. In this framework, some important laws and regulations have been approved at the national level, defining the ways, conditions and tools to protect this natural and cultural heritage. These include laws no. 20/04 and 71/04 for cultural protection of the heritage, and no. 75/2010 for management of the natural and cultural heritage of Lake Ohrid. Other laws were adopted regarding nature protection, environment protection, waters management, ratification of the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (informally called the Espoo Convention), ratification of the Aarhus Convention, and ratification of the Helsinki Convention for transboundary waters. Based also on the national legislation, the Directorate for Protection of Cultural Heritage at the Ministry of Culture has finalised procedures for a draft management plan of the cultural and natural heritage of Lake Ohrid. The last version of this plan for 2015-2026 was prepared in 2015. Lately the Ministry of Culture, in cooperation with the Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning of FYR Macedonia, have started a process to establish a commission for management of the cultural and natural heritage of Lake Ohrid region.

What are the main threats to the Lake Ohrid region?

The implementation of the above-mentioned laws and enforcement of continuing inspections by the State Inspectorate of Environment and other inspectorates are minimising the threats posed to our Lake Ohrid. Some of the problems or challenges that impact the natural and cultural heritage of Lake Ohrid in both countries include sewage (wastewater) treatment, waste management, uncontrolled urbanisation, destruction of natural values, lack of awareness on the region important value. To overcome these challenges we are implementing some additional regional projects, including the following:

- Protection and sustainable use of biodiversity in Ohrid, Prespa and Skadar Lakes: GIZ
- Climate Change Adaptation Programme in the Western Balkans: GIZ

What are the challenges for the joint management of transboundary Lake Ohrid?

The project "Towards strengthened governance of the shared transboundary natural and cultural heritage of the Lake Ohrid Region", which is being implemented in the framework of an upstream process initiative, is a good opportunity to identify and protect the natural and cultural assets of the lake and improve transboundary cooperation and management. The Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning, and also the Office for Protection of Natural and Cultural Heritage, have been actively involved since the start of this project. In all the meetings and joint activities, in order to give maximal support for its implementation. We conclude that a joint management and the creation of an integrated system to manage the natural and cultural values of Lake Ohrid region, as one of the most important ecosystems in the world is a common objective with our neighboring country, the Republic of Albania. We strongly support the contribution and assistance of UNESCO and advisory bodies of the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM), International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) and International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), which with their maximal engagement and dedication have helped us to better identify and face the challenges that impact negatively on our shared transboundary lake region.

World Wetlands Day 2017, activities in Lake Ohrid region

World Wetlands Day is celebrated every year on 2nd February, marking the date in 1971 when the Convention on Wetlands, known as the Ramsar Convention, was adopted in the Iranian city of Ramsar, drawing attention to the importance of wetlands. The theme for 2017 "Wetlands for Disaster Risk Reduction" was selected to raise awareness and highlight the vital role healthy wetlands have in reducing the impacts of extreme events such as floods, droughts and cyclones on communities, and in helping to build resilience. Many activities were held across the world on World Wetlands Day, and various awareness campaigns were launched weeks prior to the day, especially in the countries where ecosystems are in danger.

Albania has four Ramsar sites, and Macedonia, two, one of which the two countries share, the Prespa lakes. Albania and Macedonia joined in the global activities to celebrate World Wetlands Day. Several activities were held in Albania, many in the Prespa lakes region. One activity was Painting Day, where children were invited to draw their impressions of the Prespa lakes and their biodiversity. The activities continued with the Tradition of Wine, held every year on World Wetlands Day. People danced and celebrated together and raised awareness of how to protect their precious nature. Meanwhile, on the Macedonian side, Struga Museum opened its doors for free on the day marking the Ramsar Convention.

In this framework there was a good news from our southern neighbours, where the Greek government ratified an International Agreement on the Protection and Sustainable Development of Prespa Park in northern Greece. This agreement will protect the park as a natural resource. Prespa Park is the first transboundary protected area in the Balkans, established on 2 February 2000, with a joint declaration made by the prime ministers of Greece, Albania and FYROM, following a proposal from the Society for the Protection of Prespa and the WWF.
The Lake Ohrid region has a very rich underwater archaeology, which has not been fully explored. The negative aspect of this lack of exploring is that people living beside the lake and the Albanians in general are not aware of the amazing heritage the region possesses. On the bright sight, this has contributed for the underwater world to remaining untouched, not ruined or robbed. Scientifically and archaeologically Lake Ohrid is part of a geographic region that includes Lake Maliq (today the fields of Maliq) and the Large and Small Prespa lakes. This region has great underwater potential that is being explored by the Institute of Archaeology, particularly in the last decade. Adrian Anastasi is the head of the Underwater Archaeology Sector in Albania’s Institute of Archaeology and has directed all the underwater scientific projects in the region, during the last years. He created his team of young passionate specialists, trained and certified internationally. Together they are exploring, digging and studying the precious archaeological objects in the lakes and seas of Albania, in the framework of the project The archaeological map of Albanian shores, approved by the Institute and the National Council of Archaeology in the Ministry of Culture. Starting from the period 2005-2007, Mr Anastasi and his team started the first exploration of the waters of Lake Ohrid on the Albanian side. The first topographical and geo-archaeological explorations began in the area from Pogradec to Hudenisht, and from Bujeze to Lin close to the border with Macedonia. What they found was amazing. Anastasi stated that there are "Five potentially rich underwater area, recorded as Lin1, 2 and 3, and Hudenisht 1 and 2". The team studied the findings and classified them as a prehistoric cultural heritage of great importance, not only for Albania but for the Balkans and beyond. Sites Lin 1 and 3 date to the Neolithic era and Hudenisht 1 and 2 to the Bronze and early Iron ages, while Lin 2 is classified as heritage from the modern period, though nevertheless of special importance because a wooden mooring stands still in good condition, the remains of a small port, set in a stone basement. This may have served as a place to anchor small ships and characteristic wooden boats, dating back some three centuries. Another important goal of the scientific work was the identification and mapping of the coordinates of this rich heritage area in order to protect it from the plans of local urban development and prevent damage and theft of archaeological objects. All the findings from the Lake Ohrid underwater area are reported to the Institute of Monuments in Tirana, the National Council of Archaeology, Regional Directorate of Korca under the Ministry of Culture and the Directorate of Border Police, Pogradec. Anastasi says that every exploration has been done with special attention paid to the UNESCO standards of the Paris Convention, November 2001. For the moment the team has drafted a map of the sites and compiled a range of documents, including graphics, videos and photographs. They have also extracted some small objects from the sites for further study, placing them for the moment in the Archaeological Museum at Durres. The findings were presented at the conference Days of Albanology, held at the National History Museum, Tirana, in December 2015 and published in the yearly bulletin 2015-2016 of the Institute of Archaeology. There are some findings also from explorations undertaken in the Prespa lakes, which are integrated with those from Lake Ohrid in order to gain a broader view of the relationships that existed among the old settlements, including also with other areas such as Maliq, Dunavec and Sovjan, Korca. The main obstacle to further exploration and studies is financial support from the respective ministries, local governments and interested organisations, which can help greatly for this heritage to be explored and become known to the public of the region and the wider world. Anastasi concluded that there is great potential to turn the region into a cultural tourism area, especially the protected site of Lin 3, where some additional ideas include: underwater diving and exploration, and opening of a National Museum. Also a diving centre could be opened, dedicated to people who love to explore underwater cultural heritage.
Tourism

The city of Ohrid has justifiedly earned its reputation as one of the most beautiful tourist destinations, not only in Europe but in the world. The little-known city of Ohrid has made it to number five in the Lonely Planet Travel List for 2017. Overlooking the extraordinarily blue waters of its eponymous lake, Ohrid enjoys a stunning position that is best viewed from a boat. From the water you’ll see the town’s terracotta roofs broken up by centuries-old church spires (the city claims once to have had 365) and overlooked by the turreted walls of Tsar Samuel’s Castle. Ohrid has transformed itself from Macedonia’s religious centre to its busiest holiday resort, and its beaches are the best by far in this otherwise landlocked nation. Many other media, magazines, well-known travel bloggers have followed up this suggestion and published articles on Ohrid and the lake after which it was named. The magazine Vogue also puts Ohrid city on its list for travellers in 2017. Welcome to Ohrid, Macedonia, an utterly perfect town full of Old World charm, set on the banks of brilliant Lake Ohrid. This UNESCO World Heritage Site sits at the intersection of three national parks, attracting hikers, bikers, and climbers to town, as well as those in search of a holiday, and it’s also the perfect place to enjoy Macedonia’s flourishing wine harvest. Meanwhile, Telegraph Travel and bloggers recommend Ohrid as a must-visit destination for 2017.

Festive days in Lake Ohrid Region, Celebrating with Tradition

Albans and Macedonians share a common lake–Lake Ohrid and have many other things in common. But they have different ways of celebrating Christmas and New Year. They commonly respect their tradition of celebrating the end of the year, continuing the traditions of their ancestors. Let’s explore part of this tradition on both sides of the lake. Half of the Albanians living by the lake are Muslim and half Catholic, so Christmas Day on the 25th of December is commonly celebrated. Meanwhile, the Macedonians, being mostly orthodox, celebrate Christmas on the 6th of January. However, New Year’s Eve is celebrated on both sides of the lake. On the Albanian side the celebrations begin in the first days of December. A few decorations light up the city of Pogradec and its surroundings. On the Albanian side the residents start making their preparations for the New Year’s celebrations weeks before, cleaning and decorating the house in a charming way. Neighbours join together to prepare Baklava, a traditional Albanian desert with up to 100 layers of puff pastry filled with walnuts and butter. Some days before New Year, the city of Pogradec celebrates the Wine Day, held every year in the third week of December, as a recent years revival of old tradition. In Pogradec, wine and fish are the main elements of the table for the New Year’s dinner. The preferred fish is the koran, the king of the lake, while elsewhere in Albania turkey is roasted as main course. Albanians celebrate together at home, with only a few going to restaurants. Pogradec is a quiet city at Christmas and New Year. The favourite activity is walking by the lake, perhaps taking a boat, or visiting Drilon.

Meanwhile, on the other side of the lake, the celebrations last longer. The cities of Ohrid and Struga radiate lights, with Christmas trees and decorations since the early days of December. Macedonians celebrate Christmas in January. But, nevertheless, the hotels are fully booked for a month. Tourists prefer to spend these holiday days in Ohrid, booking hotels and restaurants, and enjoying the view of the lake. The Macedonian Orthodox Church follows the Gregorian calendar which has 13 days difference from the Gregorian. Christmas begins early in the morning with a service at the church. The night before, on Christmas Eve, the family come together and prepare to celebrate the joyous Christian holiday with a dinner. The Christmas Eve dinner must be rich, including not only fish and meat, but specialties such as sarma and dolma. Of course a main part of the dinner is the Christmas cake, baked early in the morning, with a coin, perhaps silver or gold, placed inside. The one who finds the coin will have luck, health and wealth, and guide the family through the New Year.

The National Agency of Protected Areas in Albania, in collaboration with the Ministry of Environment, organised a Coordination Forum, Protected areas network- a model of future sustainable development. Towards next steps for better management, which was held in Tirana on 6th December, 2016. The forum gathered four Albanian ministries: Environment, Agriculture, Tourism and Urban development, who assured to work together for the sustainable development of protected areas. The most important fact emerging in the forum was the increasing number of tourists in protected areas, 3.3% higher in 2016 than in 2015, and for the first time Albanian visitors outnumbered foreign visitors, showing that the Albanian community is aware of the value of natural parks and protected areas. Another achievement is the inventorying of flora and fauna in protected areas for the first time. In 2017, the ministry will report internationally on the statistics of flora and fauna in the country.
Lake Ohrid region is home to nearly 160,000 people, with more than 52,000 of them residing in Albania. Every year, approximately 300,000 visitors explore the region’s natural and cultural heritage. While on the Macedonian side of the lake, summer tourism rests easily with culture nature, this is not the case on the Albanian side of the lake. “The main threat in wetlands such as the Lake Ohrid region is the fact that it is exclusively used for a sunny weekend, for a few hours, with extremely low or no income for the local people,” says Alois Lang, an Austrian expert working with local authorities in Pogradec region for sustainable tourism development. “The challenge for local and international experts who are working closely in this area, is to find alternative tourism products and interests for the general public, but also for different kinds of audiences.” - says Christophe Graz, heritage consultant at ICOMOS, who is working with Albanian experts to explore the tourism opportunities of the region. Local experts and authorities are optimistic for the coming years. Gani Beqo from the Regional Administration of Protected Areas in Pogradec says, “In the next ten years, I see tourism in this area going beyond water tourism, linked more with mountain tourism and family tourism, and which is less developed on the Albanian side, particularly given the experience of the Macedonian side.” Local and international experts are working closely together on the implementation of the EU-funded project “Towards strengthened governance of the shared transboundary natural and cultural heritage of the Lake Ohrid region”. Some of these experts were interviewed to produce a video, which focuses on the challenges and opportunities of sustainable tourism. The video was recently published with the support of UNESCO, aiming at raising awareness of values and threats of the Lake Ohrid site.

Sustainable Tourism Opportunities in the Lake Ohrid Region

Pogradec - 'Raising awareness for a cleaner city'

Last December, the ‘Une Gruaja’ NGO organized a sensitizing activity in Pogradec, within the framework of the Lake Ohrid Region project. Young volunteers held three days of activism to sensitize the people of Pogradec municipality on the importance of proper waste management and appropriate reduction of urban waste. Around 20 placards/slogans were used by the group of volunteers who demonstrated during the caravan days. Besides the slogans prepared by UG, students had prepared some more slogans of their own that added value and visibility to the activity. This activity was also attended by the Mayor, the Minister of Agriculture and many visitors currently in Pogradec. The young volunteer’s convoy continued the environmental walking for three days spreading awareness and useful information about the waste reduction. Within the campaign, the NGO also produced cotton bags with the slogans ‘Clean Pogradec - Rich Pogradec’ and ‘I am a cotton bag – Use me instead of plastic bags’. Some of the bags were taken to the super markets and shops of Pogradec to promote the usage of environmental friendly cotton bags. The event was widely published by the NGO through social media channels and also a short reportage was produced in cooperation with the local TV channel SOT7.
Protecting Lake Ohrid

partners

UNESCO
World Heritage Centre - Project coordinator

The European Union
main financial contributor

The Ministry of Environment
of the Republic of Albania

MINISTRY OF CULTURE
of Republic of Albania

MINISTRY OF CULTURE
of the FYR of Macedonia

Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning
of the FYR of Macedonia

ICCRoM
International Centre for the Study of the
Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property

ICOMOS
(International Council on Monuments and Sites)

IUCN
(International Union for Conservation of Nature)

Whats next?

Social Media Competition - launch in April 2017
25-27 April 2017 Workshop: Heritage supporting sustainable development opportunities in the Lake Ohrid Region (Pogradec, Tushemist, Albania)
6th Transboundary meeting - mid September
Ohrid Lake Day and Opening of Tourism Season in Lake Ohrid (21 June 2017)

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”. Languages: English, Albanian, Macedonian. The European Union is not responsible for the content of this newsletter.

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