



*Annex 13 of the Operational Guidelines*

**FORMAT FOR THE SUBMISSION OF STATE OF CONSERVATION**

**REPORTS BY THE STATE PARTIES**

**(in compliance with Paragraph 169 of the Operational Guidelines)**

**WORLD HERITAGE – NATURAL AND CULTURAL HERITAGE OF THE OHRID REGION –  
(Albania/Republic of North Macedonia) (C/N 99)**

**State of Conservation Report of the Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Ohrid Region and  
report on the progress in the implementation of the recommendations from the World Heritage  
Committee Decision (45 COM 7B.104)**

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**Name of World Heritage Property:** Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Ohrid Region (Albania/Republic of North Macedonia) (C/N 99)

**Date of Inscription:** 1979

**Expansion:** 1980, 2019

**Year of minor modifications to the boundaries:** 2009

**Criteria:** (i) (iii) (iv) (vii)

## **1. Executive Summary of the report**

The Republic of North Macedonia and the Republic of Albania remain firmly committed to preserving the World Heritage status for the Natural and Cultural Heritage in the Ohrid region. This State of Conservation Report for the Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Ohrid region and report on the progress in the implementation of the recommendations from the World Heritage Committee Decision (45 COM 7B.104), constitutes an update to the joint report by the States Parties, the Republic of North Macedonia and the Republic of Albania, on the state of conservation of the property, with information on the progress achieved in the implementation of the recommendations of the Reactive Monitoring Missions and the strengthening of bilateral cooperation aimed at joint management of the property in 2023.

A Strategic Recovery Plan (SRP) for rehabilitation of the natural and cultural heritage of the Ohrid region has been drawn up, which identifies the extreme vulnerability of the property, the main reasons for such vulnerability, especially the inconsistency of the regulations, the lack of implementation of existing programs and projects, as well as the presence of active threats. The Strategic Recovery Plan for rehabilitation provides a solid foundation for commencing the process of recovery of the properties; however, it should be strengthened, in particular by giving advantage to activities related to cross-border goals and priorities, to explain the mechanisms for implementation and integration into national policies and plans, and then to define the time frames for completion of the activities. The successful implementation of the plan will contribute to the improvement of cross-border cooperation, as well as long-term engagement at the national and local level. It should be emphasized that in the revised SRP, some actions, which were envisaged only in North Macedonia but actually relevant to both States Parties, were revised also by Albania.

For the Albanian part of the property, the Report in chapter 2 focuses on the points of the Decision 45 COM 7B.104 of World Heritage Committee. In chapter 3 are described maintenance and restoration works and projects undertaken by the Regional Administration of Protected Areas, Korça, Regional Directorate of Cultural Heritage (RDCH Korça) and Municipality of Pogradec for the protection, promotion of cultural values in the Albanian part of the property. Chapter 4 lists and explains the ongoing projects and preliminary proposals prepared and implemented within the Albanian part of World Heritage Property and the buffer zone.

The Government of the Republic of North Macedonia convened an emergency session on 09/26/2023, in response to the Decision of the World Heritage Committee in Riyadh 2023. During the session,

conclusions were reached, requiring immediate action for the rehabilitation of the natural and cultural heritage in the Ohrid region. These conclusions apply to all relevant ministries and institutions, mandating the implementation of the World Heritage Committee's recommendations. The objective is to mitigate and eliminate factors that negatively impact the property's Outstanding Universal Value (No. 41-9086/4 of 26.09.2023).

Considering the state of the legislation and the treatment of the heritage, as well as in order to strengthen the institutional capacities, the Ministry of Culture in cooperation with the Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning, the Directorate for Environment and the Directorate for Protection of Cultural Heritage prepared a new Draft Law on the Management of the World Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Ohrid region. In addition, a Draft Law on the Protection of Cultural Heritage and a Draft Law Declaring the Old City Core of Ohrid as Cultural Heritage of Particular Importance, have also been prepared.

Currently there is an ongoing procedure for the adoption of a new Law on Fisheries and Aquaculture with a special focus on protected areas, a Draft Law Declaring the Studenchishte Marsh in Ohrid as a Protected Area in category IV - Nature Park and a Draft Law on Lake Ohrid as a Monument of Nature.

The preparation of a Feasibility Study for drafting an **Urban Plan for areas and buildings of national importance for the protected zone of the coastal belt in the Ohrid region**, aimed at overall and long-term protection of the shore of Lake Ohrid.

In 2023, the PI Galichica National Park started the creation of an orthophotomosaic of the terrain within the National Park, by means of which it will detect all illegally constructed buildings by using a drone and low-flying recording of all buildings within the boundaries of the National Park.

Confirming the open and partnership relationship of the Republic of North Macedonia and the Republic of Albania with the World Heritage Centre and the advisory bodies, in January 2024 it requested a joint Reactive Monitoring Mission of the UNESCO World Heritage Centre and the advisory bodies, which will assess the current state of the natural and cultural heritage of the Ohrid region with guidelines for future activities aimed at its adequate protection of the heritage.

### **Response to the World Heritage Committee Decision:**

Decision 45 COM 7B.104

**The World Heritage Committee,**

1. **Having examined Document WHC/23/45.COM/7B.Add.2,**
2. **Recalling Decision 44 COM 7B.7[7] adopted at its extended 44th session (Fuzhou/online, 2021),**
3. **Welcomes the joint efforts of the States Parties to develop a Strategic Recovery Plan for the property but calls on the States Parties to ensure the following:**
  - a) **The inclusion of an implementation timeframe, budget and prioritisation for each action in the Strategic Recovery Plan**

Attached the revised draft Strategic Recovery Plan.

**b) The extension to Albania of the implementation of actions envisaged only in North Macedonia but relevant to both States Parties,**

The State Party of Albania took note of this request. In the revised draft Strategic Plan attached to this Report there were incorporated several actions envisaged only in North Macedonia but relevant also to Albania.

**c) Adequately staffed, resourced and mandated national teams to liaise and coordinate with all relevant institutions to guarantee the integration of the actions of the Strategic Recovery Plan into national policies and plans, as well as an inter-institutional effort to halt and reverse the threats and achieve the goals set out in the Strategic Recovery Plan;**

For the Cultural Component of the Albanian Part of the property, Korça RDCH exercise its activity in the cultural heritage area, with the ultimate goal of tracing, designing, conserving, restoring, supervising, commissioning, promoting, and publicizing cultural heritage in the territory they manage in Korça region. As defined by the law 27/2018 "On Cultural Heritage and Museums", art. 31, RDCH field of competences includes the implementation of international tangible cultural heritage conventions ratified by the Republic of Albania. According to the structure of Korça RDCH the sector of Pogradec is composed of a Specialist and a Maintenance worker. The monitoring of cultural heritage assets in the world heritage site and buffer zone is part of the everyday work of the dedicated staff of Pogradec (Department of Pogradec). Monitoring is done through inspections on site of the specialists and technical staff, which report to the department of archaeology and architecture in Korça RDCH. The Korça RDCH does not have offices or any other facilities at its disposal, but the maintenance worker has a warehouse inside the Early Christian Church of Lin, where he keeps his maintenance tools. The maintenance worker operates full time at the remains of Early Christian Church of Lin, welcoming and accompanying tourists, keeping data on the number of visitors. The remains of Early Christian Church and mosaics of Lin has fences around and the only person that has access to the monument is the maintenance worker of Korça RDCH.

Korça RDCH staff dedicated to Pogradec is continuously assisted by National Institute of Cultural Heritage (NICH). NICH, is a specialized scientific national institution subordinate to the minister responsible for cultural heritage. NICH exercises its activity in the field of tangible cultural heritage, with the ultimate goal of tracing, researching, studying, designing, conserving, restoring, supervising, commissioning, promoting, and publicizing tangible cultural heritage. As defined by the law 27/2018 "On Cultural Heritage and Museums", art. 30, NICH coordinates the work for the implementation of the World Heritage convention for national cultural properties of outstanding universal significance.

The Historical Museum of Pogradec is part of the Directory of Tourism, Cultural Heritage and Youth at the Municipality of Pogradec. Personnel of the Historical Museum of Pogradec consists of three employees, respectively the Responsible Person of the Cultural Heritage and two Specialists.

Administration of Protected Areas Korçë (RAPA Korçë) exercises its activity in the natural component the World Heritage which lies in the protected area of the Protected Terrestrial/Water Landscape "Pogradec Lake".

Presentation, promotion, and monitoring activities have been organized by RAPPA Korçë. Regarding the WTPL "Pogradec Lake" have been identified and correctly implemented the rules for the designation and implementation of projects within the protected areas where planning and action plans have been drafted/ draw up for the development of measures for the preservation and rehabilitation of ecosystems, habitats and species in the Environmental Protected Areas. Afforestation projects with autochthonous species of the area and mountain interventions have been designed.

Through field monitoring has been collected and processed all the information about the physical state of the Natural Monuments, continuously assessing their state. Inside WTPL "Pogradeci Lake" there are 7 natural monuments, that represent a good state according to the results of field monitoring. During the monitoring field, the relevant notes are also kept completing and collect the necessary data related to these monuments. For conservation and promotion purposes of this Pas, various ecotourism activities are also carry out, such as: cleaning, guiding and accompanying groups passionate about nature.



*Photos from some natural monuments found in the PMTU "Pogradec Lake" area:*

Fauna Monitoring: Lake Ohrid is a central World Heritage Site, a deep, oligographic lake of tectonic origin and among the 2-3 oldest lakes in the world. This long existence of the lake has allowed the development of an extraordinary ecosystem, which maintains an amazing degree of biodiversity.

On 15.01.2023, within the framework of the International Waterfowl Census, the staff of the Pogradec Protected Area, (RAPA Korçë) together with PPNEA colleagues, in cooperation with ornithological experts, NGOs and nature lovers, developed the process of observing and counting birds along certain coastal points of Pogradec lake.

From this Census, 7138 individuals were observed of 23 birds species that were present in the Albanian part of the Lake Ohrid. While during the census of the January 14, 2024, the number of birds that were observed were 6881 individuals of 25 types of birds.



The systematic monitoring of waterfowl in these protected areas, the geographical distribution and the distinction of the areas according to the number of populations continuously serve to strategy conception or national policies for the preservation of their habitats.

Almost every month RAPA Korçë in collaboration with PPNEA specialists, conducts monitoring and counting activities.

The Flamingos are the rarest species that has been observed for 2023 year, present in the lake for the second time 2.

Monitoring was carried out in Lake Ohrid, where waterfowl were counted in the lake, together with PPNEA, along the Tushemisht-Lin coastal line with some well-defined routes.

Fauna species monitoring has also been carry out in the buffer zone of the site WTPL "Pogradeci Lake".

The purpose of monitoring has been to ensure special protection of the protected environmental area and the important components of biodiversity and nature.



Related with monitoring activities Pogradec municipality, through Local Health Care Unit in Pogradec, during the summer season 2023, water samples have been taken along the lake from Lin to Tushemisht as below:

Udenisht Administrative Unit:

- Lin - 7 samples
- Piskupat - 4 samples
- Udenisht - 6 samples
- Memelisht - 3 samples

In the City:

- At the Pier - 3 samples
- Near the Police Station - 3 samples
- Near Bar "Konti" - 3 samples
- At the Bridge - 1 sample
- At "1 Maji" Hotel and Restaurant - 4 samples

Bucimas to Tushemisht:

- At the Beach in Bucimas - 3 samples
- At "Titanic" Area - 3 samples
- In Tushemisht - 3 samples
- At "Dante" Pizzeria - 4 samples
- At "Millenium" Hotel and Restaurant - 5 samples
- At "Uckat" - 1 sample

**Total:** 53 samples taken in depth of 5 m, in depth of 50 m, in depth of 100 m from the shore of the Lake.

In addition RAPA Korçë work focused also on:

- Continuous monitoring of illegal activities.
- Review of different competencies with local actors.
- Drafting of management plans for ZMM that do not have one.
- Cooperation with other local actors.
- Mining activities in Alarup and Çerrava.

- Damage to Black Pine forests by the Processionary and damage to the Bush by the Chinese Butterfly, mainly this phenomenon appeared in PMTU "Pogradec Lake".
- Accidents of forest surfaces from the construction of the Qukës-Qafë Pllloçë road.
- Complete closure and rehabilitation of the old Garbage Dump near the village of Peshkëpi.

**4. Urges the States Parties to put in place immediate emergency measures to bring together all relevant actors to stop new threats and reverse existing threats before the Strategic Recovery Plan has been finalised, approved and begun to take effect;**

In accordance with the Decision of the 45<sup>th</sup> session of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee (45 COM 7B.104 Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 2023), a Working Group established by the Minister of Culture in cooperation with the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Albania revised the Strategic Plan for Rehabilitation of the World Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Ohrid region (2023-2030). **In the procedure of revising the Strategic Plan, the indications, notes and recommendations contained in the opinion of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) were implemented.** According to the indications and recommendations, the working groups that were working on the Strategic Recovery Plan took steps in order to complement and specify certain activities indicated in the Plan. We note that the financing/budgeting for the implementation of the measures (activities) for the recovery of the properties should be evaluated at the moment of their implementation and in accordance with the current financial situation by the competent institutions with a determined budget framework for implementation and/or opportunities for co-financing by international donors. The fiscal implications required for the implementation of the measures will be provided by each of the competent entities responsible for the implementation of the measure, for the purpose of which the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia will oblige all competent entities to provide an assessment of the fiscal implications and sources of financing. These data will be the basis for programming the budget funds for the years in which the specific activity should be implemented.

Considering the organizational set-up of the institutions, the most acceptable solution is for the Commission for Managing the Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Ohrid Region to be competent for the monitoring of the implementation of the Rehabilitation Plan.

**5. Notes with serious concern the assessment made in Chapter 4 of the Strategic Recovery Plan regarding the vulnerability of the property and the negative factors affecting it and urgently requests that:**

- a) **Amendments to Detailed Urban Plans and approval of Local Development Plans outside settlements be suspended until a Heritage Impact Assessment at the strategic level is carried out and demonstrates that the attributes underlying the property's Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) are not adversely affected by these plans,**

The General Local Plan of the Municipality of Pogradec was approved by Decision of National Council of Territory, No. 5, on 27 July 2022 and entered into force on 15 February 2023.

The Municipality of Pogradec could only grant developing or construction permissions based on the General Local Plan, as approved by Decision of the National Council of Territory.

Since its establishment in 2018, the Commission for Managing the Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Ohrid Region has been actively working on harmonizing the entire urban planning documentation of the Municipalities of Ohrid, Struga and Debarca in the Republic of North Macedonia with the provisions of

the Management Plan. In the period from January 2023 to January 2024, opinions were reviewed and provided for a total of 137 requests, mainly for modification and amendments or the adoption of new urban planning documentation in the Municipalities of Ohrid, Struga and Debarca. For urban planning documentation whose implementation in accordance with the national legislation may have a negative impact on the attributes of the outstanding universal value of the region, the implementation of a Strategic Impact Assessment on the heritage is mandatory.

In order to comply with the Management Plan for the World Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Ohrid Region, the Municipality of Ohrid in its Annual Program for 2023 envisaged the compliance of Detailed Urban Plans for 18 Urban Communities with the Management Plan. On the basis of Article 17 of the Law on the Management of the World Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Ohrid Region (“Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia” No. 75/10), before starting the procedure for a public survey and public presentation, it is mandatory to submit urban plan for an opinion to the Commission for Managing the World Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Ohrid Region.

The Spatial Planning Agency of the Republic of North Macedonia started procedures for the preparation of an Urban Plan for areas and buildings of national significance for the protected coastal zone in the Lake Ohrid region (the part of the Republic of North Macedonia), which includes the cadastral Municipalities of Ljubanishta, Trpejca, Peshtani, Elshani, Konjsko, Ohrid 3, Ohrid 4, Orovnik, Misleshevo outside the city, Misleshevo, Struga, Kalishta and Radozhda, i.e. parts of the Municipalities of Ohrid, Struga and Debarca.

**b) the General Urban Plans for Ohrid and Struga and the spatial planning instruments for non-built-up areas be elaborated as a matter of urgency and in full respect of the attributes underlying the OUV of the property;**

With the adoption of the Management Plan for the Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Ohrid region in 2020, all changes and the adoption of the Urban Plans in the Municipalities of Ohrid, Struga and Debarca are in accordance with the guidelines indicated in the Management Plan and approved with the opinion of the Management Commission as a mechanism that performs appropriate control of urban planning in the region.

The Government of the Republic of North Macedonia convened an emergency session on 09/26/2023, in response to the Decision of the World Heritage Committee in Riyadh 2023. During the session, conclusions were reached, requiring immediate action for the rehabilitation of the natural and cultural heritage in the Ohrid region. These conclusions apply to all relevant ministries and institutions, mandating the implementation of the World Heritage Committee's recommendations. The objective is to mitigate and eliminate factors that negatively impact the property's Outstanding Universal Value (No. 41-9086/4 of 26.09.2023).

In order to strengthen the institutional capacities, the Ministry of Culture in cooperation with the Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning, the Directorate for Environment and the Directorate for Protection of Cultural Heritage, prepared a new Draft Law on the Management of the World Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Ohrid region. In accordance with the Draft Law, consultations are carried out with the expert public, whereupon it will be submitted to the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia.



**6. Requests to the State Party of North Macedonia to submit to the World Heritage Centre, upon completion, the feasibility study for the Urban Plan for areas and buildings of State importance in the coastal belt of the Ohrid region for review by the Advisory Bodies;**

The Spatial Planning Agency actively cooperates with the work team that, through UNDP, prepares the Feasibility Study for the Ohrid region and delivers all the data, information, projects and documents they need during the preparation. An engaged expert team of international and domestic experts is preparing the Feasibility Study. After finalizing the Study, the Spatial Planning Agency will be able to continue the drafting of the Urban Plan. The Draft Feasibility Study for the Urban Plan for areas and buildings of national significance for the protected coastal zone in the Lake Ohrid region, after its completion, will be submitted to the UNESCO World Heritage Center for review by the advisory bodies.

For the purpose of complete preparation of the Study and drafting an Urban Plan for areas and buildings of national significance for the protected coastal zone in the Lake Ohrid region, the Agency for Real Estate Cadastre prepared a new updated geodetic base.

Progress update prepared by the “Instead Heritage” team <sup>1</sup>:

Preparation of the “Feasibility study for the urban plan for areas and structures of state and international significance for the protected coastal zone in the Lake Ohrid Region, including delivery and implementation of the proposed ‘Lake Ohrid Region World Heritage Geodatabase (1st Phase)’” is entering its last phases. Drawing extensively on the inputs from the second, very productive, in-country campaign of site visits, stakeholder consultation and work sessions which took place in October 2023, the UNESCO-appointed Instead Heritage team<sup>2</sup> has been working closely with the interdisciplinary national team of experts appointed by UN agencies<sup>3</sup> to construct the interwoven datasets that are forming the body of knowledge behind the planning resource that will be handed over to the Spatial Planning Agency. It is envisaged that the Feasibility Study’s most significant component will be the database tool offering georeferenced analysis of the heritage significance of the entire World Heritage property, but with a special focus on the coastal areas. With data gathering and manipulation terminated by the end of February 2024, a complete draft of the Feasibility Study and associated geodatabase will be submitted by the second week of March 2024. The review process will involve the project partners of the Working Group, in particular the Spatial Planning Agency, pushing forward with geodatabase queries and extractions that can inform coastal planning, with support from the project team. We understand that the final submission will also be submitted to the World Heritage Committee and Advisory Bodies for review. Indeed, it is hoped that joint implementation of the geodatabase from March onwards will consolidate use, updating and management of this new resource among staff of the Spatial Planning Agency and, in later phases, among all key stakeholders. Mentoring and facilitation activities offered by Instead Heritage and, when necessary, the wider project team will be central to the success of this second phase that is so key to ensuring that broader outcomes sought by this initiative can be achieved by the summer of 2024; they are twofold:

- the most important and immediate outcome is that the new campaign of territorial planning for the coastal areas by the Spatial Planning Agency is rooted effectively in national requirements but also World Heritage considerations.

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<sup>1</sup> The ‘Working Group on the Ohrid Coastal Urban Plan is made up of various representatives of various institutions identified by the State Party at the outset of the Feasibility Study to oversee the process.

<sup>2</sup> Jane Thompson appointed by UNESCO and working with Ascanio D’Andrea, Ottavia Semerari and, more recently, joined by Mishe Tutkovski.

<sup>3</sup> Slavčo Hristovski, Zlatko Levkov, Menka Spirovska and Danco Uzunov appointed by UNEP; Divna Penchikj appointed by UNDP; and Point Pro/Jakov Simjanoski appointed by UNESCO.

- the second outcome is, at this stage, a prospect to be verified. If the geodatabase approach does prove effective as a decision-making framework for drafting the coastal plans, there is the potential for the geodatabase to be utilised and enhanced to inform planning and management approaches right across the portion of the transboundary World Heritage property under the Republic of North Macedonia thereafter.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, in light of this broader potential, the geodatabase has been named the ‘Lake Ohrid Region World Heritage Geodatabase’, a single shared reference framework for all those involved in governance and management of the World Heritage property.<sup>5</sup> This second outcome will be possible if the different State Party stakeholders can work together to sustain this new resource a single shared, accessible and accountable reference framework for decision making. In this way, it could contribute to a radical shift away from the planning failures of recent years which have been at times a direct product of an over complex and overlapping governance model weak in the fact of conflicts of interests. This process will depend on some governance issues for the World Heritage property also being overcome. This January 2024 overview explores the two-step methodology behind the Feasibility Study and associated geodatabase, and offers a more detailed update on proposed timeframes.

#### Project purpose

The overriding objectives for the Feasibility Study remain those identified in early 2023: fulfilling the requirements of the 2020 Law on Urban Planning Art. 25 and fulfilling the additional obligations created by inscription of the Lake Ohrid Region on to the World Heritage list. The focus is on the coastal areas where development pressure means shortcomings in governance and management have had, and can continue to have, a devastating impact on the heritage and on the livability of places that humans have inhabited for some eight millennia. There is an urgency to the task, since the state of conservation of the World Heritage property is at a tipping point. This is not just in terms of the issues visible to the human eye – new build, infrastructure projects, waste water and landfill, and the last natural habitats of the coastline further compromised. It is about the entire “superlative natural phenomenon”<sup>6</sup> potentially collapsing due to ecosystem degradation or loss, and a socio-economic model that, paired with this deteriorating natural environment, risks its ultimate conclusion being the interruption of millennia of continuity of human settlement in the coastal areas of the lake. The close coordination from the outset with the main client, the Spatial Planning Agency of the Republic of North Macedonia, together with the multiplicity of other institutional and civil society stakeholders brought into the process over the course of 2023, has made it very clear that the critical situation in the Lake Ohrid Region requires this Feasibility Study and the follow-up coastal plans to be a real springboard for change. This support to the Republic of North Macedonia, in the form of independent expertise offered by the UN organisations, is delivering an operational framework for the effective development and implementation of territorial planning for the Macedonian coastal areas of Lake Ohrid (and not only) long into the future; and in a way that embeds wider World Heritage obligations into every day governance and management arrangements. The international and national interdisciplinary team of experts involved are working to consign a resource that is an asset to improve participatory and accountable decision making for change and continuity, for the immediate coastal plans of the Spatial Planning Agency, but structured in a way that means that, if the State Party finds ways to sustain the geodatabase as a shared framework in the long

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<sup>4</sup> *The analytical mapping of Outstanding Universal Value and other heritage values of the geodatabase that will be delivered in March 2024 is already for the entire Nord Macedonian part of the property. Only the analysis of ‘factors’ affecting attributes has the specific focus on the coastal areas.*

<sup>5</sup> *Application of the same geodatabase approach to encourage heritage-values based decision making to the Albanian part of the property in the future would also be an opportunity to be evaluated in the future.*

<sup>6</sup> *A phrase from the retrospective Statement of Outstanding Universal Value for the World Heritage property Lake Ohrid adopted in 2015. Available here: <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/99/documents/>*

term, it could be used to inform decision making and empower positive contributions for the safeguarding and enjoyment of other areas of the World Heritage property long into the future. Paramount to the methodological approach is that of embedding every step of the Feasibility Study in international recognised UNESCO guidelines and monitoring frameworks for World Heritage. This is vital to ensure that recommendations shaped by analytical outputs from the new resource, the 'Lake Ohrid Region World Heritage Geodatabase', hold up to international not just national legislative frameworks for heritage. The use of such guidelines and frameworks is highlighted on a case-by-case basis in the footnotes.

**7. Urges the State Party of North Macedonia to finalise the proclamation of Studenčišča Marsh as a nature park and Lake Ohrid as a Monument of Nature, and to ensure that management measures conserve the key ecological processes and features which contribute to the property's OUV;**

The Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning prepared the ***Draft Law on the Proclamation of Lake Ohrid as a Monument of Nature***, which on 10.07.2023 was published on the official website of the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia for legal procedures ([www.ener.gov.mk](http://www.ener.gov.mk)) where all stakeholders are able to comment thereto. On 14 and 15 September 2023, public hearings were held in Ohrid and Struga with regard to the text of the Draft Law on Lake Ohrid. As of November 2023, the Draft Law with the incorporated notes has been in a government procedure whereby the technical provisions are being agreed with the Secretariat for Legislation.

The Draft Law Declaring the Studenchishte Marsh in Ohrid as a Protected Area in Category IV Nature Park has been adopted by the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia and, in accordance with the legislation it has been submitted to the Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia for further action.

Currently there is an ongoing government procedure for the adoption of a new Law on Fisheries and Aquaculture with a special focus on protected areas. By the end of 2024, it is expected that a Law on Financial Support in Fisheries and Aquaculture will be adopted, which will be indirectly related to the activities that would be planned in connection with the maintenance and protection of salmonid species of fish in Lake Ohrid.

In December 2020, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy of the Republic of North Macedonia signed an agreement with the Republic of Albania for joint sustainable management of fish in the watersheds of Lake Ohrid and Lake Prespa, which envisages cooperation in the sustainable use and protection of the fish stock, harmonization of management in fishery and information exchange. According to the Agreement, a Fishery Committee was formed, with representatives from the two States Parties, and it meets once a year when recommendations are issued that contribute to the harmonized management and measures for protection and sustainable fishery in regard to the fish stock in Lake Ohrid.

Modifications of the Law on Inland Navigation are planned in 2024, in order to control the registration, use/maintenance of speedboats and jet-skis, whereby measures that are more restrictive will be proposed regarding the registration of watercrafts, especially in relation to the limit of their date of manufacture. Simultaneously, in the period 2024-2025 an Impact Assessment Study for Water Transport in Lake Ohrid will be prepared, as well as a revision of the routes of water transport in accordance with the zoning of Lake Ohrid carried out with the Management Plan for the Monument of Nature - Lake Ohrid.

### Modernization of the monitoring

Thanks to the projects that the Hydrometeorological Service carried out with GIZ and UNDP, the monitoring in the watershed of Lake Ohrid (Figure 1) is being improved, which was at a standstill for many years due to lack of funds and equipment.

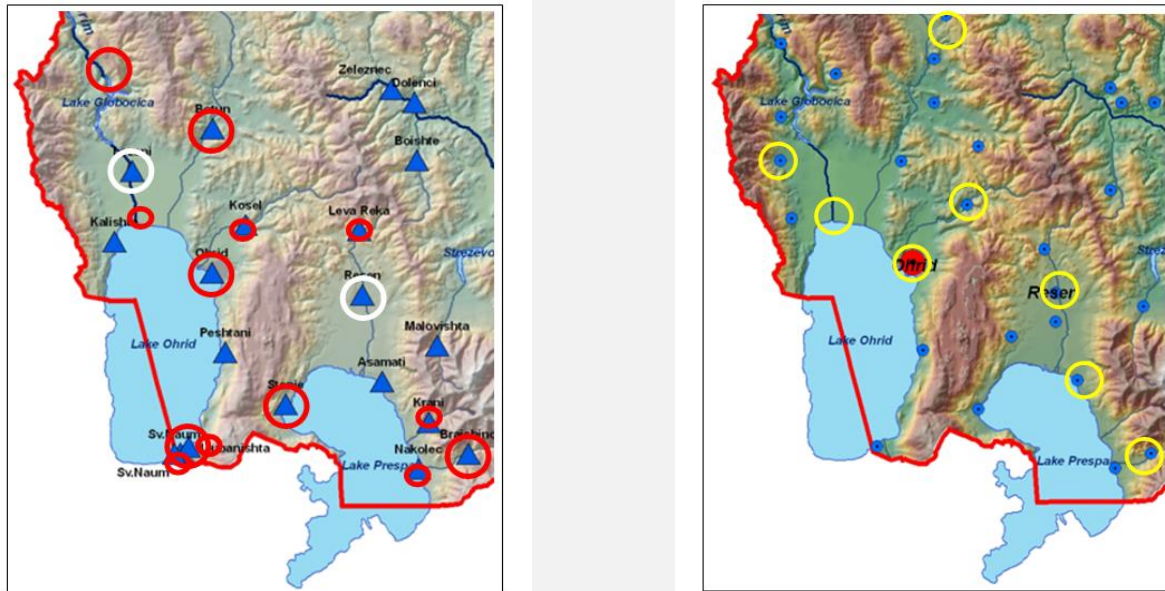


Figure 1 - Hydrological and meteorological monitoring in the watershed of Lake Ohrid

Modern automatic instruments have been installed at several stations (Hydrological online stations: Ohrid - Lake, Ohrid, Lozhani - Crn Drim river, Botun – Sateska river, Resen – Golema river, Stenje – Lake Prespa, Brajchino – Brajchinska river, St. Naum - springs, Crn Drim, Globochica – Lake Globochica, and in addition, ordinary digital hydrological stations, without the possibility of online data transfer (Nakolec – Lake Prespa, Arvati - Arvatska river, Leva river – Leva river, Ljubanishte - Cherava river, St. Naum - Lake Ohrid, Struga - Lake Ohrid, Kosel – Koselska river).

Meteorological online stations exist in Ohrid, Struga, Slivovo, Resen, Pretor, Brajchino, Kuratica, Vevcani, the data from these stations are presented on the website of the Hydrometeorological Service ([uhmr.gov.mk](http://uhmr.gov.mk)), while the ordinary digital stations are equipped with instruments from which physical connection is being used for data download.

In addition to these data obtained from the automatic stations, a network of stations for calls also operates within the Hydrometeorological Service, which consists of observers who are private individuals engaged on a freelance basis by the Hydrometeorological Service. The data from the observers are very necessary, especially in moments of crisis at low and high water levels when the public is most interested about the situation of Lake Ohrid and Lake Prespa. The data from the observers are obtained through a telephone connection. The information from this network is sent to the relevant ministries and the public on a daily basis. In this way, the water level at the following hydrological stations is monitored: Ohrid – Lake Ohrid, Nakolec – Lake Prespa, Botun – Sateska river, Lozhani – Crn Drim river.

In addition to the information regarding the water level, the monitoring also takes place by visiting the hydrological stations and performing hydrometric measurements. These measurements are necessary for obtaining flows that are exceptionally important for obtaining data for the analysis of the water balance in the watershed of Lake Ohrid.

## Monitoring information

The events in relation to Lake Ohrid since 1951 are presented on the graph of the characteristic annual levels of the lake for the water measuring station Ohrid (minimum, average and maximum levels).

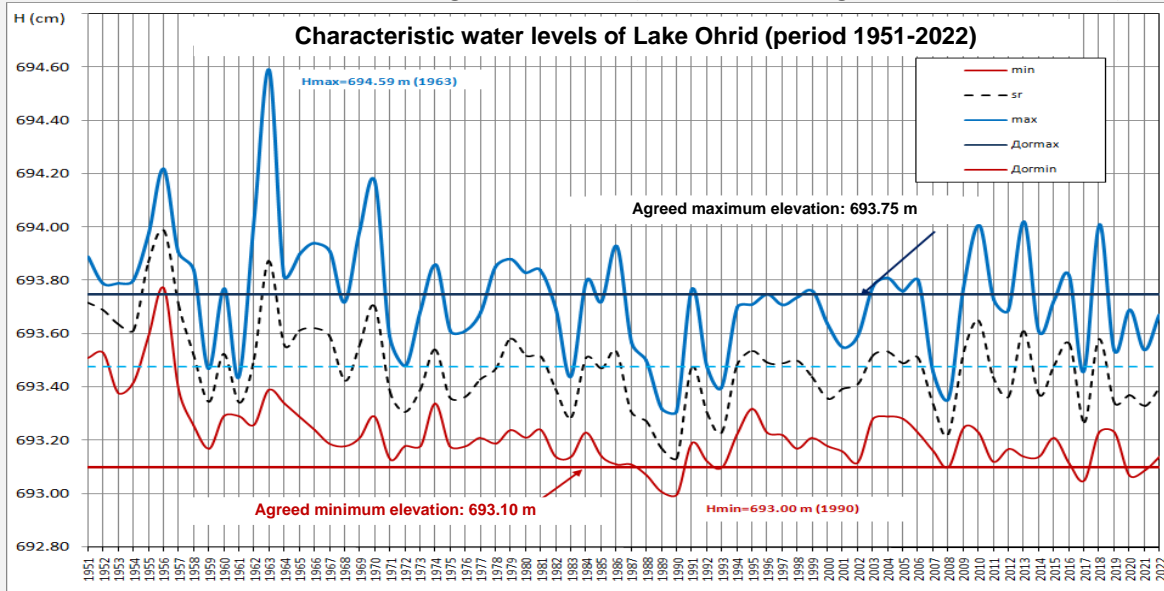


Figure 2 - Characteristic water levels of Lake Ohrid – period 1951-2022

After the performed analysis of the hydrological parameters, it can be concluded that the absolutely observed maximum water level of Lake Ohrid was registered on 22 February 1963 with an elevation of  $H=694.59$  meters, and the absolutely observed minimum water level with an elevation of  $H=693.00$  meters was registered on 29 September 1990. Under such circumstances, the absolute amplitude is 159 cm.

If we compare the water levels of Lake Ohrid for the period from June to the end of the year for the past 5 years, we obtain the following graph (Figure 3). The graph shows that in 2018 the lake had higher water levels at the beginning of the summer season compared to the other years, with a difference of the level of 40 cm in 2021 and 2019, and a difference of 20 cm in 2020 and 2022. The utilization of the water of Lake Ohrid for energy production is evident and shows that the water of the lake was used to the maximum level, i.e. to the minimum permitted elevation. Hence, since 1 October, the water of the lake has been close to the permitted minimum, and on several occasions, it has reached a point below the permitted minimum, whereby at the end of 2020 it was completely below the permitted minimum. Such misuse of the lake leads to a huge loss of the lake's biodiversity.

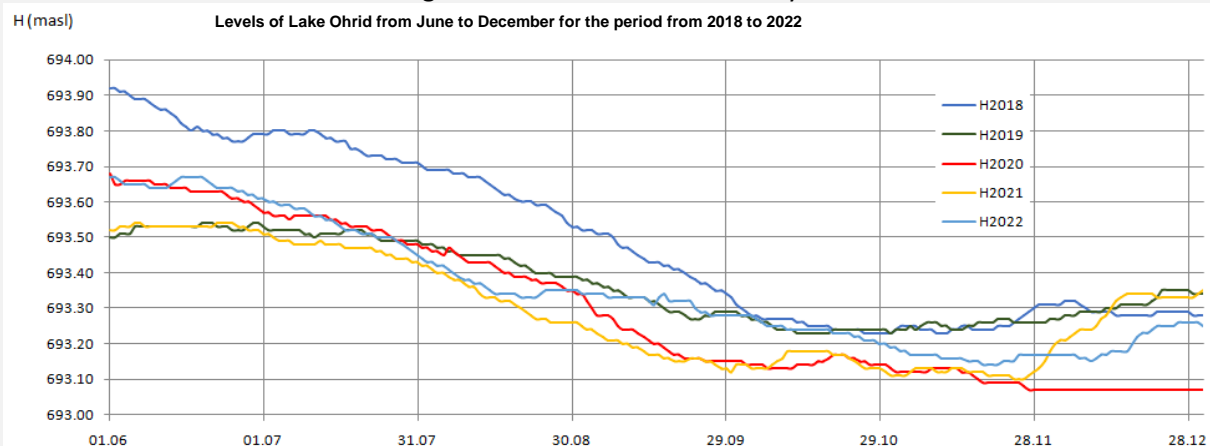


Figure 3 – Levels of Lake Ohrid from June to December for the period from 2018 to 2022

Figure 4 shows confirmation of the utilization of water from Lake Ohrid, where the process of electricity production is observable from the significant water level rises at the Lozhani station on Crn Drim. At the end of the year, precipitation usually has a positive effect on water levels, however that was not the case with precipitation in 2020, despite the fact that the electricity production process was interrupted (low water levels at Lozhani), the water of Lake Ohrid (Figure 3) continued to be below the minimum permitted level.

In the graph, showing the water levels of Lake Ohrid, there is an observable slight trend of reducing water levels.

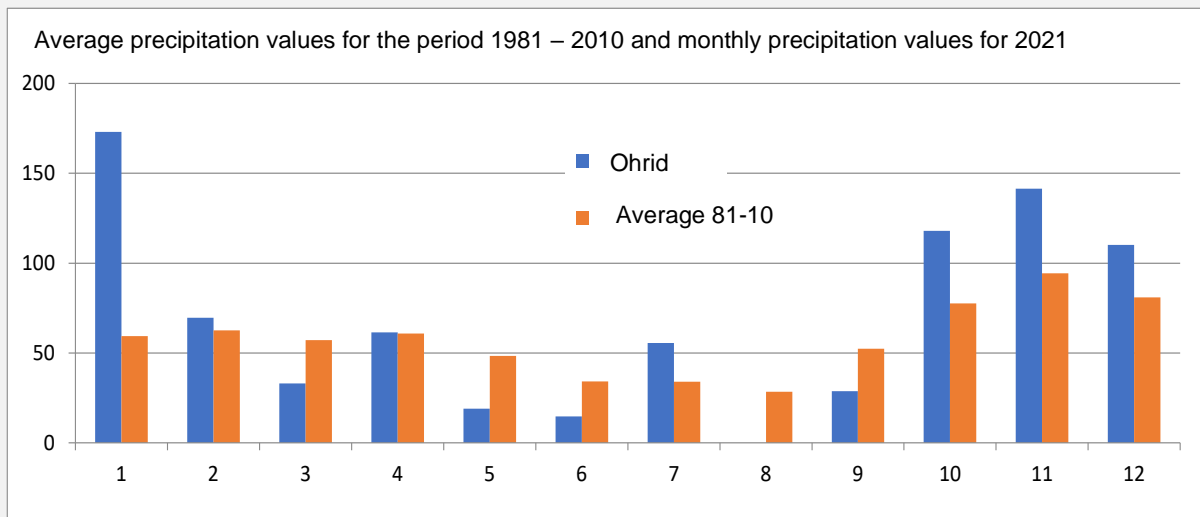


Figure 4 – Multi-year monthly precipitation values for the Ohrid meteorological station compared to monthly annual values for 2021

If the precipitation in 2021 is analyzed, it should be noted that in August there was no precipitation at all, there was below average precipitation in March, May, July and September, and there was above average precipitation in October, November, December, January, February, and a very small amount in April.

The level of Lake Ohrid, in addition to atmospheric precipitation, is replenished by the large number of natural water sources, the rivers Sateska, Koselska, Grashnica, Biljanini Springs, Cherava, the springs of Crn Drim, Tushemishte (AL) and several other springs and small rivers in the Republic of Albania. The runoff water that flows into the lake depends mainly on atmospheric precipitation, while the water from the springs near Sveti Naum and Tushemishte is replenished by the water of Lake Prespa, which through the sinkholes near Zavir (AL), flows under the massif of Galichica. At the higher elevations of Lake Prespa, the water enters the massif of Galichica from several larger sinkholes, now at lower levels, the water enters through the lower sinkholes, but of course, this process is uninterrupted. From the occasional hydrometric measurements of the springs of Crn Drim at St. Naum since 2015, there are findings of quite stable outflows, which requires the installation of a modern instrument for constant flow measurement at the Hydrological Station at St. Naum.

The main manager of the runoff water from Lake Ohrid is ESM, and the Hydrometeorological Service regularly maintains contacts with ESM and informs them of the corresponding changes of the lake's level. The lake's water is a subject of constant pressure for energy production and this negatively affects

its water reserves. However, the barrier at Struga could affect towards protection of the lake from larger discharges, if the water is properly used by ESM. For additional protection of the level, it would be good to raise the minimum permitted elevation by 10 cm, in order to avoid the tendency of the lake level to drop below the permitted minimum. To that end, it is necessary to completely divert the water from Sateska river to Crn Drim river.

**8. Expresses its deepest concern about the approval of the Drilon-Tushemisht Water Park project without the corresponding recommendations of the 2020 Reactive Monitoring mission having been implemented and requests the State Party of Albania to halt further implementation of the project and transmit to the World Heritage Centre the detailed documentation of the approved project, for review by the Advisory Bodies;**

As regards Drilon-Tushemisht Water Park project, is based on Detailed Plan of the Area of National Importance (PDZRK) Drilon (including regulations and the detailed development plan of the area, as well as projects for infrastructure interventions), which has been approved by the National Council of the Territory on 03.12.2020.

Named "For the development of Eco-Tourism in the Drilon-Tushemisht area" this project aims at the development of the Drilon-Tushemisht area and its return/transformation into a tourist destination, which will offer diverse and diversified activities, according to a sustainable model.

The core principles on which the project implementation will be based are:

- a. preservation and protection of assets and natural resources of the area;
- b. preservation and protection of the Outstanding Universal Value of the Albanian part of the world heritage "Natural and cultural heritage of the Ohrid region", approved by Decision of the World Heritage Committee/UNESCO 43 COM 8B.9, year 2019.
- c. implementation of a model of sustainable touristic development of the territory;
- d. carrying out remedial interventions, in harmony with the environment and natural elements, avoiding or reducing as much as possible all effects that may negatively affect the environment and natural elements of the territory where the project will be implemented;
- e. increasing the level of direct and indirect benefits for the community, the relevant territory, and visitors to the area where the project will be implemented;
- f. expanding and improving the types/categories of activities, offers and touristic models offered in the area where the project will be implemented;
- g. increasing and improving the quality of tourist services offered to visitors;
- h. the attraction of quality investments with domestic and/or foreign capital, in order to increase the capacities of local business;
- i. implementation of innovative business models;
- j. the promotion and development of tourist enterprises, through the increase of the surface and space available for the realization of tourist activities;
- k. strengthening the level of interaction between the community, business and competent state bodies;
- l. implementation of administration models according to international best practices;
- m. the implementation of the project through a transparent, common, quality, efficient, efficient, environmentally friendly administration model, as well as with non-profit goals;

In accordance with Detailed Plan of the Area of National Importance (PDZRK Drilon – Tushemisht), AADF has committed to fund:

- Drafting project-ideas and/or implementation projects for 15 sub-projects foreseen in the PDZRK;
- Building and making the visitor centre functional;
- The rehabilitative interventions in Drilon Park;
- Improvement interventions in Natural Monument of Drilon Springs;
- The intervention for the realization of two or three parking lots for the vehicles that will come to the area, respectively the southern parking lot, the western parking lot 1, the western parking lot 2;
- Intervention for the improvement of public infrastructure in squares and building facades in the village of Tushemisht according to the agreement between AADF and the Pogradec Municipality.
- Supporting businesses and NGO in the area and the NGO

In accordance with PDZRK Drilon – Tushemisht, the Council of Ministers through the responsible bodies of the state administration under his responsibility, will carry out the improvements of the public infrastructure:

- Interventions for the construction and rehabilitation of the bypass and automobile and non-automobile auxiliary roads in the area;
- Improvement interventions on the north coast and the south coast;
- Improvement interventions on the shore of the lake in the Tushemisht area;
- Interventions in the public space from the west;
- Any other intervention beyond the financial value committed by AADF;
- The water museum if the latter is approved by the authorities.

The all-necessary detailed documentation related with the interventions in the frame of this project, are going to be transmitted together with this SoC report, Annex 5.

**9. Requests the State Party of North Macedonia to provide to the World Heritage Centre detailed documentation of approved projects for the A2 Kichevo-Ohrid section of the highway for review by the Advisory Bodies;**

**Link for download:**

**ANNEX 1:** <https://we.tl/t-8sahmkpLh6>

**ANNEX 2:** <https://we.tl/t-3QGu7P19xz>

**ANNEX 3:** <https://we.tl/t-WLnfjkh1yl>

**10. Also requests the States Parties to continue addressing the issue of illegal buildings and structures and to ensure that those already removed are not reinstated and that new illegal structures do not occur;**

For the cultural component of the Albanian part of the property since 18.06.2015 with the proclamation of the historic center of Pogradec and buffer area (Decision of Council of Ministers no. 554), Korça RDCH reports no illegal constructions/ buildings within the boundaries of the historic centre (buffer zone of the world heritage property).

As reported by the Municipality of Pogradec, regarding the existing illegal buildings, as is the case of an implemented project, development or regeneration one) in cooperation with the State Cadastre Agency, the unauthorized construction is demolished. Such is the case of the demolition of some constructions without permission in Drilon.

The Public Institution Galichica National Park, with financial support (donation) from the Embassy of the Kingdom of Spain in the Republic of North Macedonia, in 2023 started the creation of an



orthophotomosaic of the terrain within the National Park through which it will detect all illegal buildings by using a drone and low-flying recording of all facilities within the boundaries of the National Park. The maps obtained from the recording will be in the form of a so-called shapefile which can overlap with other documents and can be compared with the urban coverage of the Municipality of Ohrid for the settlements within the boundaries of the park. In that manner, the illegally constructed buildings will be detected immediately. The Public Institution Galichica National Park already procured the equipment and the software required for the creation of the orthophotomosaic (a donation from the Embassy of the Kingdom of Spain in the Republic of North Macedonia) and the activity is in progress.

In 2023, the municipal construction inspectors found a total of 62 illegal buildings on the territory of the Municipality of Ohrid (in the Galichica National Park – 8; in the coastal area – 2; in the protected area – 50; in the contact zone – 1; in the protected core – 1). Proceedings are being conducted before the competent institutions for the other illegally constructed buildings.

In the past period, intensive efforts have been made to improve the legal regulations with the aim of harmonizing but also finding mechanisms for better protection and management of the natural and cultural heritage. The Ministry of Culture, in cooperation with the Directorate for Protection of Cultural Heritage and the National Institution Institute for Protection of Monuments of Culture and Museum - Ohrid, prepared a Draft Law Amending and Supplementing the Law Declaring the Old City Core of Ohrid as a Cultural Heritage of Particular Importance, which has been submitted to the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia for a further adoption procedure. Considering that in the reports of the UNESCO missions, several threats have been recorded that negatively affect the exceptional universal value of the Old City Core of Ohrid, the Draft Law envisages a change in the regime of protection of the entirety of monuments in the Old City Core. The new protection regime will prevent the completion of extensions, superstructures and construction of new buildings in the entirety of monuments with 19 urban complexes until the adoption of new detailed urban plans.

For the purpose of improved management and prevention of illegal buildings, the Directorate for Protection of Cultural Heritage has developed guidelines that define (restrict) the possibilities for the construction of new buildings, superstructures and extensions in the Old City Core of Ohrid, which have been submitted to the competent institution – National Institution Institute for Protection of Monuments of Culture and Museum - Ohrid.

**11. Further requests the States Parties to ensure systematic assessment of impacts of plans and projects, including but not limited to the project for the re-routing of the Sateska River and the plan for revised route for the railway Corridor VIII in its section between the North Macedonian and Albanian borders, on the attributes of OUV of the property according to the Guidance and Toolkit on Impact Assessments in World Heritage Context;**

Within the Project for diversion of the riverbed of Sateska river, which is being implemented by the UNDP office in Skopje and the Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning, in 2023, the rehabilitation of the separation structure was completed, as well as complete cleaning of the riverbed of Sateska River and construction of the sedimentation facilities. Other necessary activities have also been foreseen within the project, such as afforestation, erosion prevention, arrangement of the riverbed and other activities, which in accordance with the envisaged dynamics will be completed in the upcoming period.

In regard to the railway corridor VIII, the European Commission adopted a Decision in December 2022 for the entire railway Corridor VIII, including the Kichevo-Lin section, to be part of the Core Network,

wherewith this section meets the prerequisites to be financed by European grants. In the meantime, the European Investment Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development expressed interest in financing the construction of this section, noting that a new Feasibility Study and an alternative route will be prepared for the section Struga – Border with the Republic of Albania, in order to fulfill the recommendations that UNESCO has provided for the Republic of North Macedonia and the Republic of Albania and it is planned to be prepared in 2024, whereby a prerequisite for its preparation is the successfully received grant for technical assistance.

In November 2023, the Director of the Public Enterprise for State Roads and the Minister of Transport and Communications of the Republic of North Macedonia, together with representatives of the BEHTEL and ENKA Consortium, had a meeting with the General Director of the Albanian Road Authority from the Republic of Albania. The meeting was focused on the construction of a section of Corridor 8, i.e. a decision was made to use the existing section Struga-Kjafasan-border crossing as a regional road while specifying technical solutions for a suitable route connected to a tunnel that should connect the two countries in order to preserve the authenticity of the protected properties, i.e. the border crossing should be in the tunnel itself. In addition, decisions are being made about the railway corridor 8, whose route is being changed. Last meeting (held in January 2024) was focused on the activities related to Corridor 8 and on the construction part of the planned tunnel at "Qafasan" which will connect the two countries - the Republic of Macedonia and the Republic of Albania.

The Directorate for Cultural Heritage Protection, in cooperation with the Institute for Protection of Monuments of Culture and Museum – Ohrid (North Macedonia), are responsible to implement the legally prescribed obligations for protection of cultural heritage, including the archeological sites that are endangered by the implementation of various infrastructure projects and urban planning.

Before starting any activities, for all newly designed road routes in the Ohrid region, the Contractor will have to submit the entire documentation to the Commission for Managing the Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Ohrid Region and obtain an opinion from it. In addition, the Contractor, according to the Decision of the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia, is obliged to perform a strategic assessment and/or Environmental Impact Assessment, as well as an Impact Assessment on Outstanding Universal Values (OUV). The draft documentation in accordance with paragraph 172 of the Operational Guidelines for implementation of the World Heritage Convention will also be submitted to the World Heritage Center for review by the advisory bodies.

In order to provide more information to the stakeholders, ***the Guide and Manual for Impact Assessment of the heritage in the context of world heritage***, prepared by the UNESCO World Heritage Center and the Advisory Bodies, has been translated into Macedonian language, which will provide its facilitated application in the procedures for the preparation of Heritage Impact Studies.

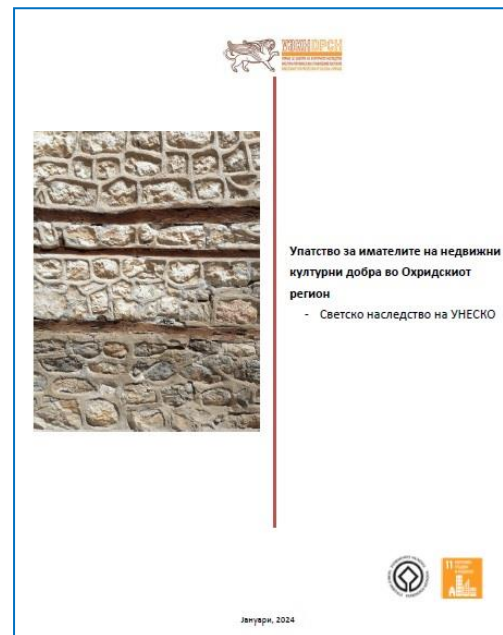
In 2024, an amendment to the *Law on Inland Navigation* will be finalized in order to control the registration, use/maintenance of speedboats and jet-skis, in which more restrictive measures will be proposed regarding the registration of vessels, especially regarding their date of manufacture. According to the action plan in the period 2024-2025, the preparation of the *Impact Assessment Study*



for Water Transport in Lake Ohrid has been foreseen. The revision of water transport routes is planned in the period of 2025, in accordance with the zoning of Lake Ohrid, which was carried out with the Management Plan for the Monument of Nature - Lake Ohrid.

In addition, the Directorate for Protection of Cultural Heritage prepared **Guidelines for the owners of immovable cultural goods in the Ohrid region - UNESCO World Heritage** in order to help the owners of immovable cultural goods in the Ohrid region in fulfilling their rights and obligations, by providing a framework for monitoring and implementation of the basic principles for the protection and use of immovable cultural heritage, prescribed by the Law on the Protection of Cultural Heritage and other national and international legal regulations that regulate the protection of cultural values.

The guidelines are intended for natural persons and legal entities that own, use or maintain immovable cultural heritage, as well as for those who need services and advice for their protection and preservation, including the local population, architects, conservators, investors, the local self-government, etc.



The main objectives of these Guidelines are to provide useful information, resources and clarifications about the system of cultural heritage protection in the Ohrid region, to indicate national and international regulations and principles, as well as strategic and planning documents in order to help the owners of immovable cultural goods when navigating through legal obligations, i.e. to guide them through the necessary legal and administrative procedures before starting any intervention thereon, to indicate the appropriate methods for the maintenance and protection of immovable cultural goods, and thus to identify priorities for undertaking conservation/restoration works and interventions.

In the Albanian part of the property, as established by the law 27/2018 “On cultural heritage and museums” and related bylaws. For the cultural component of the Albanian part of the Property safeguarding and preservation intervention design, implementation, supervision and commissioning in tangible cultural properties is undertaken by entities licensed for these services, or by specialised state institutions, namely the National Institute of Cultural Heritage and Korça RDCH. The execution of cultural property safeguarding and preservation intervention works, supervision, and commissioning are solely subject to the provisions of this law and when possible, the legislation on the control and disciplining of construction works. The design, implementation of safeguarding and preservation intervention works, their supervision, and commissioning are regulated by Decision of the Council of Ministers. For all interventions proposed to be implemented in areas of national heritage importance, the proposal must be submitted for review and decision-making to the National Council of Material Cultural Heritage (NCMCH). After the approval in this council, the permit granting procedure follows according to the legislation in force for territorial planning and development.

#### **Preliminary Proposals prepared in the Albanian part of the property**

Korça RDCH has prepared and submitted in the National Institute of Cultural Heritage (NICH) the draft report for the proposal to declare the village of Lin ‘protected landscape’. The preliminary draft report currently is being reviewed by NICH and after being finalized will be presented for approval in NCMCH and other relevant institutions.

Korça RDCH has prepared and submitted in NICH a project proposal for the remains of the Early Christian church and the mosaics of Lin. The project proposal includes:

- Masonry restoration works and its consolidation;
- Mosaic conservation;
- Systematization works;
- Rehabilitation works of the road leading to the Early Christian church and the mosaics of Lin;
- Proposal for the opening the mosaics for the visitors;
- Other works necessary for the preservation of the object;
- Electrical project included as well.

The proposal is in process of review by the National Institute of Cultural Heritage, and after being finalized will be presented for approval in NCMCH.

**12. Regrets that, despite initial efforts by the States Parties to redress threats to the property, tangible outcomes are yet to be achieved and risk being undermined by ever-emerging threats and lack of a coherent vision shared by all actors to conserve the property's OUV and strongly urges the States Parties to implement immediate emergency measures to address existing threats and prevent emerging threats from negatively impacting the OUV of the property;**

For the cultural component of the Albanian part of the Property, before the decision-making in the National Council of Material Cultural Heritage, for all large projects presented in this Council, a Heritage Impact Assessment is required by NICH. Also there is a daily monitoring by Korça RDCH, in all cultural heritage sites.

The measures taken by the Municipality of Pogradec regarding the addressing of existing threats and prevent emerging threats from negatively impacting the OUV of the property, includes:

- Daily cleaning of the shoreline
- Yearly cleaning of the City Collector next to Drilon
- Regular cleaning of all the City Rivers
- Rehabilitation of the River of the village Rrëmenj
- Partial rehabilitation of the River of the village Çërravë
- A project is being compiled about systematization of sewage in Administrative Unit Çërravë
- There are no structures along the shore of the Lake

In addition, the Municipality of Pogradec reports:

- no sewage is poured into the Lake from the village of Gështenjas
- no depositing of urban waste in Peshkëpi dump
- establishment of a special Task Force by the Municipality of Pogradec, responsible for continuous monitoring of the situation of the rivers and taking measures to prevent pollution
- regarding the GLP (General Local Plan) approved by Decision of the National Council of the Territory, No. 5, on 27 July 2022 and entered into force on 15 February 2023, this revision include, following the Joint World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS/IUCN Reactive Monitoring Mission Recommendations to the Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Ohrid Region, the obligation that for every DPANI (Detailed Plan for the Areas of National Importance) proposed, the latter should be presented first for evaluation in the world heritage Center. This mandatory decision is also extended to the areas Lin-Pogradec and Pogradec-Tushemisht.

For the natural component of the Property that coincides with the Environmental Protected Area of WTPL of "Pogradec Lake" has been carry out monitoring activities on the forest and pasture areas.

Legal measures have been taken for persons responsible for damage of the forest fund inside protected area. Record of findings of various natures such as: cutting, acquisition of wood material, inert dumping, unauthorized grazing, wastewater discharge in the lake, mines etc., have been kept.

There also have been carry common monitoring activities in collaboration with other institutions such as the State Police, the management structures in the Pogradec Municipality, the Fishery Inspectorate, the National Inspectorate of Territory Protection, the OMP Pogradec, Border Police, specialists of PPNEA, etc.



*Photos from monitoring filed for illegal activities*

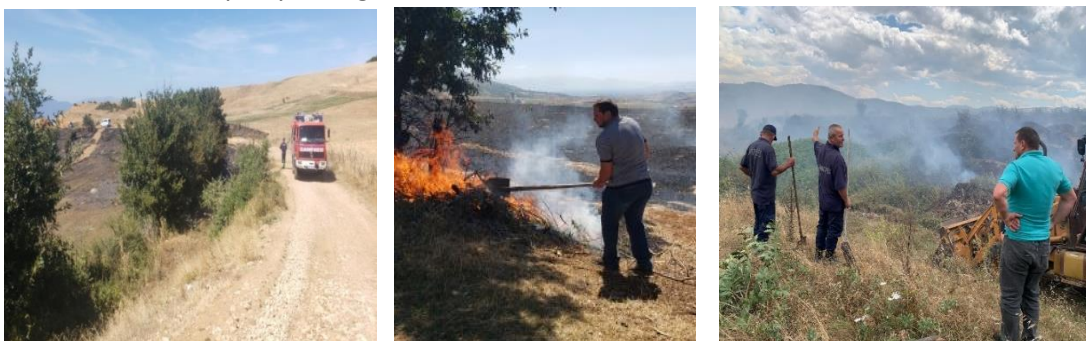
In addition, from RAPA Korçe verification on the ground has been done for the exercise of the economic activities of entities with active mining permits in EPA WTPL "Pogradeci Lake". From the monitoring field it was found that some of these mining entities are not effective (they do not perform their activity) for a long time. A big concern are also the damaged surfaces over the years from the exploitation of mining activity, where in such cases have been kept control acts for each of these subjects.



*Photo from inspection in quarries and mines*

Part of the work for the protection of the buffer zone of the heritage property, has also been the isolation of fires in the protected area.

RAPA Korçë has prepared the program of measures against fires. In some villages part of PA have also been set up volunteer fire teams. For 2023 year, we have had small fires, where some of them have been inside TWPL "Pogradeci Lake". Their isolation and extinguishing was carried out in a very quick and short time by the staff of ZMM Pogradec Protected Area, in cooperation with the employees of the fire department in the Municipality of Pogradec and the State Police.



The PE Collector System - Skopje (North Macedonia) in 2023 within the domain of its activities installed frequency regulation at six pumping stations, which enables automatic regulation of the operation of the pumps according to the level of fecal water. The occurrence of an overflow, and thus the intake of fecal waters into Lake Ohrid (value of 6,000,000.00 denars), has been completely eliminated. Currently the activities for remediation of the collector system continue (recording, pulling a pipe into a pipe at the location in front of the Podmolje pumping station where the pipeline was most damaged and there was a large percentage of groundwater infiltration into the system, cleaning of the pipeline from the Grashnica locality to the pumping station Daljan, which will enable a normal flow...), as well as ongoing maintenance for the normal functioning of the system and protection of the waters of Lake Ohrid. Simultaneously, projects are being developed for separate treatment plants in the settlements Ljubanishta and Radozhda, a new treatment plant in Podmolje for the treatment of water from the Ohrid region, collection of wastewater from the settlement Elshani and their intake into the existing collector system, as well as a revision of the reconstruction project and modernization of the water treatment plant which currently operates at 90% of its capacity.

The Public Scientific Institution Hydrobiological Institute successfully implements seasonal monitoring campaigns aimed at an insight into the state of the natural heritage in Lake Ohrid and its coastal waters. For the purpose of these activities, the PSI Hydrobiological Institute - Ohrid in 2023 implemented a project titled: "Assessment of the influence of the rivers Sateska, Koselska and Velgoshka on the quality of water from the littoral zone of Lake Ohrid based on physical-chemical and specific biological parameters, financed by the Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning. The goal of the project is to determine how much the rivers that flow into Lake Ohrid have an impact on the quality of the water, but also on the living organisms in the water. This assessment was performed by means of standard physical and chemical analyses, microbiological indicators and bioindicators. The results of the analyses, in addition to contributing to the determination of the water quality, will also provide a direction for taking appropriate protection measures in the zones that are also defined as "hot spots" for the lake.

Within the project "Development of a method for the detection of mercury in different matrices of aquatic ecosystems" financed by the Ministry of Education and Science, the PSI Hydrobiological Institute - Ohrid procured a sophisticated apparatus for determining mercury concentrations in water, sediments and tissues, wherewith it enriched the possibility of performing modern analyses of this potentially dangerous element for the environment.

In the period 2-5 October 2023, the PSI Hydrobiological Institute - Ohrid, in cooperation with the international foundation HEALTHYSEAS, organized and implemented a pilot project for the detection and removal of abandoned, lost or otherwise abandoned fishing gear from Lake Ohrid, in the localities where the best natural spawning grounds of trout are located, in the east and southeast parts of Lake Ohrid.

A total of 64 ghost nets were removed, with a total length of almost 2 km, with mesh dimensions of 12 – 180 mm from knot to knot, as well as other fishing gear such as hooks, artificial baits, blinkers, anchors, etc., from previously registered and geo-positioned localities, at a depth of 5 to 35 m, with joint activities of 9 divers from Healthy Seas and Ghost Dive and the research team from the Hydrobiological Institute - Ohrid.

"Ghost nets" - abandoned, lost or otherwise left fishing nets on the natural spawning grounds of trout from Lake Ohrid, which is still being caught, and not only fish, but also birds, crabs and other animals, are one of the reasons that the female fish (hens) avoid these localities due to the presence of putrefaction from decaying flesh of dead animals. To raise public awareness and share the results, findings and recommendations from this project, on 6 October 2023, a round table of the stakeholders was held: "Ghost Nets" as a global problem for water ecosystems and a step forward in solving this

problem for Lake Ohrid, with participants from all relevant ministries related to the protection of Lake Ohrid, local self-government institutions, non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders.

According to the Extract from the Draft Minutes of the 187<sup>th</sup> session of the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia (held on 26 September 2023), the Professional Services within the National Institution Institute and Museum - Ohrid prepared a complete record of the protected cultural goods and ambient buildings within the Old City Core of Ohrid, on which solar collectors, photovoltaic devices, air-conditioners and other inappropriate installations are placed, as well as of commercial billboards and illuminated advertisements. For the above, they prepared a complete photo-documentation individually for each structure, with foreseen conclusions. Based on the completed records, a priority list is drawn up for the removal of solar collectors, photovoltaic devices, air-conditioners and other inappropriate installations, as well as commercial billboards and illuminated advertisements placed on protected cultural goods and ambient buildings within the Old City Core of Ohrid, which will be delivered to the Directorate for the Protection of Cultural Heritage - Skopje.

The drafting process has reached its final phase in regard to the Draft Law Amending and Supplementing the Law Declaring the Old City Core of Ohrid as Cultural Heritage of Particular Importance, as well as the Draft Law on the Management of the World Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Ohrid region, where strengthened mechanisms for management and decision-making in relation to heritage protection have been envisaged.

The Agency for the Promotion of Tourism from the Republic of North Macedonia continuously works on the promotion of the World Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Ohrid region with its potentials in the context of developing cultural tourism, eco-tourism and other alternative forms of tourism through several segments of the Agency's operation - production of printed and video promotional materials (*The Nomad Life in North Macedonia, National Parks Protected Areas, Top 20 Touristic Attractions*), conducting a media campaign in media in other countries (Poland, Bulgaria, Serbia, Croatia, Albania and Kosovo) and through the official tourism portal <https://macedonia-timeless.com>. The cross-border project ABOVE (2022-2023) aimed to record several locations in the Republic of North Macedonia and the Republic of Greece from a bird's eye view by using drone technology, including the area covering the Ohrid region and the Galichica National Park, intended to show border natural and geographical landmarks in a way they have not been seen before. As part of the implementation of this project, training courses for tourist guides were held in Struga, with the participation of students and teachers from the Faculty of Tourism from Ohrid. The Agency for the Promotion and Support of Tourism is preparing to create a special tab (section) within the portal <https://macedonia-timeless.com> dedicated to all UNESCO-protected natural and cultural goods in our country.

**13. Further requests the States Parties to strengthen their transboundary coordination and cooperation in addressing the threats to the property by:**

- a) Enhancing reciprocal communication and coordination about plans and projects that may impact the attributes underlying the property's OUV,**

Cross-border Cooperation Project:

COOLTOUR - Struga & Pogradec for promoting tourism and cultural heritage in the framework Cross-border Programme the Republic of North Macedonia - Republic of Albania under the Instrument of Pre-accession Assistance (IPA II) allocations for 2018 – 2020.

Lead applicant: Municipality of Struga and Co-applicants: Municipality of Pogradec, NGO Green Institute (North Macedonia) and Institute for Rural Development, Environment and Tourism (Albania)

The Municipality of Struga and the Municipality of Pogradec are neighboring municipalities, divided by the border between North Macedonia and Albania. They are both part of the Lake Ohrid region, known as one of the oldest and deepest lakes in Europe, surrounded by mountains. Despite the touristic potential of these two municipalities, there is a lack of services and trained touristic service providers and weak presence in the touristic market place and lack of an integrated management and promotion strategy of cultural and natural heritage and insufficient involvement of community actors, in both Municipalities of Struga and Pogradec. For this reason, there is a need of joint management of common heritage sites through direct and constant involvement of local/regional stakeholders/experts. The public authorities in these two municipalities should gain a deeper knowledge of the territories involved, thanks to the territorial mapping, as well as ingrowth incomes due to the establishment of a new management model. By developing the potential of tourism by promoting cultural heritage and values, the targeted sites themselves should benefit from a higher flow of tourist, impacting local economy. Through the best available means of promotion, digital mapping and web positioning, local, regional and world-wide public will be aware of the new touristic sites and content, so the economic growth assured through the self-sustainable models. The aim of the Project COOLTOUR is to increase the joint touristic offer that will provide the new dimension to cultural tourism in area of these two municipalities, in line with national and local strategic documents; to develop and improve the infrastructure and the current situation which can offer occasional and short-term programmes, to turn to multi/stakeholders facilities users, offer.

The Project will act on facilitating development the potential of tourism by promoting cultural heritage and values in both Municipalities of Struga & Pogradec. This will be achieved through the comprehensive management plan that implies a tourism and promotional detailed action plan; establishment and equipment of the local tourist offices in Struga and Pogradec; training for tourism workers and civil servants in the field of tourism and sustainable development; the creation of new touristic facilities and products, their management plan and the development of sustainable financial plans; SMEs from the targeted area have the need for better integration with tourism content as well as improved infrastructure which will attract more visitors and extend the seasons. This will be achieved by:

- Empowering the capacities of touristic service providers and operators in Struga and Pogradec;
- Improving the public tourism infrastructure in terms of upgrading the facilities for environment friendly touristic activities, pollution reduction and sustainable development;

Joint touristic offers from Struga and Pogradec to increase in terms of common cultural heritage and values.

This will be achieved by creating a team of experts composed by both sides, then a joint touristic agency and opening two touristic offices in both cities. It will be completely reconstructed a pedestrian street by the lake in Struga, and rehabilitation of Pogradec ancient Castle, with many side components. In this project will take place trainings, providing the touristic businesses with Renewable Energy Solutions, interventions in the touristic infrastructure and other PR and awareness raising campaigns. [Annex 1](#) - Project Summary

In the Albanian part of the property the project for the rehabilitation of Pogradec ancient Castle is in implementation phase. The works in progress include: unearthing the traces of castle's walls, infrastructure works, systematization of the access road, complete cleaning of the vegetation on the line of the walls in order to highlight the walls and enable finishing the complete plan of the Castle and database in orthophotos.



- b) Continuing improvements to the resourcing of the transboundary working group established for the preparation of the Strategic Recovery Plan with the mandate to support the operational implementation of the plan;

On 15 June 2023, the PSI Hydrobiological Institute - Ohrid hosted the Second Meeting of the Joint Fisheries Committee for Lake Ohrid and Lake Prespa, formed by members of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy of the Republic of North Macedonia and the State Inspectorate for Agriculture and appropriate representatives from the Republic of Albania. At the meeting, the delegations from the Republic of Albania and the Republic of Macedonia discussed on harmonization of the legislation and fisheries management. The representatives from the PSI Hydrobiological Institute, as members of the Joint Advisory Group and as experts in the field, had an advisory role and participated in the creation of potential cross-border measures in the protection of Lake Ohrid and Lake Prespa.

In addition, in the period 1-3 November 2023, the scientific staff of the Hydrobiological Institute actively participated in the 4<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Agriculture and Life Sciences "ICOALS" which was held in Tirana, Republic of Albania and in which, among other things, a reference was made to the state of the natural heritage of the Ohrid Region.

A Priority List of key habitats of national and European importance and a list of status of species according to the IUCN classification of endangered priority species of fish, invertebrates and algae in Lake Ohrid is currently being prepared, which is based on a long-term research conducted by the scientific staff of the PSI Hydrobiological Institute and after its preparation, it will be submitted to the Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning.

The National Institution Institute for Protection of Monuments of Culture and Museum - Ohrid started the implementation of the project titled: *"Strengthening the capacities for managing the cultural heritage of the Ohrid Region: Training for the development of databases and a GIS-platform for the immovable cultural heritage for the Institute and Museum – Ohrid"*, financially supported by the UNESCO World Heritage Center.

In 2023 (September), a series of activities were completed on the territory of the Republic of North Macedonia and Albania. The field activities were focused on the preparation of records, inventory, digitization and use of modern technology for 3D recording by means of drones and photogrammetry for the preparation of orthophotographs and topographic maps. The results of the joint activities are a basis for the creation of a GIS platform for the immovable cultural heritage and the archaeological sites from the Ohrid region, which will provide a WEBGIS database that can be used by the general public and will be fed with data about immovable cultural heritage and the protected archaeological sites collected and documented during the project. This will be the first transnational Geographic Information System from the World Heritage of the Ohrid Region, and it is of essential importance for the management of the hundreds of localities around the lake. The main goal of the project is to strengthen the capacity of the employees of the National Institution Institute and Museum - Ohrid to improve the management of the cultural heritage on the territory of the Ohrid region. As part of the project, the goal is the classification and scanning (digitization) of protected archaeological sites, their selection and organization by priority for facilitated inventory and archiving. This documentation is necessary not only as a record, but also as a management and monitoring tool.

The mentioned activity is one of the objectives of the Strategic Plan for the rehabilitation of the world natural and cultural heritage of the Ohrid region (2023-2030), which are noted as proposed measures in the Action Plan.

**High level Meeting:** The Minister of Culture of the Republic of North Macedonia Mrs. Bisera Kostadinovska Stojchevska met at the invitation of her counterpart Mrs. Elva Margariti in Tirana on the

occasion of the first restitution and return of the illegally exported cultural heritage from Macedonia that was found in Albania. During the meeting held on 15 December 2023 both Ministers responsible for cultural heritage exchanged experiences regarding the current issues and processes in their portfolios, and special emphasis was placed on the next steps in the implementation of the common agenda for the protection of the world heritage property when implementing the joint WHC/ICOMOS/IUCN Reactive Monitoring Mission recommendations. The Ministers assures they will continue strengthening the cooperation between the two countries in the field of culture, heritage preservation and the uncompromising fight against the illegal trafficking of cultural heritage.

**Joint Meetings held during 2023:** During the reporting period the meetings between the representatives of Albania and North Macedonia were held on the occasion of the meeting organized for the launching of the preparation of the next regional action plan for the implementation of the World Heritage Convention in Europe and North America (held on 23-26 October 2023 in the city of Kotor, Montenegro), and on the occasion of the second session for Periodic Reporting that took place in Paris, France (19-21 December 2023).

On **March 22, 2023** a workshop of the cross-border network for the protection of biodiversity in the Ohrid-Prespa Region has been organized, within the project "Local actors work together in the protection of the environment of the Prespa-Ohrid region" financed by Prespa Ohrid Nature Trust - PONT. Specialists from North Macedonia and Albania part has been present during this meeting.



**14. Requests the States Parties to invite, as a matter of urgency, a joint World Heritage Centre/IUCN/ICOMOS Reactive Monitoring mission to the property in order to examine the effective implementation of the immediate emergency measures, the level of mobilisation and coordination of all the stakeholders involved as well as the implementation of the recommendations of the 2020 mission and the repeated requests of the Committee, and to assess the overall state of conservation of the property;**

In accordance with the Decision 45 COM 7B.104, a Joint World Heritage Centre/IUCN/ICOMOS Reactive Monitoring mission to the transboundary World Heritage property "Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Ohrid Region" was officially invite in order to assess the overall state of conservation of the property.

The official invitation was signed on behalf of the Republic of North Macedonia and Republic of Albania by the respective ministers responsible for natural and cultural heritage. The national authorities from both countries stand ready to work closely in preparing and facilitating the Joint WHC/ICOMOS/IUCN Reactive Monitoring Mission.

**15. Requests the States Parties to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by 1 February 2024, a revised draft of the Strategic Recovery Plan and a joint updated report on the state of conservation of**

the property and the implementation of the above, for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 46<sup>th</sup> session, **considering that the urgent conservation needs of this property require a broad mobilisation to preserve its Outstanding Universal Value, including the possible inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger.**

\* \* \*

**3. Other current conservation issues identified by the State(s) Party(ies) which may have an impact on the property's Outstanding Universal Value**

**Maintenance works during 2023 in the Albanian Part of the Property**

During 2023, the Regional Directorate of Cultural Heritage (RDCH), Korça has undertaken maintenance works in the remains and the mosaics of the Early Christian Church at Lin Peninsula and restoration interventions implemented in the buffer area of the World heritage Property.

No.	Name of monument	Maintenance Periodicity	Responsible Person
<b>Within the World Heritage Property</b>			
1.	The remains and the mosaics of the Early Christian church at Lin	weekly maintenance Cleaning the monument from snow, (in the winter) cleaning the sters that fill with water and ongoing maintenance of the basilica. In the summer months, sulfur and herbicide are applied to the surrounding area. Cleaning of low vegetation On the surface of 2861 m2	Maintenance worker Roland Sulollari – maintance worker at Department of Pogradec
2.	The mosaic of Lin	weekly maintenance	Maintenance worker

**Monitoring of Cultural Heritage assets**

As reported in the state of Conservation Report submitted by the State Party in January 2000 the monitoring of cultural heritage assets in the world heritage site and buffer zone is part of the everyday work of the dedicated staff for Pogradec. Monitoring is done through inspections on site of the specialists and technical staff which report to the department of archaeology and architecture in the Regional Directorate of Cultural Heritage Korça. Table 1 below describes the periodicity of monitoring of main cultural heritage monuments and sites in the World heritage site and buffer zone.

**Annex 3 attached - Inspection file for each monument**

No.	Name of monument	Monitoring Periodicity	Responsible Institution
<b>Within the World Heritage Property</b>			
1.	The ruins of the early christian church and the mosaics	daily inspection	RDCH Korça Department of Pogradec
2.	The mosaic of Lin	daily inspection	RDCH Korça

			Department of Pogradec
3.	The ruins of the byzantine church near the fishing station	monthly inspection	RDCH Korça Department of Pogradec
4.	The prehistoric settlement of Zagradie in the hill located near the village of Zagradie	daily inspection	RDCH Korça Department of Pogradec
<b>Within the Buffer Zone</b>			
5.	The house of the Icka brothers, neighbourhood of Burimeve	monthly inspection	RDCH Korça Department of Pogradec
6.	The house of Kucuku brothers, neighbourhood of Burimeve	monthly inspection	RDCH Korça Department of Pogradec
7.	The house Lasgush Poradeci, neighbourhood of Burimeve	monthly inspection	RDCH Korça Department of Pogradec
8.	The house of Kristaq Puce, neighbourhood of Burimeve	monthly inspection	RDCH Korça Department of Pogradec
9.	The house of Rinka Guxho, neighbourhood of Burimeve	monthly inspection	RDCH Korça Department of Pogradec
10.	The house of Sandri Qipro, neighbourhood of Burimeve	monthly inspection	RDCH Korça Department of Pogradec
11.	The historic center of Pogradec and the regulation for its administration	monthly inspection	RDCH Korça Department of Pogradec
12.	The castle of Pogradec	monthly inspection	RDCH Korça Department of Pogradec
13.	The mosaic of Tushemisht	surveys need to be carried out	RDCH Korça Department of Pogradec

Monitoring periodicity of cultural heritage monuments and sites (WH site and buffer zone)

### **Visitors to the Early Christian Church of Lin**

*Statistical data for 2023 (summer session)*

Month	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December
<i>The ruins of the paleochristian church and the mosaics</i>												
Nr. of visitors	24	30	55	171	644	813	516	1475	940	285	40	23
<b>Total 2023</b>												<b>5016</b>

As reported in the State of Conservation Report submitted in February 2023, the visits to the monument are free of charge. The statistical data are being registered by the Department of Pogradec and are being reported periodically to the DRCH in Korça.

Being one of the most visited cultural destinations in the Albanian part of the world heritage property, the Regional Directorate of Cultural Heritage Korça is evaluating the statistical data with a purpose of advancing a proposal for a fee entrance ticket for the monument.

During 2023, several activities that aim at the involvement and awareness raising of the youth towards cultural heritage values of the world Heritage property and lake Ohrid region, have been organized by the Pogradec Municipality through the Directorate of Tourism, Cultural Heritage and Youth. The activities are listed as below.

### **Awareness-raising activities in the Albanian part of the property**

Community awareness and engagement is considered an essential part of the protection, preservation and promotion of cultural heritage values. During the reporting period this was achieved through a series of activities such as:

**18 April 2023** – Activity on the occasion of the International Day of Monuments and Sites Presentation of the Archaeological Heritage Catalog, as well as a presentation on the cultural and natural monuments of the Pogradec area held in the premises of the Municipal Council Hall.



**May 18 2023 - International Museum Day**

On the occasion of International Museum Day and pursuant to the theme for 2023 “Museums, Sustainability and Well-being” the Historical Museum Pogradec was reopened. During December 2022- May 2023, the Historical Museum of Pogradec has been in the process of restoration. First, the structure of the museum building was rehabilitated and then the museumization process was carried out, including the placement of artefacts and new showcases in a totally renewed concept.

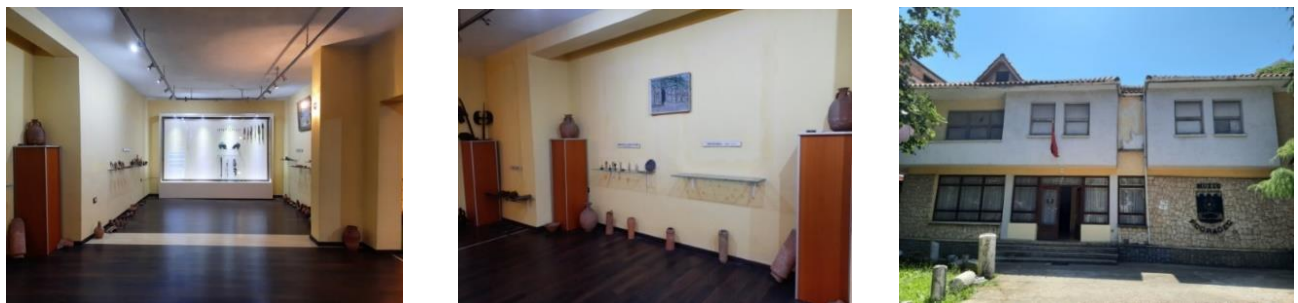


Photo of the Pogradec Historical Museum before the restoration



*Photo of the Pogradec Historical Museum after restoration*

### UNESCO Days - 5-9 July 2023

This activity was carried out in the framework of the promotion of Lake Ohrid as a UNESCO World Heritage Property.

Five days of activities and events, aimed at promoting sustainable tourism, raising national awareness on the outstanding values and vulnerability of the unique biodiversity of the Lake Ohrid. Various activities were organized during these days such as:

- Water sports;
- Paths exploration;
- Early Christian Church of Lin Peninsula ;
- Exploration of the Tushemisht - Peshkipi trail ;
- Presentation "Pogradeci in UNESCO";
- Exhibition "Touristic attractions".
- Tourist guide to the central area of UNESCO, the Lin peninsula.



- Accompanying a group of young people on the Tushemisht-Peshkëpi trail



- Cleaning action in the river of the city and that of Vërdova which flow into the lake



29 September 2023 - National Day of Cultural Heritage

In the premises of the Pogradec Historical Museum, the "Little Archaeologist" activity were organized, where students had the opportunity to use archaeological tools and learn more about excavation techniques in the field of archaeology.



**October- December 2023 Preparation of the installation of Palafite dwelling in the historical museum premises**

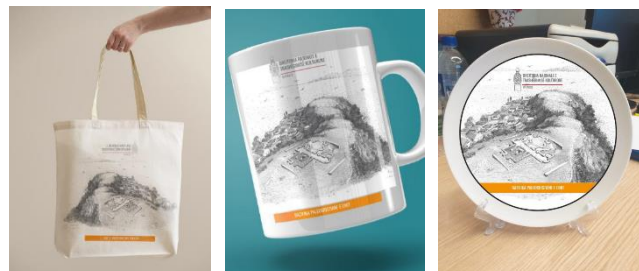
Design and implementation of an installation on the first floor of the Pogradec Historical Museum, which visually presents how parts of the structures of the Palatine dwellings were located, which were discovered in the village of Lin and belong to the settlement of early in Europe in terms of this typology.



**Activities part of the National Programs "Education through culture" and "Friends of Monuments"**

Promoting through souvenirs (designed and realized by RDCH Korça)

The Regional Directorate of Cultural Heritage Korça has conceived the realization and design of several typologies of souvenirs in the concept of the memory of the cultural heritage of the Korça district in the field of architecture and archaeology.





In the district of Korça, archaeological and architectural heritage objects have been selected, and sketched by RDCH Korça. The idea of realization is the promotion of cultural heritage through a package of souvenirs with cultural elements, which can be continuously developed in typology and design by the Municipalities.

### **New archaeological discovery in Pogradec area**

A 7500-year-old settlement has been discovered near the village of Buqeza, in the district of Pogradec. The project named "Lin 3" is being implemented by the Institute of Albanian Archeology in collaboration with the University of Bern in Switzerland. The results of excavations over 4 years confirmed that the palafite settlement of Lini in Pogradec is the oldest in Europe.



### **Cleaning activities**

From the staff of RAPA Korçe have been carried out cleaning activities in cooperation with the schools in NM "Shpella e Najazma" near Dogana, Tushemisht, as well as on the walking path around the Lin peninsula, etc.

Through these cleaning actions, we send a sensitizing message to everyone so that they do not pollute these places. This activity aims to mobilize citizens, institutions, and businesses in cleaning actions (and not only), to remove as much waste as possible but also to reduce their amount and to have a clear and sensitizing message for all residents of protected area.

In the framework of the "**World Environment Day**", a cleaning action was organized on the Pogradec-Kala path with a length of 3.8 km. The environmental activity was carried out in cooperation with the Directorate of Tourism, Youth and Cultural Heritage of the Municipality of Pogradec and the students of the 9-year-old school "Kozma Basho".



A cleaning activity was carried out at the WTPL "Pogradeci Lake" at the Tushemisht Customs, together with a group of young people from Poland and Albania who were part of a summer camp organized by the Evangelical Church.

As part of the European Day of Parks, a cleaning action took place on the path around the Lin peninsula, with the students of the "Muharrem Çollaku" High School, with the aim of raising their awareness of the protection of nature and the environment.



On the occasion of the World Cities Day, a clean-up action was carried out by the staff of RAPA Korçë in the city of Pogradec, part of the WTPL "Pogradec Lake."

### Environmental Education Classes

In the framework of the World Day of Environmental Education on January 26, 2023, in cooperation with the Directorate of Tourism, Cultural Heritage and Youth near the municipality of Pogradec, an environmental class was held with the students of two elementary schools that are inside the Protected Area, WTPL "Pogradeci Lake", and specifically in the school "Kozma Basho" in Pogradec as well as in the school "Dëshmorët e Pojska" in the village of Udënisht.



Environmental class at the non-public school "Amaro Tan" in Pogradec within the framework of World Water Day, which is March 22.

In the framework of the International Climate Action Day, an environmental class was organized at the elementary school "Sami Zgjani" in Guras

An environmental theme was organized at the elementary school "Myredin Bashalli" in Lin, where students were introduced to the specific Natural and Cultural values enjoyed of Lin Peninsula and the Ohrid region.

In the framework of December 11, "The International Day of Mountains "was organized an environmental class at the school "14 Angels" Buçimas.



In Korçë, a meeting was held in the framework of "World Tourism Day" in cooperation with "Fan S. Noli" University, Korçë - UNIKO activity, with the aim of promoting Protected Areas and tourist guides in these areas.

On our part, a presentation was made for the promotion of the values of protected areas and the development of mountain guides for the Protected Area, WTPL " Pogradeci lake".

Participants in this activity were representatives of the tourism sector from the regional municipalities, Professors of the Marketing-Tourism Department from Fan S. Noli Korçë University, as well as representatives from several tourist agencies operating in the Korçë Region.



### **Meeting of the Management Committee of Protected Environmental Areas "Protected Terrestrial and Water Landscape of Pogradec Lake".**

On the August 22, 2023, the meeting of the Management Committee of the Protected Environmental Area "WTPL Pogradeci Lake" took place in the Pogradec Protected Areas administration building. The meeting was attended by representatives from all responsible institutions, according to the provisions

made in DCM no. 593, dated 09.10.2018 "On the composition, functions, duties and responsibilities of the Management Committees of Environmentally Protected Areas". The committee was led by the Prefect of Korçë District in the capacity of chairman. The Protected Area "Lake Pogradec Protected Terrestrial-Water Landscape" does not have a Management Plan but regulates its operation based on the World Heritage Supplement to the Management Plan, for the period 2017-2027. Some of the identified problems in WTPL Pogradec Lake are:

- Production of firewood by residents
- Mining activity in the protected area (damp and closure which is a repeated recommendation by UNESCO as well as a task left to all developed Committees);
- The overlap of powers between the Municipality and the Protected Areas related to the various contracts.
- Pouring sewage into the lake (in the Udënisht e Çërravë watershed), since there is no system for their treatment.
- Closure and final rehabilitation of the waste disposal site in Peshkëpi.
- Drafting of Management Plans for all Protected Areas.

Regional Tourism Development Committee under the chair of the Prefect of Korça district it has been organized took place in Drilon on 27 June 2023.

"Ohrid Lake Day" held in Ohrid on June 21, 2023. RAPA Korçë participated with its stand in this activity aiming the promotion and protection of the values of this lake and the region as well.

#### **Other awareness meetings**

In the tourist village of Lin, an awareness-raising meeting was held with the residents of the area, where the topic of the meeting was "Recognizing the status and values enjoyed by the area, the importance it has, being a central area of the World Natural and Cultural Heritage." This meeting took place in cooperation with the association "I, Woman" within the project, "Local actors work together in the protection of the environment of the Prespa-Ohrid region", supported by PONT and implemented by the association "I, Woman".



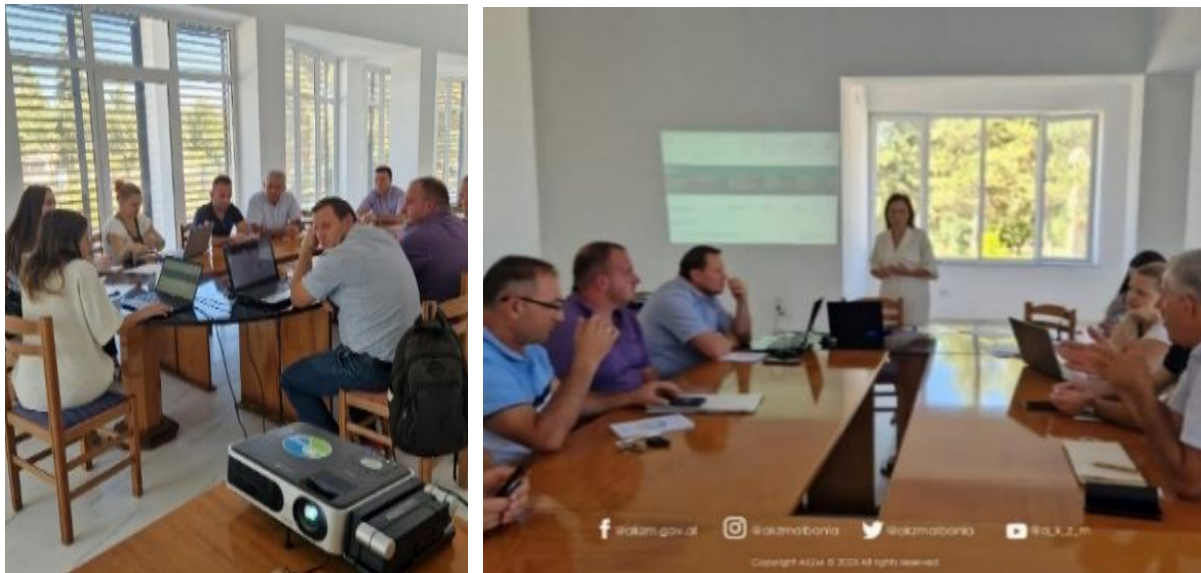
#### **Training of environmental journalists on the polluters of Lake Ohrid.**

On January 10, 2023, an in-depth Workshop on the problematics of Lake Ohrid. The focus of this Workshop was investigative journalists at the national and local level, who received detailed information on the entire situation of Lake Ohrid on both sides of the border.



### METT 2023 analysis

Since 2019, with the implementation of PONT grants, the process of evaluating the efficiency of PA management through the METT - 4 analysis has begun. In the framework of the support of PONT, at the meeting on October 2, 2023, METT - 4 analysis was carried out for the evaluation of the management efficiency of the protected area. The main purpose of the analysis is to make a realistic assessment of biodiversity and different ecosystems. METT is an instrument which is used to monitor the sustainable development of a protected area, where in cooperation with all the actors operating in the territory, it is developed jointly between AdZM Korçë, PONT, Pogradec Municipality and NGOs with various environmental activities.



### Interviews

In promoting the values of the protected area, has been organized different interviews and reportage with participation of RAPA Korçë staff.

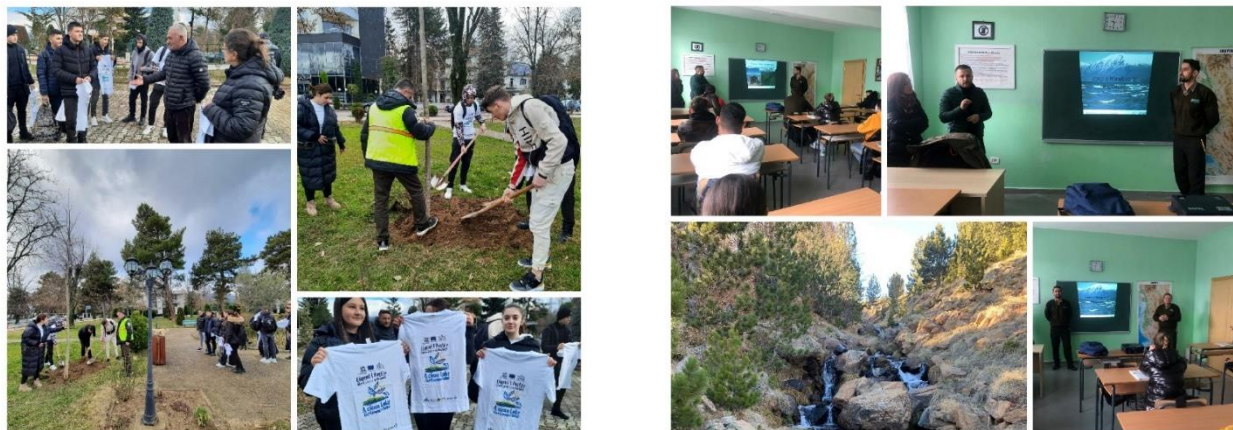


The Municipality of Pogradec participated and organized different awareness activities:

### Environmental Education Week

January 2023

In the framework of this week the young people planted trees in the avenue along the Lake and were provided information by the National Agency of Protected Areas on the topic: "Let us live in harmony with Nature"



### Earth Day, 22 April 2023

"Nature always wears the colours of the soul!" This was the topic of the activity, which was realized by promotion of artisan works and different recyclings in the framework of Earth Day.



We pedaled for a sustainable future in the framework of World Bicycle Day.

**4. In conformity with Paragraph 172 of the *Operational Guidelines*, describe any potential major restorations, alterations and/or new construction(s) intended within the property, the buffer zone(s) and/or corridors or other areas, where such developments may affect the Outstanding Universal Value of the property, including authenticity and integrity.**

#### **In the Albanian part of the property**

##### **Ongoing Projects (Buffer zone of the World Heritage Property)**

1. "Revitalization of the walls of the castle of Pogradec", attached in [Annex 2](#)

The Project is currently under implementation process, more specifically:

- evidencing of the traces of the walls of Pogradec Castle,
- infrastructure works
- systemization of the access road,
- complete cleaning of the vegetation on the line of the walls in order to highlight the walls and enable finishing the complete plan of the Castle and data-base in orthophotos.

2. The Project "Urban restoration and requalification of the historic centre and the protected area of the city of Pogradec" is expected to be implemented during this year, attached in, [Annex 4](#).

3. Water supply systems and sewerage project (Update)

With the support of German Government and Albanian Government, Waterworks Pogradec enterprise has realized its goal and vision in completing the entire city with a sewerage network and supplying 24 hours of clean and controlled water to the entire Pogradec area, Bucimas. Lake Ohrid is one of the oldest lakes in the world and has a high biodiversity. Its setting as a cultural heritage has been and is the focus of the Waterworks Pogradec for its protection. The three implementation phases of the projects consisted in laying out and completing the Bucimas Administrative Unit and the city of Pogradec with the potable water network and the sewage system. In the village of Lin , also announced as one of the 100 villages for rural development, the project for "System and supply of drinking water" was implemented in the period 2020-2021 for all residents of the village, improving the quality of services, tourism and life residents of the area. Investing in a whole new infrastructure and network after a long supply shortage.

In the administrative unit of Udënisht with about 6000 inhabitants for the villages of Udënisht and Mëmëlisht, the implementation of the project for the fulfillment of a drinking water supply system began in June 2020 and the entire new infrastructure for both villages with 3 new storages is currently being completed. 2 of which are reconstruction and rehabilitation. For about 20 years with a reduced supply in 2021, this investment will be completed with 24 hours of drinking water according to European quality standards.

In 2022, the completion of the environmental protection of Lake Ohrid for all families in the village of Bucimas, Guras, Remenj, Verdovë, which were not part of the three-phase projects, is being completed with the sewage system. The villages of the Administrative Unit Cërravë (Leshnica, Cërravë, Stropckë, Dardhas, Grabovicë, Petrushë, Nizhavec, Lumas, Bllacë, Alarup and Bletas) since the 90s have not had any investment in drinking water network systems. Which of the feasibility The area turned out to be a major problem, especially for the quality of life, and the intervention in these areas was immediate for all the villages of this unit. The project in the drinking water supply component started its implementation in February 2021 and is currently being implemented, its completion will provide 24-hour drinking water for all residents of this unit. Also, another investment for the fulfillment and

connection of the drinking water network for the residents is the area of Mokra, which includes a large number of villages and residents, with an investment for about 20 years before the implementation of the new network and the elimination of all the difficulties arising from the lack of drinking water supply. These areas are mountainous and the terrain is relatively difficult to carry out all the connection points, but with the completion of the project, the entire service will be provided 24 hours a day.

#### **Projects approved by the National Council of Material Cultural Heritage in 2023**

- The approval of the project "Reconstruction of the existing 2-storey building + usable roof construction", within the Pogradec Historical Center, located on "24 May" street, Pogradec Municipality, with developer Lubjana Samsuri, Decision No. 288, dated 26.05.2023
- The approval of the project "Roof over 2 existing floors", Within the Pogradec Historical Center, Pogradec Municipality, with developer Jovan Basho, Decision No. 405, date 18.07.2023
- The approval of the project "Revitalization of the walls of the Pogradec fortress" Cultural Monument of the 1st Category, with the developer Pogradec Municipality, Decision No. 484, date 12.09.2023
- The approval of the ongoing research-scientific project "Albanian-Swiss LIN 3 joint project", extending the lake shore in Lin and Buqeza, with developer Academy of Albanian Studies, Decision No. 450, date 24.08.2023

**According to the national procedures the State of Conservation Report of the Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Ohrid Region and progress in the implementation of the recommendations from the Decisions of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee (the part of the property on the territory of the Republic of North Macedonia) was adopted by the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia at its 3<sup>rd</sup> session, held on 06.02.2024 (no. 41-2074/2).**

\* \* \*

5. The State Parties Republic of North Macedonia and Republic of Albania consents **to publish this Report on the State of Conservation of the Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Ohrid Region on the website of the UNESCO World Heritage Center.**

#### **LIST OF ANNEXES (The State Party of Albania):**

**Annex 1\_** Project Summary: COOLTOUR - Struga & Pogradec for promoting tourism and cultural heritage in the framework Cross-border Programme the Republic of North Macedonia - Republic of Albania under the Instrument of Pre-accession Assistance (IPA II) allocations for 2018 – 2020.

**Annex 2\_** "Revitalization of the walls of the castle of Pogradec"

**Annex 3\_** Inspection files for the cultural monuments within the World Heritage Property and Buffer area (Albanian Part of the Property, cultural component).

**Annex 4\_** Urban restoration and requalification project

**Annex 5\_** Drilon\_Tushemisht Water Park project which includes:

- **5.1** Infrastructure\_Projects\_technical\_details\_Drilon\_Tushemisht.zip
- **5.2** Detailed\_plan\_of Area\_National\_Importance\_PDZRK\_Pogradec.zip
- **5.3** Project\_interventions\_technical\_specifications\_Drilon\_Tushemisht.zip

**Annex 6\_** The detailed regulation of beach stations, beach area for fun activities and services, Pogradec Municipality

**Annex 7\_** Useful information

**Link for download:** <https://we.tl/t-uK4ECHKViv>



Signature of the Authority



REPUBLIC OF ALBANIA

MINISTRY OF TOURISM  
AND ENVIRONMENT

MIRELA KUMBARO FURXHI



MINISTRY OF ECONOMY,  
CULTURE AND INNOVATION

BLENDI GONXHJA



Republic of North Macedonia

MINISTER OF CULTURE

President of the National Commission  
for UNESCO

Biserka Kostadinovska - Stojchevska

