

# Protecting Lake Ohrid

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

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Two-thirds of Lake Ohrid is inscribed on the World Heritage List on the Macedonian side of the Lake as the mixed World Heritage property "Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Ohrid region". Now time has come to extend World Heritage status to the remaining third of the lake located in Albania.

Dear readers,

It is with great pleasure that I address you through this first newsletter published in the framework of the transboundary project aiming at protection of the natural and cultural heritage of Lake Ohrid region. Management of this protected area is today the primary focus of the Ministry of Environment, in a challenging time for achieving tangible results with regards to biodiversity. It requires a process of responsible use of biodiversity hotspots and the protection of species and habitats. Implementation of this transboundary project will contribute greatly to the integrated management of natural and cultural heritage of the region, which is highly important for nature conservation and biodiversity.



Lake Ohrid Region is a mixed property and protected area included in the cross-border Biosphere Reserve of Albania and Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. This project aims at addressing possible threats to the natural and cultural heritage of the region.

Strengthening of transboundary cooperation to save, protect and promote the values of the region, identifying its universal outstanding values, exploiting opportunities for sustainable development and building capacities for effective and integrated management of the cultural and natural heritage based on active cross-cutting sectorial cooperation and involvement of the community, are some of the pillars of the project's implementation.

The final goal of the project is to extend the status of Lake Ohrid as a mixed World Heritage Property also to the Albanian part. The project team is currently working to prepare UNESCO nomination file and a management plan that will contribute to wards protecting this transboundary cultural and natural heritage region through close cooperation and exchange of experience amongst stakeholders from the two countries. The project will also help in raising awareness and increasing the visibility of the values of Lake Ohrid both nationally and internationally.

Yours sincerely

*Lefter Koka*

Minister of Environment

# KEY FACTS

## World Natural and Cultural Heritage since 1979

- **1979** Lake Ohrid is first inscribed on the World Heritage List as a natural property, under criterion (iii) on superlative natural phenomena which is today criterion (vii).
- **1980** The World Heritage property is extended to cultural criteria (i), (iii) and (iv) and becomes one of the first mixed World Heritage properties.
- **1998** A joint UNESCO-ICOMOS-IUCN monitoring mission is carried out for the first time since inscription. The mission highlights that economic and demographic developments pose threats to the values of the site that can only be addressed through an integrated approach and protective measures that link the cultural and the natural heritage preservation. The state of conservation of the property is discussed by the World Heritage Bureau in Kyoto, Japan (Decision 22 COM VII.30).
- **2008** At its 32nd session (Quebec City, 2008), the World Heritage Committee initiated the Upstream Process during a reflection on the future of the World Heritage Convention. The Upstream Process is an experimental approach aimed at reducing the number of properties that experience significant problems during the process of nomination for inscription on the World Heritage List.
- **2009** The World Heritage Committee approves a minor boundary modification that reduces slightly the northern and western boundaries of the property. Within this process, the Committee encourages the creation of a buffer zone as well as undertaking efforts towards a transboundary extension of the World Heritage property to include the Albanian part of Lake Ohrid.
- **2011** The World Heritage Committee, in decision 35 COM 12C, selects ten Pilot Projects to test the effectiveness of the Upstream Process, including the Pilot Project "Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Ohrid Region" (Albania and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia).
- **2011** Albania submits "Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Ohrid region" on the Tentative List as a first step in the World Heritage property extension process.
- **2012** Phase One of the Upstream process entails the Advisory Scoping mission to assess the feasibility of an extension for nomination to the already inscribed site. This mission identifies threats affecting natural and cultural heritage of the Lake Ohrid region such as unplanned urban development, fishing and habitat alteration as well as unsustainable waste actions.
- **2014** Phase Two of the Pilot Project for the Upstream process initiates the project Towards Strengthened Governance of the Shared Transboundary Natural and Cultural heritage of the Lake Ohrid region.

## Project in a nutshell

Lake Ohrid, one of the world's oldest lakes situated in south-eastern Europe, stands out as one of the largest reserves of biodiversity and contains some of the oldest human settlements in the continent. The convergence of distinctive natural values with the quality and diversity of its cultural, material and spiritual heritage makes this region truly unique.

Two-thirds of Lake Ohrid are inscribed on the World Heritage List on the Macedonian side as the mixed World Heritage property Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Ohrid Region. It is now time to join our efforts and take on our responsibilities to extend World Heritage status to the remaining third of the lake located in Albania.

The project "Towards Strengthened Governance of the Shared Transboundary Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Lake Ohrid region" has been designed to address the main factors affecting the region through identifying and safeguarding the main natural and cultural assets of the lake and improving transboundary cooperation and management.

The region's efforts to balance conservation with sustainable development are laid out in the 2005 bilateral agreement between the two countries for the Protection and Sustainable Development of Lake Ohrid and its Watershed. The project is coordinated by UNESCO in partnership with the authorities of the two countries and the three advisory bodies to the World Heritage Committee (ICOMOS International, IUCN and ICCROM), and is financed by the European Union (EUR 1.700.000) with co-financing from the government of Albania (EUR 170.000).

The main project activities include:

- (i) reinforcement of transboundary cooperation between Albania and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia;
- (ii) establishment of integrated management mechanisms;
- (iii) capacity building on management effectiveness.

The activities also aim to identify and safeguard cultural and natural assets, provide technical assistance to national authorities for the preparation of a transboundary World Heritage property extension file and implement a waste awareness campaign.

# project meetings

## Management Planning Workshops

**THE FIRST** Management Planning Workshop to protect the transboundary Lake Ohrid region took place on 25 and 26 March 2015 in Korca, a city in southeast Albania and seat of Korca county, which also includes the city of Pogradec, situated on the shores of Lake Ohrid.

The workshop brought together national and local authorities of two sides of the lake and representatives of UNESCO and the Advisory Bodies to the World Heritage Committee (ICCROM, ICOMOS and IUCN), who discussed the heritage management systems currently in use in the region, and identified key stakeholders to support the development of a transboundary heritage management plan.

At the meeting stakeholders presented the state of the cultural and natural heritage in the Lake Ohrid region, with particular focus on the existing management structures and planning processes in two participatory working sessions. Two main participatory working sessions focused on undertaking a thorough stakeholder analysis, the first session with a thematic approach based on the key themes of the project (waste, sustainable tourism, urban development and spatial planning, civil society and communities), while the second involved group work focused on nature and culture. The mixed composition and size of the groups enabled dialogue across the various sectors and an integrated review of stakeholders present in the Lake Ohrid region.



1st workshop in Korca

**THE SECOND** Management Planning Workshop held on 3 and 4 June in Tirana-Albania brought together stakeholders from the two sides of the lake to discuss a long-term vision and management objectives for a potential transboundary protection zone for Lake Ohrid. A number of participants attended the workshop, developing jointly four vision statements through working groups led by facilitators from various institutions. The four

statements led to a single statement, which will be fine-tuned over the course of the management planning process for the World Heritage extension project. The workshop also focused on mapping, improving knowledge of the area and understanding the different factors affecting the area, in particular ongoing and future projects and initiatives that may have an impact on the Lake Ohrid region and the potential transboundary World Heritage property.



2nd workshop in Tirana

**THE THIRD** Management Planning Workshop and Thematic Training for the Lake Ohrid Region was hosted in Pogradec, Albania from 7-10 December 2015. The workshop advanced the work done on an integrated management system for the protection and sustainable development of the Lake Ohrid region.

The emphasis of both the Management Planning Workshop and the Thematic Training was on the long-term vision, discussing boundaries and buffer zones, and identifying management objectives for the Lake Ohrid region in Albania in the light of the potential extension of the World Heritage property "Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Ohrid region" to Albania.

Representatives from both countries participated in the workshop, including national authorities from the respective ministries of environment and culture, local authorities from the municipalities of the Lake Ohrid region, Advisory Bodies to the World Heritage Committee (ICCROM, ICOMOS and IUCN) as well as a representative from UNESCO.



3rd workshop in Pogradec



## Transboundary Platform Meetings

The Inception Workshop held in Albania on September 2014 kick-started a three year initiative for protection of the Lake Ohrid region, serving also as first transboundary platform to define the roles and responsibilities. Second Transboundary Platform Meeting took place on 2 October 2015 in Ohrid following along the same footsteps. These events are part of a total of six meetings that aim to support the Albanian and Macedonian governments in their efforts to protect the Lake Ohrid area, and intends to create transboundary management structures for effective heritage management. A number of representatives attended the Transboundary Platform Meeting, including officials from the two countries environment and culture ministries, and from the regions municipalities, UNESCO and the Advisory Bodies to the World Heritage Committee (ICOMOS and IUCN) attended the meeting. The Transboundary Platform meeting intends to improve and facilitate bi-lateral cooperation among representatives from both Albanian and Macedonian local and central administrations, the tourism sector, and those in charge of urban and rural development, culture, nature protection, resource management and the environment. The meeting seeks to address the main factors affecting the natural and cultural heritage of the Lake Ohrid region, notably unplanned urban development, waste management, habitat alteration and the destruction and depletion of natural resources.

**MILESTONE** - The draft Baseline Assessment report prepared under the coordination of ICOMOS and IUCN ECARO has been published. The report provides crucial background information on the Lake Ohrid region in Albania covering a number of themes such as biodiversity, agriculture, forestry, tangible and intangible heritage and tourism. This report has been made available for public consultation from 16 February until 18 March 2016.

Interview with the Mayor of Pogradec, Mr. Eduard Kapri to discuss the shared responsibilities and benefits of the project



**What does the project: "Towards Strengthened Governance of the Shared Transboundary Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Lake Ohrid region mean for Pogradec?"**

The project took place in the framework of the Agreement signed in 2005 between the governments of former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Albania for the protection and sustainable development of Lake Ohrid and its watershed. Both governments are committed to undertaking development and spatial management plans of the area of Lake Ohrid. A steering committee of experts from the two countries are working together to define the criteria, standards, restrictions and clear objectives for the protection of Lake Ohrid region in accordance with EU standards and principles. We hope this project will contribute in this direction.

**What are the concrete measures that the Municipality of Pogradec will undertake to save and protect Lake Ohrid?**

Based on the new administrative division of Albania, Pogradec Municipality is the sole local government unit responsible for the Albanian part of Lake Ohrid. Currently, our municipality is preparing a Local Action Plan (LAP) and is one of 26 municipalities to be financially and technically supported by the Government of Albania. Issues related to the Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Lake Ohrid basin as well as conservation, water quality, its flora and fauna, will be an integral part of the plan.

**What is the tourism development plan for the area? Will there be constructions on the lake shore?**

We see tourism development of the area as an essential factor for economic development and support the idea of alternative tourism, in order to make our Lake Ohrid very attractive for tourists throughout the whole year. Pogradec has plenty of tourism resources, which need a new management concept, so that they can bring revenues to the local community. We are also looking at ways of cooperation over tourism with the Macedonian side. The introduction of Lake Ohrid as a joint ecosystem and having a unified tourism product will really have a positive impact on both countries and increase the number of tourists.

**How do you plan to raise awareness and involve the community to save the outstanding values of Lake Ohrid ?**

Pogradec inherits a tradition and obligation to conserve and protect Lake Ohrid. Our citizens have always seen the lake as a valuable resource, and have treated it as a gift from God. A network of local environmental NGO-s was established during 1996-2004, under the Regional Environmental Centre in order to raise public awareness and participation, thus becoming a factor and a partner of the municipality in decision making for the region of Lake Ohrid. We also consider as a necessity the cross-border cooperation. Together with municipalities of Struga and Ohrid we signed a Memorandum of Understanding in Wismar and another on technical cooperation, will be signed in Ohrid. This is the only way to ensure sustainable development of the Lake, inspired by the motto "One lake, one vision, one future"



*View from a forest in Albania*

## Albanian Parliament has passed a 10-year moratorium to save forests

The Albanian Parliament has passed a 10-year moratorium on chopping down trees for industry or export purposes. The law drafted by the Ministry of Environment allows local authorities to approve limited wood-cutting for heating. Albania's 14 million hectares (3.5 million acres) of forests have been savagely cut or burnt over the past 26 years since the fall of the communist regime, with an average of 2.5 million trees chopped down each year. Minister of Environment Lefter Koka said that this radical decision has come after measures failed to stop the loss of woodland, which has contributed to the flooding the country experienced in recent years.

## Old boat - tells the history of life in Ohrid

An old Ohrid boat, recently reconstructed, brought back distant memories to the citizens living on the shores of Lake Ohrid.



*The old Ohrid boat & Goran Patchev*

It is an added attraction for domestic and foreign tourists in Robevci house in Ohrid. The idea to reconstruct the boat was that of Goran Patchev architect at the Institute for the Protection of Monuments of Culture and the Museum in Ohrid. This old type of boat was an indispensable part in the life of the citizens living around Lake Ohrid. It served for fishing and for transporting people and post between Ohrid, Pogradec and Struga, SvetiNaum, Lin, as well as goods such as, trees, grain, grape, sand, and was also used for celebrations and festivities held by the lake. Asked if this boat will remain as an exhibit at the Robevci Museum or will once again sail in the waters of lake, Mr. Patschev replied: The goal of the construction of this boat is achieved, this was to rekindle memories of Old Ohrid boat. But we went further with a sailing test proving that it can be used practically for tourism purposes, catering for various events as a tourist attraction. With some improvements in materials and processing it can realistically once again be the most common craft in the lake. This boat will remain as an exhibit in the courtyard of Robevci house and provide a lesson on the history of life in this area.

## Albania defines the buffer zone protecting Basilica of Lin Peninsula, Pogradec

Albanian National Council for Restoration at Ministry of Culture defined the Buffer Zone for protecting cultural heritage in the area of Lin Village Pogradec.



*Lin Mosaic, Pogradec*

The protected area includes the ruins of Paleo-Christian Church and Mosaics, which are considered as Monuments of First Category. The Paleo Christian basilica of Lin is situated in the West Side of Lin peninsula and represents one of the most important monuments of Albanian heritage. The structure is decorated with colorful mosaics of flowers motifs, geometric and Eucharistic scenes, belonging to early Christian Period. Archaeological excavations and numismatic records of Basilica with mosaic floor are dating back in V-VI the century. Poly-chrome mosaics and rich archaeological material, make the Church one of the most beautiful monuments and the most interesting site in the territory of Albania.



## OHRID CITY, THE PEARL OF THE BALKANS

Located on the shores of Lake Ohrid, the city of Ohrid is one of the oldest human settlements in Europe. Ohrid, the wider lake region is a prime destination for Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, with the city's old quarter containing beautiful churches along a graceful hill, topped by a medieval castle overlooking the majestic 34 km-long Lake Ohrid. This is undoubtedly the most alluring attraction of the Lake Ohrid region.

### Cultural Heritage

Built mostly between the 7th and 19th centuries, Ohrid is home to one of the oldest Slav monasteries (St Pantelejmon) with more than 800 middle Byzantine icons dating from the 11th to the end of the 14th century. This icon collection is considered to be one of the most important in the world. Ohrid comprises one of Europe's best preserved archaeological complexes with remains dating from the Bronze Age up to the Middle Ages. The city boasts unique religious architecture dating from the 7th to 19th centuries as well as urban structures showcasing a vernacular architecture from the 18th and 19th centuries. All of these present a treasure of historic, architectural, cultural and artistic values.

### What to see

Ohrid's major attractions are all located within a remarkably concentrated and easily accessible area, among and above the narrow streets of the Old Town lined with restaurants and cafes perfectly suited for relaxing against the backdrop of the lake. Top attractions in the city include: Sv. Jovan Kaneo, Sv. Naum Monastery, Galicica, National Park Tsar Samuel's Fortress, Saint Sophia Church, Sv Kliment Monastery, Plaoshnik Church.

### What to do

Ohrid's many cafe bars and nightclubs make for a vibrant nightlife. As for the lake itself, it is so large and so deep that one might mistake it for a sea. For water sports lovers, fishing and boating are available, and numerous churches alongside the lake shores make for fascinating side trips and walks; while nature and adventure travellers can explore the National Park of Galicica, an unspoiled wilderness ideal for nature enthusiasts. To gain a better feeling of the city, we recommend a gentle stroll along Lake Ohrid shore having a coffee, a glass of wine or a meal overlooking the lake. Ohrid and its beaches are packed from 15 July to 15 August, during the popular summer festival when it seems half of country descends on the town. The bars and restaurants are full during the summer, while June or September are much quieter enabling one to reflect next to the lake.

## POGRADEC, IN HARMONY WITH NATURE

Pogradec is one of the most charming tourism destinations in Albania set on the shores of Lake Ohrid. **The journey to Pogradec** is always inspiring. The more you travel here, the more you become addicted to the city. Travelling over Qafe Thane, reaching the pass and beginning the descent down to Lake Ohrid and the beautiful village of Lin with its magnificent scenery surrounded by hills unfolds itself like a book to the eye of the tourists. The beauty and tranquility of the lake move your soul. Once in the city, a long promenade, invites you for a long walk. Pogradec is very welcoming, and people are among the most friendly in Albania, the lake has softened their hearts.. The city was home to many of the country's famous writers and poets: Lasgush Poradeci and Mitrush Kuteli, and lately Luan Starova and painters Anastas Kostandini(Taso), Gjergji Lako, Gentian Zeka, Vangjo Vasili and Ilir Dhima.

### Cultural heritage

In the west side of Lin peninsula you can visit the paleochristian church, a National Cultural Monument of Albania included within the site on the UNESCO Tentative List of Albania for the Natural and Cultural Heritage of Ohrid Region (Albania). The Illyrian Tombs of Selca e Poshtme (40km from Pogradec) is another important site to visit. The tombs rest among the remains of the ancient city of Pelion, an Illyrian settlement of the Enchele tribe and the residence of Illyrian kings. In 1996, Albania proposed the Royal tombs of Selca e Poshtme on the UNESCO World Heritage Tentative List: Other churches to visit are the church of Saint Dimitri (small Orthodox church of 1154 AD) and the church of Saint Marena ( Orthodox church rebuilt in 1744).

### What to see

**Lin Village** and its mosaic are a natural first stop on a journey to Pogradec. The village lies in a quiet and picturesque bay, with beautiful houses with red tiled roofs.

**Drilon National Park**, is also an essential

*"The lonesome lake increases its waves like a sea*

*Through its spirit it whispers me:*

*Ah! Look how deep is this chest of mine who brought you to life"*

*Lasgush Poradeci*



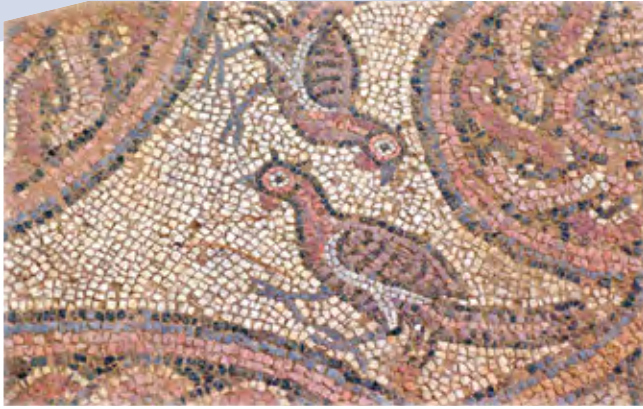
place to see in Pogradec with crystal clear springs that supply the beautiful channels overhung with trees and ornamental plants. This was the holiday home for the former dictator Enver Hoxha, whose villa is now a hotel and restaurant. **Tushemisht Village** and its newly renovated centre is not to be missed. The blogger Yomadic refers to it as Albania's "small Venice" full of canals with clear waters emerging from the mountain that ironically is named "The Dry Mountain". You shouldn't miss the **Balkan Food Film festival** which is a major event in the Balkans and Pogradec cultural life.

### What to do

Pogradec is perfect for a relaxing holiday. Peak months are July and August, when the lakeside teems with beach lovers in the sun. Pedal boats are available, and canoeing and kayaking activities are growing in popularity. Off season, the city goes back to its tranquility, and is ideal for walking and meditation. In winter the scenes are very panoramic, often spectacular with snow covering the mountains, set above a background of green and blue. One of the highlights of Pogradec is its delicious cuisine.



@Ardian Fezollari



# partners

## Who does what?



**UNESCO**  
World Heritage Centre - Project coordinator



The European Union  
main financial contributor



The Ministry of Environment  
of the Republic of Albania



MINISTRY OF CULTURE  
of Republic of Albania



MINISTRY OF CULTURE  
of the FYR of Macedonia



Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning  
of the FYR of Macedonia



ICCRUM  
(International Centre for the Study of the  
Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property)



ICOMOS  
(International Council on Monuments and Sites)



IUCN  
(International Union for Conservation of Nature)

# calendar

## Whats next

- 9- 11 May 2016 -Training on Promoting World Heritage in the Lake Ohrid region
- 11- 13 May 2016 Pogradec area Fourth Management Planning Workshop on Lake Ohrid Region
- 22 May - 5th June 2016 Environmental film festival of Albania
- 21 June 2016 Lake Ohrid Day
- 22- 23 June 2016 Fifth Management Planning Workshop in Pogradec area
- 1-7 August 2016 Balkan film food festival
- 4-13 October 2016 Regional Community based approach course
- November 2016 Training Conservation and Management LoR Ecosystem
- December 2016 Training sustainable enterprise development

## Protecting Lake Ohrid

*This is a quarterly newsletter published by the project "Towards strengthened governance of the shared transboundary natural and cultural heritage of the Lake Ohrid region".*  
Languages: English, Albanian, Macedonian.

**In the next issue:** *Tourism in Struga and Debarca, Waste awareness campaign, Photo Contest results, and much more...*

Project page: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/lake-ohrid-region>  
Twitter: [https://twitter.com/lake\\_ohrid](https://twitter.com/lake_ohrid)  
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