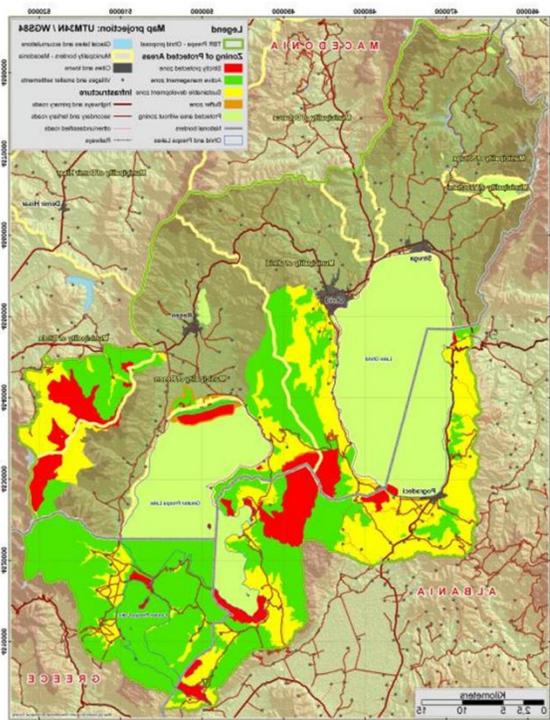


How TBR “actors” maintain and conserve their site whilst justifying the social, economic, and natural values.



Ohrid-Prespa Ecosystem SPIS

Sign In

SPIS

Spatial Planning Information System

Spatial Planning Information System - SPIS - is implemented to contribute balanced and sustainable socio-economic development of the Ohrid-Prespa transboundary biosphere reserve, through applications for support of planning and management of the natural resources and heritage. SPIS maps the most important ecosystem services towards the enhancement of forestry, tourism, fishing and hunting.

Applications

These customised, modular sets of applications provide tailored, multichannel access to the data stored in the SPIS. Via assessments exploring the apps below for helping manage around specific topics and on factors they represent.

<p>Hunting Application focused on the hunting activities and facilities in the area.</p> <p>View</p>	<p>Fishery Application focused on the fishing activities and facilities in the area.</p> <p>View</p>	<p>Environment App focused on mapping the objects and areas of protection.</p> <p>View</p>	<p>Tourism Promotion of nearby areas and points of interest.</p> <p>View</p>
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Project partners
 Albanian Local Capacity Development Foundation (ALCDF)
 SEG Holding
 Federation of Fisheries Organizations of Internal Inbound Waters of Albania (FFOWIA)
 Hunting Federation of Macedonia (HFM)

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Prepared by: Mirko UKOSKI

Struga, 2022



It is by starting with the poorer and enabling them to gain the livelihoods

they want and need, that both they and sustainable development can be served.....For the protection of the environment, poor people are not the problem, they are the solution”

Chambers, 1988



Acknowledgments

I would like to thank some people without whom this study would not be possible.

To all the stakeholders involved in this work who presented invaluable information, allowing me to conduct my research successfully.

To my master's degree supervisor, Prof. Dr. Dijana Blazhekovikj - Dimovska who has given me continued understanding, support, and encouragement coupled with insightful suggestions, guidance, patience, and time.



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Abstract

The protection and sustainable development of an ecosystem or region that has been nominated as a Biosphere Reserve based on the Man & Biosphere Program of UNESCO requires the respect of this program, which has the creation of a "balance" between conservation and sustainable use of natural resources to ensure sustainable development of the region and socio-economic cohesion for the local community.

Maintaining biodiversity in a Biosphere Reserve is based on three strategic pillars:

- Management of biodiversity components
- Ensuring sustainable use
- Promoting the value of nature conservation in society

The implementation of sound management principles and strategies for the conservation of natural resources is paramount in the entire system of protected areas and the entire landscape of the given region. This requires implementing management by objectives and an adaptive management approach that relies on research and information to achieve key biodiversity performance measures.

Even in the Ohrid-Prespa watershed, the sustainable use of natural resources is a key strategy for nature conservation, since by creating a means by which natural resources create direct economic benefits, nature conservation in the region is recognized as a major contributor to everyone's quality of life. communities. Nature-based tourism is an important component of this overall approach. Community conservation strategies complement this approach, primarily by working with people to ensure that the opportunities and values/benefits of nature conservation can be exploited by all communities, within a community-based, self-sustainable natural resource management framework. environmental, social, and economic.

The consolidation of these goals was undoubtedly served by the initiation and signing in 2004 of the bilateral agreement between the governments of the two countries, Albania and North Macedonia, for the protection and sustainable development of Lake Ohrid and its watershed, an agreement which was also ratified by the parliaments of both countries in March 2005.

The agreement had 3 objectives to be realized, one of which was the nomination of the watershed of Lake Ohrid and Prespa as a Transboundary Biosphere Reserve based on the Man & Biosphere Program of UNESCO, a status which was given to this region in June 2014 by UNESCO.

The watershed of Ohrid and Prespa, (with a total area of 4462.54 km² and a population of about 454000 inhabitants), is the first for Albania and North Macedonia and a new Transboundary Biosphere Reserve in the Balkan area. The creation of this "peaceful cooperation" area between man and nature aims to direct its development toward the preservation and use of sustainability of natural resources has a longer history, which began in the mid-nineties of the last century from a bilateral project to protect the vulnerable and unique Lake Ohrid.



One of the most important reasons for the creation of the TBR is to encourage the adoption of new local development practices, to compare the current trends that are negatively affecting the South-Eastern European region in general, and the proposed territories in particularity; they are related, as shown in the recent European Environment Agency Report on environmental trends and outlook in the Western Balkans (2010), to (a) pollution (mainly air and water) and its potential health consequences; (b) biodiversity loss and its impact on ecosystem services; (c) abandonment of agricultural land, especially in mountainous areas; (d) the remaining high level of conflicts over natural resources due to legacies from the past.

In transition areas, the need to support more sustainable activities emerged from meetings with local operators, compared to the increasing impacts of some practices that are not properly managed. A good example is provided by the fisheries sector, which is of crucial importance both ecologically and economically. Illegal and unsustainable fishing activities are still quite present in both lakes; The phenomenon is more visible in Lake Ohrid, where the demand for fresh fish is higher (mainly due to the high tourist presence) than in Prespa. The recent creation of the Fishing Association with a release and patrol mandate on the Macedonian side of Lake Ohrid should be taken as a good signal by national and local authorities in terms of implementing a more rigorous fishing protection regime.

In this paper, the impact of the project "Protection of the ecosystem of the cross-border region Ohrid - Prespa" related to biodiversity, economic and social criteria for sustainable development are examined in the context of the status as RNB-Watershed Ohrid - Prespa. Emphasis will be placed on how the project has responded or is responding to the challenge of ensuring sustainability.

In the end, the study tries to identify the main opportunities and challenges that the SPIS platform can face for the future, its sustainability, as well as its database extension not only for the two sectors targeted by the project but also for other relevant sectors. The object of this platform is to increase the impact on the rational protection of this ecosystem and above all the greatest impact on the local community.

The Transboundary Biosphere Reserve of the Ohrid - Prespa watershed is the main focus of this transboundary project, which aims to influence the structures responsible for its management in the protection and management of its natural resources, their sustainable use, as a key contributor to the economic and social development of the local community. There are some challenges with which the protected areas (the target of this project) as a part of the Ohrid-Prespa basin RNB are currently facing in achieving this task, especially with the current financing challenges (e.g. programs always towards reduction by the government).

Important additional information comes from interviewing the target groups of the project (fishermen, hunting associations, local government, tourist facilities, as well as the local community), accompanied by a SWAT analysis of this data.



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Abbreviation List

ANPA	Association of National Park Authority
DEFRA	Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources
NPG	National Park Galitchica
NPP	National Park Pelister
NPPr	National Park Prespa
TBR	Transboundary Biosphere Reserve
M&BP	Man & Biosphere Program
WTO	World Tourism Organisation

Appendices List

Appendix 1:	Interview Schedule
Appendix 2:	The designed questionnaire
Appendix 3:	E-mail sent to a potential respondent
Appendix 4:	Designed consent form for interview



Presentation

1.1 Breakdown

The MAB Programme develops the basis within the natural and social sciences for the rational and sustainable use and conservation of the resources of the biosphere and the improvement of the overall relationship between people and their environment. It predicts the consequences of today's actions on tomorrow's world and thereby increases people's ability to efficiently manage natural resources for the well-being of both human populations and the environment.

By focusing on sites internationally recognized within the World Network of Biosphere Reserves, the MAB Programme strives to:

- identify and assess the changes in the biosphere resulting from human and natural activities and the effects of these changes on humans and the environment, in particular in the context of climate change;
- study and compare the dynamic interrelationships between natural/near-natural ecosystems and socio-economic processes, in particular in the context of the accelerated loss of biological and cultural diversity with unexpected consequences that impact the ability of ecosystems to continue to provide services critical for human well-being;
- ensure basic human welfare and a liveable environment in the context of rapid urbanization and energy consumption as drivers of environmental change;
- promote the exchange and transfer of knowledge on environmental problems and solutions, and foster environmental education for sustainable development.

Biosphere reserves are 'learning places for sustainable development'. They are sites for testing interdisciplinary approaches to understanding and managing changes and interactions between social and ecological systems, including conflict prevention and management of biodiversity. They are places that provide local solutions to global challenges. Biosphere reserves include terrestrial, marine, and coastal ecosystems. Each site promotes solutions reconciling the conservation of biodiversity with its sustainable use.

Biosphere reserves are nominated by national governments and remain under the sovereign jurisdiction of the states where they are located. Biosphere Reserves involve local communities and all interested stakeholders in planning and management. They integrate three main "functions":

- Conservation of biodiversity and cultural diversity;
- Economic development that is socio-culturally and environmentally sustainable;
- Logistic support, underpinning development through research, monitoring, education, and training;

These three functions are pursued through the Biosphere Reserves' three main zones. Biosphere Reserves and their constituent parts (national parks, natural monuments, wetlands) have become important tourist attractions throughout the world due to the increased growth of tourism based



on nature (Juutinen et al, 2011). Some authors (Saterson et al, 2004; Juutinen et al, 2011) argue that the last decade has witnessed an increase in the level of awareness in evaluating the effective management of national parks, protected areas, and their natural resources.

The creation of Biosphere Reserves in regions that fulfill the criteria of Madrid is increasingly serving to preserve the cultural heritage and the natural ecosystem for a wide range of human activities. The last Congress held by the IUCN described the National Parks or protected areas that are an integral part of the RBs, as natural areas where the ecological integrity of ecosystems is protected, as well as providing a basis for recreation, education, science, spirituality, and opportunities for the visitors.

Therefore, the need for managers to balance visitor and community needs with conservation objectives is imperative. In the first place, National Parks and protected areas as an integral part of the Biosphere Reserve were created to preserve their cultural and biological values, but this is not the case nowadays as a result of their multiple roles in society.

The unsustainable use of natural resources, mass, and uncontrolled tourism, as well as outdoor recreation, are seen as the main threats to biodiversity and protected areas and as a major factor endangering species. For their effective management, there must be sound planning and management to ensure the right balance between providing opportunities for the development of these activities and protecting the environment. The lesser efficiency of the managers within the protected area, and the activities of the various interest groups in the region, will result in a decrease in the demand for tourism in this tourist area, the degradation of the environment, and the reduction of economic benefits for both the locals and the government.

This requires that to ensure effective management and sustainability within these areas, park authorities and managers must include stakeholders in the management process, which according to different researchers, (Buultjens et al, 2005; Eagles et al, (2005)) are three main groups of actors that influence ecosystem management in National Parks and Protected Areas, which include: regional managers, stakeholders and finally, the local community.

Another issue is financing. Funding is extremely important if national parks are to (successfully) achieve their goals. However, the Biosphere Reserve (its constituent elements) currently lacks the necessary funds to fulfill its purpose as a result of the (recent) reduction program by the government. This (cuts) raises so many questions as to whether national parks and protected areas will cope, therefore, achieving their statutory purpose and duties. If these cuts are so severe that it affects national parks and protected areas from fulfilling their multifaceted role within society, then the role of the authority would be called into question.

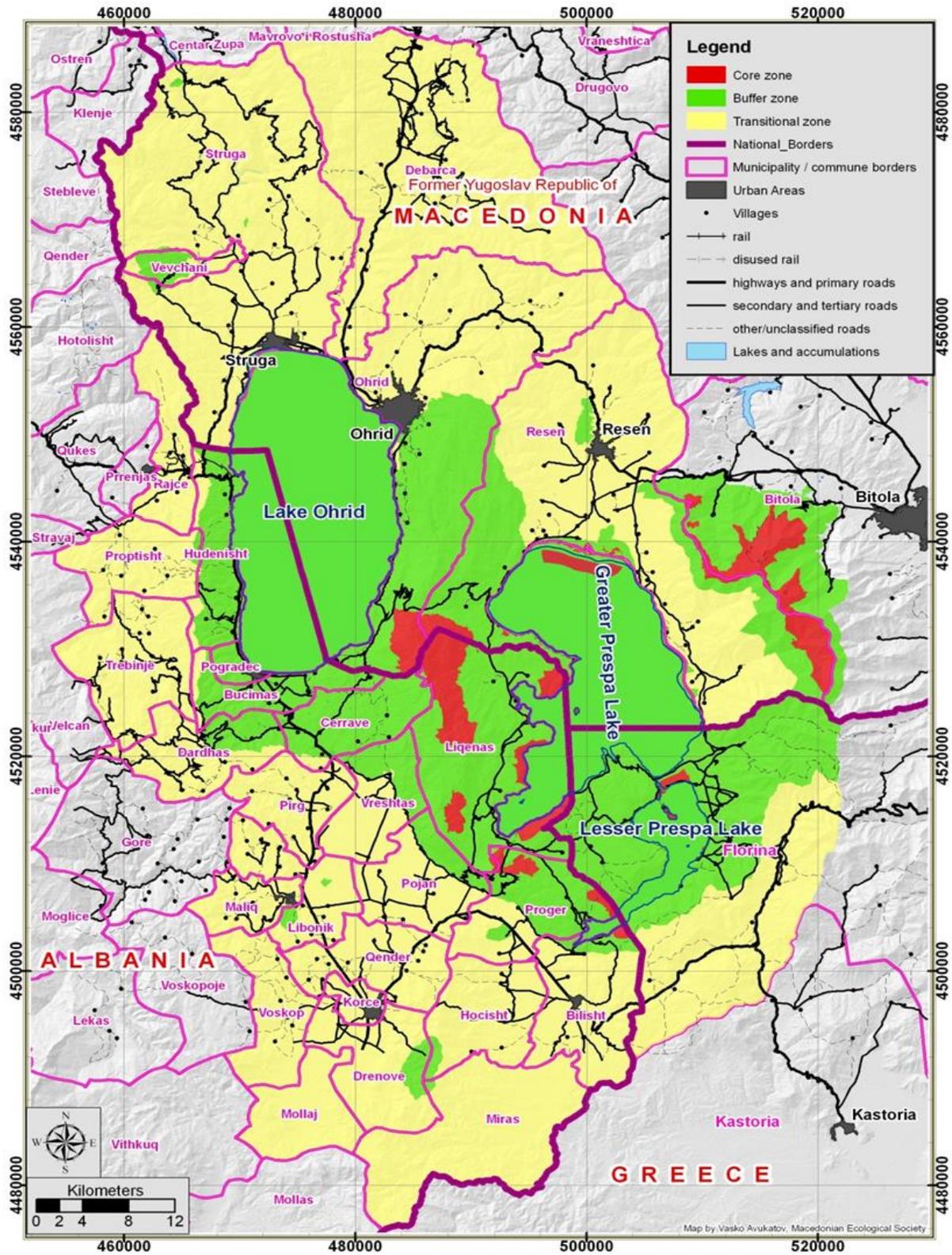


Figure 1. TBR Ohrid - Prespa watershed map



1.2 Study Area

The Ohrid-Prespa watershed is a cross-border region located between the Republic of North Macedonia and the Republic of Albania, with an area of 4352 square kilometers with a total population of about 445,000 inhabitants. The region under this UNESCO status is divided into 11 administrative units, of which 5 are in the Albanian part, (respectively the municipalities of Korce, Pogradec, Maliqi Pusteci, and Devolli) while 6 are local administrative units in the Macedonian part, specifically the municipalities of Bitola, Ohrid, Struga, Debrca, Resnjes, Vevcani).

The inclusion of two municipalities of the Albanian part, (Librazhd and Perrenjas), which are located in the North-Western part of Lake Ohrid and RNB-Pellgu Ujembledhes Ohrid-Prespa as part of the study area is argued by the project implementers as an area that has an impact on the targeted region. UNESCO's M&B program, in nominating a region as a Biosphere Reserve, includes the entire territory of the ecosystem that guarantees its sustainability, as well as the zoning of this territory into three component elements (Core, buffer & transit), so this inclusion as an area targeting of these municipalities is not effective and has no impact on the target of the project (fishing and tourism and hunting).

The object of the project's target is the lakes of Ohrid and Prespa, (fishing and tourism facilities around them) as well as the national parks of Pelister, Galicica, and Prespa, (areas designated as hunting areas) located in this cross-border region. Specifically:



Figure 2. Ohrid and Prespa Lake

Ohrid Lake

The Ohrid and Prespa Lakes are the two largest in a north-south chain of tectonic basins (grabens) including the Korca basin, and Lake Ioannina in NW Greece, known as the Dessaret group. The transition from compressional to extensional tectonics in the central Balkan Mts occurred around 6 million years ago, with the oldest lake sediments being Pliocene, possibly 3-5 million years old. Worldwide, rift valley lakes with similarly ancient origins include Lake Baikal, Lake Titicaca, Lake Tanganyika, and the Dead Sea.

There are three cities on the lake's shores: Ohrid and Struga on the Macedonian side; and Pogradec in Albania. There are also several fishing villages, although tourism is now a more significant part of their income. The catchment area of the lake has a population of around 170,000 people, with 131,000 people living directly at the lake shore (43,000 in Albania and 88,000 in North Macedonia). The population in the catchment has increased by 100,000 people in the last half-century, putting the lake's fragile ecosystem under pressure.

Historically, Lake Ohrid was close to the main highway of the Roman Empire, the Via Egnatia, from Durrës on the coast of Albania to Thessalonika and Constantinople (Istanbul), but now is a communications backwater. There is a minor road around the lake, with border crossings between Albania and North Macedonia. Religious monuments such as the Black Madonna south west of Struga and St Naum monastery are counterposed with ravages of war, such as the fortifications of the Macedonian Front across Galicica Mountain.



Prespa Lake

In the Prespa Valley, there are two lakes: The Small and the Big Prespa Lake. The Big Prespa Lake's waters are on the borders of the Macedonia, Albanian and Greek territories. The Small Prespa Lake is on Greek territory.

The Big Prespa Lake is enlisted among the cleanest lakes in the world and it is in the south-western part of the country, at a distance of 10 km from the Ohrid Lake. Anyway, Prespa compared to Ohrid, seems as if it troubles the contemporary way of life. Despite Prespa Lake, the tourists also come to seek some true peace, far from the parties, traffic jams, hustle and bustle, and willing to enjoy nature. Prespa is characterized by the Mediterranean climate, warm summers with cool nights, and mild winters. The air is considered to be a real climate therapy that cures asthma and heart diseases. From an ecological point of view, the region of Prespa is one of the cleanest parts of Macedonia. Lake Prespa has not commanded a large tourism population in the past. Lake Prespa has subsequently remained somewhat isolated and pastoral, bringing its special attraction in current times. The area remains pristine, without the hustle and bustle of a tourist town and a distinct lack of concrete and pollution which usually comes with developing tourism. A descent from Galicica on the western face brings the cyclist or hiker down to the most scenic part of Lake Ohrid, which is separated from Lake Prespa by its massif. Once on the Lake Ohrid side, the springs where the waters of Lake Prespa emerge from under the mountain and drain into Lake Ohrid can be enjoyed.

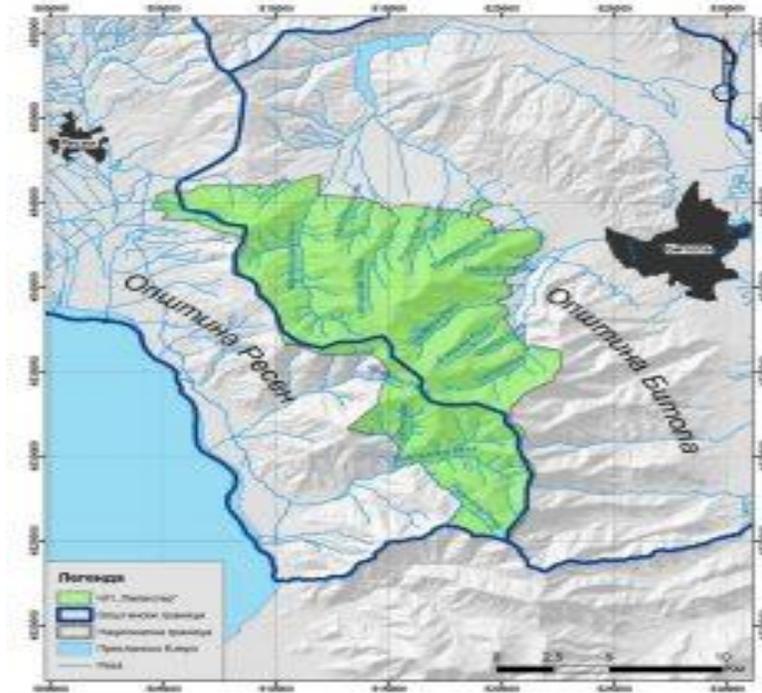
National Park Pelister

History is a part of who we were, who we are, and who we will be. Pelister National Park was proclaimed on November 30, 1948, by a law endorsed by the Presidium of the People's Republic of Macedonia. According to the Law on Nature Protection the public institution Pelister National Park is responsible for the protection and management of the Park.

Mountain Baba, more commonly known as Pelister is the southernmost mountain with alpine characteristics. Set between the valleys of Pelagonija and Prespa, it is over 465 million years old and the highest peak in the park is 2,601 meters above sea level.

The Molika pine – *Pinus peuce* is the best-known feature of National Park Pelister. This species was discovered by the Austrian botanist August Grisebach in 1839. Although the Molika is also found in other mountains of the Balkans, one of the oldest and most compact forest communities can be found on Pelister. By walking on Pelister it is possible to find trees over 230 years old.

Pelister National Park is located in the south-western part of the Republic of Macedonia, encompassing an area of 17.150 ha on the northern side of the Baba massif at altitudes between 900 and 2601m. The regional road Bitola-Resen and the Bigla Mountain are to the north of the Park and the border with Greece is to the south. To the east of the Park are the Pelagonide valley and the city of Bitola and to the west are the Prespa valley and the city of Resen.



Слика 4. Административна припадност на Националниот парк „Пелистер“

Figure 3. National Park Pelister

Galicica National Park

Galicica National Park, recognized for its rich and rare nature and unique beauty, was declared a national park in 1958 to preserve the flora and fauna and the natural appearance of Mount Galichitsa. About 2/3 of the Park is included in the boundaries of the World Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Ohrid region, inscribed on the UNESCO World Cultural and Natural Heritage List.

Galicica NP is located in the southwestern part of Macedonia. The park is a hotspot of biological diversity in the region, but also in a wider global context. The park stands out from other areas of similar size due to the exceptional wealth of habitats and species in a relatively small territory. On an area of approximately 24000 hectares, more than 37 habitat types, 40 plant communities, about 1600 taxa of vascular plants, over 143 species of lichenoid fungi, more than 480 species of fungi, and over 3279 taxa of fauna are found.

The cultural-historical region contains several layers of values. They consist primarily of the geographical and environmental properties of Lake Ohrid and the mountain ranges that represent the border of the protected region. Using the lake as a basic source of life, many generations have left behind syntheses of the natural, the rural, and the urban. Among the large number of cultural-historical monuments on the territory of the Park, the most significant are: the monastery "St. Naum", the church "St. Bogorodica Zahumska", the archaeological sites on the island of Golem Grad, and many others.

As a complex whole, the park, together with Lake Ohrid and Lake Prespa, represents a relatively limited area with a very rich biological diversity, a high degree of heterogeneity, and endemism, and in that sense, it is considered a very valuable locality in Europe.



Figure 4. National Park Galicica

National Park Prespa

The Prespa National Park (Albanian: Parku Kombëtar i Prespës) is a national park situated in southeastern Albania on the border triangle shared with Greece and North Macedonia. At approximately 277.5 km² (107.1 sq mi), the park encompasses the country's sections of the Great and Small Prespa Lake. It is considerably characterized by high mountains, narrow islands, vast freshwater wetlands, salt marshes, meadows, reed beds, and dense forests.

Established to protect the natural and cultural heritage of the region, the park is included in the European Green Belt and the World Network of Biosphere Reserves under the UNESCO Man and Biosphere Programme.

Both lakes are essentially situated between 850 and 900 meters elevation above the Adriatic. Mali i Thatë separates the Great Prespa from Lake Ohrid, which is one of the most ancient lakes in the world. The mountain is primarily recognized for the cultivation of mountain tea that flourishes on the limestone rocks of the mountain; it is one of the most popular tea types of the Albanian people. Otherwise, the park protects the island of Maligrad, which is dotted with many caves suitable for wildlife and a circular cliff.

Due to the temperature and climate differences between different areas and elevations of the park, it is characterized by housing a wide range of plants and animals. The park falls within the Pindus Forests covering 13,500 ha (135 km²) of the park's area, with dense coniferous and deciduous forests. Prespa National Park is a cultural landscape that displays evidence of cultural

practices dating back thousands of years, with the oldest traces of human habitation dating back to the neolithic. During classical antiquity, the trade route of Via Egnatia passed nearby the region as it was inhabited by several Illyrian and Ancient Greek tribes as well as Romans and later by Byzantines. Nonetheless, the park is dotted with many natural and cultural features containing prehistoric dwellings and Byzantine churches such as the caves of Zaver and Treni, the St. Mary's Church, and so on.



Figure 5. National Park Prespa

Action executive summary

The implemented project focused on Priority 3 of the Cross-Border Cooperation Program - *raising awareness of a greener economy, sustainable use of natural resources, and environmental protection, as well as with the specific objective of stimulating a balanced socio-economic development of the population in the targeted region*. So, the project aimed to achieve its general objective, (the balanced and sustainable socio-economic development of the RNB, the Ohrid-Prespa basin, through the introduction of the spatial information and planning system (SPIS) for the planning and management of natural resources and heritage of the target region.

At the level of achievements, the project aimed to develop this system for the most important services of the ecosystem of the RNB Oher-Prespa basin, as well as their contribution to the improvement of forests, tourism, fishing, and hunting. To achieve this goal, the implementers of the project:

- identified the development and introduction of an integrated environmental monitoring system, using the spatial planning and information system (SPIS), as an instrument to be used. from target groups (CSOs, local self-government, and businesses).
- Prepare a feasibility study with the main focus on assessing the needs of the project actors, in particular, those of the two federations (HFM & FFOIWA), where the functionality of the system was also based (1 single system with 2 integrated monitoring components, internal waters, and forest wildlife) was developed and delivered for both



countries, including core elements for environment and tourism, both included in 2 components and as separate features.

- Identification and development of scenarios for ecosystem services as well as the drafting of a Management Plan and Action Plan that would determine the opportunities and potential for the sustainable use of natural resources, and the creation of opportunities for social-economic development for the targeted groups, through activities, carried out as:
 - o Surveying economic activities in the natural environment;
 - o Preparation of the comparative analysis for the use of natural resources
 - o Development of a sustainable Management Plan and Action Plan for the target area.
- The project was accompanied by a package of awareness activities for the preservation of the ecosystem and the development of services for hunters and fishermen to strengthen the capacities of the target groups and other beneficiaries, their education to use the natural resources sustainably in the target area. CBC.

Also, another project activity carried out by the project, is the preparation and establishment of an integrated environmental monitoring system, for the existing services of the hunting and fishing ecosystem, as well as the inclusion of elements of tourism and the environment.

To strengthen the cooperation and connection between HFM and FFOIWA, as organizations that are parties to the preservation of the ecosystem in both countries, and through them to encourage the expansion of network and coverage of the target area, with other organizations, the implementers of the project, instead of dividing it into 2 parallel projects, agreed to provide a single Spatial Planning Information System (SPIS) for both countries.

The activity started with a joint procurement process related to the development of SPIS and the provision of training on the use of SPIS, as the supplier of SPIS (A2.2) was also responsible for the provision of (1) 5-day training (A2.3) for each federation (HFM and FFOIWA) for the use of the system; and (2) two 1-day pieces of training (A2.4) for each country, for interested parties who are expected to have an interest in knowing the functionality of the system. The activity for the development of SPIS started 2 months later than planned due to: preparation and later submission of the feasibility study (including fine-tuning of the planned outputs from SPIS); limited data available (outdated documents) from two key applications (hunting and fishing) most of which were limited to paper sources, as well as limited spatial data available from national, local institutions and other organizations, regardless of SPIS enabled interaction.

The process had difficulties, especially in collecting reliable data and accurate maps from both the HFM and FFOIWA federations during the SPIS development process, for which the contracted company in close cooperation with the project partners adopted a mapping solution and cloud-based analytics offering server functionality, data storage solutions and analytics capabilities to primarily hunters and anglers. Furthermore, in addition to the two main modules for hunting and fishing, the platform provides an overview of tourism and environmental data (which are mostly incorporated in the first two main modules).



This platform, SPIS according to the project and its implementers present an innovative approach/tool on the integrated practice of environmental monitoring for the members of both federations, which can be used in all institutions, in addition to the use by HFM and FFOIWA.

SPIS website: <http://en-spis.opendata.arcgis.com/> (desktop + mobile version) is prepared in 3 languages (Macedonian, Albanian, and English) and is planned to cover at least 10% of the area's main target.

The project emphasizes that it has realized:

- ***Current coverage of SPIS:*** Coverage of 10% of the basic target area and as for hunting, a 100% coverage of the basic target area in North Macedonia has been achieved (all 18 hunting areas in Ohrid-Prespa are mapped to meet the needs of members and concessionaires, covering the hunting areas: Brajčino, Ezerani, Tsarev Dvor, Plakë, Istok, Zavoj, Kosel, Meseishte, Zavoj, Brezani, Belçishte, Debarcë, Karaorman, Rzanovë, Drslajca, Veleshta, Belicë, and Drimkol);
- ***Financial sustainability and the possibility of expansion of SPIS.*** The Macedonian Hunting Federation (HFM) will be the main owner of SPIS, and confirmed in 2019 with an official letter addressed to the project's leading organization, ALCDF, that, based on the subsequent amendments to the Law on Hunting, it will be in able to ensure financial stability and the possibility of expansion of SPIS in the entire territory of North Macedonia (former member of the management board of HFM is now Head of the Hunting Sector in the Ministry of Agriculture).
- ***Creation of trained personnel for the use*** (including manipulation and data entry) of the system. Through two training programs for each federation (HFM and FFOIWA) as the institutions responsible for the use of this SPIS system, training that provided basic knowledge for collecting, manipulating, and entering data into the system, as well as through organized training with actors from various (municipal members, CSOs and SMEs working in the field of environmental and nature conservation, alternative tourism, rural development, and diversification, etc.) who were expected to be interested in knowing the functionality of the system. 30 stakeholder representatives for each country attended the training and were provided with the training manual - SPIS user manuals.
- ***Drafted two studies***, (the potential and importance of eco-system preservation for fishing and diversification of the eco-system services; The potential and importance of eco-system preservation for hunting and diversification of the eco-system services) on the potential and importance of eco-system preservation for fishing and hunting, using data from the SPIS, to increase the capacity of two federations (HFM and FFOIWA) in utilization of Spatial Planning and Information system (SPIS), and strengthen the analytical and research capacities of HFM and FFOIWA to better advocate and strengthen their position in the process of policy creation.
- ***Prepare a Survey on economic activities in the target area.*** This Survey regarding economic activities in the natural environment & Comparative analysis on utilization of natural resources by preserving the environment, to identify the existing eco-system services and economic activities, including those related to hunting and fishing, which



were implemented in the target region, but also to assess the awareness of the stakeholders on the other potential services and development trends in this area, a primary research survey was conducted. Also, identify the legal framework and development opportunities within which the ecosystem services can be implemented and sustained. As a result of that, a questionnaire was prepared (in English, Macedonian and Albanian languages) for the project target groups and beneficiaries (CSOs, SMEs, and municipal representatives).

The comparative study on the utilization of natural resources, while preserving the environment and enhancing the social and economic livelihood of local people, was prepared, based on outputs from a prepared questionnaire, as well as using secondary data such as other relevant studies, strategic documents, and national or international research and policy papers.

- ***Ensuring sustainable management of the ecosystem in the target area***, through the drafting of two strategic documents, the Ohrid-Prespa Watershed Transboundary Biosphere Reserve Management Plan and the Action Plan for its implementation 2021-2025. The raw data from the survey, the data received from SPIS in real-time, and the comparative results of the studies carried out in the framework of this project, as well as the opinions of the interested parties for each country who actively contributed to the identification and collection of realistic inputs on the ecosystem of Ohrid-Prespa forests and lakes, were used as a basis during the development of sustainable management and action plans for the management of the existing economic activities of the ecosystem in the target area. This purpose was also served by the organization of two 1-day promotional events (one per state) with local main actors.

The purpose of the preparation of this Service, which was based on the request of the operational structures of this Cross-Border Collaboration Programme, (knowing how the implementation of the IPA CBC Program between North Macedonia and Albania contributes to improving the lives of inhabitants in the program area), also defined its constituent elements which are as follows:

- Analysis of the set of activities carried out by the project "Protection of the ecosystem of the cross-border region Ohrid - Prespa", financing of the IPA CBC Program 2014-2020,
- "products" realized within the framework of the project and their sustainability two years after the end of its implementation,
- The degree of involvement of the local community during and after the project in the project activities as well as its impact on the socio-economic cohesion of the region.

Specifically, this Survey wants to see how much the implemented activities of the project have increased the cooperation between fishermen and hunters in both countries, their institutions (federations), how much the SPIS platform is used and information is updated for the citizens of the cross-border area and not only, how much the project is directly related to



sustainable use of natural resources, and has stimulated balanced, comprehensive and sustainable socio-economic development of the local community.

And to achieve this goal, Survey is conceived as a two-plan study:

- On the one hand, a diagnostic analysis of the environmental condition of the ecosystem, as well as the degree of information of the main "actors" in the region on these issues and the measures proposed by the implemented project, for the sustainable use of the natural resources of the region, the development of sustainable for the economy of the local community.
- On the other hand, determining the impact of the implemented project on the needs of the local community, various interest groups in the region, the local and regional administration, civil society as well as the local community, as well as its sustainability two years after the completion of the implementation his.

Project Impact Assessment Report.

The service undertaken, which is finalized with the preparation of this document, the Evaluation Report, makes it possible to highlight not only the level of information that the target groups have on the legal framework on which UNESCO operates, the status of the region as World Natural Cultural Heritage, the measures taken by the bodies responsible for the conservation and management of this ecosystem, but also the recognition and evidence of the results of the financing project within the framework of the IPA CBC cross-border cooperation program between Albania and North Macedonia, difficulties, various problems of a technical nature, administrative and financial, the degree of involvement of various local subjects in the activities carried out by the project "Protection of the ecosystem of the Ohrid - Prespa cross-border region", as well as their use even after its completion (the case of the SPIS platform).

Under the supervision of the subject mentor, the methodology was drawn up, a schedule was drawn up for field work, according to a well-defined methodology, a questionnaire was compiled for all "actors" in the region as well as relevant ministries, as well as an interview schedule for meetings with representatives. of the local community and stakeholders in the region, necessary elements to have the most complete data for the most accurate analysis of the impact of the project on the development of the area and its socio-economic cohesion.

Preparation.

The preparation phase for this process includes several stages that include:

- i. consultation of all materials available for the Project;
- ii. formulation of interviews and standard questionnaires for subjects engaged in the Project;
- iii. determining the representative sample for questionnaires (institutions, bodies, enterprises, informal groups, NGOs, etc.);
- iv. identifying how the questionnaires would be administered and their training.



Objectives.

The objective of the study conducted with a representative championship is:

- ⇒ to assess the level and degree of recognition by the various local subjects, the main actors in the region, of the legal framework on which the status of Lake Ohrid is based, as well as what the UNESCO organization represents, its way of functioning, as well as its relations with the States Parties;
- ⇒ to evaluate the level of perception and judgment by them of the activities carried out in the framework of various Projects during the last years implemented in the region;
- ⇒ to assess on this basis the main needs of the problems that will be addressed to the topics of the planned training program, to achieve the maximum effect in increasing the capacities of the targeted group;
- ⇒ make occasional recommendations on the state of conservation and management of the Ohrid Lake region as UNESCO "Property".

This Report, through a detailed analysis of all elements of the implemented project, aims to help:

- 1) in the evaluation of the achievements so far in this project but also in other projects implemented by various CSOs for building the capacities of civil society, not only, the problems in their effective implementation, as well as to be informed about the level of basic knowledge about UNESCO and the problems faced by the conservation and management of the ecosystem of Lake Ohrid as an International Biosphere Reserve, on the part of the targeted group, part of the activities of the project "Protection of the ecosystem of the cross-border region Ohrid - Prespa", EU funding in the framework of the IPA cross-border cooperation program;
- 2) on this basis and following the goals of the Project, the survey identifies the problems that the target groups have, their shortcomings related to ecosystem management, and the development of different sectors of the local economy, and aims to help change this approach regarding the management of the natural resources of the ecosystem through the creation of an integrated environmental monitoring system, as an opportunity for sustainable development of the region. Through the implementation of a training program, not only for "interest groups" directly related to the activities targeted by the project (fishing and hunting) but also for representatives of local government, civil society, social groups, and NGOs. In addition, it is intended to guarantee a quantitative and qualitative increase in the engagement of more active and effective participation as well as, in a wider context, cooperation between institutions, interest groups, the local community, and civil society organizations in Macedonia of the North and Albania for the protection of the unique natural values of Lake Ohrid.



STUDY METHODOLOGY

The research was carried out to extract information on how the Transboundary Biosphere Reserve - Ohrid - Prespa watershed is conceived, managed, and protected by the responsible authorities, and other actors in the region, as well as the impact in these processes of the project "How TBR "actors" maintain and conserve their site whilst justifying the social, economic and natural values" financing in the framework of the IPA CBC Program, between Albania and North Macedonia. The study combines the quantitative method (to understand the motivation of the "actors" in the region) and the qualitative method (to understand the perception of the interested parties on the project's target) in field research. This chapter explains the rationale as well as the advantage of adopting quantitative and qualitative research methods.

In addition to the introduction, this chapter also explains the survey carried out with different actors in the region and the questionnaire prepared for all regional stakeholders included in the project or beneficiaries of it, i.e. the definition; the type of questionnaire survey conducted; how, when and where the survey was conducted. Also, the later part of this chapter examined some of the qualitative methods (eg observation, focus group, interviews, triangulation, etc.) open to the researcher. The last part of this chapter examined some of the limitations of the research.

The study aimed to collect and process quantitative and qualitative information about the level of involvement of the beneficiary parties in the implementation of the Project, as well as their perception and judgment about the Project 2 years after its completion related to the effect it had on increasing cohesion socio-economic of the local community. The methodology included:

- i. the standard structured questionnaire (see Annex 1 - Questionnaire), based on a representative sample of more than 210 individuals, from local government bodies, local and regional offices responsible for the protection and management of this ecosystem, NGOs, the local community, specialists from institutions and sectors whose activity has an impact on the management of the lake and its watershed, representatives of private business, media, etc.;
- ii. direct interviews with some prominent representatives and key leaders of the local government, NGOs, media, business, and specialists (some of them have been participants in the implementation of the project activities).

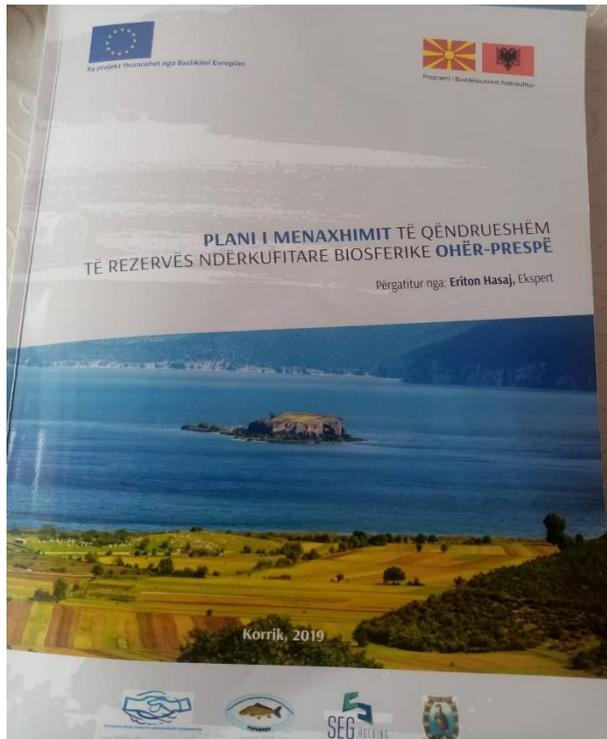


Figure 5. Meetings with the implementation team of the project



Figure 6. Products of the Project



Figure 7. Meeting with Mayer of Ohrid Municipality

The information was collected first from the interviews and then from the questionnaire. Discussion notes were prepared at the end of each interview session. The process of defining the sample was a critical step of the study. The criteria for determining the championship (interviewees and respondents) were:

- (i) their responsibility in local government structures;
- (ii) the level of their involvement in the different components of the Project;
- (iii) their professional diversity;
- (iv) residential area, etc.



Based on a preliminary analysis and in consultation with the mentor of this study, the representative subjects of the Project's activities were chosen, to whom the prepared questionnaire was distributed: representatives of the local government in the municipalities of Ohrid, Struga and Deberca for the Macedonian side and Pogradec and Pustes for the Albanian side, as well as all actors local, part of the project target in the region, NGO activists in the area, representatives of the economic sectors (administration of the Ohrid - Prespa Lakes, fishing, protected areas, forests, tourism, etc.), inspectors for the environmental problems of the lake, as well as members of Informal Groups.

The data analysis was carried out based on the detailed control of the results of the questionnaires, elaborating on the collected information and highlighting the result. During the comparison, independent variables were taken into account, such as the type of activity, level of education, social status, engagement in CSOs, etc. To complete the study, consultations were made with the technical staff of the project and with the existing documentation for the region and the various reports for it.

Reporting was carried out in two stages, following the Terms of Reference. The Draft Report was submitted for preliminary review to the mentor of the study topic at Sv Kliment Ohrid University, Bitola. Their comments and constructive suggestions were reflected in the Final Report.

The theoretical approach

Many authors have defined the theory for the research of protected areas or Biosphere Reserves, as a conceptual framework that helps to understand the research findings and shows the conditions in which the research was carried out. There are different types of theoretical approaches (eg deductive approach, positivist approach, interpretive approach, etc.), but only some are ever appropriate (Veal, 2010). For the target area, we adopted the interpretive approach because it allows the sample group to give their own explanation of the behavior or situation of the region (Bryman and Bell, 2007) and thus, allows us to see a clear picture of our topic through the eyes of subjects (Veal, 2006). This (interpretive) approach I think allows the research to be carried out as accurately as possible.

Research strategy

It is useful to distinguish between quantitative and qualitative research methods. According to a study, Ritchie et al (2005) the argument for the difference between both research methods is mainly related to the amount of data collected or analyzed. Bryman and Bell (2007) described the quantitative research method as a research strategy that emphasizes quantification in data collection and analysis, while the qualitative research method, on the other hand, was described (Bryman and Bell, 2007) as a research strategy that emphasizes the word. (rather than quantification) in data collection and analysis.



However, both qualitative and quantitative methods can be adopted to form two distinct sets of research strategies (Bryman and Bell, 2007). To summarize, the qualitative research method is more flexible, develops new theoretical knowledge, and explores meaning by analyzing text and words, while the quantitative research strategy is strictly structured, and requires statistical data collection and hypothesis testing, so for to achieve successful research, I have adopted both methods.

Quantitative Research Approach

The quantitative research method is based on the numerical measurement of data (Thomas, 2003) and the specific aspect of phenomena; it requires measurement and data analysis that is easily repeatable by other researchers, so to be successful, this method requires careful sampling strategies and experimental design.

Questionnaire

This purpose is served by the questionnaire, which is a question about the written/printed program, a proforma for recording the answers to the question, which, like any (written) research instrument, presents respondents with a series of questions to which they must respond either by choosing from existing answers or by writing their answers. There are several types of questionnaires (eg street surveys, household surveys, telephone surveys, field surveys, mail surveys, and electronic surveys) in the field of leisure and tourism. To understand people's motivation towards the object of the study, we thought about the e-survey technique (where the survey is carried out online, i.e. via the Internet) that includes not many questions (Veal, 2010) as well as through direct meetings with representatives of the project's target groups. , taking care that the sample is suitable and probable.

The questionnaire was designed in collaboration with Mentor, using the website of the UNESCO M&B Program and the specific object of the project, consisting of three different sections: which aim to understand the connection of the samples to the project and the accuracy of their answers. The filling process lasted for 2 weeks after which the researcher collected, analyzed, and interpreted the data collected from the sample.

Qualitative research approach

According to Denzin and Lincoln (1987) "qualitative research involves the collection and study use of various empirical materials - personal experience, case study, life story, visual text, observation, interview, introspective, interaction and story - which describe the routine and problematic moment. and meaning in individual lives". This type of research method is based on the assumption that people involved in a given situation are in a better position to explain their feelings and experiences in their own words, and they should be allowed to express their opinion without being limited by the framework established by the researcher or any other mediator (Veal, 2006). The qualitative research method consists of several (specific) methods, and they



include focus groups, in-depth interviews, participant observation, case study approach, triangulation, text analysis, and sampling. The following methods explain their importance for this research.

Focus and group interviews

A focus group is seen as an option for this qualitative research and can be described as a form of qualitative research method where a small group of people interacts with each other to explore a particular topic in a relatively unstructured way (Finn et. al, 2000). The main advantage of this research method is that it gives a clear understanding of a certain social situation to both the researcher and the participants during the research process. Our research aims to give equal opportunities to the contacted respondents to express their opinion on the topic without being influenced by each other.

Triangulation

Triangulation is used in both quantitative and qualitative research methods (Veal, 2006). Triangulation can be defined as the study of social phenomena using more than one method or data source (Bryman and Bell, 2007:412; Veal, 2006). Triangulation can be used in different ways: adopting more than one sampling strategy; analyzing data in two or more ways; so it was somehow used in this research, thus providing a final research paper.

Textual analysis of secondary data

Documentary analysis by the managers of various activities in the PA of the targeted region gave a more detailed background on the maintenance, sustainable development and conservation of natural areas. These documents gave a clearer picture of how these natural areas are managed. The secondary data provided the researcher with a method of triangulation by which to analyze, compare and contrast the primary data collected.

Sampling

In most survey and observational research, sampling as a research method that involves selecting and observing a part of the population to understand something about the whole population, so the selection respected the basic rules of this process, which helped the study gain access and information from representatives of the region targeted by the project. The various stakeholders (ie representatives from the targeted sectors) were selected through purposive sampling. However, the convenience sampling method was also used and as a result, all targeted participants were contacted.



interviews

According to Seidman, the context of people's behavior is understood by researchers with the help of interviews (Seidman, 2006). An in-depth interview was used to gain a clear understanding of how activity managers in the Biosphere Reserve maintain and preserve their sites while justifying their existence, and social, cultural, and natural value. This form of qualitative research method tends to be much longer than the questionnaire-based interview and is usually characterized by its length, depth, and structure (Veal, 2006). Contacting all interviewees by allowing them to set the location, date, and time that the meeting will take place in the hope that respondents will feel comfortable in an environment that they seem familiar with. The duration of interview was supposed to last no more than thirty minutes, time perceived as sufficient to get the right amount of data from the respondents without subjecting them to interview fatigue, thus avoiding the collection of invalid data. However, a part of the interview lasted longer (one hour) than the required time.

Codex

After transcribing the data collected from the interview, the need for coding is imperative. Coding is like the technique used in the grounded theory approach, and it means categorizing the data into segments using a short name that simultaneously accounts for each part of the data (Boeije, 2009). It allowed the researcher to select, separate and sort the data before making an analytical account of the data (Boeije, 2009). Usually, codes are attached to a piece of words, sentences, paragraphs, or phrases of different sizes related to a specific environment (Basil, 2003). However, due to time constraints, I chose to use the manual technique.

Research limitations

There are several limitations to this research, including:

- Lack of time: this research would have been a complete success if there were no delays in the meetings with the project implementers or the targeted groups in the Biosphere Reserve.
- Insufficient funds: there was little money available to the researcher during the realization of this project. If there were sufficient funds, we would have increased the number of visits to the Ohrid - Prespa Biosphere Reserve, to expand the researcher's knowledge of the destination.

Another problem worth mentioning was the delay in completing the questionnaire. These problems delayed the process of compiling the results gathered from the field trip.



PROJECT RESULTS AND THEIR ANALYSIS

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss and explain the results of the project's activities, its products, and the impact on the local economy even today, two years after its completion, through field research carried out in the Oher-Prespe basin RNB, in the August/September period 2022.

The chapter is divided into two parts: With a qualitative approach, the researcher focuses on understanding and explaining the internal thoughts of stakeholders. about the topic; while the other part seeks to explore the effect of the project, (two years after the end of its implementation), on the socio-economic condition of the local community, and its sustainability using the quantitative approach (questionnaire).

The information collected was compiled (through primary and secondary data) and divided into several themes. Each topic represents the stakeholders' perceptions of the topic (relative to the authors' views). The positions/role of all interested parties within the Oher-Prespë basin RNB area, which include:

- Officials of the Ministries of Agriculture (Albania and North Macedonia), responsible for the policies and strategic development of fishing and hunting within the Oher-Prespe basin RNB area.
- Representatives of the Municipalities of the targeted area (Ohrid, Struga, Resen, Pogradec, and Pustec) as the responsible authority for planning and development, and protection of the territory under the Ohrid - Prespa basin RNB status.
- Representatives of the OMP and SHGJM), responsible for the organization, coordination, and supervision of fishing and hunting activities in the area targeted by the project.
- Representatives of ARZM Korca (which has a developmental and protective role in this ecosystem);
- Environmental associations in the Ohrid - Prespa region support local regional initiatives for the protection of this unique ecosystem in the world.

Lessons learned from the implemented project

At the end of the implementation of the project, its final report also provides some of the Lessons learned from the implemented project. So, the report emphasized that:

- ⇒ ***The partnership between different organizations*** which are in different stages of organizational development is needed a significant time to increase the organizational capacity of partners with weak skills and capacities. The spirit of partnership and partners' commitment and engagement changes positively or negatively with the changes in the organization's management structures

impacting the project performance. Even though signed agreements are made in advance there is no authority from the Lead Applicant and/or partners to interfere in others' own decisions and standing.

- ⇒ ***Larger scale interventions are needed*** that involve cross-sector partners related to eco systems. CSOs, and indeed our involvement provided information on the vitality of preserving eco-systems whilst at the same time trying to maintain and modernize traditional economic activities (fishing, hunting). But the partners (who were also beneficiaries) do not have enough understanding of the ongoing valorization processes, and the need to align our practices with those of the EU. Without significant institutional support from the institutions from both countries, as well as the EU, there is already potential for social unrest – many families in the Ohrid-Prespa region rely on outdated but often harmful traditional economic practices. A point in case is the ban on hunting in Albania due to the draining of all-natural resources. SPIS is one tool that, although seems advanced at this stage, with institutional support, whereby institutions drive the main input of data and maintenance, these representatives of traditional economic operators can understand the process of protection and adjust themselves to be better prepared for times when no more hunting/fishing can be done in some areas. EU with this project is the pioneer in that sense, and it would be wise to continue to invest in the obvious challenging points, such as the capacity of representatives of traditional economic operators (although initially planned with no-cost extension, DEU canceled the devised capacity building for the members of the representative fishing and hunting associations). Moreover, DEU can lead the way in inter-institutional support, as is the case in the EU, whereby technical solutions, can help protect the economic, and environmental resources and the health of all those involved due to the use of digital means.
- ⇒ ***Change of management*** in one minor partner (HFM) also contributed to a misunderstanding of the new management of the concept that is implemented in the Project, due to a lack of institutional memory, a language barrier, and perhaps mistrust in partners. Yet, the basis has been set for hunters and fishermen to increase their cooperation through their representative associations, as study visits particularly contributed to a greater understanding of the regulations related to fishing/hunting in cross-border areas of Ohrid and Struga. On their own, these representatives would not be able to structure strategic cooperation and would rely on individual contacts.
- ⇒ ***Digitalization is the future of both countries***, despite initial obvious obstacles, such as elderly representatives of traditional economic operators. Yet, both governments have adopted digital strategies, which are still to be mainstreamed on a local level. There is a chasm between the rural and urban areas. Yet, it is still the most efficient way to go (despite the need for larger investment from the



inception). A point in case is the SPIS co-funded by the EU. Allowing a large swathe of stakeholders to input data, and use data, in key areas of ecosystems: tourism, environment, and economic activities, (rather than using a cheaper server-based program that is only available to one organization) will enable new entrants and younger generations of economic operators. Furthermore, as the institutions would also have control of the quality and input of data, this information can be cross-referenced and used by different entities. For example, as shown by SPIS, the inter-operability of data in Albania and North Macedonia can be used for tourists coming in both countries, who are also interested in visiting clean air locations (AirCare application is already foreseen to be used in SPIS, linked with present and future, found in EU).

- ⇒ *A multitude of options are available* and cannot be restricted to one option. What is more, the abundance of data to be inputted will benefit both hunters and fishermen, who will see increased interest in their products/services. To reach that point, any future projects will have to link their activities with functional, fully operational SPIS that is expanded on a national level in North Macedonia (with an option to include Albania), with shared management of institutions and primary beneficiaries of HFM and FFOIWA.

These lessons from the implemented project were part of the interview questions prepared regarding the issues to be discussed with the targeted persons, as part of the "different interest groups" in the Ohrid - Prespa region.

Community participation

- ⇒ The UNESCO M&B Program for Biosphere Reserves adopts a community-led approach based on community facilitation, engagement, and capacity building, emphasizing the importance of community participation in the management of the region as RB.
- ⇒ RB has been promoted by the UN as a "peaceful" region that promotes the reduction of biodiversity loss, and the growth of social, economic, and cultural living conditions for a sustainable environment, contributing to the pursuit of the Millennium Development Goals.
- ⇒ Local participation is essential for the successful management of activities in Biosphere Reserves, so a close connection with local communities must be established through regional liaison work, education, service, and interpretation activities.
- ⇒ Community participation is essential to the success of Biosphere Reserves, so managers and policymakers need to understand the attitudes of local people to implement programs that would facilitate increased participation in resource management, especially now that



due to due to the global crisis, we have a reduction in government investments for the region.

Economic Development

The targeted region, nominated as RNB, has determined the development of a series of activities within its territory, which have a direct impact on the rural economy as a result of the jobs they create in the local economy. Currently, in the RNB Ohrid - Prespa basin, (targeted sectors such as fishing, and hunting) 2020 employ about 650 workers, as well as the communities within these areas also apply for grants if they want to develop a project (e.g. reconstruction of heritage, facilities for the processing and packaging of aromatic medicinal plants, community centers, etc.), applications that, to be approved, are required to demonstrate good practice (i.e. there would be no negative impact on the environment) before grants from different donors.

Social inclusion

All interested parties emphasized the need that the implemented project but also other projects should promote social inclusion (as defined by the Environmental Act 1995) emphasizing that the RNB Oher-Prespe basin creates opportunities for projects that aim to promote social inclusion inside and outside its border. Examples of such projects can be projects that aim to address various problems such as the support of Informal Groups in economic difficulty, problems with ethnic minority groups, groups of unemployed youth and persons with disabilities, etc.

Funding

Fishing and hunting do not receive direct funding from the government, and also the National Parks or the administrations of the protected areas in the RNB Oher-Prespe basin are facing difficult times (reduction or lack of funding from the government), as funding is extremely difficult to find, a situation that will affect the sustainable management of the region.

This would significantly impact the region's businesses, residents, and visitors, however, it is also an opportunity for the various activities in an RB to explore other possible sources of funding and ways to minimize the impacts of future funding cuts.



Conclusions

The Transboundary Biosphere Reserve watershed of the Oher-Prespe lakes is an important environmental, attractive and touristic asset that has a multifaceted role within society. It was created by the governments of the two countries with the responsibility to preserve the environment; create opportunities for public recreation; and opportunities for sustainable development and socio-economic cohesion for the local community. Therefore, there is a need to protect and preserve natural and socio-economic values, this can be achieved through cooperation between conservation authorities and local communities to jointly manage a resource of high conservation value; this has been a major focus of conservation in both developed and developing countries (McNeely, 1995; Harris et al, 1996; Venter and Breen, 1998; Beltran, 2000; In Papageorgiou and Kassioumis, 2004).

Community participation is essential to the success of Biosphere Reserves, therefore managers and policymakers must understand the attitudes of local people to implement programs that would facilitate increased participation in resource management (Tomicevic, 2009).

Economic and social development is a key task that Biosphere reserves must fulfill and their success is measured in terms of their contribution to the local community. The study area showed that the local and regional authorities consider this task as a major responsibility that must provide necessary funding through various projects, as well as this EU funding project for the development of tourism and the sustainable use of natural resources. Therefore, there is a need for RNB to create more awareness of the funding programs that are in place, to encourage more participation of people within the community, regardless of their background or hardship.



INFORMATION ANALYSIS AND MAIN FINDINGS

The sample (a total of more than 210 people) was carefully chosen to represent as realistically as possible the structure of entities representing potential "actors" and the community in the three local units that administer the watershed of Lake Ohrid, (Struga, Ohrid, and Debrce) , and that there was a different distribution in terms of residence, age, education, employment and position at work. Given that this project will have as object the lakes of Ohrid, Prespes, and their catchment basin, it is understandable why more than 95% of the respondents are residents of the targeted area, mainly the cities of Struga, Ohrid, Pogradec, Pustec, Debrce (about 77%) and substantial part residents of the villages around the lake (19%), while too much smaller extent representatives of the relevant ministries, regional structures responsible for the protection of the ecosystem, who have information or work for the protection and management of Oher-Prespe lakes as Transboundary Biosphere Reserves (not more than 4%).

The age distribution of the respondents was quite different: from the youngest 18 years to the oldest 65 years, the average age being 38.5 years. According to age groups, the distribution was: between 21-30 years old (31.6%), 31-40 years old (30.6%), 41-50 years old (16.3%), and 51-60 years old (13.2%) and the remaining few were under 20 and over 60 years old. The level of education of the respondents was very satisfactory: mainly with higher education (51.2%) and secondary education (44.7%) and quite a few with uncompleted higher education, while eight-year education was negligible.

An important part of the championship (30%) was a member of various non-governmental organizations; most of them, about three-quarters of them, were members of environmental NGOs, and their seniority was high for the history of NGOs in North Macedonia. Thus, about 22% of those engaged in environmental NGOs had seniority of more than 10 years, 24.4% of 3-10 years, 44.2% of 1-3 years, and a small part (7.3%) had seniority of less than 1 year in environmental NGOs.

Type of Activity

In our championship, approximately half (49.6%) worked in the public sector and a significant part (27.1%) worked in the private sector, while in NGOs (7.5%). Currently unemployed and pensioners were 10.2%, while pupils and students were 5.6%. The level of education and the composition according to age also match well with the job position of the respondents: 41% of them held the position of specialists, 39% of managers or managers, and 20% were included in other categories (support workers, students, etc.).



The level of involvement in the protection of the Ohrid lake ecosystem and its recognition

A relatively significant part of the championship, approximately (38.6%) had information and was involved in activities for the conservation or management of Lake Ohrid and Prespa, training to increase the capacities of local actors, as well as another part (27.1%), had the opportunity to cooperate in special activities organized in the framework of the Project. However, a significant part about 35% more than a third of the championship was not involved in the activities that include the protection of Ohrid and Prespa Lakes as UNESCO Sites, and they did not have information on the legal framework that regulates the status of the region of these lakes. From the part of the championship directly involved in these project activities, approximately half (46.3%) were involved almost from the beginning of the projects undertaken (after 2000), for the protection of the Ohrid and Prespa Lakes, about 40% since for 5 years and a small part (about 14%) for less than 5 years. With this distribution of the championship concerning the involvement in the activities of the projects, as well as the internship of the involvement, it became possible to obtain judgments and adequate answers related to the objectives of the given study.

PERCEPTION of the activities performed within the framework of the project

It is interesting to point out the relatively high evaluations of all the respondents regarding the aims of the Project to inform and raise awareness of all the "actors" responsible for the conservation and management of the ecosystem of Lake Ohrid, as well as to bring a new approach related to the use of natural resources, and the sustainable development of the local economy through the creation of an integrated monitoring system of this ecosystem. Fully 70% of them evaluate these goals as very important and another 30% as important, while there is not even a single individual who calls the goals of the Project unimportant.

- ❖ Direct interviews with local government authorities, including Mayors or secretaries of Ohrid, Struga, Deberce, Pogradec, and Pustec municipalities, representatives of private business, media, and non-governmental associations, many of whom have contributed to the Project, speak clearly for a commitment and welcome from their side in not only this project but also other relevant projects. The achievements in the field of strengthening capacities, in the dissemination of information, and also the new innovative ways in the protection and management of the environment that materialized with the creation of an Integrated Environmental Monitoring System for the targeted region are evaluated. However, they are aware that the first time and a fund should be spent on public awareness, and then it should be continued and implemented in other more sensitive areas in nature and the community.

1 It should be noted that the analysis of the questionnaire data testified to a high degree of responsibility in their filling, while the deficiencies in the filling are negligible. Thus, the rate of completion of answers to the questions contained in the questionnaire was higher than 96.4%. Moreover, the cross-checks of the total responses (for more than 210 questionnaires) showed a matching of the balances to a degree higher than 95%, which makes their data accepted with a high degree of reliability, practically full.

- ❖ Prominent representatives of environmental NGOs, but not only, express that this project will also have a positive impact on increasing or strengthening the capacities of the local community, and NGOs in the region, increasing the socio-economic cohesion of the region, increasing the cross-border cooperation in areas of common interest, bearing in mind the contribution with the exchange of the most up-to-date information, working methods, etc. Even NGOs that are not focused on environmental activities have contributed to environmental issues. The project, in particular, has given an impetus to the strengthening of the activities of Informal Groups in rural areas, intending to empower them as partners in every initiative for the region.
- ❖ Representatives of the electronic and written media, as well as the social media networks, estimate that comprehensive and effective work has been done for the complete and detailed information of the public, of all local actors in the region of Lake Ohrid, and to Prespes. Their belief that the public follows their information aligns very well with the findings of our study. Based on the experience of cooperation between the Albanian colleagues of the media in the city of Pogradec, as well as the visits there, the Macedonian representatives of the media express themselves for a greater influence on the public, but they seek a better understanding and greater support for their informative and promotional role in the framework of various environmental projects, but not only.
- ❖ The impact of the Project on public awareness of the protection and management of the environment is positively evaluated in an absolute way, 100% (no individual expressed negatively). Moreover, the main part of the championship (68.4%) thinks that this influence is very important, while the remaining part thinks the influence is important (only one individual calls it a little important).
- ❖ Regarding fishing restrictions in Lake Ohrid, during the last three years (2019-2021), a large proportion of the championship (about 56%) has had a positive opinion. However, the rest (44%) have a negative opinion, i.e. calls these restrictions wrong. The impact that UNESCO has had in this direction is assessed as very important by the majority (57.3%) of those who have a positive opinion, as important by a third of them and only 9.4% assess UNESCO's impact as little -s in this matter. Also, a large part of the championship (67.5%) judges the level of illegal or irregular fishing in the lake, during the last years, as higher, 30.2% of them judge it as the same, while about 3% as shorter.
- ❖ The vast majority of the respondents are aware that in the area of the lake shore, in the framework of the bodies responsible for the implementation of the law, several inspectorates operate for fishing, forests, and protection of the territory



and the environment. In this context, the assessment of the current situation in terms of illegal fishing, deforestation, dumping of waste from construction works, or technological waste from various activities and other harmful activities, is generally positive. The majority (52.2%) assesses the situation as better overall, but a significant part 39.4% as worse, and 7.4% as the same.

- ❖ The opinion of the respondents is absolutely (100%) that the initiative of this project for a new approach related to the protection and sustainable management of resources in this region, after the completion of this project there should be other projects of this nature. There is a generally even distribution of answers regarding the directions in which future projects should be focused, but the development of sustainable tourism is ranked first, followed by the improvement of the legal/institutional framework, the protection of biodiversity, the ecosystem, and the development of forests, the development of responsible fishing, and somewhat later the development of organic agriculture.
- ❖ A significant number of individuals are interested in marking their options regarding the directions where future projects should be focused. Among these directions are mentioned the sustainable development of coastal urban and rural centers, urban planning of the cities themselves, clean and organized beaches along the entire lake shore, public awareness, wastewater management, advertising and development of traditions and activities craftsmen and popular summer holidays in connection with the development of tourism, training for the development of organic agriculture and the engagement of the residents in this activity, etc.

ASSESSMENT of the Impact of the Project on Strengthening the Capacities of Local Institutions/Bodies

- ❖ The judgment of practically all the respondents (more than 98% of the responses) is that, like any other project, this Project will have an impact on the local government structures, and local and regional offices, responsible for the conservation and management of this ecosystem, but also other local and regional "actors" to engage in the issue of environmental protection and sustainable development of the region of Ohrid and Prespa Lake. The degree of this commitment is rated better than sensitive (as the average of the responses). Thus, 48.1% call this commitment sensitive and 40.4% high, while a relatively small part (11.5%) calls the commitment slightly sensitive.
- ❖ Similarly, practically all respondents give positive answers (more than 97%) that the development of such Projects has helped to strengthen the cooperation of various structures of the local and central government, as well as the local community in decision-acceptance not only for the issue of environmental protection but also for the sustainable development of the region. The results of this cooperation are evaluated in different ways, but in most of them they are good (39.1%) and very good (24%); only 25.3% evaluate the results of cooperation at the sufficient level, while 11.6% as weak.
- ❖ In harmony with the above data are the assessments regarding the level of participation/involvement of all the targeted beneficiaries of the watershed in the realization of the initiatives and activities foreseen by the project in the Ohrid - Prespa region, as well as the new approach for protection and the sustainable development of the Ohrid and Prespa watersheds. Thus, 45.1% of the respondents evaluate the level of involvement/participation as very good and fully half (50.0%) evaluate it as well, while less than 5% evaluate this level as poor.
- ❖ A little different is the assessment of the extent to which the opinion of the beneficiaries of the watershed was taken into consideration in the implementation of the activities foreseen by the implemented project. At a time when more than two-thirds of the respondents (48%) have the opinion that the opinion of the beneficiaries of the watershed is taken into account a lot, but something more than a third (39%) think that it is taken a little consideration and 13% answered not at all.
- ❖ At the same level, the evaluation of the new approach offered by the project regarding the creation of an integrated monitoring system for the management of the natural resources of the Ohrid - Prespa ecosystem and the socioeconomic cohesion it brings fluctuates. Thus, this approach to the implemented project, which also serves the strategy of the two states for the conservation and management of the region as "property" of UNESCO, was answered by 53.7% of respondents as very important these measures and 32.4% as important, while less than 14% rate them as slightly important. The degree of



fulfillment/satisfaction of the watershed beneficiaries' requirements with the various activities and programs carried out within the framework of this project in the region is estimated between satisfactory (49.5%) and not completely satisfactory (39.7%) and only less than 11.8% of respondents consider this rate unsatisfactory.

- ❖ Practically at the same level, although with a slightly different distribution, the assessment for the number and quality of activities and programs (pilot projects, awareness programs, etc.) undertaken in the framework of the implementation of this project also fluctuates. Just over half (51%) call them good and a third (33%) are not good enough. Only 13% of the responses consider the number and quality of activities and programs carried out to date in this framework to be sufficient.

DISCUSSION OF THE MAIN FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

- ❖ Based on the fact that the Ohrid - Prespa lakes ecosystem is a unique ecosystem, one of the oldest in Europe, with one of the most diverse biodiversity in the world, limited by some of the earliest settlements in Europe and rich cultural heritage, now part of the list of UNESCO as Transboundary Biosphere Reserve, it is necessary to establish a comprehensive process for every decision-making for the region, the creation of a culture of cooperation not only between different levels of administration but also with all "groups of interest" in the region, as well as permanent cross-border cooperation. To fulfill the recommendations or requirements of the UNESCO Man & Biosphere Program for the Ohrid - Prespa Lakes region, a new approach is required regarding its management as an ecosystem, which should not only guarantee the sustainable use of natural resources and a documented management system, to guarantee the management and planning of the area, as "property" of the World Heritage.
- ❖ Survey also offers an analysis of the current situation, as well as a summary of the facts about the challenges that the region and the local community are facing with the status of the Transboundary Biosphere Reserve, its buffer zone, the legal framework based on which it operates this status, the purpose and scope of its implementation, also identifies the main actors involved in the decision-making of the area as well as other related projects, plans, and initiatives.
- ❖ Also, the survey after the analysis of the interviews made with representatives of "different interest groups", as well as the answers from the questionnaire that this study distributed in the Oher-Prespe region but not only. This analysis identified the current factors that threaten the Outstanding Universal Values of this ecosystem, listed below:
 - The increase in the pollution of the Ohrid-Prespa Lakes and their water resources, in particular, from phosphorus and nitrogen or even from contaminated mining waste constitutes a serious threat to their fish stock and that can bring problems in the sustainable development of the sector of fishing and that will harm the social-economic development of the community in the region;
 - Little planning and implementation of development which is based on the concepts of sustainable use of natural resources, or the use of ecosystem services as elements on which the M&B Program of UNESCO is based, as well as the principles on which the status of the region is based as The Biosphere Reserve is harming the watershed of the lakes which, if not prevented, will have a direct impact on the development of the local economy in the targeted region;



- The phenomenon of indiscriminate use of natural resources, especially fishing and wood for heating from the Oher-Prespe lake basins, besides affecting the landscape, is causing soil erosion and degradation, as well as the reduction of fish stocks in both lakes, phenomena that will bring irreparable consequences in this ecosystem and that will also have consequences in the social-economic condition of the community in the region;

- ❖ Based on the Vision agreed upon by the two states of North Macedonia and Albania, for this cross-border region as a Transboundary Biosphere Reserve, which emphasizes that the Oher-Prespe Lakes Region with its unique and inspiring landscape where the values of cultural heritage with natural assets and aspects of the traditional way of life. These values make this region a sustainable tourist destination, an archive of natural history, which Survey identifies as a series of principles that must be respected and implemented, listing them as follows:
 - Respecting the responsibilities and obligations of the responsible bodies, not only related to the World Heritage status;
 - Bringing innovative approaches for the integrated management of the Ohrid -Prespa ecosystem, which preserves the rational use of natural resources and the sustainable development of the local economy;
 - Strengthening cross-border cooperation of all "interest groups" in the region not only for the conservation and management of "property" but also for increasing the socio-economic cohesion of the region;
 - The long-term commitment of interested parties for the Ohrid - Prespa region, as well as the strengthening of law enforcement as a guarantee for every initiative taken for the protection and sustainable development of the Ohrid-Prespa Lakes and their watershed.

- ❖ Also, based on the assessment, vision, and guiding principles, Survey has identified and assessed the main risks that affect the authenticity and integrity of the Outstanding Universal Values of the ecosystem, which must be taken into consideration and integrated with the conservation plans of the party states. and the management of this UNESCO "property". So a list of them would look like below;
 - Organization of sustainable fishing in Lake Ohrid in ecological and economic terms;
 - Development of an effective monitoring system, which guarantees the permanent exchange of information for all interest groups in the region about the state of the lake and the threats it faces.
 - Enabling natural and cultural tourism through the presence of several infrastructures and basic information for visitors, as well as the use of a



common brand and image for the marketing and promotion of the region of Ohrid and Prespa Lake;

- Prevention of the loss of forest areas and the sustainability of forest management, the use of ecosystem services, as elements that guarantee the sustainability of the development of the area targeted by the project financed by the Program for Cross-Border Cooperation between Albania and North Macedonia, financed by the European Union.
- ❖ Another finding of the Service was the fact that the implemented project does not clarify what is the "future" for its two products, the Management Plan of the Transboundary Biosphere Reserve Ohrid - Prespa basin and the short-term and long-term Action Plan during 2021-2025. In the responses of the interviewees representing the Ministries of Agriculture or the Ministries of the Environment in these countries, they emphasized that they had no information on these documents and had not participated in their drafting, discussion, and approval. Likewise, in the answers to the questionnaires, the majority of them stated that they had no information about these documents, they had no information whether they were approved by the respective governments or not, or in the municipalities that are part of the targeted area.
- ❖ Likewise, the claim that an Integrated Environmental Monitoring System has been set up in the Transboundary Biosphere Reserve, the Ohrid - Prespa basin (SPIS platform), raises a series of questions related to the reliability of the data of this system, as they are accurate and professional since the responsible institutions are not included in this process. It also remains unclear how this new approach will help the local community in the development of their business, (specifically how the fish reserve will be determined through this system that will also determine the number of fishermen that will be allowed to shoot, etc.). Therefore I think that:
- The project should have defined the procedures for the approval of these documents by the institutions responsible for the "governance" of the region such as Biosphere Transboundary Reserves.
 - I think that a Management Plan for a Biosphere Reserve should contain all the constituent elements of the ecosystem that is under this status, so it should be revised to be completed with all the necessary elements for monitoring and reporting following the requirements of the M&B Program UNESCO on the implementation of management plans and a detailed action plan for the implementation of each targeted objective, essential elements for consolidating and securing the management system in the Ohrid Lake region as "property" of UNESCO.
 - Only ensuring the management of the region correctly, as a "property" of UNESCO, involving local actors in a sustainable process with the



participation of interest groups to contribute to the sustainable management of the area's resources, keeping an acceptable balance between the preservation of nature and the development of human activities can guarantee success in this initiative.

- ❖ Likewise, another finding of the Survey is the finding that measures should be taken to guarantee the diversity of ecosystem types and processes in the region of Lake Ohrid and Prespa and their basins from the negative impact of human activities. This will require:
 - Maintaining water quality in both lakes to protect lake habitat, especially fish with commercial value, to prevent degradation and deterioration of lake shores and wetland ecosystems, terrestrial habitats, and pastures;
 - Encouraging broad-based community leadership and commitment to the conservation of species of special level of protection.
 - Development of sustainable socio-economic activities to ensure environmental health, economic profitability, and social and economic equality in the region
 - Supporting the sustainable development of forest activity, as well as supporting sustainable fishing.

- ❖ Survey also emphasizes the necessity and promotion of scientific research and studies in the region, as key elements in the promotion of education, through the evaluation of nature and scientific research on the biological, geophysical, and cultural values of the Ohrid - Prespa region. This will permanently require that:
 - To encourage research-scientific activities and their publications to provide knowledge about the values of the Ohrid - Prespa lakes region, as well as provide more data about the values of the region's natural resources, their management, and the impact they have in sustainable development of the local economy in the region;
 - Ensuring that this information is benefited by all the "actors" in the region, especially by the bodies responsible for the conservation and management of the UNESCO Transboundary Biosphere Reserve area;
 - Innovative findings in improving public awareness, and concepts for the development of the local economy of the area as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, based on the principles of sustainable use of natural resources and ecosystem services, as a guarantee for a socio-economic cohesion of the region.

Although the project also had a period of 3 months of extension (January-March 2020) to work more on the promotion and institutionalization of SPIS, when several meetings were held with



the Ministries of Agriculture in Albania and North Macedonia, but not only where detailed draft agreements on the SPIS platform and the partners who manage it have also been presented, again there is no institutional support from these institutions (through an agreement between the parties).

So, even though there is support for this initiative, the interest shown for the institutionalization of SPIS and ensuring that the applications planned in SPIS (fishing, tourism, and hunting) are also used by the relevant ministries, it has not been possible to finalize an agreement.

Meetings to promote the SPIS platform and the possibility of cooperation in its use have also been organized with local institutions (municipalities or municipalities) in the targeted area as well as CSOs or informal groups, but there is no involvement of it in the services of these institutions.

Conclusions

- ⇒ ***Transboundary Biosphere Reserve Ohrid-Prespa Watershed***, is an important environmental, attractive, economic, and tourism asset that has a multi-faceted role within the society. It was created by both governments, Albanian and North Macedonian, and charged with the responsibility to conserve the environment; create opportunities for public recreation; and opportunities for socio-economic development. Therefore, there is a need for the local authorities to protect and maintain its natural and socio-economic value this can be achieved through collaboration between conservation authorities and local communities to jointly manage a resource of high conservation value; this has been the main focus of conservation in both developed and developing countries (Venter and Breen, 1998; Beltran, 2000; In Papageorgiou and Kassioumis, 2004). Community participation is crucial to the success of a Biosphere Reserve therefore responsible authorities and policymakers must understand the attitudes of the local people to implement programs that would facilitate increased participation in resources management (Tomicevic, 2009).
- ⇒ ***Economic and social development*** is a key duty Biosphere Reserve must fulfill and the success of a Biosphere Reserve (aside from its primary purpose) is measured in terms of its contribution to the local community. The study area showed that managers consider this duty as a key responsibility must provide as seen from some of the projects (e.g. being administered by the local authorities).
- ⇒ ***There is so much concern*** as to the difficult choices this region like the UNESCO site will be faced with over the coming years. The cuts of financial support by governments in Albania and North Macedonia are in their early stage and Transboundary Biosphere Reserve Ohrid-Prespa Watershed is currently facing funding challenges as a result of the government cuts. This would affect not just the UNESCO site alone but also the visitors, local businesses, and local people. However, the best alternative could seek (to reduce the impact of these cuts) is to try and attract more grants from external sources (e.g. HLF, SDF, European funds, etc.). Also, Transboundary Biosphere Reserve Ohrid-Prespa Watershed should continue to encourage good nature funds (and visitor payback) no matter how little these contributions are, they tend to make a huge difference at the end of the day.
- ⇒ ***Transboundary Biosphere Reserve Ohrid-Prespa Watershed***, (TBR) has the responsibility of creating specific programs aimed at encouraging people from all backgrounds (e.g. socially excluded groups) to make use of and participate in the management of the Ohrid-Prespa region. The survey found that most people (particularly the socially excluded group e.g. ethnic minority groups, people with varying difficulties, etc.) are not participating in this process. This might be a result of a lack of awareness about the UNESCO Man and Biosphere Programme. Therefore, there is a need for local



authorities to create more awareness about the programs it has in place to encourage more participation of the people within the community irrespective of their background or difficulty.

⇒ *From the survey* carried out on representatives from different stakeholders within the TBR Ohrid-Prespa watershed, it was gathered that the main motive why most people participate is to help preserve the environment as proved earlier by the work of some authors (Westphal, 1993, 1995; Still and Gerhold, 1997; Schroeder, 1998; Roggenbuck et al, 2000; Grese et al, 2000) who found that helping the environment is an important motivation for a sustainable local economy. However, their motivation can change over time particularly if the Development program is not being successfully organized by local authorities and responsible structures. Having said this, the TBR authority must channel its effort into making the Management and development programs as interesting as possible for local communities to benefit not only the activities in this area but also TBR-like UNESCO- Sites.



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Appendix 1

Interview Schedule

Background:

1. What is your role/position within the Ohrid Prespa region like TBR?
2. Who are your key partners?
3. Can you give a summary of what you do?
4. How long have you been involved in local activities, the target of this project?
5. Are there any key policies you are currently working on?
6. What government policies influence your work?

Objective:

1. Can you describe the environmental and socio-economic issues you face?
2. Do you believe these problems are inevitable or do you think they can be avoided?
3. If these problems were to be prevented, who do you think is responsible and why?
4. These problems will greatly affect the target area if not addressed, how can they be challenged?
5. Have you got any sustainable development projects in place?
6. Would you describe these projects as being successful?
7. It is generally believed that education leads to more environmentally aware behavior however, there is little evidence to back this up – are there any environmental programs in place?
8. Do the local community participate in the management of the TBR?
9. Do you think they should be more involved?

About the Management Plan and Action Plan for TNR Ohrid-Prespa-Watershed:

1. Were you aware of the management plan, and what was your involvement in the development of the plan?
2. Do you think the plan has been implemented successfully?
3. How could the plan be improved?



Appendix 2

The designed questionnaire

Pyetësor

E nderuar Zonjë/Zotëri,

Në kuadër të programit IPA CBC midis Shqipërisë dhe Maqedonisë së Veriut financim i Bashkimit Europian në vitet 2018-2020 u zbatua projekti “Mbrotjtja e ekosistemit të rajonit ndërkufitar Ohër – Prespë”, i cili kishte për qëllim të kontribuojë në zhvillimin e balancuar dhe të qëndrueshëm socio-ekonomik të Rezerves Ndërkufitare të Biosferës Ohër-Prepë, përmes futjes së sistemit të bazuar në GIS për planifikimin dhe menaxhimin e burimeve natyrore dhe trashëgimisë së rajonit të synuar përmes zhvillimit të një sistemi për të hartuar shërbimet më të rëndësishme të ekosistemit dhe për të kuptuar kontributin e tyre dhe përdorimin e tyre për përmirësimin e pyjeve, turizmit, peshkimit dhe gjuetisë.

Projekti zbatohet nga 4 subjekte, Fondacioni për ngritjen e kapaciteteve lokale (ALCDF) si lider i projektit, Organizata e Menaxhimit të Peshkimit, (OMP), si dhe në pjesën maqedone nga SEG Consulting dhe Organizata e Gjuetisë së Maqedonisë. Projekti aktivitetin e tij e zhvillonte në komunat Ohër, Strugë dhe Resnjë nga ana e MK, dhe bashkitë Pogradec, Librazhd, Prrenjas, Pustec, nga pala AL;

Vlerësimi i njohurive dhe opinionit që kanë grupet e targetuara nga ky projekt mbi rezultatet e projektit të zbatuar, si dhe impaktin e tij 2 vjet mbas përfundimit në gjendjen e ekosistemit, (specifikisht për peshkimin, gjuetinë dhe turizmin), qëndrueshmërinë e aktiviteteve që ai ka realizuar si dhe efektet që ka pasur në rritjen e mirëqenies së komunitetit lokal, kanë për qëllim që ky Survey mbi rajonin, të pasqyrojë sa më saktë IMPAKTIN real të këtij financimi të Bashkimit Europian në kuadër të Programit IPA CBC.

Duke ju falenderuar për mirëkuptimin dhe ndihmesën tuaj, ju lutemi plotësoni formularin duke shënuar brenda kutizës përkatëse.

I. Informacioni bazë	<input type="checkbox"/> Bashkia _____	Mosha: _____ vjeç
Arsimimi:	<input type="checkbox"/> pa mbaruar universitetin	<input type="checkbox"/> mbaruar universitetin
Profesioni: _____	Fusha e veprimtarisë _____	
Pozicioni :	<input type="checkbox"/> drejtues/përgjegjës	<input type="checkbox"/> specialist



II. Informacion i përgjithshëm

1. Lloji i aktivitetit tuaj:

- Sektori publik Sektori privat OJQ

2. A jeni i angazhuar në veprimtari që përfshin ky pyetësor (liqeni i Ohrit dhe i Prespes flora dhe fauna e tij, pyjet, menaxhimi i ujrave, peshkimi ose bujqësia)

- Po Jo

3. A keni dijeni se ndërmjet qeverisë shqiptare dhe asaj maqedonase ka një marrëveshje për liqenin e Ohrit si dhe një Program për bashkepunim ndër-kufitar IPA, financim i Bashkimit Europian :

- Po Jo

4. A keni dijeni për projektin dhe platformen SPIS dhe cili ka qenë ndikimi i tyre në zhvillimit të këtij rajoni dhe ndërgjegjësimin e publikut për mbrojtjen e mjedisit:

- Po Jo

Nëse mendoni se Po, si e konsideroni këtë ndikim:

- shumë të rëndësishëm të rëndësishëm pak të rëndësishëm

5. Cili është opinion i juaj lidhur me këtë projekt dhe këtë platforme sot 2 vjet pas përfundimit të projektit në sektorin e peshkimit turizmit por jo vetëm, si dhe a ka ndikuar në përmirësimin e punës dhe jetesës suaj.

- keq njësoj pak më mirë mirë
 shumë mirë

6. Konkretisht cili ka qenë bashkepunimi juaj me këtë projekt dhe platformen SPIS ?

III. INFORMACION SPECIFIK

7. A mendon se duhet të përmirësohet /plotësuar kuadrin ligjor e rregullator për mbrojtjen e Liqenit Ohrit dhe të pellgut ujëmbledhës te tij:

Po Jo

Konkretisht :

8. A mendoni se keni instrumente të mjaftueshëm ligjor për funksionimin e Platformes SPIS ?

N.q.s. jo, çfarë instrumenti i mungon institucionit tuaj?

9. A keni bashkëpunuar dhe bashkepunoni me aktorë të tjerë nga sektore të ndryshëm që merren aspekte të menaxhimit? N.q.s po, ju lutem shkruani grupet me të rëndësishme të interesit (jepni 3 deri në 5 emra).

10. A mendoni se trajnimet e organizuara në kuadrin e këtij Projekti, por edhe projekteve të tjere ndikojne në rritjen e kapacitetit profesional të pjesëmarrësve:

Po Jo

Nëse Po, si e vlerësoni këtë ndikim të këtij projekti :

të pakët mesatar të lartë

11. Në cilat drejtime trajnimi ka qenë më i dobishëm:

konceptet e menaxhimit të zonave të mbrojtura kuadri ligjor/institucional
 trajtimi i problemeve me komunitetin vlerësimi i ndikimeve në mjedis

12. Si e vlerësoni shkallën e bashkëpunimit midis pushtetit lokal, inspektoreve, komunitetit dhe stakeholdersve të tjere si dhe me palen maqedone dhe si mendoni se mund të përmirësohet:

dobët mjaftueshëm mirë shumë mirë

13. A mendon se projekti ka ndikuar në situatën socio-ekonomike të komunitetit lokal, nëse po si konkretisht ?



Po

Jo

14. Si e gjykoni shkallën e peshkimit pa leje në liqen gjatë këtyre tre viteve të fundit:

më e lartë

njëlloj

më e ulët

15. Cfare mendoni se duhet permiresuar ne fushen e peshkimit dhe turizmit apo drejtimeve te tjera problematike ku duhet të permiresohen? :

përmirësimi i kuadrit ligjor/institucional

mbrojtja e peshkimit te kontrolluar

Pyjet dhe zhvillimi i gjyetise

zhvillimi i turizmit të qëndrueshëm

shënoni drejtime të tjera

Ju faleminderit



Прашалник

Почитувани,

Во рамките на ИПА програмата за прекугранична соработка помеѓу Албанија и Северна Македонија, финансирана од Европската Унија, во периодот од 2018-2020 година, се реализираше проектот „**Заштита на екосистемот на прекуграничниот регион Охрид - Преспа**“, кој имаше за цел да придонесе за рамномерен и одржлив социо-економски развој на прекуграничниот биосферен резерват Охрид-Преспа, преку воведување на систем заснован на ГИС, за планирање и управување со природните ресурси и наследството на целиот регион, преку развој на систем за мапирање на најважните екосистемски услуги и разбирање на нивниот придонес и нивната употреба за подобрување на шумите, туризмот, риболовот и ловот.

Проектот својата активност ја разви во општините Охрид, Струта и Ресен, од страна на МК, како и општините Поградец, Либражд, Прењас, Пустец, од страна на АЛ;

Евалуација на знаењето и мислењето на групите насочени во овој проект, за резултатите од спроведениот проект, како и неговото влијание врз состојбата на екосистемот (конкретно за риболов, лов и туризам) две години после завршувањето, одржливоста на активностите што се реализираа како и ефектите што ги имаше при зголемувањето на благосостојбата на локалната заедница, целта на ова истражување за регионот е што е можно попрецизно да го одрази вистинското **ВЛИЈАНИЕ** на финансирањето на Европската Унија во рамките на IPA CBC програмата.

Во знак на благодарност за разбирањето и помошта, ве молиме пополнете го формуларот со потпирање на соодветното поле.

I. Основни информации

Општина _____ Возраст: _____ години

Образование: Средно образование Високо образование

Занимање: _____

Област на активност _____

Позиција: менаџер/одговорен специјалност

II. Генерални информации

1. Вид на активност:

Јавен сектор Приватен сектор НВО

2. Дали сте ангажирани во активноста опфатена со овој прашалник (Охридско и Преспанско Езеро, неговата флора и фауна, шуми, управување со водите, риболов или земјоделство)



Да Не

3. Дали знаете дека помеѓу албанската и македонската влада има договор за Охридското Езеро, како и Програма за прекугранична соработка ИПА, финансирана од Европската Унија:

Да Не

4. Дали сте запознаени со проектот и платформата СПИС и какво е нивното влијание врз развојот на овој регион и јавната свест за заштита на животната средина:

Да Не

Ако вашиот одговор е да, како го сметате ова влијание:

многу важно важно малку важно

5. Какво е вашето мислење за овој проект и оваа платформа денес, две години после завршувањето на проектот во секторот за лов, риболов, туризам или во друг дел од секојдневниот живот и дали тоа влијаело врз подобрување на вашата работа и начин на живот.

лошо истото малку подобро добро многу добро

6. Конкретно, каква беше вашата соработка со овој проект и платформата СПИС?

III. СПЕЦИФИЧНИ ИНФОРМАЦИИ

7. Дали мислите дека треба да се подобри/заокружи правната и регулаторната рамка за заштита на Охридското Езеро и неговиот слив:

Да Не

Поточно:

8. Дали мислите дека имате доволно правни инструменти за функционирање на платформата СПИС?

Доколу не, каков инструмент и недостига на вашата институција?

9. Дали соработувате со други актери од различни сектори кои се занимаваат со аспекти на менаџментот? Ако вашиот одговор е да, ве молиме напишете ги најважните интересни групи (наведете 3 до 5 имиња).

10. Дали мислите дека обуките организирани во рамките на Проектот и различни проекти влијаат врз зголемување на професионалниот капацитет на учесниците:

Да Не

Ако вашиот одговор е да, како го оценувате ова влијание:

неколку просечни високи

11. Во кои области обуката се покажала како најкорисна:

- правна/институционална рамка
- справување со проблемите со заедницата
- концепти за управување со заштитените подрачја
- проценка на влијанијата врз животната средина

12. Како го оценувате нивото на соработка помеѓу локалната власт, инспекторите, заедницата и другите засегнати страни, во двете држави:

слабо доволно добаро многу добар

13. Дали мислите дека проектот влијаеше врз социо-економската состојба на локалната заедница, и доколку да, на кој начин?

Да Не



14. Како го оценувате нивото на нелегален риболов во езерото во последните три години:

- повисоко еднакво пониско

15. Што мислите дека треба да се подобри во областа на рибарството и туризмот или други проблематични насоки што треба да се подобрат?

- подобрување на правната/институционалната рамка
 - заштита на биолошката разновидност
 - развој на екосистемот и шумите
 - развој на органското земјоделство
 - развој на одржлив туризам
 - обележете други насоки
-

Ви благодарам



Appendix 3

Email sent to potential respondents

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am conducting a research study as part of the EU CBC Program between North Macedonia and Albania founded by the EU. My research seeks to understand how the implementation of projects funded by IPA Cross border cooperation programs North Macedonia - Albania IPA 1 (2007 – 2013) and IPA 2 (2014-2020) contributes to improving the lives of inhabitants in the program area and I would like to meet with you to discuss your views on this topic.

I have chosen this destination because this region Ohrid & Prespa watershed, is widely recognized as one of the heritage spots in both countries North Macedonia and Albania.

I hope to conduct a successful study with the help of you and your expertise.

The research aims to identify the issues and opportunities this cross-border area faces as a cultural, heritage, and alternative tourist destination. To conduct this research successfully, I would like to meet and talk with you, as the main actor within this project “Protection of the cross-border ecosystem Ohrid – Prespa”, to understand your thoughts and opinions on the topic.

The interview will last approximately thirty minutes and will be tape-recorded. The information provided in the interviews will be vital to my research study and will allow you to voice your opinions on the topic.

I understand that you may be concerned with confidentiality issues with the interview being tape-recorded. May I assure you that the recording will only be listened to by me to help me process all the information, and possibly by an examiner who assesses my study? Your name will not be mentioned in any part of the research study either and I will provide a confidentiality contract for us both to sign which promises what is written above.

Please could you inform me of who is most appropriate to contact for this matter so that I may contact them directly. I shall contact you again later this week to discuss this further. In the meantime, please do not hesitate to contact me via email at mirko.u@hotmail.com or mobile at 070261285 should you have any further questions.

I look forward to hearing from you soon

Yours faithfully

Mirko UKOSKI

University “St. Kliment Ohridski”
Bitola, North Macedonia
Master Degree Student
ID:



Appendix 4

Designed consent form for Respondents

MASTER DEGREE DISSERTATION

“How TBR “actors” maintain and conserve their site whilst justifying the social, economic and natural values through IPA CBC projects, founded by EU”.

CONSENT FORM FOR INTERVIEWEES

1. I, the undersigned, voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.
2. I have explained to the researcher of the nature, purpose, and length of this study. I have been allowed to ask questions on all aspects of the study.
3. I am aware this interview is recorded. I have a clear understanding that the recordings are for the sole benefit of the interviewer, however, an external examiner may be required to listen to the recording.
4. I understand that all personal data relating to research participants is held and processed in the strictest confidence and accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998). I agree I will not restrict the use of the results on the understanding that this study is purely academic.
5. I understand that I am free to withdraw from the interview at any time without needing to justify my position and without any prejudice.
6. I confirm I have read and understood the above and freely consent to participate in this study.

Name of participant

Name of researcher

Signature/DateSignature/Date