Towards strengthened governance of the shared transboundary natural and cultural heritage of the Lake Ohrid region.

PROTECTING

LAKE OHRID REGION

OUR SHARED RESPONSIBILITIES AND BENEFITS

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PROTECTING LAKE OHRID REGION – OUR SHARED RESPONSIBILITIES AND BENEFITS

The transboundary Lake Ohrid region

In the Lake Ohrid region, some of Europe’s earliest human settlements and heritage routes border one of Europe’s oldest lakes. In this special place, natural and cultural history have blended together through time to create truly exceptional heritage that has long transcended boundaries and must continue to do so for the benefit of future generations.

Lake Ohrid is shared between Albania and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, while its catchment extends well into the Lake Prespa basin. Joint and coordinated efforts between the two countries are therefore crucial to ensure the safeguarding of the rich heritage of the Lake Ohrid region.

Protecting the Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Lake Ohrid region

Several protected areas have been designated at national level, such as the Pogradec Aquatic and Terrestrial Protected Landscape and the Driton National Monument in Albania, and the Lake Ohrid Monument of Nature and Galicica National Park in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

The protection of the region was further strengthened in 1979 by the inscription on the World Heritage List of what is now the Macedonian part of the region, and by the establishment of the Transboundary Biosphere Reserve Ohrid-Prespa Watershed (Albania / the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) in 2014.
The Challenges

In spite of these international and national protection measures, unplanned urban development, inadequate waste water and solid waste management, habitat alteration, destruction and depletion of natural resources, mining activities, infrastructure development and intensive tourism activities continue to threaten the region's heritage.

Designed to support both countries in their efforts to protect the area, the project “Towards strengthened governance of the shared transboundary natural and cultural heritage of the Lake Ohrid region” focuses on the protection of culture as well as nature, recognising their multiple values, addressing the main threats and harnessing opportunities through a sustainable development approach.
The World Heritage property

The World Heritage property “Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Ohrid Region” was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1979, initially as a natural property, and was re-inscribed one year later to become a mixed (natural and cultural) property on the basis of the World Heritage criteria (i), (iii), (iv) and (vii).

The inscribed property includes the historical centre of Ohrid, the town of Struga, several fishermen’s settlements on the shore, early Christian spiritual centres and monasteries, as well as over 250 archaeological sites covering a period of more than 5,000 years.

The town of Ohrid, one of the oldest human settlements in Europe, represents a rare architectural and artistic achievement and boasts a wealth of architectural, archaeological, material and intangible values. The urban nucleus of Ohrid includes buildings and other features dating back to prehistoric times, Antiquity and Late Antiquity, Early Christianity, Early and High Middle Ages and the Ottoman period, up to present day.

Lake Ohrid has also long been recognized as a superlative natural phenomenon. With a geological and biological history of over one million years, Lake Ohrid stands out as one of the oldest lakes in Europe and a remarkable biodiversity hotspot of global importance. It has been estimated that it is the lake with the highest biodiversity in the world, taking into account the number of endemic species per surface area. The catchment area also supports equally rich and important biodiversity with exceptionally high number of endemic species.

The World Heritage Selection Criteria

• Criterion (i): represent a masterpiece of human creative genius;
• Criterion (iii): bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared;
• Criterion (iv): be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history; and
• Criterion (vii): contain superlative natural phenomena or areas of exceptional natural beauty and aesthetic importance.
The joint EU-UNESCO project

The project “Towards strengthened governance of the shared transboundary natural and cultural heritage of the Lake Ohrid region” aims to profile this transboundary area by assessing its values and opportunities for sustainable development, and to improve capacities for the effective management of natural and cultural heritage. The project is building a participatory process for integrated management planning and the preparation of a dossier by the Albanian authorities to extend the World Heritage property to the Albanian part of the Lake Ohrid region.

The European Union is contributing 1.7 million EUR to the project in the framework of its assistance to pre-accession countries in the field of Environment and Climate Change. Additionally, the Government of Albania is financing 170,000 EUR, bringing the total budget for this three-year project to approximately 1.87 million EUR.

We look forward to working together!
WHO IS CURRENTLY INVOLVED?

UNESCO World Heritage Centre - Project coordinator

Established in 1992, the UNESCO World Heritage Centre promotes and coordinates the implementation of the 1972 World Heritage Convention. The Centre organizes the annual sessions of the World Heritage Committee and, together with the Advisory Bodies IUCN, ICCROM and ICOMOS, provides advice to States Parties in the preparation of nominations to the World Heritage List, coordinates the reporting on the state of conservation of World Heritage sites and organizes emergency actions and international assistance from the World Heritage Fund when a site is threatened.

The European Union - main financial contributor

The European Union is made up of 28 Member States who have decided to gradually link together their know-how, resources and destinies. Together, during a period of enlargement of 60 years, they have built a zone of stability, democracy and sustainable development whilst maintaining cultural diversity, tolerance and individual freedoms. The European Union is committed to sharing its achievements and its values with countries and peoples beyond its borders.

Project partners

The Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Albania has the mission to develop and propose policies, strategies and action plans for environmental protection and management, in view of sustainable development and the improvement of the quality of life and the promotion of the integration into the European Union. This mission is accomplished by participating, promoting and coordinating activities for the long-term development and prosperity, the protection of natural resources and raising public awareness.

The Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Albania is responsible for the implementation of government cultural policy. A network of 29 state institutions under the Ministry, implements and supports projects, programs and activities related to preservation, restoration, management, valorisation and promotion of culture and cultural heritage in Albania.

The Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia is responsible for the development and enforcement of policies and laws related to the environment and nature protection. The Ministry is represented in the National Commission for UNESCO, the Management Commission for the Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Ohrid Region, as well as in the transboundary Lake Ohrid Watershed Committee established under the agreement between the governments of Albania and the FYR of Macedonia for the protection and sustainable development of Lake Ohrid and its watershed.

Ministry of Culture - Cultural Heritage Protection Office (CHPO) was established by law in 2004, as an independent governmental administrative body and a constituent part of the Ministry of Culture of the FYR of Macedonia. The CHPO carries out administrative, professional and other activities related to cultural heritage protection following the Law on Protection of the Cultural Heritage. The conservation and protection of the cultural heritage in the Ohrid region is under the responsibility of the Institute for Protection of Monuments of Culture and Museum – Ohrid.

ICCROM (the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property) is an international intergovernmental organization with headquarters in Rome, Italy. Established by UNESCO in 1956, ICCROM’s statutory functions are to carry out research, documentation, technical assistance, training and public awareness programmes to strengthen conservation of immovable and moveable cultural heritage.

ICOMOS (the International Council on Monuments and Sites) is a non-governmental organization with headquarters in Paris, France. Founded in 1965, its role is to promote the application of theory, methodology and scientific techniques to the conservation of the architectural and archaeological heritage.

IUCN (the International Union for Conservation of Nature) was founded in 1948 and brings together national governments, NGOs, and scientists in a worldwide partnership. Its mission is to influence, encourage and assist societies throughout the world to conserve the integrity and diversity of nature and to ensure that any use of natural resources is equitable and ecologically sustainable. IUCN has its headquarters in Gland, Switzerland.
LAKE OHRID
IN FIGURES

Lake Ohrid region

• located at an altitude of 683 m
• bounded by high mountain chains to the east and west, reaching about 2,250 m in altitude
• maximum depth of 288.7 m and average depth of 155 m
• one of the most voluminous lakes in Europe
• total surface area of 358 km², of which approximately two-thirds are located in the FYR of Macedonia and about one-third in the Republic of Albania
• immediate catchment area of 1,129 km², but the effective catchment extends into the Lake Prespa basin due to an underground karst connection
• over 1,400 native species, including around 300 species endemic to Lake Ohrid
• over 160,000 people live around Lake Ohrid, with almost 52,000 in Albania (2011 census data)
• about 300,000 visitors explore the region’s natural and cultural heritage every year.

For more information: http://whc.unesco.org/en/lake-ohrid-region/

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