

Zhulieta Harasani, MBA
PhD. Petrit Harasani

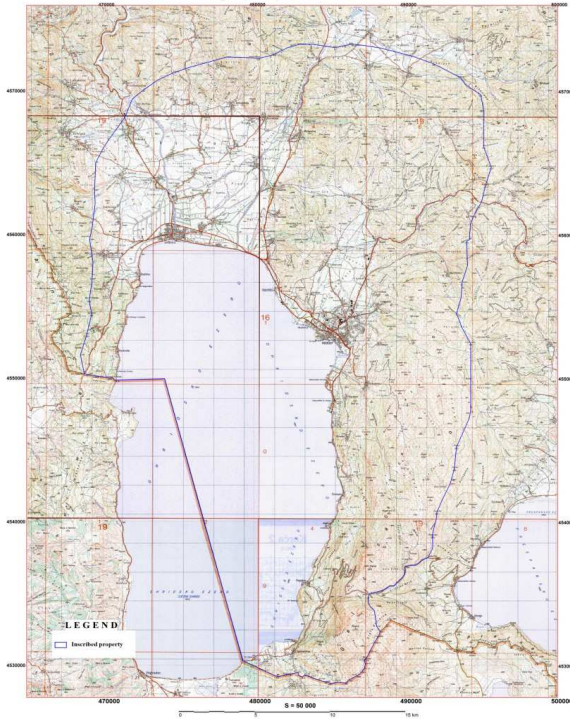
The shared Transboundary Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Lake Ohrid Region

The natural and cultural heritage of the Ohrid Region comprises the ancient city of Ohrid and nearby Lake Ohrid.

Lake Ohrid is located in the southwest part of the Republic of Macedonia, on the border between Macedonia and the Republic of Albania. It is situated at an altitude of 683 m, bounded by high mountain chains to the east and west, reaching about 2,250 m in altitude. The Lake is one of the most voluminous lakes in Europe with a 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. It contains over 1,400 native species, including around 300 species endemic to Lake Ohrid. 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.

Several protected areas have been designated at national level, such as the Pogradec Aquatic and Terrestrial Protected Landscape and the Drilon National Monument in Albania, the Lake Ohrid Monument of Nature and Galicica National Park in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. The Lake and its surroundings has been given the status of an Important Bird Area (IBA) both in Albania and Macedonia and it is also part of the European Green Belt initiative, the most comprehensive transboundary conservation initiative in Europe.

The city of Ohrid has been a cultural centre of great importance for the Balkan and the Slavonic language. Its churches are renowned for their frescoes and icons. As an episcopal city, Ohrid was also an important cultural center. The property inscribed holds the best preserved complete ensemble encompassing archeological remains from the Bronze Age up to the Middle Age; religious architecture from the 7th-19th century and urban structure representing the vernacular architecture from the 18th-19th century; Byzantine arts displayed by more than 2500 sq meters of frescoes and over 800 famous icons of worldwide fame.



Map of the inscribed property

The World Heritage Property “**Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Ohrid region**” was first inscribed on the World Heritage List as a natural property, in 1979 under criterion (iii –superlative natural phenomena (today criterion (vii)). One year later the World Heritage property was extended to to include the cultural and historical area and cultural criteria (i)(iii)(iv) were added (i), (iii) and (iv) **becoming one of the first mixed World Heritage properties.**

In 2009, at its 33rd session, the World Heritage Committee approved a minor boundary modification that slightly reduced the boundaries of the property to the north and to the west. Within this process, the creation of a buffer zone was encouraged by the Committee. On this occasion, the Committee also recommended

that “a trans-boundary extension of the property to include the Albanian part of Lake Ohrid and its watershed be considered in order to strengthen the value and integrity of the property”.

The World Heritage Committee, (decision 35 COM 12C), selects 10 Pilot Projects to test the effectiveness of the Upstream Process, including the Pilot Project “Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Ohrid Region” (Albania and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia).

In September 2011, the State Party of Albania submitted a tentative list format as a first step in the process of proposing this extension on the basis of the same cultural criteria of the inscribed property but proposing also criterion (ix) in addition to criterion (vii), formerly natural criterion (iii)

From a cultural perspective the preliminary proposal focuses on historic centre of the city of Pogradec, the triconch church of Lin with its mosaics and the traces of the Via Egnatia in Qafe Thana, which are considered the main attributes demonstrating the

importance of this region along the centuries. Pogradec is a town located by the lakeshore at a site with a long history of occupation, as attested to by the archaeological findings and the remains of a fortified settlement dating back to the 5th century. The values of Pogradec would reside in the 19th- 20th vernacular architecture of its historic centre that would convey the atmosphere of that epoch. The aesthetic and landscape values of the historic cultural setting of the lakeshore are also underlined. The State Party also mentions among possible relevant attributes the Tombs in Lower Selca, an important Illyrian settlement excavated in 1960s-70s and included in the tentative list of Albania since 1996.

The first Phase of the Upstream process entails the Advisory Scoping Mission to assess the feasibility of an extension for nomination to the already inscribed site. The mission was organised by the World Heritage Centre in cooperation with Albania as a first step in the implementation of the pilot project “Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Ohrid Region” proposed by the State Party in the framework of the Upstream Process in support of World Heritage nominations, established on an experimental basis following Decisions of the World Heritage Committee (34 COM 12 and 35 COM 12). The aims of the upstream process were to provide transparent and systematic support in the nomination process in the very early stages of their preparation as well as to test more cooperative working methods among the State Parties, the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies with the broad aim of improving protection and management of World Heritage properties.

The Mission identified the following main threats:

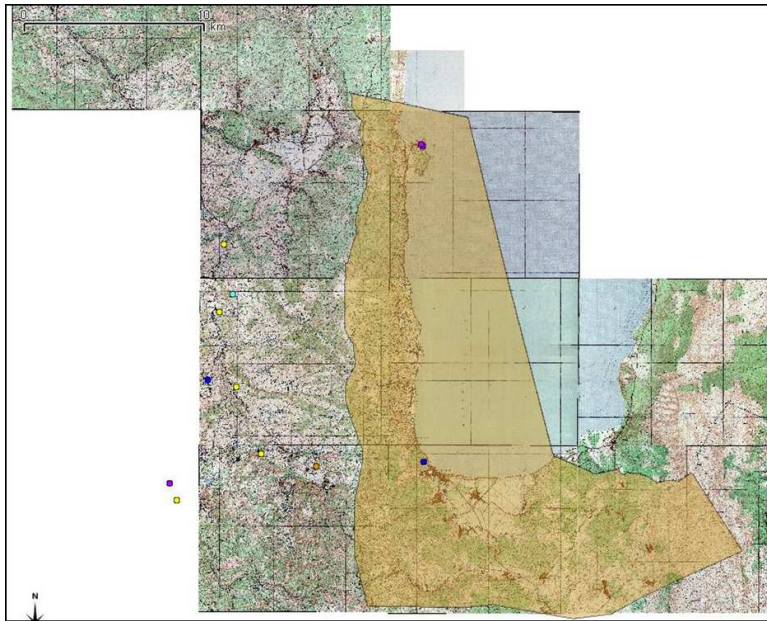
- Unplanned urban development
- Waste water and solid waste disposal
- Natural habitat alteration and
- Destruction and depletion of natural resources

The underlying causes of these threats have been identified as follows:

- Management challenges: Institutional arrangements and lack of coordination and cooperation
- Expertise and knowledge: Need for comprehensive understanding of the heritage and the regional values and their threats
- Transboundary cooperation: Need to strengthen transboundary management structure
- Awareness: Need for shared common vision both within communities and across boundaries

Among the **potential cultural attributes conveying the cultural value of the proposed extension** (Albanian part of the Lake) the following can be mentioned:

- Tri-conch church of Lin similar with tetraconch church in Ohrid, 6th century colored with floor mosaics. The remains of the structures are located on the top of a peninsula formed by a hilly outcrop close to the lakeshore connected to the mainland through a stretch of lowland, today converted into arable land.
- Pile-dwelling archaeological site. South of Lin, near Bukezë, the remains of a pile dwelling settlement was documented. No precise information about its location and consistence could be provided by the representatives of the State Party
- The Castle of Pogradec, cultural monument of the first category
- The historic centre of Pogradec
- Traces of the ancient Via Egnatia road
- The monumental tombs of Lower Selca carved in stone dating back to IV-II century BC



Map of the proposed extension of the inscribed property (in yellow)

The second Phase (2014-2017) of the Pilot Project for the Upstream process initiates the project “Towards strengthened governance of the shared transboundary natural and cultural heritage of the Lake Ohrid region”. The implementation phase of this joint EU-

UNESCO project 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 project is coordinated by UNESCO World Heritage Centre, while the main partners involved are:

- The Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Albania
- The Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Albania
- The Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning of the Republic of Macedonia
- Ministry of Culture - Cultural Heritage Protection Office (CHPO)
- ICCROM (International Centre for the Study, Preservation & Restoration of Cultural Property)
- ICOMOS (International Council on Monuments and Sites)
- IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature)

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.

The overall objective of the project is to contribute to the sustainable development of the cross-border Lake Ohrid region.

The specific objectives of the project are:

- To reinforce the management of the shared natural and cultural heritage of the transboundary Lake Ohrid region in view of a possible recognition as World Heritage property.
- To build 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 results expected for the project are:

- **Improved trans boundary cooperation and management effectiveness in place for the protection and sustainable development of the natural and cultural heritage of the Lake Ohrid region**

(a) Reinforcement of transboundary cooperation (activity 1)

(b) Establishment of integrated management mechanisms (activity 2)

- (c) Capacity Building on management effectiveness and transboundary cooperation (activity 3)
 - **The important cultural and natural assets of the Lake Ohrid region identified and safeguarded by the local and national authorities**
- (a) Profiling of the transboundary area and its sustainable tourism opportunities (activity 4)
- (b) Technical Assistance for the preparation of the extension file of the World Heritage property (activity 5)
- (c) Implementation of waste awareness campaign through Pilot Actions on Waste Water and Solid Waste (activity 6)

Activities to date

The Inception workshop held in Pogradec (15 – 16 September 2014) started this three year phase of the project aimed at reinforcing the protection and sustainable development of the Lake Ohrid region. The Inception Workshop reconfirmed the high interest and commitment to the project by all project partners.

Five management planning workshop are planned to be held during the second phase of this project aiming to support the elaboration of an integrated management system for the Lake Ohrid region.

The **First management Planning Workshop** took place in Korça (Albania) 25 - 26 march 2015. This workshop aimed at the establishment of a core team and management plan preparation statement as well as stakeholder identification. Representatives from Albania and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia participated in the first management planning workshop, including national authorities from the respective Ministries of Environment and Culture, local authorities from the Municipalities of the Lake Ohrid region, Advisory Bodies to the World Heritage Convention (ICCROM, ICOMOS and IUCN) as well as representatives from UNESCO.



































































































The **Second Management Planning workshop** (3 - 4 June 2015) in the framework of this project took place at the Regional Centre for Restoration (Institute of Cultural Monuments) in Tirana, Albania.










































































Around 20 Albanian and Macedonian experts, supported by 6 international experts from the Advisory Bodies to the World Heritage Committee (IUCN, ICCROM and ICOMOS), gathered at the second Management Planning “Visioning” Workshop to discuss and



develop joint vision statements for the Albanian part of the Lake Ohrid region. The experts from IUCN, ICOMOS and ICCROM gave presentations on theoretical aspects of management of World Heritage properties and the progress in the ongoing baseline assessment of natural and cultural heritage of the Lake Ohrid region. The Macedonian experts shared their experience in developing a vision and management objectives for the existing property.















































































































































The **Second Transboundary Platform Meeting** of the project “Towards strengthened governance of the shared transboundary natural and cultural heritage of the Lake Ohrid region” was held in Ohrid (2 October 2015), the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. As part of total of six meetings, it intended to improve and facilitate bi-lateral cooperation between representatives from both Albanian and Macedonian local and central administrations, the tourism sector, and those in charge of urban and rural development, culture, nature protection, resource management and the environment.

The **Third Management Planning Workshop** (and the last one for 2015) is planned to be held in Pogradec, Albania (9-10 December 2015) and will be focused on “**Operationalizing the activities foreseen**”.

Updated Dynamic Work Plan - Lake Ohrid region project (update June 2015)		Projected on 09/2014 :  Adjusted as on 06/2015: 	2014		2015				2016				2017	
No	Activity	Required action	3Q	4Q	1Q	2Q	3Q	4Q	1Q	2Q	3Q	4Q	1Q	2Q
1	Preparation of Terms of Reference and preparation of the detailed work plans	UNESCO												
2	Finalisation of selection procedure of the sub-contractors	UNESCO												
3	a) Organisation of Kick-off workshop and project launching ceremony	UNESCO												
	b) establishment of core and extended stakeholder group among Albanian institutions													
4	Support to existing transboundary management structures: Organisation of 6 transboundary Platform meetings for each milestone of the project	Selected contractors / UNESCO												
5	Defining and Understanding the property: Analysis of available literature, data, information, plans and existing gaps	Selected contractors												
6	Baseline assessments, mapping of natural and cultural heritage, including desk and field research on cultural and natural heritage assets and their potential to contribute to OUV	Selected contractors												
7	Capacity building programme: Development of the programme content and elaboration and preparation of the training materials	Selected contractors / UNESCO												

Updated Dynamic Work Plan - Lake Ohrid region project (update June 2015)		Projected on 09/2014 :  Adjusted as on 06/2015: 	2014		2015				2016				2017	
No	Activity	Required action	3Q	4Q	1Q	2Q	3Q	4Q	1Q	2Q	3Q	4Q	1Q	2Q
8	Series of 5 two-day workshops focused on the preparation of the management plan: a) establishment of core team and management plan preparation statement b) property vision and management objectives c) stakeholder consultation and management options d) management measures e) management actions	Selected contractors / UNESCO												
														
9	Series of 5 thematic trainings on a) monitoring b) climate change adaptation c) visitor management d) business planning f) disaster risk reduction	Selected contractors												
														
10	Elaboration of integrated management plan for transboundary Lake Ohrid region Stakeholders analysis - conduct detailed analysis	Selected contractors												
														
11	Determining borders of the property and preparation of databases and GIS	Selected contractors												
														
12	Drafting final management plan	Selected contractors with beneficiaries												
														
13	Delivery of the final plan for approval	Selected contractors with beneficiaries												
														

Updated Dynamic Work Plan - Lake Ohrid region project (update June 2015)		Projected on 09/2014 :  Adjusted as on 06/2015: 	2014		2015				2016				2017	
No	Activity	Required action	3Q	4Q	1Q	2Q	3Q	4Q	1Q	2Q	3Q	4Q	1Q	2Q
14	Technical Assistance for the preparation of the extension file of the transboundary World Heritage property: Identifying attributes and features	Selected contractors with beneficiaries												
15	Technical Assistance for the preparation of the comparative analysis	Selected contractors with beneficiaries												
16	Technical Assistance for the preparation of the nomination / extension dossier	Selected contractors with beneficiaries												
17	Soft-based tourism and sustainable development opportunities: Assessment of current state of infrastructure	Selected contractors												
18	Technical Assistance for the elaboration of strategy document identifying sustainable development opportunities including soft tourism based on cultural and natural heritage	Selected contractors with beneficiaries												
19	Planning and Producing soft-tourism infrastructure	Selected contractors												

Updated Dynamic Work Plan - Lake Ohrid region project (update June 2015)		Projected on 09/2014 :  Adjusted as on 06/2015: 	2014		2015				2016				2017	
No	Activity	Required action	3Q	4Q	1Q	2Q	3Q	4Q	1Q	2Q	3Q	4Q	1Q	2Q
20	Putting in place soft tourism infrastructure	Selected contractors												
														
21	Preparation and dissemination of communication material (in English and local languages)	Selected contractors												
														
22	Pilot Actions on waste water and solid waste: Setting-up of a coordination group and development of a waste implementation plan	Selected contractors												
														
23	Purchase of infrastructure, installation and operationalization of infrastructure	Selected contractors												
														
24	Waste awareness campaign	Selected contractors												
														
25	Progress Report to the Donor	UNESCO												
														
26	Evaluation	UNESCO												
														
27	Final reporting and closure of the project	UNESCO			