

Convention on the Conservation
of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats

Standing Committee

Recommendation No. 219 (2023) of the Standing Committee, adopted on 5th September 2023, on the possible impacts of infrastructure and urbanisation developments particularly Vloora International Airport, on the Vjosa-Narta Protected Area (Albania):

The Standing Committee to the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats, acting under the terms of Article 14 of the Convention,

Having regard to the aims of the Convention to conserve wild flora and fauna and their natural habitats;

Recalling that Article 3 of the Convention provides that each Contracting Party shall take steps to promote national policies for the conservation of the habitats of wild flora, wild fauna and natural habitats, with particular attention to endangered and vulnerable species, especially endemic ones, and endangered habitats;

Recalling that Article 4, paragraph 1 of the Convention provides that each Contracting Party shall take appropriate and necessary legislative and administrative measures to ensure the conservation of the habitats of the wild fauna species, especially those listed in Appendix II to the Convention;

Recalling that Article 4, paragraph 2 further stipulates that Contracting Parties, in their planning and development policies, shall have regard to the conservation requirements of the areas protected under the preceding paragraph, so as to avoid or minimise as far as possible any deterioration of such areas;

Recalling that Article 4, paragraph 3 further provides that the Contracting Parties undertake to give special attention to the protection of areas that are of importance for the migratory species specified in Appendices II and III and which are appropriately situated in relation to migration routes, as wintering, staging, feeding, breeding or moulting areas;

Recalling that Article 4, paragraph 4 further states that Contracting Parties undertake to co-ordinate as appropriate their efforts for the protection of the natural habitats referred to in this article when these are situated in frontier areas;

Recalling its [Recommendation No. 202 \(2018\)](#) adopted on 30 November 2018 on the planned hydro-power plant developments on the Vjosa river (Albania);

Recalling that the Vjosa-Narta Protected Area has been officially nominated as a candidate Emerald Network site in 2005, in accordance with national legislation, and as such, it is subject to [Recommendation No. 157 \(2011, revised in 2019\)](#) on the status of candidate Emerald sites and guidelines on the criteria for their nomination, requiring national authorities to “take the necessary protection and conservation measures in order to maintain the ecological characteristics of the candidate Emerald sites” until their full inclusion in the Emerald Network;

Recalling [Recommendation No. 208 \(2019\)](#) on detecting, reporting, assessing and responding to changes in the ecological character of Emerald Network sites;

Considering other relevant international guidelines on birds and airport/biodiversity conflicts such as the African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement (AEWA) Guidelines for Waterbird Monitoring, Commission Regulation (EU) No 139/2014 and International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) guidelines, processes and standards;

Recalling Albanian national and regional legislation aiming to protect habitats and species;

Considering that the Vjosa-Narta Protected Area and its surroundings host migratory species, waders and other rare land breeding species protected under the appendices of the Bern Convention, AEWA and Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) and aware of the foreseeable ecological impact of the airport project on this unique natural sanctuary;

Taking note of the report of the on-the-spot appraisal jointly held with the AEWA and CMS carried out by an independent expert on 29th August to 2nd September 2022 (document [T-PVS/Files\(2022\)67](#));

Recommends to the Government of Albania to:

1. Suspend the construction of Vlora International Airport until a new and sufficient Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) procedure will be conducted as well as a Proper/Appropriate Assessment.