Strasbourg, 1 August 2025 **T-PVS/Files(2025)2016-5_gov**

CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE
AND NATURAL HABITATS

Standing Committee
45th meeting
Strasbourg, 8-12 December 2025

Bureau of the Standing Committee
16-18 September 2025
Strasbourg

Open file: 2016/5

Presumed negative impact of developments on the Vjosa river including hydro-power plant development and Vlora International Airport(Albania)

- GOVERNMENT REPORT -

Document prepared by

The Ministry of Tourism and Environment

REPUBLIC OF ALBANIA
MINISTRY OF TOURISM AND ENVIRONMENT

Tirana July 31, 2025

To:
Mr. Mikaël Poutiers
Secretary of the Bern Convention
Council of Europe
F-67075 Strasbourg Cedex, France

Subject: Case – file report on the response to "Complaint No. 2016/05: Open File: Albania: Presumed negative impact of developments on the Vjosa river including hydro-power plant development and Vlora International Airport

Dear Mr. Poutiers,

With the reference to ordinary meeting of 2025 on 8-10 April, the Bureau of the Standing Committee to the Bern Convention on "Complaint No. 2016/05: Open File: Albania: Presumed negative impact of developments on the Vjosa river including hydro-power plant development and Vlora International Airport", in which the government was invited to submit a progress report as well as for the Himara water supply project please find below the requested one:

The Government of Albania reaffirm its full commitment to the principles of the Bern Convention, ensuring that both environmental protection and sustainable development and the inclusion of public and other stakeholders remain top priorities reaching out the best possible performance on Albanian environmental field.

The latest developments regarding the Vjosa River National Park, the Vlora International Airport project, and the Law on Protected Areas.

- ✓ The Albanian Government has successfully completed the Integrated Management Plan (IMP) for Vjosa River National Park (NP) approved by Minister of Tourism and

Environment Order no. 342 date 23.09.2024 (annex 1). This document has now been formally approved and is under full implementation, ensuring that the highest standards of protection are in place for the Vjosa ecosystem.

- ✓ The dossier for the recognition of Vjosa Valley as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve under the Man and Biosphere (MAB) Program has been approved, and it will be launched during the UNESC World Congress. This submission marks a historic step towards reinforcing the region's international recognition and conservation status; strengthening regional and international collaboration on conservation and scientific research; Supporting local sustainable development initiatives, benefiting communities while preserving biodiversity.

While there has been expressed concern over law on Protected Areas as amended, for which the pretention was that the law goes in contrary with the Constitution of the Republic of Albania and with international agreements, the Constitutional Court withdrew the pretention as it was lacking the arguments and with regard to the public consultations was considered by the Constitutional Court in accordance with the Constitution of the Republic of Albania. Even regarding the pretention on financial issues- there were no concrete effects that the law can bring, as it is a framework law, without direct impacts, so it does not harm the international obligations towards the environmental protection. The last decision will be officially declared within the legal framework timeline.

The Albanian Government remains committed to international conservation standards and will continue to monitor and refine management strategies based on best practices and scientific input.

- ✓ Vlora International Airport is currently under construction; however, the Albanian Civil Aviation Authority has already initiated the certification process during this development phase. As part of this ongoing process, the ACAA has held coordination meetings to inform stakeholders of national and international certification requirements, placing particular emphasis on environmental protection measures. A critical component of these requirements is the submission of a comprehensive Wildlife Hazard Management Plan. This plan must include a list of wildlife species in the vicinity, mitigation measures such as fencing and deterrents, as well as detailed monitoring and reporting procedures. These elements aim to proactively identify and mitigate the risk of bird and animal strikes, ensuring that wildlife hazards are addressed prior to the airport becoming fully operational.
- ✓ In parallel, and in alignment with the National Aviation Safety Action Plan and the State Safety Programme—as outlined in Decision of the Council of Ministers No. 95, dated 9 February 2022—the ACAA is actively addressing ICAO's Top 5 Global Risks, with bird strikes identified as a key concern. The Action Plan sets out Key Performance Areas (KPAs), Safety Performance Indicators (SPIs), and Safety Performance Targets (SPTs), supported by targeted risk control measures. For example, the plan aims to reduce bird strike occurrences at international airports by 40% within three years, ensure that 100% of airports maintain updated Wildlife Hazard Management Plans, and achieve a 90% response rate to bird sightings within 10 minutes. In support of these objectives, the

ACAA has established a mandatory bird strike reporting system, complemented by wildlife activity logs, response time tracking, and a continuous feedback mechanism. Data collected is shared through the National Wildlife Strike Committees, fostering a collaborative and data-driven approach to improving both aviation safety and environmental sustainability.

- ✓ Part of the CAA's oversight activities at the operator will be to cover the wildlife management.
- ✓ Part of the discussions in working groups such as RST will be wildlife management. All airport stakeholders participate in the RST, including environmental experts according to thematic areas.
- ✓ Environmental assessments and monitoring protocols are ongoing processes. The Albanian Government remains open to further collaboration with the Bern Convention and international conservation organizations to ensure that all environmental concerns are addressed effectively.

- ➢ **With regard to the Himara water supply (the Rural Water Supply Program IV (RWSP IV), Himara)**

We are deeply concerned by the continued dissemination of misinformation and unsubstantiated allegations by certain non-governmental organizations (NGOs) regarding the Himara Water Supply Project, implemented under the Rural Water Supply Program IV (RWSP IV). These narratives, despite being repeatedly addressed through transparent dialogue, technical clarification, and regulatory compliance, continue to undermine a project that is crucial for the health, well-being, and socio-economic development of the local population.

A Project of Strategic Importance for the Region

The RWSP IV project is a flagship initiative aimed at ensuring **sustainable access to clean drinking water**, **adequate wastewater treatment**, and **improved sanitation services** for the residents of Himara and its surrounding villages, including Kuç, Pilur, Kudhës, Livadh, Jalë, and Himarë Fshat. It directly addresses long-standing infrastructure gaps affecting both permanent residents and the region’s growing number of seasonal visitors. Upon completion, the project will benefit an estimated **80,000 individuals**, including tourists.

Moreover, by improving environmental hygiene through **modern wastewater collection and treatment systems**, the project contributes meaningfully to **public health**, **environmental protection**, and the **preservation of natural resources**, including coastal and marine ecosystems. These improvements are essential not only for current residents but also for the sustainable development of **tourism**, a vital economic driver for the region.

The project has also prioritized **institutional strengthening and management capacity-building**, ensuring long-term sustainability and efficiency in the operation of water utilities in the Himara area.

Financing and Structure

With a total budget of **€47.37 million**, the program is financed through a combination of funding sources:

- €40 million loan from **KfW Development Bank**
- €2 million **KfW grant**
- Two **WBIF** grants: €1.8 million and €2.22 million
- €1.35 million from the **Albanian State Budget** to cover operational costs

The project is divided into four technical components (lots), covering water intake infrastructure, transmission and distribution, sewerage rehabilitation, and wastewater treatment. Each lot is tailored to meet the technical and geographical requirements of specific sub-regions.

Clarification on the "Hydropower Plant" Misrepresentation

Among the most misleading claims circulating is the accusation that the project includes the construction of a "hydropower plant." This assertion is not only technically incorrect but also grossly misrepresents the project's scope and environmental impact.

To clarify: the facility in question is a **pressure-breaking chamber**, an essential hydraulic structure designed to manage and safely reduce excessive pressure in the **gravity-fed water transmission system** from the Lepusha spring to the distribution network.

In alignment with modern sustainable engineering practices, a **small micro-turbine** has been integrated into the chamber—not for commercial electricity production, but exclusively to **recover energy that would otherwise be lost** in the process of pressure reduction. The modest amount of electricity generated is intended **solely to power the operational needs of the Himara Water Utility**, such as lighting, monitoring, or telemetry systems.

This installation does **not involve any diversion of the watercourse**, does not store or regulate flows beyond what is already required for potable water supply, and does **not constitute a hydropower plant** in any regulatory, technical, or commercial sense. Describing this technical solution as a "commercial hydropower facility" is **not only factually inaccurate**, but undermines the credibility of legitimate environmental concerns.

Factual Timeline and Permits

The project has undergone **rigorous assessments** and obtained all necessary approvals in compliance with Albanian legislation and international best practices. These include:

- **Environmental Permit**: No. AN030320210005, issued 05.05.2021
- **Water Use Permit**: Decision No. 4, issued 09.12.2021

- **Technical Approval**: Albanian Construction Institute, 27.07.2020
- **Construction Permit**: Himara Municipality, No. 34, Prot. 1021/1, dated 30.03.2022

Stakeholder Engagement and Public Consultation

Since its inception in 2017, the RWSP IV has been characterized by **transparent stakeholder engagement**, including multiple rounds of public consultation, social and environmental feasibility studies, and meetings with community representatives. Notable milestones include:

- Community meetings in **Kuç, Pilur, Kudhës** (2017–2020)
- A public consultation event in **Himarë on June 16, 2021**, attended by the German Ambassador and KfW representatives
- Technical workshops and follow-up sessions with civil society and environmental institutions through 2023 and 2024

Contrary to recent claims, the project has never restricted access to researchers or the media. The allegation that ornithologists and journalists were denied site access in January 2025 is **entirely unfounded**. The project has consistently upheld **full transparency**, including open communication with civil society, environmental experts, and the general public.

Environmental Protection Commitments

In March 2023, the **Vjosa River and its tributaries**, including Shushica and Lepusha, were designated part of the **Wild River National Park** (Council of Ministers Decision No. 155, dated 13.03.2023). Although the permits for RWSP IV predate this designation and remain valid, the project stakeholders voluntarily **suspended the works** in sensitive areas to accommodate further environmental assessments, in line with recommendations from **KfW** and the **IUCN**.

During a high-level meeting on **November 27, 2024**, between the Albanian Minister of Tourism and Environment and the German State Secretary for Economic Cooperation and Development, both sides agreed to follow **Scenario 2 of the IUCN Report**, committing to:

- Reduced water abstraction at Lepusha
- Determination of **environmental flow** through a full hydrological year
- Additional **accompanying studies**, financed by KfW
- Continued community consultation and transparency

Following this, a technical meeting on **January 30, 2025** confirmed that works under **Lot 1** would resume, based on a jointly agreed **Action Plan** and the development of environmental safeguards.

The outcomes of these meetings were transparently communicated to all relevant NGOs during a follow-up session held at the **German Embassy in Albania on February 22, 2025**.

Implementation Progress and Environmental Adjustments

To date, **85% of Lot 1** has been completed, with **66% of funds disbursed**. Materials (pipes, fittings) have been supplied and stored on-site, prompting unjustified protests despite the fact that construction activities were voluntarily halted.

To further strengthen environmental compliance, the Implementing Agency (ADF) has initiated the **rerouting of the pipeline** to avoid all overlap with the protected area boundaries. Additional environmental measures include:

- Establishing a **real-time SCADA monitoring system** to regulate and limit water abstraction
- Implementing a scientifically verified **ecological flow framework**
- Identifying **alternative supplementary sources**, such as the Potami spring
- Rehabilitating existing irrigation infrastructure to optimize water use efficiency

Final Remarks

Despite thorough due diligence, transparent communication, and voluntary accommodations well beyond legal requirements, certain NGOs persist in circulating misleading narratives that hinder a project **fundamental to public health, regional development, and environmental management**. These narratives risk derailing years of technical work, international cooperation, and local trust.

We respectfully urge the Bern Convention Secretariat and its advisory bodies to consider the **facts, the collaborative international effort behind this project, and the irreplaceable benefits it brings** to thousands of residents and future generations. RWSP IV stands as a model of **sustainable infrastructure development**—combining engineering excellence, environmental sensitivity, and community-focused planning.

1. Please find attached as separate document the Hydrological Study prepared by the expert
2. **Report on flow measurement during the last year, including the latest measurements conducted on 03/07/2025**, as well as measurements conducted from July 2024.

Sincerely,

Annex A: Flow Measurements in Lepusha Source and Shushica River downstream of Lepusha

ALBANIA

RURAL WATER SUPPLY PROGRAMME IV

CONSULTING SERVICES FOR PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

BMZ ID 2014 67 448

LOT 1

FLOW MEASUREMENTS IN LEPUSHA SOURCE AND SHUSHICA RIVER DOWNSTREAM OF LEPUSHA

03/07/2025

CES

1 GENERAL INFORMATION

1. Date of measurement Campaign: 03.07.2025
2. No. of measurement locations: 4 (Four)
   - 2.1 Lepusha source (road culvert)
   - 2.2 Downstream of Buronja sources
   - 2.3 Lasko Bridge (Shushica river)
   - 2.4 Irrigation Channel
   - 2.5 Downstream of Lepusha (Point B) N/A
3. Method of measurement: Velocity – flow area measurement
4. Equipment used: Mulinela
5. Weather: Sunny

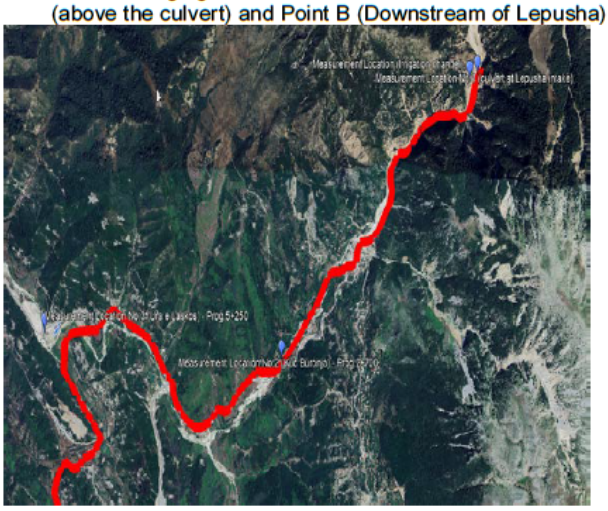
2 MEASUREMENTS

a) Selection of location

For selection of the flow measurement location, we considered:

- The regular flow cross section
- Regular flow surface
- The full source flow is collected on the measurement section

The following figure shows the location of the 2 additional points near Lepusha spring, Point A - Lepusha source (above the culvert) and Point B (Downstream of Lepusha) N/A.



1. Lepusha source (road culvert) flow measurements

The measurements and the results of the collected data at Lepusha source road culvert, are summarized in the following table:


Table 1 Measurement at Lepusha source

Measurements at Lepusha Source (road culvert)							03.07.2025		L = 270 cm					
No.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12		
h (cm)	45	45	37	30	27	25	20	17	18	17	17	17		30 l/s
Dist. (cm)	0	25	50	75	100	125	150	175	200	225	250	270		out of
No. rot/min (n)	170	138	91	141	117	131	101	102	71	81	78	76		culvert
No. rot/sec (n)	2.83	2.30	1.52	2.35	1.95	2.18	1.68	1.70	1.18	1.35	1.30	1.27		
Velocity (m/sec)	0.9025	0.7391	0.4880	0.7551	0.6271	0.7017	0.5440	0.5492	0.3881	0.4401	0.4245	0.4141		
Flow (m3/sec)		0.0923	0.06289	0.05205	0.04924	0.04319	0.03503	0.02528	0.0205	0.01812	0.01837	0.01426	0.431	491

Apart of this flow from Lepusha, it estimated that about 30 l/s seepage under the road body and out of the culvert flow. The following figure shows the seepage spring under the road body.
As a result, the total flow at Lepusha source on 03.07.2025 is measured to be **491 l/s.**
For reference, we have measured the flow in the irrigation channel just downstream of the road culvert. The summary of the measurements and results of the flow in this location is presented in the following table.

2. Measurement At Irrigation Channel


The flow in the irrigation channel is 125 l/s.

Measurements at Irrigation Channel					03.07.2025		
No.	1	2	3	4	5		
h (cm)	25	25	25	25	25		
Dist. (cm)	0	20	40	60	80		
No. rot/min (n)	108	108	120	123	120		
No. rot/sec (n)	1.80	1.80	2.00	2.05	2.00		
Velocity (m/sec)	0.5804	0.5788	0.6429	0.6589	0.6427		
Flow (m3/sec)		0.029	0.031	0.033	0.033	0.125	125

3. The flow measurement downstream of Buronja sources

b) Selection of location

For selection of the flow measurement location we considered:

- The regular flow cross section
- Regular flow surface
- The full sources of Buronja contributing to the flow

The above conditions are met at the stream section as shown in the layout above. In the following photos is shown the selected measurement section and the process during the measurements.

The measurements and the results of the collected data at Buronja are summarized in the following table:

Table 2 Measurement at Stream section below Buronja sources

	Measurements at Buronja (downstream)						03.07.2025			L = 600 cm					
No.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13		
h (cm)	15	27	26	25	21	20	30	31	36	21	15	15	8		
Dist. (cm)	0	50	100	150	200	250	300	350	400	450	500	550	600		
No. rot/min (n)	50	144	107	192	97	107	201	243	194	174	99	50	25		
No. rot/sec (n)	0.83	2.40	1.78	3.20	1.62	1.78	3.35	4.05	3.23	2.90	1.65	0.83	0.42		
Velocity (m/sec)	0.2791	0.7711	0.5735	1.0275	0.5232	0.5752	1.0756	1.2999	1.0382	0.9314	0.5336	0.2791	0.1354		
Flow (m3/sec)		0.0551	0.08908	0.10206	0.08917	0.05629	0.10317	0.18113	0.19582	0.14033	0.06592	0.03047	0.011917	1.120	1,120

The flow out of the measurement section are very small and not to be considered. As a result, the total flow at Buronja sources on 03.07.2025 is measured to be **1120 l/s.**

4. Shushica river flow measurement (Lasko Bridge)

c) Selection of location

The same principles are considered for selection of the measurement cross section. It is selected the river cross section under the new bridge.

The measurements and the results of the collected data at the Lasko bridge are summarized in the following table:

Table 3 Measurement at Lasko bridge

Measurements at Lasko Bridge							03.07.2025		L=750 cm				
No.	2	3	4	5	6	6.5	7	7.5	8	8.5	9	10	
h (cm)	5	12	21	22	29	32	34	37	34	30	24	10	
Dist. (cm)	0	100	200	300	400	450	500	550	600	650	700	750	additional flow
No. rot/min (n)	15	39	57	76	102	129	131	145	128	71	53	40	extracted for
No. rot/sec (n)	0.25	0.65	0.95	1.27	1.70	2.15	2.18	2.42	2.13	1.18	0.88	0.67	irrigation
Velocity (m/sec)	0.0972	0.2219	0.3154	0.4141	0.5492	0.6910	0.7017	0.7764	0.6856	0.3881	0.2946	0.2271	channels 160l/s
Flow (m3/sec)		0.0136	0.04433	0.07843	0.12282	0.09456	0.11489	0.13118	0.12976	0.0859	0.04609	0.02217	0.88 1,044

As a result, the total flow at Laskos Bridge on 03.07.2025 is **1044 l/s.**

4. Lepusha source (above the culvert – Point A)

N/A

5. Downstream of Lepusha (Point B)

N/A

These are measurements on the predefined cross sections of the Shushica upper part. The analysis of the measurement flows and results obtained will be done when a number of the measurements would be undertaken. Of course, with a small number of the measurements we cannot arrive on sound conclusions for the flow distribution along the Shushica river starting from Lepusha source.

Table 6: Summary of the measurements in Lepusha and Shushica River

Flow measured in l/s							
Date	Locations						
	Point A	Lepusha source (road culvert)	Point B	Irrigation channel (Lepusha)	Buronja (downstream)	Lasko Bridge	Total production of surface water in Lepusha (l/s)
16.07.24	-	550	-	210	1,313	1,333	-
23.07.24	-	475	-	210	1,300	1,260	-
31.07.24	-	481	-	214	1,278	1,290	-
07.08.24	-	445	-	207	1,278	1,265	-
10.08.24	392	420	387	198	1,273	1,252	585
15.08.24	339	398	408	193	1,047	1,155	601
22.08.24	322	407	371	168	1,503	1,204	539
29.08.24	304	375	369	164	1,064	1,203	533
12.09.24	287	317	374	139	1,018	1,211	513
26.09.24	269	317	368	0	910	1,097	368
16.10.24	247	272	346	0	813	1,109	346
05.11.24	232	245	277	0	723	930	277
11.12.24	200	250	265	0	891	1682	265
17.01.2025	424	427	465	0	1169	1780	465
20.02.2025	539	662	699	0	1416	1559	669
21.03.2025	486	612	692	0	1274	1384	692
25.04.2025	485	563	583	0	1121	1382	583
28.05.2025	585	638	N/A	0	1262	1217	N/A
16.06.2025	519	549	N/A	146	1202	1220	549
03.07.2025	**N/A**	**491**	N/A	**125**	**1120**	**1044**	**491**

Annex B: Lepusha Study Flow Measurement 2018 - Final Report for Lepusha Source, Consulting Services For RWSP IV, Minimum Yield Measurement Campaign, CES Consulting Engineers Salzgitter GmbH

Table A3-1: Lepusha Source Investigation – Surface flow measurement dated 26th August 2018

No.	Measuring point chainage (m)	Segment width W (m)	Water depth H (m)	Cross section A (m^2)	Velocity V (m/s)	Flow Q (m^3/s)
S-1 – Lepusha spring						
1	0.700	0.700	0.350	0.245	0.850	0.208
2	1.650	0.950	0.300	0.285	0.434	0.124
3	2.000	0.350	0.180	0.063	0.860	0.054
4	2.300	0.300	0.050	0.015	0.660	0.010
Total						0.396
S-2 – Irrigation Channel						
1	0.800	0.800	0.210	0.168	0.880	0.148
Total						0.148
S-3 – Shushica Main Stream						
1	0.700	0.700	0.400	0.280	0.730	0.204
2	1.300	0.600	0.300	0.180	1.100	0.198
3	1.800	0.500	0.200	0.100	0.740	0.074
4	2.400	0.600	0.100	0.060	0.650	0.039
Total						0.515

Table A3-2: Lepusha Source Investigation – Surface flow measurement dated 2nd September 2018

No.	Measuring point chainage (m)	Segment width W (m)	Water depth H (m)	Cross section A (m^2)	Velocity V (m/s)	Flow Q (m^3/s)
S-1 – Lepusha spring						
1	0.700	0.700	0.350	0.245	0.740	0.181
2	1.650	0.950	0.300	0.285	0.413	0.118
3	2.000	0.350	0.180	0.063	0.835	0.053
4	2.300	0.300	0.050	0.015	0.625	0.009
Total						0.361
S-2 – Irrigation Channel						
1	0.800	0.800	0.210	0.168	0.850	0.143
Total						0.143
S-3 – Shushica Main Stream						
1	0.700	0.700	0.400	0.280	0.800	0.224
2	1.300	0.600	0.300	0.180	1.000	0.180
3	1.800	0.500	0.200	0.100	0.710	0.071
4	2.400	0.600	0.100	0.060	0.610	0.037
Total						0.512

Table A3-3: Lepusha Source Investigation – Surface flow measurement dated 5th September 2018

No.	Measuring point chainage (m)	Segment width W (m)	Water depth H (m)	Cross section A (m^2)	Velocity V (m/s)	Flow Q (m^3/s)
S-1 – Lepusha spring						
1	0.700	0.700	0.350	0.245	0.725	0.178
2	1.650	0.950	0.300	0.285	0.410	0.117
3	2.000	0.350	0.180	0.063	0.811	0.051
4	2.300	0.300	0.050	0.015	0.620	0.009
Total						0.355
S-2 – Irrigation Channel						
1	0.800	0.800	0.210	0.168	0.850	0.143
Total						0.143
S-3 – Shushica Main Stream						
1	0.700	0.700	0.380	0.266	0.730	0.194
2	1.300	0.600	0.320	0.192	0.958	0.184
3	1.800	0.500	0.170	0.085	0.694	0.059
4	2.400	0.600	0.080	0.048	0.612	0.029
Total						0.466

Table A3-4: Lepusha Source Investigation – Surface flow measurement dated 11th September 2018

No.	Measuring point chainage (m)	Segment width W (m)	Water depth H (m)	Cross section A (m^2)	Velocity V (m/s)	Flow Q (m^3/s)
S-1 – Lepusha spring						
1	0.700	0.700	0.350	0.245	0.742	0.182
2	1.650	0.950	0.300	0.285	0.441	0.126
3	2.000	0.350	0.180	0.063	0.835	0.053
4	2.300	0.300	0.050	0.015	0.630	0.009
Total						0.370
S-2 – Irrigation Channel						
1	0.800	0.800	0.220	0.176	0.865	0.152
Total						0.152
S-3 – Shushica Main Stream						
1	0.700	0.700	0.380	0.266	0.952	0.253
2	1.300	0.600	0.350	0.210	0.437	0.092
3	1.800	0.500	0.240	0.120	0.651	0.078
4	2.400	0.600	0.140	0.084	0.550	0.046
Total						0.469

Table A3-5: Lepusha Source Investigation – Surface flow measurement dated 18th September 2018

No.	Measuring point chainage (m)	Segment width W (m)	Water depth H (m)	Cross section A (m^2)	Velocity V (m/s)	Flow Q (m^3/s)
S-1 – Lepusha spring						
1	0.700	0.700	0.350	0.245	0.711	0.174
2	1.650	0.950	0.300	0.285	0.421	0.120
3	2.000	0.350	0.180	0.063	0.842	0.053
4	2.300	0.300	0.050	0.015	0.643	0.010
Total						0.357
S-2 – Irrigation Channel						
1	0.800	0.800	0.220	0.176	0.860	0.151
Total						0.151
S-3 – Shushica Main Stream						
1	0.700	0.700	0.260	0.182	0.759	0.138
2	1.300	0.600	0.300	0.180	0.754	0.136
3	1.800	0.500	0.240	0.120	0.883	0.106
4	2.400	0.600	0.080	0.048	0.493	0.024
Total						0.403

Table A3-6: Lepusha Source Investigation – Surface flow measurement dated 24th September 2018

No.	Measuring point chainage (m)	Segment width W (m)	Water depth H (m)	Cross section A (m²)	Velocity V (m/s)	Flow Q (m³/s)
S-1 – Lepusha spring						
1	0.700	0.700	0.330	0.231	0.475	0.110
2	1.650	0.950	0.280	0.266	0.880	0.234
3	2.300	0.650	0.150	0.098	0.842	0.082
4	2.300	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Total						0.426
S-2 – Irrigation Channel						
1	0.800	0.800	0.220	0.176	0.861	0.152
Total						0.152
S-3 – Shushica Main Stream						
1	0.700	0.700	0.360	0.252	0.711	0.179
2	1.300	0.600	0.300	0.180	0.723	0.130
3	1.800	0.500	0.240	0.120	0.819	0.098
4	2.400	0.600	0.080	0.048	0.485	0.023
Total						0.431

Table A3-7: Lepusha Source Investigation – Surface flow measurement dated 30th September 2018

No.	Measuring point chainage (m)	Segment width W (m)	Water depth H (m)	Cross section A (m^2)	Velocity V (m/s)	Flow Q (m^3/s)
S-1 – Lepusha spring						
1	0.700	0.700	0.370	0.259	0.629	0.163
2	1.650	0.950	0.290	0.276	0.790	0.218
3	2.300	0.650	0.100	0.065	0.587	0.038
4	2.300	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Total						0.419
S-2 – Irrigation Channel						
1	0.800	0.800	0.220	0.176	0.873	0.154
Total						0.154
S-3 – Shushica Main Stream						
1	0.700	0.700	0.360	0.252	0.629	0.159
2	1.300	0.600	0.300	0.180	0.790	0.142
3	1.800	0.500	0.240	0.120	0.587	0.070
4	2.400	0.600	0.080	0.048	0.493	0.024
Total						0.395

Table A3-8: Lepusha Source Investigation – Surface flow measurement dated 7th October 2018

No.	Measuring point chainage (m)	Segment width W (m)	Water depth H (m)	Cross section A (m^2)	Velocity V (m/s)	Flow Q (m^3/s)
S-1 – Lepusha spring						
1	0.700	0.700	0.340	0.238	0.474	0.113
2	1.650	0.950	0.280	0.266	0.733	0.195
3	2.000	0.350	0.160	0.056	0.448	0.025
4	2.300	0.300	0.050	0.015	0.726	0.011
Total						0.344
S-2 – Irrigation Channel						
1	0.800	0.800	0.220	0.176	0.846	0.149
Total						0.149
S-3 – Shushica Main Stream						
1	1.000	1.000	0.320	0.320	0.494	0.158
2	2.000	1.000	0.310	0.310	0.894	0.277
3	3.000	1.000	0.120	0.120	0.464	0.056
4	3.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Total						0.491

Table A3-9: Lepusha Source Investigation – Surface flow measurement dated 13th October 2018

No.	Measuring point chainage (m)	Segment width W (m)	Water depth H (m)	Cross section A (m²)	Velocity V (m/s)	Flow Q (m³/s)
S-1 – Lepusha spring						
1	0.700	0.700	0.330	0.231	0.396	0.091
2	1.400	0.700	0.180	0.126	0.533	0.067
3	2.000	0.600	0.120	0.072	0.289	0.021
4	2.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Total						0.179
S-2 – Irrigation Channel						
1	0.800	0.800	0.280	0.224	0.660	0.148
Total						0.148
S-3 – Shushica Main Stream						
1	1.000	1.000	0.320	0.320	0.351	0.112
2	2.000	1.000	0.310	0.310	0.492	0.153
3	3.000	1.000	0.120	0.120	0.236	0.028
4	3.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Total						0.293

Table A3-10: Lepusha Source Investigation – Surface flow measurement dated 14th October 2018

No.	Measuring point chainage (m)	Segment width W (m)	Water depth H (m)	Cross section A (m²)	Velocity V (m/s)	Flow Q (m³/s)
S-1 – Lepusha spring						
1	0.700	0.700	0.350	0.245	0.476	0.117
2	1.400	0.700	0.180	0.126	0.630	0.079
3	2.000	0.600	0.120	0.072	0.405	0.029
4	2.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Total						0.225
S-2 – Irrigation Channel						
1	0.800	0.800	0.250	0.200	0.732	0.146
Total					0.738	0.146
S-3 – Shushica Main Stream						
1	1.000	1.000	0.310	0.310	0.425	0.132
2	2.000	1.000	0.280	0.280	0.598	0.167
3	3.000	1.000	0.100	0.100	0.499	0.050
4	3.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Total						0.349

Table A3-11: Lepusha Source Investigation – Surface flow measurement dated 4th November 2018

No.	Measuring point chainage (m)	Segment width W (m)	Water depth H (m)	Cross section A (m²)	Velocity V (m/s)	Flow Q (m³/s)
S-1 – Lepusha spring						
1	0.700	0.700	0.290	0.203	0.685	0.139
2	1.400	0.700	0.180	0.126	0.577	0.073
3	2.000	0.600	0.120	0.072	0.224	0.016
4	2.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Total						0.228
S-2 – Irrigation Channel						
1	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Total						0.000
S-3 – Shushica Main Stream						
1	1.000	1.000	0.210	0.210	0.557	0.117
2	2.000	1.000	0.280	0.280	1.047	0.293
3	2.900	0.900	0.070	0.063	0.305	0.019
4	2.900	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Total						0.429

Table A3-12: Lepusha Source Investigation – Surface flow measurement dated 18th November 2018

No.	Measuring point chainage (m)	Segment width W (m)	Water depth H (m)	Cross section A (m^2)	Velocity V (m/s)	Flow Q (m^3/s)
S-1 – Lepusha spring						
1	0.200	0.200	0.090	0.018	0.450	0.008
2	0.400	0.200	0.120	0.024	0.250	0.006
3	0.600	0.200	0.150	0.030	0.350	0.011
4	0.800	0.200	0.170	0.034	0.420	0.014
5	1.000	0.200	0.210	0.042	0.750	0.032
6	1.200	0.200	0.260	0.052	0.650	0.034
7	1.400	0.200	0.280	0.056	0.650	0.036
8	1.600	0.200	0.300	0.060	0.780	0.047
Total						0.187
S-2 – Irrigation Channel						
1	0.800	0.800	0.190	0.152	0.375	0.057
Total						0.057
S-3 – Shushica Main Stream						
1	0.500	0.500	0.140	0.070	0.404	0.028
2	1.000	0.500	0.190	0.095	0.700	0.067
3	1.500	0.500	0.200	0.100	1.066	0.107
4	2.000	0.500	0.120	0.060	1.000	0.060
5	2.500	0.500	0.080	0.040	0.350	0.014
Total						0.275

Table A3-13: Lepusha Source Investigation – Surface flow measurement dated 29th November 2018

No.	Measuring point chainage (m)	Segment width W (m)	Water depth H (m)	Cross section A (m^2)	Velocity V (m/s)	Flow Q (m^3/s)
S-1 – Lepusha spring						
1	0.200	0.200	0.270	0.054	0.900	0.049
2	0.400	0.200	0.250	0.050	0.850	0.043
3	0.600	0.200	0.240	0.048	0.800	0.038
4	0.800	0.200	0.240	0.048	0.750	0.036
5	1.000	0.200	0.160	0.032	0.650	0.021
6	1.200	0.200	0.120	0.024	0.500	0.012
7	1.400	0.200	0.100	0.020	0.500	0.010
8	1.600	0.200	0.050	0.010	0.100	0.001
Total						0.209
S-2 – Irrigation Channel						
1	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Total						0.000
S-3 – Shushica Main Stream						
1	0.400	0.400	0.150	0.060	0.900	0.054
2	0.800	0.400	0.250	0.100	1.300	0.130
3	1.200	0.400	0.260	0.104	1.300	0.135
4	1.600	0.400	0.270	0.108	1.300	0.140
5	2.000	0.400	0.250	0.100	1.400	0.140
6	2.400	0.400	0.170	0.068	0.800	0.054
Total						0.654

Table A3-14: Lepusha Source Investigation – Surface flow measurement dated 16th December 2018

No.	Measuring point chainage (m)	Segment width W (m)	Water depth H (m)	Cross section A (m^2)	Velocity V (m/s)	Flow Q (m^3/s)
S-1 – Lepusha spring						
1	0.200	0.200	0.100	0.020	0.400	0.008
2	0.400	0.200	0.170	0.034	0.500	0.017
3	0.600	0.200	0.220	0.044	0.900	0.040
4	0.800	0.200	0.210	0.042	0.900	0.038
5	1.000	0.200	0.200	0.040	1.000	0.040
6	1.200	0.200	0.170	0.034	0.800	0.027
7	1.400	0.200	0.120	0.024	0.800	0.019
8	1.600	0.200	0.100	0.020	0.600	0.012
9	1.800	0.200	0.060	0.012	0.300	0.004
10	2.000	0.200	0.050	0.010	0.100	0.001
Total						0.205
S-2 – Irrigation Channel						
1	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Total						0.000
S-3 – Shushica Main Stream						
1	0.200	0.200	0.280	0.056	0.900	0.050
2	0.400	0.200	0.320	0.064	1.200	0.077
3	0.600	0.200	0.330	0.066	1.500	0.099
4	0.800	0.200	0.280	0.056	1.600	0.090
5	1.000	0.200	0.290	0.058	1.300	0.075
6	1.200	0.200	0.220	0.044	1.100	0.048
7	1.400	0.200	0.210	0.042	1.100	0.046
8	1.600	0.200	0.170	0.034	0.900	0.031
9	1.800	0.200	0.110	0.022	0.200	0.004

10	2.000	0.200	0.050	0.010	0.100	0.001
Total						0.522

Table A3-15: Lepusha Source Investigation – Surface flow measurement Summary from 26/08 – 16/12/2018

Stream	Section	Measured Flow Rates (m³/s)														NOTE
		26/08/2018	02/09/2018	05/09/2018	11/09/2018	18/09/2018	24/09/2018	30/09/2018	07/10/2018	13/10/2018	14/10/2018	04/11/2018	18/11/2018	29/11/2018	16/12/2018	
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	
Lepusha spring	S-1	0.396	0.361	0.355	0.370	0.357	0.426	0.419	0.344	0.179	0.225	0.228	0.187	0.209	0.205	recession
Irrigation Channel	S-2	0.148	0.143	0.143	0.152	0.151	0.152	0.154	0.149	0.148	0.146	0.000	0.057	0.000	0.000	recession
Shushica Main Stream	S-3	0.515	0.512	0.466	0.469	0.403	0.431	0.395	0.491	0.293	0.349	0.429	0.275	0.654	0.522	recession
Balance (m³/s)		0.663	0.654	0.609	0.622	0.555	0.582	0.548	0.640	0.441	0.495	0.429	0.332	0.654	0.522	Shushica aquifer recession

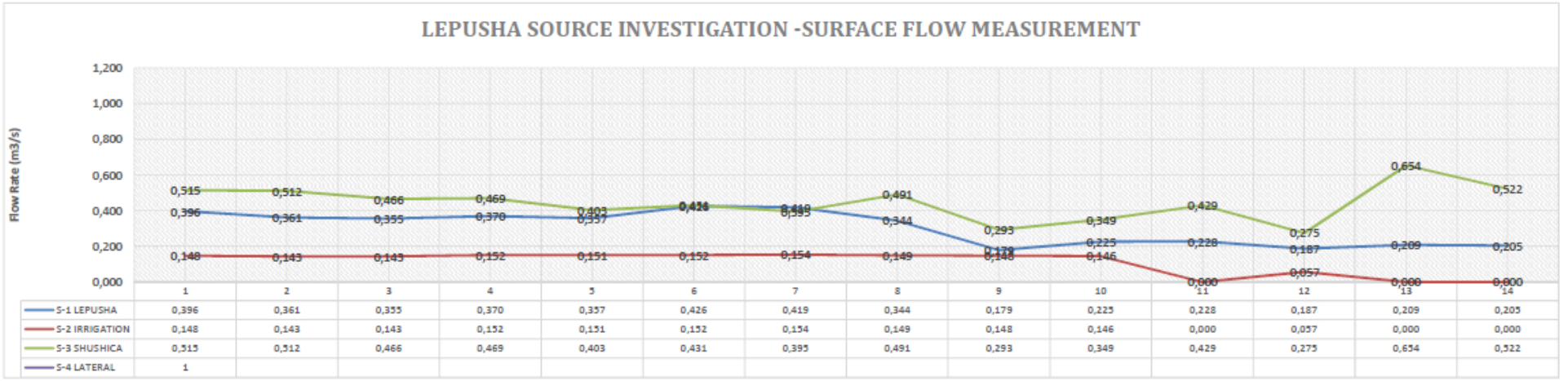


Figure A3-1: Lepusha Source Investigation – Surface flow measurement Summary from 26/08 – 16/12/2018

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REPUBLIC OF ALBANIA
MINISTRY OF TOURISM AND ENVIRONMENT

Tirana February 14, 2025

To: **Mr. Mikaël Poutiers**
Secretary of the Bern Convention
Council of Europe
F-67075 Strasbourg Cedex, France

Subject: Case – file report on the response to "Complaint No. 2016/05: Open File: Albania: Presumed negative impact of developments on the Vjosa river including hydro-power plant development and Vlora International Airport

Dear Mr. Poutiers,

With the reference to the Standing Committee Decision of the Bern Convention at its 44th meeting of December 2024 considering "Complaint No. 2016/05: Open File: Albania: Presumed negative impact of developments on the Vjosa river including hydro-power plant development and Vlora International Airport", where the government was invited to submit a progress report including the 11 point of Recommendation No. 2019 (2023) as the basis for their reporting, please find below the requested one:

The Government of Albania reaffirm their full commitment to the principles of the Bern Convention, ensuring that environmental protection and sustainable development remain top priorities. In this regard we would like to present the latest developments regarding the Vjosa River National Park, the Vlora International Airport project, and the Law on Protected Areas.

Since the submission of the last report in July 2024, the Albanian Government has successfully completed the Integrated Management Plan (IMP) for Vjosa River National Park (NP) approved by Minister of Tourism and Environment Order no. 342 date 23.09.2024 (annex 1). This document has now been formally approved and is under full implementation, ensuring that the highest standards of protection are in place for the Vjosa ecosystem.
The IMP guarantees:

- Permanent protection of Vjosa River and its tributaries, reinforcing the ban on all hydropower projects and major infrastructure developments.
- Sustainable management practices, ensuring that tourism, agriculture, and local economic activities align with conservation priorities.

- Regular biodiversity monitoring and ecological research programs to assess potential environmental threats and ensure evidence-based conservation strategies.
- Effective enforcement mechanisms, with designated rangers and oversight structures to prevent illegal activities within the park.

Furthermore, Albania has officially submitted the dossier for the recognition of Vjosa Valley as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve under the Man and Biosphere (MAB) Program. This submission marks a historic step towards reinforcing the region's international recognition and conservation status. The designation as a Biosphere Reserve will:

- Strengthen regional and international collaboration on conservation and scientific research.
- Support local sustainable development initiatives, benefiting communities while preserving biodiversity.
- Provide an additional legal framework to prevent environmentally damaging projects in the future.

These two major achievements represent a firm commitment by the Albanian Government to the long-term preservation of the Vjosa ecosystem in full alignment with international conservation agreements.

The Albanian Government recognizes the ongoing concerns regarding the Vlora International Airport project and remains committed to ensuring that its construction and operation adhere to the highest environmental protection standards. The latest environmental verification reports confirm that:

- Mitigation measures have been strictly applied to minimize any potential ecological impact on the Narta Lagoon.
- Strict biodiversity monitoring continues, conducted by NAPA and independent experts, assessing species presence and ensuring conservation protocols are upheld.
- Noise and light reduction measures have been successfully implemented to minimize disturbances to migratory birds.
- A dedicated ecological oversight team is actively monitoring compliance with the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) conditions, ensuring immediate corrective actions if required.

It is important to emphasize that environmental assessments and monitoring protocols are ongoing, allowing authorities to adapt conservation strategies as necessary. The Albanian Government remains open to further collaboration with the Bern Convention and international conservation organizations to ensure that all environmental concerns are addressed effectively.

Furthermore the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) has initiated the certification process for VIA Airport, where one of the regulatory requirements to be addressed prior to certification is the submission by the operator of a Wildlife Risk Management Program.

2. The wildlife risk management program may cover an area of approximately 13 km (7 NM) from the aerodrome point of reference and must include, at least, the following elements:

a. staffing:

i. a person who is responsible for developing and implementing the wildlife risk program

ii. a person who oversees daily wildlife control activities and analyzes the data collected, and conducts risk assessments to develop and implement the wildlife risk program

iii. trained and qualified staff to discover and record birds/wildlife

b. a process to report, collect and record data on struck and living birds/wildlife;

c. a process to analyse data and assess risk to birds/wildlife to develop mitigation measures, proactive and reactive measures. This should include a risk assessment methodology;

d. a process to manage the habitat and land both on and around the site, whenever possible, in order to reduce the attractiveness of the area to birds/wildlife;

e. a process to remove dangerous birds/wildlife;

f. a process for liaison with non-aeroportual agencies and local landowners, etc. to ensure that the airport is aware of developments that may contribute to creating additional risks to birds within the vicinity of the airport infrastructure, vegetation, land use and activities (for example harvesting crops, sowing seeds, ploughing, installation of land or water features, hunting, etc. that may attract birds/wildlife).

3. In support of addressing wildlife management, DCM 784 has been recently approved, dated 18/12/2024 “Decision on determining the rules for the development of airport areas”, in which the Article 10 refers to: “The development of activities or activities that may attract wildlife within protected airport areas are subject of preliminary assessments by the CAA.

4. The CAA has a dedicated function for the environment, where coordination with the airport will play a key role on: establishing an Environmental Management System, which includes the entire set of procedures and policies that the operator should follow for the full implementation of requirements for the protection of the environment, surrounding areas and the management of wildlife risks.

5. CAA has approved by the Executive Director Decision, a guiding document, Wildlife Hazard Management Guidance Material ACAA-DAD-GM7-WHM, dated 15.05.2024, which serves as a good guidance for operators to use regarding the management of wildlife and the protection of areas around the airport.

6. CAA in implementation of Article 9 of Ministerial Order 170/2022 will ensure that consultations are carried out in relation to human activities and land use such as:

a. any development or change in land use in the aerodrome area

b. the creation of areas that may encourage the activity of wild animals that might harm aircraft operations;

7. CAA in implementation of Article 10 of Ministerial Order 170/2022 Wildlife Hazard Management will ensure that this assessment is carried out through:

a. establishing a national procedure for recording and reporting wildlife strikes on aircraft;

b. collecting information from aircraft operators, aerodrome personnel and other sources on the presence of wildlife that poses a potential risk to aircraft operations;

c. an ongoing wildlife risk assessment by competent personnel.

8. As part of fulfilling the obligations in Order of Minister No. 170/2022, AMC1 ADR.OPS.B.020 “Reducing the risk of wildlife strikes”, CAA will coordinate the establishment of a national wildlife strike risk reduction program, in which the aerodrome operator and stakeholders will be part.

9. Part of the CAA's oversight activities at the operator will be to cover the field of wildlife management.

10. Part of the discussions in working groups such as RST will be wildlife management. All airport stakeholders participate in the RST, including environmental experts according to thematic areas.

The Law on Protected Areas, which has now been fully approved and enacted, provides a strengthened legal framework for protected area governance, enforcement, and conservation in Albania. Contrary to concerns raised, the law does not weaken environmental protection; instead, it:

- Strengthens legal enforcement against illegal activities, including poaching and unauthorized construction in protected areas.
- Expands the responsibilities and resources available to NAPA, reinforcing its role in safeguarding Albania’s natural heritage.
- Aligns national conservation policies with EU directives, ensuring compliance with Albania’s European integration commitments.

Regarding concerns over zonation in protected landscapes, it is important to clarify that while the new law has removed strict zonation for certain protected landscapes, this does not mean a reduction in protection. Instead, the new approach enhances flexibility in management while maintaining strong conservation safeguards. The following principles ensure continued environmental protection:

- A more flexible and adaptive management approach allows local authorities to respond to conservation needs dynamically rather than being bound by rigid zonation rules.
- Management plans will still define specific restrictions and conservation measures tailored to each protected landscape, ensuring that biodiversity conservation remains a top priority.
- The removal of zonation does not equate to reduced protection, as protected landscapes still fall under the highest environmental governance frameworks dictated by the law.

To mitigate risks, the law requires the development of detailed management plans for each protected landscape, specifying:

- Areas where economic activities such as tourism and agriculture are permissible.
- Strict biodiversity monitoring and impact assessment mechanisms.
- Prohibitions on activities that could significantly degrade ecosystems or alter the natural landscape.

While the Bern Convention has expressed concern over the elimination of zonation, it is important to note that many European countries manage protected landscapes using adaptive management

principles rather than strict zoning. The new Albanian legal framework aligns with international best practices by:

- Encouraging community-based conservation approaches.
- Ensuring management remains flexible yet science-based.
- Providing legal instruments for intervention if any activities threaten biodiversity.

This approach ensures that protected landscapes remain safeguarded while allowing for sustainable economic activities, balancing conservation needs with local development priorities. The Albanian Government remains committed to international conservation standards and will continue to monitor and refine management strategies based on best practices and scientific input.

Sincerely,