

# Governance for the Montenegro TB MAB BR Skadar Lake

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Task: Scope of the work is to provide national expertise in the area of governance for the purpose of finalizing the Nomination Form of future TBR Skadar Lake.

## **Abbreviations:**

Alb - Albania

CEED – Centre for Entrepreneurship and Economic Development

CEPF – Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund

CITES - Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora

DASHI - Dinaric Arc Sustainable Hydropower Initiative

DMO – Destination Management Organisation

EPA – Environmental Protection Agency

EU – Europe Union

GEF – Global Environment Fund

GTZ - German Agency for Technical Cooperation

IFAD – International Fund for Agricultural Development

ISSP – Institute for Strategic Studies and Prognosis

IUCN - International Union for Conservation of Nature

LSIEMP - Lake Skadar Integrated Ecosystem Management Project

LTO – Local Tourism Organisation

LUC – Land Use Consultant

MAB BR – Man and Biosphere Reserve

MIDAS - Montenegro Institutional Development and Agriculture Strengthening

Mne - Montenegro

MONSTAT – Statistical Office of Montenegro

MORT – Ministry of Sustainable Development and Tourism

MSME – Micro, small and medium sized enterprise

NGO – Non Governmental Organisation

NP – National Park

NPSL – National Park Skadar Lake

NTO – National Tourism Organisation

PA- Protected areas

PAD – Project Appraisal Document

REC – Regional Environment Center

SAP – Strategic Appraisal Programme

SEA – Strategic Environmental Assessment

SH - Stakeholder

SME – Small and medium enterprises

SNV – Netherlands Development Organisation

TB – Trans-boundary

TBR – Trans-boundary Reserve

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UNDP – United Nation Development Programme  
UNESCO - United Nation Education Science Culture Organisation  
UNOPS – United Nation Office for Project Services  
UNWTO - United Nations World Tourism Organization  
WB – World Bank  
WTTC - World Travel and Tourism Council  
WWF – World Wild Fund

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## **I Legislation, political and strategic directions of Montenegro**

Bearing in mind the commitment of Montenegro to be an ecological state by its Statute as of 1991, its development directions toward agriculture and tourism (together with energy sector), and its orientation toward EU, sustainable development is to be complied with a number of EU regulations that relate to the protection of the environment and sustainable use of natural resources.

Montenegro is a signatory to a large number of international agreements which form the foundation to the long term sustainable development, some of which are: Kyoto Protocol to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (1992); The UN Convention on Biological Diversity (1992) and the European Biodiversity Strategy (1998). Moreover, here significant: Convention on Protection of World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972); Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of international importance (1971), but also: Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES); Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention); Bern Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats; Bonn Convention on Migratory Species.

Several key Directives relevant to the sustainable development are: Directive on Conservation of Wild Birds (1979); Waste Framework Directive (1975, amended 1991); Air Quality Framework Directive; Water Framework Directive; Directive to Promote Electricity from Renewable Energy, EU habitat directive, etc.

Montenegro is a signatory to the Barcelona Convention for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea and its protocols and has developed programs within the framework of the Mediterranean Action Plan (Skadar Lake-Shkoder drains directly into the Adriatic Sea through the Bojana River). Also, it is signatory to the Espoo Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context and the Helsinki Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes.

Relevant national laws in Montenegro include: The Law on National Parks (currently under revision), The Law on Environment, The Law on Nature protection, The Law on Waters, The Law on Freshwater Fishery, The Law on Forests, The Law on Agricultural Land, The Law on Tourism, The Law on Waste Management, The Law on Environmental Impact Assessment, The Law on Strategic Environmental Assessment, The Law on Integrated Pollution Prevention and Control, The Law on Waste Management, The Law on Spatial Planning and Development, etc.

Relevant Strategic documents in Montenegro include: National Biodiversity Strategy with Action Plan 2010-2015 (under revision), National Strategy for Sustainable Development (till 2020), Tourism Development Strategy until 2020; Strategy for Fishery Development of Montenegro and Strengthening of the Capacities for the Implementation of the Common Fishery Policy of EU.

## II Current and future designation outlook of Skadar Lake:

Skadar Lake region has been an important historical, economic and cultural destination over time. Skadar Lake has high ambient, ecological, landscape and cultural-historical values (Rijeka Crnojevica, Vranjina, Lesendro, Zabljak, Virpazar and monastery's complexes on the archipelago), of national and international importance.

Nationally protected as **National Park** since 1983 (IUCN category II, with defined nature reserves areas: IUCN category I), in 1996 it was internationally protected on both sides, Montenegro and Albania<sup>1</sup>, as **Ramsar site**. Skadar Lake region is on the list of **Important Plant Areas (IPA)**, and on the list of **Important Bird Areas (IBA)**, too. Based on the criteria of Bern Convention, 17 **Emerald habitats** with good representation have been identified in the Lake region. Although the work on identification of **Natura 2000 habitats** based on the Habitat and Bird directives of the EU has started for Montenegro, the sites are still not adopted, though the Special Areas of Conservation are present in this region.

As noted in the Spatial Plan of Montenegro, and in order to expand the **network of protected areas**, there is left an open possibility to be considered, of expanding borders of the National Park Skadar Lake to the Regional Park Rumija (not established) or the area of Šasko Lake/the River Bojana Delta. Moreover, according to the Spatial Plan till 2020, the Skadar Lake basin is identified as **cross-boundary development zone**, where development priorities are set on traffic integration, primarily by construction of the part of the Adriatic-Ionian motorway, fast road in the coast hinterland and navigable roads on Skadar Lake, economic cooperation in the field of industry, energy, tourism, agriculture, trade and environmental protection.

Some of the cross-border cooperation progress is laid down below:

**2000** – The first international project, “Promotion of Networks and Exchanges in SEE countries”, started its implementation. The main aim of the project was to enhance cooperation between neighbouring countries over shared natural resources.

**2003** – Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed by two relevant Ministries from two involved countries over environmental protection and implementation of the principle of sustainable development.

**2000-2009** – Cross-border Forum for Skadar Lake has been established, gathering representatives of different institutions from two countries relevant for the management and protection of Skadar Lake (National Park, local authorities, ministries, NGOs, nature protection institutes, educational institutions). They further enhanced cooperation between two countries through many different activities implemented jointly.

**2005** – International workshop “Lake Skadar International Designations for Territorial Development”, held in October 2005, when two Prime-ministers expressed the necessity and willingness to work further on joint protection of Skadar Lake. The workshop was conducted by international organizations: UNDP, UNESCO and IUCN.

**2008-2012** - Skadar Lake Integrated Ecosystem Management Project (LSIEMP), the largest international project regarding management of Skadar Lake resources so far. Through this project, the Agreement between the Ministry of Tourism and Environment of Montenegro and Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Water Administration of the Republic of Albania for the protection and sustainable

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<sup>1</sup> 20.000ha on Mne side and 49,562ha on Alb, together with Buna/Bojana river

development of the Skadar-Shkoder Lake has been signed, thus establishing Skadar-Shkoder Lake Commission.

**2010 - EU IPA cross-border component Alb-Mne** - Under the first call the project undertaken on the Skadar Lake ecosystem have been: “Support to the proposed cross-border Biosphere Reserve of Lake Skadar region, trough participative approach”, lead by civil society organisations NGO Green Home and NGO INCA.

National and local strategies and plans in both Montenegro and Albania identified the Skadar Lake area as a priority for environmental protection, sustainable natural resource management, and nature/culture-based tourism development. Therefore, both sides are implementing activities as part of undergoing initiative for **proclamation of Trans-boundary MAB BR Skadar Lake**, where nomination file is under preparation.

### III Overview of main stakeholders and their roles

#### 1. Cross-border level

Cooperation between Montenegro and Albania in the area of Skadar Lake has been formalized by signing two Memorandums from the side of two relevant ministries. The first is a Memorandum of Understanding on environmental protection and implementation of the principle of sustainable development between Montenegro and Albania. The agreement was designed with the support of the REC and signed in 2003 by the Ministry of Environment of Montenegro and Albania. By doing so, the two countries commit to conserve the natural resources of Skadar Lake in a coordinated and integrated manner and to improve the relevant national level regulatory and institutional capacities. Both governments show their willingness to cooperate in improving the protection and management of the Lake and its resources. Taking that opportunity cross-border forum has been formed with representatives of different institutions relevant for the mentioned issues. A development in bilateral co-operation was the joint inauguration by the Prime-ministers of the two countries of the international workshop on “Skadar Lake international designations for territorial development” on 18-19 October, 2005 in Vranjina (Montenegro) and Shkodra, conducted by international organizations like UNDP, UNESCO, IUCN and others.

Last, the two Ministers of environment signed Declaration of Lake Day, agreeing that third week of June will be every year celebrated as Skadar Lake Day.

The second agreement is a memorandum on cooperation in protection and sustainable development of the Skadar Lake, signed between the ministries in February 2008.

#### 2. National and local government

In Montenegro, the following institutions at the national level are responsible for dealing with issues of protection and development of the NP Skadar Lake region: Ministry of Sustainable development and tourism, Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Culture (within which is National Commission for UNESCO Secretary General and President), Ministry of Internal Affairs and European integrations, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural development.

**Ministry of Sustainable development and tourism** merged previous Ministry of environment and spatial planning and Ministry of tourism, is responsible for the formulation and execution of the national sustainable development and tourism policy. It has a supervisory and coordinating function in the work of nature protection institutions such as National Parks of Montenegro in charge for managing the National Park which key role is in protecting biodiversity and managing of protected areas. Its environmental responsibilities include nature protection, biodiversity and protected area management and its legislation. In addition to these, it has a regulatory and coordinating role in communal and spatial planning issues, including waste and wastewater management. Efforts are also focused on the economic development of certain areas, and especially on the assessment of tourism development and conservation of natural values of the Skadar Lake. The sector for tourism of this Ministry is inter alia responsible for the promotion of National Parks.

**Ministry of Agriculture and Rural development** is responsible for, among others, the management of water resources (including their protection against pollution but also in NP Skadar Lake relevant extraction of sand and gravel (concession issuing authority)), agricultural land, forests, hunting and fishing, extraction of economic development in these fields. Several other ministries play a role in the

environment of the Lake and its basin, depending on the issue. At the moment the agenda of the Ministry is directed toward support of ecologically sound agricultural measures, through the newly adopted document on good agricultural practices back up by MIDAS funds.

**Inspection Directorate** – It is a newly established institution (in 2012) that acts as a central body for the most of the inspectorates that were previously scattered across different Ministries and institutions. The aim of this Directorate is to improve the efficiency of control and enforcement of various laws and regulations, prevent overlap of competences, improve cooperation among the inspectorates and with other institutions, build capacities of the staff, act to prevent and decrease corruption. The inspectorates that are most relevant for Skadar Lake are for the following: tourism; spatial protection; environmental protection; construction; agriculture; water resources; forestry, hunting and wild plants. In the next phase of expansion, this Directorate should also incorporate the inspectorate for the protection of cultural heritage.<sup>2</sup>

**Juridical system** – in respect to the Lake, it is responsible for processing charges and issuing fines and penalties for all illegal activities such as illegal fishing, construction, hunting, exploitation of resources, etc.

On the level of institutional responsibility for protection and monitoring of environment **Environment Protection Agency (EPA)** is an administrative body in charge of the environment protection, monitoring, issuing licenses, preparation of analysis, environmental reporting and inspection, as well as communication with international organizations and general public.

*Institute for Protection of Nature* recently merged with the EPA is institution whose mission is the protection and conservation of protected natural objects (i.e. natural monuments, nature reserves and protected plant and animal species). The Institute is responsible for implementing nature protection policies and its function is executed through: keeping a record on an inventory of the protected natural goods; proposing measures for protection of nature to relevant authorities; identification of natural resources in need for a special protection status; conducting research and monitoring projects for protection and preservation of nature; preparation of plans and programs for improvement in protected natural objects, providing expert opinions on the project documentation and spatial plans, etc.

**National Parks of Montenegro** (redefining its status from previous Public Enterprise) was founded in 1993, same as NP Skadar Lake, pursuant to the Law on National Parks, as the management body that manages natural and cultural resources of a protected area of the National Parks (at the time joining independent NPs: Durmitor, Biogradska gora and Lovcen under one company). The National Parks is responsible for protecting, promoting and managing the five Montenegrin national parks units: Biogradska Gora, Lovcen, Durmitor, Skadar Lake and newly established Prokletije. Two main documents of each national park are Spatial Plan and 5 years Management Plan. Two basic functions of the National Parks are: (i) protection of natural and cultural resources, i.e. physical protection in a form of the monitoring service which operates on the field and which records and reports to the inspections all types of illegal activities (illegal construction, illegal fishing, felling trees, etc.) and (ii) development, in terms of education, increase of awareness and implementation of specific projects related to tourism, focusing on nature – oriented tourism (walking, cycling, bird watching) and in accordance with the protection of the environment, as well as promotion and education: educational campaigns, educational workshops, etc. Some of the main activities include: implementation of management plans; determining and enforcing internal rules of conduct in national parks; research and monitoring of environmental

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<sup>2</sup> Vogdelic, M. 2012

conditions and processes within the parks; issues the rights to use natural resources to other parties, in accordance with laws and regulations (e.g. concessions); performing other activities of public interest, as stipulated by the laws and other acts, etc.

NPs revenue is partly generated by the collection of fees and charges levied on fishing, wood cutting, sand extraction (Skadar Lake) and other economic activities such as tourism, some from the taxes, and some for the government, etc. Toward the self-sustainable financial directions of NPs and better utilisation of potentials the company is in the process of producing business plans for some of the units.

**Natural History Museum** keeps the extraordinary collection of flora, fauna and geological samples, and provides expertise in the studies of biodiversity. With regard to the Skadar Lake, a Museum's particularly important activity is a regular winter bird counting.

**Centre for Eco-toxicological Research (CETI) and Hydro-meteorological Institute (HMZ)** are key institutions responsible for monitoring the environment in Montenegro through its regular activities, or based on special agreements. These institutions monitor the quality and concentration of pollutants in various elements of the natural environment - air, water and soil. Program of monitoring of water and water resources is especially important regarding the management of the Skadar Lake and therefore CETI has an important role in monitoring pollutions that industries brings into the waters, especially KAP. HMZ keeps an electronic database with a series of data on a water quality for a longer period. This database includes options that enable connection and sharing of data, extrapolation and trend analysis. Their reports are shared with NP Skadar Lake authorities.

**Department of Biology at the Faculty of Natural Science** has grown from the Institute for Bio-Medical Research. Until 1980s, almost all of the projects that the Institute has worked on referred to the Skadar Lake and from the time onward there have been investigated other mainland and water ecosystems (natural Lakes, artificial Lakes, river flows) as well, for the Republic of Montenegro's purposes, i.e. energy sector, fishing households (CEED, 2010). The Department is an institution that should define a fish base of the Skadar Lake, which would be considered a base for assessment of the fishing volume from the Lake.

**CANU** (Montenegrin Academy for science and art) in terms of Skadar Lake intervention, last several years together with the Albanian academy for science and art has been working on the project "Regulation of water regime of Skadar Lake waters and river bed of Bojana River".

Goal of CANU at the first phase of the project is to free up about 5.000ha of arable land in the territory of Montenegro by regulation of water of the Skadar Lake and rivers of Drim and Bojana. The idea is to deepen a riverbed and to make a river dam, boat route, fish trace that will enable natural communication with the Lake. So far, the land has been flooded several times and inhabitants of Zeta do have the right to use this land. At the second phase of the project, additional 14.800ha of arable land would be gained (CEED, 2010).

Expert services of the **Institute for Protection of Cultural Monuments** created a number of projects for conservation and presentation of sites on the Skadar Lake. Thirty-three cultural monuments have been legally protected in the close and broad surroundings of the Skadar Lake. Determination of a protected zone is in progress, as well as a creation of rehabilitation program for degraded monuments (CEED 2010).

**Office for Sustainable development** has been concerned with environment and sustainable development, questions about ecological state of Montenegro on strategic level, nowadays incorporated in Ministry for Sustainable Development and Tourism.

**Directorate for development of small and medium sized enterprise** has a mission to give institutional preconditioned development educational and promotional support to the SMEs and entrepreneurship development.

Recently established (2012), **Regional Centre for Culture** in Cetinje is the fifth centre established in SEE by UNESCO, specialized in the management of cultural heritage.

**National Park Skadar Lake** is the organizational unit of the (Public Company) National Parks of Montenegro. Its management authority is directly involved in the protection and management of the Lake and its shores. The NPSL has a 5 year Management programme (2011-2015) and annual plans for the conservation and development of the park. The Main Goals of the Plan are:

- Protection, use and management of protected natural area;
- Conservation, maintenance and monitoring of natural and other values;
- Sustainable use of natural resource, development and arrangement of space;
- Promotion and valorisation of the protected natural area;
- Cooperation and partnership with the local people, owners and users of the property.

Given that the Skadar Lake is of a particular interest for Montenegro, it is under the jurisdiction of the institutions at the national level. National Park Skadar Lake, as a key institution in the management and protection of the Lake, operates within the Ministry of Sustainable development and tourism. However, there is a need for a clear cooperation and coordination between relevant ministries, as well as between national and local institutions that have an impact on the Skadar Lake, as well as the clearer division of the roles and responsibilities (CEED, 2010). Also NPs are structures that function on the top down level approach, and therefore local communities are neglected in the decision making, planning and programming processes, as well as in the activities, leaving local issues aside as a constant conflict and confrontation to the protection authorities. Though stipulated as compulsory, the public debates for 5 years Management plan adoption are never held. Among others reasons this is why there is a need for empowerment of local communities.

### 3. Local government

Local governments play an important role because of their direct involvement in physical planning and implementation of urban development, and in acts that regulate the use of areas adjacent to the National Parks. They can have considerable impact in the Park management by controlling (and monitoring) illegal construction of buildings that are considered as a huge issue nowadays. Institutions at the local level in Montenegro recognized the issue of illegal construction and take steps for its resolution. Further, their responsibilities and authorities extend to the management and operation of public utility services such as municipal (solid) waste, water supply and sanitation. The inspectorates for these public utilities are organized within local administration and on the centralized level.

Territory of the National Park Skadar Lake falls within administrative borders of three municipalities: Podgorica (the capital), Bar (the port) and Cetinje (the royal capital). It comprises the following social, economic, and ethnic entities, where entity is representing a wider socio-economic area consisting of more settlements: Krajina and Crmnica in the municipality of Bar; Rijeka entity in the municipality of Cetinje; Ljesanska entity, Zeta and Malesija in the municipality of Podgorica in the north side of Skadar Lake. The most important role of local authorities is related to the management of communal waste and

wastewaters, through their public companies, which is regulated by the Law on Waste Management (Official Gazette 80/05). The Capital of Cetinje, the Capital Podgorica and the Municipality Bar by improper waste water treatment and waste management directly affect the quality of water of the Skadar Lake and hence its ecosystem. In addition, there are also Municipality of Niksic and Danilovgrad that significantly contribute to the amount of wastewaters which through the river of Moraca get at the water of the Skadar Lake (CEED, 2010). Three municipalities, Podgorica, Cetinje and Bar, have two levels in the management of the NP Skadar Lake. They act as protection institutions as well as resource users (SAP, 2007). These local bodies are directly related to the park management and preservation because of their responsibility for managing municipal solid waste and wastewater. However, they have limited budget and, as a consequence, shifts their interests towards the use of the Lake's resources through different economic activities.

A disharmony within a decision-making process was noticed and a competence over certain decisions was questioned between authorities at national and local level. However, all institutions have shown willingness to include development of this area into their development plans (CEED, 2010). The intersection of problems between NP Skadar Lake and Municipalities roughly sometimes ends on the level where when requested NP authorities gives opinion to the development plans and programmes of municipalities, supervised by Ministry of Economy. However lack of direct communication and coordination between municipality authorities and NP ones is evident.

Important to note is establishment of **Local tourist organizations** in each municipality. According to Law of tourism organizations, LTOs are established to improve and promote tourist products in relationship with Strategy of Promotion Montenegrin Tourism on the local and republic level and to support its inclusion in Europe and world tourist trends and market. They should be responsible for: (i) improving of general conditions for tourist staying trough forming complete tourist offer, raising quality of tourist and other complementary services, preserving and making recognizable and attractive tourist ambient of site that they are established for; (ii) awareness development, regarding the importance of tourism, and economical, socio and other tourism effects, about the need and importance of preserving and improving all the tourist product elements of the certain place, especially environment protection; and (iii) enhancing development of tourist infrastructure and providing information for tourists.

The problem the region with this institutional set up is facing is micro orientation of the LTO in territorial and functional aspects, where the competences and work of LTO finishes on the promotional activities. The model does not imply destination models but needs to function within municipality administrative borders.

#### **4. International organizations**

During the past few years, a number of international organizations had a significant role in the management of the Skadar Lake. Activities of these organizations ranged from the support to NGOs and technical assistance to institutions for the protection of nature, to financing a number of research, promotion and investment projects. A large number of institutions for the protection of nature and NGOs develop a long-term cooperation with various international organizations. International cooperation is particularly important given the global importance of eco-system of the Skadar Lake and a low-level domestic capacity for nature conservation and biodiversity management (CEED, 2010).

In the process of European integration, important is the role of the **Delegation of European Union to Montenegro**.

**The office for Pilot project for development of local communities of Skadar Lake** was part of the Regional program for cultural and natural heritage of South east Europe is a Council of Europe.

The very important and large program for the region of Skadar Lake is **WB/GEF program, Skadar Lake Integrated Ecosystem Management Project (LSIEMP)**. The overall objective of the LSIEMP was to assist the governments of Albania and Montenegro in achieving more sustainable use of the natural resources of Skadar Lake and its watershed.

This program focused on the protection of natural resources, though economic activities are treated in a limited way - as a prevention and control, obviously not supportive, not offering opportunities for income and employment in line with sustainable development. Although called integrated, they still lack the concepts of linking different interests and requirements - both spatially and sectoral - in a coherent way.

**REC** had a lead a Trans-boundary Management of Shared Natural Resources – Skadar Lake Site, October 2000 – December 2006 as already mentioned.

**GTZ, now GIZ** has made its presence through The Cross-boundary spatial planning Lake Scutari region, Albania and Montenegro-05/2006 – 10/2007 and Support to Tourism Destinations in the Hinterland of Montenegro- 01/2006-12/2010 projects. Now working on Monitoring Programme...

**WWF** together with NGO Green Home implemented the initiative: Dinaric Arc Sustainable Hydropower Initiative (DASHI); and NGO Green Home and NGO INCA with IPA Cross-border project: Supporting the proposed Trans-boundary Biosphere Reserve of Lake Skadar/Shkodra area through a participatory approach catalyze the process of submission of the nomination file for TB MAB BR Skadar Lake.

There have been several organizations that left the trace in the Skadar Lake region such as: **EURONATUR**, present in the area and wider as a consultancy body for different documents and plans; **USD IRD** with several projects for improving tourist product of the NP Skadar Lake; **UNESCO** with „Bicycle through Balkan “initiative and M&B training; as well as the UNDP, SNV, etc.

Ongoing trans-boundary projects and initiatives:

**EU IPA cross-border component Alb-Mne** - had 2 calls announcement so far. Under first call the projects undertaken on the Skadar Lake ecosystem have been: “Support to the proposed cross-border Biosphere Reserve of Lake Skadar region, through participative approach” and “Valorisation of ethno-gastronomic heritage of Skadar Lake”. Under second: EMA Plan and “Development of hydrological and hydraulic study of regulation of Skadar lake and Bojana river water regime”. The utilisation of the available funds is not yet full, proving lack of capacities in this area.

**GIZ - Improving the transboundary water management: Conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity at Lakes Prespa, Ohrid and Shkoder (CSBL)** - The Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Water Administration in Albania, Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning in Macedonia and the Ministry of Sustainable Development and Tourism in Montenegro are jointly implementing this project from January 2012 till June 2014. The CSBL project provides technical assistance to administrative entities and public authorities that are responsible for environmental monitoring and management of protected areas, as well as users of biological resources. The aim is to improve the enforcement of laws, regulations and management plans for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity at Lakes Prespa, Ohrid and Skadar.

The project covers four main topics: monitoring of fauna and flora in line with the European Union's Habitats Directive (Natura 2000); management of fish and fisheries, including the establishment of

quotas; the protection and restoration of wetlands; characterization of lakes and defining of environmental objectives under the EU Water Framework Directive. In addition to the projects budget of two million Euros, the support of the German government is reflected in long-term and short-term assignments of experts, provision of materials and equipment, as well as financial arrangements, grants and subsidies.

**CEPF, IUCN - Supporting the Long-Term Sustainable Management of Transboundary Lake Skadar -** Long-term Impacts (3+ Years) is defined as: Enable the effective management of the biodiversity of trans-boundary Skadar Lake shared by Albania and Montenegro by 2020; Short-term Impacts (1-3 Years) as: Improve management practices and capacity for the management of protected areas of Skadar Lake. This is planned to be achieved through following results: Capacity of PA authorities for management planning increased; Awareness of local communities on PA management raised; Information on illegal activities within PAs publicly available; Transboundary cooperation between PAs administration improve.

**CEPF, Noé Conservation - Conservation of Pelicans, a key biodiversity Species of Skadar Lake -** Through its 3 years project funded by CEPF, Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), EuroNatur and Tour du Valat, aims at contributing to the effective management of Skadar Lake National Park, a wetland of international importance, with (i) healthier populations of key biodiversity species, especially Dalmatian Pelicans, (ii) greater appropriation by local stakeholders of their natural heritage and (iii) capacitated local institutions.

**Drin basin UNOPS project -** GEF is funding the project Preparatory Grant (PPG) phase for the Full Size Project (FSP) "Enabling Trans-boundary Cooperation and Integrated Water Resource Management in the Extended Drin River Basin". The project will contribute towards the joint management of the water resources of the extended trans-boundary Drin River Basin. The project builds on the on-going cooperation of the Drin Riparians under the Memorandum of Understanding for the Management of the Extended Drin River Basin (Drin MoU -signed in Tirana, 25 November 2011) and the Action Plan for its implementation. The project will include the following components: 1) Consolidating a common knowledge base; 2) Building the foundation for multi-country cooperation; 3) Institutional strengthening for Integrated River Basin Management; 4) Demonstration of technologies and practices for IWRM and ecosystem management; 5) Stakeholder Involvement, Gender Mainstreaming and Communication Strategies.

## 5. Non-governmental organizations and associations

NGO sector in general, and particularly NGOs in the field of environment, experienced a great expansion during the last decade. Due to that, both in terms of a number of existing organizations and the scope of their projects, environmental NGOs have become an important actor in the management of the Skadar Lake, and their importance continues to grow. Various projects related to the Skadar Lake, which were implemented in recent years by NGOs (and currently in progress), had a positive effect on the protection and management of the Lake. The most significant outcomes of activities undertaken by the NGO sector are increased general awareness on pressures on the Lake and its resources, improvements in promoting the value of Lake and international cooperation (with Albania and other countries) and specific improvements related to the protection of certain species and habitats. In recent period, the main donors for NGOs' activities were international organizations, while the share of domestic sources of finance is still quite low (CEED, 2010). The most prominent ones are: **NGO "Green home"** very active on environmental and transboundary issues and initiatives in Montenegro but especially on Skadar Lake. NGO Green Home is implementing the project - **Towards the designation of Lake Shkodra/Skadar as Trans-boundary Biosphere Reserve** - which main objective is the designation of the Shkodra/Skadar

Lake as the first TBR in the region. The specific objective is carrying out the complete process of nomination and for Skadar Lake to be accepted as Transboundary Biosphere Reserve based on the UNESCO procedures. Also there are following, **NGO “Expeditio”, NGO “Centar za zaštitu i proučavanje ptica” (Center for protection and research of birds)**, which are nationally presented, than, **NGO Educo centar**, and local ones: **NGO “DANI SKADARSKOG JEZERA” (Days of Skadar Lake)**, **NGO “Godinje”**, than, **NGO “Eko turističko udruženje Karuč” (Eco-tourist association Karuc)**, **NGO “Crmnicom na konju” (Crmnica on the horse)**, **NGO “Outdoor club”, NGO “Skadarsko jezero” (Skadar Lake)** Also there are many association, such as: **Agricultural producers, Wine growers, Fisherman association** (recently established), and many clubs such as: **Sport-fisherman club, Sport-fishermen club-Podgorica, Mountain club, Kayak club Moraca, Podgorica, Wind surfing club Pelican, Balloon club, Buducnost**, etc.

## 6. Local communities

**Pilot project for development of local communities of Skadar Lake activated several local communities such as:** Crmnica, Virpazar, Tuzi, Vuksanlekići – Podhum, Rvaši, Vranjina, Rijeka Crnojevića, Ostros, Mrkojevići, Šestani, Dodoši, Drušići, Vranj, Gostilj, Balabani, Donja Zeta, Mataguži and Vukovci Ponari

None of the villages on the shore of the Skadar Lake has documented (other than photo and descriptive), monumental-historical values. The exception is Godinje where NGO EXPEDITIO organized an architectural workshop and published their results. A number of whole settlements and individual buildings have architectural value of traditional architecture authentic objects, and all the villages, whether they are permanent settlements, fishing settlements and mill villages have ambient value. Also, it is important not to forget that many of them bordering on or in the district have a protected monuments or objects of importance in their vicinity or inside their borders.

### Private sector

Private enterprises and local businesses such as hotels, handicrafts shops, tourist agencies, fish markets, hunting clubs, restaurants, catering services etc., are another group of stakeholders. Some of them are: **“Kings”Companies of travel tourist boats; restaurants: “Poslednjaluca”, “Mostina”, “Badanj” “Venezia” “Stari most”, “Ploče” “Crmnica” “Vidikovac”, Restoran and hotel “Pelikan”, Complex “Plavnica”, etc.**

## IV Management issues

Approximately 500.000 people live in the greater Skadar Lake watershed, with two-thirds in Montenegro and one-third in Albania. This was and persisted to be a challenge of the protected area Skadar Lake designation. Local population, as well as small businesses and industries, are mainly interested in using Skadar Lake as a resource.

Sixty percent of the population is urban, living in a few cities: Shkodra in Albania and Podgorica, Niksic, Danilovgrad and Cetinje in Montenegro. The rural population is sparse in small villages and communes. The total population of 40 settlements inside or at the edge of the park in Montenegro is about 12.500. Of these, only about 550 (4%) live in the relatively urbanized settlements of Virpazar and Rijeka Crnojevicica, while the remainder (96%) live in rural areas.

In this region the unemployment rate is about 40% higher than it was in 1991, and since 2003 unemployment has increased 25% in Krjina and 40% in Crmnica (PAD, 2008). The two places suffered severe economic decline during the 1990s and many industries within the watershed collapsed.

According to the statistical data<sup>3</sup>, the majority of settlements within or nearby NP Skadar Lake have a negative demographic trend and the main occupations of their inhabitants are fishery, tourism and small-scale agriculture. However, population density in the Park's buffer zone and the wider Lake region is much higher, and therefore pressures on the resources are more substantial. This particularly refers to Zeta Valley, one of the most intensively cultivated agricultural areas in Montenegro that stretches alongside the northern shore of Skadar Lake, and which has a relatively stable demographic trend. Beside the intensive agricultural activity in the Zeta Plain (includes the use of artificial fertilizers) the large amount of waste, municipal and industrial water (over 69 million m<sup>3</sup>/year), brought to the lake with Morača river negatively affects and intensifies eutrophication of the lake (Radujkovic & Sundic, 2013).

The challenges of protecting the biodiversity are of many origins: natural such as flooding, earthquake, natural eutrophication of the lake, than climate change, an evident pollution and other anthropogenic pressures: hydrological interventions, human activities in the lake which are many, traffic, exploitation of sand, illegal construction, illegal fishing, tourism, disturbances, introduction and advancement of invasive alien species, extraction and unsustainable use of the species and materials etc. Habitat destruction is the most prominent pressure on biodiversity in general, at Skadar Lake present in the form of expansion of human population (construction, tourism, and agricultural activities expansion), introduction of invasive species, extraction of materials, etc. As a consequence, there has been an evident lost of biodiversity caused by the high anthropogenic pressure, and notified in several studies.

Further to this, there are institutional constrains of the protection and management system: government policy in the field of environment (long lasting and repeated revision and updates of strategies and laws, low enforcement and commitment), lack of clear vision and directions, weak institutional capacities and accountability, poor coordination and intersectional collaboration, lack of consultative processes in planning and implementation, lack of education, awareness raising and promotional activities. Weakness in the research and monitoring system from lack of coherent and consistent research and monitoring activities are evident. When all's said and done conservation is on the very declarative level. Trans-boundary joint initiatives are sporadic and not sustainable, very often fund driven.

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<sup>3</sup> Vugdelic, M. 2012

However, great opportunity lies in developing models for sustainable use of the resources for reconciliation of tourism, agriculture, energy and protection, enhancing eco-tourism, agro-ecological measures support, renewable energy sources, and participative management of protected areas.

Lake Skadar is proclaimed as **National Park** on the Montenegrin side, although the enormous pressure on this ecosystem has been noted as a big challenge to its conservation function maintenance and management.

The legislative framework for protection and management of Skadar Lake region and its natural resources in Montenegro is in place. A number of legal instruments have been endorsed in the past and more recently, within the context of EU integrations, where national legislation has to be harmonised with the EU acquis. Relevant regulations endorsed by PENP based on the Law on National Parks and the Statute of NPs are: Decision on the modes and conditions for sport fishing on Skadar Lake; Decision on the modes and conditions for tourist transportation on Skadar Lake waters; Decision on modes and conditions for conducting birdwatching in NP Skadar Lake, etc.

Still, National Parks institution is a conservative, top down structure, politically embedded, with high overheads and weak capacities. Nowadays it is in the transition process from the public enterprise to a new organisational framework (joint-stock company), which will however bring no crucial changes in the structure or operation. Still it is not a public company and the government will have all its shares, able to sell it.

The planning and implementation is mostly done in the central office and on the conventional approach, having no practice of coordination and communication with other relevant institutions and local population. Good and efficient Management of NP Skadar Lake require narrow cooperation between management of NP, 3 municipalities and their relevant local units, stakeholders and all citizens who could support enhancement of management through joint activities, identification of main challenges and solutions for safeguard of biodiversity and ecosystems. Both, NP and local SHs are not taking too much interest in implementing this concept though all sides agree that this is necessary for sustainable development.

Some of the issues related to the management of NP are: Lack of vision and solid strategic directions; Low capacities in relevant institutions; Conventional management, processes and therefore solutions; Weak commitment of the relevant authorities for conservation issues; Neglect of conservation of cultural and archaeological sites; Lack of public participation processes, cooperation and coordination of plans and actions; Conservative and short sighted financial and management planning; Weak absorption capacity of the staff and the system toward creative and innovative practices; Low level of proactive and adaptive management and initiatives.

Based on the regulations, the NP is given the mandate to enforce them through its Legal department and the Rangers service of NP Skadar Lake, together with support from other relevant national institutions (various inspectorates, police, etc). However, although the legal framework is extensive, the enforcement is rather deficient. Some of the main issues that exist in this respect include: Insufficient number of rangers and technical equipment for adequate monitoring the Park area; Insufficient capacities of rangers in terms of being acquainted with the legal framework, technical skills for preparing proper charges, conducts during law enforcement etc.; The judiciary system is very slow and

nature protection-related charges are not given priority to; The judiciary personnel does not have sufficient understanding of ecological processes for efficient nature protection<sup>4</sup>.

Large number of stakeholder groups has been present in Skadar Lake region, all of them having various degrees of power, interest and influence over protection, development and management of the Lake.

As **local communities** are important part of the rural development process here are several segments where improvement is needed to foster their interests in the sustainable actions, collected during the preparation of the diagnostic document (never published) of the pilot project office for Development of local community:

- The cooperation of the local population that uses the resources of the lake with the management of National Park and local authorities is not satisfactory. The problem is the lack of (i) the association of fishermen (now established under WB project), entrepreneurs, tourism workers and agricultural cooperatives, (ii) insufficient transparency of the NP, (iii) low level of participation of local communities in decision making and planning processes of the NP.
- Troubleshooting utility infrastructure and proper disposal of solid waste is one of the fundamental and pressing issues in all local communities;
- Poor economic situation and the possibility of easy money through the sale of fishing catches, led to the expansion and increasing the number of fishermen in these regions, and thus the pressure on fish stocks of the lake, but also to other biodiversity groups..
- The subjective assessments of the population evaluate that management of National Park has so far not proved good.
- There is a weak organization of control of tourist visits to the lake, illegal construction, which is only allowed to certain owners of land.
- Positive evaluation of the administration's National Park for recent activity on the lake in the form of marking of vessels and excursion paths, cleaning the lake.
- Citizens expressed no confidence in the results of the Center for Eco-toxicological studies and data on pollution in the Zeta plain.
- Residents have stated the need to establish professional associations that would protect their interests and rights.

The regulatory function (enactment and enforcement of legislation) is assigned to several governmental institutions and public enterprises. In the same time provisional services of this ecosystems are in the hands and interest of public institutions of different level and pressure of the industry and investments. Resource use is of particular interest for local population, industries and small businesses, while several public and scientific institutions, non-governmental and international organisations are active in the domain of the research, protection of particular aspects of Lake ecosystem and promotion of its values. Moreover, presence of many donators (some of which reaching 4.5 million US\$) in this region frequently delivered just marginal assistance and very often not complete outcome.

Overlapping competencies and mandates are frequently exhibited among key Skadar Lake stakeholders. The weaken law enforcement additionally create obstacles for effective management of protected area. There are several issues listed bellowed that contribute to poor management of the overall are and its development on the sustainable way:

Some of the more general issues that exist in the Skadar Lake region are listed below:

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<sup>4</sup> These issues will be part of the CEPF-IUCN project framework.

It is recognized the lack of **scientific and technical data** as a basis for making planning and policy documents. The most recent systematic investigation of the Skadar Lake are made in the late 70s of last century, and has since made sporadic research and monitoring of certain segments of the environment of the lake (water monitoring, monitoring of birds). There is no centralised database about the Lake nor unified methodologies in performing monitoring (so data not comparable), thus creating serious gap in making proper management decisions (e.g. regarding fishery, exploitation of sand and gravel, carrying capacity for various tourism activities etc.).

The **enforcement of law and bans** is poor in some segments: activities to combat fishing during the ban is insufficient.

Illegal **construction** is common; in addition there are no established guidance on construction type for maintaining aesthetic value and authentic appearance of the place.

Maximize **agriculture activities** in the northern part of the park are not assessed and controlled properly. There is a weak organization of control of **tourist visits** to the lake.

There are several obstacles for **tourism and tourist products** development such as weak cooperation between tourist subject and therefore weak information sharing and development of the area as a region, undeveloped accommodation structure, not fully developed products (already advertised), scattered activities not linked and combined in a tourism offer, huge problem of waste, etc.

Facilities NP offers in tourism purposes does not enhance in satisfying level **entrepreneurship** and involvement of other actors, most importantly local community and private sector.

Effective **supervision**, in the National Park as a result of insufficient availability of funds and capacity is not in place. Monitoring system is needed, inter alia, for assessing: Impacts from extraction of rock, gravel, sand, water diversion and extraction, and peat extraction, etc.

**Involvement and consultations** of some stakeholders, especially users (local population, industries, and small businesses) is poorly exercised, they have any part in decision-making and management of the Lake, although they could play a more active role and in such a way compensate for the Park's lack of capacities in certain fields.

**Coordination** between stakeholders in planning and management is generally lacking. **Cooperation** is usually related to concrete projects and on an *ad hoc* basis, rather than being a continuous collaboration where all different parties have a voice and take a part of responsibility in Lake's protection and resource management.

### 1. Some actual implications of the weak management system:

- Depopulation of rural areas, which are targets for development of nature-oriented and rural tourism and agriculture, is a constant trend, resulting in a decrease and overall ageing of the local population, which has implications for labour market.
- General lack of strategic approach to planning and development has created an over-exploitation of resources that threatens to permanently endanger some parts of the country, while at the same time create underutilization of resources in others (Map of Resources, 2011).
- Loss of protected species by poaching with implications for tourism and recreation.
- Illegal development trends
- Pollution: eutrophication, domestic sewage pollution, industrial waste pollution, solid waste, and illegal dump sites, unspecified agricultural runoff, lead poisoning.
- Distrust between local population and authorities.

## V New institutional management modalities

### 1. Strategic directions:

Montenegro Tourism Development Strategy to 2020 has identified as the objectives:

- Institutional and legal framework to be established suitable to demands of successful and sustainable tourism, and
- Local population increasingly involved in tourism industry.

Territory that has been recommended in the Tourism Master Plan to 2020, and which has been endorsed by the Ministry of Tourism and defined as “The Skadar Lake-Cetinje Cluster”, needs to be developed and implemented in the management model for successful implementation of sustainable tourism development directions. Some work done by international stakeholders SNV and GTZ and Ministry of tourism was already elaborating on this model through development of a Destination Management Organisation (DMO) structure: located within NP Skadar Lake borders and includes settlements from three municipalities Podgorica, Cetinje and Bar, which gravitate to Skadar Lake. The proposed DMO would reflect this Municipal / geographic area into a market focussed, customer driven “destination”: covering a territory that has been recommended in the Tourism Master Plan, endorsed by the Ministry of Tourism and defined as “The Skadar Lake-Cetinje Cluster”.

The Strategy of Development Food Production and Rural Areas is underlying as the primary objective to define the multifunctional role of agriculture and modernization of the state administration for the purpose of the realization of the strategic commitment of sustainable development.

The Strategy outlines that key element in reform of agricultural policy is the gradual building of a system of integrated rural development policy that shall be harmonized with the EU principles of which one of the three key areas of rural development is better management of land and environmental resources.

The prepared action plan for IPARD foresees IPARD Programme approval by the EC in July 2012, while the conferral of management power is expected the latest in June 2013. Experiences of other Candidate Countries and Member States show that the preparation for conferral of management power is a complex and time consuming process. Successful implementation of projects depend not only on the knowledge/skills/ established procedures of implementing bodies, but also on absorption capacity of final beneficiaries –farmers and SMEs, as well as the general awareness of IPARD, enabling overall environment, etc. LEADER approach thus require establishment of the Local Action Groups, LAGs (consisted of local subjects from public, civil and private sector) eligible for utilisation of EU funds for rural development

### 2. Trends and possible solutions within

Formal partnerships will need to be developed and clear planning guidelines for all major developments, because how the situation is at the moment shows that different development plans, not coordinated, with their cumulative effects may cause irreversible changes to the Skadar Lake ecosystems.

Some of the cooperation level and willingness exist when it comes to the festivals and its organisation, support and promotion, what is one of good modalities for exploring possibilities for further development and improvement of interaction between private, NGO and governmental.

The promotion of cultural assets around Skadar Lake is a key part of the Masterplan’s vision. However, the plan does not contain detailed plans as to how this is to be achieved. Therefore, a detailed planning framework should be produced to ensure that exploitation of cultural assets occurs in a sensitive manner and that local identity and traditions are not adversely affected or overly commoditised.

Economic issues are very closely linked with the social issues. Employment creation is likely to have a positive effect on the local economy and migration issues. However, it is imperative to ensure trainings and educations for the quality of service and products. Initial private initiatives are beginning to take advantage of the opportunities afforded by tourism in the Skadar Lake region, although growth has occurred from a relatively low base. Additionally, some of the activities taking place around Skadar Lake are considered to be largely unprofessional and not always environmentally sound. Thus, criteria and protocols for eco tourism, green jobs, etc., should be created and their implementation stimulated.

There are many potentials for development of eco-tourism offer of the lake such as bird watching, historical and botanical tours, cave exploration, biking and hiking tours, educational tours, gastro and ethno tours and products, many of which National Park, different national and international organisations are already shaping into successful further products.

Residents have stated the need to establish professional associations that would protect their interests and rights.

Introducing payment for ecosystem services could help revenues increase of the management organisations on the lake.

Improving marketing and branding of the products and increasing pride in the place of locals would have some positive effects on the protection and sustainable economy issues.

Regulation of the Skadar Lake and river Bojana remains a critical and very complex problem and the provisions of the Plan have to be replaced by new approaches (Spatial plan till 2020).

Last but not least, integrating water management across a range of political, social, economic, legal, environmental diversities requires considerable human, financial and temporal resources. Having said this trans-boundary management and integration of the MAB BR concept could bring long term sustainable development directions and solutions to the area.

***Having in mind previous strategic directions listed, and the current tendencies of stakeholders and possible solutions within, there is a need for introduction of new management structure for the Skadar Lake wider area that will complement and align different roles and programs of existing structures into a complementary and coherent plan as to help maximizing integrated sustainable development effectiveness and absorption capacities for strategic usage of resources and available funds. This could be implemented under the MAB BR Lake Skadar national and trans-boundary management platform.***

### **3. Steps that need to be discussed along the lines of sustainable development issues and management:**

Sustainable tourism development of this area need plans to be fully discussed between the International Agencies, Ministry for Sustainable Development and Tourism, National Tourism Organisation, independent tourism developers and operators and the mayors and administrations of the relevant municipalities in developing the practical plans for implementing the strategy.

The role of National Park is very important in cooperating for tourism development basis as well as for setting up milestones for changing and regulations. The park has been active in strengthening the place and cultural identities of some places and established the Day of the Lake, making tourism even more important than it is revealed in the employment statistics.

Local communities are important part of the rural development and sustainable development process. They should be engaged planning and monitoring programmes, too.

The process of ensuring a collaborative approach between stakeholders, including those advancing in cross-border initiatives need to be in place.

New governance models for successful management of the Lake Skadar region in Montenegro and for its trans-boundary component need to be discussed with government officials and through public hearings (public participation process of this project).

Some suggestions for various options of management governance could be following:

- A “Managing Partnership” to provide collaboration / integration of the MAB (MNE, or MNE-AL) with Management Strategy & Plan.
- The destination’s tourism led office in one of the Municipalities or from the NP.
- A “virtual” or “independent” office as an umbrella and legally constituted entity: a form of MAB BR management body.
- Public-private partnerships for certain functions - often in the form of a non-profit company
- Association or company funded purely by a private sector partnership and / or doing business.
- LAG form of organisation within the LEADER programme, compliant with tourism clusters approach from Tourism Master Plan.
- Both countries Focal Points form of cooperation, serving to ensure coordination activities and initiatives on the Lake between wide range of SHs and especially on trans-boundary level.

Some of the possible roles of new management body could be:

- To ensure the brand promise of the area is protected and delivered across all initiatives - through integrating initiatives of different stakeholders, from environmental protection to enterprise activities of private sector to education with regulative mechanisms and certification models.
- To integrate and support infrastructure and development projects within the overall vision and regulative norms of the Site and its offer.
- To integrate action planning / supported product development, preserved cultural heritage, training & education for private sector, communication strategy for sustainable development, raising awareness.
- To work on the product enhancement & integration, supporting LTOs and delivery channels eg. Tour operators, working with key strategic partner NP Skadar Lake and municipalities.
- To “imbed” NP policing and management with increasing visitor numbers.
- To ensure and empower joint platform for discussing, implementing directions such as International water traffic, cross border joint activities, etc.

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