

Petersberg Process Phase II / Athens Declaration Process

GEF IW:LEARN ACTIVITY D2

**Face-to-face and virtual training, knowledge sharing
and capacity building cooperation between stakeholders
in Southeastern Europe and Mediterranean sub-region**

*Protection and Sustainable Use of
Transboundary Water Resources Management in
Southeastern Europe*

International Roundtable on Integrated Shared Lake Basin Management in Southeastern Europe

12-14 October 2006, Ohrid

Information Note



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Shared lakes in Southeastern Europe

Ninety (90) percent of the area of the Southeastern European (SEE) countries falls within transboundary river basins. On average, the regional dependency on transboundary water resources is 66 percent. The Transboundary Rivers flow into the Adriatic, the Aegean, the Ionian and the Black Seas. More than half of the transboundary basins are shared by three or more riparian states. The SEE Region is also characterized by a large number of transboundary groundwater aquifers that are often karstic in their nature.

There are three major Lakes in the SEE region: Prespa¹, Ohrid and Shkoder². These water bodies and their watersheds along with Drin and Buna/Bojana Rivers comprise an interconnected groundwater and surface hydrological system. It covers almost 1/5 of the Balkan Peninsula, in a geographical area that includes Albania, FYR Macedonia, Montenegro and Greece. Each water body is shared by two to four of these countries.

The interconnected shared water bodies in the South Western Balkan Peninsula

Water bodies	Prespa	Ohrid	Shkoder	Drin
Shared by:	Albania, FYR Macedonia, Greece	Albania, FYR Macedonia	Albania, Montenegro	Albania, FYR Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia (Kosovo)
Physically interconnected (through surface waters flow)				
Physically interconnected (through ground-water flow)				

The watershed of the Drin Basin can be considered as the “connecting body” of the system of South Western Balkan Peninsula, linking the Lakes, wetlands and other aquatic habitats into a single ecosystem.

The value of each one of the Lakes and Rivers is high. They support uses such as fisheries, agriculture, hydropower generation, water supply, tourism – activities of paramount importance for the local and national economies – and ecosystems of global significance.

There are several problems and challenges for the management of these transboundary water bodies, such as water quantity and quality management, balancing conflicting interests to ensure ecosystem and biodiversity conservation etc.

These issues are becoming more complex since these water bodies extend across national boundaries, and hence are managed through a series of quite different and often conflicting management approaches. The uncoordinated sectoral policies and development activities at the national level are leading to degradation of the natural values of the system, and also pollution export to the adjacent Adriatic Sea. Climate variability also influences the system, increasing the pressures for water withdrawal for irrigation and other uses, which might further exacerbate the potential for conflicts over water allocation across sectors and uses in the future.

¹ The Prespa basin includes two lakes separated by a naturally formulated narrow strip of land: Macro Prespa and Mikri Prespa. From this point forward we will be referred to the system of the two lakes as Prespa.

² The Lake is called “Skadar” in Montenegro and “Shkodër” or “Shkodra” and also sometimes “Scutari” in Albania. From now on the English name of the lake – *Lake Shkoder* – will be used to avoid the usage of two – at least names – when referred to it.

The management of the water bodies in the region goes beyond the adoption of suitable and effective management on behalf of the sovereign states. Transboundary management should follow an integrated approach and would need integrated management planning, to address upstream and downstream concerns over different sectoral interests at the scale both of the basin of each water body and the hydrographic system. This also requires the existence of a well planned and efficiently enforced framework of laws, well organized institutions, adequate human capacity and sustainable financing. It demands cooperation involving not only riparian but also basin countries.

Official cooperation for the management of the shared lake basins has been initiated in all three lake basins of focus and is in different stages of development:

- a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between Albania and Montenegro in 2003 also providing for the management of Lake Shkoder;
- a Declaration of Lake Prespa as a trilateral protected park, was signed by the Prime-ministers of Albania, Greece and FYR Macedonia in 2000, while an agreement for the management of the Lake and its Basin is underway;
- an Agreement was signed for the management of Lake Ohrid and its Watershed by Albania and FYR Macedonia in 2004 and ratified by the parliaments of the two countries in 2005.

These rather encouraging for the future developments, reveal the existence of two major characteristics which are prerequisites for every cooperation activity in the field of shared water resources management: *Political will* of the governments and *trust* between littoral countries. They provide a basis for enhanced cooperation and eventually joint management in the three Lake basins. They also provide the basis for the initiation of a dialogue, with the participation of all relevant stakeholders at all appropriate levels. Establishing broader cooperation between the basin countries of the hydrological system of the South Western Balkan Peninsula will lead the way to water allocation that considers all uses and the rights of upstream and downstream communities, and the sharing of benefits.

The involvement of the international community (including the European Union, Donor countries, International organizations such as the Global Environment Facility, World Bank and other Intergovernmental and Non-governmental organizations) through the undertaking of a series of initiatives for promoting transboundary cooperation has been noteworthy.

*Particular reference should be made to the **Petersberg Process** (since 1998) and the more recent **Athens Declaration Process** (since 2003) which through their joint action and cooperation with GEF and IW:LEARN, seek further enhancement of progress (since 2004).*

The Petersberg Process Phase II / Athens Declaration Process

The Petersberg Process is an initiative jointly coordinated by the German Government and the World Bank, launched in March 1998. Under Phase I of the process a ministerial level roundtable was held at Petersberg, Germany that resulted in the "Petersberg Declaration" which supports "water as a catalyst for cooperation." This was followed by roundtables of senior level experts on transboundary river basin and lake management (Berlin), lessons learned from management of transboundary waters in the Baltic Sea Region (Vilnius), experience in the Rhine River Basin (Bonn); and a special meeting on transboundary water management to support preparation of the World Bank Water Resources Strategy (Berlin).

Although the Petersberg Process has been global in scope, a major focus of the Petersberg Process – Phase II is intended to provide support to translate into action the current developments and opportunities for future cooperation on transboundary river, lake and groundwater management in SEE. A Concept Paper on the further development of the Petersberg Process – Phase II has been prepared and presented at a planning meeting

between cooperating parties hosted by the Government of Germany, 6-7 December 2004, in Rudesheim, Germany.

A revised Concept Paper has been prepared on the occasion of the Roundtable on Protection and Sustainable Use of Transboundary Waters in South Eastern Europe (Berlin, Germany, 5 – 7 December 2005). The Concept Paper presents the background of the process, updates on activities undertaken and synergies with on-going initiatives and describes future orientation and next steps foreseen.

The Athens Declaration Process, jointly coordinated by the Government of Greece and the World Bank, was launched during the major International Conference on Sustainable Development for Lasting Peace: Share Waters, Shared Future, Shared Knowledge, 6-7 May 2003, Athens, Greece. The Conference was an important element of the Hellenic Presidency of the European Union.

The “Athens Declaration concerning Shared Water, Shared Future and Shared Knowledge” provides a framework for a long-term process to support cooperative activities for the management of shared water resources specifically in the SEE and Mediterranean regions. The Athens Declaration Process is intended to assist SEE countries, in cooperation with relevant stakeholders, to prepare IWRM and water efficiency plans for major river basins and lakes, including a range of complementary interventions, with a coordinated mechanism to allow for exchange of information and experience between activities.

The two processes are linked in order to generate synergies and maximize the outcomes for the benefit of the SEE region, rather than duplicate activities and consequently efforts. The **Petersberg Process Phase II / Athens Declaration Process** has become a reference for many other processes and activities in the region. The Process would complement European Union (EU) integration processes, the Stabilisation and Association process of the European Union and other ongoing initiatives in the region. It contributes directly to the scope and objectives of the Mediterranean Component of the EU Water Initiative (MED EUWI).

As agreed in Rudesheim, 2004, follow-up activities focus on basins of transboundary rivers lying south of Danube, which flow into the Adriatic, the Ionian, the Aegean and the Black, Seas, and on the set of transboundary lake basins in the same area.

The main objective is to build capacity and share experience on Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM), and to develop IWRM plans for these shared water bodies as a response to the targets of the Johannesburg Summit, 2002. The activities are fully integrated in the MED EUWI Work Plans.

The Berlin Roundtable (December, 2005) has been a milestone in the Petersberg Process Phase II / Athens Declaration Process. More than 60 participants, representatives of competent Ministries of the countries of the SEE, water stakeholders, representatives of the German and Greek Governments, World Bank, GEF, European Commission, UNESCO, UNECE, UNEP, KfW, GTZ, InWEnt and GWP-Med, participated.

The Roundtable reviewed the progress on cooperation in the field of transboundary Water resources management (TWRM) in the region and underlined its importance for succeeding stability and prosperity in the SEE. It reaffirmed the, common, interest for the continuing and enhancement of close cooperation and underlined the importance of initiatives that promote such activities. It acknowledged the central role of Petersberg Process Phase II / Athens Declaration Process and provided input and guided the next steps of the Process in the effort to succeed its objectives.

It was recommended that the Petersberg Process Phase II /Athens Declaration Process will:

- Continue to provide a dialogue Forum for identification of new and discussion of all relevant ideas and challenges in transboundary water management in SEE;
- Support measures to obtain and enhance the political, economic and environmental benefits that may be realized through effective cooperation in management of transboundary waters;
- Increase the visibility of success stories and good practices that may inspire similar initiatives; and
- Focus on a set of key areas and conduct activities at an increasingly local level to facilitate a broader range of participants in the dialogue.

The Process would not directly support investments. However it would provide the framework for exchange of the necessary information and experience that would support the creation of conditions that would facilitate investment to take place.

GEF IW:LEARN, in cooperation with the World Bank, the Governments of Germany and Greece, and GWP-Med is supporting synergy in the Petersberg Process Phase II / Athens Declaration Process, and contributions of practical experience from GEF projects working in transboundary river, lake and groundwater in the SEE region as well as elsewhere in the world.

It aims to strengthen Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) by facilitating structured learning and information sharing among stakeholders. The goals of Activity D2 of GEF IW:LEARN Programme 2004-2008 (from now on referred to as the 'Project') are to contribute to the cross-fertilization between competent organizations and persons with roles within the river commissions and other joint bodies in SEE and, at the same time, to allow for the introduction of new elements and experiences from outside the region.

The goals will be pursued through the organization of a series of capacity building workshops for senior officials, decision makers and experts, and through the facilitation of an internet-based information network establishing a community of practice on transboundary water resources management with a particular focus in SEE. The project's overall implementation period is 38 months, from May 2005 until June 2008.

The 'countries of focus' are Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, FYR Macedonia, Romania and Serbia & Montenegro. Neighbouring countries – Greece, Hungary, Moldova, Slovenia and Turkey will be included where relevant.

Activities are primarily supported by the Governments of Germany and Greece, World Bank and GEF IW:LEARN. GWP-Med provides technical and administrative assistance. Organizations and Institutions having experience and working in the field of TWRM, such as UNESCO, UNESCO-IHP / International Shared Aquifers Resource Management Programme (ISARM), UNESCO Chair and International Network of Water-Environment Centres for the Balkans (UNESCO Chair/INWEB), and United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) are collaborating partners. Synergies with active institutions, processes, initiatives and projects supported by GEF, International Financial Institutions (IFIs) and donor countries, in the field of transboundary water management at the international, regional and national level, are being developed.

Objective of the International Roundtable in Ohrid

In the series of activities within the Petersberg Process Phase II / Athens Declaration Process an **International Roundtable on Integrated Management of Shared Lake Basins in Southeastern Europe** will take place in *Ohrid*, 12–13 October 2006. It is jointly

organised by GWP-Med and the Lake Ohrid Watershed Committee, recently established by Albania and FYR Macedonia, and is primarily supported by *GEF IW:LEARN*.

The Roundtable will address issues of integrated management of lake basins and the linkages to river basin and coastal management; this would build on related ongoing work in the region and would be linked to the GEF supported Lake Basin Management Initiative. A series of Lakes (i.e. Ohrid, Prespa and Skhoder and the Drin River), creating an interconnected complex hydrological system in the South Western Balkan Peninsula, will be presented and discussed as case studies.

The overall aim is the promotion of cooperation for the management of the transboundary water bodies of the South Western Balkan Peninsula region. Among the objectives are the exchange of information and the communication of good practices and success stories in different aspects of management of shared Lake Basins, such as stakeholder involvement, exchange of scientific information, institutionalization of cooperation, financing etc. and the establishment of a peer network between persons working in the three shared Lake basins of focus.

A **study visit** will be organised on the occasion of the International Roundtable on 14 October 2006. It aims to provide the opportunity for participants to share experiences at the field level. Sites in both the Albanian and FYR Macedonian parts of the Lake Ohrid Basin will be visited. The main objective of such events is to allow for the exchange of practical knowledge on a variety of aspects of joint management including the development and implementation of field based activities.

The activities contribute to the works of the Mediterranean Component of the EU Water Initiative (MED EUWI) as well as to the new GEF Strategic Partnership for the Mediterranean Sea Large Marine Ecosystems.

Expected Outcomes

- Experience and practical knowledge gained by the decision makers, stakeholders and experts participating in the event, in several aspects of cooperation for the integrated management of shared water bodies;
- A set of recommendations for the promotion of integrated water resources and ecosystem management in the three Lake basins of focus;
- The setting of a basis for the establishment of a peer network of managers for cooperation on the management of the hydrological system in the South Western Balkan Peninsula;
- Donor countries and international actors have a clear picture with regard to on-going activities for the management of shared water bodies in the area, that will allow their better involvement for the promotion of activities towards joint management of these water bodies;
- Identify key areas of action where the involvement of Petersberg Process Phase II / Athens Declaration Process in cooperation with other initiatives, would result in the enhancement of synergies with on-going and planned activities in the region.

Participants

Representatives of competent authorities and organizations that work in the shared water bodies of focus from Albania, FYR Macedonia, Greece, Montenegro and Serbia; of Donor Countries and International Financial Institutions, and of the Core and Collaborating Partners of the Process and GEF IW:LEARN Activity D2, are expected to attend the Roundtable and participate in the study visit.

