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Transboundary Prespa Park

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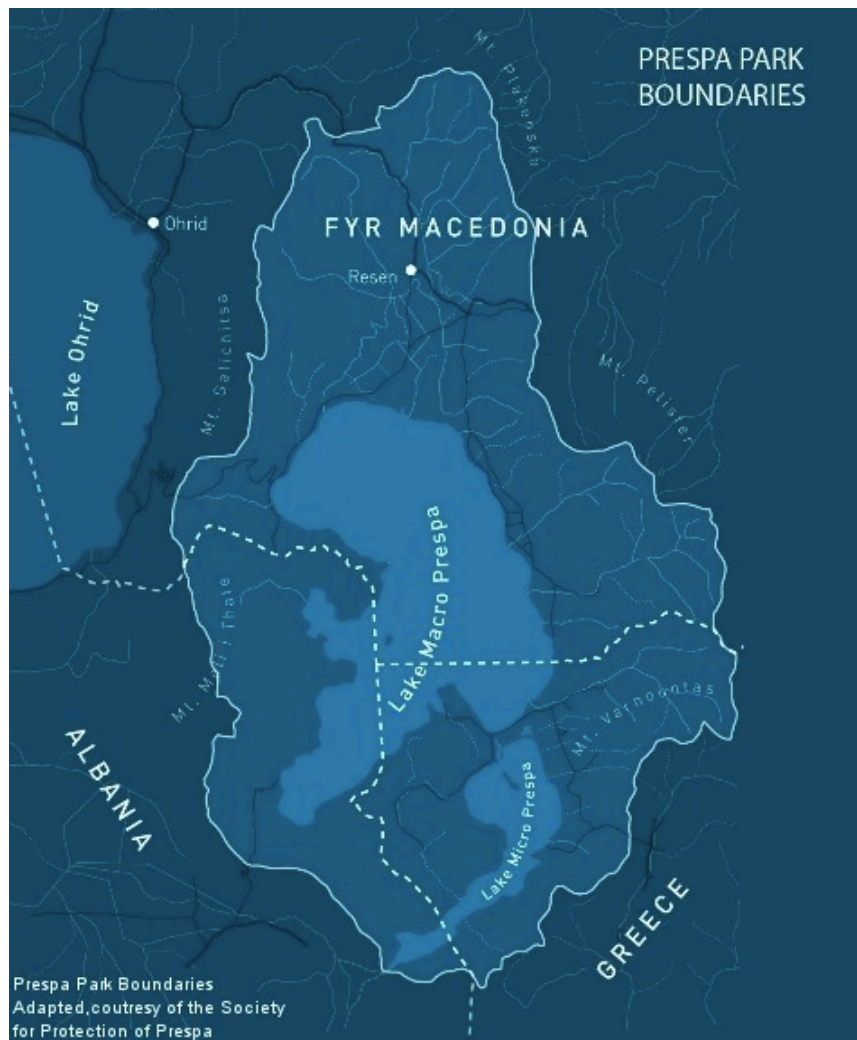
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<http://prespa.iwlearn.org/>

Albania, Greece, Macedonia:

Size: 1,386 km²



Participants in coordinating the ongoing transboundary cooperation:

National Government:

- Albania, Greece, Macedonia

Local Government:

- Resen (MKD),
- Prespa (GR),
- Pustec (AL)
- Devoll (AL)

Protected area administration:

- Prespa Park Coordination Committee (PPCC; 2001-2007);
- Prespa Park Management Committee (2010-present; not active);

International NGOs:

- MAVA,
- Mediterranean Wetlands Initiative,
- Euronatur

National NGOs:

- PPNEA (AL),
- Society for the Protection of Prespa (GrR),
- Union of Ecologists -Ecoprotection (MKD),

Intergovernmental organizations:

- UNDP

National Corporations:

- KfW (DE),
- SDC,
- GIZ,
- SIDA

Objectives: The Vision for the Prespa Lakes Basin, as set out in the Strategic Action Program (2012), is defined as follows: “By 2025, the Prespa Lakes Basin will represent a healthy ecosystem that supports a sustainable economy.” A set of Environmental Quality Objectives (EQOs) have been designed to address the key transboundary concerns and threats to achieve the Vision:

EQO 1: To preserve and restore the ecological status and values of surface and ground water resources.

EQO 2: Strengthening land-use management and planning.

EQO 3: The conservation of Prespa Lakes Basin’s biodiversity and habitats.

EQO 4: To improve the livelihoods of the local communities by ensuring sustainable forestry, agriculture and fisheries.

Values and importance: The transboundary Prespa Lake is one of Europe’s major trans-boundary “ecological bricks.” It hosts unique habitats and species that are important from both European and global conservation perspective, including dozens of local endemic diatoms, vascular plants, invertebrates and fishes; 261 species of birds have been observed in the last 50 years, including over 90 migratory birds. The Greek part of the basin is a

breeding site for rare waterbirds of global and European importance, such as the Dalmatian Pelican (*Pelecanus crispus*), Great White Pelican (*Pelecanus onocrotalus*), Pygmy Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax pygmeus*), Glossy Ibis (*Plegadis falcinellus*) and several species of heron. The primary economic sector is the most significant in all three countries in the basin. The Prespa Lake basin is located in one of the most unstable geopolitical contexts on the continent, where national, religious and ethnic rivalries and weak states combine to produce social, political and ecological challenges.

Aspects of transboundary cooperation: At the transboundary level a UNDP/GEF project has supported several strategically important actions:

- Strategic Action Plan for the Sustainable Development of the Prespa Park (http://www.spp.gr/sap_executive_summary_edition_en.pdf);
- Transboundary fisheries and fish management (<http://iwlearn.net/iw-projects/1537/reports/transboundary-fish-and-fisheries-management-planning-in-the-prespa-lakes-basin>);
- Transboundary monitoring (http://www.spp.gr/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=63&Itemid=68&lang=en);
- Transboundary water management ([http://www.lakeprespa.mk/content/Publications/Prespa%20Lakes%20Basin\(1\).pdf](http://www.lakeprespa.mk/content/Publications/Prespa%20Lakes%20Basin(1).pdf)).

In addition, transboundary teams of experts have developed the following action plans on habitats and species:

- Status Survey and Conservation Action Plan for the Bats of Prespa (Papadatou et al. 2011) (<http://www.spp.gr/bats%20action%20plan.pdf>);
- Conservation Action Plan for Grecian Juniper forests in the Prespa Lake watershed (Fotiadis et al. 2012) (<http://www.lakeprespa.mk/content/Publications/Grecian%20Juniper%20Forests%20%20Conservation%20Action%20Plan.pdf>);
- Conservation Action Plan for Reedbeds in the Prespa Lakes watershed (Angelova et al. 2012) (<http://www.resen.gov.mk/content/Documents/Jean/Conservation%20action%20plan%20for%20reedbeds.pdf>);
- Status Survey and Conservation Action Plan for the Caves and Cave Bats of Prespa (Papadatou et al. 2012) (<http://www.resen.gov.mk/content/Documents/Jean/Conservation%20action%20plan%20for%20bats%20caves.pdf>);
- Conservation Action Plan for Mountain tea in the Prespa Lakes watershed; (Bojadzi et al. 2012) (<http://www.resen.gov.mk/content/Documents/Jean/Mountain%20tea%20conservation%20action%20plan%20final.pdf>);
- Brown Bear Conservation Action Plan for the Prespa Lakes watershed (Stojanov et al. 2012) (<http://www.resen.gov.mk/content/Documents/Jean/Conservation%20action%20plan%20for%20bears.pdf>);

Stage in the process: The Prespa Park was established in February 2000 by a joint Declaration of the Prime Ministers of Greece, Albania and Macedonia. A trilateral Prespa Park Coordination Committee (PPCC) was established a few months later including

representatives from central government, local government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), as well as a permanent observer from the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands. In the following years many local bodies collaborated on transboundary programs, with financial and technical support from several international funding organizations. In 2010 the Environment Ministers of the three countries and the EU signed the “International Agreement for the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Prespa Park Region” establishing the Prespa Park Management Committee. The Agreement will enter into force once ratified by the Greek government.

Date Established: 02/02/2000

Official Protected Area Designation: The area of Prespa National Park in Albania coincides with the Albanian share of the Prespa basin; the area of Prespa National Park in Greece is equivalent to the Greek part of the Prespa basin. In Macedonia, 37% of Galichica National Park and 37% of Pelister National Park fall within the Prespa basin, whereas the Ezerani Strict Nature Reserve is entirely within the Prespa basin. The Macedonian share of Greater Prespa Lake has been declared a natural monument and a Ramsar Site. In the Greek part of the Prespa basin a large part of Prespa National Park and a large section of Varnous Mountain are part of the NATURA 2000 network of protected areas: GR 1340001 and GR 1340003. The part of Lesser Prespa Lake in Greece has also been declared a Ramsar Site. Albania has also declared a Ramsar site including both Greater and Lesser Prespa Lakes. The Albanian and Macedonian parts of the basin are included in the Ohrid-Prespa Transboundary Biosphere Reserve.

The Catalyst: The transboundary cooperation in the Prespa Lake Basin has been driven by a combination of local activists and international organizations. The Prespa Park was established in 2000 following a proposal from the NGOs “Society for the Protection of Prespa” (GR) and WWF Greece. In 2003 UNDP, KfW and the Greek government financed a PDF-B project to conduct studies and consultations to develop a full project proposal. The full project "Integrated Ecosystem Management in the Prespa Lakes Basin in Albania, FYROM and Greece" was implemented from 2006 to 2011. As part of this project KfW implemented supporting activities in Galichica (MKD) and Prespa (AL) national parks. In 2015 the Prespa Ohrid Nature Trust (PONT) was created through financial commitments from the MAVA foundation and the BMZ (through KfW). PONT's co-financing program is under development and the allocation of grants is expected in early 2017.

History: The participants in the policy processes related to transboundary management of the Prespa Lakes basin initially belonged to three different policy networks, each closely associated with three largely separate management structures with competing agendas and each relatively well integrated. The first emerged in relation to a GEF/World Bank transboundary project for the Lake Ohrid watershed (AL, MKD), also covering the Prespa Lakes basin. The second policy network was related to the Euroregion network, which has involved a different set of funders, NGO backers and officials. The transboundary Prespa Park initiative and the related institutions represents a gradually emerging transnational public policy-making structure as the product of a complex interplay of people and organizations, including MAVA, UNDP and KfW. After 15 years of international support the

riparian countries have not committed significant resources to maintaining and developing the governance institutions. The civil society sector is still largely dependent upon international funding.

Barriers, challenges, obstacles, or constraints: The Prespa Lakes Basin Strategic Action Program (2012) has identified the following root causes of the environmental problems:

Governance

- Insufficient government priority on environment
- Inadequate water basin management
- Inadequate land use management
- Inadequate inter-sectoral coordination
- Inadequate legal/regulatory basis
- Insufficient economic incentives
- Insufficient law enforcement
- Inadequate human/institutional capacity

Scientific cooperation and stakeholders awareness

- Insufficient scientific capacity/or cooperation/data sharing information
- Insufficient knowledge / understanding
- Inadequate available technology
- Low public awareness

Socio-economic issues

- Poverty
- Pressures from unsustainable use of natural resources (agriculture, forestry, fisheries and industry)
- Inadequate municipal services and infrastructure
- Lack of funds

The Prespa Lakes Basin Strategic Action Program includes actions addressing the environmental problems and the related root causes. The implementation of these actions is currently not coordinated by a transboundary management structure, but instead by individual organizations that are able to mobilize resources from international donors.

The Governance and Management Structures

- **Cooperative relationship:** The initiative is based on a Ministerial Declaration (see below), to be succeeded by a legally binding agreement (still not in force, see below)
- **Legal basis for cooperation:** 2000: Declaration on the Creation of the Prespa Park and the Environmental Protection and Sustainable Development of the Prespa Lakes and their Surroundings (http://www.spp.gr/declaration_en.pdf) 2010: Agreement on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Prespa Park Area. Ratified by Albania, Macedonia and the EU, but not Greece (http://www.spp.gr/agreement_02.02.10.pdf)
- **Governance Structure:** The Prespa Park Management Committee is to be composed of members from the three riparian countries representing the

responsible ministries, environmental NGOs, local protected area management authorities, and permanent observers from the MedWet Initiative of the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar) and the Lake Ohrid Watershed Management Committee.

- **Cooperative management arrangement:**

- Strategic Action Plan for the Sustainable Development of the Prespa Park (http://www.spp.gr/sap_executive_summary_edition_en.pdf);
- Prespa Lakes Basin Strategic Action Program ([http://www.lakeprespa.mk/content/Publications/Prespa%20Lakes%20Basin\(1\).pdf](http://www.lakeprespa.mk/content/Publications/Prespa%20Lakes%20Basin(1).pdf));
- Transboundary Monitoring System for the Prespa Park (http://www.spp.gr/tms_adjustment_final_report%202.pdf);

Results: Significant progress has been made in transboundary cooperation since the fall of the Iron Curtain. Over the last two decades a complex network of people and organizations, including local, national and international actors, has developed. This network or some of its elements have demonstrated a robust capacity for adaptation to the changing political context and mobilization of financial assistance to implement some of priority environmental protection actions. Knowledge and information on transboundary environmental issues has grown rapidly although data sets are often incomplete and discontinuous. Other significant achievements include the establishment of a formal transboundary management structure that has endorsed several important policy and planning documents for ecosystem based management, including transboundary environmental monitoring, biodiversity conservation and fisheries. The recent establishment of PONT is an important step in providing a long-term and sustained financial support to the transboundary management structures and activities.

Lessons Learned: NGO have played a key role in initiating and sustaining the Prespa Park initiative with support from international non-governmental and governmental organizations. They have been instrumental in supporting the establishment of informal policy networks of politicians, civil servants, policy analysts, experts, and interest groups who have promoted environmental but also other forms of transboundary cooperation and integration, eventually linking to formal institutional structures. The informal relationships between organizations and individuals have played important role in seeking balance between competing public needs and priorities, in particular with respect to the recent developments that give precedence to economic growth over biodiversity conservation. The emergence of informal policy networks has increased the potential for social learning between organizations across the national borders and proved to be more resilient and adaptive to unexpected exogenous shocks, thereby increasing the potential for longer-term maintenance of transboundary cooperation. The high level of international assistance and funding has been of critical importance for sustaining both the formal and informal transboundary cooperation structures in the Prespa Lakes basin.

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Society for Prespa Park website

http://www.spp.gr/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=10&Itemid=15&lang=en