

## CEPF Final Completion and Impact Report

<b>Organization's Legal Name:</b>	Environmental Citizens' Association "Front 21/42"
<b>Project Title:</b>	Enhance the Transboundary Conservation of the World Heritage Site Lake Ohrid in North Macedonia and Albania
<b>Grant Number:</b>	CEPF-110130
<b>Hotspot:</b>	Mediterranean Basin II
<b>Strategic Direction:</b>	2 Support the sustainable management of water catchments through integrated approaches for the conservation of threatened freshwater biodiversity
<b>Grant Amount:</b>	\$172,000.57
<b>Project Dates:</b>	May 01, 2020 - September 30, 2023
<b>Date of Report:</b>	January 25, 2024

### IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERS

Environmental Citizens' Association Front 21/42, Skopje, North Macedonia was the only organization responsible for the project implementation and as such responsible for all aspects of the implementation (all activities, deliverables, results, financial management, etc. - on national and regional level).

ACEG, Albania were a sub-grantee, but their role was also very close to an implementing partner - ACEG coordinated all project activities which involved Albanian NGOs, including their identification and internal/national communication; they provided essential help for the organization of the meetings and workshops; run monitoring of the relevant Albanian authorities' activities; coordinated joint actions (e.g. letters to UNESCO and the authorities of both countries); coordinated and compiled the draft report on the implementation of UNESCO's recommendations in Albania; provided narrative and financial reports for the sub-grant.

### CONSERVATION IMPACTS

Planned Long-Term Impacts: 3+ years (as stated in the approved proposal)

Impact Description	Impact Summary
Lake Ohrid, a KBA of 24.700ha, has the first Macedonian and Albanian Transboundary Management Plan and completed legal and management framework, which enables long-term sustainable development of the local	Important steps towards this long-term impact took place during the project implementation: (1) the legal basis for Lake Ohrid Management Plan is Lake Ohrid Law, which is still in a process of adoption and we took active part in its creation; (2) joint

Impact Description	Impact Summary
communities and conservation of 1.500 freshwater species.	Macedonian/Albanian Strategic Recovery Plan for the Natural and Cultural World Heritage Ohrid Region was compiled by the 2 countries and submitted to UNESCO during the project; we took active part in the creation of the Macedonian part of the plan (the Albanian authorities didn't conduct any public consultations - our action is described in other parts of this report). Even though this is not a management plan for the lake, it's a plan with many joint MK/ALB conservation actions, relevant for the sustainable development of the local communities and the biodiversity of Lake Ohrid; (3) the close cooperation between Macedonian and Albanian CSOs, established thanks to the project is also an important element for the future trans-boundary management of the lake.
Formal regional network for transboundary preservation of Lake Ohrid is established, joining at least 5 organizations from North Macedonia and Albania; The network initiates at least 2 multi-year projects within which Macedonian and Albanian CSOs, local communities, conservations and private sector work together on initiatives for biodiversity-friendly practices.	Within the project we established a base for realization of this envisaged long term impact - informal trans-boundary partnership was formed with a core group of 9 organizations (2 from North Macedonia and 7 from Albania); the core group agreed on a list of short and long-term joint activities for preservation of the WH Ohrid Region.

Planned Short-Term Impacts: 1 to 3 years (as stated in the approved proposal)

Impact Description	Impact Summary
Lake Ohrid Law is adopted by the Government with active participation of CSOs; Management Body for Lake Ohrid is established and it includes CSO representatives.	Lake Ohrid Law is not yet adopted, the process is on-going. We took active part in the creation of the new law in both formal and informal communication with the authorities, as well as in the creation of the base for the law - Lake Ohrid Valorization Study. Even though few of our proposals were taken into account, the majority of our comments (including the crucial ones relating to the specific species, proposed protection of the lake shore, etc.) were rejected in both documents. Following this development, our strategy was to put a special focus on Lake Ohrid formal national protection in our case to the Bern Convention, which resulted with a Report from the On Spot Appraisal (with expert's recommendations) and an additional Recommendation 221 that has several points directly connected to Lake Ohrid Valorization Study and Draft Law on Proclamation of Lake Ohrid as a Monument of Nature, including a request for revision of the proposed zoning. In our opinion, the fact that the process of adoption of this law is still open is actually a positive development because Macedonian

Impact Description	Impact Summary
	authorities now have a legal obligation to implement the BC Recommendation, which implies much stronger formal protection of the lake.
Lake Ohrid becomes a Ramsar Site and gets new international protection under the Ramsar Convention.	As already reported, Ramsar designation took place on 15.02.2021 and Lake Ohrid (together with Studenchtishte Marsh) became the 3rd and largest Ramsar site in N. Macedonia. The significance of this new international protection became evident during our case to the Bern Convention - within this case we pointed out many issues with the proposed national laws for Lake Ohrid and Studenchtishte Marsh, including their non-compliance with the Ramsar convention (especially in regard to the proposed zoning), the BC Secretariat consulted the Ramsar Convention, which confirmed our concerns; representative of the Ramsar Convention joined the Bern Convention On the spot Appraisal (OSA) in April 2023. The outcome are several points in the Recommendation 221 (adopted by the Bern Convention Standing Committee in late 2023) which request changes in the proposed zoning, specific bans for planned destructive projects, etc. and directly relate to the protection of the whole Ramsar site. The implementation of the BC Recommendation, as well as the Ramsar Convention, are legally binding due to an article in the Constitution of N. Macedonia, which provides us with a very strong legal argument in the process of establishing the formal national protection of Lake Ohrid and Studenchtishte Marsh.
Albanian CSOs' capacities to actively participate in the protection and management of Lake Ohrid are significantly improved - at least 2 Albanian CSOs are trained to use national and international legal mechanisms for nature protection.	Our workshop on how to use the relevant international legal tools for nature protection was attended by 20 Albanian CSOs (one of which is a network of 15 organizations), the participating organizations included local community organizations, experienced national NGOs, tourism development organizations, forestry professionals, academia, etc. Within the project our Albanian colleagues (with our guidance) also put some of the national and international legal tools into practice during the process of adoption of the Joint Macedonian/Albanian Strategic Recovery Plan for WH Ohrid Region, demanding public consultations for the Albanian part of the plan (due to the fact that the Albanian authorities completely skipped the public consultations for this important document). Unfortunately, the request was ignored by the Albanian authorities, but the World Heritage Committee requested revision of this plan, as well as an urgent new Reactive Monitoring Mission to the site and we plan to use these opportunities to press

Impact Description	Impact Summary
	the Albanian government to organize the public consultations during the revision of the plan.
The first partnership for Lake Ohrid protection is established between Macedonian and Albanian CSOs.	Within the project we established a partnership for protection of Lake Ohrid which includes 2 organizations from North Macedonia and 7 from Albania. We had several joint events/activities, including 3 meetings and 2 joint actions (one towards the World Heritage Committee and one towards the governments of North Macedonia and Albania); drafted a joint CSOs report on the implementation of UNESCO's recommendations for WH Ohrid Region; agreed on joint short and long term activities for preservation of Lake Ohrid and the whole region; submitted one project proposal which includes organizations from both countries; established regular communication and exchange of information between the organizations in both countries.

**Unexpected impacts (positive or negative)?**

Covid19 pandemic was unexpected impact, it significantly contributed to the postponement of the development of the regional cooperation.

Another unexpected impact was the IUCN Valorization Study for Lake Ohrid - we expected a sound scientific document, suitable for a global natural phenomenon as Lake Ohrid, with proposed zoning in accordance with the IUCN standards and strong base for efficient law and management plan. Instead the document that was produced didn't even apply the national legal requirements, lacks even basic data about key species and in general sets up a dangerously low standard for all future documents of this kind. We communicated all this with the team (primarily the main writer, Mr. Daniel Bognar) through informal and formal comments, as well as direct meetings, but still the final version wasn't much better and in accordance with the Law on Nature Protection. For this reason, we included the detected issues in our Bern Convention case and as a result there are several points in the OSA Report and Recommendation 221 which imply serious revision of the text, prior to the adoption of the Lake Ohrid Law.

On organizational level, we had an unexpected leave of our main lawyer and executive director at the very beginning of the project, which impacted the start of the implementation and to some extent the whole project - one of the reasons we were late with many reports was the lack of experienced human capacities to run the many national and one international legal case and participate in the processes of many (more than envisaged) laws, plans, etc.

Our strong media actions related to the attempt of the Ministry of Transport to finalize a very harmful (for nature conservation) Law on urban planning without a public hearing had a positive and unexpected impact - the State Commission for Prevention of Corruption organized a public debate, to which the Ministers of Transport and Environment were invited, as well as Front 21/42 and other CSO representatives; one of the conclusions of the debate (agreed by the Minister of Transport) was to halt the adoption of the law and organize a public hearing prior to its finalization. At the time of writing this report there hasn't been any development in this manner (the process is still on hold, which is good news).

Another positive unexpected impact came from one of the MPs, members of the informal "Green Group" at the Macedonian Assembly - she became very invested in the activities related to Lake Ohrid and WH Ohrid Region, which resulted with her sending us regular information about all relevant activities at the Assembly and asking for our opinion (this way adoption of a harmful law for Studenchtishte Marsh prior to the adoption of the Bern Convention Recommendation was prevented, she asked for our proposal about the division of the state budget for environment and submitted it as her amendment, she facilitated our meeting with Municipality of Ohrid Mayor, etc.).

The above mentioned reaction of the founder of Lesser Foundation for Nature and his offer for additional funding was a surprising, very positive impact of the German newspaper interview, as was the TV Arte documentary.

## **PROJECT RESULTS/DELIVERABLES**

### **Overall results of the project:**

Our project had activities on 3 levels: national, regional (trans-boundary) and international. Within the national set of activities we were primarily focused on decision-making and policy creation that directly and/or indirectly affects the protection of Lake Ohrid and Conservation of its species. Our actions involved direct participation in the processes for adoption of these documents (through comments and participation in the public hearings); national legal actions related to these documents and/or the processes of their adoption, but also as a result of our regular monitoring of the authorities' actions and site visits; we conducted many advocacy activities and had regular communication with the media, as well as various stakeholders, in order to influence noted documents; we also had several own initiatives directly and/or indirectly related to the many findings and formal events that took place during the project implementation.

We consider the prevention and/or halt of several harmful laws, strategies and development plans to be our greatest results on national level, especially: halt of the law on urban planning with possible devastating impact on nature conservation in general and specifically for Lake Ohrid and WH Ohrid Region; prevention of the adoption of a very harmful law for legalization of illegal constructions; halt of the process of adoption of the urban plan Gorica North for urbanization of a huge area right next to the vital Studenchtishte Marsh and Lake Ohrid coast; halt of harmful strategies for tourism and rural development in the Municipality of Ohrid, which would lay down a foundation for many new destructive projects, including a marina within the marsh and a new ski center. From our initiatives, we consider the adoption of the Minister of Environment Decision for Temporary Protection of Studenchtishte Marsh (until the process of its proclamation as a Park of Nature is finalized) – to be our most important result because it bans any developments within the marsh during the proclamation process.

On regional/ trans boundary level we established and developed close cooperation for Lake Ohrid and WH Ohrid Region protection with our Albanian colleagues and in this manner we consider the creation of the core group and its activities to be the most significant result, but also the joint actions in which we presented a united NGO voice to our national authorities and to UNESCO. This project enabled us to create the much needed base for cooperation with the Albanian NGOs, which we plan to further develop in our future individual and joint projects; it also contributed to their capacities for future activities related to Lake Ohrid, as well as the use of legal tools for nature protection (especially international ones). Within the project we visited for the first time Lake Ohrid on the Albanian side and got to know first hand some of the problems; our Albanian colleagues

visited the Macedonian side and had an expert guided tour around the St. Naum area on the border between our 2 countries.

The greatest results of the whole project are from our international activities, specifically the formal designation of Lake Ohrid and Studenchishte Marsh as a Ramsar site and the opening of the case for Candidate Emerald sites Lake Ohrid and Galichica National park by the Bern Convention. The significant impact of these activities is elaborated in detail in other sections of this report.

Another set of activities on international level was with the EU, we consider the inclusion of the problem with the WH Ohrid Region in all Country Reports for North Macedonia to be our most significant result, as well as the cancellation of EU funded (through the World Bank) project for Quay Macedonia reconstruction with extension into the lake.

We also had important communication with international media. In this manner the most impactful was an interview about WH Ohrid Region in a leading German newspaper, which resulted with additional funding for the project from the Lesser Foundation for Nature (the founder, Mr. Andreas Lesser read the interview and learned for the first time about the oldest lake in Europe and our fight to save it from harmful developments, after which he contacted us) – this enabled us to fund additional activities which we couldn't envisage during the design of the project; the article with the interview also inspired TV Arte documentary on Lake Ohrid.

**Results for each deliverable:**

Component		Deliverable		
#	Description	#	Description	Results for Deliverable
3.0	Partnership with Albanian CSOs	3.4	Joint Macedonian and Albanian CSOs report on state of conservation and governments' activities in Ohrid Region is compiled and submitted to WH Centre and IUCN; demonstrated by the adopted and submitted report.	We planned to submit the report prior to the 2023 World Heritage Committee Session, in order to influence the decision for WH Ohrid Region, but UNESCO decided not to discuss WH Ohrid Region. One of the requests in the latest UNESCO Decision for WH Ohrid Region is an urgent new Reactive Monitoring Mission in early 2024 - we agreed to update the draft report and give it to the mission team - we think this would be most impactful.
3.0	Partnership with Albanian CSOs	3.5	At least 2 educational and promotional events are organized for Lake Ohrid local communities in North Macedonia and Albania; demonstrated by participants lists, events reports and photographs.	We organized 1 weekend workshop in Albania, during which we had an educational session on the values of Lake Ohrid - the workshop was attended by many organizations, including representatives of the local community of Pogradec; we also organized 1 educational tour around the St. Naum springs area, in north Macedonia - this was an activity during the workshop/meeting of Albanian and Macedonian organizations organized in Ohrid.
1.0	Creation of and advocacy for new Lake Ohrid Law	1.1	New Lake Ohrid Law is compiled and proposed by the CSOs and supported by relevant stakeholders and institutions in North Macedonia and Albania, demonstrated by the Law proposal document and	Lake Ohrid Law is not yet adopted, the process is on-going. Since the majority of our comments, given during the informal and formal public consultations for this law, were rejected, we put a special focus on Lake Ohrid Law in our case to the Bern Convention. The result was a Report from the On Spot Appraisal (with expert's recommendations) and an additional Recommendation 221 that

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			reports from stakeholders' consultations.	has several points directly connected to Lake Ohrid Valorization Study (which is the base for the law) and Draft Law on Proclamation of Lake Ohrid as a Monument of Nature, including a request for revision of the proposed zoning (which was one of our main comments). Macedonian authorities now have a legal obligation to implement the BC Recommendation and we will use all available legal and advocacy tools to make sure that Bern Convention recommendations are included in the new/adopted version of the law. We also ensured that this is clearly noted in the Strategic Recovery Plan for the WH Ohrid Region and communicated the issue with the informal group of "Green MPs" at the Macedonian Assembly (the institution that adopts laws).
2.0	Legal Actions and Advocacy for Improved Conservation of Lake Ohrid and its River Basin	2.1	At least 3 sets of CSOs Comments to specific studies, plans and reports about Lake Ohrid and its River Basin are compiled and submitted to relevant authorities.	We submitted more than 30 sets of comments to the authorities, the main ones include comments for: Lake Ohrid Valorization Study, Draft Law and Draft Management Plan; Studenchishte Marsh Draft Law; National Park Galichica Management Plan and SEA report; Special Management Plan for St. Naum Area, NP Galichica; Joint Strategic Recovery Plan for WH Ohrid Region; Strategy for Tourism Development, Municipality of Ohrid and SEA for the strategy; Strategy for Rural Development, Municipality of Ohrid and SEA for this strategy; over 5 new urban plans and



Component		Deliverable		
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				SEA reports for these plans; 2 laws for legalization of illegal constructions; Amendments to the Law on Urban Planning; Law on Water; Law on Concessions; etc.
2.0	Legal Actions and Advocacy for Improved Conservation of Lake Ohrid and its River Basin	2.2	At least 5 legal and/or advocacy procedures for Lake Ohrid protection are initiated/continued/finalized, including formal declaration of Lake Ohrid as Ramsar Site; demonstrated by formal Ramsar designation, national and international courts' documents.	We had over 20 legal and/or advocacy procedures for Lake Ohrid protection, the most important results of these actions include formal designation of Lake Ohrid as a Ramsar site; opening of the case file for Candidate Emerald sites Lake Ohrid and Galichica National Park by the Bern convention Standing Committee, organization of On Spot Appraisal to Lake Ohrid, by the Bern Convention and also joined by the World Heritage Center and Ramsar Convention, as observers and formal adoption of a set of recommendations by the Bern Convention; several harmful laws were not adopted (Law on Urban Planning, Law on legalization of illegal constructions) and/or postponed for revision (Law on Proclamation of Lake Ohrid as a Monument of Nature, Law on Proclamation of Studenchishte Marsh as a Park of Nature); adoption of several urban plans was halted, including Gorica North Urban Plan which envisaged new hotels, hotel complexes, weekend houses, etc. on 17,5ha in the close vicinity of Lake Ohrid shore;; etc.
3.0	Partnership with Albanian CSOs	3.1	At least 5 meetings, with at least 5 Albanian CSOs and local community members	We had 3 meetings (one of which was 2 days weekend meeting), with 7 Albanian CSOs who joined the core trans-boundary group for Lake

Component		Deliverable		
#	Description	#	Description	Results for Deliverable
			are organized for identification of Albanian partners, data is gathered, joint activities are developed; demonstrated by meetings minutes and participants lists.	Ohrid Protection; as reported in the progress reports, we developed and adopted a plan for joint activities - minutes from the meetings, as well as copies of participants lists and the adopted joint activities were submitted as supporting documents. We also had several online meetings with the identified Albanian partner organization - this was due to the Covid 19 pandemic, which took place during the project implementation.
3.0	Partnership with Albanian CSOs	3.2	Custom made capacity building program for the Albanian CSOs is created (electronic and printed training material); at least 1 weekend workshop is organized in Albania; demonstrated by the submitted publications, workshop participants lists and photographs	As planned, the workshop was organized in Albania, electronic material (on the values of Lake Ohrid and various legal tools and mechanism that can be used for its protection) was disseminated at this event, and printed publication (on the specific use of the Bern Convention for better preservation of Lake Ohrid) was disseminated at the weekend meeting in Ohrid, North Macedonia.
3.0	Partnership with Albanian CSOs	3.3	CSOs Transboundary Lake Ohrid Protection Programme is created and implemented by MK and ALB partners; demonstrated by the adopted text, workshop minutes and photographs, joint monitoring reports	Due to the Covid19 pandemic, as well as the large number of relevant laws, urban and other plans in North Macedonia, which required significant engagement of Front 21/42 team, we had a very late start of the trans-boundary cooperation; this resulted with an agreed joint list with trans-boundary activities and division of tasks among the participating organizations, but there was time for implementation of very few of these

Component		Deliverable		
#	Description	#	Description	Results for Deliverable
				activities; 2 monitoring reports were exchanged between Macedonian and Albanian organizations and a joint draft monitoring report on the implementation of UNESCO's recommendations in both countries was produced.
4.0	Capacity building and project administration	4.1	CSTT/GTT filled up and sent to CEPF at beginning and end of project	CSTT and GTT reports were submitted at the beginning of the project and will be submitted again right after sending this (Final Completion and Impact) report.
4.0	Capacity building and project administration	4.2	Final Completion and Impacts Report filled up and submitted at the end of the project	This is the Final Completion and Impacts Report.
4.0	Capacity building and project administration	4.4	Report from participation to CEPF grantee meetings and exchanges.	We didn't participate in any CEPF grantee meetings and exchanges, to our knowledge no such meetings took place.
4.0	Capacity building and project administration	4.3	Safeguard reports on implementation of the process framework and consultations with local stakeholders are submitted.	2 Safeguard reports were submitted.
2.0	Legal Actions and Advocacy for Improved Conservation of Lake Ohrid and its River Basin	2.3	Amend Sept. 22 Public oversight hearing for Ohrid Region is organized at the Macedonian Assembly and relevant conclusions are adopted	The Public oversight hearing at the Assembly didn't take place - even though several MPs supported our initiative for this event and submitted a request for the hearing to the President of the Assembly Commission (as the rules imply), the request was accepted and initially the public hearing was scheduled to take place in September 2022, since then this date has been postponed/moved by the

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				Commission President several times and at this point we don't know for certain when the event will take place.
5.0	Bern Convention opened file for the threats to Emerald sites Lake Ohrid and Galichica	5.1	Amend 2022 Lake Ohrid and Galichica NP conservation is improved, with implementation of the recommendations from the Bern Convention, demonstrated by incorporation of the Bern Convention recommendations into the relevant management and planning documents	The Bern convention Recommendation 221 (for Lake Ohrid and Galichica National Park) was adopted in late 2023, so there was no time to achieve this deliverable. The adoption took place with one year delay, because Macedonian government didn't reply to the Bern Convention Secretariat regarding the proposed Agenda for the On Spot Appraisal (OSA) for almost one year. Only after the adoption of the Standing Committee Decision in December 2022 (with a repeated request for the Macedonian authorities to urgently send a reply to the proposed agenda and organize the OSA), the Ministry of Environment got engaged in the process. The OSA was organized in April 2023 and the Report from this mission was a base for the Recommendation 221. Several points in the Recommendation impose changes in the proposed or existing legislation and/or management documents and we also advocated that the Strategic Recovery Plan clearly states that the Bern Convention recommendations will be incorporated in the relevant laws and management plans - we see this as a solid base to achieve the envisaged deliverable.

### **Tools, products or methodologies that resulted from the project or contributed to the results:**

As a result of our project the following was developed/produced:

- Electronic educational material on the international legal tools relevant for Lake Ohrid protection and nature conservation in general, with tips how to use them;
- Printed educational material on Lake Ohrid and WH Ohrid Region natural values and detailed overview on the use of the Bern Convention in their protection;
- many reports to the Bern Convention and 3 presentations for the Standing Committee sessions in 2021, 2022 and 2023;
- On Spot Appraisal (OSA) - mission to Lake Ohrid and Galichica National Park of Bern Convention, with UNESCO and Ramsar Convention representatives as observers;
- OSA Report with expert's recommendations;
- several decisions and 1 Recommendation with 15 points formally adopted by the Bern Convention Standing Committee;
- decision for formal designation of Lake Ohrid and Studenchishte Marsh as a Ramsar site;
- many sets of CSO's comments in the processes for various laws, strategies, plans;
- many legal actions;
- joint Macedonian/Albanian NGOs letter to the national authorities regarding the Joint Strategic Recovery Plan;
- joint Macedonian/Albanian NGOs letter to UNESCO;
- initiative for revision of the implementation of WH Ohrid Region Management Plan, submitted to the State Audit Office
- reports/comments to EU Delegation in Skopje, as a contribution to the Country Progress Reports;
- analysis of the implementation of the SEA Directive in the plans and strategies for WH Ohrid Region, with proposals for improvements - for Ministry of Environment of North Macedonia.

### **PORTFOLIO INDICATORS**

<b>Portfolio Indicator Number</b>	<b>Portfolio Indicator Description</b>	<b>Expected Numerical Contribution</b>	<b>Expected Contribution Description</b>	<b>Actual Numerical Contribution</b>	<b>Actual Contribution Description</b>
2.0	Number of KBAs under improved management and number of hectares covered			25,205	There is no specific number of hectares of KBAs with enhanced protection or management in our project proposal; in general the project aimed to enhance the protection and management of Lake Ohrid, which is a KBA of 24,700 ha. Within the project, Lake

Portfolio Indicator Number	Portfolio Indicator Description	Expected Numerical Contribution	Expected Contribution Description	Actual Numerical Contribution	Actual Contribution Description
					<p>Ohrid together with Studenchtishte Marsh were formally designated as a Ramsar site covering an area of 25,205 ha - we consider the new international protection to be an important layer of additional protection of the 2 connected sites. In addition to this, a formal national proclamation of Studenchtishte Marsh as a Park of Nature was also initiated during the project implementation, which is a base for a new Management Plan and management body for the marsh - this process is still ongoing. Note: Studenchtishte Marsh is a vital part of Lake Ohrid ecosystem and a valuable habitat of many species on its own (including 72 internationally protected bird species, 15 types of dragonflies on IUCN global red list, etc.). Also within the project the Minister of Environment adopted a formal Decision for Temporary Protection of Studenchtishte Marsh (until its proclamation as a Park</p>

Portfolio Indicator Number	Portfolio Indicator Description	Expected Numerical Contribution	Expected Contribution Description	Actual Numerical Contribution	Actual Contribution Description
					of Nature is finalized), this document refers to an area of 60,23ha (which is part of the Ramsar Site with 25,205 ha). This Decision was a direct result of our initiative/ request for temporary protection of the marsh.
3.0	Number of sites that gain official permanent protection status and number of hectares covered			25,205	Our proposal didn't specify a site with new official protection status - 25,205 ha is the area newly designated as a Ramsar site number 2449 Lake Ohrid. In addition to this, the Decision for Temporary Protection of Studenchishte Marsh establishes specific and new protection regime on previously not protected area of 60,23 ha (integrated into the Ramsar Site of 25,205 ha). The new regime implies a ban on any construction and/or urbanization activities within the marsh, during the process of its formal proclamation as a Park of Nature (IUCN category IV).
5.1	Number of organizations demonstrating increase knowledge			9	The noted number refers to the organizations which are part of the trans-boundary core group for Lake Ohrid

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	of and engagement in international or regional conservation agreement				and WH Ohrid Region protection, which was established within the project. Also 34 organizations from North Macedonia and Albania signed a letter to the World Heritage Committee regarding the inscription of WH Ohrid Region on the List of World Heritage in Danger - this engagement directly relates to the UNESCO Convention; 8 NGOs from North Macedonia and Albania signed the Request for postponement of the adoption of the Joint Strategic Recovery Plan for WH Ohrid Region, due to shortcomings in the text and complete lack of public participation for the Albanian side - this engagement directly relates to the UNESCO Convention, as well as the Bern Convention.
5.3	Number of sustainable cross-border networking relationship supported			1	There is no specific number of cross border networking relationships in our proposal. However, one of the main components of the project was partnership for



Portfolio Indicator Number	Portfolio Indicator Description	Expected Numerical Contribution	Expected Contribution Description	Actual Numerical Contribution	Actual Contribution Description
					<p>improved protection of Lake Ohrid, between Macedonian and Albanian CSOs and in this manner informal cross-border partnership was established between 2 Macedonian and 7 Albanian NGOs.</p> <p>The core group consists of: ACEG, Udhetim I Lire, AOS Albania, EcoAlbania, Korca Alpin, Une Gruaja (Me Women), DMO Albania, plus a forest engineer (Mr. Avni Myrte) - from Albania and Ohrid SOS and Front 21/42 from North Macedonia</p>

## GLOBAL INDICATORS

### Protected Areas

Protected areas that have been created and/or expanded as a result of the project. Protected areas may include private or community reserves, municipal or provincial parks, or other designations where biodiversity conservation is an official management goal.

Name of Protected Area	WDPA ID*	Latitude	Longitude	Country	Original Total Size (Hectares) **	New Protected Hectares ***	Year of Legal Declaration or Expansion

\*World Database of Protected Areas

\*\*If this is a new protected area, 0 should appear in this column

\*\*\* This column excludes the original total size of the protected area.

## Key Biodiversity Area Management

Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) under improved management—where tangible results have been achieved to support conservation—as a result of the project.

KBA Name	KBA Code	Size of KBA	Number of Hectares with Improved Management
Lake Ohrid	MKD10		25,205

## Production Landscapes

Production landscapes with strengthened management of biodiversity as a result of the project.

A production landscape is defined as a site outside a protected area where commercial agriculture, forestry or natural product exploitation occurs.

Name of Production Landscape	Latitude	Longitude	Hectares Strengthened	Intervention
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## Benefits to Individuals

- **Structured Training:**

Number of Men Trained	Number of Women Trained	Topics of Training
14	11	International legal tools for improved nature protection, specifically relevant for Lake Ohrid

- **Cash Benefits:**

Number of Men – Cash Benefits	Number of Women – Cash Benefits	Description of Benefits
0	0	0

## Benefits to Communities

View the <b>characteristics</b> column below with the following corresponding codes:	View the <b>benefits</b> column below with the following corresponding codes:
1- Small Landowners	a. Increased Access to Clean Water
2- Subsistence Economy	b. Increased Food Security
3- Indigenous/ Ethnic Peoples	c. Increased Access to Energy
4- Pastoralists / Nomadic Peoples	d. Increased Access to Public Services
5- Recent Migrants	e. Increased Resilience to Climate Change
6- Urban Communities	f. Improved Land Tenure
7- Other	g. Improved Use of Traditional Knowledge
	h. Improved Decision-Making
	i. Improved Access to Ecosystem Services

Community Name	Community Characteristics							Type of Benefit									Country	Number of Males Benefitting	Number of Females Benefitting
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i			

### Characteristics of "Other" Communities:

## Policies, Laws and Regulations

View the <b>topics</b> column below with the following corresponding codes:			
A- Agriculture	E- Energy	I- Planning/Zoning	M- Tourism
B- Climate	F- Fisheries	J- Pollution	N- Transportation
C- Ecosystem Management	G- Forestry	K- Protected Areas	O- Wildlife Trade
D- Education	H- Mining and Quarrying	L- Species Protection	P- Other

No.	Name of Law	Scope	Topics															
			A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P
1	Designation of Lake Ohrid with Studenchtishte Marsh as a Ramsar site - application adopted and submitted to the Ramsar Convention by the Government of North Macedonia	International	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
2	Law on proclamation of Lake Ohrid as a Monument of Nature	National	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	Law on Proclamation of Studenchtishte Marsh as a Park of Nature	National	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	Law on regulating the status of unlawful constructions	National	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
5	Decision for Temporary Protection of Studenchtishte Marsh	Local	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
6	Amendments to the Law on Urban Planning	National	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
7	Municipality of Ohrid Strategy for Tourism Development with Action Plan	Local	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
8	Municipality of Ohrid Strategy for Rural Development with Action Plan	Local	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
9	Special Management Plan for St. Naum Area, National Park Galichica	Local	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

No.	Name of Law	Scope	Topics															
			A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P
10	Joint Strategic Recovery Plan for the World Heritage Ohrid Region (North Macedonia, Albania)	International	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**“Other” Topics Addressed by the Policy, Law or Regulation:**

- Law on regulating the status of unlawful constructions: Urbanization and construction
- Decision for Temporary Protection of Studenchishte Marsh: Construction - the Decision bans any construction activities within the marsh
- Amendments to the Law on Urban Planning: Urbanization, including in the protected areas
- Municipality of Ohrid Strategy for Tourism Development with Action Plan: Urban development
- Municipality of Ohrid Strategy for Rural Development with Action Plan: Urban development

No.	Country/ Countries	Date Enacted/ Amended	Expected impact	Action Performed to Achieve the Enactment/ Amendment
1	North Macedonia	February 15, 2021	Enhanced protection of 25,205 ha of protected area, including formal zoning, 2 new laws, 2 new management plans and 2 new management bodies; cancellation of destructive projects and plans, including urbanization of Lake Ohrid shore and	We submitted an initiative for Ramsar designation to the Ministry of Environment and assisted the authorities with the application.

No.	Country/ Countries	Date Enacted/ Amended	Expected impact	Action Performed to Achieve the Enactment/ Amendment
			surrounding area of Studenchishte Marsh; re-establishment of the severed connection between and marsh and the lake; restoration plan for the marsh and several restoration actions for the lake.	
2	North Macedonia	July 01, 2020	Established zones of protection; new (first) management body for the lake; first management plan for the lake; established legal framework for conservation actions; adopted banned activities; legal framework for actions to tackle the lake pollution; etc.	The formal process of proclamation of Lake Ohrid as a Monument of Nature started in July 2020, with the creation of Valorization Study and continued with the first Draft Law (for proclamation) and Draft Management Plan - we participated in the process for the Valorization Study (had informal meetings with the team that worked on the study, submitted formal and informal comments to the draft - the result was an extension of the zone of strict protection, definition of key habitats, and a list of key species); we participated in the informal and formal public consultations for the draft law (sent analysis, proposals for articles); we also sent comments to the first draft

No.	Country/ Countries	Date Enacted/ Amended	Expected impact	Action Performed to Achieve the Enactment/ Amendment
				<p>management plan for the lake. Many of our key comments were not taken into account in the final version of the Valorization Study and the Draft Law on Proclamation (crucial for preservation of the lake and its species, confirmed by independent biodiversity experts we consulted) - we put a special focus on these documents in our reports within our case opened by the Bern Convention; many of our concerns related to the study and the law were confirmed by the On Spot Appraisal team, as a result specific requests for revision of these documents were adopted by the convention.</p>
3	North Macedonia	July 21, 2021	<p>Formal proclamation of the marsh as a Park of Nature; established zones of protection; first management body and management plan for the marsh; legal framework for conservation actions; legal framework for banned activities; legal framework for</p>	<p>The proclamation started with the publication of the draft law for formal public consultations on 21.07.2021. We participated in the process for this law, including: conducted legal actions for proper public consultations; sent several rounds of comments and took part in the public hearing. Many of our crucial comments were rejected, so we put a special focus on the protection of the</p>



No.	Country/ Countries	Date Enacted/ Amended	Expected impact	Action Performed to Achieve the Enactment/ Amendment
			restoration of the marsh; cancellation of planned urbanization within and in the immediate surrounding of the marsh; enhanced protection and improved protection of Lake Ohrid since Studenchishte Marsh is one of the most important biodiversity hot spots for the lake and vital part of its ecosystem.	marsh (and the proposed law) in our Bern Convention case; as a result the Ramsar Convention representative joined the On Spot Appraisal to the site in April 2023, also Ramsar convention confirmed our concerns related to the proposed zoning (with no buffer zone and no connection between the lake and the marsh). The outcome of these actions are several points in the Recommendation 221, adopted by the Bern Convention, which imply revision of the zoning, establishment of a buffer zone, ban on specific destructive activities, cancellation of the planned urbanization around the marsh, etc. We established close cooperation with an informal group of "Green MPs" to ensure that the harmful draft law won't be adopted by the Assembly and ensured that the Strategic Recovery Plan for WH Ohrid Region specifies inclusion of the recommendations of the international conventions in the final version of the law.
4	North Macedonia	May 11, 2021	The law would have a negative impact on nature protection due	The formal process of adoption of this law started with its publication for public

No.	Country/ Countries	Date Enacted/ Amended	Expected impact	Action Performed to Achieve the Enactment/ Amendment
			<p>to the legalization of unlawful constructions, including ones in protected areas. Urbanization and specifically the unlawful constructions are pointed out by UNESCO as one of the main problems within the World Heritage Ohrid Region, several recommendations from the Reactive Monitoring Missions in 2017 and 2020 specifically call for a halt of any further legalization of illegal constructions, mandatory impact assessment of the existing ones and demolition of the ones with negative impact on the values of the property, decisive actions for prevention of new illegal constructions, etc. The law is a direct opposite of all these</p>	<p>consultations in May 2021. We had several legal actions against the adoption of this law, sent comments in the formal process of public consultations, alarmed the media about the problem, etc. Since the law was still adopted by the assembly, together with many other CSOs we sent a Request to the President of the country not to sign the adopted law (and in that way prevent it from becoming a valid law). The President Pendarovski refused to sign the law, which was returned to the Assembly where it still is. We also included this law in our reports and presentations to the Bern Convention and sent a special alarming letter to the World Heritage Center.</p>

No.	Country/ Countries	Date Enacted/ Amended	Expected impact	Action Performed to Achieve the Enactment/ Amendment
			<p>recommendations. There are over 20.000 illegal constructions within Ohrid Regio, including over 5.000 within the National Park Galichica and on Lake Ohrid shore.</p>	
5	North Macedonia	July 19, 2021	Banned destructive activities within the marsh and improved protection until it is formally proclaimed as a Park of Nature.	We wrote a Request for adoption of a Decision for Temporary Protection of Studenchishte Marsh until the marsh is formally proclaimed as a Park of Nature (IUCN category IV) - based on an article in the Law on Nature Protection; we asked for a support from the informal citizens' initiative Ohrid SOS and submitted the Request (together with Ohrid SOS) to the Minister of Environment.
6	North Macedonia	January 05, 2022	If adopted, this law would have a long-term negative impact on protected areas and nature conservation in general. The proposed law stipulated that urbanization is a public interest per se,	Draft law was published on the Electronic Legislation Data Base in January 2022, which started the official adoption process of this document. We had several legal actions against this law (specifically due to the lack of a public hearing and many legal breaches in the process of its adoption); sent comments in the formal process; alarmed the

No.	Country/ Countries	Date Enacted/ Amended	Expected impact	Action Performed to Achieve the Enactment/ Amendment
			<p>instead of the valid one which implies that urbanization must be in service of the public interest; it would allow realization of annulled general acts for villages (type of urban plans adopted without strategic environmental assessment, there are several such acts within national parks and within WH Ohrid Region; the law stipulated automatic treatment of any kind of land (agricultural, forest, coastal, etc.) as a construction land;etc.</p>	<p>media and the CSO sector; organized joint Request for a public hearing for the law and a protest against the proposed amendments, by 35 CSOs; one of the outcomes was a public debate organized by the State Commission for Prevention of Corruption, in which we were invited to present our positions as one of the main participants (together with the Ministers of Transport and Environment); etc. The law was withdrawn for revision and since then the process is dormant.</p>
7	North Macedonia	February 16, 2022	<p>The proposed strategy, if adopted, would have a negative impact on Lake Ohrid and the World Heritage site as a whole because it focuses on further urban development (construction of</p>	<p>Draft Strategy was published for formal public consultations on 16.02.2022. We took part in the consultation process (sent 2 sets of comments and participated in the public hearing) and we also had a legal action due to the insufficient time for public consultations. Almost all of our comments were rejected, but we</p>

No.	Country/ Countries	Date Enacted/ Amended	Expected impact	Action Performed to Achieve the Enactment/ Amendment
			<p>various touristic facilities, legalization of illegal constructions, etc.) and especially because it lays down a legal base for a construction of a new marina within Studenchishte Marsh (vital biodiversity hot spot for Lake Ohrid and part of the Ramsar site).</p>	<p>made sure this strategy is on the Agenda of the On Spot Appraisal of the Bern Convention, which took place in April 2023. The expert's recommendation in the OSA Report states: "Prior to adoption of the Draft Strategy for Tourism Development for the Municipality of Ohrid, it is necessary to prepare and adopt a Sustainable Tourism Development Strategy for the whole World Heritage area, and at the same time to adopt a new Ohrid General Urban Plan, which shall not foresee any construction, especially a new marina, in the "New Town" development zone for the Studenchishte Marsh area." The Strategy hasn't been adopted and implementation of the Bern Convention recommendation is legally binding.</p>
8	North Macedonia	February 16, 2022	<p>If adopted, the strategy would have a negative impact on Lake Ohrid and nature conservation because it proposed urban development of the coastal villages and a</p>	<p>Draft Strategy was published for formal public consultations on 16.02.2022. We took part in the public consultations - sent written comments, we also had a legal action due to the insufficient time for public consultations; we reported the</p>

No.	Country/ Countries	Date Enacted/ Amended	Expected impact	Action Performed to Achieve the Enactment/ Amendment
			new ski center in Plakenska Mountain, in an area used as a corridor by the Balkan Lynx.	issues in the proposed document to the Bern Convention. The strategy was withdrawn for revision and its adoption was postponed to an undefined date.
9	North Macedonia	May 03, 2022	The plan is still in a draft version; the first proposed draft would have some positive impact (established regular bio monitoring; developed educational programme), but also negative one as well (further development of tourism in this highly sensitive area, possible new tourism facilities).	The process of creation and adoption of this plan started in May 2022, when the Government's Decision was adopted and sent to the Management Body of NP Galichica. We put a special focus on St. Naum area throughout the project, considering the fact that this is one of the most important bio diversity hot spots for Lake Ohrid, also over 50% of Lake Ohrid water comes from St. Naum springs - we sent several letters to the Government and NP Galichica authorities regarding the raft floating restaurant in the area, initiated several inspections, etc. We participated in an informal consultations for the draft plan and put a special focus on the area (and the draft plan) in our Bern Convention case. As a result, St.Naum is noted in the OSA Report, with several expert's recommendations, as

No.	Country/ Countries	Date Enacted/ Amended	Expected impact	Action Performed to Achieve the Enactment/ Amendment
				well as part of the Recommendation 221, adopted by the Bern Convention Standing Committee in late 2023. Implementation of these recommendations should result with a much stronger protection of St. Naum area.
10	Albania;North Macedonia	February 01, 2023	Improved conservation and protection of Lake Ohrid as a habitat and its species; established regular bio monitoring; reduced water pollution; improved management of the lake and related protected areas and/or biodiversity hot spots; significant reduction of, or complete ban on destructive activities, including unsustainable fishery, urbanization of the lake's coast; etc.	We participated in both informal and formal consultations for this plan (sent several sets of comments, took active part in 3 rounds of public hearing); many of our proposals were included in the final version which was submitted to UNESCO, but some of the most important ones were rejected (including the request for inclusion of a specific budget for the envisaged conservation activities in the Action Plan); we also had a joint action with our Albanian colleagues, due to the fact that Albanian authorities excluded the public completely; we put the issues with the plan in our reports and presentation to the Bern Convention and sent a letter to the World Heritage Centre. According to the latest Decision for WH Ohrid Region, adopted by the World Heritage Committee in September 2023,

No.	Country/ Countries	Date Enacted/ Amended	Expected impact	Action Performed to Achieve the Enactment/ Amendment
				the governments of North Macedonia and Albania should revise the Joint Strategic Recovery Plan and among other things, include specific budget for the envisaged activities.

### Companies Adopting Biodiversity-friendly Practices

A company is defined as a for-profit business entity. A biodiversity-friendly practice is one that conserves or uses natural resources in a sustainable manner.

Name of Company	Description of Biodiversity-Friendly Practice	Country/Countries where Practice was Adopted

### Networks and Partnerships

Networks/partnerships should have some lasting benefit beyond immediate project implementation. Informal networks/partnerships are acceptable.

Name of Network/Partnership	Year Established	Country/ Countries	Established by Project?	Purpose
Trans-boundary core group for preservation of the World Heritage Ohrid Region	2022	Albania; North Macedonia	Yes	The informal partnership between Macedonian and Albanian CSOs was established to join the forces of NGOs from both countries that share the World Heritage Ohrid Region in order to contribute to an improvement of the vulnerable state of the site; promote its natural values at home and



Name of Network/Partnership	Year Established	Country/Countries	Established by Project?	Purpose
				internationally; educate and inspire the local communities to develop sustainable practices based on the preservation of the natural and cultural values of the site; motivate and facilitate cooperation for Lake Ohrid protection and conservation, between the scientists and scientific institutions in both countries; to motivate and facilitate greater public participation in relevant decision-making and policy creation in both countries.

### Sustainable Financing

Sustainable financing mechanisms generate funding for the long-term (generally five or more years). These include, but are not limited to, conservation trust funds, debt-for-nature swaps, payment for ecosystem services (PES) schemes, and other revenue, fee or tax schemes that generate long-term funding for conservation.

Name of Mechanism	Purpose	Date Established	Description	Country/Countries	Project Intervention	Delivery of Funds?

### Globally Threatened Species

Globally threatened species (CR, EN, VU) on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, benefitting from the project.

Genus	Species	Common Name (English)	Status	Intervention	Population Trend at Site

## LESSONS LEARNED

One of the most important new experiences which brought a new practice in our work, was a discovery brought by the use of a drone for our presentation of the case at the Bern Convention. Our initial plan was to include a visual material taken with a drone, in order to present a wider perspective of certain sites and show the scope of destruction and/or the areas to be urbanized if some plans are adopted and their closeness to some of Lake Ohrid biodiversity hot spots. What we didn't expect was to discover completely new developments which are not visible from a normal perspective and/or accessible land.

Following this surprising result, we included drone use in our periodical monitoring visits to the site, which brought acknowledgement of even more developments and illegal activities – this in turn resulted with several actions, including initiatives to relevant inspectorates and legal actions.

Another, somewhat similar discovery took place during our boat trip around Lake Ohrid – we decided to make this tour as part of our preparations for the Bern Convention On Spot Appraisal (OSA), in order to inspect the shore from that perspective. Thanks to this trip we learned that previously untouched parts of the shore, which are accessible only from water, became popular destinations for beach parties, barbecue picnics, etc.; we also discovered some illegal construction activities in these parts of the shore. The negative human impact was obvious through the litter, remainings of open fires, changes on the shore, as well as on the biodiversity, especially the birds – their nests were much higher in the rocks above the shore.

Following this discovery we insisted to include a boat trip in the agenda for the OSA, which was rejected by the Ministry of Environment, but supported by the Bern Convention. We ended up paying for the OSA team boat trip (representatives of MoE refused to join the trip) and the Bern Convention expert confirmed all our concerns, including the impact on the birds – all this was noted in the OSA Report and reflected in some of the recommendations. Since boat trips around the lake are almost 3 times more expensive than a daily rate of a drone operator, we included taking periodical drone materials from the problematic parts of the shore, in order to monitor the situation and provide evidence for all related legal cases. We also plan to include purchasing of a drone in one of our next project proposals, which in a long run will be much more cost effective and enable us to gather material/monitor the situation whenever needed.

## SUSTAINABILITY/REPLICATION

Our greatest success was opening of the Bern Convention case for the negative impact on Candidate Emerald Sites Lake Ohrid and National Park Galichica due to infrastructure and urban developments, which consequently led to an On Spot Appraisal that was also joined by UNESCO and Ramsar Convention, resulting with OSA Report with expert's recommendations and Recommendation 221, adopted by the Bern Convention Standing Committee. Considering the points in the Recommendation 221, which imply obligations for the Macedonian Government to make significant changes in the relevant legal and management framework and also the fact that the real life implementation of these changes will be closely monitored by the international nature conservation community – we see this as a base for multiplication of our project results in the years to come, as well as a base for its continuing and growing impact. Bern Convention cases, as a rule, remain open until the governments fully, or significantly implement the recommendations, for example the case for the hydro power developments in the National Park Mavrovo has been open for 10 years (and it successfully cancelled 2 large hydro power plants and prevented construction of

several small ones) – Ohrid case is far more complicated and larger than Mavrovo, which means that for a foreseeable future its preservation will be in a strong focus of the Bern Convention, but also that the civil society will have a strong set of legal and advocacy tools in the efforts for better protection of Lake Ohrid and formal channel to present its findings and positions to the relevant international authorities.

Besides providing a base for many (legally binding) nature conservation actions and a strong CSO's engagement, in relatively long period of time, the case is also helpful for future fund-raising activities, especially towards the EU, due to the fact that it relates not only to the environment and nature protection, but also to the rule of law in the country (which is in a special EU focus for North Macedonia).

At the same time, this case brings challenges for our organization, especially in relation to the human resources needed for such a big and long international case, which also implies participation in many decision-making and policy creation processes (as well as possible national legal cases). Front 21/42 is the only environmental law NGO in the country and after 19 years of work we are aware that it is very hard (if at all possible) to find environmental lawyers in North Macedonia. To tackle this challenge we plan to develop a several years programme to educate and train young lawyers/law students in environmental law and offer positions in the organization to the most successful ones.

The established informal partnership for protection of Lake Ohrid and WH Ohrid Region as a whole, between Macedonian and Albanian CSOs is another result with a potential to bring long lasting and sustainable trans-boundary cooperation. In this manner, the adopted joint activities are solid base for development of several joint projects on both national and trans-boundary level; the partnership between all organizations within the established core group, but also between individual organizations from this group, as well as the opened channels for exchange of news, calls for support, etc. – all contribute to the sustainability of this result. ACEG from Albania already submitted a trans-boundary project with Front 21/42 as a partner organization; AOS from Albania invited Front 21/42 to present the Ohrid case at the nature conservation conference they organized in Tirana; we (Front 21/42) successfully advocated for the Albanian NGOs to have a presentation, as part of the public oversight hearing at the Assembly – all these actions point out that even if the partnership doesn't grow into a formal network, there is a solid base for various forms of cooperation after the project completion.

Finally the Ramsar designation of Lake Ohrid and Studenchtishte Marsh also provides a sustainable base for long-term improved protection of the site and many conservation activities – we already utilized the Ramsar Convention for our requests for one management body for the marsh and the lake, a buffer zone around the marsh and extending the protected area to the connection between the lake and the marsh, as well as to other vital parts for both sites (Biljanini springs, Studenchtishte Canal, Mazija hot spot), during our participation in the processes of adoption of the Law on proclamation of Studenchtishte Marsh as a Park of Nature; the need for all these requests were confirmed by Bern and Ramsar Convention representatives and are now part of the adopted Recommendation 221.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL SAFEGUARDS/STANDARDS**

Safeguard is a separate component of our project. In accordance with our contract, we implemented the Grievance Mechanism, specifically we noted the grievance details on all printed materials which were distributed to the participants of the regional workshops and meetings.

## ADDITIONAL COMMENTS/RECOMMENDATIONS

### ADDITIONAL FUNDING

<b>Total Amount of Additional Funding Actually Secured (USD)</b>	\$32,716.00
<b>Breakdown of Additional Funding</b>	<p>32,716.20 USD (or 30,000.00 EUR) were granted by the Lesser Stiftung fuer Naturschutz in the period October 2021 - March 2023; this amount was used for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- GIS expert fees (creation of maps for the Bern Convention case);</li><li>- boat trips around Lake Ohrid, preparations for On Spot Appraisal (OSA) from the Bern Convention and during the OSA;</li><li>- meetings with NGOs, preparations for On Spot Appraisal (OSA) from the Bern Convention and during the OSA;</li><li>- print of maps and other materials for the OSA team (Bern Convention, World Heritage Center and Ramsar Convention representatives);</li><li>- drone operator fees (presentations and reports within the Bern Convention case);</li><li>- weekend meeting with Albanian NGOs in Ohrid (travel, hotel accommodation, printed materials)</li><li>- biodiversity expert fee (educational tour around St. Naum springs for Albanian CSOs);</li><li>- trips to and meetings with local community affected by the small hydro power plants on a tributary river to Lake Ohrid;</li><li>- co-funding of staff salaries and benefits;</li><li>- co-funding of office costs;</li><li>- purchase of needed equipment (binoculars, computer components, etc.)</li></ul>

### INFORMATION SHARING AND CEPF POLICY

CEPF is committed to transparent operations and to helping civil society groups share experiences, lessons learned and results. For more information about this project, you may contact the organization and/or individual listed below.

Environmental Citizens' Association Front 21/42; [contact@front.org.mk](mailto:contact@front.org.mk)