

Developing cooperation in the Drin River Basin ENVSEC designs roadmap for multi-lateral water cooperation

The Drin river basin is an illustrative example of the interdependences between different users in five inter-connected water bodies. The Basin is being managed through different and often inconsistent national management approaches, resulting in degradation of natural values as well as considerable pollution to the Adriatic Sea.

Also due to the remaining instability in the region related to the break-up of Yugoslavia, basin-wide cooperation is fragile, but possible due to improved cooperation and developing political commitments. Building on strengthened awareness and interest to explore potential synergies and benefits from better cooperation, ENVSEC helps to develop a shared vision for sustainable management.



The Drin River connects lakes, wetlands, rivers and other aquatic habitats into one single ecosystem shared by five countries: Albania, Greece, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Kosovo (*UN administered territory under UN Security Council resolution 1244*).

The regional wetland ecosystem provides resources for agriculture, industrial production, hydropower generation, fisheries and tourism. The anthropogenic activities in turn put pressure on the available natural resources and induce trans-boundary upstream-downstream effects. Trade-offs such as between industrial and agricultural growth at the expense of downstream water quality and biodiversity are present.

The Drin regional transboundary system is a revealing example of interdependences created between different sectors in five inter-connected inland water bodies and a receiving sea, shared by a number of countries with different priorities and interests. Political unrest at national and regional levels has made basin-wide cooperation difficult and resulted in different and often conflicting national management approaches.

Awareness of the potential value of trans-boundary water cooperation in the region is increasing due to the frameworks of EU Directives and the UNECE Water Convention and disastrous incidents, such as the extensive floods that occurred during December 2010 with detrimental effects in both Albania and Montenegro.

Following-up on the emerging willingness to cooperate, UNECE has engaged water competent Ministries, existing joint bodies as well as other stakeholders in a structured and open consultation process to develop a shared vision for sustainable management of the extended Drin Basin. The “extended” Drin Basin comprises the watersheds of the

Prespa, Ohrid and Skadar/Shkoder Lakes and the Black Drin, White Drin, Drin and Buna/Bojana Rivers.

The political commitment for the so-called Drin Dialogue is now clearly expressed, providing solid grounds for the full development of activities and further transboundary cooperation in the area. The discussions have been highly participatory and informed by the knowledge and experience of stakeholders from multiple sectors. The resulting confidence has been instrumental for the progressing work on technical solutions.

The Drin Dialogue has contributed to an increasing understanding in the region that cooperation on trans-boundary water resources provides opportunities for synergies and benefits for all parties involved.

Implementing ENVSEC partner

UNECE

Key Stakeholders

- Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Water Administration, Albania
- Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
- Ministry of Spatial Planning and Environment, Montenegro
- Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management, Montenegro
- Prespa Park Coordination Committee
- Lake Ohrid Watershed Committee
- Skadar/Shkoder Lake Management Commission

Duration

2009-2012

ENVSEC budget

41,332 USD plus 175,000 USD from Swedish EPA

Outcomes

- Strong political support to the on-going Drin Dialogue on a shared vision for sustainable management of the Drin Basin
- Progress on technical work