

Drin Basin Multi-Stakeholders Conference

10-11 December 2013

Tirana, Albania

Information Note

Within the framework of the
Memorandum of Understanding for the
Management of the Extended Transboundary Drin Basin

Contributing to
GEF Project “Enabling Transboundary Cooperation and Integrated Water Resources Management in the
Extended Drin River Basin”.

Organized by the
Drin Core Group

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The organization of the event contributes to the *GEF/UNDP "Enabling Transboundary Cooperation and Integrated Water Resources Management in the Extended Drin River Basin" Project*



The Drin Basin

The Drin Basin comprises of the watersheds of the Prespa, Ohrid and Skadar/Shkoder Lakes and Drin and Buna/Bojana Rivers. The Drin River is the “connecting body” of this complex water system, linking the international lakes, shared rivers, wetlands and other aquatic habitats.

Each of the Drin sub-basins is of ecological importance as it hosts unique biotopes with many indigenous species, which are important from a European and international conservation perspective.

The Drin regional transboundary system is a fine example illustrating the interdependences created between different uses (environment, agriculture, hydropower generation, industry, fisheries, urban, tourism etc.) in four major inter-connected inland water bodies and a receiving sea (the Adriatic).

The Drin Basin encounters diverse and unsustainable management approaches; this leads to the degradation of ecosystems and inhibits sustainable development.

Legally binding agreements among the littoral countries form the basis for water resources and ecosystem management cooperation in each of the three international Lakes.

The MoU for the Management of the Extended Transboundary Drin Basin (Drin MoU)

Coordinated action at the Drin Basin level has been absent until the development of the Shared Vision¹ for the sustainable management of the Drin Basin by the stakeholders and the signing of a related Memorandum of Understanding (Drin MoU² - Tirana, 25 November 2011) by the Ministers of the water and environment management competent ministries of the Riparians.

The Shared Vision became the objective of the Drin MoU; the Drin Riparians committed to “promote joint action for the coordinated integrated management of the shared water resources in the Drin Basin, as a means to safeguard and restore to the extent possible the ecosystems and the services they provide, and to promote sustainable development across the Drin Basin”.

The Drin MoU identifies short-, medium- and long-term actions to address problems identified as affecting sustainable development in the entire Drin Basin or in one or more of the Sub-Basins.

The Drin MoU provides the political framework for and defines the context of the cooperation among the Drin Riparians.

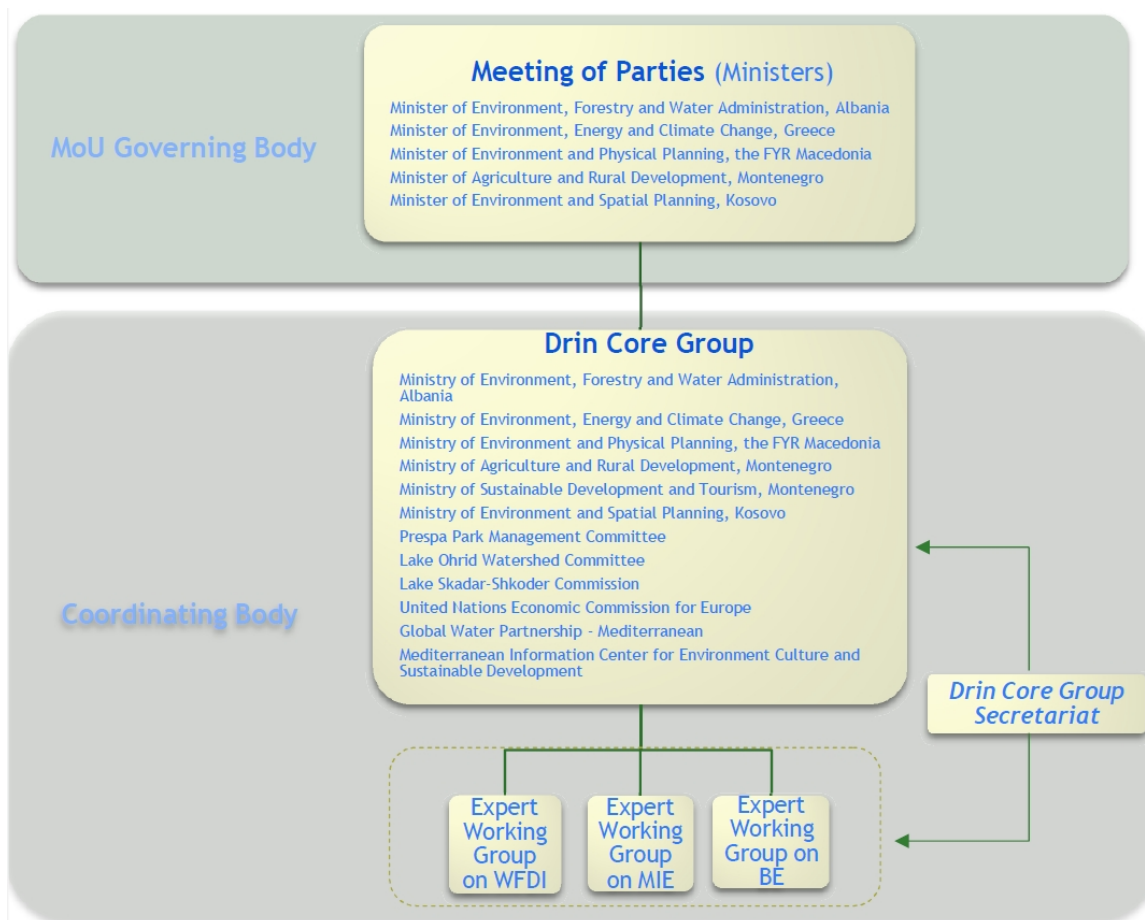
Institutional Structure for the implementation of the Drin MoU

The institutional structure for the implementation of the Drin MoU was established in 2012 and is operational. This includes the following Drin MoU Bodies:

The **Meetings of the Parties**; according to Article 6 of the MoU “the Ministers responsible for the management of water resources and/or environment of the five Parties shall meet annually to review progress in the implementation of the present MoU and its provisions”. The first Meeting of the Parties (MoP) was organized on 28 May 2013 in Tirana.

¹ The establishment of the Shared Vision was the outcome of a structured multi-stakeholders consultation process at the national and transboundary levels, the so-called Drin Dialogue (2009-2011), supported by the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and the Global Water Partnership – Mediterranean (GWP-Med). The activities under the Drin Dialogue were financed primarily by the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency, but also with contributions from UNECE as well as GWP-Med. Support activities were implemented in the framework of the Petersberg Phase II / Athens Declaration Process, the UNEP/MAP GEF MedPartnership and the Mediterranean Component of the EU Water Initiative (MED EUWI). <http://www.twrm-med.net/southeastern-europe/southeastern-europe/supported-processes-and-projects/drin-river-basin>

² <http://www.twrm-med.net/southeastern-europe/southeastern-europe/supported-processes-and-projects/drin-river-basin/the-memorandum-of-understanding-for-the-management-of-the-drin-basin>



The **Drin Core Group** (DCG), established through the Drin Dialogue, was given the mandate to coordinate actions for the implementation of the MoU. The DCG comprises of representatives of the (i) competent Ministries of the Riparians, (ii) the existing joint structures³, (iii) UNECE, (iv) GWP-Med, and (v) MIO-ECSDE. According to the MoU, “the decisions of the DCG will be taken by the representatives of the Parties (i.e. the Drin Riparians) on the basis of consensus”. There are two ordinary DCG meetings per year. Eight DCG meetings -three since the signing of the Drin MoU- have been organized in total.

The **DCG Secretariat** provides technical and administrative support to the DCG; GWP-Med serves by appointment of the Parties through the MoU as the Secretariat.

Three Expert Working Groups were established in 2012 to assist the DCG in its work:

- Water Framework Directive implementation EWG.
- Monitoring and Information exchange EWG.
- Biodiversity and Ecosystem EWG.

The Action Plan for the implementation of the Drin MoU

The Drin Action Plan⁴ (DAP) was prepared to operationalize the implementation of the Drin MoU. It is not a “static document”; it is subject to updates and amendments in accordance to the decisions of the

³ Prespa Park Coordination Committee; Lake Ohrid Watershed Committee; Skadar/Shkoder Lake Management Commission

⁴ Approved by the 6th DCG meeting (Ohrid, 30 May 2012) and endorsed by the 1st Meeting of the Parties (Ministerial meeting that took place in Tirana, 28 May 2013). It is structured around 6 Actions:

1. Enhancement of coordination mechanisms among the Parties.
2. Enhancement of the knowledge basis about the Drin Basin.
3. Improvement of information exchange through the establishment of a system for regular exchange of relevant information among the competent authorities of each Party.

Meeting of the Parties to the Drin MoU and the DCG in response to developments as an outcome of the work for the implementation of the Drin MoU.

The Drin Core Group and its Secretariat guides the implementation of the DAP; these bodies along with UNECE are given the responsibility to coordinate efforts to secure the financial resources in this regard.

The GEF supported project “Enabling Transboundary Cooperation and Integrated Water Resources Management in the Extended Drin River Basin” (GEF Drin project)⁵

The objective of the GEF project is to promote joint management of the shared water resources of the extended transboundary Drin River Basin, including coordination mechanisms among the various sub-basin commissions and committees (Lakes Prespa, Ohrid and Shkoder/Skadar).

Kosovo and Greece are not among the beneficiary countries as they are not eligible for GEF financing. The Drin Core Group is exploring opportunities to secure support for the implementation of the GEF Drin Project activities also in Kosovo.

UNDP is the implementing agency and UNOPS, UNECE and GWP-Med the executing partners of the project.

The in-cash GEF contribution to the project is 4,500,000 USD and additionally 18 million USD is co-funding coming from the beneficiary countries and project partners.

The GEF project⁶ is linked to the existing Drin MoU institutional structure and the DAP.

A project preparation phase was launched in May 2013 and will be completed within the first quarter of 2014. It will lead to the development of the Full Size Project (FSP) document to be submitted for endorsement to the GEF CEO. The implementation of the full phase of the project is expected to start in the first half of 2014 and be completed in 2018.

The inception meeting of the Preparation Phase (27-28 May 2013, Tirana, Albania) gathered fifty one representatives of beneficiary and non-beneficiary Drin Riparians as well as key national, regional and international stakeholders. The meeting agreed on a work plan for the preparation of the FSP document.

Drin Basin Multi-Stakeholders Conference (Tirana, Albania, 10-11 December 2013)

The Drin Basin Multi-Stakeholders Conference will be organized in Tirana, Albania, on 10 and 11 December 2013 by the Drin Core Group with the assistance of its Secretariat (GWP-Med) and the support of the GIZ (Deutsche Gesellschaft fuer Internationale Zusammenarbeit)

4. Enhancement of cooperation in the field of flood risk preparedness, management and mutual support.

5. Institutional strengthening in the field of integrated water resources management.

6. Promotion of public participation and stakeholders engagement.

More information as well as the Action Plan can be found at <http://www.twrm-med.net/southeastern-europe/supported-processes-and-projects/drin-river-basin/the-action-plan-for-the-implementation-of-the-drin-mou>

⁵ The project proposal was endorsed by the GEF operational focal points of the beneficiary countries and approved by the GEF Council that took place in Washington, D.C., 13-15 November 2012.

⁶ The GEF Drin project is structured around five components:

- Component 1: Consolidating a common knowledge base.
- Component 2: Building the foundation for multi-country cooperation.
- Component 3: Institutional strengthening for Integrated River Basin Management (IRBM).
- Component 4: Demonstration of technologies and practices for IWRM and ecosystem management.
- Component 5: Stakeholder Involvement, Gender Mainstreaming and Communication Strategies.

The Conference is organized within the framework of the Memorandum of Understanding for the management of the Drin Basin (Drin MoU – signed in Tirana, 25 November 2011). It is one of the activities under the Drin Action Plan.

The Conference aims to sustain the active engagement of stakeholders, initiated through the Drin Dialogue Process in 2008, in the process for the management of the Drin Basin through the Drin MoU implementation.

The Conference will:

- Present the activities for the implementation of the Shared Vision and the Drin MoU and seek input from the stakeholders in this regard.
- Promote coordination of action -through the exchange of views and information- among national and international actors as well as processes and projects implemented in the Drin and its sub-basins.
- Facilitate cross-fertilization among national and regional stakeholders on management related and development related issues e.g. management of protected areas, monitoring, and challenges in implementing the WFD, sustainable tourism etc.

The event will be used for and provide input for the preparation of the GEF Project Enabling Transboundary Cooperation and Integrated Water Resources Management in the Extended Drin River Basin.

Finally, it will assist in updating the list of national and international stakeholders and enlarging the group of those actively involved in the process for the implementation of the Drin MoU, ensuring enhanced information flow and steering of the process by the Drin Core Group.

Stakeholders from the Drin River Basin including representatives of competent authorities, regional and national NGOs, academia, representatives of the private sector as well as international organizations, donor countries and institutions active in the area will be invited to participate.