



ASSESSMENT OF CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES RELATED TO ECOTOURISM IN THE WIDER PRESPA AREA

Prepared by



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Authors:

Bojan Rantasa

Anela Stavrevska-Panajotova

Albana Cule

CNVP – Connecting Natural Values and People Foundation

Contact person:

Janaq Male, Country Director CNVP Albania

E-mail: janaq.male@cnvp-eu.org or businessdevelopment@cnvp-eu.org

Albania Office

7th floor Zayed Business Centre

Rr. Sulejman Delvina, Tirana

Albania

Tel: +355-4-222 9642

Fax: +355-4-222 9551

Website: www.cnvp-eu.org

The opinions and standpoints expressed in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official position of PONT.

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Abbreviations and Acronyms Used

AEWA - Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds
AKZM - Agjencia Kombëtare e Zonave të Mbrojtura / National Agency of Protected Areas (Albania)
APST - Agency for Promotion and Support of Tourism of the Republic of North Macedonia
ATA - Albanian Telegraph Agency (Agjencia Telegrafike Shqiptare)
CBD - Convention on Biological Diversity
CMS - Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals
COE - Council of Europe
EC - European Commission
EDEN - Tourism Cluster of South-Eastern North Macedonia
EU - European Union
FC - Financial Cooperation
IMBA - International Mountain Biking Association
IPPM - Institute for Public Policy and Good Governance
IUCN - International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources
JICA - Japan International Cooperation Agency
KfW - Kreditanstalt Für Wiederaufbau / Credit Bank for Reconstruction (Germany)
MAB - Man and the Biosphere
ME - Ministry of Economy
MEPSO - Electricity Transmission System Operator of North Macedonia (Оператор на електропреносниот систем на Република Северна Македонија, Акционерско друштво за пренос на електрична енергија и управување со електроенергетскиот систем)
MC - Mountain Club
MP - Management Plan
MSC - Mountain Sports Club
MTC - Ministry of Transport and Communications
n.d. - no date / unknown date
nn - no name / unknown author
NP - National Park
NPE - Nature Park Ezerani
NPG - National Park Galicica
NPP - National Park Pelister
PA - Protected Area
PIGNP - Public Institution Galicica National Park
PIPNP - Public Institution Pelister National Park
PNP - Prespa National Park
PONT - Prespa Ohrid Nature Trust
REC - Regional Environmental Centre for Central and Eastern Europe
TBR - Transboundary Biosphere Reserve
TIC - Tourism Information Centre
TIES - The International Ecotourism Society
UN - United Nations
UNESCO - United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
WB - World Bank

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

To be completed with the drafting of the final report

INTRODUCTION

The Wider Prespa Area (WPA) spreads between North Macedonia, Greece and Albania. The defined geographical scope for the current analysis focuses only on the part of the WPA in Albania and North Macedonia. The area is repeatedly recognized for its natural values: Ohrid region is a UNESCO World Heritage Natural and Cultural Site (UNESCO, n.d.). The Prespa area in Albania, Greece and North Macedonia was declared as a Transboundary Prespa Park (Declaration on the Creation of The Prespa Park and the Environmental Protection and Sustainable Development of the Prespa Lakes and Their Surroundings, 2000). Ohrid-Prespa area was declared a Transboundary Biosphere Reserve (TBR) under the UNESCO Man and Biosphere Programme in 2014 (UNESCO, 2014a). Prespa Lake is a RAMSAR site in both Albania and Macedonia (RAMSAR, 1998; 2013); and Prespa Lake, Ohrid Lake, as well as the Prespa National Park (PNP), Galicica National Park (PIGNP), Pelister National Park (PIPNP), and Nature Park Ezerani (NPE) are Officially nominated candidate Emerald sites (Directorate of Democratic Participation and Roekaerts, M., 2018). In particular, this report focuses on the protected areas (PAs) of the WPA.

Though, for many people of the WPA agriculture still represents the main source of income, tourism represents the key development sector for the area (UNESCO, 2014a). The WPA has rich biodiversity, appealing landscape characteristics and abundance of cultural and historic monuments. This richness, paired with the two lakes create a tourism attractive place. The WPA is considered to have had tourism even in the early 19 century (PIPNP, 2006), while Ohrid region being a UNESCO World Heritage Site is recently very popular achieving tourism presence 6 times its population during the season (UNESCO, 2014a). The challenge exists ahead of transforming the tourism sector into a sustainable sector, further providing sustainable development in tourism, and minding that overtourism is avoided.

Taking into account that the WPA stretches over the protected areas of Prespa NP in Albania, Pelister NP, Galicica NP, Monument of Nature “Prespa Lake”, Ezerani Nature Park, and part of the UNESCO designated WHS in North Macedonia, it is crucial for successful nature conservation to ensure the development of sustainable tourism, and delivery of eco-tourism packages as a means of reducing the pressure on nature and the environment from tourists.



Map of the Wider Prespa Area (PONT, 2019) map © Google Inc.

Tourism has noted an increased growth in the World with 3, 6% in 2018, making it an eight consecutive year of growth above the world's GDP (WTTC, 2019). The numbers are staggering: \$8.8 trillion and 319 million jobs contribution to the world economy (WTTC, 2019). This trend of increased development is present in the region, where in the Western Balkans Countries is noted that tourism has greater growth than other sectors, and it provides for 14% of employment in the WBC (n.n., 2019). This rate of development is not avoiding the WPA, where the adjacent Ohrid town is already under pressure from over tourism in the summer days.

Local people in the WPA are becoming more and more dependent on tourism income, as once fishing settlements become tourist settlements along the shores of Ohrid and Prespa lakes. Yet, they have financial challenges to make a livelihood. Desires to grow and develop the tourism sector in the WPA exist, however the only thing that local people see are the lakes for swimming and a need for accommodation. Steps need to be made to enable this growth to be sustainable.

Sustainable tourism is defined as "Tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities." (UNEP and UNWTO, 2005, p.12) Therefore sustainable tourism has the challenge to help, overcome and manage the dynamic growth of the sector; the alleviation of poverty; support for nature conservation; and the health, safety and security of travel (UNEP and UNWTO, 2005).

But tourism development is not only related to the wellbeing of local people. The national parks of the WPA become more and more dependent on income from tourism, as they strive in North Macedonia to abandon the traditional self-financing practice of harvesting wood to finance conservation measures. "Tourism provides a crucial and unique way of fostering visitors' connection with protected area values, making it a potentially positive force for conservation. Visitor experiences can be transformative for an individual's personal growth and well-being, while instilling an increased sense of stewardship and support for protected area values." (Leung et al., 2018, p.xi) Therefore tourism not only need to be sustainable, but it also needs to be supporting nature protection, so focus is given of ecotourism as a form of sustainable tourism.

Ecotourism is defined as "responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment, sustains the well-being of the local people, and involves interpretation and education" (TIES, 2015). Ecotourism is about uniting conservation, communities, and sustainable travel (TIES, 2015) in which term ecotourism should provide direct (financial) benefits to local people and to nature conservation. This means that those who implement, participate in, and further market ecotourism activities in the WPA should adopt the following ecotourism principles (TIES, 2015):

- Minimize physical, social, behavioural, and psychological impacts.
- Build environmental and cultural awareness and respect.
- Provide positive experiences for both visitors and hosts.
- Provide direct financial benefits for conservation.
- Generate financial benefits for both local people and private industry.
- Deliver memorable interpretative experiences to visitors that help raise sensitivity to host countries' political, environmental, and social climates.
- Design, construct and operate low-impact facilities.
- Recognize the rights and spiritual beliefs of the Local People and work in partnership with them to create empowerment.

To enable this growth of sustainable tourism in the direction of supporting the conservation of nature in protected areas, but also in improving the livelihood of local communities, IUCN has devised a set of best practices, among which (Leung et al., 2018, p.xi):

- Encourage national tourism policies that contribute to the conservation of nature as well as generate economic benefits to both protected area authorities and local communities;
- Supporting community-based delivery of tourism services that is market related;

- Building training in business development and management skills into community-based delivery of tourism services; and
- Re-imagining recreational activities in protected areas as a way to meet community needs and address larger societal goals.

It is within the frame of these best practices, and principles of ecotourism that the further development of tourism in the WPA should develop and transform the tourism sector.

The objective of the present analysis is to (a) identify challenges and opportunities for local actions related to eco-tourism in the WPA in Albania and North Macedonia, and (b) develop a set of recommendations on how to maximise the success of future efforts while adhering to nature conservation needs. The analysis was prepared over 5 months, starting in February 2019. To achieve its objective the needs assessment was developed in three steps, in parallel, taking place simultaneously in Albania and North Macedonia. The first step was desk-top research and data gathering of all ecotourism related initiatives and efforts for 1990 – 2019 in the WPA of North Macedonia and Albania. Annex 1 gives an overview of initiatives and programmes in the WPA, whilst Annex 2 gives an overview of policies and instruments in relation to ecotourism. The second step was a wide consultation with stakeholders, donors, CSO's and institutions in direct meetings, and a workshop in each country with invited stakeholders to gather further information. The third step was a joint workshop where stakeholders from: Albania and North Macedonia, commented on the draft of the assessment report.



*Wider consultative meeting held in v. Stenje
Photo: Anela Stavrevska-Panajotova*



*Wider consultative meeting held in v. Stenje
Photo: Anela Stavrevska-Panajotova*

The WPA territory is much bigger in North Macedonia in comparison with the territory in Albania. In addition the tourism sector is much more developed in North Macedonia and therefore major part of this report is focused on initiatives and actions in North Macedonia.

OVERVIEW OF POLICIES WITH MAJOR ISSUES AND PRIORITIES FOR ACTION

National Policies

Looking at national policies, Albania, though with an outdated tourism strategy, seems to be much better standing and facing the right direction towards sustainable tourism in contrast to North Macedonia. In North Macedonia, though exist many strategies related to tourism and additional other policies that address tourism, it seems that sustainable development of tourism is not a priority.

Albania

The strategic policies related to tourism in Albania are outdated and in need of updating. The Sector Strategy on Tourism 2007-2013 (Ministry of Tourism, Culture, Youth and Sport, 2007) does focus on sustainable tourism development, and defines that guiding principle for realization of the strategy are: sustainable development, benefits of local communities, partnerships and quality (Ministry of Tourism, Culture, Youth and Sport, 2007). Additionally, it recognizes ecotourism as a special form of tourism that is to be developed in the mountains, but it also defines that ecotourism should be a priority for development. However it does not make a specific relation to the WPA in Albania.

The focus of Albania's tourism development on sustainable tourism is so strong that the Instrument For Pre-accession Assistance (IPA II) 2014-2020 for Albania "aims at increasing the contribution of sustainable and responsible tourism to Albania's economic growth" (EC, 2017). Sustainable tourism is also addressed in the National Strategy for Development and Investment 2014-2020 where it aims to improve competitiveness and economic growth of Albania through high quality and sustainable tourism (EC, 2017).

Albania have a specific law on tourism: Law No.93/2015 on Tourism, aims the promotion of Albania since "The purpose of this law is to promote Albania as an attractive tourist destination for domestic and foreign visitors, backing up developing a sustainable tourism, running provided that the tourist service providers meet the demands of tourists, in an environment healthy and safe, and respectful to the needs of today's and future generations" (Official Journal or the Official Announcement Bulletin, 2015).

North Macedonia

At national level in North Macedonia there is a draft National Strategy for Tourism in the Republic of North Macedonia, for the period 2016 - 2021 that is expected to be adopted in 2019. The Strategy is very general, aiming to increase and improve tourism in the country. It does not make specific determinations whether the focus should be on sustainable tourism, it only notes that there is a growing demand for that. The action plan is again very general, and very little direct relation to the WPA¹, but with potential to be utilized for Sustainable Tourism Development and Ecotourism, thus placing the outcomes in the hand of the WPA stakeholders and their efforts and priorities.

The action plan of the Study for the Development of Alternative and Mountain Tourism, (North Macedonia) though a national study, it foresees development of Golem Grad as a tourist attraction, and it aim is to establish a system for management and protection (Petrovska et al., 2015), where specific activities

¹ A supporting activity for establishment of modern visitors' centres in the national parks, and implementation of the action plan of the Study for the Development of Alternative and Mountain Tourism (Petrovska et al., 2015)

development of a management plan, promotion, capacity building and infrastructure improvement are noted, and it is foreseen that all activities on the island would be eco-friendly.

There are other outdated national strategies that to some extent are current, such as the Strategy for Rural Tourism 2012 - 2017. The Strategy for Rural Tourism was implemented in the policies, and a logo - a Sunflower was developed for rural tourism, however, it was not implemented in practice because finances were expected from outside sources. Additionally it has not been updated, signifying the low importance of this strategy, as well as to the other outdated and not updated strategies.

In regard to the commitment to the implementation of the policies, the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia has several programmes, among which the Programme For Development of Tourism for 2019 (Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia, 2019b) which corresponds to the not yet adopted National Tourism Strategy. It does not have Sustainable Tourism or Ecotourism specific measures for the WPA, but it does involve measures that can have, but not necessary will have relation to the Sustainable Tourism in the WPA: measure 1, the WPA stakeholders may or may not participate in an international tourism fair for promotion of the region; measure 2, the WPA stakeholders may or may not send hospitality workers on the foreseen trainings for them; measure 3, the WPA CSOs may or may not have a road cleaning activity; measure 5, the WPA stakeholders may or may not apply for funds for support of tourist event; measure 7, the WPA may or may not receive better directional signage; measure 8, WPA rural households may or may not apply to receive funds for tourism equipment and or tourism facilities adaptation; measure 16, the WPA stakeholders may or may not apply to make information digitally/online available.

None of the governmental programmes in North Macedonia have a direct relation to Sustainable Tourism, with the exception to measure 3 of the Programme For Development of Tourism for 2019 (Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia, 2019b) where a campaign at national level is planned about the importance of the environment for the development of tourism.

The law on tourism (Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia, 2004a) regulates only the administrative form of execution of ecotourism and defines that ecotourism is conducted only in natural sites with special characteristics and in protected areas. However, the Law On Nature Protection (Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia, 2004b; 2006; 2007; 2010b; 2011a; 2011b; 2012; 2013a; 2013b; 2014; 2015; 2016a; 2016b) provides foundation for the establishment of the protected areas, and regulates the activities in nature: in article 104 regulates minimal human activity in the Strictly protected zone; in article 105 states that ecotourism is allowed in the zones for Active Management, and in article 106 defines that the Zone for Sustainable Use are a place with no special characteristics for protection. Additionally, in article 62 it allows only ecotourism and traditional cattle raising practices in the high-mountain habitats and ecosystems. Thus, the Law on Nature Protection sets the regulation that "ecotourism, in accordance to sustainable development" (Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia, 2004b; 2006; 2007; 2010b; 2011a; 2011b; 2012; 2013a; 2013b; 2014; 2015; 2016a; 2016b, a105) should be the choice for tourism activities in the protected areas of the WPA in North Macedonia.

WPA Specific Policies

In 2010, the Environment Ministers of the three countries: Albania, Greece and North Macedonia, and the EU, signed the Agreement on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Prespa Park Area. This agreement provides legally binding obligation with the objective "to ensure an integrated protection of the ecosystem and the sustainable development of the Prespa Park Area" (Official Journal of the European Union, 2011, a.2). It lays the foundations for tourism development in Article 3: where it obliges the parties to "...conserve traditional architecture and monuments, develop and implement a joint strategy for the touristic development of the Area, and promote public awareness and environmental education as a means

for reaching local solutions” (Official Journal of the European Union, 2011, a.3(2)(e)) being mindful to employ environmental standards and criteria in doing so, and considering the objective: in a sustainable manner.

At WPA level, in Albania there is a Draft Prespa Area Tourism Action Plan from 2008 (Liqenas Commune, 2008) and a Tourism Marketing and Product Development Strategy for the Korça Region from 2009. Both of these documents are expired, and in need of updating, but are still current in terms of the needed activities to be done. In North Macedonia the Municipality of Resen has a Local Strategy For The Development Of Tourism In Resen 2019 - 2024 (Pekevski, 2019) and a Strategy For Development Of Resen Municipality 2016 - 2021 that has a whole chapter for tourism.

Priorities for Action

Unfortunately in Albania there is no current strategy or action plan that would portray the policy level of the priorities for action. Therefore all the portrayed national and local priorities for action are from the few current policies from North Macedonia.

Considering our focus on sustainable tourism and ecotourism in particular, a less than a few specific priorities for action can be identified from the current policies that affect the WPA. However many other supporting, and general priorities for action can be identified that can contribute to the general development of tourism in the WPA. Below is a table overview of the actions deemed as a priority from the current policies in North Macedonia and that have or may have relation to the development of sustainable (eco) tourism in the WPA.

Area of priority for action	Strategy For Development of Resen Municipality 2016 - 2021	Local Strategy For The Development of Tourism In Resen 2019 - 2024	draft National Strategy for Tourism in the Republic of North Macedonia 2016 - 2021
Tourism promotion	Promotion of the natural and cultural heritage	Development of Resen as a brand of a desired tourist destination through development, creation and implementation of a marketing strategy for greater visibility and recognition of the destination;	Establishment of regional Destination Management Organizations.
Tourism marketing		Improvement of cooperation of world and European tour-operators by including Resen and the surrounding in their programmes;	
Tourism development offer	Improvement of the quality and increase of the tourism offer	Adding to the current offer and introduction of new types of tourism, such as sports tourism, medical tourism, rural tourism;	Development of new leading projects for tourism in North Macedonia; Establishment of a tourism development fund; Establishment of a hotel development fund. Development of national tourist routes; Development of a modern center in each National Park; * Development of Golem Grad as a tourist attraction; Establishment of rural tourism development zones.

Human capacity development	Strengthening of the capacities of the rural tourism providers	Improvement of the human resource capacities.	Assessment of the tourism high school and increasing the attraction to the students.
Tourism infrastructure	Investment in tourism infrastructure		Continuation of the financial support for placing road signage for tourism.
Tourism related entrepreneurship			

On the level of the PAs, their management plans (MP) provide the priorities for action. Below is a table of the foreseen priorities for actions in the appropriate MPs, in various degrees of detail that the MPs present the priorities for action. Considering that some MPs have been well implemented, and other MPs are waiting to be updated, the actions that are still current/not implemented are presented in bold letters.

Area of priority for action	Management Plan for Prespa National Park 2014 - 2024	Management Plan for the Nature Park "Ezerani" 2012 - 2021	Management Plan for Galicica National Park 2010-2020	Management Plan For Pelister National Park 2006 - 2016
Tourism infrastructure	establishing visitor's infrastructure	Educational paths for students	Establishment and maintenance of a system of marked and arranged walking trails of different difficulty degrees (physical effort), bringing together natural, historical and archaeological values of the Park and offering amenities Establishment and maintenance of a system of marked and arranged biking trails of different difficulty degrees (physical effort) Establishment and maintenance of a system of dirt roads intended for motor vehicles (off-road automobiles and motorcycles) Design and maintenance of wild animals observation decks in various ecosystems (aquatic, forests, alpine) Construction and maintenance of mountain huts and shelters Construction and maintenance of arranged camping sites in the wilderness Design and maintenance of rock climbing and paragliding sites Design and maintenance of picnic sites Design and maintenance of view points	Prepare a detailed urban plan for the Golema Livada zone; Develop new walking trails, alpinist, mount bike and education trails that are at the same time relevant to and in accordance with the Information, Interpretation and Education Program and the zoning of the Park; Maintain the existing trails and equip them with infrastructure as appropriate and in accordance with the zoning of the Park; Mark new trails that connect the villages in the immediate vicinity of the Park, on both the Prespa and Pelagonide side, with attractive destinations within the Park.
Tourism activity development	training guides for the visitors	Specially designed tours for visitors; Observation of birds;	Development and implementation of a system of boat tours on Sveti Naum springs and to the island Golem Grad.	Prepare and implement the integrated Information, Interpretation and Education Program. This program defines the measures (materials, trails

			Development and implementation of a bird and large-mammal watching program.	and the accompanying infrastructure, programs, training of guides, etc.) to achieve the three objectives mentioned above in an integrated and comprehensive way and through linking this program and the Plan for Visitor Infrastructure Development in Pelister National Park. Among other, this program will include information, interpretation and education materials and other measures and activities concerning the key values of the Park (habitats, species, geomorphological phenomena, the village of Malovishta;
Information	placing information boards along the main roads and key access points to the PNP	Information boards;	Construction, furnishing and management of information points at Derven, Sveti Naum and Korita	In the shortest possible time set up information and interpretation boards concerning the following: - The glacial lakes. Location of the boards: in the vicinity of the Greater Lake and the Smaller Lake, and the mountain hut at the Greater Lake; - Red-billed chough (<i>Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i>). Location of the boards: near the Greater Lake and the Smaller Lake; - Pelagonide trout (<i>Salmo pelagicus</i>). Location of the boards: along the rivers Rotinska, Malovishka / Shemnica; In the shortest possible time print out and distribute to the visitors information/education leaflets on the ban on collection and the need of strict protection of all endemic, rare and threatened species throughout Park's territory;
Visitor's Centre	building of a Visitor's centre	Info-centre or info-office.	Construction, furnishing and management of visitor centres in Ohrid and Carina	By 2007 the Visitors Center at Sedum Cladenci is operational, staffed and equipped as appropriate;
Local community engagement in tourism			Implementation of a small grants program for local communities in the Park, through the Environment Forum; Technical support provision for sustainable tourism capacity development in the local communities.	

Participation			Informing the local population on a regular basis, regarding the financial effects of tourist activities in the Park; Review and regular update of the Strategy for Sustainable Tourism within National Park Galicica, through participation of the local communities and other key stakeholders.	
Event promotion			Promotion and organization of the traditional excursion Dva Yavori – Ohrid; Promotion and organization of the traditional mountain biking cross-country race (Ohrid Visitor Centre – Dva Yavori and back); Promotion and organization of a national / international paragliding competition (multiple disciplines); Promotion and organization of national / international rock climbing competition. Organization of a hiker / paraglider / alpinist search and rescue drill; Organization of a traditional spring solid waste disposal campaign; Marking the International Day of European Parks; Marking the Park Proclamation Day – October 25; Organization of "an open day" at Visitor Centres.	
Marketing			Development and maintenance of a system of training and system of hiring licensed tourist guides in the Park; Development and maintenance of a booking system for stays in the mountain hut Sharboica and the camping sites in the wild.	
Monitoring and research			Conducting studies and scientific research to identify the effects of tourist activities in the Park; Establishment of an integrated data collection and analysis system concerning the effects of tourist activities in the Park; Preparation of an Annual Report concerning the effects of tourist activities in the Park; Organization of summer youth research camps.	
Education		Development of an educational	Design and maintenance of walking trails for environmental	

		programme for visitors; Brochures for groups of water and mud organisms; Brochure on the habitats; Biology guidebook;	education in Peshtani, Sveti Naum and in the vicinity of Prespa Visitor Center; Promotion of the arboretum and the small botanical garden at Ohrid Visitor Centre for educational purposes; Publishing environmental education materials for particular target groups; Informing multiple target groups on the Park zones (permitted and banned activities); Informing the visitors on the infrastructure and PINPG services; Preparation and distribution of information materials on popular sites in the Park; Organization of regular environmental education programs for visiting school children groups.	
Management of visitors		Development of a plan for development of sustainable tourism; Preparation of a birds observation plan; Making a protocol for visitors;	Establishment of a visitor surveillance system in the Park; Development of visitor management plans at the Park's popular destinations.	Prepare a Plan for Visitor Infrastructure Development in Pelister National Park through involvement of the local communities and other stakeholders (NGOs, business sector and others), and in accordance with the conservation objectives for natural and cultural values prescribed by this Plan of Management.
Promotion		Development of web page or inclusion of NPE in existing portals on Prespa Lake or the Prespa Park and use of media; Use of media.	Promotion of cultural and historical heritage in the Park; Promotion of the infrastructure and services in the Park intended for the visitors (through the implementation of relevant activities under GO-V and GO-VI).	

OVERVIEW OF PAST AND CURRENT EFFORTS

The WPA has been a subject of many efforts in the past to promote and develop tourism. Some initiatives have been donor funded, others have been local initiatives conducted by the NPs management or even the Municipalities and the Government implementing investment driven development. Most of the efforts done with donor support were in the line of sustainable tourism development, but in contrast those done by the Government of North Macedonia, in particular, had a different approach.

The most significant initiatives appear around 2001, after the establishment of the Prespa Park (Declaration On The Creation Of The Prespa Park And The Environmental Protection And Sustainable Development Of The Prespa Lakes And Their Surroundings, 2000) with the involvement of GIZ (GTZ at that time) with a cross-border cooperation project to promote tourism and tourism development (Alac, Georgievski and Gegprifti, n.d.; Georgievski, n.d.). The initiatives further increased in 2004, when donor supported processes provided for the development of the management plans of the PIPNP in North Macedonia, parallel to developing tourism content and infrastructure, out of which, most significant is the development of Sustainable Tourism in Brajcino, North Macedonia (Notarianni, 2008).

Many projects sought to develop tourism in the WPA, like that one implemented by REC in 2004 - Regional Strategy For Sustainable Tourism Development With Special Accent on Eco-tourism and its Development Opportunities in the Prespa Region (REC, 2004), and the Strategic Action Plan for the Sustainable Development of the Prespa Park that provided a plan for evolution of the Prespa Park and a set of activities for transboundary cooperation as well as for national address. It was only until 2006, that the UNDP lead a long term project on Integrated Ecosystem Management in the Prespa Lakes Basin under which was developed a trilateral Tourism Strategy for the Prepsa Lake Basin (Travers and La Paz Group, 2012).

In 2008, the Prespa Transboundary Biosphere Reserve project, supported by KfW begun (KfW, 2018), and in its framework PIGNP got to develop management plans, and tourism infrastructure. While in Albania, Prespa Area received its Tourism Action Plan (Liqenas Commune, 2008), and the Korca Region a Tourism Marketing and Product Development Strategy in 2009 (Becherel, 2009) with support from SNV. The strategy lead to establishment of DMO Korca.

In 2011, the development of monastery tourism in the WPA by North Macedonia (Paligora, 2011) gained interest, but remaining only on a study. in 2011 also UNESCO started working in the Ohrid Region on the project Towards Strengthened Governance Of The Shared Transboundary Natural And Cultural Heritage Of The Lake Ohrid Region with the aim to improve the management of the World Heritage Site of Ohrid Region and to increase the area under designation to Albania as well (UNESCO, 2016a; 2016b; 2016c; AKZM, n.d.).

While the Ohrid-Prespa region came to be declared as a Transboundary Biosphere Reserve under UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere Programme (UNESCO, 2014b), the government of North Macedonia decided to pursue development activities in PIGNP - a ski centre (Horwath HTL, 2013) and an expressway (Citrus Partners LLP and PIGNP, 2015). Similar, top-down, investment driven initiatives were laid out by the government of North Macedonia and some realized, such as the beach development in Stenje and Slivnica on Prespa Lake in 2016 (MTC, 2016).



Photo: Anela Stavrevska-Panajotova

From 2014 the work in the area of tourism intensified, primarily in North Macedonia, where USAID worked on promotion of the WPA, and together with Swiss Contact, ATTA, and the APSTRNM organized the Adventure Next Conference in Ohrid, North Macedonia, that is considered a milestone in the tourism sector of the Balkans (CARANA, 2015). While UNDP began the project on Improving Management Of Protected Areas (UNDP, 2019), for which tourism received a significant share while working with PIPNP, PIGNP and NPE. In parallel the project on Increased Market Employability implemented by Swiss Contact, worked on the development of Ohrid region as a destination, and in the process supported the capacity building of the sector, primarily the tourism cluster of Ohrid Region.

The Albanian part of the Prespa Cross-border Biosphere Park received more attention from 2016, with support from KfW (AKZM, n.d.), where among other, tourism activities were developed.

In 2018, PONT made grant agreements to PIGNP (PONT, 2018b) and PIPNP to support them in the transfer of a wood harvesting oriented management towards a tourism oriented management.



Photo: Anela Stavrevska-Panajotova

EXISTING ISSUES

Tourism has a cross-sectoral dimension, thus, sometimes activities in the most marginal field of living have effect in the tourism sector. Tourists, especially eco-tourists, see and experience life in an area with all the issues that it has. In this relation some issues may not seem at first as directly important for sustainable tourism development, but they do have an impact in the overall image and experience that the destination has to offer. Therefore in this report, notices even marginal issues that the stakeholders have deemed as important to be addressed.

The issues that have been identified are considered from a point of tourism as a system, in particular, a value chain approach (Hawkings and Nikolova, 2005). It is seen that tourism functions within an institutional frame that can be divided at national, municipal and level of the location; tourism requires resources in infrastructure and human capacity; tourism service is provided through the acts of operations by the stakeholders; and lastly, tourism is marketed for sale.

Issues at the level of governance

Issues at the level of State governance

The main issue at the level of state governance is that there are discrepancies between policies, including legislation with what is going on in practice. Though there is legislation in place, and policies exist (some outdated, or not yet adopted), enforcement is diluted. **State institutions instead to create an enabling environment with a reliable state system, there is a feeling that they do exactly the opposite.** Additionally there is a discrepancy between policies and/or legislation, and due to the lack of them being harmonized, they create even further confusion and disappointment in the state system.

- WPA: In both countries Cattle herders burn the fields where cattle graze, posing a wildfire risk, thus posing a life threatening situation for any outdoor activity, as well as creating a landscape that is not appealing to nature loving tourists. The current regulation in North Macedonia consider this a felony and foresee 3000 EUR fines, however, it is not implemented.
- WPA: Enforcement of legislation is an issue in both countries. Illegal activities in Albania are either not stopped or the court system does not punish the perpetrators (Grazhdani, 2010). In North Macedonia, though cooperation between the NPs and appropriate environmental and/or cultural inspectorates exists, many burning issues remain not being addressed by the state institutions, even though they are pinpointed by the NPs.
- WPA: There are unclear institutional responsibilities in both countries. Many legal documents require opinion from a governmental institution in charge without specifying that institution. When investments need to be done, institutions deny responsibility and obtaining the needed opinion in paper takes a very long time.
- Albania: The concept of sustainable tourism is unknown to state institutions in Albania.
- North Macedonia: The Agency for Roads of North Macedonia is not maintaining the state roads on a timely manner or sufficiently to provide constant safe passage.
- North Macedonia: There are many tourism studies and strategies from various perspectives (rural development, economy, nature protection, etc.) that are not harmonised.

There is a general issue of weak continuity of processes and policies at State level. This is linked with the often changing of responsible people at State level, so previous initiatives are often abandoned by the new heads. This situation is transposed also at the level of management (for example: the National Parks) where the managers are appointed by the State. Therefore this practice creates a system where **State enforcement is dependant to the expertise and the will of the person in charge.**

- WPA: In both countries general issue is the attitude that everyone is an 'expert' in tourism but the availability of real tourism expertise is limited, and advice from tourism experts is rarely sought.
- WPA: General problem in both countries is that there is no continuity of the implemented initiatives and projects. Concern is expressed in North Macedonia that the often changing heads of state bodies and/or management of the NPs creates a difficult situation of weak follow-up on realized projects, strategies and management plans, while in Albania concern is seen in the non-existent change that the project promised to bring at the appropriate level after completion, that is connected to the inappropriate or the lack of an entity which can lead the project and secure the project's sustainability and follow-up.
- WPA: In both countries tourism strategy is an issue. In Albania the tourism strategies are outdated. In both countries there are processes for making new national tourism strategies, but are still ongoing.

Issues at the level of Municipal governance

Municipal Governments suffer from the same issue of the region: low transparency; weak and selective enforcement of regulations; lack of continuity of activities upon changes of responsible people; and are distrusted by local people, making them inappropriate to lead a sustainable process. This situation creates issues in various fields of the local life that is under Municipal Governance, such as waste management, or preservation of local architecture. This **lack of good Governance makes a bad effect to tourism in general.**

- WPA: In both countries there is a problem with waste, both solid and liquid, disposal (collection and treatment). The current wastewater and solid waste disposal system does not suffice even for the local inhabitants. Wastewater needs to be treated. Solid waste is dispersed everywhere and is not being collected or the people that throw that waste are not punished. The need is that the locals must come up with a solution and rules together with the municipal, communal service and the PAs on how to dispose of the solid waste in the urbanized areas, but also in the mountain areas where tourists are present, especially close to the motor vehicle roads.
- WPA: There is a need for the preservation of the traditional architecture and the historic heritage. The specifics and uniqueness of the heritage is what brings added value to tourism. In North Macedonia there are no effective local policies on maintaining the traditional architecture, thus, many towns and villages are lost, and still are losing their authentic look.
- Albania: Sustainable tourism concept is unknown to municipal institutions.
- North Macedonia: Municipal Government cannot lead since they have no trust from the local people. There is no transparency in the work of the Municipalities.
- North Macedonia: There is no continuity of the municipal projects as Municipal Heads change.
- North Macedonia: Ohrid does not have an official tourism strategy, though there is one developed with Swiss support. However the Municipality of Ohrid refuses to adopt it on the account that there is no environmental impact assessment made for it.
- WPA: In both countries there are no urban plans for most rural areas in the Wider Prespa Area (Grazhdani, 2010). This causes problems for use of IPA RD funds, as well as any kind of further legal development in the area.
- WPA: Municipal Governments are not enabling sustainable tourism development, in Albania they are not involved, while in Macedonia they sometimes present a barrier for development.

In North Macedonia an issue at Municipal level is the securing income from tourism on Municipal level. The Municipality would like to get income from tourism, they would also invest as much as they can, but very often there are **weak mechanisms in place to secure tourism tax collection so income from tourism can be received in the Municipal budget.** This situation is mostly present in Resen Municipality. Additionally,

since both PIGNP and PIPNP headquarters are registered in other municipalities, Resen Municipality sees no income from their turnover either.

- North Macedonia: Because categorization is poorly implemented, hospitality establishments do not pay tourist tax for the accommodation they provide. Therefore the Municipality of Resen is not having tourism income that it can use for further tourism promotion of Prespa as a tourist destination.
- North Macedonia: Municipality of Resen cannot collect income from tourism from activities realised in NPG. They invest and see no return.
- North Macedonia: There is no registry of water transport entities on Lake Prespa. It is in process though.

In North Macedonia an issue at Municipal level is the **weak vertical communication and cooperation of the Municipal with the State Government**. Many activities that the Municipal Government could do in relation to tourism development are related with the jurisdiction of State institutions. Because of this void of communication, rarely something is done from the Municipalities to overcome the issue and enable processes that lead to improvement of Municipal Governance in tourism. Therefore often the decision is to do nothing, even at the point of enforcing legislation (that may require adaptation to local needs and situation). Municipalities as if are in a subordinate position to the State.

- North Macedonia: Lack of vertical communication: Government - Municipality - Local People.
- North Macedonia: Tourism Attractive sites have overlapping jurisdictions, both State and Municipal, such as the Sarai in Resen.
- North Macedonia: Municipalities would like to preserve their cultural heritage, but they have no registry of protected monuments/buildings. The list of protected cultural heritage is within the Ministry of Culture - the Directorate for Cultural Heritage, and cooperation between the Municipality and the Directorate for Cultural Heritage is questionable.
- North Macedonia: Possibility exist at the Ministry of Economy for setting up road signage along main roads to direct to tourist destinations, but municipalities need to request this.
- North Macedonia: Categorization of accommodation facilities is poorly implemented and needs local adjustments to enable hospitalities that want to categorize to do so. Municipalities can request sub-legal acts in order to adapt existing legislation to the local needs, when the legislation is not appropriate for implementation in their own municipality, however, they rarely do so. This situation enables effective grey economy, where the hospitality establishments work outside of the law.

Issues at the level of PA governance

Many activities in the PAs in the WPA are left undone, such as maintenance of the trails. While CSOs from the region remain open and willing to help, but with unused potential. Such potentials for cooperation are only marginally used by PA's management, for various reasons and excuses. Realizing that there is a **need for coordination and cooperation with the other stakeholders is needed by the PA's management**.

- WPA: NPs cannot develop tourism by themselves. PNP, Albania recognizes this and needs the efforts and coordination with the other stakeholders in the area, while PIGNP, North Macedonia, takes a step forward to recognize the need for a good planning process with public involvement, and even is in the process of signing a memorandum for cooperation with the MC "Patagonija" from Ohrid.
- Albania: The PNP Tourism Info Centre is not functioning.
- North Macedonia: Though there is existing cooperation between PIGNP and mountain sports CSOs, there is potential for increased cooperation between the two. Some mountain sports CSOs, such as MC "Patagonija" and "EcoDrome" are ready to offer their manpower to serve the PIGNP's needs such as monitoring. The mountain sports CSOs are willing to volunteer in the NP, offer their expertise for marking of trails, and even act as a control to the ascent to Magaro, otherwise a highly protected area, yet it is the most popular tourism hike in the NPG.
- North Macedonia: The maintenance of hiking and biking trails is a burden for the NP MAs.

In Albania the MP of the PNP has a simple component on tourism development. Considering that tourism is seen as a potential for income for the NPs, especially considering the success of PIGNP in their efforts to secure income from tourism, it is important for PNP to **develop an appropriate focused strategy for the development of sustainable tourism.**

- Albania: Strategic documents developed for PNP, by different actors, are not relevant any more or need to be revised/updated. A strategy focusing on nature and culture tourism is needed for the PA.

In North Macedonia, where tourism activities in the PAs are more present, issues arise on the extent of exploitation of the park by the visitors. Questions are being opened on what and how much it should be allowed. And though some of these issues are addressed in the MPs of the PAs, there is one general issue that there is no monitoring of visitors and even more there is **no monitoring on the effects that visitors and their activities make in the PAs. Studies for the carrying capacities and the impact of the various forms of tourism present in the PAs is needed**, that later can be transposed in the MPs. Additionally, enforcement of these limitations are an issue even at present.

At the moment over tourism may not be a big issue in the PAs in North Macedonia, but it may become very soon. Likewise, this issue may appear in PNP soon, so the processes in North Macedonia can be used as a learning example for Albania.

- North Macedonia: Many strictly protected areas are also of high interest for adventure travel. The conflict is present whether and how much to allow tourism in these areas, especially since tourism activities are ongoing there.
- North Macedonia: Hunters cross the borders between the hunting areas and the PAs. There is a need for stopping this in a form of a buffer zone, education of hunters, better control and enforcement of regulations.
- North Macedonia: There are no monitoring and evaluation mechanisms related to tourism and their impact. There are some past and current projects that tackle this issue. However very often is the case that monitoring is not being implemented by the NPs with exception on monitoring of biodiversity, in particular endangered species, but only in some PAs. Some NPs, such as PIGNP even have monitoring equipment for tourists, but do not use it. There is a need to begin implementing monitoring of tourists in PAs.
- North Macedonia: There is a need to assess the needs for tourism development, against the possibilities for tourism development and nature protection, in particular of the island Golem Grad where municipal and State interest collide with those for nature protection.
- North Macedonia: There is a need for a study on the carrying capacities for tourists of individual sites in the NPs in North Macedonia.
- North Macedonia: There is a need for an assessment on the environmental impact that certain forms and activities of tourism make.

Financing of PAs is an issue in North Macedonia. Though there are wishes to have tourism as a primary income, the NPs in North Macedonia continue to have harvesting of wood as a primary source of income. Here lies the basic problem with NPs that the management is in the mind set of harvesting trees. PIGNP, despite the issues on control of the entrance to the PNG, made a progressive step in achieving a substantial part of their income to originate from tourism in 2018, and hopes to continue the same in 2019. Hopefully, with better control to the entrances it will achieve greater income. If this succeeds, along with the support from PONT, PIGNP may become the first NP in North Macedonia not dependent on wood harvesting, and lead the way as an example to other NPs and PAs in North Macedonia, but also the region, on tourism based financing of PAs. A step towards this change has made the PIPNP by signing a memorandum that enables Bitola residents to enter the NP for free - entrance paid by the Municipal Government. This alone is a good example how the NPs can be supported from local governments. However State and Local Governments do

not often realise the need to support the PAs in their financing. Therefore a need to explain the significance that the PAs make for the community and for the State, perhaps by making a valorisation of the ecosystem services that the PA offers.

- North Macedonia: PIPNP considers that the PAs management plans are fairly ambitious, and that they have no finances for its full implementation. They need funding from outside sources.
- North Macedonia: There is an idea for a municipal fund for development of PAs for the Ohrid area, but it is refused from the municipal government in Ohrid.
- North Macedonia: North Macedonia: Tourism is considered as a panacea to economic development. Very often, disregarding nature protection and sustainability in the ideas, and seeing only financial gain. Investments are made in NPs from Municipal or State Governments with ideas for an economic boom. However when the NPs start making income from tourism, and finally see possibility for focusing more on nature protection, the local stakeholders, including municipal governments want to have a direct percentage from this earnings. The irony is that the local stakeholders have not made mechanisms/steps to make earnings from tourism. The danger is that these wants for a piece of the cut of the tourism income of the NPs is disregarding nature protection, and this position is stating an obvious disregard to the role of the NPs in attracting tourists. But this issue is in part owed to the management of the NPs, since their work is hidden from public eyes, without providing public reports and transparency to their activities. So when local stakeholders learn of the income they make from tourism, knowing that all the NPs do is cut trees, the reaction is expected.
- North Macedonia: At PIGNP there is a need for valorisation of ecosystem services that the park offers to the local community. Expected to be realized this year with support from PONT.
- North Macedonia: There is no access control to the PAs. The NPs have only one entrance points where they charge entrance fees, while there are many paths to enter the NPs.

The NPs being State institutions are dependent on the State policies, thus appointment of the NP's managers are related to the State Government. Considering the issue stated above on State Governance, it is unfortunate to see the same practice at the level of NP management, thus making the **responsibility of implementing the MP and with it nature protection dependant to the expertise and the will of a political party appointed person in charge.**

- North Macedonia: Many **donor supported initiatives tend to stop** when the donation support is no longer in place. Thus there is low continuity of the projects implemented. Concern is expressed in the often changing management of the NPs.

Issues at Resource Level

Issues at the level of human capacity building

The tourism sector in the WPA has a shortage of skilled and qualified personnel. The issue is that the **local formal education institutions do not provide the qualification level that is demanded by the tourism sector.** This issue is related to various reasons. For one low end hospitalities pay too little for such high qualifications, and well qualified personnel goes abroad to work for higher wages. Creating a complex situation on the market of a need for appropriate personnel, but not willing to pay for the qualified service. New courses, new curricula or even new approaches may be needed to amend this situation.

- WPA: There is a general shortage of skilled staff, especially well trained, qualified personnel in the hospitality sector.
- WPA: There are no appropriate skilled workers in hospitality, such as: waiter, baker, cook, sweets maker. Education curriculum from primary, high school and at university is inappropriate to the needs of the tourism sector. In North Macedonia this is due to the educational system developed by the Bureau for Education. The skills listed are only with 3 years of high school, but in order to complete the minimal education of 4 year high school, the student enrol at a 4th year, thus they

become eligible to work at the reception desk. Therefore they are lost as the needed skilled workers they would have been. At university level there is no course for cook or waiter.

- WPA: There is a mismatch of tourism education with sector requirements. As a result qualifications from the tourism education are much appreciated by other fields and qualifications from other education are useful for tourism.
- North Macedonia: In practice there is no internship stagier for students in the field of hospitality.
- North Macedonia: There is no planning for the educational needs for labour requirements of the tourism sector.
- North Macedonia: There is no local possibility in Prespa for becoming a boat captain, one needs to go to Skopje or Ohrid to do that.
- North Macedonia: In the primary schools in North Macedonia there is possibility for students to select various classes, but this not on offer since there are no appropriate staff to provide classes on topics of tourism or entrepreneurship. Young people should have the first contact with biodiversity, nature protection, tourism and entrepreneurship even from primary school whether in school or after school activities.

Local people in the WPA need support in developing sustainable tourism businesses. They lack the skills and the knowledge of how to develop a tourism product and/or service. **Capacity building in the form of training that will help those that are interested to begin a sustainable tourism business are needed.**

- WPA: The local people have no knowledge or skills for entrepreneurship in the area of tourism. They need to gain this in order for local tourism initiatives to be successful.
- WPA: Local people need capacity development / training in the field of diversification of their farming activities to include tourism.
- Albania: Need for tourism product development capacity building.
- Albania: Need for capacity building on management.
- North Macedonia: Farmers and shepherders that have relation to the NPs need to be trained to provide services for tourists, as an additional income.
- North Macedonia: There were trainings in the past, but little of the learnt was implemented. There is a need to stimulate/motivate implementation of the newly learned topics.

Local people have difficulties to go beyond their surroundings; to envision a different life in the location they live in. They are in **need of inspiring and developing their creative sense paired with entrepreneurship**. People that have been abroad have overcome this limit. Capacity building in the form of study visits may be required to achieve the needed mental switch to start being creative in the sustainable tourism sector.

- WPA: Local people lack vision. They are not able to envision alternative income sources than those that already exists in the area. There is a need for an inspirational and visioning workshops for the local people to get inspired to start new businesses.
- North Macedonia: Local people's mind set is at a level insufficient for a successful business. The area needs a person with a vision, most probably an outsider.
- North Macedonia: Local people that have been abroad, are inspired to start tourism activities, unlikely to those that remain in their homes continuously. However those that went abroad, do not want to return.

The local people of the WPA are simple, mostly rural people, and they lack the modern skills of today's people, as well as skills and knowledge in delivering quality tourism related services. **Basic trainings such as language, computers, hospitality, and guiding are needed. But also advanced increase of their knowledge for example on the biodiversity, in order to provide tourism services related to nature and the PAs.**

- WPA: Local people, but also tourist guides, have very little knowledge on biodiversity, and are unable to guide tourists interested in biodiversity. Raising the interest among the locals and guides

paired with training may provide a solution to this and create new tourist activities related to biodiversity.

- WPA: The local people have very low language skills. They need to learn languages in order to be able to receive foreign tourists.
- Albania: Need for capacity building in communication skills.
- Albania: Need for capacity building on hospitality.
- Albania: Need for capacity building on guiding.



Photo: Anela Stavrevska-Panajotova

- Albania: Need for capacity building on ICT skills to integrate it into their sales and marketing activities.
- Albania: Use of internet and new communication technologies is needed with today's tourists. Local stakeholders lack language, knowledge and skills to use these technologies to communicate with tourists.

In North Macedonia, there is an issue that the PAs, especially NPs are changing and the staff needs to transform to the new situation, from being forest guards to rangers of a park where visitors are in abundance and they need to provide support to these visitors. The rangers need to educate the visitors, not only to be keepers. Training on communication skills are needed. But also the guides that visit PAs have the need to learn the required behaviour in PAs, therefore trainings for them should be made as well.

- North Macedonia: The ranger service at PIGNP needs to be developed to work as support for the visitors.
- North Macedonia: There is a need for creation of a codex for behaviour in PAs that guides and visitors alike can take to read, learn and practice. It could be in the form of a booklet.

Safety is a prime issue in travel. However it is the last thing on the minds of many start-up tourism services providers. **There is a need to make tourism service providers aware about the safety protocols they need to have** in order to be able to provide good services.

- North Macedonia: The tourist activities are at low safety level. Activity providers need safety management capacity building.

Municipalities in North Macedonia should be able to support sustainable tourism development. **Training on the basics of sustainable tourism development is needed in order for the public administration to be able to assist the development and promotion of sustainable tourism in the WPA/their municipality.** But this is also an issue for the local people that often are not aware what being sustainable means.

- North Macedonia: Strengthening of municipal administration capacities for sustainable tourism and to make promotion of the WPA/their region. A legal requirement is that municipalities must have a person in charge of tourism.
- North Macedonia: There is a general misconception about what is sustainable tourism. In the eyes of the stakeholders sustainable tourism is tourism that is active throughout the whole year, unlike summer tourism where tourism season last for couple of months and for the rest of the 10 months of the year the tourism facilities remain empty and unused.

Issues at the level of infrastructure

Issues at the level of general infrastructure

There is a general lack of appropriate infrastructure, whether that be road, water supply or sewage facilities in both Albania and North Macedonia. Basic infrastructure needs improvement or development if it is missing.

- WPA: The infrastructure is either missing or the existing one suffers from ill maintenance.
 - North Macedonia examples: 1. Water supply in Stenje, North Macedonia needs renewal; 2. The waste water collector system around Ohrid Lake does not have the capacity for all the built structures, unlike the one in Prespa where 2m diameter pipes were used, in Ohrid only 1m diameter pipes have been used; 3. Some villages have no road connections; 4. St Nahum Monastery built a wastewater treatment facility, but it is an illegal structure.
 - Albania examples: Need for sewage system in PNP.
- WPA: In both countries there is a problem with wastewater (disposal and treatment). The current wastewater disposal system does not suffice even for the local inhabitants.
- Albania: Existing road infrastructure needs improvement. Current road infrastructure is not safe enough. Tourism safety is of prime importance.
- North Macedonia: No piers/dock on Prespa Lake.

Tourism in Ohrid area has sparked overdevelopment investments and initiatives that affects the WPA. **The issue is that there are many existing hotels that are in bad to terrible condition, yet they are not revitalized, but rather brand new buildings are built mostly on nature sites.** If such a process continues, sustainability criteria needs to be applied in the WPA.

- North Macedonia: The impact to the environment is devastating in Ohrid area and PIGNP. New hotels are being built, occupying existing nature sites, while the old hotels remain and slowly become ruins. The old hotels should be renovated, instead of building new ones. Ohrid area is close to becoming an Endangered UNESCO World Heritage Site due to the overbuilt structures. A ban on all construction works is favoured by eco-tourism workers.

The border crossing in Prespa between North Macedonia and Greece is closed. Opening of that border crossing would enable connection on the Greek side that is dearly sought to spark movement of tourists in the WPA. There have been numerous announcements that the border crossing will be opened, however to this date it remains closed. According to the latest announcement, it is expected to start working in 2023.

- North Macedonia: Need for opening the border crossing Markova Noga in Prespa with Greece as a way for movement of tourists (Resen Municipality Council, 2016).

Issues at the level of small-scale infrastructure

There is a general insufficiency of appropriate infrastructure for active tourism. For example: not enough marked trails for visitor's activities in the PAs. And in the PAs where there are trails, the trails are badly

maintained. There is a need for renovation of existing and establishment of new trails - a system of trails that will improve and enrich the tourism offer in the WPA. This is the same case for shelters and resting places in the high mountain areas of the WPA, as well as paragliding take off sites.

- Albania: Hiking and bicycle trails in PNP should be revised, restored and appropriate signage is missing.
- North Macedonia: In NPG there is a need for maintaining the paragliding take off sites.
- North Macedonia: In NPG there is a need for establishment of thematic trails.
- North Macedonia: In NPG there is a need for facilities that will provide rest and a place for a meal, perhaps a sheepfold that offers hospitality services.
- North Macedonia: No bicycle trails in NPP.

Accommodation facilities in the rural and mountain areas of North Macedonia are insufficient or inappropriate. **There is a need for support for renovation of infrastructure for accommodation/resting.**

- North Macedonia: The MSC have ownership of the mountain huts in NPP, but do not have the money to restore them and turn them into sustainable tourism facilities and offers.
- North Macedonia: There is a need to define locations for construction of a system of mountain huts for cross-mountain hikes.
- North Macedonia: The PIGNP has ownership of facilities in the mountain that can be utilized for tourism, however they are not fully utilized. PIGNP is working with MC Patagonija to put to use one of the mountain huts at Lipopva Livada.
- North Macedonia: There are no appropriate accommodation facilities for village, in-house hosting in the villages.



Photo: Anela Stavrevska-Panajotova

Supporting facilities are also identified as an issue in North Macedonia. Whether that be a trash can, a bicycle parking or a bus parking place, tourism workers notice these needs. However it is up to the owners / managers of the properties to decide whether they can and want to have such a supporting facility.

- North Macedonia: There is a need for waste disposal containers at various points on Galicica Mountain in PIGNP.
- North Macedonia: Accommodations do not have facilities for bicycles, yet they have bicycle riders as guests and the accommodation management complain that the bicycles make their place dirty.
- North Macedonia: Lack of parking/stopping facility for busses at tourist attractions, such as the Sarai in Resen.



Photo: Anela Stavrevska-Panajotova

Issues at the level of services

Tour operators and tourism hospitality in the WPA currently do not have fully sustainable operations. Simply because it is not embedded in the practice, though it may not take much to achieve sustainability for some.

The need to move closer to sustainability exists, for some a barrier is the lack of information, for others it is a needed financial support to achieve sustainability.

- WPA: Currently there is no sustainable tourism. There are, however, small scale hospitality that have close to sustainable tourism in both countries, but need further transformation to become sustainable, such as: Spirit of Prespa, Carev Dvor, North Macedonia; Villa Utarna, Konjsko, North Macedonia; Villa Minami, Konjsko, North Macedonia; Sheepfold Naume, Velesovo, North Macedonia; Stilian Male, Gollomoboc, Albania; Valentina Vurmo, Gorrica, Albania; Villa Kostoski, Brajcino, North Macedonia; Villa Livae, Brajcino, North Macedonia; Villa Raskrsnica, Brajcino, North Macedonia; etc.
- North Macedonia: There is a need for support for existing facilities to become sustainable, such as subsidies for placing solar panels or waste water treatment.

The weak and limited offer of ecotourism products and services in the WPA pose as the greatest challenge that needs greatest attention in order to be able to develop sustainable tourism. The combination of low financial capacity to invest and low idea capacity on what to develop in the area of ecotourism of local people poses a barrier. **Local people need incentives, and most importantly as ideas and examples on what they can do to start generating income from ecotourism.** Furthermore local people need support to the process of development of ecotourism products and services. Pilot projects as examples, or establishment of ecotourism incubator hubs to provide support and networking are some of the needs that may help stimulate the creation of successful ecotourism activities.

- WPA: There are financial constraints to the growth of tourism in both countries (Grazhdani, 2010) since local people have limited investment power, especially for tourism capacities.

- Albania: There is interest from tourists for PNP (ATA, 2017), however the tourism offer in Prespa is limited.
- Albania: Underdeveloped production of souvenirs.
- North Macedonia: Need for a long term process support for development of an idea into a product.
- North Macedonia: The local people of Prespa see tourist activities only as an additional income that is only secondary to the apple production they have (Smith et al., 2009), this viewpoint discourages farmers to engage in tourism activities. However, by avoiding to engage in tourism farmers are not diversifying their income, considering the low prices of apples diversification is needed. And, they are not opening new markets in the way that Spirit of Prespa, North Macedonia is an example of agro-tourism that is perhaps the only farm that has a significant, direct sale. On the contrary, in Albania, due to the low income in agriculture, see tourism as an appropriate income (Grazhdani, 2010).
- North Macedonia: The locals continuously say that they need infrastructure like accommodation, however the fact is that they have no activities packed and ready to offer if people come. The only activity available, with 0 effort, is the lake - beach tourism. A step away from this approach needs to be made with a strategy to transform the tourism from a summer season work to a whole year round work.
- North Macedonia: There is a need to promote sustainable tourism through examples of ecotourism products and services. And in that way to increase awareness about the possibility of sustainable tourism to generate better income. The example of ecotourism that is needed, may be from the country, the region or even further, to show to the locals that tourism can provide a viable income. Such examples may be created through pilot projects.
- North Macedonia: Need to develop alternative skiing in the PAs.
- North Macedonia: No winter activities to keep tourists in the winter season.
- North Macedonia: Need for a tourism incubator in Resen, a facility that will support people with ideas for tourism products to help them achieve them.
- North Macedonia: PIPNP's experience is that sustainable tourism activities are difficult to create since the local population is not engaging to implement them, even when the NPs are supporting the implementation and facilitating the production of the activity. This is so because the local people do not see an opportunity in tourism, they have other sources of primary and additional income. The local population in the area is over 40 years old, and not willing to start something new. And there are no young people to start initiatives and businesses.
- North Macedonia: There is no offer of products from the NPs; there are no products from the NPs, such as the mountain tea. There is a need for such products to be made available and be sold.

Coordination among stakeholders: institutions (national and local), national park, travel agencies, and even projects is a challenge. Failure has been identified due to this weak coordination and communication among the organizations and their exchange of information. In eg. In North Macedonia mapping of tourism attractions and services has been done too many times, but the information is not exchanged, and stakeholders keep asking for it. In North Macedonia, the tourism sector is fragmented in view of the WPA: there is a Tourism Cluster at the level of South West Planning Region (Ohrid area) that is functioning well, and there is one at the level of Pelagonia Region that is not functioning. A successful tourism sector will require the joint effort of the involved stakeholders. In Albania there is DMO for the whole Korca region, where the WPA is only a segment. **There is a need for a coordinated effort among stakeholders of the WPA in planning and delivering the tourism offer.**

- WPA: Cooperation between stakeholders is very low (Grazhdani, 2010) and poses an issue in both countries.
- WPA: Local people expect that their problems will solve someone from the outside, like the Government.
- WPA: Local people have suffered from past false promises and tourism looks like a false promise to them.

In Albania there is a need for improving the quality of service provided. The quality of services is not reliable. **Quality certification scheme is needed to secure quality of service provided.**

- Albania: The quality of tourism service is not stable.
- Albania: Need for implementation of quality standards and certification.
- Albania: There is a need to move to improving tourism products, and making them into more profitable with quality of service.

The traditional way of life paired with the extensive, traditional agriculture in the WPA is an ecotourism product that needs to be preserved and developed to be offered as a tourism offer. The challenge is to halt the loss of this way of life. Therefore eco-agro-tourism measures to re-establish these diminishing practices are needed. The steps of moving to extensive agriculture, away from intensive agriculture (as in the case of Resen, North Macedonia) would also help the process of lowering the pollution from pesticides in the area and Prespa Lake.

- Albania: Need for preservation of the living culture of people in the area. The traditions and the cultural uniqueness is being lost.
- North Macedonia: The traditional forms of cattle herding need to be returned at PIGNP as a tourist attraction and activity.
- North Macedonia: There is a need for maintaining the values of the anthropogenic landscape in PIGNP. Options are subsidies or support for people that return to live in the villages and practice traditional farming in the PAs.
- North Macedonia: There are no local people in the villages fit to provide a local reception with local food, appropriate for tourists.

Issues at the level of promotion and marketing

The WPA needs a clear and recognizable branding, one that can be used on a cross border manner, and that businesses and municipalities in the WPA would gladly utilize in their promotion. This way, through the joint efforts for promotion, everyone in the WPA would benefit from the cumulative visibility of the area.

- WPA: Being inside a PA for the businesses that are established on the territory, is not utilized in their marketing and promotion, as if it is not significant.
- Albania: Prespa area is a destination based on nature and culture. There are many products and destinations to compete with at national and international level. Thus, there is a need for a clear market positioning of the destination.
- North Macedonia: The WPA needs to be branded and promoted to be recognizable.

The WPA lacks presence and promotion, and primarily on the internet. Information about the WPA and especially about the ecotourism activities, goods or services is insufficient or missing from the internet. But not only on the internet, information is insufficiently present in the WPA as well, whether that be as information boards on the streets or as brochures at tourism hospitality establishments.

- WPA: Tourists have trouble getting information about activities and services. There is a need for promotion and accessibility of tourist information about the activities and services in the WPA, mainly on the internet.
- Albania: Internet presence is needed.
- North Macedonia: Insufficient road signage. Yet, each year, there is an open call for tourism road signage within the Ministry of Economy open to the municipalities.
- North Macedonia: There are tourists that would like to see biodiversity, but have limited access to information on what and where they can see.

- North Macedonia: There is a need for WPA to be promoted on the main highways with information boards to direct country visitors to go there.
- North Macedonia: Missing tourism promotion on social media.

Linking markets with the ecotourism providers in the WPA is needed. However, to do this the local ecotourism providers must adhere to basic comfort and quality standards that those markets require. The fact is that travel agencies are in search of good, quality tourism providers constantly. So, before making marketing campaigns, we need to make sure that the WPA has the required quality on offer.

- WPA: Local providers of tourist activities are not linked/known by travel agencies. Though the wish is that travel agencies need to include more elements of WPA in their offers, currently, it is the travel agencies that approach the local suppliers in need of content, and sometimes the travel agencies are those that develop the content when there is none.
- Albania: Accommodation facilities have low level of occupancy, where hotels experience an average of 11,6% occupancy, and private accommodation experience an average of 3% occupancy per year, while the numbers of restaurant visits is also low (Grazhdani, 2010). This situation of low capacity use of facilities is not stimulating for investments in any tourism development. The need to increase the visitors through marketing is evident.

Tourism market research is needed for the WPA in order to gain proper information for the development of the sector in the right direction. For example, local people think about tourism in a very local and national scope. However, the fact is that travellers more and more are interested in cross-border tourism, rather than staying in one country. Therefore not only that the information is needed, but also an organization that can interpret these data is needed, such as a DMO for the WPA.

- Albania: Prespa needs to make significant investments in data collection in the area and management systems to monitor and analyse tourist visits, spending behaviour, profiles of tourists and other features. These data are almost missing.
- Albania: There is no market research to understand the consumer - tourists.
- Albania: There is a need of attracting new markets.
- Albania: There is no knowledge in tourism market intelligence to drive the sector in the right direction.
- North Macedonia: Tourism is seen as a national activity, while it should have a cross border / multi country approach.



Photo: Anela Stavrevska-Panajotova

RECOMMENDATIONS (concerning the main areas of intervention in future)

The process of supporting and developing ecotourism in the WPA in Albania and North Macedonia should follow complementary steps done in consultation and guidance of established local or international travel agencies and adventure tourism guides that can transfer their experience and know-how. But also in close communication with environmental experts and the PAs management. It should follow these basic steps: rising the overall, local, human capacities for tourism; creating a tourism offer; matching the offer with markets; improving the quality of infrastructure and facilities; finding new markets and matching it with new products; organizing the stakeholders to work together and prepare for each new season together. This would be a continuous process, where one step would gain more focus as the demand for it appears. All of that starting the process with few, quality, local tourism products or services that will be leaders and examples to sustainable tourism and ecotourism in the WPA; and finishing with organizations for organizing the tourism sector and the management of the destination.

- Aiming to support sustainable tourism and ecotourism measures of existing local and WPA based strategies would contribute and complement to the development process, such as the PAs management plans, Municipal tourism development strategy, in particular the actions related to sustainable development of tourism and those related to ecotourism.
- Many of the local and adjacent residents use the PAs for recreation and they are not necessarily tourists and should be included in the vision of the ecotourism development. They are seen as potential drivers for the development of basic ecotourism activities, since they have the necessity and convenience of being in nature in the PAs of the WPA at a weekly or even daily basis.
- Development of quality, ecotourism offer in form of products, routes, activities, facilities and services is a basic prerequisite for ecotourism development of the area. The aim would be to develop ecotourism offer sufficient to fulfil a minimum of three full days of stay in the WPA, across as many possible topics of interests and types of tourism, in example: adventure, gourmet, biodiversity, hiking, cycling, crafts, farming, etc. The ecotourism offer should be, at best, following the tourist demand for: local and intrinsic to the WPA culture and people, quality, taken care about the safety and with cross-border nature. The activities to achieve this would need to follow primarily, the needs for human capacity building identified in this report. It is through the human capacity building processes that the ideas and opportunities for tourism products would be identified by the interested people, and later followed up on their ideas with support to realize the ideas. Priority to the activities for human capacity building would be envisioned as, but not strictly related only to:
 - Work with current providers of tourism products, services, facilities, activities, routes to establish champions - leaders in their own communities to sustainable tourism development. Work should be focused on their capacity building of their hospitality skills, environmentally friendly practices, increasing the quality and helping the marketing of their products.
 - Provide inspirational, mind changing experiences and lectures to people that want to engage in tourism. The experiences can be in the form of study visits to eco- and/or sustainable tourism products and services offered in the region that can provide inspiration and example to the people of the WPA.
 - Work with aspiring local people that would like to create tourism products by providing them with skills on innovative/creative thinking; tourism product development; safety in tourism; communication; marketing and promotion. These people should be supported in the form of pilot projects in order to stimulate others to follow that innovative path.
 - Enable trainings on skills and knowledge in languages, as well as specific topics, such as the biodiversity of the area, that will enable local people to provide guidance on that topic.

- Diversification of the income of farmers and shepherders/cattle herders and helping them to start providing tourism services will lead to an increased tourism offer in the WPA. This is a practice that is used in the region by sustainably oriented tour operators with great success, where farmers provide food and even accommodation in their rudimentary facilities. Most traditional farming (cattle) practices are in the process of being lost, due to the labour and time dedication that it involves, making it unpopular to the younger people. However these practices are of particular interest for experiential tourism activities, and have the potential to bring good income. Though, arguably research proposes that tourism will only compensate the loss of income not made during the time of engagement with tourism (Mettepenningen et al., 2011). However, the greatest benefit of the engagement of the farmers and shepherders with tourists, is that quality of life of farmers may increase and keep them to continue the farming practices (Mettepenningen et al., 2011). Which for the NPs is an added benefit of maintaining the cultural landscapes. Potential for such intervention exists in the lower areas of the mountains of the WPA, since rarely at higher altitudes there is a sheepfold, and it would not be wrong to support creation of one if there is a need for such in accordance to the PAs Management Plans.
- Support to small scale, family run hospitalities in achieving eco requirements in accordance to national standards for North Macedonia (Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia, 2009) or the EU Ecolabel (EC, n.d.) in Albania. The needs are primarily in achieving energy efficiency, water consumption, wastewater treatment, decrease of waste and education. Many of these facilities already have practices that are close to the requirements, due to the simple fact that these practices save costs. Additional support is mainly needed in achieving the requirements that are otherwise not available in the place, such as: waste selection, wastewater treatment, etc. Having at least one hospitality receiving an Ecolabel would gain the WPA with a genuine example, a leader in environmental hospitality and sustainable tourism that will strive others to become part of that process. Furthermore, it will be an asset for drawing more attention from tourists and travel agencies to be more present in the WPA.
- Matching the tourism offer to markets should follow the process of the development of the offer in the WPA. This matching of markets can be focused on three steps:
 - The first should be on direct marketing since it will bring local travellers and intrepid international travellers, appropriate for the early development stage that the tourism offer would be at. Direct marketing would depend on the promotion and the internet presence of each tourism provider, and their reviews on tourism platforms.
 - Second, but not less important, would be to work with travel agencies that are already present in the region, such as in the Ohrid area, to divert them to Prespa. To achieve this, direct contact with the travel agencies can be made, offering the packages appropriate to the travellers that they have.
 - Third would be the incoming travel agencies that organize multi day tours to include part, if not the whole trip, with a stop in the WPA. They would require the best possible quality of the tourism products, however it would take the longest period of time to see results, sometimes years, because of the nature of the procedure preparing, packaging, marketing and selling the tours. To achieve this, package trips can be made yearly in the WPA to match travel agencies to tourism activity providers.
- The tourism sector is complex, incorporating a network of interrelated stakeholders and organisations, both public and private sector, working together. The success of Prespa as a destination relies on a coordinated approach to the planning, development, management and marketing of this destination. A clearly defined destination management structure can provide destination managers and stakeholders with a place to negotiate sustainable destination development, ongoing management and effective destination marketing outcomes. In Albania, a DMO organization already exists that needs further capacity building. However in North Macedonia a DMO or a tourism cluster, or a similar form of association and organization specific to the WPA should be formed that will unite and coordinate the joint activities to promote tourism.

It should be explored the potential for establishment of a cross border DMO for the whole WPA. Considering also the difficulties that cross-border bodies that bring. However, a process of coordination and communication at cross-border level should be established for joint development of ecotourism in the WPA.

- A strategy focusing on nature and culture tourism is very important for the area in Albania, because a number of strategic materials developed by different actors are not relevant any more (or need to be revised / updated), while the Tourism Strategy and Action Plan for the Prespa Lakes Basin did not have responsible institution/tourism actor, to take the lead and follow the strategy implementation. Prespa cannot gain a market position capable of attracting national and international tourists without aggressive efforts that ensure the sustainable use of natural and cultural resources.
- Since people that have experienced life in large cities and/or have international experiences tend to be bigger tourism entrepreneurs than those that never leave their place of living, support in the form of subventions for returning or to newcomers that are going to live in the rural of the WPA, done in cooperation with the municipality, and in the context of sustainability (development and nature protection) would yield results in driving the area to better tourism development.
- A long term investment to the human capacity building of the WPA should also be taken care of. Thus, working with teachers and students on education to sustainable tourism should be done.
- Just because it was not identified by any of the stakeholders toilets deserve the last, and separate recommendation for intervention. Toilets are an integral part of any tourism hospitality provider. Awareness to the tourism providers must be raised that they should equally maintain and clean the toilets. Toilets are usually the second thing that travel agencies and tourists check. It would be most inconvenient to invest in developing a tourism product that will be disregarded due to bad or no toilet availability. Additionally, toilets should be taken care that they have an appropriate disposal of the waste, preferably in an environmentally friendly manner.



Photo: Anela Stavrevska-Panajotova

Suggestions (about how to maximise the success of future efforts, with a focus on the role of EAs)

General

- Change does not happen fast, it is a long process. Considering that almost all projects stop, the moment the donor support is stopped, any process of change should and deserves a long lasting donor support, one that stretches over a decade.
- There should be local ownership of any future project with support from the governmental structures. Good example are some GIZ supported projects due to the fact that the projects were designed to the needs of the local people, with their direct engagement, by this transferring the project ownership and with the involvement of all stakeholders.

Municipalities

- Supportive measures and enabling procedures should be in place for sustainable tourism development. While restrictive measures and discouraging procedures should be in place for non-sustainable tourism development.
- Maintenance of traditional architecture and building with sustainable, and local materials should be encouraged, and even made regulations at local level to maintain such architecture. An example to such building would be the houses in village Jance, in North Macedonia, which are restored with the traditional crafts methods.
- Maintenance and improvement of public infrastructure should be a focus in providing conditions for tourism.
- Enforcement of current regulations, and collection of tourism tax to be efficient and the funds to be dedicated back to the development of sustainable tourism and promotion of the region.
- Financial support to the protected areas should be sought for their further development since tourism development is based on the good functioning of the PAs.

PAs

- Protected Area's Management Plans is the only thing that manages to hinder short-sighted ideas on destructive tourism development. However, Management Plans are not detailed enough for all purposes and unfortunately not always illegal constructions are managed to be prevented, such as the case with NP Galicica. Sustainability should be embedded in all areas of the Management Plans with mechanisms that will prevent potential overriding to the Plans. In North Macedonia such 'development interventions' are regular, but Albania's PNP should also be ready to fight off from future, similar 'development intervention'.
- Good and sustainable tourism can be achieved with the joint efforts of the whole community. Without involvement of all stakeholders' sustainable tourism within the PAs cannot be achieved. An attempt for such a process has been tried, though shortly, at the PIGNP with initial success of the so called eco-forums, but later disengaged due to changes in the management.
- Maintenance and building of new trails could be conducted with the help of local CSOs or work camps. Even monitoring activities can be done with the help of local or even foreign visitors to the PAs. These kind of activities are becoming regular throughout Europe, in example International Mountain Bike Association (IMBA) supports trail maintenance events by local mountain biking organizations every April (IMBA, 2019), while the Leave No Trace camps to clean hiking trails are happening as close as Montenegro. Both activities additionally help to promote the destination in the world as an appropriate place for active tourism. A similar activity is done in Prilep, North Macedonia where every year there is an international bouldering festival where people from the whole world come to find and establish new bouldering trails. As a result, Prilep is becoming a world renowned bouldering destination.

Tourist Service Providers

Tourism in the Wider Prespa Area should be decoupled from the conventional/mainstream tourism development thinking. Tourism in the WPA does not have to be conventional, and it should not be. There are many activities of the daily life of local people, paired with the natural and cultural heritage that can become tourism worthy activity when it is properly packed. To list just a few examples:

- Nature conservation ecotourism, where in organized manner people can come in the area and take part in the preservation of the natural heritage.
- Development ecotourism, where in organized manner people can come and work on sustainable development in the region contributing with their time, knowledge, skills and money.
- Escape ecotourism, where people come to get away from the rush of the big cities.
- Artist's inspiration - local houses could be rented to artists seeking inspiration and quiet time to focus on their work.
- Rural ecotourism, where tourists will take part in the daily activities whether with cattle, apple orchards, and even cooking in the kitchen.

Tourism can be anything as long as the right market is found. Additionally, these specific ecotourism niche markets provide higher income for the locals than any conventional tourism.



Photo: Anela Stavrevska-Panajotova

Tourism hospitalities

There is a habit of thinking big, when accommodation is in question. People tend to desire big hotels as a prerequisite for tourism development. This is yet another area that needs decoupling from conventional tourism in order to enable sustainable tourism development. The example of Brajcino, North Macedonia and Ljubojno, North Macedonia as well as other villages in the region, like Vevcani, prove the contrary. Focus should be given on small scale, family run accommodation that will focus on quality and enable rooms with separate toilets. This approach will provide greater income for the local people, and become interesting for travel agencies and foreign travellers that are willing to pay. Accommodation of larger groups will be achieved through the cooperation of several family accommodations to offer one joint rural experience.

Local people

Local people should be motivated by providing them with examples that function. Any new generated projects should be developed and implemented in close relation with the local people, showing and emphasizing the positive aspects and income generation. If appropriate examples do not exist locally, then

foreign countries should be identified as appropriate examples. Montenegro and neighbouring Greece has examples where the local life and local resources are used with great success and sold to international markets creating good income.



Photo: Anela Stavrevska-Panajotova

Annex I: Review of initiatives and actions with notes on the reasons for success

- EXHIBITION OF THE DENDRO-FLORA OF NATIONAL PARK GALICICA (North Macedonia) was done in 1998 by PIGNP. It was a onetime event that did not continue.
- LIGHTING OF SAMOTSKA DUPKA CAVE (North Macedonia) in 1998, implemented by PIGNP. The lights were soon after stolen. This was a good thing in the end, since this way, without lights, is better for the bats.
- STUDY FOR TOURISM MASTER PLAN (North Macedonia) from 2003, made by Lous Berge. Pilot projects foreseen, but it was not implemented since it was not transposed in a strategy. However no activities for the WPA.
- CROSS BORDER COOPERATION IN THE REGION OF OHRID AND PRESIPA LAKES - EUREGIO (Albania and North Macedonia) Ohrid and Prespa Lakes Region supported by GIZ from 2001 to 2005. The project aimed to get the three countries closer, improve economic ties and contribute to the development of the region. However the process did not see full realization in part due to the political issues between Greece and North Macedonia. As a product of the project there were a brochures, one on the Heritage of Ohrid and Prespa Lakes (Georgievski, n.d.) and another one - Albania's Secret Beauty (Alac, Georgievski and Gegprifti, n.d.), a web page for promotion of the region <www.magiclakes.com> that now is not existing anymore, and local organizations were developed with whom they worked on their sustainability, but the organizations are no longer existent. The project also supported infrastructure development - local people in Prespa received a grant to refurbish their houses, and 40 houses in total were improved for accepting guests.
- PELISTER MOUNTAIN CONSERVATION PROJECT (North Macedonia) started in 2001 and supported, among others: development of a Management plan for PIPNP (PIPNP, 2006); and had a component of developing Eco Tourism in Brajcino village in its second phase 2005 - 2006, as a nature protection strategy (Notarianni, 2008). With the support of the Swiss Agency for Development trainings in hospitality and house renovation/adaptation activities were done to support tourism creation. The Brajcino Eco Tourism component is seen as successful since Brajcino tourism is still active. However, there has not been growth to the local tourism facilities or any offer to tourism activities. Additionally, the village has an aging danger, where young people do not have interest to stay, and leave, thus these facilities may soon close. On the other hand the project had other sustainable tourism activities: development of thematic trails, and studies for bird species and tree species in the park. But due to the change of the management in the NP Pelister in 2007, the new management abandon the implementation of the developed Management Plan, and this lead to breach of contract and stopping any further financial support. The greatest concern is seen that there is no consciousness among high government officials to protect nature and to have management plans in national parks.
- EXPERIENCE PRESIPA (North Macedonia) was a project done by a local NGO Zocus and supported by USAID with the aim to promote domestic tourism in Prespa by an advertisement in the printed newspapers (REC, 2004).
- REGIONAL STRATEGY FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT WITH SPECIAL ACCENT ON ECO-TOURISM AND ITS DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN THE PRESIPA REGION (Albania and North Macedonia), developed by the Regional Environmental Centre in 2004 (REC, 2004). It includes an action plan for the development of sustainable tourism, where it includes 11 priority issues in order of importance, with appropriate actions. However the issues and actions listed here are still current and need addressing equally like in 2004:
 - Insufficient offer of tourist services in Prespa Lakes Region. Actions proposed: 1. Training for tourist services management; 2. Creation of system for communal tax deductions for investments in development of tourist services in Prespa Lake Region; 3. Organized hiking tours in Prespa Lake Region; 4. Organized boat tours on Prespa Lake; 5. Modernization of

- ski tracks on Galicia Mountain; 6. Medical and health services; 7. Establishment of tourist info centres; 8. Decision making for establishment of body for monitoring the quality of tourist services; 9. Feasibility study for investment in tourist services in Prespa Region.
- High percentage of unemployed people in Presa Lakes Region. Actions proposed: 1. Training for different skills needed in tourist services in Prespa Lake Region; 2. Creation of system for tax deductions for newly employed in tourist services in Prespa Lake Region; 3. Organizing actions for cleaning and maintenance of beaches and lakeshore.
 - Lack of capacities for tourism accommodation. Actions proposed: 1. Training for facilities for tourist accommodation management; 2. Creation of a system for communal tax deductions for investments in facilities for tourist accommodation in Prespa Lake Region; 3. Creation of positive local policy for investment in facilities for tourist accommodation; 4. Decision making for the ownership of the existing facilities; 5. Development of business plans for renovation and management of facilities for tourist accommodation.
 - Undeveloped waste management system. Actions proposed: 1. Public campaign for reduction of solid waste; 2. Training on solid waste management; 3. Enforcement of mandatory penalties; 4. cleaning and cultivation of areas devastated by solid waste; 5. Modernization of technical equipment for solid waste management; 6. Assessment of options for recycling and reuse of solid waste.
 - Production of food without pesticides and other chemicals. Actions proposed: Media campaign for promotion of sustainable agriculture; 2. Trainings for farmers for production of food without pesticides and chemicals; 3. Marketing campaign for advertisement of healthy food; 4. Establishment of the sustainable agriculture office; 5. Establishment of local office for monitoring and licencing of food quality; 6. Conducting public survey; 7. Feasibility study for investment in sustainable agriculture in Prespa Lake Region.
 - Lack of water supply systems in the villages. Actions proposed: 1. Program for completion of village water supply system; 2. Connection of villages with central water supply system.
 - Lack of infrastructure for sustainable transport. Actions proposed: 1. Public awareness campaign about sustainable transport; 2. Training for sustainable transport management; 3. Creation of system for communal tax deductions for investments in sustainable transport in Prespa Lake Region; 4. Construction of bicycle roads in the Region; 5. Development of lake transportation system; 6. Feasibility study for investment in sustainable transport in Prespa Lake Region.
 - Degradation of the Lake. Actions proposed: 1. Public campaign for the protection of the lake; 2. Construction of wastewater treatment plant; 3. Construction of monitoring system for the quality of wastewater; 4. Enforcement of legal requirements; 5. Feasibility study for construction of wastewater treatment plant.
 - Lack of usage of renewable/alternative energy sources. Actions proposed: 1. Public awareness campaign about renewable/alternative energy sources; 2. Training for renewable/alternative energy sources management; 3. Creation of system for communal tax deductions for investments in renewable/alternative energy sources in Prespa Lake Region; 4. Municipal advisory office for use of alternative energy sources; 5. Feasibility study for investment in renewable/alternative energy sources in Prespa Lake Region.
 - Degradation of cultural heritage. Actions proposed: 1. Media campaign; 2. Capacity building trainings for NGOs and other institutions; 3. Establishment of system for public information; 4. Issuing of local cultural guides; 4. Organizing cultural group visits; 5. Youth/student working camps for restoration of the monuments; 6. Enforcement of legal requirements; 7. Conducting public surveys.
 - Degradation of soil. Actions proposed: 1. Public campaign for soil protection; 2. decreasing of soil erosion through planting trees and arrangement of the ground; 3. Feasibility study for decreasing the soil degradation.

- STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN FOR THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PRESPA PARK (Albania and North Macedonia) was developed in 2005 by SPP, WWF Greece, PPNEA and MAP, and financed by the Greek Ministry of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works. The aim of the Strategic Action Plan is: “a) to facilitate the provision of information and its exchange among stakeholders; b) to outline the Prespa Park objectives in order to facilitate future discussions; as well as c) to describe in the clearest possible way the institutional, economic, management initiatives and procedures that should be taken in order to enable the accomplishment of these objectives.” (SPP et al., 2005) The Strategic Action Plan provides a detailed, but indicative, plan for the evolution and institutionalisation of the TBPAC in Prespa where Sustainable tourism is addressed with three measures: “1. Integrated protected area visitor infrastructure (roads, pathways, bird watching sites etc.); 2. Network of local tourist agencies and businesses (e.g. agro-tourism, ecovillages etc.); 3. Pilot-project on linked tourism products (joint visitors facilities, boat trips etc.), on condition that the indicator of axis I has been accomplished.” (SPP et al., 2005, p.34) It also addresses the development of SMALL-SCALE TOURISM AND ESPECIALLY ALTERNATIVE TYPES OF TOURISM in the action plan for each country and for cross border approach. FOSTERING THE DEVELOPMENT OF SMALL-SCALE TOURISM AND ESPECIALLY ALTERNATIVE TYPES OF TOURISM for Transboundary Cooperation

- SMALL-SCALE TOURISM-RELATED ACTIVITIES – STUDY
Feasibility study on the potential for developing small-scale tourism-related activities and on the proper management of those in sensitive areas
- DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF INTEGRATED INTERVENTIONS IN TOURISM
 - a. Creation of common structures and infrastructures regarding the integrated reception and provision of information to tourists.
 - b. Design and publication of common booklets and information material
 - c. Electronic information
 - d. Promotion of enterprise cooperation among the three countries
 - e. Revitalisation/ creation of special-purpose tourist infrastructures
 - f. Actions concerning lakeside tourism
 - g. Development of common cultural infrastructures and organisation of cultural events
- ROLE OF TRADITIONAL CUISINE IN PROMOTING ALTERNATIVE FORMS OF TOURISM IN ALBANIA, GREECE AND THE FYR OF MACEDONIA
 - Comparative study, which will consequently be published as a trilingual brochure for the popularisation of traditional folk cultures in Prespa
 - Workshops with stakeholders

FOSTERING THE DEVELOPMENT OF SMALL-SCALE TOURISM AND ESPECIALLY ALTERNATIVE TYPES OF TOURISM in Albania

- FOSTERING OF UNDERTAKINGS OFFERING COMPLEMENTARY TOURIST SERVICES (INFRASTRUCTURE AND EQUIPMENT)
Promotion of family tourism in Macro Prespa as the most appropriate type for the Prespa Park conservation and development

FOSTERING THE DEVELOPMENT OF SMALL-SCALE TOURISM AND ESPECIALLY ALTERNATIVE TYPES OF TOURISM in North Macedonia

- ECOTOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN THE PRESPA REGION YOUTH SPORTS-RECREATION CENTRE IN KRANI CAMP SITE
Renovation of existent capacities, construction of lake dwelling settlement, hotel & adjoining structures: complex of pools and sports terrains in Krani camp site – EIA required
- CONSTRUCTION OF MOUNTAIN PICNIC PARK IN ARVATI VILLAGE
Construction of a mountain weekend cottage, two sanitary units and a sports terrain on Pelister Mountain in the vicinity of Arvati village
- CONSTRUCTION OF KONJSKO ECOVILLAGE AT THE PRESPA COAST (CAMPAIGN)
 - a. Brochure & album “Konjsko ecovillage”

- b. Seminar on affirmation and proclamation of Konjsko an ecovillage
 - c. Promotion of traditional items and handiwork as well as cultural historic monuments in the village
- PROMOTION AND DEVELOPMENT OF HEALTH TOURISM
 - a. Marketing strategy/ attraction of foreign patients to the Institute for Prevention, Treatment and Rehabilitation of non-specific, chronic respiratory and allergic conditions
 - b. Renovation of facility/ standardisation of hospital rooms, professional services and regulation of health insurance issues for foreign patients
- RELIGIOUS TOURISM
 - Procurement of equipment for monasteries and church complexes, paving the access roads with asphalt
- TRILINGUAL TOURIST SIGNS
 - a. Procurement of suitable info-boards
 - b. Establishment of info-boards in Galichitsa NP in Prespa Lake and Ezerani
- TRANS-BOUNDARY WINTER SKI CENTRE “OTESHEVO”
 - Revitalisation and modernisation of the Oteshevo Ski Centre and its transformation into an international Ski Centre for the FYR of Macedonia, Albania and Greece – detailed EIA required to accommodate the ecological sensitivity of the Galichitsa NP
- INTERMUNICIPAL COOPERATION (North Macedonia) was a project supported by GIZ in 2006. In the frame of that project the peer at Golem Grad Island was improved, and an information board was placed; and maps with places of interests were developed for the municipalities in the WPA.
- PRESPE MUSIC EVENT (North Macedonia) was initiated in 2006, with the aid of the Ministry of Economy where an American Company was interested to invest. However the initiative was turned down by Resen Municipality.
- MUNICIPAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (North Macedonia) was a project supported by GIZ. It run in 2006 and 2007. In the frame of the project hiking trails in the WPA were marked, in particular connecting Kurbinovo and Slivnica.
- INTEGRATED ECOSYSTEM MANAGEMENT IN THE PRESPE LAKES BASIN (Albania and North Macedonia) is a UNDP supported project in the period 2006 to 2012, under which a number of activities have been supported:
 - Feasibility Study for Ezerani (Smith et al, 2009) where tourism is sought as a way to switch farmers from the unsustainable apple production to sustainable tourism activities and as a way to improve the livelihood of the local population. However, it also notes that locals see massive tourism as being sustainable and the proper way forward (Smith et al, 2009 p.224), but it also states that there is potential to promote sustainable tourism by good examples (Smith et al, 2009 p.236). Finally it sees tourism as a potential threat to nature protection, mainly through the pollution of the lake’s waters (Smith et al, 2009 p.244).
 - In cooperation with KfW project, the project has contributed in establishing the Information center in Gorica. (UNDP, n.d.)
 - Tourism Strategy for the Prespa Lake Basin (Travers and La Paz Group, 2012). The Strategy provides a detailed strategic vision for sustainable development of the Prespa Lake Basin with action plan with a focus on cross border pilot projects. The Strategy’s recommended plan was to: 1. place an executive manager of the trilateral Prespa Park; 2. Establish the Prespa Park as a Transboundary Biosphere reserve under UNESCO’s MAB programme; 3. Establish a network of TICs; 4. Establish an International Prespa Ecotourism Academy; 5. Develop the NPs to receive tourists; 6. Develop tourism on the islands of Prespa Lake; 7. Establish a Prespa Lake Discovery Centre in NPE; 8. Create Blue Flag beaches on Prespa Lake; 9. Build and prepare the potential for tourism on the Albanian side by means of enforcing waste collection and better planning; 10. Putting in place a UNESCO Heritage Management Plan for the cultural heritage and proclaiming it as a transboundary UNESCO World Heritage site; 11. Develop accommodation in monasteries; 12. Develop sustainable and responsible

activity tourism offer; 13. Upgrade domestic tourism offer; 14. Develop event and conference tourism based on nature, culture and ecotourism; 15. Marketing plan to create awareness about Prespa as a destination for ecotourism, promote transboundary tourism, promote off-season tourism, and ease of booking; and 16. A capacity development support programme that will provide continuous training to the locals, municipal staff and the NPs' staff.

The Strategy envisions five pilot projects: 1. Market research, to ensure that flagship development projects in the Prespa Lakes basin will be market-led; 2. Celebration of Prespa cultures, for the three Prespa countries to open up and get to know each other better, nurture and enhance productive relationships and design joint actions for sustainable tourism development; 3. Prespa transboundary triathlon, to link up the three territories in a common, high profile event and put pressure on governments to reopen the border at Dolno Dupeni; 4. Taste of Prespa TV programme, to become a unique culinary experience for tourists appreciating authentic food together with unspoilt nature; 5. Prespa lakes basin trilateral tourist map, to nurture cross-border cooperation and begin to create awareness of the Prespa Lakes basin as a trilateral tourism region.

- The project invested in energy efficiency of the municipal building. This made budget savings that were used to cover the salaries for two rangers of NPE.
- STRATEGY FOR SUSTAINABLE LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (North Macedonia) was developed for Ohrid Municipality in 2007. The strategy involves four activities related to tourism: 1. Defining the tourism products and offer, and their promotion and presentation; 2. Improvement of the existing and building of new infrastructure; 3. Branding of Ohrid as a tourist destination; and 4. Institutional development and human capacity building. (Ohrid Municipality, 2007)
- LEGAL EXPERTISE FOR THE REGULATION AND ORGANIZATION OF THE PRESPA NATIONAL PARK ADMINISTRATION (Albania), supported by UNDP in the period from 2007 to 2008. "The project aims that through an analysis and assessment of the existing documents, regulations and studies regarding the structure and legal gaps in the functioning of the protected area, to achieve two main objectives: a) Preparation of the draft regulations for the management of Prespa National Park protected area; b) Drafting of the possible national structure of the protected area administration for PNP." (INCA, n.d.)
- BIRDWATCHING TOWERS (North Macedonia) in Ezerani together with information boards were built by Resen Municipality, and financed by the Bureau for Rural Development of the Republic of North Macedonia, while continuous care of the PA is provided with the support of the UNDP project for the protection of the Prespa Lake Water Catchment Area. However they remain underutilized, because there are no birdwatching tours offered, because there are no birdwatching tours or birdwatching guides.
- STRATEGY FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF TOURISM 2008 - 2012 (North Macedonia), financed by UNDP, and adopted by the Government of North Macedonia. It is considered that is fully implemented since there was a Tourism Commission at the Government with many participating parties, and chaired by the Prime Minister, thus managed to push through the activities to be implemented and supported by the various ministries.
- STANDARDS FOR LOCAL QUALITY IN PRESPA (North Macedonia), was a project implemented by Prespa Municipality in 2008-2009 and supported by the EU. Within the framework of this project a Study for the assessment of the existing state and the potential for development of agro-tourism in Resen Municipality (Slavkovski, et al, 2008) was delivered. The study focuses on the villages: Brajcino, Dolno Dupeni, Slivnica, Pretor, Stenje and Ljubojno. The study identifies and proposes several priority measures: 1. Road infrastructure renovation; 2. Integrated management with the tourism destination Prespa, in particular training for that and promotion; 3. Protection of the cultural monuments and making them into tourism attractions; and 4. Protection of the natural heritage and turning that into tourism attraction. It further recommends establishment of quality standards for architecture, interior furnishing, quality of services, and traditional cuisine.

- DRAFT PRESIPA AREA TOURISM ACTION PLAN (Albania) developed by Liqenas Commune, Proger Commune and Qender Bilisht Commune, and with support from SNV in 2008 (Liqenas Commune, 2008).
- PRESIPA TRANSBOUNDARY BIOSPHERE RESERVE (Albania and North Macedonia). Supported by KfW, lasting from 2008 to 2012. "The objective at the outcome level was to reduce the impact of use on areas needing protection in the Galicica (Macedonia) and Prespa (Albania) NPs and to create alternative sources of income in Albania. At the impact level, the intention was to maintain biodiversity in the border region of Prespa, to contribute to regional cooperation in the area between Albania, Macedonia and Greece, and to contribute to alleviating poverty in Albania." (KfW, 2018) "The open FC programme subsidised the Galicica NP from 2008 to 2012 with EUR 1.53 million and the Prespa NP from 2010 to 2015 with EUR 3.23 million. Management plans were developed, zones for different uses were identified, and investments were made in infrastructure and working capital for both parks. Staff in both NPs were trained and equipped with planning and operating instruments to be able to protect the habitats of animals and plants, and to reduce traditional timber harvesting with suitable measures." (KfW, 2018) The project's effects were evaluated in 2018 by KfW (2018) where they mark the overall projects in **Albania as Satisfactory** – project falls short of expectations but the positive results dominate; and in **North Macedonia as Unsatisfactory** – significantly below expectations, with negative results dominating despite discernible positive results. The explanation is provided: "Both projects primarily concentrated on building up park management capacities. During the project implementation it was not possible to implement the measures for preserving forest area and biodiversity in the management plans or the measures for developing alternative sources of income due to insufficient funding and staffing at the park level; this is still the case today. Therefore the threat of over utilizing the (forests) and to biodiversity in both national parks continue to be high; however, this is exacerbated in Macedonia as park authorities finance park management through timber harvesting. Sustainability is thus no longer satisfactory here, even if new funds are being provided through a subsequent FC project that supports the establishment of a financing fund to support the park in the future." (KfW, 2018)
 - SYSTEM OF MOUNTAIN TRAILS (North Macedonia) in PIGNP was supported. The trails were well defined, but the implementation of the marking signs was done by a subcontractor that had no experience with mountain trails and many markings were improperly placed. There should be better involvement of people that have expertise, in example: mountain clubs and cycling clubs in hiking infrastructure projects and activities in marking of trails.
 - MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR PIGNP (North Macedonia) was developed with in this project.
 - STRATEGY FOR TOURISM FOR PIGNP (North Macedonia) was developed within this project.
 - Building of an INFORMATION CENTRE for PIGNP in Stenje.
 - Establishment of PICNIC SITES in PIGNP
- TOURISM MARKETING AND PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY FOR THE KORÇA REGION (Albania) developed by Lionel Becherel in 2009, for the Korça Regional Council and supported by SNV Balkans and UNWTO – SNV - ST-EP Programme (Becherel, 2009). The strategy has 5 year strategic goals and 10 year strategic goals. It also includes a 3 year action plan. One of the measures of the strategy was to establish a Destination Management Organization for the Korca region. This was implemented due to the continuous, non-formal support that SNV provided to the implementation of the Strategy.
- SUB STRATEGY FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT OF RESEN MUNICIPALITY (North Macedonia) 2009-2013. Developed by a Local Group For Rural Development in 2009, and financed by Programme For the Support Of The Advisory Services In Agriculture In The Republic Of North Macedonia (nn, 2009). Recognizes the need for promoting Alternative tourism and Agro-tourism. There is a plan with good measures in place, however implementation seems close to non-existent.
- SUSTCULT (North Macedonia) Project was financed by the EU, and implemented by Ohrid Municipality, Municipality of Berat and the Regional Directorate of National Culture Berat as local partners and in coordination with 12 institutions from 7 different countries of the South-East

Europe. Among the things that this project produced it was a Management Plan of the Municipality of Ohrid for World Heritage property: Natural and Cultural heritage of the Ohrid region (within the territory of the Municipality of Ohrid) for the period 2014-2020. The plan foresees activities regarding economic development, under General Objective 4: To contribute to the economic development of the municipality of Ohrid through using the potentials of WHP Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Ohrid region within the territory of the Municipality of Ohrid on the sustainable growth principle. (Using the WHP). That has relation to tourism development. Several tourism related activities are planned: 4.1.1. Encourage the development and coordination of Audience Development and Visitor Management Strategies to identify opportunities for increasing usage of the Site, and to identify any measures required to effectively manage the impact of increased usage on the Site's material; 4.2.1. Encourage the development of Marketing and Brand Development Strategies, exploring potential benefits of cross marketing and whole site marketing. The strategy should consider domestic and international markets, and the opportunities presented by the existing high visitor profile for City of Ohrid; 4.3.1. Labelling and arranging roads and objects near the natural and cultural properties and setting up directional signs; 4.4.1. Preparation of detailed study for the existent and constructing new infrastructure in the WHP; 4.4.2. Preparation of technical documentation for needed infrastructure; 4.4.3. Construction of accessible and necessary infrastructure to and around the protected natural and cultural properties; 4.5.1. Encourage the creation of a stronger sense of arrival and sense of place; 4.6.1. Identify opportunities to improve and promote user and visitor amenities and facilities across the Site and support landowners to undertake improvements. (Ohrid Municipality, 2014b)

- COMMITTEE ON TOURISM (North Macedonia) at the Government, where the Prime Minister chaired the Committee and Ministers as well as business and civil community participated. It was functioning from 2010 to 2016. Due to the existence of this cross institutional platform, many projects and initiatives in tourism were implemented.
- TOURISM PROMOTION ADVISOR (Albania and North Macedonia) supported by JICA in 2010. The project objective was: Measures for tourism promotions of Macedonian tourism authorities are enhanced (JICA, n.d.a); and Measures for tourism promotions of Albanian tourism authorities are enhanced (JICA, n.d.b); respectively. The activities in both countries were comprised of: 1) To analyse existing conditions of potential tourism resources and the performance of the counterpart organization, other organizations relevant to tourism, and local government with regard to tourism development. 2) To host tourism promotion and marketing seminars to attract international tourists. 3) To consider formulating regional tourism projects together with neighbouring countries. And 4) To strengthen the capacity of tour operators to receive a familiarization tours.
- TRAINING OF TOUR GUIDES ON THE VALUES OF PIGNP (North Macedonia) was an initiative by the PIGNP in 2011, to create a licencing scheme for guides that can make tours in the PIGNP. A guide book for the PIGNP was also developed. However, the director of the PIGNP was changed and the new director disregarded all past efforts.
- RRITJE ALBANIA/COMPETITIVE ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT (Albania), a project by USAID, in which framework an Authentic Albania Quality Mark (AAQM) program was developed considering the recent trends in tourism and travel industry, showing an increasing number of travellers seeking authenticity and enjoying experiencing a genuine connection with people in the country they visit. The Authentic Albania Quality Mark, in operation since April 2011, was designed to function as an industry-led initiative with partnerships and support from the Ministry of Tourism, and National Tourism Agency (NTA). The AAQM, is the only quality-driven standards for Albanian accommodations (hotels and guesthouses) all typically with 50 beds or less. The AAMQ is based on the sustainable tourism certification program of New Zealand - Qualimark Accreditation Program, and adopted to the specific conditions of Albania. Albanian Tourism Association, is the owner and administrator of Authentic Albania Quality Mark program. As owner of the program, ATA has a responsibility to ensure that the program is managed in a rigorous and transparent manner without favouritism or bias; The certification scheme, since

the establishment year until February 2014, has been funded by Rritje Albania USAID project. It, is designed to be sustainably funded through the collection of member fees and the sale of collateral materials, from ATA. Revenue is earned through an Assessment Fee, and annual Award Fee (based on size of property) and a follow-up review every two years. Certification: There are three levels of awards given; Bronze, Silver and Gold. The assessor makes a recommendation for a hotel based on his or her visit to the property, and the final decision is ratified by the Award Committee. Hotels that hold the Authentic Albania Quality Mark are assessed, through on-site assessments carried out by trained assessors.

- PROJECT FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF A STUDY FOR CONNECTION AND PROMOTION OF THE MONASTERY TOURISM ON BABA MOUNTAIN (North Macedonia) was conducted by the CDPPR in 2011. The basic problem that was treated with this project is insufficient use of the cultural and historic heritage and the natural beauties and uniqueness in the role of economic development of the municipalities of Resen and Bitola, especially Baba Mountain as a joint geographical complex in both municipalities (Paligora, 2011). Under the project, four hiking routes were developed along monasteries and churches on Baba Mountain (CDPPR, 2014a).
- TOWARDS STRENGTHENED GOVERNANCE OF THE SHARED TRANSBOUNDARY NATURAL AND CULTURAL HERITAGE OF THE LAKE OHRID REGION (Albania) is a project on Ohrid Lake Region, and was implemented in Albania and North Macedonia. It had a scoping phase from 2011 until 2014. And an implementation phase from 2014 till 2018. The project aimed to assist the expansion of the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Ohrid Lake Region also to Albania, and to strengthen transboundary cooperation and management effectiveness of the region's natural and cultural heritage by addressing the main threats. In the scope of the project two types of management practices were promoted, unknown or unusual for the area, thus training sessions were organized in: Co-management (UNESCO, 2016a), and People-Centred Approaches: Engaging Communities in the Conservation of Nature and Culture (UNESCO, 2016b; 2016c). The project prepared a brochure for tourism promotion of the region, with an accent on active, sustainable tourism that does not harm nature (Gentle, n.d.).
- PROJECT FOR ROAD SIGNAGE TOWARDS THE SUB-PELISTER VILLAGES FOR PROMOTION AND IMPROVEMENT OF THE TOURIST POTENTIAL OF BITOLA AND RESEN MUNICIPALITIES (North Macedonia). The project was implemented by the CDPPR and, in its frame, 98 signs and 11 info boards were placed. The project contributed to the connection of the cultural tourist attractions and promotion of the tourist potential of Baba Mountain (CDPPR, 2014a).
- STUDY FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF TOURISM IN PIPNP (North Macedonia) made in 2012 by the Ministry of Economy. However there was no followed up.
- STUDY FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF TOURISM IN PIGNP (North Macedonia) made in 2012 by the Ministry of Economy. However there was no followed up.
- PROJECT (Albania) financed by GIZ, implemented by AKZM, Phaze I from 2012 to 2015, and Phaze II from 2015 to n.d. In the frame of this project there were several activities implemented in the Prespa area: "1. Strengthening capacities and those participating administrative provisions and the improvement of service quality in tourism. 2. Admonition in implementing the actions proposed in the management plans of protected areas. 3. Promote specifically the local trade (especially women) local businesses and local trading bio agricultural products, etc. 4. Implementation of policies, procedures, processes to improve the conservation of biodiversity and the agricultural nature. 5. Advising the partners in the development and implementation of mechanisms for generating revenue for the management of protected areas." (AKZM, n.d.)
- DEVELOPMENT AND CONSTRUCTION OF A SKI CENTER IN THE GALIČICA NATIONAL PARK (North Macedonia) is an initiative of the Government of North Macedonia, for which purposes a market study was ordered in 2013 by MEPSO (Horwath HTL, 2013), and which was used as a basis for amendments to the Management Plan of PIGNP.
- IMPLEMENTATION OF THE LEGAL REQUIREMENT FOR CATEGORIZATION OF TOURISM-HOSPITALITY FACILITIES IN THE PELAGONIA REGION (North Macedonia) implemented by the CDPPR, where

training on the legal requirements was made for the owners of the accommodations, and one house in the WPA received grants to refurbish their houses. This led to the improvement of the accommodation facilities, increase of the registered accommodations, their promotion and increase of tourists in the region (CDPPR, 2014a).

- STENJE AND SLIVNICA BEACH DEVELOPMENT (North Macedonia) implemented in 2016 by the Ministry of Transport and Connections of North Macedonia (MTC, 2016).
- SUB STRATEGY FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT OF OHRID MUNICIPALITY 2014 – 2018 was developed by the Municipality of Ohrid, in which each village is addressed. Tourism development is part of the priorities and measures foreseen. For the villages that are within PIGNP tourism development was planned to be developed mainly through: 1. developing rural tourism and alternative forms of tourism; and 2. rising the capacities of the local people by giving trainings to the providers of services. Some of the planned projects involve: placing tourist signage; involvement of the villages in promotional campaigns and advertisements; establishment of a local tourism oriented organization in Pestani; making viewpoints and barbeque designated places around Elsani; restoration of the watermills in Elsani; building of a cable car to Konjsko village; making walking pathways to and along the beachfront in Raca and Konjsko. (Ohrid Municipality, 2014a)
- OHRID-PRESPA TRANSBOUNDARY BIOSPHERE RESERVE under UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere Programme (Albania and North Macedonia). "The Bilateral Secretariat was the leading body of the Transboundary Biosphere Reserve (TBR) project. The expected results of this programme include a strengthened administration; more coordinated research; enhanced conservation of biodiversity, increased sustainability and a greater awareness and understanding of the Reserve. Management Plan development for the TBR and the establishment of management structures have been identified as the key next steps in the process of setting the TBR in motion." (UNESCO, 2014b).
- TOUR DE GALICICA (North Macedonia) is an annual event, organized since 2014, supported by Resen Municipality, and organized by civil organization Prespa Bike. It is a mountain biking tour covering the East slope of Galicica Mountain and Istok Mountain. The tour has moderate popularity among mountain bikers from the country. However the trail is of high difficulty level, and is only for highly experienced and well fit mountain bikers. Promoting the trail as a general tourism offer must be done with great care, since it may result in injuries, and it is one of the rare trails that has recorded fatalities. Developing alternative connections to the extremely difficult sections may solve the issue with the trail.
- ROMAN ROAD VIA EGNATIA (North Macedonia) passes through the area and is recognized as a tourism potential by the Agency for the Support and Promotion of Tourism in the Republic of North Macedonia. The Agency commissioned a study on the potential for making a hiking and mountain biking trail (Rantasa, 2014) and placed information boards in the towns in the region where the road passes. Information map boards together with a replica of a roman milestone were placed in each municipality where the road passes, to inform tourists about the route. However the road remains closed due to forest overgrowth and inappropriate for anything but extreme adventure travellers, since it requires investment in clearing, crossing obstacles, cleaning and care, and none of the recommendations that the study proposes were realized. The failure to follow up on this project lies in the lack of dedicated finances for continuity, and in part that the person responsible within the Agency abruptly died.
- PREPARATION OF STUDY ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PELAGONIA PLANNING REGION AS ADVENTURE TOURISM DESTINATION (North Macedonia) project was implemented by CDPPR, where a Study was commissioned and prepared by PointPro in 2015 (PointPro, 2015). The study includes strategic objectives and an implementation plan. In regards to the WPA, the study proposes three, interrelated steps of: 1. Creation of the required conditions for the development of adventure tourism, in the form of infrastructure and education and trainings to local people on tourism; 2. Creation of adventure tours offers attractive for foreign tourists; 3. Marketing strategy for adventure tourism and promotional activities. And further states that the creation of adventure

tourism offer is not feasible without prior investment in the preconditions because the tourists would not be satisfied and would make negative reviews.

- **SMALL BUSINESS EXPANSION PROJECT (North Macedonia)** a USAID supported project (USAID, 2015) and implemented by Carana corporation (CARANA, nd) in North Macedonia
 - **WEB SITE PROMOTION** was made in 2017 with USAID support through the Prespa LAG. Even a young person was hired to maintain the information and run the webpage that was developed. Even local businesses were added on internet portals to increase visibility with the idea that the Prespa LAG would manage this activity. However once the funding stopped, the young/dedicated person left for Skopje, and the Prespa LAG did not maintain anything, and people waited over one week to receive an answer. Now the webpage is offline. The reason for the failure is that the locals are mainly elderly people with traditional mind set and no vision for tourism.
- **NATIONAL PARK "PELISTER" (North Macedonia) Own Initiatives:**
 - **ANIMAL WATCH HOUSE.** Initiative within a USAID project to support tourism, where a local travel agency (supplier) was linked with an international travel agency (provider) in order to promote sustainable tourism within the protected areas in Macedonia. The NP Pelister built the house with its own means and established a bear feeding ground, based on fruits. There was only one tour organized, because the bears did not show up in front of the tourists, so the reviews were very bad.
 - Initiative to build **ECO RESORT** at two locations in NP Pelister. The plans were made, with Swiss donor support, but further implementation was disabled since there are no urban plans in the PA. (Kunovski, 2015)
 - Initiative to create a **HORSE RIDING TRAIL** in NP Pelister was placed in motion by the park's administration. However it did not reach realisation because the local people from village Maloviste did not want to work with horse riding.
- **IMPROVING MANAGEMENT OF PROTECTED AREAS (North Macedonia)** The project is implemented by UNDP and supported by the EU. The duration period is from 2014 till end of 2020. The aim is to improve nature protection and to promote sustainable use of natural resources while increasing the capacity of designated authorities and NGOs to manage protected areas professionally (UNDP, 2019). Activities of this project are being implemented in "Pelister" NP and NPE. There are three sub projects related:
 - **Strengthening the National Park "Pelister"** Administration that is done with NP "Pelister" aiming to build capacities for monitoring of the species, including NTFP species.
 - **Sustainable Future Of Prespa Lake Monument Of Nature And Nature Park "Ezerani"** that is done with Resen Municipality as manager of NPE, and aims to build the capacities for monitoring of the species, and to raise the public awareness with the aim to raise the protection level. As a result there will be developed a Program for the Development of the Nature Park "Ezerani".
 - **Sustainable Management of Plant Natural Resources in the Prespa Region** is done with Balkan Foundation for Sustainable Development. The project aims to improve protection, conservation, monitoring and sustainable use of commercial species of flora in the Prespa region (NP "Pelister") and will produce digital maps of 15 flora species together with their productivity. Among these plants is a study of the blueberry that is considered to be of the biggest economic value in the Park.
 - **Improvement of the Management Effectiveness in "Galičica" National Park** is done with NP "Galičica" and the aim is to improve the Management Effectiveness through Promotion, Biodiversity Conservation and Monitoring In the scope of this project the plan is to reintroduce deer in the park and to create an arboretum of the local dendro flora.
- **ADVENTURE NEXT CONFERENCE (Albania and North Macedonia)** was an event prepared by Adventure Tourism Trade Association in 2015 to promote emerging destinations, and was a joint effort from USAID, Swiss Contact and the Agency for the Support and Promotion of Tourism of North

Macedonia. The aim was to draw the attention of the travel agencies from the world on North Macedonia and the Balkan, and many adventure tourism activities that were provided as examples were conducted in the Wider Prespa Area. Some travel companies after this event started offering Albania and North Macedonia (where the WPA is included) to the USA, UK and German markets, while North Macedonia (with the WPA) received a lot of world media coverage in the area of tourism as the emerging destination in adventure tourism (CARANA, 2015). However the high end tourism companies went back home empty handed with the conclusion that the region is not yet ready for such tourists, and leaving the comment that currently it is right for more intrepid travellers, young people that take budget travels, and lower grade services.

- INCREASED MARKET EMPLOYABILITY (North Macedonia) Phase I was a project implemented by Swiss Contact and supported by the Swiss Government. In this project they had a tourism programme in which they focused in Tourism Destination Management, where one of the three destinations taken was the Ohrid Region. Under this project several activities were implemented:
 - DESTINATION MANAGEMENT TRAINING to the South-East Tourism Cluster EDEN, supported by Swiss Contact in 2015. The Cluster has difficulty in working on its own, but after this training the Cluster started planning the season beforehand, and thinking about out of season offers.
 - In 2015 and 2016 a Tourism Strategy for Ohrid was developed. The Municipality of Ohrid refused to adopt it under the account that there is no impact assessment to it. If it would have been adopted, they would not have been able to have so much construction works.
 - In 2017 and 2018 **language courses for guides** were supported by Swiss Contact. Two local guides sent by NP Galicica took part learning Dutch and Polish language. There is still need for further learning in order for these and other guides to be able to use it to guide groups, but the fact that they have recognized the need and made an effort is valuable.
 - **Sustainable Tourism Training** was organized for representatives of municipalities by Swiss Contact in 2018. Among the 20 participants the Mayor of Resen took part.
- LEIWW (North Macedonia) project from 2015 to 2017, supported by GIZ.
 - Balkan Hiking Adventure was developed - a three-county (Albania, Kosovo and North Macedonia) hiking paths, connected to the international Via Dinarica. One trail of that Via Dinarica ends on Galicia Mountain in the WPA. The result is a success, since the experts involved continue to work together on adventure tourism issues on a cross-border level.
 - Grant scheme was included where 11 projects in two calls were funded, mainly in tourism and agriculture where some were in the WPA.
 - Safety and Risk Management trainings were organized for the people involved in adventure tourism. A group of adventure guides from the WPA were included in the trainings.

The success of this project is due to the fact that the project was designed to the needs of the local people with engagement of the local people and stakeholders, and a transfer of the ownership to the locals.

- CAPACITY ASSESSMENT FOR HUNTING AND MOUNTAIN TOURISM (North Macedonia) made in 2016 by the Ministry of Economy. Prespa area is not included, only Ohrid and Bitola.
- PRESPA CROSS-BORDER BIOSPHERE PARK - Prespa KP Support, Phase II (Albania) financed by the German Government and KfW, implemented by the AKZM from 2016 to 2017. In the frame of this project there were three main activities: "1. Improve the administration of Biosphere Reserve. 2. Socio-economic development in the Transboundary Biosphere Reserve. 3. Activities in tourism, agriculture, fisheries and farms." (AKZM, n.d.).
- ECO ADVENTURES (North Macedonia) is a project implemented by Eco Sense in 2016 and supported by the Heinrich Boell Foundation. Within the project a map was developed, together with activities, to promote eco-tourism and environmental awareness about Mavrovo and Galicica National Parks (Eco-Sense, n.d.). The project had an initial successful beginning by establishing a cooperation with an adventure travel company - Rlde Macedonia, however the project was never finished and the awareness rising activities planned were not realized, having only the map as a deliverable.

- MAPPING OF NATURAL AND BIODIVERSITY VALUES (North Macedonia) has been done by the Macedonian Ecological Society. Though these values are recognized as tourism potential (Resen Municipality Council, 2016) it needs further to be analysed on the specific niches of nature tourism and ways of reaching markets.
- MOUNTAINS AND MEMORIES (North Macedonia) was a youth exchange project that dealt with youth education on nature awareness and readiness for outings in nature (Sfera, 2017). It was implemented by the CSO SFERA in 2017 as an international youth exchange supported by ERASMUS+ programme. The project is valued as very successful for the things that the 25 young people learned about nature and the adventure they had in NP “Pelister”.
- TRAINING ON TRADITIONAL MACEDONIAN COOKING (North Macedonia), financed by GIZ and implemented by EDEN in the Ohrid region.
- TRAINING OF BARISTAS AND BARMEN (North Macedonia), financed by GIZ and implemented by EDEN in the Ohrid region. During this activity two new cocktails were developed: Ohrid Pearl and Ohrid Sunrise.
- REGION OF OHRID LAKE - SAFE DESTINATION FOR ADVENTURE TOURISM (Albania and North Macedonia) is a project financed by the EU, cross-border IPA2 programme and implemented by the Rescue service of Red Cross, Ohrid and the National Centre for Environment, Tourism and Sustainable Development of Albania. The project developed the capacities on both side of the Ohrid Lake for mountain and water rescue.
- LOCAL AND REGIONAL COMPETITIVENESS PROJECT (North Macedonia) supported by EU, administered by WB, and implemented by the Government of the Republic of Macedonia, begun in 2017. “The Project Development Objective of the LRCP is to enhance the contribution of tourism to local economic development and improve the capacity of the Government and public entities to foster tourism growth and facilitate destination management.” (LRCP, n.d.a) Within the project strategies for development of the 10 regions in North Macedonia were developed, among which one for the area of Ohrid, and another one for Pelagonia, both of them affecting parts of the WPA.
 - Volume II – Destination Development Plans – Plan No.1: Tourism Development Plan for Ohrid, Struga, Prespa and Surroundings. It defines priorities: “1) Better conservation of ecosystems and natural resource management; 2) Maintain and enhance (more and better) job opportunities; 3) Preservation of local traditions and culture including handicrafts and heritage structures; 4) Improved and expanded facilities and infrastructure for residents; 5) Increased number of SME opportunities” (LRCP, n.d.b). It recognizes PIGNP and Prespa as tourist attractions, in particular of interest: 1. Ohrid Lake and surrounding nature; 2. Prespa Lake and surrounding nature; 3. Golem Grad; 4. Galicica National Park; 5. Hiking, mountaineering, biking, and 6. Rural and traditional experiences (LRCP, n.d.b). It defines “the high concentration of tourism traffic and activity around Lake Ohrid itself, as well as the increasing focus on low-value segments” (LRCP, n.d.b). The plan defines 8 main gaps:
 1. Gap between the quality of offered accommodation and the expectation of priority markets
 2. Limited and uneven availability of food offerings geared towards the tastes and needs of the priority segments
 3. There are not enough products and attractions that are specifically geared towards the priority segments
 4. There is inconsistent and poor maintenance of sites and attractions, which negatively impacts the visitor experience
 5. There is a gap between the level of service offered and the expectation of priority markets
 6. There is a lack of adequate guiding capacity and skills to meet the expectations of both market segments
 7. There is limited online content for promotion and/or information at the destination level. this affects the visitor experience in accessing timely information

8. There is a lack of signage and roadside information necessary to guide priority market segments

The plan also defines interventions at various levels and different themes:

- Accommodation and Hospitality
 - Diversification of accommodation outside of Ohrid with focus on small and traditional accommodations
 - Improve quality of design and services at existing accommodations
 - Expand available food service providers
 - Enrich availability of culinary experiences outside of standard meal services
 - Improve food providers' culture and preparedness for traveller dietary restrictions
- Activities and Experiences
 - Develop a system of visitor infrastructure in natural areas in the region to enable outdoor activities
 - Develop new products and experiences around nature and water
 - Develop new products and experiences around local culture, farming and culinary traditions
 - Develop and improve access to locally-produced crafts, souvenirs and supplementary products linked to local traditions
 - Improve experiential design of activities
- Attractions
 - Refurbish and restore attractions and sites
 - Improve waste collection and waste management culture (national)
- Capacity Building
 - Advance service culture and service quality (national)
 - Modernize and diversify available capacity building and skill development programs for guides (national)
- Marketing, Branding and Access to Information
 - Create and maintain contemporary online presence for the region
 - Increase digital communications and social media skills of tourism operators (national)
 - Develop contemporary digital services for independent travellers and other priority segments (national)
- Accessibility and Infrastructure
 - Improve signage and information on roads (national)
 - Improve signage and information in towns, settlements and recreational areas (national)
 - Develop roadside visitor infrastructure (national)

The plan finally defines five priorities for action:

1. Better conservation of ecosystems and natural resource management
 2. Maintain and enhance (more and better) job opportunities
 3. Preservation of local traditions and culture including handicrafts and heritage structures
 4. Improved and expanded facilities and infrastructure for residents
 5. Increased number of SME opportunities
- Volume II – Destination Development Plans – Plan No.3: Tourism Development Plan for Pelagonija. It defines priorities: "1) Maintain and enhance (more and better) job opportunities; 2) Preservation of local traditions and culture including handicrafts and heritage structures; 3) Increased awareness of the importance of environmental protection; 4) Better conservation of ecosystems and natural resource management; 5) Enhanced image of the area ('make people proud to live in it')" (LRCP, n.d.c). It recognizes PIPNP as a

tourist attraction, in particular of interest: 1. Pelister National Park; 2. Hiking, mountaineering, some biking; and 3. Rural and traditional experiences (LRCP, n.d.c). It defines “underutilization of its significant tourism potential” (LRCP, n.d.c) as its most significant challenge. The plan defines 8 main gaps:

1. Gap between the quality of offered accommodation and the expectation of priority markets
2. Limited and uneven availability of food offerings geared towards the tastes and needs of the priority segments
3. There are not enough products and attractions that are specifically geared towards the priority segments
4. There is inconsistent and poor maintenance of sites and attractions, which negatively impacts the visitor experience
5. There is a gap between the level of service offered and the expectation of priority markets
6. There is a lack of adequate guiding capacity and skills to meet the expectations of both market segments
7. There is limited online content for promotion and/ or information at the destination level. this affects the visitor experience in accessing timely information
8. There is a lack of signage and roadside information necessary to guide priority market segments

The plan also defines interventions at various levels and different themes:

- Accommodation and Hospitality
 - Expand available accommodation with focus on small rural and authentic accommodations (up to 20 rooms)
 - Improve quality of design and services at existing accommodations
 - Expand available food service providers
 - Enrich availability of culinary experiences outside of standard meal services
 - Improve food providers’ culture and preparedness for traveller dietary restrictions*
- Activities and Experiences
 - Expand paragliding offering
 - Expand freestyle skiing offering
 - Develop new hard adventure offerings
 - Develop a system of visitor infrastructure in natural areas in the region to enable outdoor activities
 - Develop new products and experiences around local culture, farming and culinary traditions
 - Develop and improve access to locally-produced crafts, souvenirs and supplementary products linked to local traditions
 - Improve experiential design of activities
- Attractions
 - Refurbish and restore attractions and sites
 - Improve waste collection and waste management culture (national)
- Capacity Building
 - Advance service culture and service quality (national)
 - Modernize and diversify available capacity building and skill development programs for guides (national)
- Marketing, Branding and Access to Information
 - Create and maintain contemporary online presence for the region
 - Increase digital communications and social media skills of tourism operators (national)

- Develop contemporary digital services for independent travellers and other priority segments (national)
- Accessibility and Infrastructure
 - Improve signage and information on roads (national)
 - Improve signage and information in towns, settlements and recreational areas (national)
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The plan finally defines five priorities for action:

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 2. Preservation of local traditions and culture including handicrafts and heritage structures
 3. Increased awareness of the importance of environment protection
 4. Better conservation of ecosystems and natural resource management
 5. Enhanced image of the area ('make people proud to live in it')
- RECONSTRUCTION OF THE MOUNTAIN HUT AT LIPOVA LIVADA IN PIGNP (North Macedonia) financed by GIZ, and implemented by "Patagonia" Mountain Club as a model for sustainable use. The problem is that the hut is not legalized.
 - FINNISH VILLAGE (North Macedonia) - project and plans are being prepared for a tourism focused village, close to the border with Greece on an area of 15000 m2. The idea is from 2009 and is slowly being implemented. The clarity of the idea and whether the approach will be sustainable remains unknown since it will depend on any future potential investors, especially since the person that proposed the idea seems not available to follow up on it and invest in its realization.
 - TRANSBOUNDARY BIOSPHERE RESERVE PRESAPA, Phase II (Albania) supported by KfW and implemented in the period from 2018 to 2021. "The purpose of this phase of the project is the reduction of the pressure on natural resources as well as a contribution to poverty reduction in the Albanian part of the Prespa Biosphere Reserve. This is to contribute to conserve the biodiversity and to improve the living conditions of the population in Prespa National Park and in the Albanian part of the Biosphere Reserve." (INCA, 2018)
 - BICYCLE and HIKING TRAILS (North Macedonia) - In the NP Pelister will be renovated and built new trails for mountain biking, downhill biking and hiking. The project is supported by UNDP and is still ongoing.
 - HOLY WATERS HIKING TRAIL (North Macedonia) was marked, along the monasteries of the East side of Prespa Lake. The first project only marked the existence of a trail with support from the Bureau for Regional Development, but left the trail in its uncared form. Resen Municipality now got a cross border EU funded project to turn the trail into a usable tourism product for hiking and biking, and is planned for implementation in 2019 and 2020.
 - GRANT AGREEMENT WITH PONT (North Macedonia) "The grant will enable PIGNP to strengthen their capacity for programming and planning operations in line with the management plan. By the end of 2018, PIGNP will develop an operational plan for 2019 that meets the requirements of PONT's and international standards, as well as a two-year grant proposal to PONT focusing on updating the management plan for the period 2021-2030. In doing so, PIGNP will review experience and lessons learned from the previous planning cycles and establish formal participatory mechanisms to be used in future: the Scientific Council and the Council of Stakeholders. The latter will have an important role in facilitating the input from key stakeholders into the development of the new management plan, to commence in 2019." (PONT, 2018b)
 - NEW WEBPAGE for NP Galicica is being prepared in 2019 with readily available information on for tourists. It will be paired with a phone application for the trails of the park..
 - Renovation and maintenance of the trails in the park.
 - PROTECTION OF THE ECOSYSTEM IN THE CROSS BORDER REGION OHRID-PRESAPA (Albania and North Macedonia) is a cross border project with ongoing implementation by the Albanian Foundation for Development of Local Capacity; SEG Holding; Hunting Association of Macedonia; and the Federation

of Fishing Organizations on inland Waters of Albania, and supported by the EU. They are developing a Spatial Information and Planning System where tourism is included in the information system.

- PRESPA TOURISM VALUE CHAIN is a project in the pipeline by SWGRRD and supported by GIZ.

Annex II: Review of current policy actions, plans and strategies

International

- There are several International Commitments that have been ratified by the Albanian and the parliament of North Macedonia and that have an impact to a need for enforcing sustainable tourism for the protection of biodiversity in the Wider Prespa Area:
 - Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, Especially as Waterfowl Habitats. UN Convention, Ramsar, 2 February 1971, entered into force in North Macedonia by Act of Succession in 1991 (Official Journal of the SFRY, 1977) and in Albania in 1996 (Ramsar, n.d.).
 - Convention on the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage. UNESCO, Paris, 16 November 1972, entered into force in North Macedonia by Act of Succession in 1997 (MOEPP, 2019) and in Albania in 1979 (UNESCO, 2017).
 - Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats. Council of Europe, Bern, 19 September 1979, entered into force in Albania in 1999 (COE, 2019c), and in North Macedonia in 1997 (Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia, 1997a).
 - Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals. UN Convention, Bonn, 23 June 1979, ratified by Albania in 2001 (CMS, n.d.), and by the Republic of North Macedonia in 1999 (Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia, 1999b).
 - Convention on Biological Diversity. UNEP, Rio, 5 June 1992, ratified by North Macedonia in 1997 (Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia, 1997b) and by Albania (CBD, n.d.).
 - Convention for the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe. COE, Granada, 1985 (COE, n.d.b.). Ratified by North Macedonia (COE, 2019a).
 - European Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage. COE, London 1969 (COE, n.d.a) and Valletta 1992 (COE, n.d.c). Ratified by North Macedonia in 2006 (COE, 2019b) and by Albania in 2008 (COE, 2019b).
 - Agreement on the Conservation of African - Eurasian Migratory Water Birds. Hague, June 1995, ratified by the Republic of North Macedonia in 1999 (Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia, 1999a) and in Albania in 2001 (AEWA, n.d.).
 - European Landscape Convention of the Council of Europe, ratified in North Macedonia in 2003 (Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia, 2003).
- DECLARATION ON THE CREATION OF THE PRESIPA PARK AND THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PRESIPA LAKES AND THEIR SURROUNDINGS (2000), represents the beginning and the foundation that lead to the cross border protection of the Wider Prespa Area that requires development of sustainable tourism.
- AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS OF THE REPUBLIC OF ALBANIA AND THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA FOR THE PROTECTION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF LAKE OHRID AND ITS WATERSHED was signed by the Governments of Albania and North Macedonia in 2004, with the aim for further deepening the cooperation between the two (Agreement Between The Council Of Ministers Of The Republic Of Albania And The Government Of The Republic Of Macedonia For The Protection And Sustainable Development Of Lake Ohrid And Its Watershed, 2004). The parties agree to protection and sustainable development; give the status of World Cultural and Natural Heritage and “Biosphere Reserve”; and prepare condition to propose the declaration of the Prespa - Ohrid area as a Euro-Region. For the fulfilment of the objectives the Governments agree to take the following measures:
 - (a) Prevent, control and reduce pollution of the waters in the watershed;
 - (b) Protect the soil from erosion, depletion, infections and pollution;
 - (c) Protect biodiversity by protecting especially the endemic, rare, threatened or endangered species of flora and fauna;
 - (d) Prevent introduction and breeding non-autochthonous animal and plant species;

- (e) Ensure the sustainable use of natural resources of the watershed;
- (f) Avoid any serious damage of the cultural values and natural landscapes
- (g) Prevent and control the economic activities which cause or may cause negative impact in the Lake watershed

And regulates the establishment and the work of the Ohrid Lake Watershed Committee. However fulfilment of this agreement is arguable since UNESCO is considering to change the status of Ohrid area as World Cultural and Natural Heritage in Danger (Trajkovski, 2019).

- AGREEMENT ON THE PROTECTION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PRESIPA PARK AREA (Official Journal of the European Union, 2011) was signed by the Environment Ministers of the three countries and the EU in 2010. This agreement provides legally binding obligation “to ensure an integrated protection of the ecosystem and the sustainable development of the Prespa Park Area, including the development of integrated river basin management plans, according to international and European Union standards” (Official Journal of the European Union, 2011, a.2). It lays the foundations for tourism development in Article 3: where it obliges the parties to “conserve traditional architecture and monuments, develop and implement a joint strategy for the touristic development of the Area, and promote public awareness and environmental education as a means for reaching local solutions” (Official Journal of the European Union, 2011, a.3(2)(e)) being mindful to employ environmental standards and criteria in doing so, and considering the objective: to be done in a sustainable manner.

National

Albania

- Sector Strategy on Tourism 2007-2013 (Ministry of Tourism, Culture, Youth and Sport, 2007), adopted by the Council of Ministers in 2008. The strategy was developed as a review to the Strategy of Tourism Development for the period 2002 – 2012 to align it with the Strategy on the Development of Natural and Environmental Tourism and its Action Plan developed by UNDP, and to comply with the Law on tourism from 2007. It sets the vision: “Albania is a safe, high-value tourism destination featuring an unparalleled variety of world-class natural and cultural attractions in a small geographic area, managed in an environmentally and socially responsible manner, easily accessible to European tourism markets (Ministry of Tourism, Culture, Youth and Sport, 2007).” Defines that guiding principle for realization of the strategy are: sustainable development, benefits of local communities, partnerships and quality.
- Instrument For Pre-accession Assistance (IPA II) 2014-2020 for Albania is programmed as an: “EU support to a tourism-led model for Local Economic Development” (EC, 2017). It “aims at increasing the contribution of sustainable and responsible tourism to Albania’s economic growth. The action will implement and test a tourism-led local development model focused on a number of pilots of cultural and natural heritage, and other local destinations’ assets.” (EC, 2017)
- The National Strategy for Development and Investment 2014-2020 aims to improve competitiveness and economic growth of Albania through high quality and sustainable tourism (EC, 2017).
- Law No.93/2015, on Tourism aims is the promotion of Albania as The purpose of this law is to promote Albania as an attractive tourist destination for domestic and foreign visitors, backing up developing a sustainable tourism, running provided that the tourist service providers meet the demands of tourists, in an environment healthy and safe, and respectful to the needs of today's and future generations (Official Journal or the Official Announcement Bulletin, 2015). In addition, the Law sets out clear rules regarding the development of tourism, investor’s financial support, criteria on operation of tourism related activities, etc. The Law regulates (Deloitte, 2015):
 - The determination of a (vertical) institutional tourism framework, which comprises, among others, the ministry responsible for tourism, National Tourism Agency, National Coast

Agency, the inspectorate covering the field of tourism, the Commission of Standardization of Tourism Activities, etc.

- The approval of the tourism development planning, which should be prepared in accordance with the national territory planning, the strategy on tourism and the legislation governing the territory planning and development.
- The classification of tourism sources, which comprises the natural and human sources of tourism. Such sources shall be inventoried in the National Registry of Tourism Sources ("NRTS"), which shall be prepared by the Ministry and other national and local public bodies.
- The development and operation of a tourism project, in the priority areas of tourism development, based on the general public interest, might be carried out in state properties as well, in case the relevant structures, constructions and auxiliary services do not harm the natural and cultural parameters of such areas and comply with the national sectoral tourism plan.
- The Ministry can provide financial support to tourism related projects through funds deriving from the annual approved budget fund. The projects exceeding the value of 50% of the annual fund foreseen for tourism projects are subject to approval by the Council of Ministers.
- In the ambit of investments in tourism, the state might assume the role of the developer, enter into public-private partnerships, hold shares/stocks in tourism companies, make available immovable properties to private investors, provide supporting infrastructure, as well as combinations of the foregoing forms of investment participation.
- Any tourism enterprise operating as accommodation structure (i.e. whether "guesthouse", "hostel", "camping", "hotel", "motel", "resort", "curative centre" or "bed and breakfast") should apply with the Ministry for the issuance of the classification certificate, within 30 days following its registration with the National Registration Centre.
- With regard to travel agencies and tourism operators, among other criteria for carrying out their activities, the Law provides that such enterprises should be licensed in accordance with the procedure provided for under article 16/3 of the law no. 10081, dated 23.02.2009 "On licenses, authorizations and permits in the Republic of Albania" as amended. The travel agencies and tourism operators, having commenced their activity prior to the date of entry into force of the Law, must obtain the relevant license within 12 months from such date.
- The new law on tourism provides a range of changes for the tourism sector in Albania, aiming to transform it into one of the most important economy sectors in the upcoming years. The Ministry responsible for the tourism sector is the link between the Government of Albania, local authorities and strategic investors, and plays the monitoring role in the implementation of the signed agreements for different investments in this sector.
- Strategy for the development of tourism in Albania for the period 2017-2022. Developed by the Institute for Public Policy and Good Governance and supported by GIZ (IPPM, 2016). "The basic principle of the strategy include sustainable development, orientation toward the market, whereby tourist destination is considered to be at the core of development (Sonia Popa in: Albanian Newsroom, 2014)."

WPA specific

- Decision on the Declaration of National Park of Prespa, taken by the Albanian Council of Ministers, No. 80, dated 18 February 1999.
- DRAFT PRESPA AREA TOURISM ACTION PLAN (Albania) developed by Ligenas Commune, Proger Commune and Qender Bilisht Commune, and with support from SNV in 2008 (Ligenas Commune, 2008). The Action plan, though outdated it is still current, defines five goals with subsequent objectives:

- Goal: To Improve Tourism Attractions, Events And Activities. Objectives: Return to identity of PV; Share of responsibilities on legal basis for administration of Prespa National Park; Encourage the respective organs to implement the status for monuments of nature and culture; Protection of natural environment from illegal activities; Encourage regional and national activities for development of tourism.
- Goal: To Improve Tourism Marketing And Promotion. Objectives: Development of promotional and marketing materials with all information; Promotion of tourism host houses; an operational tourism info centre within the existing centre of National Park.
- Goal: To Improve Tourism Infrastructure. Objectives: Encourage the P.P.P to create the needed infrastructure for water and winter sports; Encouragement + pressure + collaboration of all actors to develop the service infrastructure; Development of an urban planning for the tourist Area; Encouragement of Improvement of road infrastructure to complete road infrastructure; Development of informative and promotional signs for the National Park; Keeping a clean environment in tourism Area (including Prespa Lake); Keeping livestock away from shore and houses area.
- Goal: To Improve Tourism Hospitality (Awareness And Industry Training). Objectives: Female involvement in all tourism developing activities; Improve community awareness on the importance of tourism industry; Encourage the collaboration of community within the National Park Area and in Region.
- Goal: To Improve Tourism Commercial/Retail Services. Objectives: Improvement of services' quality in the Area (in restaurants, hotels, bars); Encouragement to open souvenir shops; Provision of facilities for tourists in the shore; Provision of bank services in the Area; Development of professional guides for different tourism activities.
- TOURISM MARKETING AND PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY FOR THE KORÇA REGION from 2009, made by Lionel Becherel, International Tourism Consultancy for the Korça Regional Council. The strategy contains an outdated 3 year action plan, however its strategic goals are still current:
 - Products/Institutional: (0-5 years)
 - The regional DMO is set up, with links to all tourist areas in the region
 - The road network in the region is improved, especially to tourist attractions
 - General infrastructure is improved
 - Attractions are fully prepared for tourists visits (established opening and closing times, fully staffed, guides available and associated retail outlets are opened)
 - Events and festivals are organized throughout the region
 - Korça City has a pedestrianised zone; the roads and pavements in the city are restored; more accommodation including high category accommodation is opened
 - Ohrid Lake is cleaned up of sewerage and environmentally safe; beaches are prepared for visitors
 - Villages tourism has become established; growth of accommodation capacity and activities
 - Signage is improved around the region
 - Capacity building in hospitality and marketing is bearing fruit
 - Souvenirs, handicrafts shops in city centres, villages and tourist attractions are opened
 - Nature tourism is starting to become important in the region through the development of activities, availability of rental equipment and infrastructure
 - Korça's Region image is becoming defined
 - Markets (0-5 years)
 - Domestic Market including Macedonians-Albanians and Kosovars is buoyant
 - Focus on North American-Albanians is increasing with greater arrivals from the US and Canada

- Grand Tour as well as regional tours are expanded resulting in a greater number of arrivals from Western Europe and others
 - Focus on Western European markets
 - Cross-border tourism is initiated
 - Focus on special interest markets (bird watching, archaeology and history, etc)
- Products/Institutional: (6-10 years)
 - The institutional structure for tourism in the region is established and fully functional with PPP
 - Cities are fully developed for tourism with the range of accommodation of all categories, restaurants for tourists, attractions and entertainment activities
 - The festivals and events of the Korça region have gained national and international fame
 - Lake and beach products are of high quality.
 - Villages are a major draw to the region and fully prepared to accommodate tourists.
 - A range of activities are available for all types of tourists throughout the region
 - Nature tourism is now well established with possibilities to enjoy ecotourism, adventure tourism and sports tourism.
 - Strong cross-border links are established with Albania providing a complementary but distinct product to Greece and Macedonia
 - Tourism human resources in the region provide excellent services and are well trained
 - The Korça Region's image is strong in the market place and recognized nationally and internationally
- Markets: (6-10 years)
 - All identified markets now visiting; those focused on in the first five years are already well established.
 - Focus on new generating markets such as Turkey, Egypt, Dubai, etc, as well as long haul destinations in Asia, Australia, New Zealand, etc
- Management Plan for Prespa National Park for 2014 - 2024 is a document that draws the potentials and sets up the management of PNP. It recognizes that tourism as a potential due to the cultural and natural heritage of the area; Places management of visitors as in important activity, especially in enabling visitors to stay for a prolonged period of time as a method that will contribute to providing income to the local people, and to keep the movement of visitors away from the sensitive areas of the park. It foresees establishing visitor's infrastructure, placing information boards along the main roads and key access points to the PNP, building of a Visitor's centre and training guides for the visitors. The plan also recognizes the future need for trained staff to meet a growing number of visitors.

North Macedonia

- CATEGORIZATION OF ACCOMMODATION FACILITIES is a policy at national level from 2004, and implemented individually by the municipalities. Though the Development Strategy for Resen Municipality recognizes 20 categorized B&Bs, currently there is only one categorized B&B and that one will soon not be categorized since the categorization requirements cannot be met. However municipalities can ask for sub legal acts that due to the specifics in the municipalities an exemption needs to be made, and the Ministry of Economy would enable this exemption, for example the rule that only actual owners can ask for categorization while in fact many of the real estate in Prespa has no inheritance resolved issues. To his date this has not been elaborated by Resen Municipality.
- THE LAW ON TOURISM (Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia, 2004a) regulates the administrative form of execution of ecotourism and defines that ecotourism is conducted only in natural sites with special characteristics and in protected areas.

- LAW ON NATURE PROTECTION (Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia, 2004b) in article 105 states that ecotourism is allowed in the zones for Active Management, and defines the Zone for Sustainable Use as a place for implementing non-conservative activities.
 - ENTRANCE FEES IN NATIONAL PARKS is a decision of the Government of the Republic of Macedonia from spring 2012. National Parks still face difficulties in implementing this obligation. The NPs are even opposing it, since traditionally they have sought financing only from wood harvesting, and due to the structure of the parks with many inhabited areas and major roads going through the NPs the management have difficulties in implementing this regulation. However NP Galicica has managed to collect 90000 EUR only from entrance fees. With increasing the offer of the NP and providing facilities to tourists, the NPs hope and can increase their income from tourism even further while working on models how to have even more effective entrance fee payment scheme. Unfortunately some activities in NP Galicica have dropped in rate of occurrence, due to the price for doing those activities, such as paragliding take offs from PIGNP.
 - TOURISM SUBSIDIES for incoming tourists are in place since 2011. They cover partial costs on transport and/or accommodation (APST, n.d.).
 - STUDY FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF ALTERNATIVE AND MOUNTAIN TOURISM, made in 2015 and ordered by the Ministry of Economy, foresees development of five alternative and mountain tourism locations, among which the island Golem Grad in Prespa. The Study also has an action plan where it states for Golem Grad that the aim is to establish a system for management and protection (Petrovska et al., 2015). The action plan foresees improvement of the availability of information; having appropriate staff and guides; reconstruction of the peer; to have well designed marking system; and to create well designed paths (Petrovska et al., 2015). The study unofficially has been dropped, however it is referred to as one of the activities to be implemented in the soon to be adopted National Strategy for Development of Tourism (Kohl and Partner, 2016).
 - NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR DEVELOPMENT OF TOURISM 2016 - 2021, developed by Kohl and Partner (2016) and financed by the Ministry of Economy. The Strategy is general, without specific measures for the WPA. It includes an analysis of the sector, strategic recommendations and an action plan. The assessment concludes that about ¼ of the previous strategy 2009-2013 has been implemented. It defines the global tourism trends as: decrease of sun related travels; increase travels to health related destinations; increase of active tourism; increase of shorter stays; need for budget options for middle class tourists; need for higher quality offer; less regular visitors; increased need for authenticity; increased need for online available information; increased direct reservations; destination management will be related to web-site visits; increase of senior tourists; decrease of travels during the hot summer season; increase of maintenance costs of natural resources due to climate change, such as snow in the mountains; increase of increase of travels in nature; increase of demand for sustainable tourism products; increased world competition; increased dynamics and need for new products; increased relation of country safety and image to the number of tourists; need for rescue and crisis management; need for intensive experiences; need for more air and land access for flow of tourists. It defines that Ohrid and Prespa region are the most attractive tourist sites in North Macedonia and lists PIGNP and PIPNP among the best ranked on TripAdvisor. The strategy sets Experiences in nature as one of the 4 pillars of the strategy. Among its recommendations, several have relations to the WPA: support of local pilot projects; and setting up regional destination management organization where most of the WPA would be in the Bitola Prespa region, and a part in the Ohrid region. The action plan does not have an activity that has a direct impact to sustainable tourism in the WPA. However, several activities may be utilized to achieve this:
 - Activity No.3: Development of leading projects for the tourism of North Macedonia till 2030;
 - Activity No.6: Establishment of Destination management organizations.
- The strategy also list several supporting activities that may have relation to the WPA:
- Assessment of the tourism high school and increasing the attraction to the students.
 - Establishment of a tourism development fund;

- Establishment of a hotel development fund.
- Organization of a summer tourism academy
- Development of national tourist routes;
- Development of modern centres in the national parks
- Implementation of the action plan of the Study for the Development of Alternative and Mountain Tourism (Petrovska et al., 2015), among other, in the location of Golem Grad, Prespa.
- Establishment of rural tourism development zones.
- PROGRAMME FOR SUPPORT OF DOMESTIC TOURISM FOR WORKERS WITH LOW INCOME for 2019 of the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia. The programme dedicates 20.000.000, 00 MKD for subsidizing vacation of up to 5 days in the vacation resorts that are part of the programme, for workers with low income (Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia, 2019a).
- PROGRAMME FOR DEVELOPMENT OF TOURISM FOR 2019 of the Government the Republic of North Macedonia. The programme dedicates 36.000.000, 00 MKD of the budget of the Government. Within the programme there are 21 actions (Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia, 2019b):
 1. International and bilateral cooperation, in particular membership in international tourism bodies and presence on international fairs, supported with 2.500.000, 00 MKD.
 2. Education and training in tourism and hospitality, provided from WTO representatives secured by the ME, supported with 1.000.000, 00 MKD.
 3. Environmental activity and a campaign for cleaning the waste on the roads leading to the tourist destinations, where the ME will coordinate the CSOs, the private sector and the tourism faculties in cleaning the roads and will distribute promotional material on the importance of the environment for tourism. Supported with 1.500.000, 00 MKD. Included in the annual plan for public procurement (MERNM, 2019b).
 4. Organizing of an international tourism conference, supported with 2.000.000, 00 MKD. Included in the annual plan for public procurement (MERNM, 2019a).
 5. Subsidies for tourism projects, events and forums, supported with 4.500.000, 00 MKD. Call already published.
 6. Development of a study for spa and wine tourism in RNM, supported with 1.000.000, 00 MKD. Included in the annual plan for public procurement (MERNM, 2019a) and completed.
 7. Unified tourist information, road signage across the country, supported with 2.500.000, 00 MKD.
 8. Subsidizing rural households with funds for equipment, refurbishment and adaptation of facilities for tourism, supported with 2.500.000, 00 MKD.
 9. Prize for innovative tourism business ideas from tourism students, supported with 500.000,00 MKD.
 10. Subsidies for municipal tourism strategies of 10 municipalities, supported with 3.000.000, 00 MKD.
 11. Study about unused facilities that could become info centres, souvenir shops or training centres, and are of potential for foreign investors, supported with 3.000.000, 00 MKD. Included in the annual plan for public procurement (MERNM, 2019a).
 12. Campaign for safe travel, conducted with the Ministry of Interior by making materials placed at each border and a media campaign, supported with 1.000.000, 00 MKD.
 13. Marking the world tourism day - 27 September by giving credit to the most successful, supported with 500.000,00 MKD.
 14. Development of three sub strategies for Rural, Cultural and Active tourism, supported with 1.500.000, 00 MKD. Included in the annual plan for public procurement (MERNM, 2019a) and completed.
 15. Development of a wine guidebook for North Macedonia, supported with 500.000,00 MKD. Included in the annual plan for public procurement (MERNM, 2019a) and completed.

16. Support of projects for innovation and making online available information, supported with 1.000.000, 00 MKD.
 17. Promotion of a mobile application "Visit Macedonia", supported with 500.000,00 MKD.
 18. Development of a "Brand Strategy" for tourism of RNM, supported with 4.000.000, 00 MKD. Included in the annual plan for public procurement (MERNM, 2019a).
 19. Surveys of incoming tourists on the tourist offer in RNM, supported with 2.000.000, 00 MKD. Included in the annual plan for public procurement (MERNM, 2019a) and completed.
 20. Printing of promotional materials in the field of tourism, supported with 1.500.000, 00 MKD. Included in the annual plan for public procurement (MERNM, 2019a).
 21. Support to active tourism for CSOs in acquisition of equipment, supported with 2.000.000, 00 MKD.
- LONG TERM TOURISM STRATEGY for the period 2019 - 2029 is in process of development, supported by the WB.

WPA specific

- TOURISM DEVELOPMENT ZONES are foreseen by the Government of Macedonia, and two locations are in Prespa: Otesevo and Stenje. The Government plans to support investments in this zones mainly through tax incentives such as exempt from personal tax payment for 10 years and exempt from paying VAT on building materials (Resen Municipality Council, 2016, p.38). However these zones have been abandoned as a measure.
- STRATEGY FOR DEVELOPMENT OF RESEN MUNICIPALITY 2016 - 2021 has a whole chapter for tourism. It recognizes the need for opening of the border crossing Markova Noga with Greece. It recognizes the role of crafts as tourism products. It recognizes the natural and historical characteristics as tourism potential. It involves activities for development and promotion of tourism in general in its action plan. (Resen Municipality Council, 2016)
- LAW ON THE MANAGEMENT OF THE WORLD NATURAL AND CULTURAL HERITAGE IN THE OHRID REGION from 2010 (Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia, 2010a). The law affects the Wider Prespa Area that is under the Ohrid Municipality. It regulates the formation of a Commission and a Management Plan for the World Heritage Site in the Ohrid Region and aims, among other, to prevent negative influences to the natural and cultural values of the Ohrid Region.
- MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR THE NATURE PARK "EZERANI" for the period 2012 - 2021 is in place, where Resen Municipality is responsible for the care, protection and implementation of the plan. It concludes that tourism is constantly diminishing. It identifies that there is a need for the local people to start offering accommodation and tourism activities. It also identifies that local people are not optimistic about tourism, and recognize that the state is not providing any support for development. Yet, there are people that think that Ezerani can become a good tourist destination. The action plan of NPE involves a number of activities related to visitors and sustainable tourism development:
 - Subprogram 4.6: Public Information in within the NPE
 - Information boards
 - Making a WEB Portal and maintaining it or the inclusion of Ezern in already existing portals for Prespa Lake or Prespa Park using the media
 - Info-center or info-office
 - Use of the media
 - Subprogram 4.7: Visit protocol
 - Making a protocol for visitors
 - Specially designed tours for visitors
 - Observation of birds
 - Educational paths for students
 - Subprogram 4.8: Sustainable Tourism
 - Development of a plan for development of sustainable tourism
 - Preparation of a birds observation plan (see sub-program 4.7)

- **LOCAL STRATEGY FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF TOURISM IN RESEN 2019 - 2024.** The strategy sets up four strategic goals, and pairs them with activities (Pekevski, 2019):
 - Development of Resen as a brand of a desired tourist destination through development, creation and implementation of a marketing strategy for greater visibility and recognition of the destination:
 - Development of a slogan and a logo for Resen and the Prespa region
 - Development and distribution of promotional materials on several foreign languages
 - Creation of souvenir
 - Advertising in foreign media
 - Designation of a promoter of Resen and the Prespa Region (public person)
 - Creation of a web page portal for the region on several languages
 - Improvement of cooperation of world and European tour-operators by including Resen and the surrounding in their programmes:
 - Participation in tourism fairs, especially in Macedonia, as a separate entity
 - Participation on international conferences on tourism
 - Organization of workshops in Resen and the Prespa region on the topic of tourism
 - Organizing free road-trips in Resen and the Presp Region for foreign journalists and tourist bloggers
 - Creation of a body that would directly work with the tour operators, tour agencies and tourism workers
 - Adding to the current offer and introduction of new types of tourism, such as sports tourism, medical tourism, rural tourism;
 - Brajcino as a tourist destination
 - Krani as a tourist destination
 - Pretor as a tourist destination
 - Golem Grad as a tourist destination
 - Stenje as a tourist destination
 - Nature Park Ezerani
 - Maintenance of sport events in triathlon, running, cycling and paragliding
 - Promotion of the caves
 - Promotion of adrenalin tourism (paragliding and mountain biking)
 - Increase of the tourist road signs and their renewal (more languages on the signs)
 - Promotion of Prespa Lake as hunting place
 - Promotion of Otesevo as a place with the cleanest air (health tourism)
 - International promotion of the events (Prespa apple harvest, International theatre festival “Acter of Europe”, Easter happening)
 - Development of new events in summer and spring (triathlon, days of culture, days of the fishermen etc)
 - Marking of walking trails on Baba Mountain, Galicica and Bigla mountain for hiking or mountaineering
 - Marking of biking trails on Baba Mountain, Galicica and Bigla mountain
 - Improvement of the human resource capacities.
 - Participation on seminars and trainings for the increase of the capacities of direct participants in tourism
 - Cooperation with faculties and universities from abroad in the area of tourism
 - Development of a traditional school for tourism in Resen
- **LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION PLAN 2017-2022** of Resen Municipality. States that tourism is important and that focus will be given on alternative tourism (p.28). Aims to promote agro-tourism through the Apple Picking Festival (Resen Municipality, 2017).
- **PROGRAMME FOR DEVELOPMENT OF PELAGONIA REGION 2014-2019** of the Centre for Development of the Pelagonia Planning Region provides a regional strategy, where the WPA is a

part. The second strategic goal is devoted on tourism development of the region as a competitive tourist destination (CDPPR, 2014b) and focuses on sustainable tourism development. It plans to achieve this by improving the tourism offer of the region, and in particular for the WPA:

- Improved categorization and standardization of the tourism offer in the region;
- Investments in the infrastructure related to tourism;
- Strengthening of the institutional structures for support and development of tourism in the region;
- Development and promotion of a regional offer on adventure tourism;
- Internationalization of the regional tourism product through promotion and networking;
- Investment in the development of the human capacity for tourism.
- INTEGRATED MANAGEMENT PLAN OF RESEN MUNICIPALITY is being under making where sustainable tourism is a topic in focus.
- MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR GALICICA NATIONAL PARK for 2010-2020. The plan sets out the vision; goals; planned activities; zoning; the activities in each zone; as well as the development and protection activities needed to be carried out. The Plan lays the foundations for sustainable and eco-tourism in the vision for the Park, where it says: “We, the visitors, care for the Park and enjoy its abundant natural and cultural wealth. Along with our presence on the shoreline, a large number of us are within, where we can find riches of inspiration, unforgettable experiences and recreation in natural, non-urbanized ambiance. The immediate contact with nature arouses a great interest in us to support nature protection. For our activities, we prefer to use modest infrastructure in order to avoid significant disturbances of the environment.” (PIGNP, 2010, p.200) In its mission, it pinpointed the role of the PIGNP’s management to provide visitors’ support and environmental education (PIGNP, 2010). The PIGNP’s management plans to develop a “comprehensive network of adequate and marked paths” (PIGNP, 2010, p.206); appropriate visitor’s infrastructure; provide visitor’s activities in the park that are not causing significant disturbances to nature. The Plan also foresees support for the local communities in the direction of changing the practices of local people in exploitation of nature to move to sustainable tourism, thus increasing the revenues of local communities (PIGNP, 2010).

The plan foresees the following activities related to tourism:

- Establishment and maintenance of a system of marked and arranged walking trails of different difficulty degrees (physical effort), bringing together natural, historical and archaeological values of the Park and offering amenities
- Establishment and maintenance of a system of marked and arranged biking trails of different difficulty degrees (physical effort)
- Establishment and maintenance of a system of dirt roads intended for motor vehicles (off-road automobiles and motorcycles)
- Design and maintenance of wild animals observation decks in various ecosystems (aquatic, forests, alpine)
- Construction and maintenance of mountain huts and shelters
- Construction and maintenance of arranged camping sites in the wilderness
- Design and maintenance of rock climbing and paragliding sites
- Design and maintenance of picnic sites
- Design and maintenance of view points
- Promotion and organization of the traditional excursion Dva Yavori – Ohrid
- Promotion and organization of the traditional mountain biking cross-country race (Ohrid Visitor Centre – Dva Yavori and back)
- Promotion and organization of a national / international paragliding competition (multiple disciplines)
- Promotion and organization of national / international rock climbing competition
- Organization of a hiker / paraglider / alpinist search and rescue drill

- Development and maintenance of a system of training and system of hiring licensed tourist guides in the Park
- Development and maintenance of a booking system for stays in the mountain hut Sharboica and the camping sites in the wild
- Development and implementation of a system of boat tours on Sveti Naum springs and to the island Golem Grad
- Development and implementation of a bird and large-mammal watching program
- Establishment of a visitor surveillance system in the Park
- Development of visitor management plans at the Park's popular destinations
- Construction, furnishing and management of visitor centres in Ohrid and Carina
- Construction, furnishing and management of information points at Derven, Sveti Naum and Korita
- Design and maintenance of walking trails for environmental education in Peshtani, Sveti Naum and in the vicinity of Prespa Visitor Center
- Promotion of the arboretum and the small botanical garden at Ohrid Visitor Centre for educational purposes
- Publishing environmental education materials for particular target groups
- Promotion of cultural and historical heritage in the Park
- Informing multiple target groups on the Park zones (permitted and banned activities)
- Informing the visitors on the infrastructure and PINPG services
- Preparation and distribution of information materials on popular sites in the Park
- Organization of regular environmental education programs for visiting school children groups
- Organization of a traditional spring solid waste disposal campaign
- Marking the International Day of European Parks
- Marking the Park Proclamation Day – October 25
- Organization of "an open day" at Visitor Centres
- Organization of summer youth research camps
- Promotion of the infrastructure and services in the Park intended for the visitors (through the implementation of relevant activities under GO-V and GO-VI)
- Implementation of a small grants program for local communities in the Park, through the Environment Forum
- Technical support provision for sustainable tourism capacity development in the local communities
- Support for the development of organic production of mountain herbal tea rosehip and juniper berries in the Park (cultivated and growing wild)
- Support for the development of organic livestock production
- Support for the development and manufacturing of souvenirs related to the Park and its natural values
- Support for the development of associations of local organic and traditional food and souvenir producers
- Support for local products branding and direct marketing
- Conducting studies and scientific research to identify the effects of tourist activities in the Park
- Establishment of an integrated data collection and analysis system concerning the effects of tourist activities in the Park
- Preparation of an Annual Report concerning the effects of tourist activities in the Park
- Informing the local population on a regular basis, regarding the financial effects of tourist activities in the Park
- Review and regular update of the Strategy for Sustainable Tourism within National Park Galicica, through participation of the local communities and other key stakeholders

The Plan also includes a Strategy for developing sustainable tourism in PIGNP 2009 - 2013 (Haeusler, 2010) to serve as a guide to all interested parties. However this strategy is outdated and needs updating.

The Plan also includes a Solid Waste Management Plan for National Park Galicica 2009 – 2014, placing waste management as an integral part of the management of the Park, however this outdated and needs updating.

- MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR GALICICA NATIONAL PARK for 2010-2020, AMENDMENTS 2015, prepared by Citrus Partners LLP and PIGNP in 2015. This particular plan portrays the pressure of the stakeholders for rapid development activities in the park (Citrus Partners LLP and PIGNP, 2015), mainly the government. Therefore it sets focus on a tourism development activity of constructing a ski centre on the slopes of Mountain Galicica, in PIGNP, and establishment of Tourism Development Zones inside the Park. The activities foreseen with these amendments some are in strictly protected zones of the Park or the Zone for Active Management where such development is not foreseen, therefore the numerous amendments as to enable the foreseen construction activities. (Citrus Partners LLP and PIGNP, 2015)
- MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR PELISTER NATIONAL PARK for 2006 - 2016 sets the management direction for the management of nature protection, tourism and sustainable use (PIPNP, 2006), though outdated, it is soon to be replaced with a new Plan, made in support of PONT (PONT, 2018a). The plan lays out the vision of the park in relation to visitors: "For the visitors it is a place which continues to inspire a sense of wonder and a feeling of freedom with ample opportunities for recreation in natural and undeveloped setting. In order to provide for pleasant enjoyment and to protect the Park visitor numbers do not exceed the carrying capacity of the Park and they respect the natural values of the area. Visitors have a range of opportunities to appreciate and understand the Park, including its cultural and historical values. There are simple visitor facilities necessary to support visitors and their stay in the Park." (PIPNP, 2006, p.41). Two tourism zones are identified in the Park in the zone for sustainable use: 1. Recreation zone - Golema Livada as an "area designated for intensive recreation activities and large number of visitors supported by highly developed infrastructure" (PIPNP, 2006, p.53) and 2. Zone of protection and recreation - Nize Pole. Above village of Capari, Turkish Fountain and zone Malovishta as "extensive natural area allowing for a significant level of recreation activities and a large number of visitors without significant impacts upon the values" (PIPNP, 2006, p.53). The plan as well foresees development of infrastructure for visitors, development of hiking and biking trails, maintenance of existing trails, and develop trails that connect the villages around the Park, and a zone for urban development at Golema Livada. It also foresees the setting into operation a visitor's centre and development of an information, interpretation and education programme (PIPNP, 2006).

Annex III: Final Workshop

To be completed with the drafting of the final report

Annex IV: Database of key stakeholders

Albania

Name Surname	Institution represent	Function	Telephone Number	e-mail
Vasil Jankulla	FUA Pustec AU	Chairman	0682560840	vasil.jankulla@gmail.com
Jani Nikolla	Prespa Marketing Organisation	Chairman	0685157057	jani1@abv.bg
Valentina Vurmo	Prespa Marketing Organisation	Border member /Secretar	0684659694	vurmovala@gmail.com
Enver Hoxha	Private Sector	Beekeeper		
Erjola Isa	Destination Management Organization	Coordinator	0695479245	isa.erjola@gmail.com
Brunilda Bashllari	ESDA Organization	Executive Director	0692189888	brunabashllari@gmail.com
Nevila Popa	Freelance consultant	tourism consultant	0672077635	nevilapopa@gmail.com
Ardita Mici	University F.S. Noli Korce	Proffesor	0673067163	ardianamici@yahoo.com
Cveta Trajce	PPNEA	Local Point	0684592746	c.trajce@ppnea.org
Mihallaq Apostollovski	DIELLI Association	Chairman	0689079065	sunofliqenas@yahoo.com
Stilian Andon	Miqte e Presper Association	Chairman	06839662357	
Dorjana Bregu	Tourism Info center	Specialist	0696225932	bregu.dorjana@yahoo.com
Aida Kristo	Tourism Director, Korca Municipality	Director	0694709337	aidashkodrani@gmail.com
Ada Elezi	AIDA specialist	Specialist		ada.elezi@aida.gov.al
Anxhela Taho	Regional Professional training Center	Director	0692187967	
Lazjon Petri	Free lance	Tourist Guide, Prespa area	0695787684	lazjon.petri@gmail.com
Mamica Nene	Korca University	Professor at Tourism Marketing	0697762266	mamicanene@yahoo.com
	Albanian National Tourism Agency		355 4 2273778	info@akt.gov.al
Blendi Klosi	Ministry for Environment and Tourism	Minister		
	National Agency of Protected Areas		355 4 222 50 68	info@akzm.gov.al
	Institute for Nature Conservation in Albania		355 42231437	info@inca-al.org
Mihallaq Qirjo	R.A.P.A	Director	0682603689	mqirjo_1@hotmail.com
Vasil Male	Prespa National Park	Manager	0685585334	vasilmale@gmail.com
Andon Jani	Pustec Municipality	Vice chairman	0693142062	andon1983@gmail.com
Edmond Themelko	Pustec Municipality	Chairman		
Ruzhdi Hymetllari	FUAs Federation Korca	Chairman	0699764032	pylliblerte@hotmail.com

	Region			
Constanze Shcaaft	Transboundary Biosphere Reserve Prespa	National Coordinator	0685619720	constanze.schaaft@gfa-group.de
Spase Shumka	Agriculture University Tirana	Professor	+355 68 2351130	sprespa@gmail.com
Spase Vurmo	Pustec Municipality	Agronom	0684475374	

North Macedonia

Name Surname	Institution represent	Function	Telephone Number	e-mail
Vlatko Trpeski	MOEPP	Department of Nature	00389 (0)76 404 395	v.trpeski@moepp.gov.mk
Sasko Jordanov	MOEPP	Head of Unit for Natural Heritage Conservation and Natura 2000	076 445 883	s.jordanov@moepp.gov.mk
Daniela Kamcheva	MOEPP	Junior Associate for keeping records of biodiversity		d.kamceva@moepp.gov.mk
Smiljka Taneva	MOEPP	Department of Nature	00389 (0)76 455 418	smiljkataneva@yahoo.com
Amet Haxhiu	NP Pelister	Director	00389 (0)78 401 977	amet.axhiu@yahoo.com ; np.pelister@yahoo.com
Pece Cvetanovski	NP Pelister		071 348039	p_cecvet@yahoo.com / np.pelister@yahoo.com
Bekim Haxhiu	Ministry of Economy	Head of Sector for Tourism	00389 2 3093-540	bekim.hadziu@economy.gov.mk
Nikola Stankovski	PE Macedonian Forests	Head of Prespadrvo Unit, Resen	078 303781	stankovski19@gmail.com
Andon Bojadzi	PE NP Galicica	Head of Sector for Nature Protection	075 282200	
Ognen Dostinovski	PE NP Galicica	Head of Sector for Tourism	075 282206	
Ljubo Atanasovski	Bitola Municipality	Department of Local Economic Development		
Zivko Gosharevski	Municipality of Resen	Mayor	00389 (0)47 551 770	kabinet.gradonacalnik@resen.gov.mk
Ajman Al Malla	Resen Municipality	Head of Environment Sector	047/551-490	ajman.almalla@resen.gov.mk
Krste Micalovski	Resen Municipality	Head of Local Economic Development Sector	047/551-901	krste.micalovski@resen.gov.mk
Zivko Gosarevski	Municipality of Ohrid	Mayor	00389 (0)46 262 492	gradonacalnik@ohrid.gov.mk
Goran Mickoski	Ohrid Municipality	Tourism and Local Economic Development Sector	389 72 524642	goran.mickoski@ohrid.gov.mk
Nektarij	Orthodox Christian Church	Head of St Nahum Monastery, Ohrid	070 236222	
Zoran Nikolovski	Agency for promotion and support of tourism	Head of Tourism Support	075 226307	zoran.nikolovski@tourismmacedonia.gov.mk
Kristijan Kjulmovski	Prespa Bike, Resen	member	078 254443	
Jovan Jovanoski	Eko Drom, Ohrid	member	389 71 352432	jovanohmk@gmail.com
Dimce Popov	PSK Pelister, Bitola	president		dimcepopov@yahoo.com
Jonce Ilievski	PSK Dimitar Ilievski Murato, Bitola	president	389 78 232 132	psk.dimitarilievski.murato@gmail.com
Stevan Joseski	PSPK 7 maj, Bitola	president	070 395 892	pspk.7maj.bitola@gmail.com
Gogo Vidimce	Pelagonia Planning Region, Bitola	Director	389 47 232 800	director@pelagonijaregion.mk
Antonio Dodevski	Crven Krst, Ohrid	Head of Rescue Service	071 342248	info.dode@gmail.com
Petar Nolev	Mountain Solution, Bitola	Owner	00389 75 458 782	pnolev@gmail.com
Aleksandar Jovanoski	EDEN Tourism Cluster of SW Macedonia, Ohrid	Project Manager		
Petar Andonov	Hotel Molika, Bitola	Manager	00389(0) 70 547 281	molika@t-home.mk
	Villa Raskrsnica, Brajcino		075 796 796	

	Villa Kostovski, Brajcino		070 507 367	
	Villa Livae, Brajcino		071 339 942	
	Villa Stara Cesma, Ljubojno		070 822 642	
	Beach Bar Markova Noga, Dolno Dupeni		070 525 440	
	Camping Krani, Krani			
	Hotel MVR, Krani			
	Etno Village, Arvati			
	Camping Coca, Slivnica		075 408 296	
	Beach Bar Connect, Slivnica		077 994 635	
	Youth Hostel, Pretor			
	Hotel Martin, Pretor			
	Hotel Pretor, Pretor		075 560 978	
	Restaurant Galaxy, Pretor		070 482 105	
	Restaurant Carnelian, Pretor		078 296 116	
	Pizza Bar, Pretor		071 225 073	
	Villa Kirjana, Pretor		071 307 301	
	Sunset Club Restaurant, Pretor		047 551 051	
	2Proper&More Pizza Bar Restaurant, Pretor		071 225 073	
	Bungalovi J.P. Vodovod Skopje, Pretor			
	Relax Beach Resort		075 421 262	
Jone Eftimovski	Ethno Museum, Podmocani		075 261 515	не користи
	Motel "Majska Rosa", Resen		078 848 981	
	Hotel Dior, Resen			
	Hotel Holidej, Resen			
	Restaurant Vito, Resen			
	Restaurant Gerdan, Resen		047 525 359	
	Royal L Hotel, Carev Dvor		047 488 500	
	Restaurant Klarite, Gorno Perovo			
	Lakeview Hotel & Resort, Otesevo		047 551 195	
	Oteshevo Camping		070 207 259	
	B&B Sonceev Raj, Stenje			
	Restaurant Mali Raj, Stenje		075 356 833	
	Hotel Riva, Stenje		071 381 040	
	Beach Summer Club Bar Delirium, Stenje			
	Hotel Rot, Konjsko		075 240 691	
	Mountain Hut Golemo Ezero, Bitola			
	Mountain hut Neolica, Bitola			
	Villa Minami, Gorno Konjsko		076 900 007	
	Terasa Utarna, Gorno Konjsko		076 621 843	
	Campgrounds Gradishte, Pestani			
	Beach Orevche, Pestani		077 763 516	
	Restaurant Bane 2, Pestani		075 295 619	
	Bay of Bones Museum, Pestani			
	Vila Tino, Trpejca			
	Under the Shade of the Willows Apartments, Trpejca		072 523 391	
	Villa Bube, Trpejca		078 313 570	
	Trpejca Terrace Mermaide, Trpejca			

	Restoran UNO, Trpejca			
	Terasa Sirena, Trpejca			
	Ribar Restaurant, Trpejca			
	Villa Mrestilishte, Trpejca			
	Taverna Mrestilishte, Trpejca			
	Apartments Kostoski, Trpejca		075 334 011	
	Philip Apartmany, Trpejca			
	Villa Elena, Trpejca			
	Rooms And Apartaments De Niro, Trpejca			
	House Geros, Trpejca			
	Klimoski Apartments, Trpejca		077 600 800	
	Villa Trpe, Trpejca			
	Elite House Trpejca		075 932 009	
	Apartments Joco		078 600 594	
	Bluebay Guest House			
	Grebnos RV Park / Camping, Trpejca		071 387 241	
	Restaurant Ostrovo, Ljubanista		046 283 090	
	Restaurant Sveti Naum, Ljubaniste		071 285 994	
	Hotel Sveti Naum, Ljubaniste			
Lasko Micalevski	Hotel Kitka, Resen			
	Lale Tours, Ohrid			
Ivana	Free Pass, Ohrid		389 71 906616	
Ivan Cekic	JJ Travel, Ohrid	tourist guide	077 605095	ivan.cekic@gmail.com
	Kompas Travel, Ohrid			
Rubin Nikolovski	Tourism Macedonia	tourist guide	075 322323	rubinnikoloski@hotmail.com
Anica Palazzo	GIZ, Ohrid	coordinator		anica.palazzo@giz.de
Frosina Pandurska Dramakinin	MES, Skopje	Project coordinator		
Ana Colakovic	EcoSense, Skopje	Director		ana@bankwatch.org
Dragi Pop-Stojanov	BFSO, Skopje	Executive Director		bfsd@t-home.mk
	SDC, Skopje			
Zlatko Samardziev	GEF, Skopje			
Mirjana Makedonska	Palladium, Skopje	Chief of party		
	USAID, Skopje			
Anela Panajotova	CNVP, Skopje	Director		
Metodija Sazdov	UNDP, Skopje	Program coordinator	070 383840	
Elena Ivanovska	Swiss Contact, Skopje	Program coordinator		
Cvetko Andreeski	Faculty for tourism, Ohrid	dean		
Cliff Hammer	Swiss Embassy, Skopje	Program coordinator		
Frosina Gorgievska	Society of fruit growers – Blagoj A.Kotlarovski		071 811828	fgorgievska@gmail.com
Goran Milanoski	AK Patagonija, Ohrid	member	075 931362	goran.milanoski@hotmail.com
Ilina Arsova	Zs Adventure	member	070 377826	lnence@gmail.com
Gorki Balojani	Balojani Tours	owner	075 207273	gorkibalojani@hotmail.com
Jonce Gagovski	Society for Sustainable Development, Brajcino	president	00389 47 482 405	
Toni Kotevski	Ekstrim Bajk, Bitola	president		
	Prespaturist, Resen			
Ana Labor	Spirit of Prespa			
Endri Haxhiraj	Institute for Environmental Policy			

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