



PROJECT FACTSHEET

Western Balkans January 2017

RESTORATION OF THE PRESPA LAKE ECOSYSTEM



The countryside around
Lake Prespa © UNDP

Lake Prespa is situated in the three-country border area of Albania, Macedonia, and Greece. Thanks to its biodiversity, the local ecosystem is of global significance. The widespread, improper disposal of waste is polluting both surface and ground water. The SDC is helping to decontaminate these waterways and to raise awareness of environmental issues.

Lake Prespa is part of a globally unique hydrological system and belongs to the 'ancient' lakes estimated at dating back to around 5 million years. In 2014, the Ohrid-Prespa lake region was designated as a UNESCO Transboundary Biosphere Reserve. The Macedonian side of Lake Prespa is home to some 17,000 people in the municipality of Resen, which comprises the town itself and 43 neighbouring villages. The regional economy is primarily based on agriculture, in particular apple cultivation. The improper disposal of waste in and around the lake in the past has resulted in the pollution of the surface, ground and lake waters.

IMPROVING THE ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITION OF LAKE PRESPA: THE MAIN OBJECTIVE

Together with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the SDC is supporting the municipality of Resen in implementing the action plan for the Prespa Lakes Basin. Because agricultural waste – primarily from apple production – is disposed of in the waterways, there are excessive amounts of nutrients in the lake. Measures to reduce these high levels of nutrients are defined and implemented as part of the project. The project also aims to restore wetlands, tributaries and ecological buffer zones, identify protection zones and combat erosion.

A MODERN WASTE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Another project activity is to establish a sustainable waste management system and to clean up illegal landfill sites in the Prespa Lakes Basin. At the same time, local residents have been encouraged to recycle materials such as paper and metal. As apple production creates large amounts of organic waste, a composting system has been built. This waste is being turned into organic fertiliser instead of being dumped into the lake. Farmers now use compost instead of chemical fertilisers, helping to reduce the amount of agrochemicals entering the water. The use of pesticides has already declined by 30% thanks to the sustainable apple orchard management brought about by the project.

Soil quality has also improved at the same time. The new composting system benefits farmers and the environment alike: because fewer agrochemicals are needed, production costs for the growers decline. Farmers can also carry out soil analyses at a newly-equipped agrochemical laboratory to optimise the quality of their soil using targeted measures.

TOWARDS AUTONOMOUS IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROJECT

The municipality of Resen has been supported by the United Nations Development Programme since the beginning of the project and is on the way to achieving autonomy in implementing a variety of environmental protection measures. From now on it will only receive a minimum of support. However, it will be able to rely on a sustainable system and the good practices that it has actively contributed to establishing. Furthermore, a team of rangers are constantly patrolling the area to prevent poaching and fires. Analyses of the lake water are being carried out on a regular basis and a school is training local farmers in ecological farming techniques for managing apple orchards.

The project has also facilitated efforts to raise awareness of ecology among local people and of the importance of sustainability.

PROSPECTS

In order to enable other regions to benefit from the experience gained through this project, there are plans to assist the Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning in the development and implementation of other water management plans. A project to restore the River Strumica basin is currently under way.

Like Macedonia, Albania and Greece have also adopted a number of measures to protect Lake Prespa. Strengthening cross-border cooperation and the coordination of environmental measures are an important precondition for the sustainable preservation of the lake's ecosystem.

FURTHER INFORMATION

SDC activities in Macedonia (en):
<https://www.eda.admin.ch/deza/en/home/countries/macedonia.html>

film clip: Restoring Lake Prespa (en):
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9Z40DCzqvHM>

UNDP website (en): http://www.mk.undp.org/content/the_former_yugoslav_republic_of_macedonia/en/home/

THE PROJECT IN BRIEF

NAME

Restoration of Lake Prespa Ecosystem (Implementation of the Watershed Management Plan)

DEPARTMENT

SDC – Cooperation with Eastern Europe

THEME

Water, environment

COUNTRY/REGION

Macedonia/Resen

PARTNERS

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
Macedonian Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning
Watershed Management Council
Forest Institute (Resen) and Hydrological Institute (Ohrid)
Municipality of Resen, Local specialists

BACKGROUND

The sustainable use of water and other natural resources, the introduction of integrated water resources management and the protection of biodiversity are firmly anchored in the European Union's legal agenda. The integrated watershed management plan aims to improve the water quality of the lake and the soil quality of its catchment area.

PROJECT OBJECTIVE

The water and soil quality of Prespsa Lakes Basin is improved.

TARGET GROUP

Municipality of Resen
Macedonian Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning (MoEPP)
Local NGOs

PHASE DURATION

Phase 1: 01.12.2011 – 30.06.2018

PHASE BUDGET

Phase 1: CHF 6'682'000

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