



Enabling  
Transboundary Cooperation  
&  
Integrated Water Resources Management  
in the extended **DRIN RIVER BASIN**



## **ENHANCEMENT of COOPERATION for the MANAGEMENT of the DRIN BASIN**

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## ***Drin Core Group Secretariat, 2015***

For more information, please contact



Web: [www.gwpmed.org](http://www.gwpmed.org)

Headquarters:  
12, Kyrristou str., 10556  
Athens, Greece  
T: +30210-3247490, -3247267, F: +30210-3317127  
E-mail: [secretariat@gwpmed.org](mailto:secretariat@gwpmed.org)

## The Drin Coordinated Action

### ***The Drin Memorandum of Understanding***

Coordinated action at the Drin Basin level has been absent until the development of the Shared Vision for the sustainable management of the Drin Basin and the signing of a related Memorandum of Understanding (Tirana, 25 November 2011) by the Ministers of the water and environment management competent ministries of the Drin Riparians i.e. Albania, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Greece, Kosovo\* and Montenegro. This was the outcome of the Drin Dialogue supported by the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency and coordinated by UNECE and Global Water Partnership Mediterranean (GWP-Med).

The **ultimate goal** of the work in the Drin Basin is to reach a point in the future where the scale of management lifts from single water bodies to the hydrological interconnected system of the Drin Basin, eventually leading from the sharing of waters among Riparians and conflicting uses, to the sharing of benefits among stakeholders in an area that is physically, culturally and historically interconnected.

The main objective of the Drin MoU is the attainment of the Shared Vision: “*Promote joint action for the co-ordinated integrated management of the shared water resources in the Drin Basin, as a means to safeguard and restore, to the extent possible, the ecosystems and the services they provide, and to promote sustainable development across the Drin Basin*”.

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

The Drin MoU identifies short-, medium- and long-term actions to address problems identified as affecting sustainable development in the entire Drin Basin and in one or more of its sub-basins. The preparation of an Integrated Drin Basin Management Plan is the long-term objective. To achieve that, a process called the Drin Coordinated Action was put in place, succeeding the Drin Dialogue.

### ***The Drin Coordinated Action***

While the process is on-going, a number of activities have already been implemented under the Drin Coordinated Action for the implementation of the Drin MoU.

Following the provisions of the MoU an institutional structure was established in 2012. It includes:

- The **Meeting of the Parties**: according to Article 6 of the MoU “*the Ministers responsible for the management of water resources and/or environment of the five Parties shall meet annually to review progress in the implementation of the present MoU and its provisions*”. The first Meeting of the Parties (MoP) was held on 28 May 2013 in Tirana, Albania.
- The **Drin Core Group** (DCG). This body is given the mandate to coordinate actions for the implementation of the MoU.

The DCG comprises representatives of the (i) competent ministries of the Riparians, (ii) the (pre)existing joint structures<sup>1</sup>, (iii) UNECE, (iv) GWP-Med, and (v) MIO-ECSDE representing civil society. According to the MoU, “*the decisions of the DCG will be taken by the representatives of the Parties (i.e. the Drin Riparians) on the basis of consensus*”. There are two ordinary DCG meetings per year. The DCG Secretariat provides technical and administrative support to the DCG.

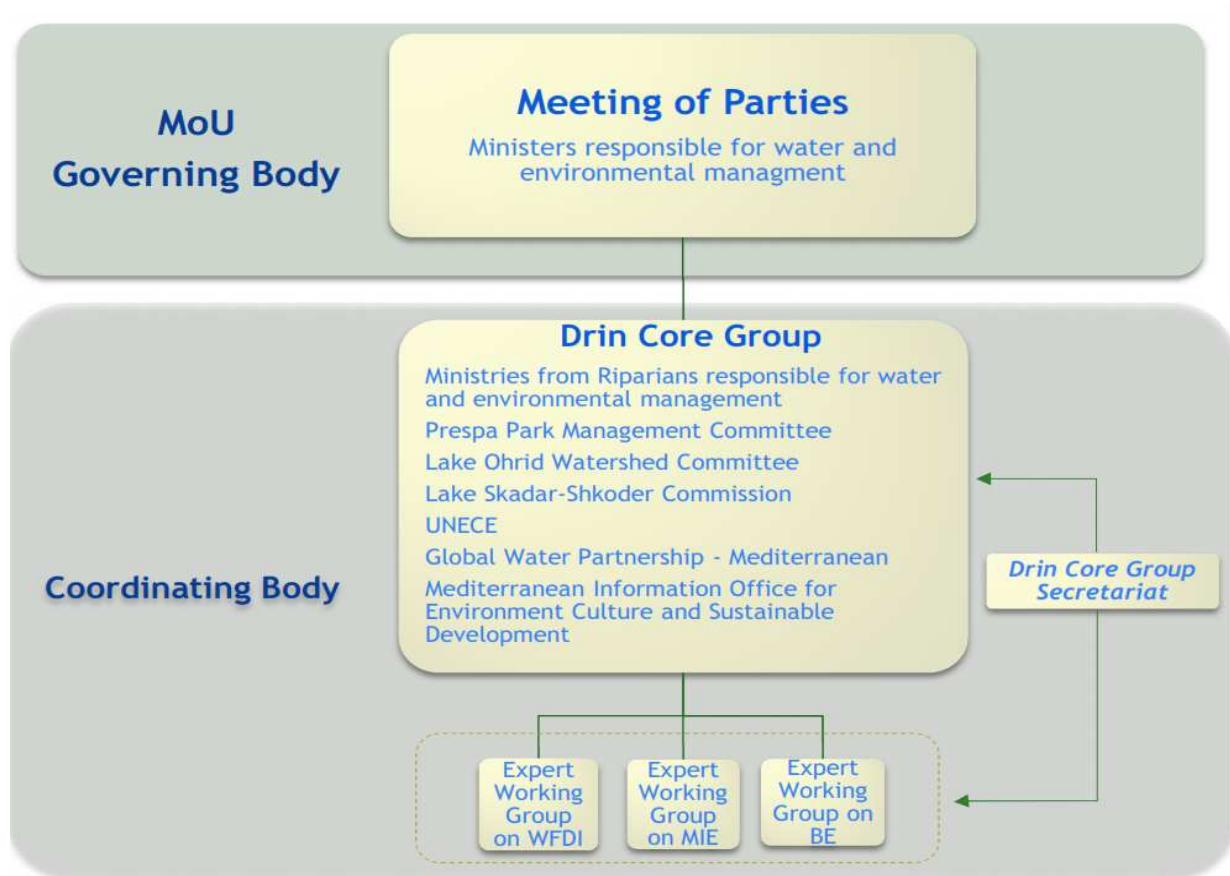
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<sup>1</sup> Prespa Park Coordination Committee; Lake Ohrid Watershed Committee; Skadar/Shkoder Lake Management Commission

\* References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999).

- Three **Expert Working Groups (EWG)** were established in 2012 to assist the DCG in its work:
  - Water Framework Directive implementation EWG.
  - Monitoring and Information exchange EWG.
  - Biodiversity and Ecosystem EWG

The **DCG Secretariat** provides technical and administrative support to the DCG; Global Water Partnership – Mediterranean (GWP-Med) serves by appointment of the Parties through the MoU as the Secretariat.



### **The Drin Action Plan**

The Drin Action Plan<sup>2</sup> (DAP) was prepared to facilitate implementation of the Drin MoU and operationalize the Drin Coordinated Action. This is considered an ‘evolving document’ and has been subject to updates and amendments in accordance with the decisions of the Meeting of the Parties to the Drin MoU and the DCG. The DCG and its Secretariat guides the implementation of the DAP. The DAP is already being implemented using resources made available by various donors active in the basin.

<sup>2</sup> Approved by the 6<sup>th</sup> DCG meeting (Ohrid, 30 May 2012) and endorsed by the 1st Meeting of the Parties (Ministerial meeting in Tirana, 28 May 2013) it is structured around six actions:

1. Enhancement of coordination mechanisms among the parties.
2. Enhancement of the knowledge basis about the Drin Basin.
3. Improvement of information exchange through the establishment of a system for regular exchange of relevant information among the competent authorities of each party.
4. Enhancement of cooperation in the field of flood risk preparedness, management and mutual support.
5. Institutional strengthening in the field of integrated water resources management.
6. Promotion of public participation and stakeholders' engagement.

## **The Drin GEF Project**

The Global Environment Facility (GEF)<sup>3</sup> supported Full Size Project “Enabling transboundary cooperation and integrated water resources management in the extended Drin River Basin”<sup>4</sup> is aligned in content, aims and objectives with the DAP and the activities under the Drin Coordinated Action.

The objective of the project is to *promote joint management of the shared water resources of the transboundary Drin River Basin, including coordination mechanisms among the various sub-basin joint commissions and committees*. Albania, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Montenegro are the Project beneficiaries.

The same goal will be fostered by the GEF supported Medium Size Project “Enabling transboundary cooperation and integrated water resources management in the White Drin and the extended Drin Basin”. Kosovo is the beneficiary of that Project.

The duration of the two Projects is four years.

The Projects share the same set of activities. The activities will constitute the means to achieve the goal mentioned above, through: (i) building consensus among countries on key transboundary concerns and drivers of change, including climate variability and change, reached through joint fact finding; (ii) facilitating the agreement on a shared vision and on a program of priority actions deemed necessary to achieve the vision; (iii) strengthening technical and institutional capacities.

Greece is not eligible for financing, and will use its own resources for financing activities in its part of the “extended” Drin Basin i.e. the Prespa sub-basin.

The Projects will assist in the operationalization of the institutional structure of the Drin Coordinated Action, rendering it capable of undertaking its coordinative and executive role. It will also further enhance scientific knowledge in the basin to assist the Riparians to make informed decisions for selecting priority transboundary issues to be addressed through related management options. A set of agreed measures will be developed to form a Strategic Action Plan. The systematic involvement of stakeholders, including civil society, will be continued and enhanced.

The Projects are implemented by UNDP and executed by the Global Water Partnership (GWP) through GWP-Mediterranean (GWP-Med) in cooperation with the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE); GWP-Med is responsible for the realization of the Project. The Drin Core Group is the Steering Committee (SC) of the Project.

The Projects is managed by a Project Coordination Unit (PCU), based in Tirana, Albania; staff is stationed also in Podgorica, Ohrid, Pristina, and Athens, Greece.

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<sup>3</sup> [www.thegef.org](http://www.thegef.org)

<sup>4</sup> The project proposal, endorsed by the Drin Core Group, was approved by the GEF and endorsed by the GEF CEO on 17 October 2014. The GEF Drin project is structured around five components:

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