

DRIN CORE GROUP
ESTABLISHING AND DEVELOPING THE INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURE
FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF THE DRIN BASIN
ACTIVITIES
APRIL – DECEMBER 2012

1. Introduction / Background

The Drin Basin (Basin) comprises of the watersheds of the Prespa, Ohrid and Shkoder Lakes and Drin and / Buna/Bojana Rivers covering a geographical area that extends in Albania, Greece, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Kosovo (UN administered territory under UN Security Council resolution 1244). The Drin River is the “connecting body” of this complex water system, linking the lakes, wetlands, rivers and other aquatic habitats into a single ecosystem.

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

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

Some action towards IWRM has been taken at national level, driven mainly by the EU accession prospect. Riparians are at various stages of transposition and implementation of the EU WFD.

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

Coordinated action at the Basin level has been absent until the development of the Shared Vision for the sustainable management of the Basin and the signing of a related MoU (Tirana, Albania, 25 November 2011) by the Ministers of the water management competent ministries of the Riparians. The establishment of the Shared Vision was the outcome of a structured multi-stakeholders process at the national and transboundary levels, the so called Drin Dialogue (launched on 1 December 2009, in Podgorica, Montenegro) supported by UNECE and GWP-Med, with UNDP contribution. Related activities were financed primarily by the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency, but also with in-kind contributions from UNECE as well as GWP-Med.

The Strategic Shared Vision / MoU identifies key issues, along with short, medium and long term actions needed to develop an integrated management of the Basin in close cooperation among the Riparians. The Drin Core Group (DCG), established through the Drin Dialogue, was given the mandate to coordinate actions for the implementation of the MoU. The Drin Core Group comprises of representatives of the (i) competent Ministries of the riparian countries ¹ (ii) the joint structures already in place² (iii) UNECE (iv)

¹ Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Water Administration, Albania; Ministry of Environment, Energy and Climate Change, Greece; Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; Ministry of Spatial Planning and Environment, Montenegro; Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management, Montenegro; Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning, Kosovo (*UN administered territory under UN Security Council resolution 1244*)

² PrespaPark Coordination Committee; LakeOhrid Watershed Committee; Skadar/Shkoder LakeManagement Commission

European Commission (v) GWP-Med and (vi) MIO-ECSDE. GWP-Med was appointed as the Secretariat of the DCG.

2. Aim and objective

The aim of the activities is to promote joint action for the coordinated integrated management of the shared water resources in the Drin Basin, as a means to safeguard and restore to the extent possible the ecosystems and the services they provide, and to promote sustainable development across the Drin Basin.

The objective is to establish an operational institutional structure for the implementation of the MoU / Strategic Shared Vision for the management of the Drin Basin and, more specifically, to provide for its functioning during 2012.

3. Rational

In order to advance towards meeting the stated aim and objective, there is need for:

- a) The Drin Core Group (DCG) to:
 - become operational to respond to the:
 - mandate stemming from the MoU i.e. coordinate actions for the implementation of the MoU hence function as a *de facto* joint commission responsible for coordination and provision of advice to the Parties for the management of the Drin Basin;
 - additional current or future functions i.e. (i) steering committee of the two Projects financed by ENVSEC and SEPA; (ii) if accepted by donors, assist in the coordination of transboundary projects financed by other donors e.g. GIZ; (iii) be the governing body of the planned GEF funded project (if approved – see below point c));
 - sustain its functioning in 2012 in accordance to the MoU (until financing from GEF or other sources for the implementation of the MoU becomes available – see also point c below) .

The establishment of Expert Working Groups has already been decided by the DCG as means to advance work towards the establishment of a legally binding agreement and the preparation of coordinated Drin RBM plan(s).

- b) Broad coordination and cooperation among the Riparians, the international institutions, initiatives and donors active in the area.

The DCG and the organizations that facilitate and support the overall process should foster cooperation, with the aim of coordinated action, among key actors active in the Basin including the European Commission, the UN agencies and programmes, IFIs and Banks and donor countries such as Sweden, Germany, etc. The DCG and its Expert Working Groups should become the reference point in this regard.

- c) Financial resources for the functioning of the DCG and its Expert Working Groups, as well as to implement activities in compliance with the MoU.

On-going efforts to secure financial support include the preparation of a project proposal to be submitted to GEF for financing. The proposed activities are aligned with the content and the provisions of the MoU. The proposal would be submitted for consideration for approval to the GEF in the first half of 2012.

Financial support for an initial set of activities has been secured by the ENVSEC initiative; additional support will be provided by the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency. Further contributions have

been secured by the service contract of the Mediterranean Component of the EU Water Initiative, GEF MedPartnership and GWP-Med. Additional in-kind contributions will be provided by UNECE.

Opportunities to obtain support by the European Commission and other donors will be investigated.

4. Activities

There is a range of activities that should be implemented in 2012. However, the current (April 2012) level of financing is not enough to cover all of these. The following part describes the activities for which financing has been secured and other for which financing has not been secured.

4.1 Activities for which financial support has been secured

The **main expected results** are the following:

- a) An Action Plan for the implementation of the MoU / Strategic Shared Vision for the management of the Drin Basin approved by the Drin Riparians.
- b) Established working level structures (primarily the Drin Core Group and Expert Working Groups) for transboundary cooperation and the implementation of the MoU.
- c) A study for the actions and steps necessary to be taken by the countries for the preparation of coordinated RBM plans for the parts of the Drin Basin extending in the territory of each one elaborated.
- d) Continued functioning of the Drin Core Group.

The activities used to achieve the aforementioned results are the following:

- a) The preparation of a draft Action Plan for the implementation of the MoU / Strategic Shared Vision for the management of the Drin Basin approved by the Drin Riparians.
- b) The preparation of Terms of Reference (ToR) for the establishment of Working Groups under the Drin Core Group on:
 - i. Water Framework Directive
 - ii. Monitoring and Information Exchange
 - iii. Biodiversity and Ecosystems
- c) The organization of one Drin Core Group Meeting
- d) Preparation of a study for the actions and steps necessary for the preparation of coordinated RBM plans for the parts of the Drin Basin extending in the territory of the Riparians
- e) Secretariat support to the Drin Core Group

In more detail:

1. Preparation of an Action Plan for the implementation of the Strategic Shared Vision MoU (April 2012)

The preparation of an Action Plan for the implementation of the MoU was requested by the Ministers during the signing ceremony (24 November 2011, Tirana, Albania).

The Action Plan will describe the key activities within already identified intervals (short, medium long term) and elaborate on the steps and modalities for the implementation of the MoU. It will be a tool facilitating (i) common understanding on the orientation, challenges and opportunities for an improved cooperation among the Riparians; (ii) action to be taken on directions to be agreed by the DCG.

The draft Action Plan will be prepared by the GWP-Med and UNECE in close dialogue with the Riparians, and will be presented in the DCG meeting (see below) for discussion and approval. It will be then presented to the competent Ministers of the Riparians for endorsement.

2. Preparation of ToRs for the establishment of Expert Working Groups under the Drin Core Group (May 2012)

The 5th DCG meeting (23 November 2011, Tirana, Albania) decided to establish 3 Expert Working Groups (EWGs) with the aim to support the implementation of the Strategic Shared Vision MoU:

- **Water Framework Directive implementation EWG:** National institutions responsible for basin management meet/work to coordinate on WFD implementation. Analysis of the characteristics of the basin and assessment of the impact of the human activity to the status of surface waters and on groundwaters constitute the initial action for the implementation of the WFD; coordination of related actions – e.g. harmonization of on-going and to be initiated characterization in different parts of the basin in different countries - will enable coordinated preparation of River Basin Management Plans later on.
- **Monitoring and Information exchange EWG:** National institutions responsible for monitoring meet/work to: (a) harmonize monitoring procedures (e.g. sampling rules and procedures etc.) and; (b) identify a system for coordination of monitoring and regular exchange of relevant information, among the Riparians.
- **Biodiversity and Ecosystem EWG:** National institutions responsible for ecosystems and biodiversity conservation will work to ensure coordination of actions regarding ecosystem conservation and management. This group can facilitate the work done under the Biodiversity project financed by GIZ; all Riparians participate in this project.

These EWGs will:

- (i) support the work of the DCG and strengthen its capacity to coordinate activities and;
- (ii) contribute to the deepening of cooperation among national institutions that will participate in the working groups.

GWP-Med and UNECE will prepare the draft ToR for these EWGs describing their aims, objectives, function / rules of procedure, responsibilities etc.

The draft ToRs will be presented for discussion and approval in the DCG meeting (see below).

3. Organization of a Drin Core Group Meeting (Tentatively in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, May 2012)

One (1) Drin Core Group Meeting will be organized by GWP-Med in cooperation with UNECE and the members of the Drin Core Group.

The DCG meeting will discuss, among others, the following:

- Action Plan for the implementation of the MoU;
- ToRs for the establishment of Working Groups;
- Project proposal to be submitted to GEF for financing;
- Operational coordination among on-going projects supported by different donors and international organizations (representatives of the projects will be asked to attend the meeting in this regard).

(a)

4. Preparation of a study for the actions and steps necessary for the preparation of coordinated RBM plans for the parts of the Drin Basin extending in the territory of the Riparians

(May-July 2012)

The Riparians have incorporated or will incorporate soon the EU WFD in their legal systems. Furthermore, they all have initiated actions for and are in different stages regarding the implementation of the Directive. Ensuring coordination of the preparatory actions for the development of RBM plans in the different parts of the Drin basin extending in each of the Riparians is crucial for the preparation of a coordinated RBM Plan.

The overall status of water resources management as well as the stage regarding the implementation of activities related to the preparation of an RBM plan in the Drin Basin in each of the Riparians will be briefly assessed. This will allow the identification of the concrete steps to be followed to ensure that RBM planning in accordance to WFD is coordinated to the extent possible. The activity will be undertaken under a service contract of the Mediterranean Component of the EU Water Initiative in coordination with GWP-Med (separately funded).

The Terms of Reference for the activity will be ready (tentatively) until the end of April; these will be shared for comments with the members of the Drin Core Group. In addition, aiming to secure coordination, the draft ToR will be shared among key actors in the Riparians supporting on-going activities addressing different aspects of sustainable management of the Drin Basin area i.e. SIDA, GIZ, World Bank etc.

5. Secretariat support to the DCG

(April-August 2012)

To ensure the smooth continued functioning of the DCG, GWP-Med as the Secretariat will supply the following support:

- coordination between DCG members with regard to the planned and emerging activities (e.g. submission of the project proposal to GEF);
- facilitation of communication among its members and negotiation if necessary for reaching agreement on the draft Action Plan and the draft ToRs;
- provision of support as necessary on the basis of emerging needs.

In addition the Secretariat will work in cooperation with UNECE to:

- explore opportunities for cooperation with international institutions, organizations and projects to attract further assistance in the development of the Drin Dialogue and the further implementation of the Strategic Shared Vision / MoU;
- raise awareness on the Drin Dialogue, its objectives and functions among national and international stakeholders.

4.2 Activities for which financial support is pending

The **main expected results** of the planned activities would be the following:

1. Working level structures for transboundary cooperation and the implementation of the MoU continue (Drin Core Group) or initiate (Expert Work Groups) i. Water Framework Directive, ii. Monitoring and exchange of information, iii. Biodiversity) their work.
2. Sustained political support from the countries.
3. Political support from the European Commission demonstrated.

The **activities** proposed to achieve the aforementioned results are the following:

1. The organization of one Drin Core Group Meeting (second meeting during 2012)
2. The organization of one meeting for each one of the following Expert Working groups:
 - i. Water Framework Directive
 - ii. Monitoring and exchange of information
 - iii. Biodiversity
3. The organization of a Ministerial Meeting

1. Organization of one meeting for each of the Expert Groups (three in total) (Tentatively in Tirana, Albania, October 2012)

Three Expert Working Group meetings will be organized by GWP-Med, UNECE and the members of the Drin Core Group.

Each of the Expert Working Group meetings will, among others, discuss the following:

- Status in each of the Riparians in the area of expertise of each group;
- Priority actions to be implemented;
- Work plan (in line with the Action Plan for the implementation of the MoU).

(b)

2. Organization of a Drin Core Group Meeting (Tentatively in Tirana, Albania, second half of 2012)

A second Drin Core Group Meeting during 2012 will be organized by GWP-Med, UNECE and the members of the Drin Core Group. Discussions have already been held with the EC Delegation in Tirana to co-fund and host the meeting, in this way demonstrating its political support to the process for the enhanced management of the Drin Basin.

The DCG meeting will, among others, discuss the following:

- Content and issues related to the preparation of the Ministerial meeting;
- Strategic Communication activities;
- Operational coordination among the sub-basins;
- Operational coordination among on-going projects supported by different donors and international organizations (representatives of the projects will be asked to attend the meeting in this regard);
- Financing of activities and developments in this regard.

It will also review the work of the Expert Groups, adopt results of the meetings and set future tasks as appropriate.

(c)

3. Organization of a Ministerial Meeting

According to Article 6 “Meetings of the Parties” 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 MoU and its provisions.

The Ministerial Meeting will be organized by GWP-Med, UNECE and the members of the Drin Core Group.

(d)

VII. Estimated Indicative Budget

See attached excel file