



Δελτίο Ειδήσεων Ν.Α. Ευρώπης

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Διασυνοριακό Πάρκο Πρεσπών: Τρεις χώρες, δύο λίμνες, ένα μέλλον

Transboundary Prespa Park: Three countries, two lakes, one future

Thessaloniki, February 3, 2009 (ANA-MPA) - In the border prefecture of Florina, where the borderlines of our country converge with those of Albania and the FYR Macedonia, two lakes, Micro and Macro Prespa “bind together” the future of the peoples in the region who live at a breath’s distance from each other.



Despite the fact that it is located in a region that in recent past had gone through difficult situations, Prespa is sending a message of friendship and cooperation, a message to which the prime ministers of the three countries responded by signing the in 2000 Declaration on

the Creation of the Transboundary Prespa Park with a view of protecting the ecological “treasure vault” of the region and meeting not only the environmental, but also the economic and social goals of the inhabitants of the region.

Thus the Transboundary Prespa Park was established with the primary goal in mind being the strengthening and enhancement of peace, friendship and cooperation between the three nations and more specifically, economic and social prosperity of the inhabitants, with parallel protection of natural and cultural values of Prespa with participation of local communities.

The Declaration signed by the Prime Ministers was followed up with the institutionalization of international cooperation by way of setting up Prespa Park Coordination Committee with representatives from the three countries at the level of ministries, local authorities and local environmental non-governmental organizations.



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The Transboundary Prespa Park is the first of its kind in the Balkan Region, and it aims to preserve the fragile eco-system of the region and to strengthen the cooperation between the people living around the two lakes at an economic and cultural level, and much more.

The Transboundary Prespa Park will celebrate in 2010 ten years of existence and it looks into the future with great optimism, despite the difficulties it has gone through.



This optimism is also shared by the International Transboundary Advisor of the Transboundary Project of UNDP/GEF, who supports the development of the Transboundary Prespa Park, Alvin Lopez, who believes that the future of the Prespa lakes as well as the enhancement of transboundary cooperation through the project will bear fruits.

In response to any remarks concerning the pace of the realization of the project, Mr Lopez reminded us that “Rome was not built in one day either.....” He also stressed that “the investment” in the region does not pertain solely to the preservation of exceptional biodiversity, but also to bringing the people in the region closer, as they are constituent elements of the environment.

Prespa Lakes: “Treasure Vault” of biodiversity

The Prespa basin stands out due to the extraordinary biodiversity which has been recognized both at the European but also at an international level, not only for its rich flora and fauna, but also for the rarity and quality of species it hosts.

For example, in the National Prespa Park alone there are 1.249 species of plants, while studies carried out by the FYR of Macedonia show that 13 “populations” of European significance are found there, as are 33 populations internationally recognized for their abundance and types of plants, as well as 84 globally recognized species of plants.



The exclusivity of the Prespa Lakes is also substantiated with the high number of endemic species of plants and animals that are found exclusively in this region and nowhere else.

Four national parks – one wetland of international significance

The waters of the lakes bind the three countries together as they share the waters, the biodiversity, but also the common future of their peoples.

Prespa is a wetland of international significance since it has a high number of protected areas with unique features of flora and fauna, as well as four national parks:

Prespa National Forest: In 1974 Greek Government declared the entire region of the Prespa Lakes a National Forest, as the region is of particular interest in terms of the wild flora and fauna, physiographic characteristics of the lake, the wetland and significant decorative fauna, as well as the density of century old mountain juniper.

According to the data of the Society for the Protection of Prespa, the Prespa National Forest occupies an area of 249,5 km² while “the core” - or the fully protected zone – occupies an area of 49 km². It is the largest and the only National Forest in the country (Greece) that has lakes, specifically one of the lakes under full protection.

In 1975 Prespa National Forest was declared “landscape of outstanding beauty” and “Wetland of International Importance”.

National Park Pelister in FYR of Macedonia: It is the chronologically oldest protected area in the wider Prespa region (since 1948) which occupies an area of 10.000 hectares of mountain ecosystem. It is the “habitat” of “pinus peuce”, a rare kind of pine tree in the Balkan that is of extraordinary beauty.

National Park Galicica in FYR Macedonia was declared a protected region in 1958, so that protection of its extraordinary biodiversity can be ensured. More specifically, one part of the park in Macro Prespa was declared a Monument of Nature in 1977.

Prespa National Park in Albania was established in 1999.



Prespa lakes shown by children's drawings and grown-ups' photo lenses

In observation of the World Day of Wetlands, the Society for the Protection of Prespa, in cooperation with two environmental protection organizations from Albania and FYR of Macedonia organized a competition in art drawing for primary school children from the three countries sharing the Prespa Basin (Greece, Albania and FYR Macedonia).

The theme of the competition "show your lake to your neighbors" provided a stimulus to the children to draw the lakes and the landscape exactly as they see it from their country and share it with the neighboring countries.

A total of 160 children sent their drawings thus taking part in this original competition.

Also, in observance of the tenth anniversary in 2010 since the Declaration on the creation of the Transboundary Prespa Park, the Coordination Committee announced a Photo-competition on six themes (four seasons in Prespa, Water, Biodiversity and species, Culture, Agriculture and pollution), with the deadline for submission of nominations set for 20 November 2009 (those interested can find more information on the competition on the web site www.prespapark.org). /ends/