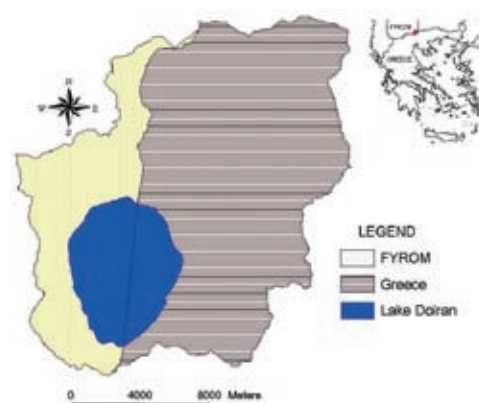


Transboundary cooperation to restore Lake Doiran

Country: Greece, FYROM (Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia)

Natural systems maintain continuity and are not constrained by administrative divisions. Problems associated with transboundary wetlands, should be the subject of bilateral co-operations, involving both national authorities and local communities.



Lake Doiran straddles the border of Greece and FYROM. Two thirds of its open waters are in FYROM, whereas 2/3 of its catchment area lies in the Hellenic territory. The lake is under serious threat mainly because of its continuous water level drop. The two countries are recently

increasing their cooperation in issues of common interest.

In June 2003, the Greek Biotope/Wetland Centre (EKBY) in collaboration with the "Society for the Investigation and Conservation of Biodiversity and the Sustainable Development of Natural Ecosystems (BIOECO)" in FYROM, were assigned by the Hellenic Ministry of Foreign Affairs (HMFA) – HELLENIC AID, the implementation of a project entitled "Assessment of the degree of expression of the functions and values of the transboundary lake Doiran". The project aimed to strengthen the transboundary cooperation, in order to evaluate lake Doiran's functions and values and to propose jointly accepted restoration measures.

The bilateral cooperation

A series of meetings and negotiations among representatives of the two countries, preceded the project. These were started in 2000, including involvement of a) the United Nations Development



Programme (UNDP), b) a consultant of the Ministry of Environment (FYROM), c) the MedWet Initiative, d) local authorities from Greece and FYROM and e) pertinent Ministries from both countries.

The negotiations revealed common views and attitudes regarding the lake. Thus, a project proposal was submitted to the HMFA and a bilateral working group with representatives from both countries was assigned to support the project implementation.

Project overview – from policy to practice

The project started in June 2003 and ends in October 2005. It mainly comprised of the following:

- Production of a joint report, describing lake Doiran's biotic and abiotic features. This was the first joint report regarding lake Doiran that has been ever produced. Its importance lies not only in the information included in the text, but also in the opportunity for collaboration it offered to its authors.
- Jointly identified measures for lake restoration. The measures are jointly studied and proposed and will be announced at the end of the project.



The future

EKBY in collaboration with BIOECO have been assigned by the HMFA, a second project entitled "Transboundary cooperation on waters, according to the Water Framework Directive 60/2000/EC", that deals with Lake Doiran and the WFD 60/2000/EC. Additionally, both countries have decided to submit proposals for the implementation of the proposed restoration measures.

Discussion

The fact that cooperation in the previous years between Greece and FYROM on the protected transboundary lake Doiran had not been as close as desired, led to significant delays in its restoration. The project gave the opportunity to address the lake's problems in an integrated way, on the basis of the evaluation of its functions and values. The experience gained from the cooperation was highly valuable. Finally, the foreseen continuation and strengthening of the bilateral cooperation, is expected to contribute to the: a) adoption of joint restoration measures for the lake, b) higher possibilities of their funding and thus c) improvement of the lake's conservation status and d) coherence of the ecological network Natura 2000.

Anastasiadis E.T. and Vasiliki Tsiaoussi
The Goulandris Natural History Museum
Greek Biotope - Wetland Centre
14th Kilometre Thessaloniki - Mihaniona, Gr-57001 Thermi, Greece
Tel.: +30 2310 473.320, Fax: +30 2310 471.795