

PRESS RELEASE

Celebrating in unity the Drin Basin's potential

On 17th of May 2014, the 1st Drin Day marks the willingness for transboundary cooperation aimed at the protection of the shared water resources and its supporting ecosystems.

Athens, Podgorica, Pristina, Skopje, Tirana, 17 May 2014 - The 1st Drin Day 2014 is celebrated today, 17 May 2014, in numerous locations across the Drin Basin, from Lake Ohrid till the outlet of the Buna/Bojana River on the coast of the Adriatic Sea. The shared objective of this initiative is to sensitize and educate local communities, with a focus on the young generation, with regards to the need to protect and responsibly handle the natural water wealth flowing next to their houses.

“Coordinated Action for a Sustainable Future” is the motto-phrase of the Drin Coordinated Action, the process established through the Memorandum of Understanding for the Management of the Drin Basin (Drin MoU) signed by the Ministers of the five Drin Riparians competent for water and environment issues, on 25 November 2011, in Tirana. The Ministers committed to closer transboundary cooperation in order to protect the shared water resources for about 1.5 million people relying on these for drinking water, as well as agriculture, fisheries, industry and hydropower. The Drin Day aims to mobilize everyone for delivering these objectives.

“Given the interconnection between Lakes Prespa, Ohrid and Skadar/Shkoder, as well as the Drin and Buna/Bojana Rivers, the four major inland water bodies of the Drin Basin, there are clear interdependences between all local and regional stakeholders involved in environmental protection, agriculture, hydropower generation, industry, fisheries, urban planning and tourism”, is the message of the Drin Core Group conveyed through its Secretariat, the Global Water Partnership - Mediterranean. *“It is, therefore, crucial that so many actors with such different backgrounds come to a common understanding of the importance of the Drin Basin in their everyday life and economic activity, and jointly hold this large, cross-border celebrative event to mark this importance”.*

“The Drin Day aims at fostering among local communities a common identity as people of the Drin River Basin, which should increase their cross-border cooperation, given the trans-boundary nature of the Basin and its environmental challenges, as well as its value for people and ecosystems”, read the message of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), major development partner of the Drin Core Group and principal funder of the Drin Day. *“The conservation of the river can only be successful when Riparians join resources and efforts to jointly enjoy benefits and share responsibilities. The objective of the Drin Day is to raise awareness on that by enhancing civil society participation through educational activities “with a smile” that will evoke a behavioural change towards nature protection”.*

The **DRIN BAG** containing useful informative and environmental education material on ecosystems and water protection has been prepared and is provided to all students and teachers involved in the planning, coordination and implementation of the Drin Day activities. The DRIN BAG material is also distributed to young people participating in the activities.

On 17 May, in **the city of Struga** in the **Lake Ohrid**, the DRIN ECO FEST will take place seeking to advance public understanding of the environment in general –and the River Drin watershed in specific– and focusing on water sustainability, climate and transboundary cultural heritage. This will be achieved through the power of music, performance, crafts, eco-art projects and interactive workshops for children. The festival's activities include the: “Meet the Drin Artists” in the Art Market; composing of the eco-song „I love green“ to be performed by singers from FYR Macedonia

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and Albania; creation and performance of a theatrical play, with an ecological message aimed for children and youth, by amateur actors from FYR Macedonia and Albania; photo competition “Drim Day, I Love my Planet” for elementary/secondary school students inspired of the Drin flora, fauna and landscape; “Eco-Riders” info-points; awareness raising bike tours across the city of Struga; teaching people about sustainability and permaculture.

In the area of **Drilon in Pogradec at the shores of Lake Ohrid**, the Drin Day will focus on educating school children and the community in general, on the history of Drin River, as well as the need to care for the river, both as a cultural heritage and a value for the future. With the motto "Drilon, living in peace with nature", participants will be divided into three groups and hold informative sessions with different focus on the Drilon River's, the Drin River's and the Ohrid Lake's restoration. Moreover, there will be bicycle rides organized for groups of youths, in the path Drilon-Saint Naum-Drin source. The ancient Indian board game “Snakes and Ladders” will be also held for groups of children, in which the snakes (vices) will be represented by garbage and waste, while the ladders (virtues) will be represented by the river's potential. There will be boat visits to Kulla River, where visitors will have the chance to see the Drilon Restoration Project supported by GIZ. The "little painters" corner will be fully equipped for the children to express their impressions of Drin, Drilon and Ohrid, while local community, civil society and local entrepreneurship representatives will be sharing their experiences from the river, to be used as inspirational material for students to write essays about the Drin River in a unique writing contest.

Across **Pejë, Gjakovë and Prizren municipalities, in the White Drin sub-basin** a number of activities will be held, such as a competition for primary and secondary local schools to paint, take photos and write essays inspired by the Drin River. Moreover, a Fair will be opened in downtown Pejë, where all partner organizations will have the possibility to show their work, while there will be music and dance performed by folklore local ensembles. Furthermore, a rock climbing activity, a cycling tour, a river education activity, as well as a visit to the hydro-meteorological institute in Pejë and the drinking water distribution center in Radavc will be organized for school students and young people, with the participation of local authorities, well-known sportspeople and celebrities.

In the **Lake of Skadar/Shkoder near the Shkodra city**, there will be a theatrical performance on “The importance of preserving natural waterways”, prepared by local high school students, as well as an environmental exhibition/competition with pictures, presentations, drawings and projects implemented by secondary school students of the wider area. Moreover, students will edit, produce and distribute themselves a newsletter with advice on the protection and conservation of water resources. A fair with local gastronomy, craft work, healing mountain flowers, artisanal tools etc. will be launched by the local business association, while there will be a presentation of Ulcinj dance – otherwise called “the dance of fishermen” – meant to promote the values of the fishing tradition. There will also be bicycle tours organized along the lake shore, following the path Shkodra-Shirokë-Zogaj Village, close to Montenegro, as well as aerobic sessions by the river coast.

In the municipality of **Ulcinj in the Buna/Bojana sub-basin** and its surrounding communities, activities for elementary school children will be organized, such as a series of workshops in the area of the Bojana/Buna River to enable better understanding of the value of the extended Drin River Basin, its sustainable use and environmental issues. The workshop will also include a drawing contest and exhibition. Furthermore, there will be boat trips and kayak regattas in Buna/Bojana River, a fair for sustainable agriculture and local products, a concert, as well as the performance of experiments/exercises.

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Note to the editors

The activities are organized by NGOs of the Drin Riparians with the financial assistance of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) under the auspices of the Drin Core Group in the framework of the Drin Coordination Action.

More information about the Drin Basin

The Drin Basin comprises the transboundary sub-basins of the Drin and Buna/Bojana Rivers and of the Prespa, Ohrid and Skadar/Shkoder Lakes. The Drin River is the “connecting body” linking the lakes, wetlands, rivers and other aquatic habitats into a single, yet complex, ecosystem of major importance. The region is very rich in endemic species and exceptional in terms of biodiversity conservation, and so has great potential for the development of sustainable tourism.

More information about the Drin Coordinated Action and the Drin Core Group

The **Drin Coordinated Action** was established through the Memorandum of Understanding for the management of the Drin Basin (Drin MoU) signed by the Ministers of the five Drin Riparians competent for water and environment issues, on 25 November 2011, in Tirana.

It is an outcome of the Drin Dialogue, a structured consultation process for the development of a Shared Vision among Riparians and stakeholders for the sustainable management of the Drin Basin. The Drin Dialogue was facilitated by United National Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) and the Global Water Partnership-Mediterranean (GWP-Med) using the platform of the ECE Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention) and the Petersberg Phase II/Athens Declaration Process.

The Drin Core Group, with representatives from all Riparians, coordinates action for the implementation of the Drin MoU.

See also www.drincorda.org

More information about the ECE Water Convention

The ECE Water Convention is an important legal framework for transboundary water management in the pan-European region. The Drin Dialogue is part of its work programme. Currently, 35 countries and the European Union are Parties to the Convention. The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Montenegro are preparing for accession; Albania and Greece are already Parties.

More information about the Global Water Partnership - Mediterranean

The Global Water Partnership – Mediterranean (GWP-Med) is a multi-stakeholder platform bringing together competent organizations working on water issues in the Mediterranean region. Created in 2002, this non-governmental organization promotes and exchanges knowledge on integrated water resources management for the sustainable use of the region’s water resources. GWP-Med serves as the secretariat of the Drin Core Group. For more information, see [at: www.gwpmed.org](http://www.gwpmed.org).

More information about the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)

As a federal enterprise GIZ supports the German Government in achieving its objectives in the field of international cooperation for sustainable development. GIZ implements on behalf of the German Government the projects Climate Change Adaptation in Western Balkans and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity at Lakes Prespa, Ohrid and Shkodra/Skadar in the Drin River Basin. For more information, see at: www.giz.de/en/