MEDITERRANEAN AND CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE REGIONAL STORIES

Mediterranean

Watershed management plan for Lake Ohrid

Lake Ohrid is a transboundary water resource shared by Albania and North Macedonia. In addition to being designated as a World Heritage site, the lake is a biodiversity hotspot (with more than 300 endemic species) and supports important economic activities. Recent years have seen increasing challenges associated with declining fish stocks, eutrophication, habitat destruction, and poor water status. GWP Mediterranean has been working to address these problems and promote a more integrated approach to the management of the lake resources.

In November 2020, the transboundary Lake Ohrid Watershed Management Plan was approved by the two littoral countries and endorsed by the joint management body, the Lake Ohrid Committee. This success followed a two-year development process under the coordination of GWP Mediterranean within the framework of the Drin Project, funded by the Global Environment Facility.

The Lake Ohrid management plan was informed by transboundary data gathering, including joint water quality surveillance and monitoring, an economic analysis, and an analysis of ecosystem services. The plan is the second transboundary management plan developed in accordance with the European Union Water Framework Directive in south-east Europe. It includes more than 100 measures designed to prevent further deterioration of water resources and ecosystems, promote sustainable water use, and improve water and ecosystem quality. The plan is an important instrument for promoting transboundary cooperation and contributes to more integrated management of water resources throughout the entire Drin river basin.

Lake Ohrid, Albania and North Macedonia

Empowering women in water diplomacy in the Middle East and North Africa

GWP Mediterranean and the Geneva Water Hub joined forces to strengthen the role of women in water diplomacy in the Middle East and North Africa by conducting analytical mapping work, based on surveying and interviewing women in water-related institutions. This evolved into a comparative study on empowering women in water diplomacy, supported by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency within the Water Matchmaker Project. The study compared the status of and challenges to women as decision-makers in water diplomacy and transboundary water cooperation settings in Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, and Palestine. It also identified capacity building needs in terms of the skills needed by 21st century water diplomats.

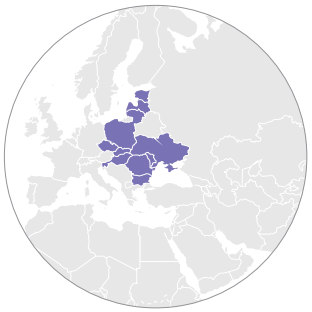
In July 2020, the study was discussed with almost 100 women who had responded to the country surveys. This elucidated feedback, with further reflections received from regional and global events, and from targeted meetings with diplomats and transboundary experts. Importantly, a community of practice across the country respondents was set up, and this evolved into an initiative on empowering women in water diplomacy in the region, facilitated by GWP Mediterranean and the Geneva Water Hub. With guidance from the six study authors, the initiative contributed to the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) Water Policy Framework for Action 2030.

GWP works in close cooperation with the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) for the purpose of advancing the implementation of the UfM Water Agenda.

Wastewater management decision support tool for the Drin basin

GWP Mediterranean was instrumental in the development of a new decision support tool to assist wastewater management in the Drin basin. This transboundary water resource is shared by Albania, Kosovo, Montenegro, and North Macedonia. In July 2020, more than 30 local planners and other experts from the riparian countries took part in an online consultation meeting to discuss the new tool. Modelled on the case of Shkodra city, the tool is designed to identify environmentally sustainable and cost-effective solutions for new wastewater treatment solutions. Voltana Ademi, the Mayor of Shkodra, was directly involved in the tool's development. She values both the practical implementation aspects of the tool, and its importance for communication: "We can use this model to present scenarios and calculations, helping people of all backgrounds to understand the costs and benefits of alternative options in wastewater treatment."

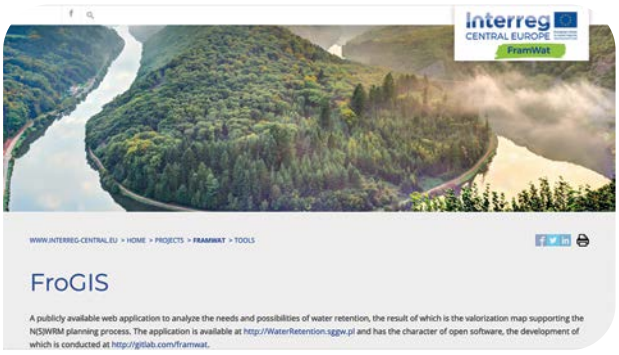
Central and Eastern Europe



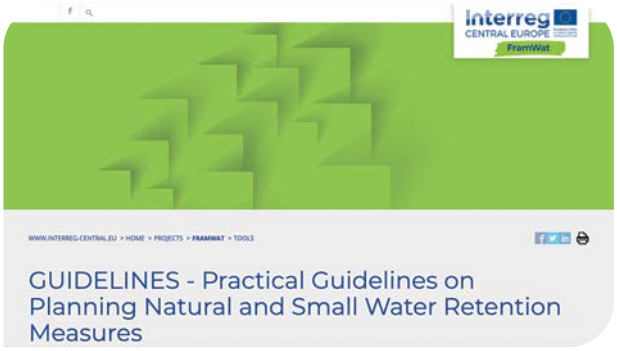
Addressing floods, droughts, and pollution in six countries

GWP Central and Eastern Europe provided valuable input on policy integration and economic instruments to the FramWat project, which aimed to establish a common regional framework for flood, drought, and pollution mitigation by increasing the buffer capacity of the landscape. In addition to GWP, the project partners included government ministries and academic institutions from Austria, Croatia, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia. The main thrust of the project was to introduce natural and small water retention measures into standard river basin management practice throughout the region. Running from 2017 to 2020, the project involved initial stakeholder consultations, national training events, and the development of guidelines and action plans with policymakers. There were three main outcomes:

- The FroGIS geographic information system tool: this is a publicly available web application for the analysis of needs and potential for water retention systems.



- Practical guidelines on planning natural and small water retention measures: based on analyses conducted within the project and tested in pilot catchments in six countries, this publication addresses the knowledge gap and issues relating to the integration of water retention measures into river basin management plans in line with the EU Water Framework Directive.



- Decision support system for planning natural (small) water retention measures: a tool to facilitate and customise stakeholders' needs and preferences for water resources planning.

Improving water quality in Haapsalu Bay, Estonia

Haapsalu is a shallow bay with a muddy bottom that contains significant amounts of nitrogen, phosphorus, and herbicide residues. In accordance with the European Union Water Framework Directive, water quality in the bay is required to be improved by 2027. GWP Estonia is working with local stakeholders towards the goal of supporting economic activities while protecting existing ecosystems and water quality. Activities organised by GWP in 2020 to discuss possible ways forward included a stakeholder seminar held in February, when recent research and potential solutions were proposed for discussion. In August, there was a panel discussion on the Baltic Sea environment and, in December, the case of Haapsalu Bay was discussed with the Coalition Clean Baltic working group, with feedback received from Finland, Poland, and Sweden.

Haapsalu Bay, Estonia