

# Mediterritage

## Valorisation économique du patrimoine naturel et culturel des montagnes méditerranéennes

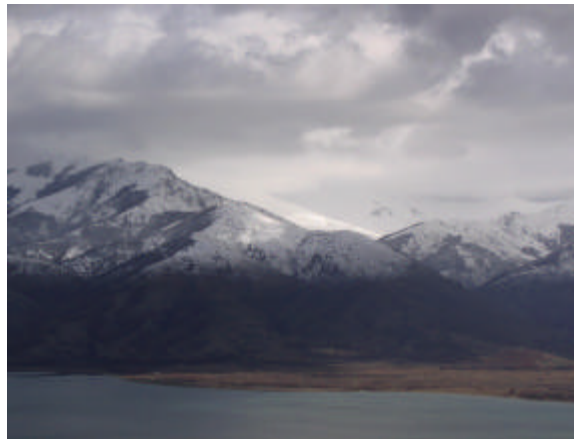
### SOUS-PROJET « NEST »

#### Présentation de la contribution de La commune de Prespa Région de Macédoine Occidentale (Grèce)

#### 1. Présentation générale du territoire/village

*Overall presentation of the territory / Village*

Situated on the north-western borders of Greece with its neighbours Albania and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, at the heart of the Balkans, Prespa is a place where a unique natural environment coexists with notable Byzantine monuments and a small agricultural community which has preserved through the tides of time. Prespa also bears witness to the myriad ways in which the inhabitants traditional use of natural resources has led to the creation of a number of semi-natural ecosystems supporting a rich variety of life. Prespa is a testament to man and nature living side by side for centuries, home to ways of life rarely seen in modern Europe. It is a peaceful natural setting that gives the impression of having remained unchanged since time immemorial.



**The Prespa lake and its surroundings**

Prespa is a place of significant interest in regard to its environment and the natural resources available. There are important ecosystems here that contribute a lot to the quality of life in the area. There are:

- 1 protected lake of great ecological interest, a cross-border park and the Small Prespa Lake is a wetland protected under the Ramsar convention, Natura 2000
- A national park at the Prespa area
- A tremendous variety of different flora and fauna species
- The Vigla-ski center"

There is an initiative going on about the establishment of a Local Quality Agreement for the tourism-sector stakeholders. This agreement will probably be valid the end of 2007.

The current situation of commercial activities in the Prespa-Ohrid region states a quite low percentage of activities in the tourism sector, much higher is agriculture.

In 2005, Prespa had 1.851 inhabitants who were living in 15 villages. The biggest villages have around 200 people. But they are leaving the region for different reasons:

- isolated area (first town at 45 min)
- difficulties in the agricultural activities
- no large opportunities for the future of the young people

Size of the area: 413.513 square km

## **2. Situation du territoire / village par rapport au thème du sous-projet**

*Situation of the territory / village with regard to the sub-project*

Prespa is ideally placed to become a model of sustainable tourism in Europe: there is a well developed small scale tourist infrastructure with successful traditional guest houses, tavernas and activities; the area is recognised internationally as being rich in biodiversity, an environment with unique natural resources. Prespa has a wealth of cultural assets and heritage which can be revived and invigorated by promoting cultural and heritage tourism. Though at the moment we know that the number of tourists that visit the Prespa region is not even close to its potential.

There is lack of:

- coordination of actions which aim at the improvement of tourism services and facilities and the development of different kinds of tourism such as sport, green, eco, adventure, rural and cultural as to heritage tourism
- coordination between local authorities, prefectures, chambers, etc
- existing tourism associations to coordinate initiatives and promote the region
- effective promotion and informational campaigns about the status of the region, with the false idea that it is dangerous to travel in the region prevailing

The results are:

- Reluctant potential tourists
  - Overlapping activities and projects implemented by different donors, development agencies, local and regional authorities
  - Abstractive and scattered activities and projects that have no follow-up or continuation
  - Absent or little involvement of local stakeholders, especially in the decision-making process
  - Deprivation of a significant socio-economic development capital, vital for survival, continuity and prosperity
- Tourism development needs vision, solid strategic planning, close collaboration between stakeholders combined with flexible working methods, endless variety in approaches and tools and a lot of patience.

There is an opportunity to contribute to steering the development of a sustainable tourism industry in the region by establishing successful models of 'best practice'.

## **3. Les attentes par rapport au sous-projet**

*Expectations from the sub-project*

The benefits for the area and the wider cross-border area (Albania, FYR of Macedonia and Greece), if vocational tourism is being developed systematically and professionally is the region's greatest opportunity and should be the first priority. However, first priority should not mean the 'only' priority, cultural tourism should embrace and utilize all local commercial activities in order to reach the most efficient and effective socio-economical outcome.

Statistics show that isolated and deserted areas in Europe after turning into a tourism destinations with high quality services, with successful collaboration of all stakeholders have shown rapid socio-economical development, the process of the decreasing of population has been reversed and the region has been able to fully valorizes the natural and cultural wealth.

More specific, for our cross-border area, the valorisation of its natural resources and cultural diversity will bring an increase of income, an opportunity for young people to see a future not far away from home, an involvement of the three cross-border communities to participate in the process of changing their socio-economical level without neglecting their heritage. Further tourism will be a friendly tool to push towards a more efficient border policy and the establishment of relations between people in the region.

- o Reviving indigenous customs, skills and cultural heritage
- o Respecting and utilization of the environment and rich natural diversity
- o Initiatives for the efficient cross-border collaboration – Prespa/Ohrid Euroregion

We aim foremost to create a successful business model placing economic viability on an equal footing with environmental and cultural sustainability. We intend to produce entertaining, relaxing and informative packages for informed consumers. We intend to research, revive and retain the rich cultural and social customs of the area with the aim of providing not only economic opportunities for the young but also the sustainable development of their unique cultural heritage.

Vocational tourism offers sustainable opportunities for economic development especially amongst young people who currently leave the area compounding the problems of rural depopulation