

EU/Greece, Albania and FYROM Agreement: Protection and Sustainable Development of the Prespa Park Area

2010/0300(NLE) - 23/05/2011 - Final act

PURPOSE : to conclude an Agreement on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Prespa Park Area (protected area shared by Greece, Albania and FYROM).

NON-LEGISLATIVE ACT : Council Decision 2011/646/EU concerning the conclusion, on behalf of the European Union, of the Agreement on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Prespa Park Area

BACKGROUND : the EU has a long-standing legislation protecting its waters, starting in the 1970s and culminating in the 2000 [Water Framework Directive](#) (WFD), establishing the objective of protection of all waters (rivers, lakes, groundwaters and coastal waters) and providing for coordination of efforts within shared river basins, across administrative and political boundaries. Under the WFD, where river basins extend beyond the territory of the Union, Member States shall endeavour to establish appropriate coordination with the relevant non-Member States, with the aim of achieving the objectives of the WFD throughout the river basin district. Where coordination takes the form of an international agreement, participation of the European Union as a Party is necessary to the extent that the agreement covers matters falling within the Union's competence.

On 27 June 2006, the Council adopted a decision authorising the Commission, on behalf of the European Community, to negotiate the conclusion of international river basin agreements to improve cooperation in European river basins shared between certain Member States and third countries, notably Greece, on the one hand and Albania, FYROM and/or Turkey on the other.

The Prespa Lakes and their surroundings are a unique natural area with high ecological significance, which can only be preserved through a holistic approach at basin level.

An Agreement on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Prespa Park Area has been negotiated by the European Commission, Greece, Albania and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and constitutes an upgrade of the existing cooperation in the area, while holding the potential to contribute to the successful implementation of the EU Water Framework Directive.

It is therefore appropriate for the Union to conclude the Agreement on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Prespa Park Area.

CONTENT : this council Decision concludes the Agreement on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Prespa Park Area on behalf of the Union.

The text of the Agreement negotiated by the European Commission, Greece, Albania and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia constitutes an upgrade of the existing cooperation in the area, while holding the potential to contribute to the successful implementation of the EU Water Framework Directive.

The main provisions may be summarised as follows :

Objective of the Agreement: the Parties shall cooperate in order to ensure an integrated protection of the ecosystem and the sustainable development of the Prespa Park Area, including the development of integrated river basin management plans, according to international and European Union standards.

Basic obligations: for the fulfilment of the objectives, the Parties shall take the necessary measures and apply best available techniques, individually and in cooperation on the basis of sovereign equality, territorial integrity, mutual benefit, and good faith, to:

- manage prudently the water quality and quantity of the Prespa Lakes giving special attention to the water level of both lakes;
- prevent, control and reduce pollution of the waters in the Prespa Lakes Area;
- protect and conserve the biodiversity of the Area by protecting especially the endemic, rare, threatened or endangered species of flora and fauna and by restoring and managing sensitive habitats;
- protect the soil from erosion, depletion, infections and pollution;
- ensure, promote and control the prudent use of natural resources and the sustainable development of the Prespa Park Area;
- prevent introduction and breeding of alien animal and plant species;
- effectively regulate the activities which cause or may cause negative impact in the Prespa Lakes Area in order to prevent or minimise such effects.

To this end, the Parties shall **design and implement integrated management plans and programmes for the protection and sustainable development of the Area**; develop coherent strategies for spatial, urban and other land-use plans as well as protected area management plans; approve and apply faithfully the environmental standards and criteria for the watershed. They should also adopt and implement legal, administrative, economic, financial and technical measures to ensure sustainable agriculture and low-impact animal breeding, the management of household and agricultural waste according to best available techniques, and the modernisation of road and communication networks and other social infrastructure in a manner consistent with the protection of biodiversity.

Measures are also provided to **facilitate the regular exchange of ideas** among the Parties, conserve traditional architecture and monuments, develop and implement a joint strategy for the touristic development of the Area, and promote public awareness and environmental education as a means for reaching local solutions. The Parties will organise a formal system for regular exchange of information in order to assist in achieving effective protection of the Prespa Park Area, including exchange of data on water, aquatic ecosystems, and important habitats and species.

Cooperation: the Parties shall seek partners locally, nationally and internationally, and will especially cooperate with, inter alia: UNESCO and the Institutions of the European Union, etc. The Agreement also establishes the **Prespa Park Management Committee** which shall have the international legal capacity of a plurilateral institution necessary for the exercise of its functions, including keeping relations with donors in order to secure projects and donations, which will be used for the implementation of this Agreement.

ENTRY INTO FORCE : the Decision will enter into force on 23/05/2011.