

Memorandum of Understanding

between

The Local Action Group (LAG) of Albania

and

The Local Action Group (LAG) of Montenegro

(Hereinafter referred to as 'The Parties')

concerning cooperation in environmental protection, tourism, recreation and sustainable development in the territories of the two communities either side of the international border between Albania and Montenegro in the Bjeshkët e Namuna/Prokletije Mountains.

(Hereinafter referred to as 'The Transboundary Area')

To take effect upon signature of both parties.

BACKGROUND

Objectives of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)

The Parties enter into this MoU with the following objectives:

- (1) To strengthen transboundary cooperation in the fields of nature protection and sustainable rural development, in particular the provision of transboundary tourism and its associated activities (e.g. recreation, service provision, marketing of local products).
- (2) To help empower the Parties to secure a high level of participation, transparency and equitable sharing of benefits in decisions made about the protection, management and development of the transboundary area.

The MoU has been signed within "Environment for People in the Dinaric Arc" project implemented by the IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature), WWF Mediterranean Program and SNV (Netherlands Development Organization) funded by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland.

- (3) To strengthen the capability of the Parties to protect and sustainably manage their environment and to maintain their culture and traditions.
- (4) To provide a basis for the cooperative development of community –based rural tourism in the transboundary area that will sustain livelihoods and the local economy.
- (5) To provide a foundation and organisational basis for the increased cooperation between the Parties.

Shared beliefs and values

The Parties enter into this MoU in recognition of the following beliefs and values

- A shared commitment to maintaining peace, friendship and mutually beneficial cooperation between the Parties and their local communities.
- A recognition by the Parties that they share the same environment and natural heritage either side of the international border and that ‘nature knows no boundaries’.
- A shared commitment to maintaining local cultures and traditions; those held separately and those held in common.
- Shared strong traditions of warmth and hospitality to visitors and guests, which make the area particularly attractive and welcoming to tourists.
- A shared commitment to protecting the environment, biodiversity and natural beauty of the transboundary area for the sake of nature, culture and human well-being.
- A shared commitment to building a thriving and sustainable local economy that sustains communities and enables people to remain in the area.
- A shared belief that, with good management, nature can provide benefits for people through sustainable use, harvesting and tourism.

Shared concerns

Furthermore the Parties enter into this MoU in recognition of the following shared concerns:

- That the costs to communities and their members of nature conservation should not outweigh the benefits it brings.

The MoU has been signed within "Environment for People in the Dinaric Arc" project implemented by the IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature), WWF Mediterranean Program and SNV (Netherlands Development Organization) funded by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland.

- That the benefits arising from tourism and development in and around the communities should primarily benefit those communities and should be shared fairly and transparently.
- That the establishment of legal protected areas and transboundary projects should not be planned and conducted without adequate consultation with local communities.
- That restrictions on border crossings and transboundary activity will limit the possibilities for cooperation and limit the potential for sustainable tourism in the areas.

AGREEMENT

Therefore the Parties agree to work individually and collectively to achieve the following.

ARTICLE 1. NATURE AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND SUSTAINABLE USE

The Parties agree to:

- (1) Work within their communities and cooperate with responsible authorities to discourage and prevent illegal and or unsustainable exploitation of nature and natural resources.
- (2) Require the responsible authorities to ensure a high degree of stakeholder participation and transparency in protected area planning and management by establishing formal consultative bodies and participatory mechanisms for current and future protected areas within the Transboundary Area.
- (3) Work with responsible authorities to develop agreements for sustainable use of natural resources from specified zones of any existing or future protected area. Such uses are likely to include grazing of livestock and gathering of wild herbs and berries.
- (4) Encourage responsible authorities in Albania and Montenegro to cooperate in order to harmonize boundaries, zones and regimes of management in current or future protected areas either side of the border.
- (5) Contribute knowledge and skills held by communities to programmes of research, survey and monitoring of nature and the environment.

The MoU has been signed within "Environment for People in the Dinaric Arc" project implemented by the IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature), WWF Mediterranean Program and SNV (Netherlands Development Organization) funded by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland.

- (6) Maintain a high standard of cleanliness and hygiene in the Transboundary Area, paying particular attention to responsible waste disposal and to protection of water courses.

ARTICLE 2. DEVELOPMENT OF TOURISM AND RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES IN THE TRANSBOUNDARY AREA

The Parties agree to:

- (1) Identify and establish in the Transboundary Area a network of trails and long distance routes of varying lengths and difficulties that can be used both within both countries and across the border.
- (2) Develop and establish a common or compatible system of trail identification and way marking.
- (3) Develop a common trail map that can be used in publications on both sides of the border and in joint publications.
- (4) Encourage responsible authorities in both countries to allow any modification of border controls that would facilitate transboundary movements of visitors and their local guides.
- (5) Encourage the development by national authorities, local businesses and individuals of a range of appropriate infrastructure designed to high environmental standards that will facilitate the development of tourism in the Transboundary Area. Such infrastructure may include roads, utility supply and provision of accommodation and visitor attractions.
- (6) Ensure that the design, construction and location of infrastructure are sympathetic to local styles and traditions and to the environment.
- (7) Develop a common code of conduct for recreational users of the Transboundary Area that includes elements related to behaviour, safety, environmental considerations and cultural sensitivity.

ARTICLE 3. PROVISION OF HIGH QUALITY TOURISM SERVICES

The Parties agree to:

The MoU has been signed within "Environment for People in the Dinaric Arc" project implemented by the IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature), WWF Mediterranean Program and SNV (Netherlands Development Organization) funded by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland.

- (1) Strive to provide a high level of services for visitors that conform to legal norms and requirements in the field of tourism and recreation, while maintaining a distinctive local character and maintaining long-held traditions of hospitality and friendship with visitors.
- (2) Train local service providers to develop and meet the standards of service required.
- (3) Strive for a fair allocation of the benefits from tourism and recreation to and between the communities. This allocation will take into account the supply of accommodation and food, provision of tourism services, the use of local products.
- (4) Provide visitors with useful, comprehensive, interesting and reliable information on the traditions, customs, culture, history and nature of the Transboundary Area and on the standards of behaviour expected of visitors.
- (5) Encourage and assist where possible local production of traditional foods and handicrafts. Motivate service providers to stock and supply these local products in order to enhance appreciation of the area, maintain local traditions and help to sustain local economies.
- (6) Establish common standards for training of guides and other service providers in the Transboundary Area.
- (7) Cooperate to ensure a high standard of visitor safety and security and to put into place appropriate and commonly understood procedures and measures for responding to accidents and emergencies.
- (8) Engage in fair, equitable and cooperative competition between service providers within and between countries, recognising that the common interest is as important as individual interest.
- (9) Cooperate to ensure that income earned from services provided in one community should remain in that community. A key element of fair, equitable and cooperative competition is that service providers on one side of the border should only sell services on the other side of the border through local suppliers.

ARTICLE 4. MARKETING AND PROMOTION

The Parties agree to:

The MoU has been signed within "Environment for People in the Dinaric Arc" project implemented by the IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature), WWF Mediterranean Program and SNV (Netherlands Development Organization) funded by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland.

- (1) Work together to develop and agree on a common brand and image for the transboundary area that will be used (alongside local and national brands if required) in local, national and international tourism marketing for the Transboundary Area.
- (2) Conduct joint campaigns and activities for marketing the Transboundary Area.
- (3) Work together and with national tourism authorities, agencies, tour operators and protected area administrations to market and promote the opportunities for tourism in the Transboundary Area.
- (4) Establish a common website and/or Facebook page for the Transboundary Area.
- (5) Ensure common publications, and marketing materials are published in both national languages, in English and if possible in other international languages.

ARTICLE 5. COMMUNICATION, COOPERATION AND FUNDING

The Parties agree to:

- (1) Establish a transboundary cooperation committee and meet at least twice a year in alternating counties.
- (2) Ensure a continuous and open exchange of information of common interest between the two Parties.
- (3) Exercise transparency and openness in their activities and encourage and enable the involvement of additional stakeholders and stakeholder groups wherever relevant.
- (4) Improve communication between the communities by encouraging individuals to learn each other's languages and by enabling regular exchanges between the communities.
- (5) Identify and mobilise national funds and sources of support to enable the implementation of activities specified in this MoU.
- (6) Cooperate to develop and apply for joint projects and grants to further the work of the Parties in relation to this MoU.

ARTICLE 6. AMENDMENTS, INTERPRETATION, EXTENSION, AND TERMINATION

- (1) This MoU shall be effective on the date entered at the head of this MoU and will remain in force for a period of five years. Either Party may propose amendments at any time; amendments will be adopted if mutually agreed in writing by both Parties.

The MoU has been signed within "Environment for People in the Dinaric Arc" project implemented by the IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature), WWF Mediterranean Program and SNV (Netherlands Development Organization) funded by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland.

- (2) Any dispute between the Parties regarding the interpretation or implementation of this MoU shall be settled amicably by consultation or negotiation within the spirit of collaboration.
- (3) This MoU may be cancelled by mutual agreement of the Parties, in writing and signed by both Parties.
- (4) Either Party may withdraw from the MoU subject to providing notice in writing to the other Party of three months.
- (5) This MoU is non-exclusive and shall not restrict the activities of either Party outside of this joint programme of collaboration, where these do not have a negative impact on the terms of the MoU.
- (6) Co-operation under this MoU will be subject to the availability of funds and personnel to each Party, and to the laws and regulations of each country. The nature and extent of funding for each joint project or activity will be decided upon by the Parties before its commencement.

APPROVED AND SIGNED

On behalf of: the LAG of *****

Signed: Date:

Name:
 Position:

On behalf of: the LAG of *****

Signed: Date:

Name:
 Position:

The MoU has been signed within "Environment for People in the Dinaric Arc" project implemented by the IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature), WWF Mediterranean Program and SNV (Netherlands Development Organization) funded by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland.