

International Expert Meeting

Nature Conservation and Sustainable Development in Kosovo, Albania, Montenegro, and North Macedonia:

The State of Affairs and the Challenges for Domestic and Trans-Border Cooperation



Prizren seen from the Sharri Mountains, Foto: H. Brey

Date: Wednesday, September 13, 2023, 14:00 – 18:45

Venue: Hotel Centrum, Prizren, Kosovo // Online via ZOOM

Conference Language: English

Conference Committee:

Hansjörg Brey, Member of the Board, Southeast Europe Association

Viktoria Voglsinger-Palm, Deputy Director, Southeast Europe Association

Flaka Bytyqi, Sharri EcoTours, Prizren



PARTICIPATION / REGISTRATION

The event will be open to a selected audience in presence and will be accessible to a larger audience via ZOOM. Please register for **online participation** by using the [registration form \(link\)](#).

If you are interested in joining us **in person in Prizren**, please contact us:
info@sogde.org

Topic

From September 9-17, about 25 members of the German Southeast Europe Association will be on a study trip, exploring some of the most outstanding landscapes in the border regions of North Macedonia, Kosovo, Albania and Montenegro. Traveling through some of the hotspots of biodiversity on European scale, and meeting experts, activists and citizens, we will concentrate on the question of how to preserve a unique natural environment while at the same time maintain or achieve a sustainable living for the local population.

The meeting with experts on September 13 in Prizren will be one of the most important elements of our tour. It is also a continuation of a dialogue on “Biodiversity and Nature Conservation in the Western Balkans” that we, the Southeast Europe Association, have organized during the last few years,¹ involving some of the major stakeholders in the region. The meeting, with three rounds of discussion, will be held mostly in a dialogue format, without extensive presentations from the speakers.

PROGRAM

14:00

Opening / Welcome

Hansjörg Brey, Member of the Board, Southeast Europe Association, Munich

Sebastian Leuschner, Policy Advisor and Chief of Protocol, Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany, Pristina

14:15

Panel I: The State of Protecting Nature and Biodiversity in the light of the “Vjosa Miracle”. Reports from Albania, Kosovo, Montenegro and North Macedonia

Some of the questions to be discussed with leading representatives from Civil Society and international experts engaged in the region: Is there a new dynamic for protecting biodiversity and, more generally, the environment, after the declaration of Vjosa River as a National Park in Albania in 2023? Which challenges do Protected Areas face from the development of infrastructures, the use of energy sources, from excessive building and the expansion of tourism? Did the launch of the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans have any positive impetus?

Chair:

Hansjörg Brey, Member of the Board, Southeast Europe Association, Munich

Speakers / discussants:

Aleksandër Trajçe, Executive Director, Protection and Preservation of Natural Environment in Albania (PPNEA), Tirana

Valmira Gashi Lipaj, Expert for Ecology and Environmental Protection, Pristina

Iskra Stojkovska, Executive Director, Environmental Citizens' Association Front 21/42, Skopje (online)

Til Dieterich, Biologist, Expert for Nature Conservation and Science, Podgorica (online)

15:45

Coffee Break

¹ See <https://www.sogde.org/de/events/biodiversity-and-the-protection-of-nature-in-the-western-balkans/>

16:15

Panel II: Towards a Sustainable Future for Sharri / Shar / Mavrovo / Korab-Koritnik Trans-boundary Region

Prizren is located at the southern fringe of the Sharri Mountains and Sharri National Park, which are part of one of the biggest Protected Areas in Europe, stretching over three countries. What are the necessary elements for both an efficient protection of such a transboundary natural heritage and its sustainable use as source of income for the local population? How to deal with conflicting interests as concerns spatial planning and the use of local resources? How to realize the high potentials for the development of ecotourism?

We will discuss these and other questions with stakeholders from relevant NGOs, from the expert community and authorities engaged.

Chair:

Hansjörg Brey, Member of the Board, Southeast Europe Association, Munich

Speakers / discussants:

Shaqir Totaj, Mayor of Prizren

Bekim Bytyqi, Sharri National Park, Prizren

Vivianne Rau, Analyst, adelphi think tank, Berlin (online)

Xhevat Lushi, Executive Board Member, Country Director Kosovo, Connecting Natural Values and People (CNVP), Pristina

Aleksandër Trajçe, Executive Director, Protection and Preservation of Natural Environment in Albania (PPNEA), Tirana

Ekrem Hyseni, Deutsche Gesellschaft für internationale Zusammenarbeit, Pristina

18:00

Panel III: Media Talk: What does it take to spread environmental consciousness in the Western Balkans?

Chair:

Adelheid Feilcke, Director at Programs for Europe at Deutsche Welle, Bonn / Berlin,

In discussion with:

Behare Bajraktari, Journalist and Publicist, Founder of Green Journalism Kosova, Pristina

...and other participants

18:45 End of the Conference