

REPORT ON THE WORKSHOP

“Coastal lagoons and wetlands: a biodiversity heritage of Albania”

Transitional water ecosystems represent landscape patches with unusually rich natural and cultural heritage. To reinforce the valorization of these inheritance of humanity, the INTERREG IIIB CADSES project TWReferenceNET is developing a number of actions, with the purpose of enhancing the value that the people assign to these ecosystems. In fact, it is not possible, and someone could say that it is also not useful and correct, to invest economic resources for the conservation of something that has not any value for the people life and for the life of future generations.

To achieve the conservation of the ecological health of the system which is supporting our life on the Earth planet, i.e. the Biosphere ecosystem, the most important areas are those which are actually suffering less human impacts, but at the same time are exposed to the highest risk of de-regulated industrialization and degradation. These areas still have pristine ecosystems, biodiversity hot spots, and conservation priority habitats.



The Balkans States partners of TWReferenceNET have in their territory some of the most valuable transitional waters of the Biosphere, including the Karavasta lagoon and the Danube Delta. TWReferenceNET is going to organise a number of events in the Balkans where scientific divulgation can reach administrators, stakeholders and people showing them not only the invaluable natural heritage richness they have but also the strategy for the sustainable fruition of these environmental heritage.

The workshop on *Coastal lagoons and wetlands: a biodiversity heritage of Albania*, which was held in Tirana on January 28th-29th, 2005 was the first of such events.

Synthetic descriptions of the natural beauty, ecological value and ecological health of Albanian lagoons are presented in this issue of the Newsletter.

The first day of the workshop was dedicated to a full day meeting on the topic on conservation of the natural heritage of Albanian lagoons, which involved the presentation of TWReferenceNET to local institutions, stacke-holders and end-users. The second day was dedicated to a more technical and restricted meeting in the field, on the Karavasta lagoon, with the focus of envisage and discuss about the strategies of conservation and sustainable fruition and planning pilot actions on the lagoon as model actions for the regional area.



The meeting, opened by a welcome address from the vice Minister of the Ministry for the Environment of Albania, Etleva Canaj, and by the Scientific Affairs Responsible of the Embassy of Italy in Albania, Adriano Ciani, had the contribution of international organizations, such as the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH), scientific institutions of Albania

and Italy, such as University of Tirana, with the Faculty of Science and the Museum of Natural Sciences, Academy of Science of Albania, with the institutes of Biological Research, Hydrometeorology, the Water Secretariat, the Institute for the Environment, the University of Lecce, with the Dept. of Biological and Environmental Sciences and Technologies, the Agency for Environmental Protection and Technical Services of Italy (APAT), governmental and local administrative institutions, including the Ministry of Environment of Albania, the Ministry of Environmental Planning and Tourism, the municipality of Lecce (ITALY), and of NGO's, including MareAmico, the Torre Guaceto Management Consortium. The views of some speakers are reported as short interviews in this Newsletter.