

# Report

# Municipality Pogradec

BACID

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## 1. Introduction

In the frame of the BACID supported project "Increasing the Development and Implementation Capacities of Community led Projects of Pogradec and Permet Municipality", EuroVienna has visited Pogradec for a workshop with representatives of the municipality.

Within the following pages, a short report will summarize the main challenges of the municipality and it will outline a set of suggested measures that should be implemented at different levels. Since some of the improvements will be partly dependent on the cooperation of the federal government, the Authors of this report hope for the support of the Austrian Development Agency, Österreichischer Städtebund and KDZ in order to improve the situation on the local level and to help the Municipality of Pogradec in successfully implementing important EU projects.

## 2. Characteristics

Pogradec is a city in east Albania with approximately 20.800 inhabitants in the main town and around 61.500 in the whole city area (Bashkia). It is located at the Lake Ohrid which also bears the national border with The Republic of North Macedonia. Pogradec with the Lake Ohrid is considered as one of the major touristic areas in Albania. It is noteworthy to mention that Lake Ohrid is also a well-known touristic region in The Republic of North Macedonia.

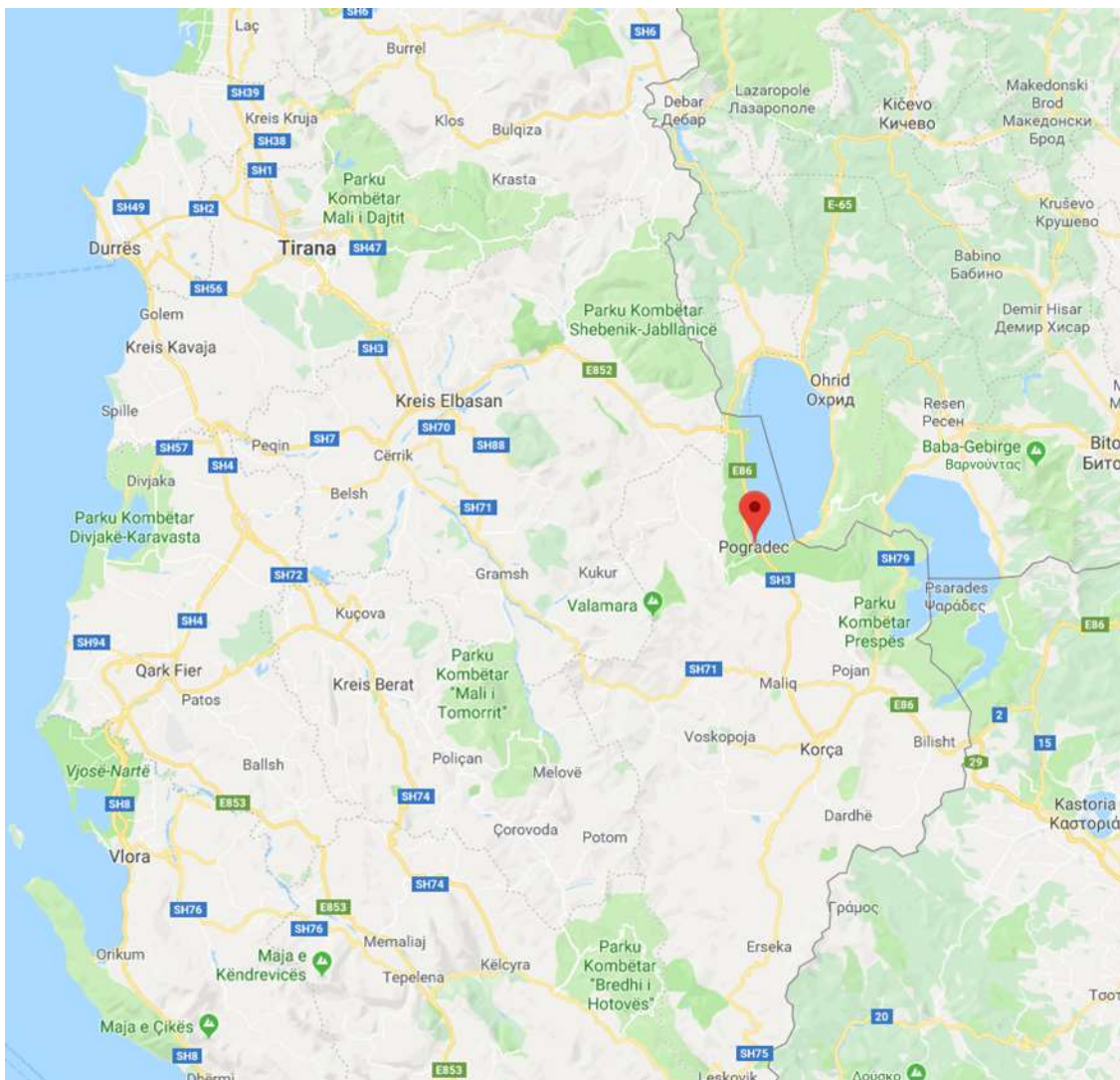


Illustration 1: Location of Pogradec (maps.google.com, Screenshot EuroVienna, 2019)

The town itself is located at an altitude of only 735 meters above sea level, next to scenic mountains - but the Lake Ohrid dominates the scenery. Since 2015, the municipality includes numerous small towns which used to be self-governed. As a consequence, the total Area of Pogradec sums up to almost 600 km<sup>2</sup>.



Picture 1: Lake Ohrid in Pogradec - Northern view (Martin Marek, EuroVienna, 2019)



Picture 2: Lake Ohrid in Pogradec - Southern view (Martin Marek, EuroVienna, 2019)

The city is connected with Ohrid (Republic of North Macedonia), located on the opposite side of the Lake, by a useable road. The road to Korça in the south, has been partly renovated already but parts of the road are still in relatively bad shape.



Picture 3: Original part of the road to Korça (Martin Marek, EuroVienna, 2019))



Picture 4: New road to Korça (Martin Marek, EuroVienna, 2019)

It is interesting to mention that major parts of the new streets have been funded by the Saudi Investment Fund, which is being prominently indicated via sign postings next to the road. The road to Tirana is most of the time in good and partly in very good shape. There has been a railroad, which has been used for mining, going to Elbasan which mainly runs in parallel to the roads. The tracks

appear to still be in decent conditions, making a revitalization appear to be possible if the will is there. In Elbasan connections to Durrës from which further connections are existing.



Picture 5: Railroad from Pogradec to Elbasan (Michael Gansch, EuroVienna, 2019)

The city's population has traditionally a mixed ethnic background, relevant conflicts between the ethnic groups are not known.

The city center and the park area next to the lake appears to be tidied up and ready for visitors. Also aside of the main roads, the city makes a cleaner and wealthier impression compared to the towns in the south of Albania. Also the touristic infrastructure is more professional including some bigger hotels of modern standard and bars next to the lake.

The town used to be known for mining in communist times, but has improved its image towards a beautiful touristic spot. It offers a variety of local fruits and wines. Also Raki is being produced. Historically, the chestnut woods have been an important economic factor. A major problem is still the waste management, while sewage water filtration has been implemented already.

### 3. CHALLENGES

Pogradec faces similar challenges than many other towns of its size and reputation. On the one hand, they are in a rather privileged situation compared to other municipalities in Albania, but on the other hand, they still have to find capital in order to remain or become competitive on a global touristic market. At the same time, major infrastructure problems like the waste management are a big issue. But in general, the town has potential - not only in tourism, but the mix of different jobs appears to be better than in many other towns already.

While cities like Durrës are already starting to become attractive for tourists from other European countries, Pogradec still is rather unknown on the continent - even though it has high potential not only due to its location next to lake Ohrid.

The city is trying to participate in EU co-financed projects. Currently they are part of 2 project consortia, one in Interreg Italy - Albania - Montenegro and one in Interreg BalkanMed. Both projects have a touristic focus. But, however, the municipality is facing one major problem which is hindering them in getting the activities started: own contribution.

According to the city representatives, the Federal State has to - by law - come up for the not funded part (15%) of a project run by a municipality. However, that ruling is not being applied in Pogradec. Since the city has calculated with that amount, they have problems getting the project work done or even started.

Furthermore, the city lacks qualified staff for the implementation of EU projects. Few staff members have already gained experience in such projects but still need support and answers to their technical questions, such as documentation of procurement procedures. EuroVienna was able to clarify parts of the questions and give suggestions for further project implementation. But the factor of own resources cannot be solved without the federal state.

Questions regarding local or national characteristics on budget issues (e.g. co-funding, FLC, etc.) need to be answered for example by the Albanian ministries. It seems that national contact points for EU funding programmes are non-existing or difficult to reach.



#### 4. RECOMMENDATIONS AND NEXT STEPS

The municipality appears to develop rather well due to the economic aspects of vivid tourism and local products that are regionally known for their quality. Also the cities administration is actively developing the city with its communities by attracting external funds for implementing necessary investments or for supporting the local economy with touristic projects.

However, the town faces challenges in implementation. Those challenges are partly due to a lack in know-how and partly due to a lack of financial resources.

Concerning the challenges in implementation, EuroVienna offered its assistance. Due to the experience of its staff, EuroVienna can help finding solutions in different problematic solutions. Some of these situations have been discussed directly during the workshop and in the weeks after the workshop. Other situations which might occur in the upcoming months, have to be looked at separately. During the workshop it became evident, that it is often important to know the structure of a funding programme in order to being able to clarify certain problems.

When it comes to the lack of resources, which are needed for pre-financing the costs and also to cover the own contribution, EuroVienna can only show good practice examples from other cities and regions, but it cannot interfere in a political discussion between the municipality and the federal state as described in chapter 3. Therefore, EuroVienna decided to inform the BACID programme, especially the country representative of the Austrian Development Agency (ADA) about that problem. The ADA will check the criteria to be fulfilled regarding the formal procedure for covering the own contributions of EU projects which are managed by the cities and in particular the obligation of the federal state in this respect. As soon as that has been clarified, further steps can be discussed.

An aspect whose effects cannot yet be estimated, is the result of the latest election on municipal level in Albania. There may be changes in the city government, which could bring a new momentum into the situation.

EuroVienna however, will try to further support Pogradec in EU project matters and will try to network the city with relevant stakeholders such as relevant programme representatives or the relevant Macro Region contact points of the EU Strategy for the Adriatic - Ionian Region (EUSAIR). In particular a good start would be to get in touch with the Albanian Pillar 4 (Sustainable Tourism) coordinators of the EUSAIR (see screenshot below).


Country:  Albania - TSG 4 Coordinator			
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Illustration 2: EUSAIR Albanian Pillar 4 coordinators (<https://www.adriatic-ionic.eu/contacts/pillar-coordinators/#aic-red>, Screenshot EuroVienna, 2019)