CALL FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

Preparation of a Feasibility Study
for Urban Plan for Areas and Structures of State Significance
for the protected coastal zone in the Ohrid Region
(Deadline: 16 September 2022)

The UNESCO Regional Bureau for Science and Culture in Europe, Venice (Italy) is seeking expressions of interest from qualified and experienced supplier (individuals, teams or firms/institutions) to possibly prepare a Feasibility Study for an Urban Plan for Areas and Structures of State Significance for the protected coastal zone in the Ohrid Region.

Background

The Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Ohrid Region, a mixed, trans-boundary World Heritage (WH) property covering c. 94,729 ha, was first inscribed for its nature conservation values in 1979, and for its cultural heritage values a year later in 1980. These inscriptions related to the part of the lake located in North Macedonia. The property was extended to include the rest of Lake Ohrid, located in Albania, in 2019.

Given the designation of the Ohrid Lake and its surroundings as a World Heritage (WH) property, a significant number of plans and projects have been proposed to protect the area’s natural and cultural heritage. In the past period, WH-related missions observed numerous threats faced by the natural and cultural values of the property including heavy pressures from tourism, and extensive uncontrolled urban development and inappropriate exploitation of the coastal zones that, among others, have negative impact on the visual quality of the property.

In order to reduce the inappropriate and excessive use of the coastal zone for tourism infrastructure and prevent further uncontrolled urbanization (in accordance with the Management Plan for the Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Ohrid Region (2020-2029), the Ministry of Transport and Communications of North Macedonia in its Annual Financing Programme for the preparation of the urban plans for 2021 included the preparation of an Urban Plan for Areas and Structures of State Significance for the protected coastal zone in the Ohrid Region (“Official Gazette of North Macedonia” no. 15/21). The preparation of the mentioned Urban Plan will enable integrated approach for coastal urbanization, which will allow preservation of coastal functionality and gradual revitalization of key ecosystems.

The 2020 Law on Urban Planning, Article 25, requires a Feasibility Study as a prerequisite for urban plans of state significance, which is a new category of urban plans in the Macedonian regulations. This requirement is also regulated with the Rulebook on Urban Planning (“Official Gazette of RNM” no. 225/20, 219/21 and 104/22), where according to Article 17, paragraph 9 of the Rulebook, a feasibility study is needed for the preparation of the urban plan for areas and buildings of state importance, meaning for spaces that are being arranged for the first time and for which there is a need for previous research and assessments.

The preparation of the Feasibility Study will contribute to the preparation of the Urban Plan for the coastal zone by providing detailed information to the relevant state authorities on the importance of the significant natural and cultural areas, with the aim to prevent any further inappropriate development in the coastal area of Lake Ohrid, without endangering the authenticity and integrity of the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV).
The Feasibility Study is a non-binding technical document to be produced by the independent experts’ team with the objective to inform the State’s Agency for Spatial Planning and the Ministry of Transport and Communications on key aspects for the development of the Urban Plan of State Significance. In particular, the Feasibility Study shall serve to identify and analyse the status/attributes of the coastal area and its threats in North Macedonia, in order to enhance and preserve the OUV of the property and to prevent any further illegal development in the coastal area of Lake Ohrid that may endanger its integrity and authenticity. The Study shall also identify areas suitable for sustainable recreation and tourism activities, including areas for potential use by authorized boats.

**Description / Scope of work**

Under the supervision of UNESCO, the supplier shall act as the international expert(s) in charge of coordinating the preparation and drafting of the Feasibility Study as its principal author(s). In this task, the international expert(s) will be supported by 3 independent national experts on urban planning and demographics, nature and biodiversity and sustainable tourism and economic development. The group of national experts will be composed of individuals with strong knowledge of the country context to be selected by other UN agencies (UNEP and UNDP) within the framework of the UN Country Team in North Macedonia. The international and national expert(s) will have to carefully take into consideration the World Heritage Impact Assessment methodologies (ICOMOS and IUCN guidance notes) to ensure that the Feasibility Study does not come to conclusions and proposals that may in fact adversely impact on the attributes of OUV of the site. All experts will need to take into consideration the Shore-zone Functionality Index (SFI) of Ohrid Lake and to harmonize or align the SFI with the possible coastal area vision.

The consultant team, including both the national and international experts, will work in close coordination and cooperation with the State Agency for Spatial Planning, to which the Feasibility Study shall eventually be submitted. As needed, the consultant team and the State Agency for Spatial Planning will be also assisted by the Government Task Force, established by the President of the Government to support the Agency in the preparation process for the Urban Plan.

The consultant team is expected to:

- review and analyse the various existing documents on the spatial, natural, cultural, economic and social aspects regulating the area;
- develop a forward-looking vision of how to ensure that the cultural and natural values are preserved, and provide suggestions and analysis of how to ensure adequate economic benefit for the municipalities and the local community;
- outline the key spots that are subject to protection, with more detailed definition, preferably with graphics, of how these specific areas should look like, including confirmation of zoning and allowed uses within the zones;
- provide recommendations to the urban planners on what to prioritize and focus on in cases in which strategic documents provide conflicting information (e.g. the same area zoned differently under different strategic documents, multiple competing uses of the same space envisaged);
- engage with CSOs, government, private sector, etc. as relevant and appropriate.

**Within this framework, the international expert(s) is expected to:**

- coordinate, advise and steer the work of the team of national experts, including by setting up ad-hoc coordination mechanisms to facilitate joint work towards shared conclusions;
• analyse the inputs of the national experts on the institutional, normative and socio-economic frameworks relevant to the preparation of the Feasibility Study, against the background of applicable international and World Heritage-related standards;

• ensure appropriate consultations with key stakeholders, including CSOs, government, the private sector, and international organizations as relevant;

• prepare a draft of the Feasibility Study in English language for consideration, comments and review by the Government Task Force, municipalities, and civil society organizations;

• finalize the Feasibility Study in English language based on comments and feedback from relevant actors in North Macedonia, and submit it to the State Agency for Spatial Planning.

Qualifications and skills
The supplier acting as international expert(s) for this assignment is expected to meet the following requirements:

• Master’s degree in urban planning, cultural heritage management, architecture, civil engineering or related subjects;

• Minimum 10 years of relevant professional experience, including on urban planning in natural and cultural protected areas and the preparation of Feasibility Studies thereof;

• Minimum 5 years of experience in the protection and management of cultural and natural heritage within the context of World Heritage properties, and especially mixed properties, including with regard to heritage impact assessment;

• Strong knowledge of the World Heritage system and processes, including knowledge of the OUV of the Ohrid Region;

• Experience in advising the organisation/spatial planning of sustainable economic activities, especially related to the sustainable use of heritage and sustainable tourism and with a special focus on participatory approaches, in World Heritage properties;

• Demonstrated capacity to draft feasibility studies or other relevant technical documents on the above-mentioned subjects in the English language;

• Fluency in English, with excellent written and oral communication skills;

• Excellent organizational skills and proven ability to deliver consultancy products within deadlines;

• Ability to synthesize research and draw conclusions on the related subject.

Duty station and travel
The assignment is expected to be carried out home based, with field visits to North Macedonia (notably the Municipalities of Ohrid and Struga, and potentially meetings in Skopje) as needed and appropriate.

Duration
The task is expected to be completed within 6 months from the time of signing a contractual agreement.

Languages
The working language during the implementation of this assignment is English.
Expressions of Interest and selection criteria

Expressions of interest shall contain the following elements:

i) the curriculum vitae of the concerned individual consultant or the profile of the firm or institution, including a portfolio with at least 3 examples of past relevant activities and the curriculum vitae(s) of the concerned personnel;

ii) a written description (max 3 pages) of the proposed approach and relevant working modalities;

iii) a financial estimate.

Expressions of interest shall be submitted by no later than 16 September 2022, clearly indicating: “Preparation of a Feasibility Study for Urban Plan for Areas and Structures of State Significance for the protected coastal zone in the Ohrid” by e-mail to Ms. Laura De Stefani (l.destefani@unesco.org).