

**International Roundtable**  
**“Integrated Management of Shared Groundwater in SEE”**  
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**Report**  
**Working Session 3 – Institutional arrangements**

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# Cases presented

- **Bilateral**
  - Skadar Lake
  - Ohrid and Prespa Lakes
  - Neretva and Trebisnjica Rivers
- **Multilateral**
  - Danube River
  - Sava River
  - Nubian Aquifer

# Topics discussed

- Mechanisms of cooperation
- Legal agreements
- Joint bodies
- Capacity building and knowledge sharing
- Public participation
- Financing

# Main findings (1/7)

- **Basis for cooperation**

- Existing bi-/multilateral institutional arrangements, based on international agreements, should be used as a basis for cooperation.
- **Informal mechanisms of cooperation**, used in parallel to the formal ones, have been found to be efficient in many cases.
- Where there are no formal joint bodies, **consultative methods** could be useful. This may lead gradually to enhancement of cooperation and finally to establishment of formal cooperation.

## Main findings (2/7)

- **Basis for cooperation (cont.)**
  - Groundwater management consideration should be incorporated into the IWRM within countries and across borders.
  - **Creation of working groups** within the existing mechanisms of cooperation (joint bodies) is a first step towards incorporating shared groundwater management considerations.

## Main findings (3/7)

- **The first step towards broad cooperation – cooperation at the technical level (joint projects)**
  - Joint projects can assist in the creation of mechanisms of cooperation (e.g. creation of working groups for the implementation of the project, and bilateral committees).
  - Countries should secure the **sustainability of cooperation** after the end of the project. Sustainable financing of mechanisms for cooperation and implementation of managerial activities are essential for the continuation of work at bi-/multilateral level.

## Main findings (4/7)

- **Support to cooperation**
  - Past experiences in the region are being used in new efforts to enhance cooperation for the management of shared water resources.
  - Regions outside SEE (e.g. Danube River Basin, Nubian Aquifer, and Guarani) provide useful lessons and experiences that could be beneficial for new cooperation efforts.

## Main findings (5/7)

- **Preconditions for cooperation**
  - **Additional scientific work and data** are needed to produce information that would allow the identification of:
    - shared aquifers;
    - possible transboundary effects and their nature.
  - **Capacity building** is needed to enable a comparable level of expertise among countries.

## Main findings (6/7)

- **Preconditions for cooperation (cont.)**
  - **Civil society involvement in the management of shared groundwater is important.**
    - Stakeholders should be involved from the planning-preparation phase (e.g. GEF Skadar Lake project) or, where this is not possible, from the beginning of the project.
    - Involvement of stakeholders in the mechanisms of cooperation should be secured.

## Main findings (7/7)

- **Karst issue**
  - Karst is an important feature in SEE - extending from Slovenia to Greece across different national and shared river basins.
  - There are cases of karst aquifers **extending beyond the river basin**. On the other hand, EU WFD foresees the management of water resources at the river basin level. This fact needs to be taken into account when managing shared groundwater resources.
  - **Coordination / cooperation between EU and SEE countries is needed.**