

# THE RAMSAR CONVENTION

## GREEK REPORT

### **Ramsar Strategic Plan - General Objective 1 To progress towards universal membership of the Convention.**

- 1.1 Describe any actions your government has taken (such as hosting regional or subregional meetings/consultations, working cooperatively with neighbouring countries on transfrontier wetland sites) to encourage others to join the Convention.

Greece is promoting wetland conservation in the context of the Ramsar Convention, the Berne and Bonn Conventions, the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Barcelona Convention and the Mediterranean Action Plan, as well as the Council of Europe and the Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy (in collaboration with its neighbouring countries).

The Hellenic Ministry for Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works (IPEHODE) has been a member of the MedWet initiative since 1991 and has actively defended its guidelines. It has also supported the establishment of the Mediterranean Wetland Committee (MedCom) in 1996 and has undertaken the Secretarial Unit of this committee (1997-1998) under The Goulandris Natural History Museum – Greek Biotope/Wetland Centre (EKBY). IPEHODE hosted the first meeting of the Mediterranean Committee in Thessaloniki in March 1998.

The Hellenic Republic has also signed bilateral agreements with Cyprus (1996) and Georgia (1997) aiming at co-operation in environmental matters including wetland conservation. At present, bilateral formal discussions are being held with Albania, the Former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia, Bulgaria, Ukraine and other Black Sea countries so as to develop relevant agreements.

### **Ramsar Strategic Plan - General Objective 2 To achieve the wise use of wetlands by implementing and further developing the Ramsar Wise Use Guidelines.**

- 2.1 Has a National Wetland Policy/Strategy/Action Plan been developed, or is one being developed or planned for the near future? If so:
- What are/will be its main features?
  - Was it, or is it, intended that the Policy/Strategy/Action Plan be adopted by the whole of Government, the Minister responsible for Ramsar matters or through some other process. Please describe.
  - How does it relate/will it relate to other national environmental/ conservation planning initiatives (e.g., National Environmental Action Plans, National Biodiversity Action Plans, National Conservation Strategies)?

#### 2.1.a.

The main features of the Wetland Policy focusing on the 1995-2000 period are expressed in the following measures:

1. Prevention of degradation through effective control of projects and activities which may be potentially harmful to wetlands, by means of the Environmental Impact Assessment procedure.
2. Based on European Union criteria, evaluation of wetlands at a national level and pertinent proposals for inclusion in the European Network NATURA 2000 (Directive 92/43/EEC).
3. Monitoring of water quality in long rivers and coastal areas.
4. Inventorying of land ownership in wetlands and their perimetric zones as part of the National Cadastre.
5. Adoption of conservation measures and funding priority actions for wetland conservation (this is achieved with the preparation of Specific Management Studies, law enactments such as Joint Ministerial Decisions, Presidential Decrees, regulations, etc.).
6. Financial support for the implementation of agro-environmental (sustainable) management measures in rural areas neighbouring wetlands.
7. Promotion of research, monitoring and wise use of wetlands.
8. Promotion of public awareness and environmental education.
9. Incorporation of the concept of multiple wetland values into the sectorial policies for fishing and tourism.
10. Re-creation or rehabilitation – restoration of wetland ecosystems.
11. The promotion and active support of international cooperation for the sustainable management of wetland resources in the Mediterranean basin.

Additional to the present wetland policy, a National Strategy for Wetland Resources for the period 2000-2005 is being developed.

The preparation of the national strategy for wetlands, on the one hand fulfils our country's commitment as a contracting party of the Ramsar Convention to work out its own strategic plan aiming at the conservation and sustainable use and, on the other hand, expresses the final strategic choice of the country concerning wetland affairs, as defined within the wider existing frame of strategic options. Its general objective is "to preserve and rehabilitate all functions and values of wetland resources in Greece, as a contribution to the sustainable development of the country", while the specific objectives and the respective actions planned, are to a great extent corresponding to the specific objectives and actions of the Ramsar Strategic Plan.

#### 2.1.b.

The implemented policy has been adopted by IPEHODE in co-operation mainly with the Ministry of Agriculture. As most of the actions are implemented with financial assistance, they are also approved by the Ministry of National Economy. A great part of the

implemented policy is also in line with the implementation of relevant European Union policies and is in harmony with their spirit.

The National Strategy (2000-2005) is being developed by IPEHODE in co-operation with other competent ministries.

This strategy reflects the political will of IPEHODE to intensify, organise more systematically and multiply actions aiming at the sustainable management of Greek wetlands, giving priority to the most ecologically important ones. Therefore, this ministry will undertake the initiative for disseminating the strategy and for advancing the implementation of the described actions. Undoubtedly, planning and implementing the actions themselves is not at the sole competence of IPEHODE; it requires co-ordinated actions of services and other ministries (primarily the Ministry of Agriculture), in the first place at a central level and later on at a regional and local level.

### 2.1.c.

The present wetland policy is a significant part of the National Environmental Policy. Most of its actions are part of the Operational Programme for the Environment of IPEHODE and come within the scope of the Natural Environment sub-programme (1995-2000). The Operational Programme for the Environment is funded by the 2<sup>nd</sup> Community Support Framework of the European Union.

As for the National Strategy (2000-2005) under preparation, it is expected to constitute a wider action framework for the Administration and it is definitely a part of the wider National Strategy for Biodiversity.

The strategy is expected to create a uniform conceptual reference framework for positive actions of various origin, that is to contribute to the co-ordination of actions of the different services and bodies at the stage of planning, in order to avoid fragmentary measures, overlapping of positive actions and thus unnecessary expenses; it should also guarantee integrated management of wetland resources. Moreover, it should promote integration of sustainable management of wetland resources into sectorial policies and it will inform other ministries which have a development orientation, Local Government bodies and interested private investors, about the national priorities in wetland affairs. Finally, it should facilitate the State to face wetland issues jointly (in co-operation with other countries) at a European level or at the level of smaller or larger geographical areas.

## 2.2 If a policy is in place, how much progress has been made in its implementation, and what are the major difficulties being encountered in doing so?

As already mentioned (2.1a), the implementation period of the present policy is from 1995 to 2000. Although this period is not over yet, it can be said by general estimate that major delays occurred during the preparation of several projects and actions. Difficulties emerged mainly due to the lack of experience in developing such projects and actions and to the complexity of the legal aspect defining their performance. Another restraining factor was the lack of experience at the regional, Prefectural and local levels of administration, as well as the lack of specialised staff. Moreover, the complexity of wetland systems, not only as ecological units but also as administrative ones, the need for broadening the scientific base, the lack of knowledge in implementing sustainable practices and the need of motivation for a real turn towards sustainable practices, add more obstacles. It is worth noticing that the Ministry of Agriculture has begun providing motivation for the promotion of

organic agriculture, the decrease of fertiliser and pesticide use, the decrease of overgrazing and the long term fallow, giving priority to the perimetric zones of wetlands.

2.3 If a Policy/Strategy/Action Plan is in place, is the responsibility for implementing it with :

- a. a single Government Ministry,
- b. a committee drawn from several Ministries, or
- c. a cross-sectoral committee?

Please provide details.

IPEHODE assumes the entire responsibility for the national co-ordination in environmental issues. For actions in line with the Operational Programme for the Environment (see 2.1c) there is a Monitoring Committee consisting of representatives of IPEHODE, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Merchant Marine, Environmental Organisations and the European Commission. During the realisation of specific projects, through Programme Agreements in all Ramsar sites as well as in other wetland sites, joint committees were set up, consisting of representatives of IPEHODE, the Ministry of Agriculture and local bodies. Moreover, for actions in line with the implementation of the agro-environmental Regulation 2078/92/EEC there is a joint committee of the Ministry of Agriculture and IPEHODE. The latter is also developing other distinct environmental projects supervised by a committee of the same Ministry.

2.4 For countries with Federal systems of Government, are there Wetland Policies/Strategies/Plans in place, being developed or planned for the provincial/state or regional levels of Government? Yes/No

If yes, please give details.

The question is not applicable to Greece, as it is not a Federal Country.

2.5 Has a review of legislation and practices which impact on wetlands been carried out, and if so, has this resulted in any changes which assist with implementation of the Ramsar Convention? Please describe these.

As already mentioned, wetlands are one of the major issues of the environmental policy. In our country, legislative issues relevant to practices affecting wetlands, started to be examined in 1984. This review led to the institution of the Law for the Environment (1650/86) which defines criteria and categories of protected areas, fundamental principles for protection, as well as for the assessment of environmental impact. The Law for Water Resources Management (1739/87) was also instituted. This law defines the ecological requirements for water resources in terms of water quantity and quality, the country's hydrological departments, the procedure of water resources management, and imposes the requirement for co-evaluation of the water ecological value. The Joint Ministerial

Decision 69269/5387 on environmental impact assessment was issued in 1990, specifying the Environmental Impact Assessment procedure for all projects and activities that may have a negative environmental impact. Moreover, since 1990 Joint Ministerial Decisions are being issued, defining the zoning and the permitted activities in each one of the Ramsar wetlands. Seven Joint Ministerial Decisions have been issued so far, for 9 out of the 11 Ramsar sites, three of which (concerning 5 Ramsar sites) have been issued since 1995. It must be noted that it is only for two Ramsar sites that Joint Ministerial Decisions have not been issued yet. These are a) Lakes Volvi and Koronia; the legal text is in the process of being signed and it has been signed by three out of five competent Ministers b) Lake Mikri Prespa, which has been declared as a National Park by a Presidential Decree since 1974.

A further legal step was the issuing of Law 1337 (Expansion of urban plans, housing development and relevant regulations) for the establishment of Housing Control Zones, among others in wetland areas. Since 1990 there has also been harmonisation with Community legislation, in matters concerning hunting, water use and environmental impact. There are also several of Forest and Agricultural Regulations, a Law for streams, etc.

- 2.6 Describe the efforts made in your country to have wetlands considered in integrated land/water and coastal zone planning and management processes at the following levels:
- a. national
  - b. provincial
  - c. local

At the national level, the enactment of the Environmental Impact Assessment procedure, which faces each project proposal in a holistic way as to its impact, constituted a significant step towards integrated planning in wetland areas. At local level, the Environmental Impact Assessment procedure considers the specific interactions between wetlands and their surrounding areas.

In order to confront the problem of managing of the country's water resources at a national and regional level, the Department of Water Resources and Natural Resources of the Ministry of Development, in co-operation with other public bodies (National Technical University of Athens, Institute for Geological and Mining Exploration and the Centre for Research and Planning) carried out a special study. In the introduction to the report, it is noted that the study constitutes an effort to plan a management programme for water resources, the objective being to support development policy as expressed in the existing programmes of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Community Support Framework (1995-1999), and to contribute to the development of water resources and the protection of the environment.

Wetland conservation measures are also forwarded through the physical planning, which forms the background for land use and activity planning at different parts of the country. Physical plans are produced for each of the Peripheries of the country. The physical plans are mostly plans of strategic physical planning. Nevertheless, apart from spatial development issues, they also cover natural planning matters. Concerning natural planning, the environmental protection sites are delineated and the uses are regulated. Most regulations are concrete and easy to follow.

Moreover, at the level of rural land use planning, due to the preparation of Specific Physical Planning Studies, until today, land use plans exist for part of the non-urban

areas, and in all cases, for the total of coastal and island areas which are under pressure from tourism. The Specific Physical Planning Studies document the required uses and conditions of permitted activities, which are then instituted by Presidential Decree, with the establishment of Housing Control Zones. With this procedure, conservation measures have been undertaken for 10 Greek wetlands (Presidential Decrees). In addition, the conclusions from the Specific Physical Planning Studies are utilised in the decision-making process of the Administration, even before the Presidential Decrees come into force, in order to promote wetland conservation (physical planning guidelines).

2.7 Have there been any publications produced, or practices documented, which could assist other countries to promote and improve the application of the Ramsar Wise Use of Wetlands Guidelines? Yes/No

If Yes, please provide details and copies.

There are two brief reports, which deal with the significance of sustainable management of agro - ecosystems in the vicinity of wetland areas and regard the conservation of wetland ecosystems.

These are the following:

- a. Gerakis, A., Kyriaki Kalburtji and S.E. Tsiouris. 1997. The role of organic farming in the sustainable development of watershed resources of Greece. Proceedings of the International Conference on Sustainable Agriculture for Food Energy and Industry held in Braunschweig, Germany on 22-28 June 1997. FAO, Federal Agricultural Research Centre, Indian Society of Sustainable Agriculture and Resource Management.
- b. Gerakis, A., and Kyriaki Kalburtji, 1998. Agricultural activities affecting the functions and values of Ramsar wetland sites of Greece. Agriculture, Ecosystems and Environment (In press).

In addition, during the execution of the MedWet – Acnat project (1992-1995), and more specifically of the sub-project “Information and Public Awareness” in which Greece participated through IPEHODE and EKBY, the following were completed: a) two pertinent projects were carried out for two Ramsar sites (Lakes Koronia – Volvi and Lake Kerkini) and b) three training seminars were organised for wetland managers of administrative and managerial level, with emphasis on the environmental impact assessment of projects and activities. Several publications were produced with relevant contents.

These are the following:

Anagnostopoulou, Maria, G.C. Zalidis, E.T. Koutrakis, A. Mantzavelas, K. Skordas, Dimitra Spala, Eleni Tryfon, and Eleni Fytoka. 1996. Testing the MedWet approach at Lake Kerkini, Greece. Final Activity Report. MedWet. Greek Ministry of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works, Greek Biotope/Wetland Centre. 21 p.

Anagnostopoulou, Maria, Eleni Hontolidou, Chrissoula Athanasiou, Styliani Kladara, Angeliki Dimitriou and A. Logothetis. 1995. Assessment of the training needs for wise wetland management in Greece. EKBY (MedWet publication). 40 p. (Gr, En su).

Anagnostopoulou, Maria. 1995. Preparation, performance and evaluation of training courses for the assessment of environmental impact on projects affecting wetlands. EKBY (MedWet publication). 57 p. (Gr, En su).

Koutrakis, E.T. and G. Blionis. 1995. Raising public awareness and information with regard to Lakes Koronia and Volvi (Macedonia, Greece). Final report. EKBY (MedWet Publication). 56 p.

Skordas, K. and Maria Anagnostopoulou (eds). 1995. Sustainable management of the water of Lake Kerkini. Proceedings of a training course, Serres, 25-29 September 1995, EKBY. Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Macedonia – Thrace (MedWet publication). 144 p. (Gr, En su).

2.8 Noting COP6 Recommendation 6.14 relating to toxic chemicals and pollution, please advise of the actions taken since then “to remedy and to prevent pollution impacts affecting Ramsar sites and other wetlands” (Operative paragraph 9).

With regard to solid wastes, Greece is conforming to the Frame – Directive 91/156/EEC and its amendment 75/442/EEC. The Greek legislation was harmonised with the said Directive through a Joint Ministerial Decision in May 1996. Furthermore, concerning hazardous wastes, the Greek legislation was harmonised with the relevant Directive 91/689/EEC, in July 1997. A Joint Ministerial Decision in 1997 defined technical specifications for solid waste management and established management policy orientations. In relation to industrial risk management, Joint Ministerial Decisions were issued in 1988 and 1993, to harmonise the Greek legislation with the Directive 82/501/EEC. In addition to the aforementioned legal documents, on several occasions of preliminary approvals for the installation of sanitary landfill sites or polluting industries within protected wetland areas, consultation of IPEHODE is sought and strict **Environmental Terms** are imposed.

On the basis of the current Community Legislation (Directive 76/464/EEC) about toxic water pollution, to which the Greek legislation has conformed, coastal and inland water sites which are likely to be polluted by toxic substances on the lists I and II of the Directive, are being monitored. No sites with this type of pollution have been identified within Greek Ramsar wetlands.

2.9 Describe what steps have been taken to incorporate wetland economic valuation techniques into natural resource planning and assessment actions.

Monetary valuation techniques for wetland resources and values at the planning stage have not so far been developed. The main approach concerns the attempt of IPEHODE to estimate the cost of management interventions in wetland areas, in order to secure their wise use. Moreover, an attempt is made to estimate the financial aspect regarding the Management Bodies in Ramsar sites, as well as in wetlands where projects are carried out under the Operational Programme for the Environment.

Finally, an evaluation of the cost for the implementation of the agro-environmental regulation 2078/92, is in progress.

2.10 Is Environmental Impact Assessment for actions potentially impacting on wetlands required under legislation in your country? Yes/No

Conformation to the Environmental Terms is required for all development projects, regardless of the type of ecosystems in which they are carried out. The approval of the projects in Annexes I and II of the Directive 85/337/EEC has to be preceded by the respective Environmental Impact Statements. In cases where specific protection measures for wetlands have been instituted or are promoted (until now EKBY has evaluated about 20 Environmental Impact Statements concerning wetland projects or management studies or specifications for project implementation), any data related to expected impacts are examined in more detail and specific implementation terms are imposed, the incompatible activities are avoided and mitigation measures are forwarded.

2.11 Is wetland restoration and rehabilitation considered a priority in your country?  
Yes/No.

If Yes, describe the actions that have been taken to identify wetlands in need of these actions and to mobilise resources for restoration or rehabilitation.

Greek wetland resources are in a relatively good state as regards their water quality and quantity. The national policy gives priority to the prevention of degradation of the existing wetlands. However, certain pilot wetland re-creation and rehabilitation projects are planned.

a) Re-creation

The Technical Study and the Environmental Terms for the re-creation of Lake Karla are completed. The project foresees the construction of a 4200 ha reservoir in part of the area which was formerly covered by the lake. In order to achieve a successful re-creation of this wetland's functions, projects and interventions complementary to the ones imposed by the Environmental Terms are proposed, together with the establishment of a Management Body for the integrated management of the entire project. The project is on the candidates' list for funding under the 2<sup>nd</sup> Community Support Framework (Operational Programme for the Environment).

The Lake Mavrouda and the neighbouring Lake Lantza (Central Macedonia) were two brackish water lakes. Both lakes were drained in 1960 in order to be transformed into farmland. Since 1993, the local communities around Lake Mavrouda have been demanding its re-creation. In response, the State has included a re-creation project into the Operational Programme for the Environment and funded it with 200 million Drachmas (approximately 700,000 US dollars). The preliminary study for the project, which includes the re-creation of a 100 ha section of the former lake, is already completed and was presented to the local authorities.

b) Rehabilitation

In recent years, the ever-increasing water consumption for agricultural, industrial and domestic use, in combination with the decrease of precipitation, have caused problems to all Greek lakes. Lake Koronia is the lake which faces most serious problems (and to a lesser extent the neighbouring Lake Volvi). A salvation plan has been elaborated by the Periphery of Central Macedonia, while, in 1997 and on E.U. funding, a British company was assigned a rehabilitation study for the lakes Koronia and Volvi. Prefecture Decisions specify water quality and quantity and upper limits for pollution indices of the discharged sewage and impose penalties for violators. At the same time IPEHODE is forwarding an integrated management plan for the area, through a Joint Ministerial Decision. The latter defines the zoning and the permitted activities, while promoting the establishment of a Management Body. In addition, the Ministry of Agriculture in co-operation with EKBY, is



planning a project for the decrease of water consumption in that same area, by implementing the agro-environmental regulation 2078/92. The project will be carried out in certain zones surrounding wetlands as well as in other ecologically important areas throughout the country.

2.12 Describe what actions have been taken to “encourage active and informed participation of local communities, including indigenous people, and in particular women, in the conservation and wise use of wetlands.” (refer to Actions 2.7.1-4 in the Strategic Plan).

The necessity for an active and informed participation of local communities in wetland management is served by the Programme Agreements signed by IPEHODE, Prefectural – Peripheral Services and the Local Government, for the implementation of priority measures and operation of preliminary Management Schemes. Until now 33 Programme Agreements have been signed for wetland management (10 in Ramsar sites and 23 in other wetlands).

Other examples showing the significance which the Government attributes to the participation of local communities in wetland conservation are, the support of actions such as information centres in wetlands, and the support of organic farming in certain hydrological basins, such as in Lake Mikri Prespa, the Axios Delta, Tavropos, etc.

In September 1995, the Hellenic Agency for Development and Local Government (EETAA), funded by the ENVIREG programme, organised 2 two-day briefing meeting in the Peripheries of Central Macedonia and Eastern Macedonia – Thrace, on the subject of wetland management. The presentations focused on the Ramsar sites within their administrative boundaries (7 out of the 11 Ramsar wetlands in Greece). There were also presentations on the Operational Plan for the Environment and the funding opportunities for nature conservation projects, on water resources management, on problems and perspectives for the Ramsar wetlands in each Periphery and, finally, on the "programme for the utilisation and operation of protected areas' infrastructure" of IPEHODE. Representatives of the respective Local Government bodies attended these meetings.

Through the European Union financial instrument for the natural environment (LIFE-NATURE), IPEHODE and the Ministry of Agriculture provide supplementary funding support to projects executed by Environmental Organisations and research bodies, very often including awareness actions. Within LIFE-NATURE, 11 wetland – related actions have already been funded. In parallel, from 1995 until today, 38 such projects have been or are being implemented on national funding (environmental petrol tax). Many of those include public awareness actions to increase participation in wetland conservation.

Moreover, the Ministry of Labor organises training projects for unemployed scientists as well as for members of Environmental Organisations. Those scientists and members are preferably selected for areas hosting ecologically important sites such as wetlands.

2.13 Describe what actions have been taken to “encourage involvement of the private sector in the conservation and wise use of wetlands” (refer to Actions 2.8.1-4 in the Strategic Plan). Has this included a review of fiscal measures (taxation arrangements, etc.) to identify and remove disincentives and introduce incentives for wetlands conservation and wise use? Yes/No

If yes, please provide details.

The Ministry of Agriculture is running a motivation programme for farmers in line with the implementation of the Agro-environmental Regulation 2078/92. Under this programme, farmers are subsidised to adopt long-term fallow practices, to develop organic farming, to reduce over-grazing and to reduce water consumption for irrigation.

Furthermore, IPEHODE provides incentives to Environmental Organisations, by exempting them from the obligation to pay (contract bonds) when undertaking environmental projects.

### **Ramsar Strategic Plan - General Objective 3**

#### **To raise awareness of wetland values and functions throughout the world and at all levels**

3.1 Is there a government-run national programme for Education and Public Awareness in your country which focuses on, or includes, wetlands? Yes/No? If yes, what are the priority actions under this programme and who are the target groups? (Refer also to question 9.4)

In recent years the Government, organisations and institutions, environmental organisations and various social groups, have undertaken a considerable number of information and awareness actions for environmental protection, especially regarding wetlands.

In particular, with regard to education, teachers of the primary and secondary education, are mobilised in the field of Environmental Education (which has been included in the analytical teaching curriculum but is considered optional), planning and performing projects and activities in schools all over Greece, since the beginning of the 80s. Through this mobilisation, they induced the institution of Environmental Education. Hundreds of teachers enthusiastically dedicated themselves to the promotion of the institution beyond the boundaries of their own schools, searching for and creating material, organising congresses and seminars, educational visits, special exchange programmes, exhibitions and competitions. There are several thematic fields, but wetlands have a prominent position with hundreds of projects developed each year throughout the country.

At the beginning of the 90s the Ministry of Education, acknowledging the importance of environmental protection, created the institution of Heads of Environmental Education in each prefecture, thus reinforcing the work of teachers in both primary and secondary education. At the beginning of every school year, the Heads of Environmental Education evaluate and approve the submitted environmental education projects, which will be implemented at the schools of their jurisdiction, whereas later on, they monitor the implementation progress.

In addition, the Ministry of Education has created and operates eight Environmental Education Centres in several regions of Greece. Their objective is to promote environmental education, public awareness and environmental training primarily of teachers and pupils but also of a wider public. Wetlands are once more a major issue in the agenda of these Centres. For instance, during the last two school years the Environmental Education Centres of Klitoria and Akrata chose wetlands to be the central theme of their work.

In addition to its supportive actions and financial aid to environmental organisations, and other bodies to promote information and awareness, in recent years IPEHODE has been organising three-day environmental happenings in various cities, at the occasion of the Day of the Environment. These three-day happenings include exhibitions, lectures, educational games, concerts, etc. Similarly, other ministries, such as the General Secretariat for Forests and Natural Environment of the Ministry of Agriculture, organise similar activities every year. At the same time, IPEHODE financially supports and implements environmental education projects in schools, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, but also with other educational institutes of the country.

Special reference must be made to the 8 newly founded Information Centres of IPEHODE, established in the Ramsar sites, which, among others, undertake public awareness activities, organise local conferences and informative sessions as well as training courses for guards and guides, etc. Through the Operational Plan for the Environment (see 2.1c), 13 more Information Centres have been or are going to be established in the near future, in non-Ramsar wetlands. Finally, it is also worth mentioning the establishment of Information Centres by other Environmental Organisations (e.g. in Asprovalta, in Prespa National Park).

Environmental Organisations and other groups (e.g. scouts, voluntary work groups, etc) organise educational projects for wetland in general, but also for particular wetland sites. These projects point out the values, the importance and the urgent necessity for sustainable use of wetlands and are addressed to teachers, pupils, students and the wider public. Moreover, members of environmental organisations in co-operation with teachers, professors and the Local Government perform Environmental Education activities at schools. For instance, the World Wide Fund for Nature – Greece has produced educational packages, for the Axios and the Evros Deltas.

The establishment of the Greek Biotope/Wetland Centre (EKBY) in 1991 was a major step for wetland conservation in Greece; an essential part of its task is to inform and educate not only school children and the public, but also managers of wetland sites, with regard to wetland functions and values. This particular task of EKBY is accomplished through the publication of brochures and posters, the production of educational packages and educational exhibitions, as well as the organisation of seminars. Until now it has organised more than 20 wetland-related seminars addressed to various target groups (teachers, pupils, staff of civil services, environmental organisations, Local Government representatives, etc.). It has also launched two project and painting competitions on wetlands, for pupils of primary schools, it supported more than 50 seminars organised by other agencies, by offering printed and audio-visual material and lectures, it organised about 250 educational visits to wetlands for students, pupils and teachers and produced printed material and 5 educational packages for the sites of Lake Kerkini, Lakes Volvi and Koronia, Spercheios Delta, Lake Stymfalia, Kotychi Lagoon and Strofylia Forest.

Local Government bodies also engage themselves in environmental awareness and education by assisting environmental organisations, organising lectures, exhibitions, seminars, etc. For instance, the annual congress of the Central Union of Municipalities and Communities (KEDKE) held in Xanthi in 1997 was dedicated to nature conservation and the need to sensitise and mobilise all competent bodies, as well as citizens.

3.2 Describe the steps taken to have wetlands issues and Ramsar's Wise Use principles included as part of the curricula of educational institutions. Has this been at all levels of education (primary, secondary, tertiary and adult)? Please give details.

Progress in this field, in respect to primary and secondary education is considerable. The 8 Environmental Education Centres whose specialised personnel have started to emphasise sustainability, as well as the Heads of Environmental Education in primary and secondary education in the Local Government, both contribute to this progress. Five more Environmental Education Centres have been decided and are under construction. In order to maintain its spontaneous character, Environmental Education is not currently an official course listed on school curricula, but takes place in the form of “projects” and hundreds of teachers work in this direction. The teacher and pupils determine the subject to be studied by each class. The subjects on wetlands are especially attractive.

The General Secretariat for Youth has also founded Youth Information Centres where training projects are taking place involving young people actively in site management (wetland and non wetland ecosystems), after examining closely their values and functions by means of analysing pertinent studies.

In tertiary education, noteworthy progress was achieved, by introducing ecology and sustainable development modules at the undergraduate level of many Faculties, including the Departments of Biology, Environment, Agricultural Sciences, Forestry, Education etc., and Departments of Engineering, Economics, Law, etc., as well as by creating post-graduate courses for the environment and sustainability. For instance, in the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, two new post-graduate courses have started to operate in the Departments of Biology and of Agriculture, whereas a post-graduate course in Oceanography is given by the University of Athens since 1975. In the University of Thrace and the Technical University of Crete, Departments of Environmental Engineering have recently been established.

Moreover, the University of Thessaly has created a new academic position on the subject of sustainable development. The University of Aegean is the only University in the country to have a Department of Environment since 1987, while it also hosts a post-graduate course on Environmental Studies since 1986. The University of Patras established a post-graduate department which developed pertinent courses (interdepartmental and of the Biology Department). The University of Crete also runs such an interdepartmental post-graduate course on environmental issues. The Department of Agricultural Sciences of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki has initiated a parallel optional curriculum on sustainable agriculture, including the sustainable use of wetland hydrological basins. The Department of Forestry and Natural Environment in the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki carries on and strengthens its efforts for a sustainable use of plant, animal, soil and wetland resources.

#### **Ramsar Strategic Plan - General Objective 4**

##### **To reinforce the capacity of institutions in each Contracting Party to achieve conservation and wise use of wetlands.**

- 4.1 Describe the mechanisms in place, or being introduced, to increase cooperation between the various institutions responsible for actions which can have an impact on the conservation and wise use of wetlands. If one of the mechanisms is a National Ramsar/Wetlands Committee, please describe its composition, functions and *modus operandi*.

In the framework of the Operational Programme for the Environment, Programme Agreements were signed by the Ministers of the Environment and Agriculture, Regions and Local Services. The contracts include various projects on nature protection and

promotion of natural values and refer to all 11 Ramsar sites and to 26 non-Ramsar sites. Committees to implement these contracts have been formed consisting of representatives of the Ministries of Environment and Agriculture and local bodies (e.g. prefectures, municipalities).

Preliminary Management Groups were set up in all Ramsar sites so as to prepare for the oncoming formulation of Local Management Schemes. These schemes were set up with Programme Agreements signed by the Ministers of Environment and Agriculture, the Regions and Local Services. They form a Joint Committee and have the flexible administrative and secretarial – co-ordinating support of the Development Companies (i.e. companies formed by municipalities etc.). The Contracts have an annex with programmed projects and activities, time schedules and budget. The non-governmental Environmental Organisations are invited to join these Groups depending on their expertise.

The preliminary Management Groups have the double target of 1) responding immediately to the everyday management problems of the regions, and 2) executing projects related to infrastructure, monitoring, and management.

The establishment of a National Committee for the implementation of the Directive 92/43/CEE (Network NATURA 2000) is also under study; its role will be among others to examine wetland issues. The National Committee "NATURA 2000" will consist of representatives of IPEHODE, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry for Development, the Ministry of the Interior, specialists, and Environmental Organisations.

4.2 Of the following, indicate which have been undertaken:

- a. a review to identify the training needs of institutions and individuals concerned with the conservation and wise use of wetlands Yes/No? If yes, please indicate the major findings of the review.
- b. a review to identify training opportunities for these people both within your country and in other countries. Yes/No?
- c. the development of training modules or a training programme specifically for wetland managers. If yes, please give details.
- d. people from your country have gained wetland-related training either within or outside the country. Yes/No? If yes, please give details.

a.

EKBY and IPEHODE conducted a training needs assessment focusing on problems relative to sustainable wetland management in Greece during the MedWet project in co-operation with WWF-Greece.

In the pertinent publication (see answer 2.7) there is an analysis of the main conclusions according to which: a) training actions for sustainable wetland use should be attractive to all parties involved so as to convince them that it is worth investing the time, effort and resources in wetland management, b) trainers and trainees should "exchange roles" to a great extent so as to maximise information and knowledge flow between involved services

and develop a common language among scientists, people working in the Services, and wetland users, c) the groups of trainees, the content of seminars and the training objectives in relation to the main wetland problems can be taken into consideration either separately or in multiple combinations, so as to maximise the efficiency and limit operational or financial constraints, and d) all problems can not be faced to the same extent by means of training.

b.

In 1993, within the framework of MedWet - Acnat, the training seminars on wetland issues that took place in Greece (as well as the relative institutions) were recorded in a database and were used as publication material (see 2.7).

c.

Under the MedWet, three weekly training seminars were held in Greece for people working on wetland management. Those seminars (February 28 – March 4, 1994, for Northern Greece and Patras, and December 8-12, 1995, for Central and Southern Greece) dealt with technical issues of the approval procedure for Environmental Terms relative to wetlands.

A MedWet leaflet was published as a guide for the performance and assessment of such seminars and was distributed to the appropriate civil services.

As mentioned earlier, in September 25-29, 1995, a training seminar on management was held in the Lake Kerkini where problems and solutions relative to sustainable management of this wetland were discussed. Special texts were also published and distributed to managers and trainers. The approach used in this seminar could be followed for future seminars in other wetlands.

A training seminar was organised by IPEHODE in 1998 for the people working in the Information Centres of Ramsar sites. This seminar aimed at broadening the knowledge of wetland specialists.

In 1995 two 2-day conferences were organised by the Hellenic Agency for Local Government and Development (EETAA) in the Region of Central Macedonia and in the Region of Eastern Macedonia – Thrace. The subject was management of wetlands especially of the Ramsar sites of these two Regions. The participants were civil servants of the Prefectures of these Regions (see 2.12).

In the context of the cooperation between IPEHODE and the University of the Aegean, a workshop was held on the coastal zone and islands management. The workshop paid special attention to the setting of guidelines for the management of coastal and island wetlands. Also, IPEHODE organised several conferences in various parts of Greece on the NATURA 2000 Network. Participants (civil servants, mayors, NGOs) were briefed on the implementation of Directive 92/43EEC. Discussion included wetland issues.

d.

In the three seminars on wetlands held in Greece during the period 1994-1995, 67 people signed up (and 20 additional in the audience), all members of the personnel of competent services working on wetland management on the local, regional and central level. Apart from these seminars, there were also several local seminars on the technical aspects of wetland use (such as aquaculture); they were subsidised by the European Social Fund

and addressed to young unemployed people in each region, without however stressing the balanced conservation of all wetland values.

Staff members of IPEHODE, EKBY, WWF-Greece and local civil servants have attended training seminars on wetlands (i.e. in the Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of Saragossa, Spain).

Staff members of IPEHODE went on an educational trip to the National Park Abruzzo, Italy (March 25-29, 1995), to be briefed in the field of the management of protected natural reserves with ecotourist development. This activity was organised by EETAA and financed by ENVIREG.

**Ramsar Strategic Plan - General Objective 5**  
**To ensure the conservation of all sites included in the List of Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar List).**

- 5.1 Of the Ramsar sites in your country, how many have formal management plans:
- a. being prepared?
  - b. fully prepared?
  - c. being implemented?

Please indicate in the attached table of Ramsar sites which sites these are and what category they fall into.

In Greece, wetland management specifications may be produced through the preparation of the following four types of documents:

Type A: documentation studies pertinent to the declaration of an area as protected; they are approved by IPEHODE and they propose management objectives, land uses, and zones.

Type B: legal texts (Joint Ministerial Decisions or Presidential Decrees) defining zones, management objectives, land uses and list of activities permitted and non permitted in each zone.

Type C: legal texts and regulations for each protected area; they can be drafted at any stage after their declaration in order to define detailed management practices on concrete issues (i.e. stock-rearing, grazing, habitat management for particular species, etc.).

Type D: in case an area has not been declared as having a protected status, the management is sectorial, for instance, hunting restrictions are applied, regulations for fishing and water quality levels are edicted, etc. Management details are also determined by the implementation procedure of Environmental Terms in the operation of a project (for example in the operation of a dam or an aquaculture unit, etc.).

In the context of the preparation of Special Environmental Studies, management plans are developed for Greek Ramsar sites according to the "Guide for Management Planning of Ramsar Sites and other Wetland Sites" of the Ramsar Bureau. These studies examine measures to be instituted by Presidential Decrees. These studies are mainly prepared by external collaborators of IPEHODE and supervised by a Joint Committee formed by representatives of IPEHODE, Ministry of Agriculture and the pertinent Region. The proposals of the studies are presented in local meetings in which Environmental Organisations are also invited. The opinion of the Prefecture Council is asked at the final

stage of approval. Moreover, as mentioned preliminary management authorities (“schemes”) have been established in almost all Ramsar sites (except Lake Mikri Prespa and Amvrakikos Gulf) through Programme Agreements.

Prior to the completion of the above procedure, Joint Ministerial Decisions have been issued for all Ramsar sites except two (Lakes Volvi and Koronia and Lake Mikri Prespa). For Lake Volvi, the Decision has been signed by most Ministers. The Joint Ministerial Decisions determine zoning and management and protection measures. It is noted that Lake Mikri Prespa is in the centre of Prespa National Park. A management plan for this park has been prepared in 1989 but it has not yet been ratified.

As mentioned earlier, the aforementioned legal texts (except the management plan for Prespa National Park) have been prepared by IPHEHODE, based on preliminary studies. The personnel of IPEHODE also advised local authorities, environmental organisations, and civil services for a long period (1986-1996). Meetings were held both locally and in Athens. Also, campaigns were organised to raise the awareness of the people living close to wetlands of the benefits from sustainable management of wetland resources.

5.2 Of the management plans referred to above, which ones have included a monitoring scheme or programme to allow changes in ecological character to be detected? Please indicate this in the attached table of Ramsar sites also.

All management plans for Ramsar sites, which are to be implemented up to the year 2000, include monitoring proposals.

5.3 Has there been a change in the ecological character (either positive or negative) at any of your Ramsar sites or is this likely to occur in the near future? Yes/No. If Yes, please give details.

Negative changes have been noticed at Lake Koronia as regards both water balance and water quality. Nowadays, IPEHODE in co-operation with the Ministries of National Economy, Development, and Agriculture has undertaken activities for water wise use and pollution abatement. Moreover, several decisions on the Prefectural level regarding the quality of wastewater flowing into the lake, the management of seasonally dried lake bottom, the preservation of the hydrological balance and the infliction of fines and penalties for violation of the law.

As already mentioned, a study for the rehabilitation of Lake Koronia was assigned in 1997 to a British firm, with funding from the E.U. and the Greek government. Furthermore, the Ministry of Agriculture in co-operation with EKBY is elaborating a plan for the reduction of irrigation water consumption in the same area through the regulation 2078/92.

Finally, IPEHODE is forwarding the approval of Special Environmental Studies in order to take measures for the protection of the lakes.

5.4 In the case of Montreux Record Ramsar sites where the Management Guidance Procedure has been applied, what is the status of the implementation of the MGP report recommendations? What is the expected time-frame for removing the site from the Montreux Record?



All Ramsar wetlands in Greece are included in the Montreux list. In 1988 and 1989 a committee of the Ramsar Bureau visited the sites and offered recommendations. Since that time the Greek Government has conformed to almost all recommendations and has taken further measures, such as delineation, preparation of management plans which are currently at the experimental implementation stage, and issuing of legal protection measures (Joint Ministerial Decisions, process of approval of Special Environmental Studies etc.), in order to issue Presidential Decrees where appropriate, and establish Management Groups (Schemes). The exemption possibility of the Ramsar wetlands of Greece from the Montreux list will be discussed at the Meeting of the Contracting Parties in 1999.

5.5 For those countries referred to in COP6 Recommendations 6.17.1-4, "Ramsar sites in the Territories of Specific Contracting Parties", please provide advice on the actions that have been taken in response to the issues raised at that time.

Greece is not mentioned in the Recommendation 6.17.1-4.

#### **Ramsar Strategic Plan - General Objective 6**

**To designate for the Ramsar List those wetlands which meet the Convention's criteria, especially wetland types still under-represented in the List and transfrontier wetlands.**

6.1 Has a national inventory of wetlands been prepared for your country? Yes/No.

If no, are there plans for this to be done? Yes/No.

Where a national inventory exists please provide details of when it was finalised, where it is kept and what information it contains.

EKBY, in co-operation with IPEHODE, has published in 1991 the "Inventory of Greek Wetlands as Natural Resources – 1<sup>st</sup> Approximation". The book contains data on abiotic and biotic features, values, uses, threats, legal status and positive actions and created a database featuring 378 wetlands. Thematic maps were also drawn up for all areas, according to the size and type of wetland. This national inventory was published in Greek and in English in 1994 and 1995 respectively.

Greece participated in the sub-project "Inventory and Monitoring" of MedWet – Acnat project (1993-1995) entitled "To stop and reverse the loss and degradation of Mediterranean Wetlands" through EKBY.

In the context of this sub-project a methodology for inventorying wetlands was developed, following the Ramsar wetlands classification system and the classification system of CORINE and of the Directive 92/43/EEC for natural and semi-natural habitat types.

The final products of the sub-project include:

- Manual for the Inventorying of Wetlands (all stages, i.e. Data Collection, Habitats Description System, photointerpretation and cartographic conventions)
- MedWet Database (software) and a user's friendly manual
- Methodological guide for monitoring Mediterranean Wetlands.

These products have already proven to be useful in test sites and their implementation is being considered.

6.2 Does there exist a list or directory of “important” wetlands for your country or region? Yes/No.

If yes, please provide details of when it was finalised, where it is kept, what criteria for “important” were used, and the types of information it contains.

Greece has prepared a list of important sites according to the criteria of Directive 92/43/EEC (Network NATURA 2000). These sites include all Ramsar wetlands and several others complying with the directive’s criteria. The criteria regard the existence of important fauna and flora species (birds, mammals, fish, amphibians, reptiles, invertebrates) and the types of habitats listed in the directive. Standard Data Forms were filled for each one of the sites in the respective database (Nature 2000). The fields of the database for each site include: Geographical information, Ecological information on species and habitats (population, conservation status, isolation, representativity, percent cover, etc.), General features of the area, Protected status, Activities and interventions within or around the site, Map of the areas, etc. A list has also been drawn up featuring the important sites for birds according to international criteria. This list also includes wetland sites.

6.3 If it is known, please provide an estimate of the area of wetlands in your country at present and any information on rates of loss or conversion to other activities.

If this information is available, please indicate what definition of “wetland” was used.

According to the data of the above mentioned inventory of Greek wetlands, which was prepared by EKBY in co-operation with IPEHODE, there are 378 wetlands in Greece covering an area of about 200,000 ha. The definition used for the inventory of wetlands is the one of the Ramsar Convention.

Sixty-five years ago Greece had three times more wetland areas. Losses concern mainly marshes but also some lakes and rivers. Drainage at that time was considered necessary in order to face the problem of malaria and floods, to secure irrigation water and to find arable land. In addition to drainage, there were intense interventions (for example alterations of river beds, clearing of natural vegetation, dam construction). It is, nowadays, shown that drainage and other interventions were in many cases unnecessary, as not only did they not bring in the anticipated economical and social benefits but also caused losses of values which at the time were not known. It should be mentioned that Greek wetlands faced exactly the same treatment with wetlands of other countries, even of those whose national economy had little to depend on wetland resources.

Presently there are relatively few Greek wetlands facing immediate drainage. There are cases where local populations not only wish restoration for some of the drained wetlands but also started to implement such plans.

Presently Greek wetlands are mainly threatened by an alteration of their functions, thus leading to degradation of their values. The main causes seem to be (Zalidis et al. 1997)

dam constructions and river diversions (altering the hydrological regime), over-pumping, clearing of natural vegetation, illegal hunting, point and non-point pollution (due to industry, crop and animal farming etc.), expansion of farms and housing development to wetland areas.

The following table concisely presents the percentages of wetland types affected by each impact group (Zalidis 1997)

Wetland type	Alteration of hydrological regime (%)	Natural resources exhaustion (%)	Water quality alteration (%)	Loss of wetland area (%)
Delta of rivers	0	42	100	50
Estuarine systems	4	16	64	52
Lagoons	0	24	42	44
Lakes	10	38	48	21
Marshes	0	16	42	60
Reservoirs	18	41	29	0
Springs	50	0	50	13
Rivers	40	30	75	0
TOTAL (%)	12	26	54	32

6.4 Have any actions been taken in response to the COP6 Resolutions and Recommendations that Contracting Parties should give priority to listing Wetlands of International Importance which:

- a. meet the criteria for fish habitat (Resolution VI.2),
- b. meet the 1% criterion for waterbird populations using data provided by the International Waterfowl Census (Resolution VI.4),
- c. are subterranean karst or cave wetland systems (Resolution VI.5),
- d. are peatland ecosystems (Recommendation 6.1)
- e. are coral reefs and associated systems (Recommendation 6.7)
- f. are under-represented wetland types (which apart from d. and e. above include mangroves and sea grass beds) (Strategic Plan Action 6.2.3)

Yes/No? If yes, please describe these actions.

a.

Having its 11 wetland sites of International Importance in the Montreux list, Greece has set as a priority the exemption of these wetlands from the list. It has therefore not taken any

steps towards adding additional sites in the catalogue of Internationally Important Wetlands.

At present, the Greek Government examines the possibility of including two more wetlands in the List of Ramsar sites (Megali Prespa, Alykes Kitrous).

6.5 If your government indicated at COP6 that it would be proceeding to list further specific sites, please advise of the status of this action.

There was no such report.

6.6 Please advise which of the sites included in the Ramsar List from your country are transfrontier wetlands (Refer also to 7.1).

The transfrontier Ramsar wetlands of Greece are the Evros Delta and Lake Mikri Prespa. Other Ramsar sites whose hydrological basin is partly situated in other countries is the Nestos Delta (by way of Nestos River), Lake Kerkini (by way of the Strymonas River), and the Axios Delta (by way of the Axios River).

6.7 Describe any plans, or actions being taken for further transfrontier sites to be listed (Refer also to 7.1).

Under consideration.

#### **Ramsar Strategic Plan - General Objective 7**

**To mobilise international cooperation and financial assistance for wetland conservation and wise use in collaboration with other conventions and agencies, both governmental and non-governmental.**

7.1 Briefly describe any bilateral or multilateral activities that have been taken, are under way, or are planned for the management of transfrontier wetlands or their watersheds/catchments (Refer also to 6.6 and 6.7).

A cooperation has already been initiated between Greece and Bulgaria concerning the watershed of the Strymonas River. On the initiative of the Geotechnical Chamber of Greece a Greek-Bulgarian congress was organised on the issue of the Strymonas watershed and Lake Kerkini. A Greek-Bulgarian Committee was also set up in co-operation with the Prefecture of Serres and a Greek-Bulgarian co-operation protocol was signed in Sofia, in 1991, for the watershed of the Strymonas River. There is also a common proposal for the management of sediments. A direct communication network was set up concerning the river discharge and there are common plans put forward in order to obtain financial aid from European programmes or other funding sources.

In addition there is a dialogue going on between Greece and the Former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia as regards the Axios river. Co-operation is strengthened through actions of appropriate bodies, such as the Sewage Disposal Board of Thessaloniki, as

well as of Universities and Ministries of both countries. Until recently those actions concerned water pollution and monitoring.

Cooperation between Municipalities of Greece and Bulgaria exists also for the Evros River with the participation of Universities and Institutes and there are proposals for funding by the PHARE and CORERNICUS programmes. Furthermore, there are actions promoting the co-operation of Greece, Turkey and Bulgaria on the initiative mainly of border Municipalities (Orestiada, Svilegrad, Harmanli, Liumbibets and Edirne).

IPEHODE operates a monitoring programme for the rivers of Greece including the interborder ones Evros, Nestos, Strymonas, and Axios which flow into Greece from neighbouring countries. For those four rivers automatic instruments have been established to monitor the inflow of major pollutants.

The Region of Epirus carries out a project (under the TERRA programme) in cooperation with other countries. The project concerns the management of coastal zones and wetlands.

7.2 Do you have Ramsar sites that are “twinned” with others, either nationally or internationally? Yes/No.  
If yes, please give details.

There are no Ramsar sites which have been twinned.

7.3 Where your country is also a signatory of any of the following Conventions, describe what mechanism(s) exist to assist regular dialogue and cooperative actions between the personnel responsible for their implementation and the Ramsar Administrative Authority:

- a. Convention on Biological Diversity
- b. Framework Convention on Climate Change
- c. Convention to Combat Desertification
- d. Convention on Migratory Species
- e. World Heritage Convention

a.

The Department of the Management of the Natural Environment which belongs to IPEHODE is the Focal Point for the Convention on Biological Diversity. (That department is also responsible for matters related to the Ramsar Convention). A project to implement the Biodiversity Convention has started in 1996 by IPEHODE and the Zoological Museum of the University of Athens. This project is conducted in association with other actions regarding wetlands and particular Ramsar sites, e.g. the Strategy on Wetlands (in progress) will be a part of the Strategy for the Conservation of Biodiversity.

b.

The Directorate General of IPEHODE (in which the Department of the Management of Natural Environment belongs) is the Focal Point for the Convention – Framework on Climate Change.

c.

The above mentioned Directorate is the Focal Point for the Convention to Combat Desertification.

d.

The Ministry of Agriculture is the Focal Point for the Convention on Migratory Species. That Ministry supervises projects on the conservation of migratory wetland avifauna and closely cooperates with IPEHODE and Environmental Organisations.

e.

The Ministry of Culture is the Focal Point for the World Heritage Convention and closely cooperates with all bodies mentioned under a, b, c, d above.

7.4 Is your country cooperating as part of any bilateral or multilateral activities directed at the conservation of migratory wetland species? Yes/No.

If yes, please provide details.

Greece has signed but has not yet ratified the Convention for migratory species. It has signed the European-Asian African Agreement.

7.5 Are there multilateral and/or bilateral donors supporting projects which contribute to implementation of the Ramsar Convention in your country? Yes/No.

If yes, please provide details.

Implementation of the "Evian" programme is discussed in our country, including bilateral and multilateral actions with the Danone Group acting as a donor.

7.6 Does your government make an annual budgetary allocation to support the conservation and wise use of wetlands within your country? Yes/No.

If yes, is this a specific allocation to a wetlands programme or as part of a larger environment or natural resource management budget?

There are yet no funds allocated specifically for wetlands. Under its environmental policy Greece has allocated the amount defined in the Operational Programme for the Environment (1995-2000) which includes actions in several wetlands. Moreover, by way of a national subsidising fund (Special Fund for Implementation of Topographical and Urban Plans - ETERPS), IPEHODE proceeds to the financing of special projects that concern wetlands.

Greece has contributed 10.5 million drs for the realization of the MedWet – Life project (1996-1998) in Albania and Croatia, through certain activities of EKBY. This project included actions for the development of a National Action Plan for wetlands. Finally, Greece has, so far, allocated from national funds about 80 million drs, contributing to the

support of the Mediterranean Wetland Committee and the operation of the MedWet Coordination Team (1997-1998).

7.7 If your country has a development assistance programme, does it include funds earmarked for wetland conservation and wise use in other countries? Yes/No. If yes, please give details.

Greece has provided about 33.000 ECU for wetland conservation actions in Albania and Croatia.

7.8 Is there a formal process in place for consultation between the Ramsar Administrative Authority and the development assistance programme in your country, where one exists? Yes/No

If yes, what is that process.

There is no such procedure.

#### **Ramsar Strategic Plan - General Objective 8**

##### **To provide the Convention with the required institutional mechanisms and resources.**

8.1 Has your government made voluntary financial contributions, other than the invoiced contributions or to the Small Grants Fund, to further the work of the Convention globally? Yes/No.

If yes, please provide details.

Greece proceeded to the voluntary contribution of 8,000 Swiss Francs in 1997.

8.2 If your country is in arrears with the payment of its annual contributions to the Ramsar Convention, please indicate the reasons for this situation and the prospects for paying these arrears in the near future.

There is usually no delay in the payment of the annual contribution. If such a thing happens, it is due to bureaucratic reasons.

#### **Optional section - Participation of non-government organizations in the implementation of the Convention**

These are **optional** questions relating to cooperation with and involvement of non-government organizations in the implementation of the Convention.

At COP6 some 42 NGOs made the “Brisbane NGO pledge of support for the Ramsar Convention”. The Standing Committee agreed that for COP7 there should be an effort made to gauge the level and type of cooperation which is occurring between government Administrative Authorities and the national and international NGOs with an interest in wetlands issues.

In this **optional** section of the National Report, you are asked to describe the nature of the cooperation and relationship with any other international, regional, national and provincial NGOs operating within your country.

9.1 Approximately how many NGOs have wetlands as part of their regular “business” in your country?

Please break this down between international, regional and national/provincial organizations.

In our country more than 150 organisations, dissimilar in many aspects, are working on the protection of Greek nature. There are organisations which are characteristic for their amateur structure and operation, organisations acting more like protest groups and others having professional structure and long experience at local or national level. There are also, of course, organisations acting as branches of international environmental organisations and have adapted their programme to the protection of Greek nature. Activities of the above-mentioned organisations may focus on protecting one particular species or may have a broader scope. Due to the high importance of the wetland resources of our country, most environmental organisations include wetlands in their activities.

More particularly, among the international organisations working in Greece, WWF-Greece considers wetland conservation as a major target in many activities.

On the national level, the Hellenic Ornithological Society carries out projects relative to the ornithological fauna of wetland areas. In the recent years the Hellenic Society for Nature Protection and the Hellenic Society do not realise a specific programme for wetlands but they include in their annual work programme several activities relevant to the management and conservation of our wetland resources.

At the local level, environmental organisations work on the conservation of the country's natural heritage. Almost all of these organisations were founded either because of the existence of some site of particular value in their region (for instance Association for the Protection of the Wetland of Lake Kerkini – Lake Kerkini) or the appearance of some environmental problem in their region (for example Aitolian Society for the Protection of Landscape and Environment – diversion of Aheloos river). According to data resulting both from the environmental organisations inventory drawn up by EKBY in 1991 and the survey of the National Centre for Social Research and IPEHODE in 1997, most of the organisations include wetlands in their field of interest while very few of them work exclusively on wetlands.

9.2 Is there a regular forum or mechanism through which these NGOs express their views on wetland conservation and Ramsar implementation:

- a. to each other? Yes/No
- b. to the government? Yes/No



If yes in either case, please give details.

a.

Environmental organisations are represented in the Monitoring Committee of the Operational Programme for the Environment which is funded by the 2<sup>nd</sup> Community Support Framework of the European Union. They have also been invited to participate to Preliminary Management Groups in Ramsar sites, depending on their expertise.

With regard to the communication between them, the environmental organisations have been holding regular meetings in various Greek cities since 1991, initially motivated by EKBY and afterwards on their own initiative and with the constant support by IPEHODE; at those meetings they exchange views and experiences on environmental issues of our country. For the last two years most of these organisations have been taking part to an environmental network they have set up and communicate through a seven-member secretariat they have elected. One of the major issues on the agenda of this network and the meetings of environmental organisations is the conservation and wise management of wetlands and they have even proceeded to a series of planned protests for their protection.

9.3 Does your government include one or more NGO representatives on its official delegation to Ramsar COPs? Yes/No

At present, it does not.

9.4 Do any of the NGOs run programmes aimed at Education and Public Awareness about wetlands in your country? Yes/No. If yes, please give details (Refer also to question 3.1).

Almost all Environmental Organisations dedicate a significant part of their actions in information and public awareness issues. These actions are either isolated activities on the occasion of some environmental event (for instance seminars and speeches for the Day of the Environment) or integrated short term and long term projects. Some of these projects and activities concern general wetland issues while others are focused on specific wetland sites.

Randomly selected examples of actions are as follows:

The Hellenic Ornithological Society and the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) have been developing since the beginning of 1997 and will continue until 2000 a project for the protection of two bird species, the *Ancer erythropus* and the *Phalacrocorax pygmaeus*, in 10 wetlands; the project will include an integrated information and awareness programme addressed to all actors concerned in these regions.

The World Wide Fund for Nature has prepared three educational packages, two of which are dedicated to the Axios Delta and the Evros Delta respectively. The third package is partly focused on wetlands.

During the past years the Hellenic Society has been organising seminars on water management in Athens and Thessaloniki.

The Society for the Protection of Prespes has developed an integrated programme for teachers and students implemented twice a year, it runs an Information Centre in Agios

Yermanos concerning the values of the two lakes and it organises seminars and lectures for farmers and stock-breeders of the region, as well as educational guided tours.

During the last three years the Hellenic Ornithological Society organises boat tours in the Thermaïkos Gulf and the Axios River aiming at informing citizens of the birds living in the gulf and the river and the need to protect them.

The Ecological Movement of Lamia organises in recent years educational guided tours in the Sperhios Delta, while a similar project is being elaborated by the Society for Environmental Information and Education of the Prefecture of Korinthia.

Since its establishment the Ecological Movement of Patras has been organising educational guided tours to the Kotihi-Strofyliia wetland and supports every year teachers in conducting educational projects in this region. The Ecological Movement of Evros and the Ecological Movement of Rodopi have undertaken a similar task.

The Ecological Group of Serres and the Association for the Protection of the Wetland of Lake Kerkini, due to location near one of the most outstanding wetlands of Greece (Lake Kerkini), organise educational guided tours of the lake, lectures and presentations of slides and other activities promoting the wetland functions and values.

9.5 Where they exist, do Ramsar site management advisory committees include NGO representatives? If yes, please give details

As already mentioned, Preliminary Management Groups-Schemes exist in 8 Ramsar sites; Environmental Organisations participate to them according to their expertise.

9.6 Describe the themes of the Convention (refer to General Objectives 1-8 of the Strategic Plan) where you perceive the national/provincial NGOs to be most active.

The Environmental Organisations can contribute and strengthen the implementation of the 3<sup>d</sup> General Objective concerning the increase of information on wetland functions and values all-over the world and at all levels. The reason is that by their nature and structure, organisations work at all levels (national, regional, local) and have acquired significant knowledge and expertise in the field of information and awareness of several public groups. Furthermore, being non-governmental bodies they may be particularly persuasive. It may be emphasized, however, that there is a great potential to increase the effectiveness of the actions of the Environmental Organisations by providing them with more funds and with more opportunities to raise their scientific and technical expertise.

## **Final comments:**

10.1 General comments on implementation of the Ramsar Strategic Plan.

The Ramsar Strategic Plan is a very useful tool both for motivation towards more effective and better coordinated actions and evaluation of the progress in wetland conservation. It

should probably focus more on sites which are not of international importance. Very few citizens know that the Convention covers all the wetlands of the Contracting countries.

The progress attained in Greece during this past year is remarkable but there is still a long and hard way lying ahead. The activation of Greece for the development of MedWet initiative can contribute significantly to the implementation of the Ramsar Strategic Plan.

10.2 Observations concerning the functioning of, relations with, and services provided by:

- a. The Ramsar Standing Committee
- b. The Ramsar Scientific and Technical Review Panel
- c. The Ramsar Bureau
- d. The Ramsar NGO partners

a. No remarks

b. No remarks

c. No remarks

d. There should be better co-ordination between Environmental Organisations mainly during the phase of activity planning in order to avoid overlapping.

10.3 Any other general observations and/or recommendations for the future.

- a) This questionnaire is good but could be improved. For example some questions may become clearer. Answers should be given in such a form so that they can be treated by computer.
- b) The issue of which practice is sustainable and which is not still remains to be resolved. We propose the strengthening of the efforts of the Ramsar Bureau (presented in question 2.7.) to collect literature on sustainability (wise use). The book "Wise Use" is not sufficient in itself.
- c) The Convention should pay much more attention to the need for sustainable practices in the non-wetland part of the hydrological basin. The Convention should be more supportive to the technology that is necessary to protect wetlands.
- d) The Ramsar Bureau should increase its efforts to bring closely together all Institutes in the world working on wetland issues.
- e) We consider that the development of the Mediterranean Wetland Committee in the framework of the Ramsar Convention will strengthen international co-operation by evaluating the possibilities for flexible co-operation and assessing the results. Such a co-operation could become a pilot project at international regional level.