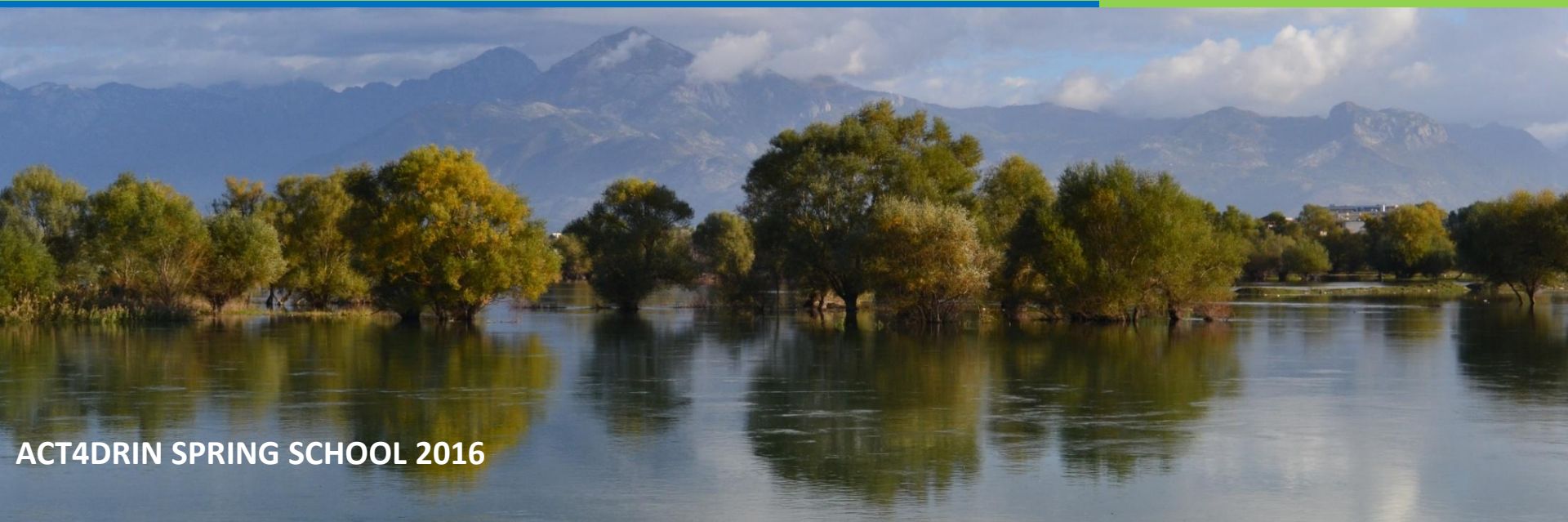


Empowering NGOs to protect and conserve freshwater ecosystems: from theory to practice

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Outline



Overview of potential benefits and challenges related to NGO involvement in transboundary water resources management in the Mediterranean

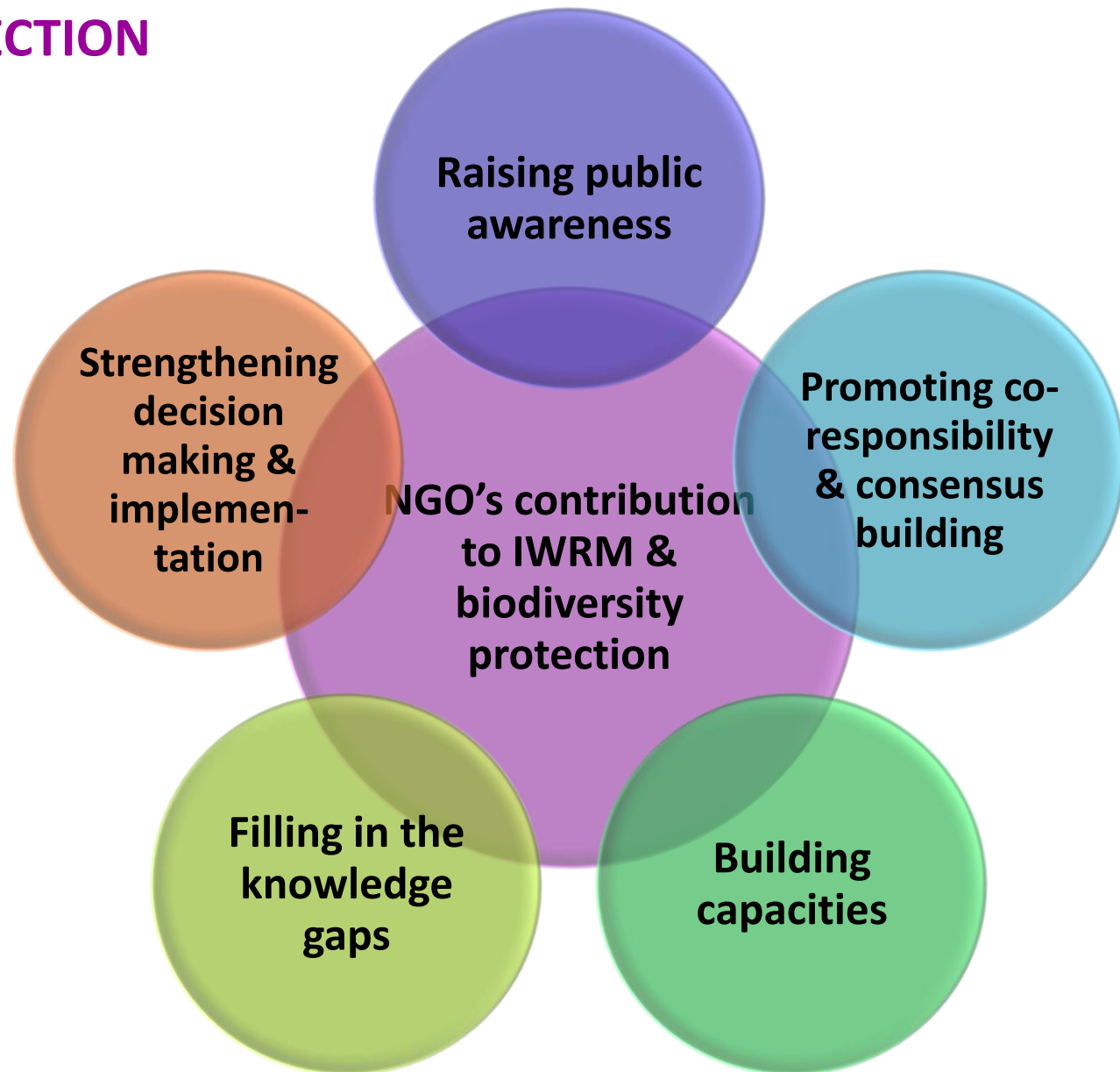
Practices applied & experiences gained from MIO-ECSDE's role in the involvement of NGOs in the GEF MedPartnership & the Drin Dialogue process

Introduction

- ✓ NGOs within the wider civil society sector play an important role in promoting sustainable water resources management.
- ✓ This includes their active participation at local, national and transboundary level in all phases of watershed management planning and implementation (design, implementation in the field, operationalization, monitoring and evaluation).



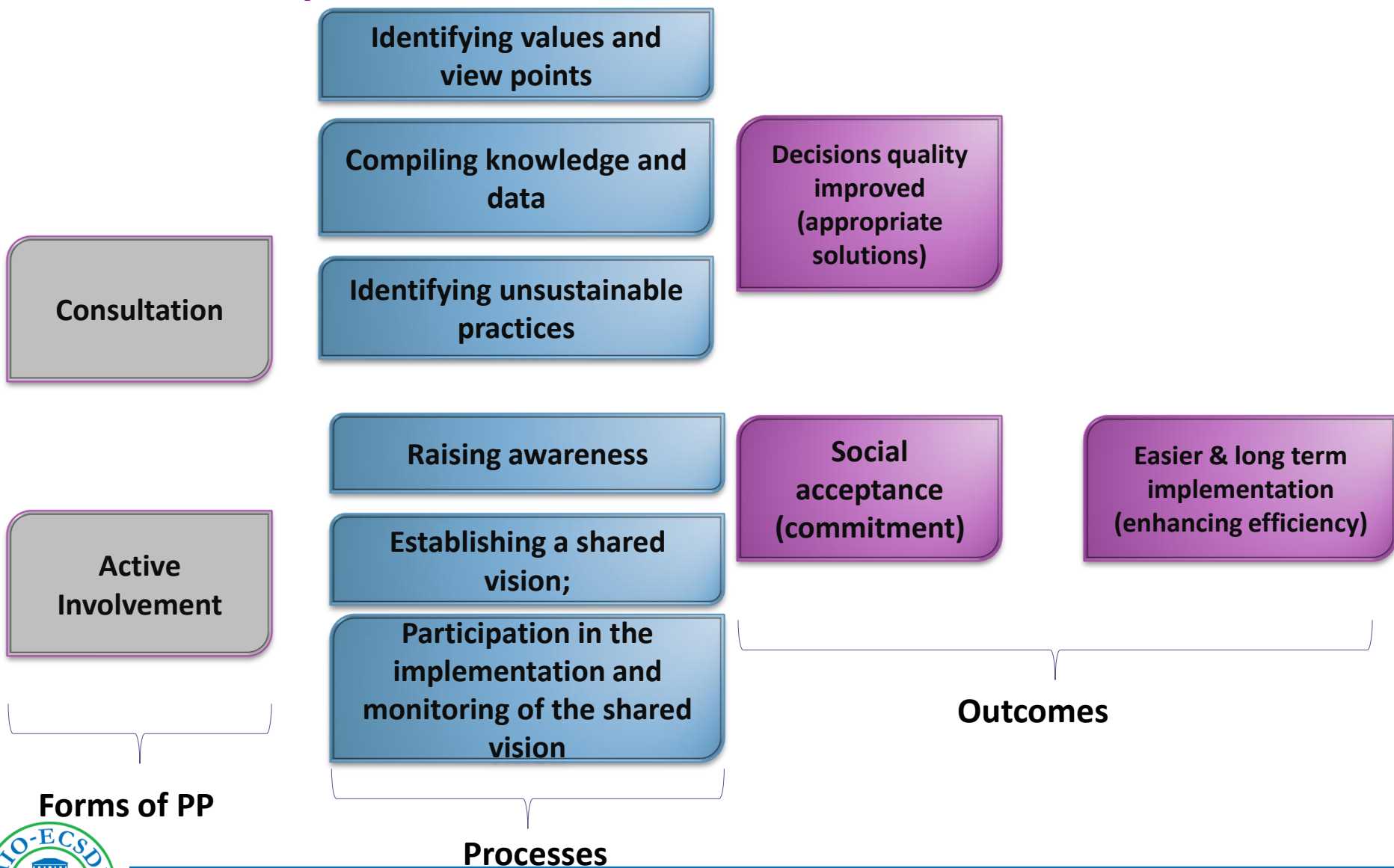
NGOs' KEY ROLE IN PROMOTING IWRM & BIODIVERSITY PROTECTION



Potential benefits from public participation & NGO involvement

- ✓ Increasing public awareness of environmental issues;
- ✓ Making use of knowledge, experience, initiatives of different stakeholders and thus, improving the quality of plans, measures, policies, etc.;
- ✓ Public acceptance, commitment and support / consensus building;
- ✓ More transparent and creative decision-making;
- ✓ Less misunderstandings, litigation, delays, and more effective implementation and in the long term, safeguarding and reinforcing of democracy.

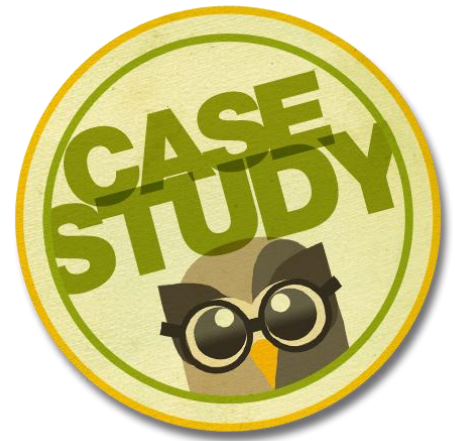
Public Participation: forms, processes and possible outcomes



Main challenges and obstacles for effective NGO involvement in the region

- ✓ Lack of recognition of legitimacy of the role of NGOs;
- ✓ Constraints on the capacities and culture of local/national administration bodies to properly organise and implement participatory processes;
- ✓ Lack of capacity and expertise of NGOs at local/national level and lack of human resources;
- ✓ Lack of funds and/or knowledge on how to access funds;
- ✓ Lack of donors;
- ✓ Lack of, or weak coordination/collaboration between national/local NGOs;
- ✓ No access to information or limited access to unreliable data regarding environmental issues;
- ✓ Frequent cases of opportunistic NGOs, that adapt their scope according to funding prospects that arise;
- ✓ Lack of continuation/sustainability of activities that have been initiated within the framework of a project.

MIO-ECSDE's experience in involving NGOs in the MedPartnership activities



The MedPartnership in a nutshell

What is the MedPartnership?

- ✓ The MedPartnership is a collective effort of leading environmental institutions and organizations together with countries sharing the Mediterranean Sea to address the main environmental challenges that Mediterranean marine and coastal ecosystems face.

What is the MedPartnership trying to achieve?

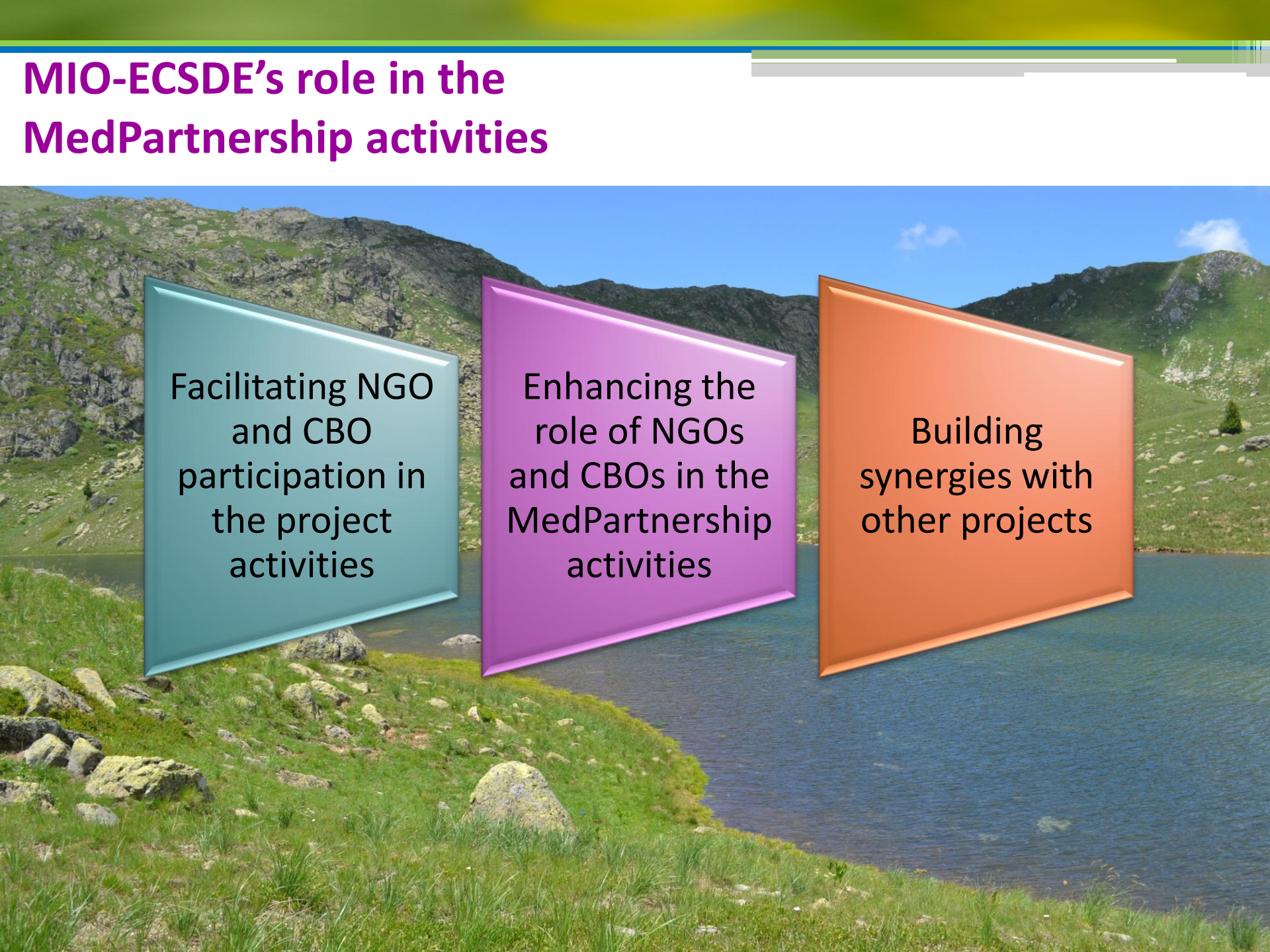
- ✓ Improve environmental conditions of pollution and biodiversity hotspots and other priority areas under stress;
- ✓ Promote the sustainable use of marine and coastal resources through integrated approaches;
- ✓ Reduce pollution from land-based sources;
- ✓ Enhance the protection of 'critical' habitats and species;
- ✓ Integrate climate considerations into national marine and coastal planning.

The framework of activities

The MedPartnership focuses on priority actions identified by the signatory countries to the *Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean* (Barcelona Convention) in two Strategic Action Programmes (SAPs). These respectively aim to

- ✓ reduce land-based sources of marine pollution (SAP-MED)
- ✓ protect biodiversity, living resources and their habitats (SAP-BIO)

MIO-ECSDE's role in the MedPartnership activities

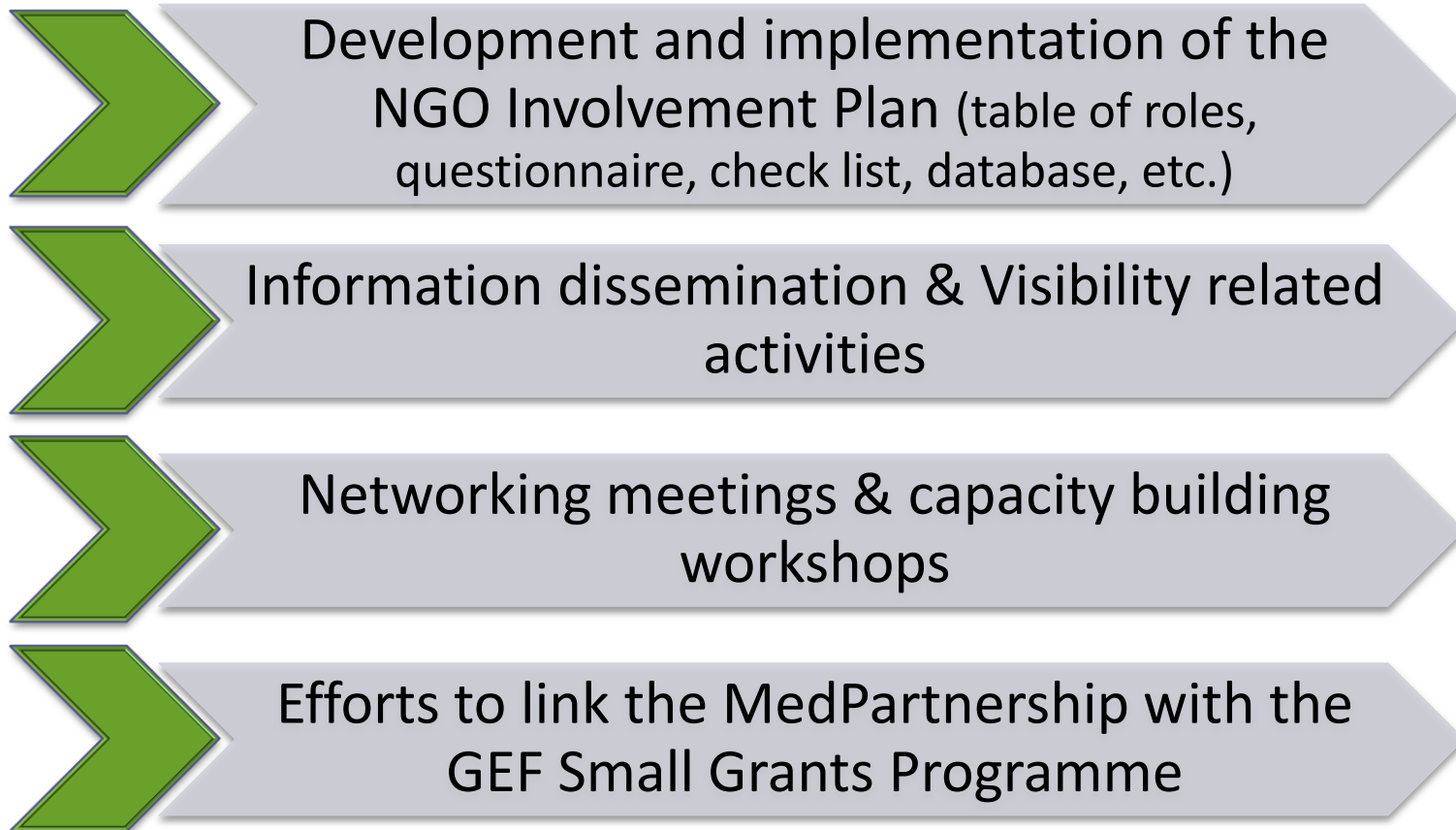
The background of the slide is a photograph of a mountain landscape. In the foreground, there is a grassy slope with some rocks. A calm lake is visible in the middle ground, reflecting the sky. In the background, there are steep, rocky mountains under a clear blue sky. Three colored callout boxes are overlaid on the image: a teal box on the left, a purple box in the center, and an orange box on the right. Each box contains text describing a role of MIO-ECSDE in MedPartnership activities.

Facilitating NGO
and CBO
participation in
the project
activities

Enhancing the
role of NGOs
and CBOs in the
MedPartnership
activities

Building
synergies with
other projects

Practices and tools applied to facilitate & enhance NGO participation in the MedPartnership



Challenges & lessons learned

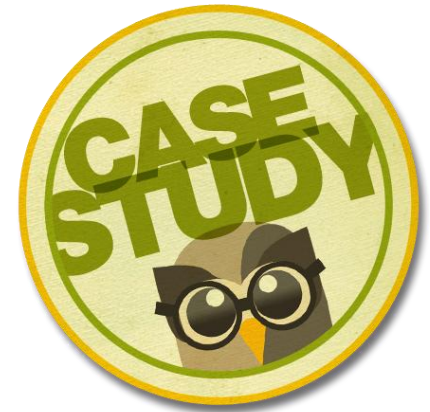
The involvement of a regional NGO such as MIO-ECSDE from the design phase of the MedPartnership has been acknowledged across the board as a major success.

However:

- ✓ Not enough financial resources were earmarked for the proper implementation of the NGO Involvement Plan.
- ✓ NGOs have not been involved from the first phases of transboundary water resources management processes → low engagement, weak commitment. Late inclusion → difficulties in the process (delays, misunderstandings).
- ✓ Continued momentum must be maintained even though some processes take a lot of time to evolve/progress (funds for communication, interim activities).
- ✓ Small scale pilot/demo projects/activities undertaken by NGOs considerably strengthen their ownership of the processes and objectives as well as the success of the overall project.

Case study

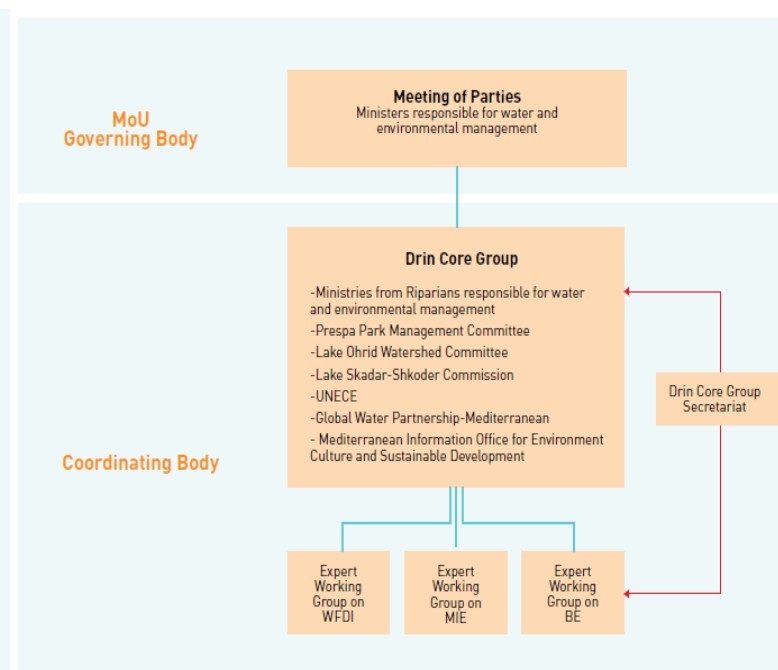
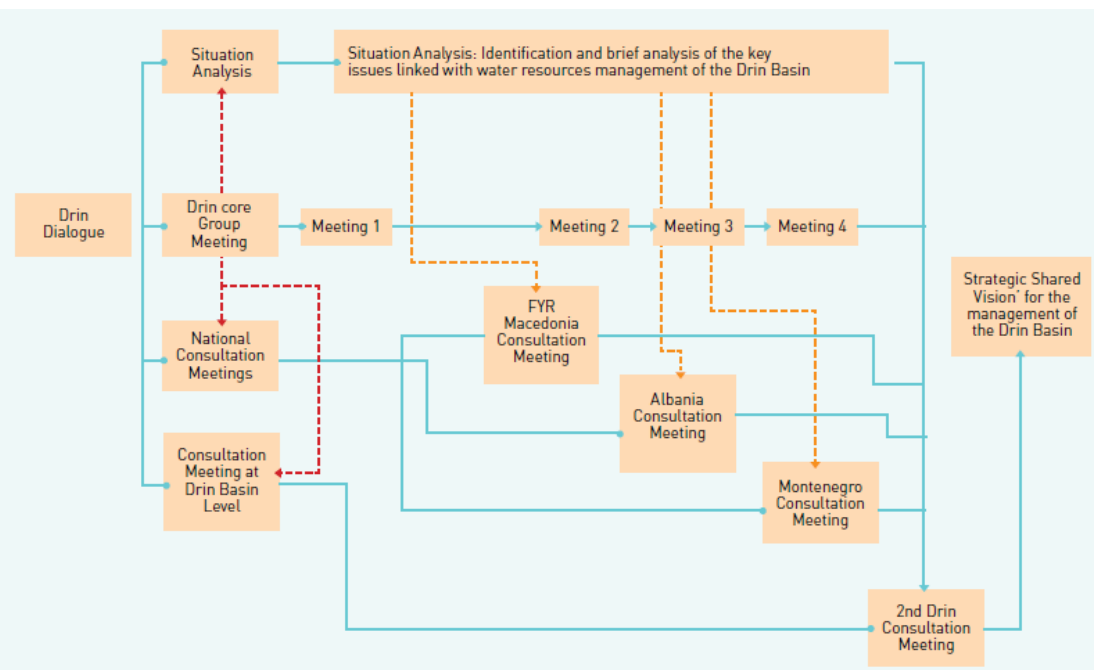
A coordinated NGOs contribution for an effective Drin Dialogue



The Drin Dialogue at a glance

The Drin Dialogue was a multi-stakeholder process for the establishment of a Shared Vision for the sustainable management of the Drin River Basin, formally launched in December 2009, in Podgorica.

The Drin Dialogue was completed on 30 November 2011, when the five Drin River riparians signed a 'Memorandum of Understanding for the Management of the Extended Transboundary Drin River Basin'.



Figures extracted by: Scoullos M, et al. *The Drin Coordinated Action. Towards an Integrated Transboundary Water Resources Management. Chapter in "Water Scarcity, Security and Democracy: a Mediterranean Mosaic. Global Water Partnership Mediterranean, Cornell University and the Atkinson Center for a Sustainable Future, 2014.*

MIO-ECSDE's contribution to the Drin Dialogue and MoU implementation



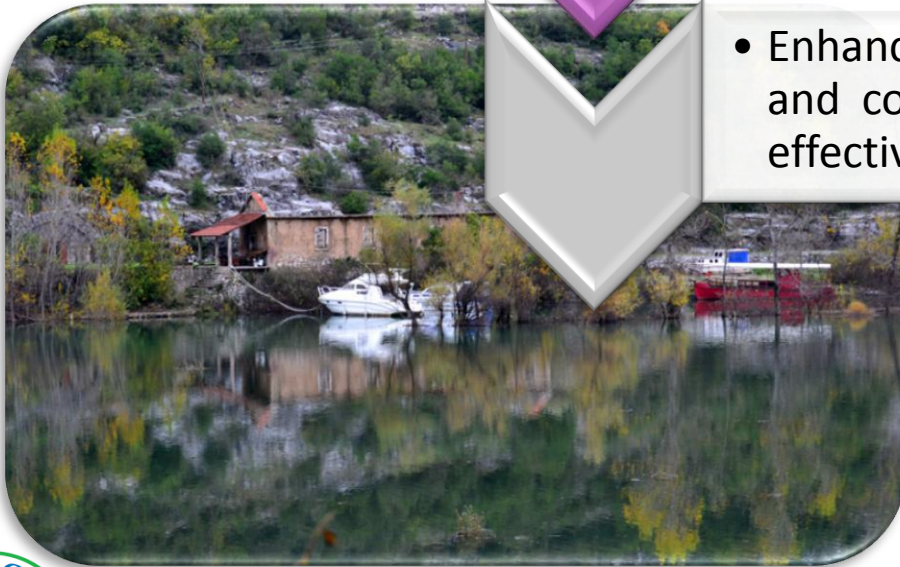
- Supporting the dialogue at regional level (politically, technically, through communication/awareness raising actions...);



- Contributing in establishing a common understanding and shared vision via the coordinated involvement of civil society, and particularly NGOs, in the Drin Dialogue;

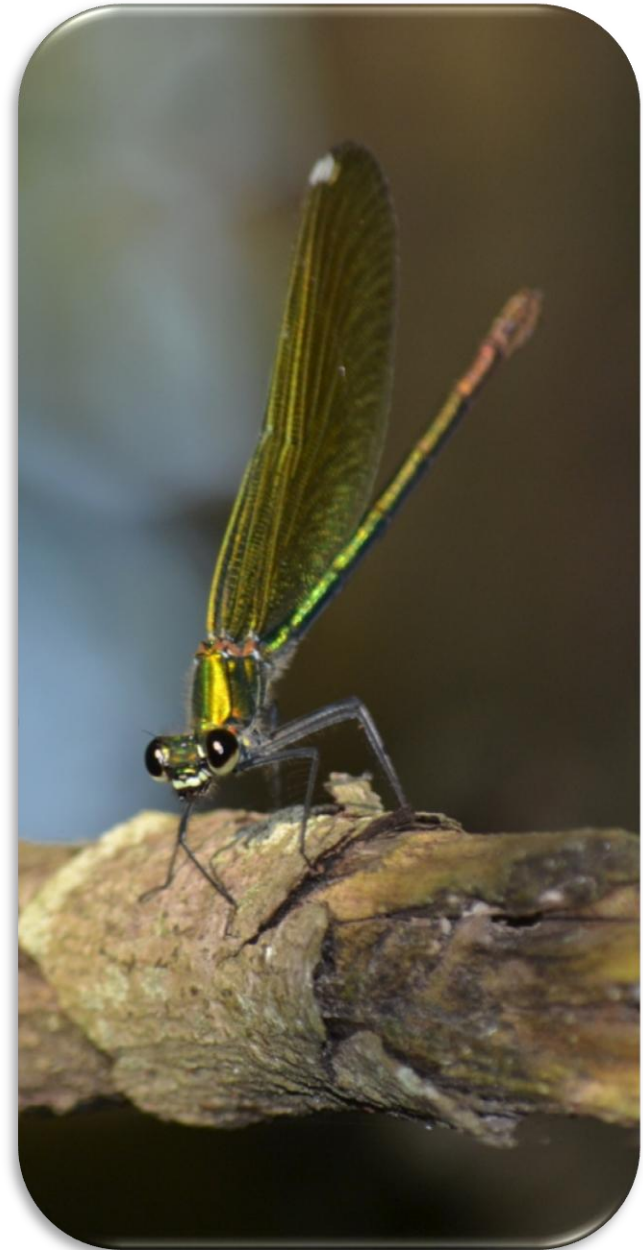


- Enhancing the ability and capacity of its member and collaborating NGOs in order to act in an effective and constructive way.



Main activities to coordinate and empower NGOs to effectively contribute in the Drin Dialogue

- ✓ Organization of capacity building workshops;
- ✓ Organization of networking meetings back-to-back with the national/regional consultations and Core Group meetings;
- ✓ Dissemination of information/communication activities;
- ✓ Joint fund raising efforts for implementing a project in support of the shared vision;
- ✓ Engagement efforts to foster commitment and solidarity among environmental NGOs of the region to protect the Drin River Basin through the development of tangible/concrete outputs.



LESSONS LEARNED...

- Need to **engage** NGOs throughout the process from the planning to the implementation phase.
- In order to ensure a meaningful, coordinated and effective participation of NGOs in the transboundary water resources management cycle, there is a need to **enhance their abilities and capacities** to act throughout these processes.
- Considerable amount of time and resources are needed in order to create an atmosphere of **cooperation and trust** but the investment definitely pays back!
- In order to keep NGOs motivated and engaged in the process opportunities should be sought to **jointly develop concrete outputs**.
- **Collaboration and exchange of experiences** among NGOs at national and sub-regional level can help to effectively replicate successful approaches.



A direct impact

MIO-ECSDE's good practices in the transboundary water dialogues and specifically within the MedPartnership & the Drin Dialogue were exemplified during the 6th session of the Meeting of the Parties to the UNECE Water Convention, Rome, November 2012 (330 participants)

A direct impact of this MedPartnership facilitated process was the CEPF funded project entitled Act4Drin (<http://act4drin.net/>) aiming at raising public awareness, enhancing knowledge and empowering NGOs to protect and conserve freshwater ecosystems in the Drin River Basin.



The greatest success and reward of all...

The **mutual trust, solidarity** and **strong commitment** built among NGOs in the region towards the protection of the natural wealth and legacy of the Drin River.



Thank you!

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*For more than twenty years
joining forces & building bridges
in the Euro-Mediterranean area*

