

**Resilient Community days**

**Thursday, March 16, 2023**

**Vlore town.**



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The valley and river of Vjosa are one of the most wonderful coastal ecosystems in the Balkans, remarkable for their natural hydromorphodynamic river processes.

They represent important reference points for the hydro-morphological characterization of the Balkan rivers and the processes resulting from the formation of the landscape. The channel pattern shows significant differences along the length of the river in Albania.

In the upper part, Vjosa follows a sequence of canyons between Përmet, Kelcyra and Dragot, inserted into gorges intersected by areas of cones and large alluvial islands. After Dragot, the river valley widens, narrowing only at the gorges of Kalivaç and Poçem. Near the town of Tepelena and around the confluence with the Drino River, the river landscape is notable for the large flow of gravel and sand formed by the braided river. The slope of the river basin decreases after Selenica; the valley widens and the river begins to meander. While floods in the upper and middle reaches of higher gradients are brief, they involve the lower Vjosa for several weeks. As mentioned, river bed floods regularly cover the entire active channel and are responsible for channel displacement and regrowth of new vegetation on the reaches and gravel islands. Regular but less frequent floods (floods all >1-5 years) are of great importance for ecological conditions in low floodplains. They form and give shape to the flood plains adjacent to the active channel and on the main islands. Willow scrub and poplar, upstream and sycamore provide the initial vegetation, often stabilizing the land at least until the next major flood. In the higher areas of the active floodplain (floods over 5-30 years), only remnants of floodplain forests, mainly poplars, are found. Most of these forests were converted to agricultural land over the years. In the remaining morphological floodplain (floods all >30-300 years) numerous settlements and urban infrastructure can be found.

Our organization Change-RDA organized resilient community days in the Vjosë-Nartë national park to inform the local public about the SMARTRIVER project and to raise awareness among stakeholders and school students about flood risk and climate adaptation.

The first day was dedicated to the presentation of the activities of the project in the protected area of the river Vjosë, with the presentation of the vice-mayor of the Vlore municipality, Ms. Aulona Veizi and the head of the administrative unit Mr. Kanan Shakaj. The Vjosë River has periods of flooding due to heavy rains that can cause flooding. Its branches flow unimpeded from the Pindis mountain range in Greece, where the river is called Aoös, to the Adriatic coast in Albania. The Vjosa River Catchment consists of a gigantic mosaic of different habitat types, from the narrow gorges in the upper part, to the wide braided parts of the river in the middle part, to the almost natural delta in the Adriatic Sea. The middle segment alone consists of at least eight habitat types that have the highest conservation importance, at EU level. Heavy rains threaten public and private infrastructure. Civil Defense presented flood risks and rescue plans. Environmental experts explained the ecological and cultural values that offer great opportunities for ecotourism and sustainable tourism, as well as other economic benefits for people in the region. The surrounding watershed provides the villages with fertile land for agricultural activities, such as crop production and livestock breeding. The large quantities and variety of fish are vital to the well-being of local fishermen, especially in the lower part of the Vjosa



