

Term of reference

**International Design Competition**

**Multifunctional  
Center and  
Information  
Stations in the  
"VJOSA RIVER"  
National Park**

**NAPA-** National Agency of Protected Areas

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## PROLOGUE

The Ministry of Tourism and Environment and the National Agency of Protected Areas have the pleasure to announce the international competition for the design of the project **Multifunctional Center and Information Stations of the "Vjosa River" National Park.**

Through this call, we intend to invite interested groups to join our initiative for the strengthening and promotion of the natural and cultural values possessed by the territory of the Vjosa Valley.

The vision for the Vjosa-Aoös River, from its source to the outlet in the sea, including its free-flowing tributaries; Shushica, Bënça and Drino (including Kardhiq), totalling 12,727 ha, is to provide full national and transboundary protection, according to the highest international standards and to be effectively preserved as a living, wild, free-flowing river, for the benefit of people and nature in Albania, Greece and the world.

The Vjosa For All Ceremony, which was attended by the Prime Minister of Albania, Mr. Edi Rama, the Minister of Tourism and Environment, Mrs. Mirela Kumbaro, the CEO of Patagonia, Mr. Ryan Gellert, IUCN and all the central and local representatives involved, declared "Vjosa River" National Park, by Decision of the Council of Ministers with No. 155, dated 13.03.2023 "On the declaration of the ecosystem natural river Vjosa "National Park", Category II".

The Vjosa River and its tributaries, is an ecosystem with considerable biodiversity of national and international importance. The outstanding picturesque values of the valley are the result of undisturbed natural processes and the mostly harmonious settlements by the local inhabitants. The ecosystem is home to more than 1,100 animal species, including 13 globally threatened animals and two plant species, and of them, 50 animal species and 24 plant species which are included in Albania's national Red List.

Beyond the beauty of any national park, is the sense of community and belonging that arises when visitors learn more about the natural values and history of the place. Visitor centers serve as places to learn, experience and engage. A space where we ideas and values meet.

The multifunctional center will serve as a gateway to the Vjosa River National Park where most visitors will start their journey and discover information about the natural and cultural values of the park, at the heart of the natural ecosystems, but also of the human habitat. It will be located at the meeting point of two main roads, coming from Tirana, Gjirokaster to the south and Permet to the southeast; an intermediate site between the lower and upper reaches of the river, which also works with two satellites on a smaller scale, as extensions of the center itself, but even more integrated and more engaged with the water, which will serve as information and rest points for tourists. Their location will come through a forthcoming detailed study and proposal.

Our aim is for this competition to generate new ideas and proposals on how the 21st Century Visitor Center works, proposing contemporary architectural, informational displays that articulate continuity, undisturbed movement, and the sense of eternity. Exhibits and materials that implement protected areas legislation ensure that our national parks meet the needs of current and future generations.

We are looking for architectural solutions in complete harmony with nature and landscape, proposals that will serve as catalysts for the national importance of this area. Concepts should be based on the principles created by identifying the natural characteristics, heritage, cultural, historical and archaeological values of the area, as well as on the best international experiences.

The multifunctional center and information stations of the "Lumi Vjosa" National Park will not be mere objects, but will serve as a place of information, meeting, dialogue, scientific research and exchange between different visitors.

The Ministry of Tourism and Environment  
National Agency of Protected Areas

## 1. GENERAL DESCRIPTION

### 1.1. CONTRACTOR (THE BENEFICIARY) /CONTRACTING AUTHORITY

The National Agency of Protected Areas is the contracting authority for this contract. The National Agency of Protected Areas (NAPA) was created by Decision of the Council of Ministers No. 102, dated 4.2.2015, and is the central state institution responsible for protected areas, subordinate to the minister, and is responsible for their administration and control throughout the territory of the Republic of Albania. NAPA has the status of the General Directorate at the central level, while at the local level it is organized on a district basis, according to the regional administrations of the protected areas. The functions, composition, responsibilities, rights, and duties of the Agency, as a central specialized body for protected areas and its dependent institutions, are expressly provided for in this law, as well as approved by the relevant decision of the Council of Ministers, at the proposal of the minister.

The main focus of the National Agency of Protected Areas (NAPA) is the preservation and development of protected areas and nature in Albania. The main tasks of NAPA include:

- the leadership, management, organization and continuous control of the structures of the protected areas under which it depends;
- updating and improving the content of the protection and management of areas, through the cultivation of concepts, practices and contemporary schemes used by advanced countries;
- management and administration of the network of protected areas, habitats and natural and semi-natural species of conservation interest, in accordance with the Albanian environmental legislation in force, as well as international environmental conventions and agreements;
- creation and implementation of the formatted and standardized documentary system, with which the management structures of protected areas work throughout the territory of the Republic of Albania;
- creation of the National File, Portal, and Database of Protected Areas, as a separate part of the Portal, the National Environmental File.
- carrying out periodic analyzes and generalizations for the basic problems of protected areas and continuous information of the minister;
- creation and implementation of the methodology for the design of management plans for protected areas;
- revitalizing environmental education and raising awareness of local communities and the public as a whole about protected areas.
- promotion of forms, methods, rational ways for collection, registration, processing and distribution of information about protected areas.
- approval of activities in protected areas, as part of the process of obtaining an environmental permit for activities that have an impact on the environment in protected areas.
- support and development of sustainable economic activities within protected areas in cooperation with the State Aid Commission.
- financial management of the network of protected areas.

## **1.2. LOCATION**

Vjosa is the second largest river in Albania and part of the series of six main rivers that flow into the Adriatic Sea, building the entire coastal alluvial plain, which begins in the north with the large Drin-Moraça-Bojana-Buna system and the Mati, Erzen, Shkumbin and Seman rivers. Together with Seman (Devoll and Osum) Vjosa creates a large lowland in the estuary.

The Vjosa transboundary watershed covers approximately 6,800 km<sup>2</sup> (4,540 km<sup>2</sup> in Albania) and the river flows in a Southeast – North West direction, in one length of 272 km (190 of which is located in Albania), from the Pindi mountain range in Greece, to its mouth at the Adriatic Sea. The Vjosa watershed in Albania passes through the counties of Gjirokastra, Vlora, Fier, Korça and Berat.

## **1.3. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

There has been a wide interest in the conservation of this river, where well-known national and international scientists and nature activists have launched the campaign for protection. However, the legal process to declare it an environmentally protected area has gone through several stages.

In support of Law No. 81/2017 "On protected areas" with Decision No. 60, dated 26.01.2022 "On the declaration of natural ecosystems, managed nature reserves/natural parks (category IV), as well as the approval of the change of the status of the existing surfaces of protected areas, belonging to this category" was decided to declare "Natural Park" (category IV of protected areas) of the natural ecosystem "Valley of Vjosa River", with an area of 7 989.5 ha.

On June 13, 2022, the Ministry of Tourism and Environment signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the company "Patagonia Inc" with the common goal of permanent protection of the ecosystems of the Vjosa River and its tributaries. In collaboration with the Patagonia company, a working group of 30 local and international experts was organized to fulfill the common goal – that of declaring the Vjosa River National Park.

Based on the high values that the river Vjosa carries, the Albanian Government approved Decision No. 155, dated 13.03.2023 "On the declaration of the natural ecosystem of the river Vjosa "National Park", Category II".

## **1.4. CURRENT SITUATION IN THE VJOSA RIVER NATIONAL PARK**

The declaration of the Vjosa River National Park will facilitate solutions to the challenges faced by the river such as: water and soil pollution, waste management and deforestation. Also, the declaration of the National Park will create economic

opportunities for local communities through responsible tourism and will help address problems related to internal migration.

Obtaining IUCN Category II National Park status means that Vjosa will be protected, according to the highest international standards, ensuring its ecological integrity, allowing natural processes to occur and supporting its populations of native species.

## **2. PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES**

### **2.1. PURPOSE OF ToRs**

The purpose of these terms of reference is to draft the project idea of the Multifunctional Center and information stations of the "Vjosa River" National Park. This project is developed within the framework of the development of sustainable tourism in protected areas.

The program on the development of the multifunctional center and information stations will be developed based on an international design competition, which will select the maximum of 3 (three) or the minimum of 2 (two) teams best project idea proposals (in the first phase) with a winning designer selected to continue with the implementation of the project implementation in the other phases.

The purpose of this project is to have a proposal of the project of the multifunctional Center and the information stations, which through the appropriate facilities, services and programs will:

- A. Promotes the protected area;
- B. Improves the quality of recreational and tourism opportunities for all visitors, and explicitly addresses access to people with disabilities;
- C. Describes other opportunities and facilities located in the protected area and surrounding areas;
- D. Provides information and interpretation on recreational, natural, cultural and historical resources within the project area and in the region;
- E. Educates about nature, protected areas, biodiversity, ecosystem conservation.

### **2.2. TARGETED OBJECTIVES**

A multifunctional center is a public structure dedicated to programs, services, and information about the Vjosa River. This will serve to attract local and foreign visitors, to extend their stay in the valley region, as well as provide conditions for the development of the local economy and quality of life for local residents. This project is intended to improve the overall tourist offer of the area, and at the same time to



function as a source of the education that is required for behavior changes that the preservation of the protected area depends on for its long term health.

The following objectives should be considered before planning, developing, upgrading, managing, and operating visitor/multifunctional centers:

- A. Through information, education and interpretation, an opportunity is created to protect, preserve, and enhance recreational, natural, historic, and cultural resources. Visitor/multifunctional centers increase public awareness and understanding of the mission and responsibilities for the protection of natural areas;
- B. The study of the national park and its in-depth analysis, through research, meetings with experts in the field and academic literature;
- C. Integration of the interpretation plan with the urban plan in the design of the visitor center;
- D. The design, construction and maintenance of the visitor center shall integrate the principles of universal and sustainable design and energy conservation as appropriate and feasible;
- E. Searching research programs and activities that make the Visitor Center livable for twelve months of the year;
- F. Integration of functional revenue-generating programs for the purposes of supporting and enhancing visitor center programs, educational and interpretive activities, and operations, where authorized;
- G. Integration of functional volunteer programs in order to develop and maintain the visitor center and its program and services;
- H. Searching for sustainable architectural and urban planning;
- I. Undertaking an Environmental Impact Assessment with a local consultant, given that the construction will be carried out in a National Park and this assessment is required by Albanian legislation.

### **2.2.1 Strategic objectives (SO)**

The project "**The Multifunctional center and information stations in the Vjosa River National Park**" aims to design the idea of a visitor center and two information stations, with all the facilities and spaces necessary to better experience and inform about the protected area.

**SO 1.** In-depth study of opportunities in the Vjosa River National Park, based but not limited to the materials with which is being worked on the Integrated Management Plan;

**SO 2.** Drafting of the interpretative master plan, in which the identity and history of the Visitor Center and two information stations will be created;

**SO 3.** Proposing the plan for the placement of the Multifunctional Visitor Center in Tepelena and two information stations in two other locations in Vlora and Permet. Selection of communication and distribution scheme;

**SO 4.** Development of a rich program for the Multifunctional Visitor Center and two information stations, to increase public understanding of the history, purpose and development of the project and the natural and cultural importance of the protected area;

**SO 5.** Orientation of visitors through the project, recreational opportunities and environmental education (section dedicated to children).

### **2.3. EXPECTED IMPACT**

The National Agency of Protected Areas has started work on the coordination of the process for the announcement of the international competition for the project "Multifunctional center and information stations in the Vjosa River National Park". The tourism sector is becoming increasingly consolidated as a priority sector of the country's economic development. One of the tourism products is natural tourism, based on the spirit of responsible tourism.

The Vjosa River National Park offers opportunities for the development of rural, mountain tourism, under the umbrella of ecotourism and outdoor activities (rafting, sports parachuting, mountain biking, mountain climbing, nature walking, hiking, riding, study visits, etc.) Some of these activities are the main motive for the visits that foreign visitors undertake in natural areas.

Currently, the protected areas cover 21.4% of the total area of the country's territory. In recent years, these areas are attracting more and more visitors, local or foreign, reaching over 8 million in 2023.

Growing environmental concern, mixed with resentment about mass tourism, has led to an increase in demand for nature-based experiences. Protected areas are increasingly seen as potential areas for tourism promotion. More and more, there is a growing demand for the development of a special type of tourism in nature, which is essentially related to increasing the interest of tourists in protected areas.

**The tourism model** will be formed based on the promotion of the identity of the Visitor Center and the development of programs and spaces suitable for tourists, local communities and persons with disabilities.

### **2.4. LEGAL FRAMEWORK**

The legal basis on which the implementation of this project is based, which enables the realization of the processes that will be carried out, are:

- Law no. 81/2017 "On protected areas" - This law regulates all aspects related to protected areas in Albania. The law defines the categories of PAs, the rules and

roles for their management and decision-making. The law requires the implementation of these rules in case of undertaking projects within the territory of the Pas;

- DCM No. 155, dated 13.03.2023 "On the announcement of the natural ecosystem of the Vjosa River "National Park", Category II";
- DCM no. 676 (20.12.2002) "On the declaration of natural monuments (MN) in Albania". The Decision of the Council of Ministers determines the list of natural monuments in the country, the natural monuments are a category of Protected Areas and as such must be protected;
- Law No. 93/2015 "On tourism;
- Law No. 27/2018 "On Cultural Heritage and Museums".

### **3. DESCRIPTION OF THE ASSIGNMENT AND SERVICES REQUIRED**

#### **3.1. DESCRIPTION OF THE ASSIGNMENT**

The National Agency of Protected Areas will be the drafting and evaluation agency for the international competition and the implementation of this project and will be responsible for monitoring, evaluating the process and coordinating it, as well as the products that will come out of it.

#### **3.2. INFORMATION ABOUT THE AREA**

The Vjosa River in Albania is one of the last large, free-flowing wild rivers in Europe. The river and its tributaries run unfettered from the Pindus Mountain Range in Greece, (where it is called Aoös), to the Adriatic coast in Albania. This Vjosa River Basin is made up of an enormous mosaic of different habitat types, ranging from the narrow gorges in the upper part to the wide braided river sections in the middle part, to the near-natural delta at the Adriatic Sea.

The middle stretch alone is host to at least eight habitat types that are of the highest importance in terms of conservation, at the EU level. The Vjosa River and its free-flowing tributaries form an ecosystem with substantial biodiversity of national and global significance, and the outstanding scenic values of the valley are the result of undisturbed major natural processes and the predominantly harmonious settlement by local people. The ecosystem is host to more than 1,100 species of animals, including 13 globally threatened animals and two plant species. The ecological and cultural values provide great opportunities for eco- and sustainable tourism and other economic benefits to the people in the region. The surrounding watershed provides the villages with fertile land for agricultural activities such as crop production and livestock farming. The abundance and diversity of fish are vital for the well-being of local fishermen, especially in the lower part of Vjosa.

Vjosa and its tributaries form a functioning natural ecosystem large enough to mitigate the external disturbances of other altered areas found adjacent to and along the river

corridor, without significantly affecting natural hydrological processes. However, the ecosystem is extremely fragile and sensitive, so it can be dramatically altered by any changes to the water regime upstream or downstream.

In the geological, hydro-morphological, hydrological, and ecological context, the Vjosa River valley can be divided into three subareas:

- The upper section of the Vjosa River is characterized by steep gorges among Përmet, Këlcyra, and Dragot, crossed by areas with depositional cones and large gullies. The valley of the Vjosa River expands in the upper reaches of the Dragot area, except for the gorge of Poçem.
- The middle section, spanning the stretch which includes the confluence with the Drino River, where the city of Tepelena is located, is known for the large sand and gravel banks formed by the branching river. Downstream of Selenica, the river's catchment area shrinks, the valley widens, and the river begins to meander. The floodplains of the Vjosa River are known as one of the most magnificent coastal ecosystems of the Balkan Peninsula, characterized by their natural hydromorphodynamic river processes. The wide branching stream, the large gravel banks and islands, and the pioneer plant species, willows, poplars, and tamarisks give the Vjosa valley an extraordinary character.
- The lower section is characterized by the stretch of the Vjosa River and the formation of wide meanders. Between the cities of Fier and Vlora, the Vjosa River passes through the Myzeqeja lowlands and flows towards the Adriatic Sea. The Vjosa Delta is located north of the Narta Lagoon, where it reaches the sea.

### 3.2.1. Geomorphology

The Vjosa Valley represents an area of international interest for geological studies. Located in the southern part of Albanides, the Vjosa River crosses several geological structures composed of successive anticlines and synclines influenced by a series of active tectonic and neotectonic lines.

The Vjosa/Aoös River is divided into three geological sections. The upstream section of the river valley, frozen during the Last Massif Glaciation, drains ophiolite, flysch, carbonaceous and limestone deposits. In the middle course section, between Dragot and Pocem, the river flows mainly over the flysch deposits of the Ionian tectonic zone.

The downstream section extends from Pocem to the Adriatic Sea where the river flows over the Ionian tectonic zone and Quaternary deposits of the pre-Adriatic lowland tectonic zone, consisting mainly of gravel, sand, silt and clay (Skrame, 2020; EcoAlbania, 2021).

As a result of this geological context, the channel types exhibit a remarkable variety of geological forms: the river forms gorges and cuts terraces in the upper and middle catchments, creates braided channel forms as the valley opens and meanders towards the estuary ( Bizziet al., 2021).

The mouth of the Vjosa River represents the most important area in the Myzeqe Lowland, 2/3 of which is the result of delta growth over a 500-year period (Fouache et al., 2010).

The watershed is dominated by mountains with an average height of about 300-1500 m above sea level, but reaching peaks of 2600 m. The relief and slopes are steep and only the big rivers gather and form terraced or even flat valleys, like the Drinos.

The Vjosa River itself runs through a variety of landscapes. The average slope of the catchment is 28%, while the slope of the riverbed is about 4%. The low gradient is characteristic of the lower reaches of the river, surrounded by a broad, flat, terraced floodplain formed during the Quaternary period, approximately 2.59 million years ago. This region includes the floodplain of Myzeqe, which is located near the city of Vlora, the valley of Kota, which is part of the watershed of the Shushicë River, and the valley of Drino with the areas of Gjirokastra and Dropulli. River gradients in these areas are shallow - up to 5° (CNR Cereg, 2015). The middle course of the river is characterized by hills of very fragmented, terrigenous, sedimentary rocks, which the branches of Vjosa have eroded over time. This includes the areas with very high slopes around the Kurvelesi highlands and the mountains of Nemerčka, Lunxheria, Bureto, Postnani and Melesini. Deep gorges and canyons are found in Bençe, Këlcyre and Langarica. The upper course of the river is surrounded by large mountains, with sharp ridges and very steep slopes resulting from water erosion and limestone terrain (karst). In Greece, the Aoös tributary, Voidomatis, flows through the Viko Gorge, ranked as the deepest canyon in the world (UNDP Albania, 2017).

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 landscape formation.

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.

### 3.2.2. Climate

The Vjosa River Catchment is part of the southeastern hilly climate zone, which plays an important role in the climate of the region, influencing temperatures and precipitation. The climate of the Vjosa Basin can be characterized as Mediterranean, with dry and hot summers and mild and wet winters. The western part of the Basin is warmer than the eastern part due to the lower altitude and proximity to the sea. Average temperature values range from 10.7 to 17.5 °C along the Vjosa River valley and from 6 to 10 °C in the mountainous areas. Average maximum temperatures in the

upper, middle and lower parts of the Vjosa Watershed range between 26.9 and 35.8 °C.

### 3.2.3. Hydrology

In the upstream, the average discharge of water is about 60 m<sup>3</sup>/s in Vjosa, while the downstream has about 175 m<sup>3</sup>/s on average (200 m<sup>3</sup>/s in the delta). Most important for the formation of active channels is the regular and frequent annual flood discharge of about 900 m<sup>3</sup>/s, while extreme 100-year floods can reach 3000 m<sup>3</sup>/s in the upper part and up to 6000 m<sup>3</sup>/s in the downstream.

Vjosa is not just one of many similar rivers in Albania. The exceptional biodiversity of the river is very rich and is complemented by outstanding values of the unique water regime along the entire river, underlining the importance of the Vjosa River as one of the last free-flowing and intact tributary river ecosystems in Europe.

### 3.2.4. Characteristics and value of biodiversity

Researchers have identified more than 15 priority habitat types of European interest in the valley (European Commission, 2013), of which four hold particular conservation interests. An additional seven habitat priority types in the area are endangered and possess significant floristic values (European Commission, 1992; Meulenbroek et al., 2018).

Experts confirm that it could be more than 1500 taxa, from which more than 570 species of higher plants and 68 species of mushrooms are featured in the coastal habitats of the Vjosë-Narta lagoon. In the Gjirokastra region, according to Malo (2011), 700 taxa of higher plants are reported, where 12 taxa are new to Albania, 40 are sub-endemic and 30 are rare or endangered species (Tan et al. 2011; Shumka et al., 2018).

Moreover, 3 additional threatened species listed on the IUCN Red List, *Aesculus hippocastanum*, *Galanthus reginae-olgae* and *Solenanthus albanicus*, which are categorized as Vulnerabile C2a(i) Vulnerabile B2ab (iii,v) and Endangered B1ab(v) + 2ab(v), respectively, are found on river banks and rock faces along tributaries as well as alpine limestone grasslands of the watershed. The dunes or wetlands are also home to several rare or relict species, including *Anacamptis morio* ssp. *Caucasica*, *Ephedra distachya*, *Narcissus tazetta*, *Nymphaea alba*, *Nuphar lutea*, *Nymphoides peltata*, and various species of *Orchis*, *Ophrys*, *Limonium*, and *Scilla*. Other species with a more restricted range can also be found there (Shumka et al., 2018)

The Vjosa River Basin is home to a vibrant and extensive diversity of fauna and includes many endemic species of great national and international conservation importance in terms of conservation. According to the scientific consensus, Vjosa and its surrounding habitats are of remarkably high conservation value for several interconnected reasons. The mosaic of various habitat types forms a highly dynamic natural river ecosystem of a scale unique in Europe. These habitats harbor viable communities of animals that have significantly or entirely disappeared from other European rivers.

### 3.2.5. Protected areas

The Vjosa River National Park includes fully or partially the following protected areas:

- The Protected landscape "Pishe Poro - Narta", natural/wetland ecosystem, Category V (IUCN). Part of the EMERALD and IBA network. It consists of two parts: Pishë Poro and Narta. The accumulation in Pishë Poro area, currently takes place on both sides of the mouth of the drainage channel of Povelça. The region is known for its special flora and diversity of habitats, with special scientific, ecological (many rare organisms) and economic (medicinal, aromatic, industrial and decorative plants) values.
- The Managed Nature Reserve Fir of Zhulat - part of the Kardhiqi Valley, which lies on the slopes of Mali Gjere. It is built from limestone formations rich in phosphates.
- The Managed Nature Reserve Fir of Kardhiq - The whole area is located on limestone substrates and is distinguished by the passage with various karst forms as well as a special flora and rich fauna.
- The National Park Fir of Hotova-Dangëllia - This park is the largest in the country and stands out for its high biodiversity values. It forms a giant green crown and, in terms of size, the only forest massif in the south of the country. Therefore, it can be called the "natural lung" of Southern Albania. The magnificent view of the park unfolds suddenly from the entrance of the valley of Lomnica, to near the mountain of Kokojka. The Macedonian Fir-dominated Forest is considered one of the most important Mediterranean plant relics in Albania and one of the largest parks in the Balkans with this relic plant.
- The Zagoria Natural Park - The mountain ranges are built from Paleogene limestone and less from Cretaceous. The valleys that separate them and the lower parts of the slopes are built by terrigenous formations and Quaternary deposits. Their main morpho structural elements are the Trebeshinë-Dhëmbel-Nëmërckë and Shëndëlli-Lunxhëri-Bureto anticlines, which are separated by the Zagori-Pogon-Maricaj syncline.
- The Managed Nature Reserve of Gërmenj - located on the mountain ridge Kamenik-Mali i Vashës, at altitudes from about 1,000-2,043m, continues along the state border and, going down, reaches Mali i Vashës. It is separated from the southern part of the highlands through several extended extensions: Sheleguri, Sotira and Gërmenji.
- The Protected Area of Managed Resources Piskal-Shqeri
- The Sotira Fir Natural Park - lies on the northeastern slopes of Mount Stugara, in the catchment basin of the Sotira stream, the left branch of the Drino river; from about 550-1,806 m above sea level as well as in the northwest of Murgana Mountain. The entire relief has the shape of a funnel with a bottom in the village of Sotira.

### 3.2.6. Natural monuments

A natural monument (Category III) is declared a natural formation (including unique biological elements), a distinctive geological and geomorphological formation, a mineral deposit, or a habitat of a rare or endangered species or with special scientific and aesthetic value.

The same level of protection as a "Strict Reserve" is applied in a "Natural Monument." The area is protected and managed to preserve the special natural, cultural, historical, and archaeological characteristics and phenomena for which it has been declared a monument. They are surrounded by buffer zones with a width of up to 200 meters from the monument's perimeter.

In the "Vjosa River National Park," there are a considerable number of natural monuments, divided according to different areas. Below, we mention:

RAPA Fier: Rapi I Ballshit, Cave of Pocem, Rapi I Uji Drizar, Rapi Vurgu te Çorrushi, Lisi Vakefi (Çerilere)

RAPA Vlorë: Dunes of Narta, Limopuo Lagoon, Molasic Hills of Zvërnec, Forest of Zvërnec, Trubull Olives in Karbunarë, Ramica Waterfall, Ramica Cave, Shënvarvara (Velçë) Flat, Velçë Cave

RAPA Gjirokastër: Ropushja Forest, Danglisjë's Bokjërrimat, Kokojka's Fir - Frashjër, Teqë's Gjështenja - Frashjër, Cilikojka's Well, Borocke's God (Canyon, Guri i Bletjës), Kamenik's Canyon (kamenckjës), Mezhegoranit Cave, Grykës Rape Kjelcyrje, Black Water Kjelcyrje, Canyons of Nivicja, Rock of Zhej, Kafa Çajupi, Veins of Koncka, , Polmen forest cluster, Cave of Pigeons, Thermal waters of Bënja, Lengarica Canyon, Stone of Petrani, Fir of Petrani, Vrimat e Koncka, Lake Kacojth, Gurra e Nivan, Repet e Nivan, Oaks of the Nivan Monastery, Rapi i Nderan, Forest of Stone - Nderan, Terrace of Nderan, Canyon of Selcka

For each of the above monuments, you will find the corresponding tabs attached.

### 3.2.7. Cultural Assets

Inside the "Vjosa River National Park," there are also several cultural assets with the status of cultural monuments, as listed below:

#### Fier County

- Illyrian City of Byllis, Mallakastër, Fier - cultural monument category I;
- Monastery of St. Mary, Pojan, Fier - cultural monument category I;
- Church of St. Friday, Sop, Fier - cultural monument category I;
- Boundaries and regulations of the administration of the Archaeological Park of Byllis.

#### Vlorë County

- Castle of Vranishë, Vranisht, Himarë - cultural monument category I;
- Castle of Boderi, Smokthina, Selenicë - cultural monument category I;



- Illyrian City of Amantia, Ploçë, Selenicë;
- Castle of Treporti and the ancient wall by the sea, Zvërnec, Vlorë - cultural monument category I;
- Bridge of Bratajt, Brataj, Vlorë - cultural monument category I;
- House of Beqir Gjoka – Drashovicë, Selenicë - cultural monument category I;
- House of Kujtim Hamza, Kaninë, Vlorë - cultural monument category I;
- Boundaries and regulations of the administration of the Archaeological Park of Amantia;
- Protected area of the Treporti Castle and the ancient wall by the sea;
- Protected area of the Bratajt Bridge.

#### Gjirokastër County

Almost all objects with the status of Cultural Assets are included in Gjirokastër County, you will find them attached in the annex chapter of the terms of reference.

### **3.3. MULTIFUNCTIONAL CENTER AND INFORMATION STATIONS**

There are several levels of guidelines that can influence the planning, development, management, and operation of visitor centers.

The Interpretive Master Plan is a document that enables project managers to develop a systematic and comprehensive approach to interpretation for the project and location. The master plan can serve to determine the visitor center's messages, location, uniqueness, accessibility, interpretive themes, means and techniques of interpretation, displays, programs, and services.

The determination of the location of the visitor center will be done after the aforementioned analysis and must be selected based on two possibilities: the proposal of the visitor center according to the two locations proposed by the ToR in Tepelena and the positioning of the two information stations in Vlora and Permet, according to a detailed analysis.

The urban, architectural, and engineering project of the visitor center is another level of analysis. Detailed guidelines and specifications will be provided by the designer.

Orientation: Visitor centers are highly effective in orienting first-time visitors who are unfamiliar with the protected area and want to learn about its biodiversity, recreational opportunities, and natural and cultural resources. They are also very effective for regular or recreational users traveling to an area for a specific recreational activity, such as rafting, fishing, or boating.

Education: Visitor centers are also effective in reaching visitors with specific interests. Beyond orientation to a location, visitors are often interested in additional educational information about the site, its resources, or functions. This information may include natural or cultural history.

Location: The purpose of the interpretive program and the visitor center is the primary criterion for determining the best location for the visitor center. Orientation and visitor information centers are best placed in locations where visitors encounter them before deciding where to go. Visitors should be able to easily find the visitor center immediately upon entering the area. In general, poor locations for visitor centers include the ends of long roads, more than a few miles from the main road, deep within a protected area, or far from the main entrance to a protected area.

### **3.4.1 Interpretative Masterplan**

The Interpretive Master Plan is a strategic process that, in its implementation, provides a plan for achieving management objectives through interpretive media and education. Interpretive planning analyzes all existing needs and resources and recommends a wide range of interpretive services and programs to communicate the purpose, significance, themes, and values of the protected area effectively and efficiently.

#### Principles of the Interpretive Masterplan

Interpretive planning determines how a project will address the task of facilitating visitor interpretive experiences, enjoyment, and learning.

Interpretative planning:

- Takes into account the client (user, visitor, public, audience, customer, tourist, recreationalist, family, child, elderly person, person with disabilities, local school, or youth group, etc.) and describes the desired visitor experiences in place;
- Defines the unique value, significance, or purpose of a site;
- Identifies key objectives for visitor learning in harmony with management goals;
- Recommends and describes appropriate approaches and strategies for visitor orientation and education that effectively communicate the most meaningful and persuasive stories of the resource while preserving and protecting the integrity of natural resources;
- Describes the best blend of methods, media, and messages based on current research and reflects knowledge about visitor expectations, demographics, changing trends, and social needs for a visitor center;
- Is flexible, ongoing, interdisciplinary, and responsive to client needs;
- Ensures universal access.

#### Purpose of Planning

This phase is often referred to as the goal and may include, but is not limited to, the following:

- Existing condition, vision or mission of the area, resource, location or project – What does the enabling legislation suggest about the purpose of the project?;
- The natural, historical, cultural, social and political context for the interpretation of planning in this protected area;

- Site or project objectives – Why is a visitor center needed for this protected area? What specific goals will the interpretation on this site or visitor center help achieve?;

#### Resource inventory and analysis:

In the inventory and analysis of the resources of the protected area including, which should be taken into account during the design are:

- Biophysical – extraordinary natural and biological feature.
- Socio-cultural - salient cultural features or phenomena.
- Recreational resources or facilities – marinas, boat ramps, campgrounds, picnic areas, trails, etc.

#### Inventory and Analysis of Facilities and Programs:

- Existing infrastructure.
- Existing interpretation – exhibits and interpretive publications and/or educational collections; library resources; and visitor orientation materials like kiosks, bulletin boards, and directional signs.
- Existing accessibility – provisions made for effective communication and equal opportunities for persons with disabilities.

#### Inventory and Analysis of Management:

- Safety issues and requirements.
- Existing plans that will affect visitor services and education.
- Any existing and relevant resource management issues that impact the visitor experience and need to be interpreted to the visiting public.

#### Inventory and Analysis of the Audience and Stakeholders:

- Current visitors – the number of visitors, demographics, motivations, interests, market segments, etc. (NOTE: This is perhaps the most underdeveloped part of most interpretive plans).
- Stakeholders of the area – partners, funders, and interest groups who may have an interest in resource management in the area or visitor education in the area.

It is not enough to merely gather this information or data. Analysis involves deliberate thinking, discussion, reflection, and judgment. Consider why and how this information is useful for the project and how this information is useful for making decisions about this project.

#### Key Themes and Visitor Experiences:

This section of an interpretive plan summarizes the essence of the project's importance and its significance with visitor experiences. Statements of significance, persuasive narratives, and themes throughout the site are used to describe the distinctive qualities of the resources in place, including natural, cultural, scientific, recreational, and inspirational resources. Statements of significance are based on specific site legislation and the overall management plan, and they answer the question: "What are the key stories, issues, ideas, or features that make this area distinctive and need

to be communicated to visitors?" Statements of significance can be a line, a paragraph, or a page.

Visitor experience opportunities or desired experiences describe how the interpretive program facilitates physical, social, intellectual, inspirational, and emotional experiences for visitors. These statements include activities in which we hope visitors will engage, facts we hope they will learn, emotions we hope they will feel, and landscapes we hope they will appreciate. In an interpretive plan, these opportunities are expressed as broad recreational goals that suggest desired visitor experiences.

### **3.4.2 Urban Project**

The development of a visitor center project involves integrating structures, services, and visitor flow at a specific location. This process encompasses initial site inventory and assessment, alternative analysis, detailed design development, and construction procedures and services.

Regardless of cost or size, contemporary visitor center development should aim to address several criteria, such as:

- Achieving harmony and ethical responsibility for the existing environment, both cultural and natural.
- Maintaining economic sustainability and ecological integrity throughout the process to the extent possible.
- Allowing the simplicity of functions to prevail, respecting basic human needs for comfort, safety, and accessibility for persons with disabilities.
- Balancing long-term and short-term social and environmental benefits and costs.
- Minimizing disturbances to the ecosystem, natural and cultural resources, vegetation, geology, and natural water systems.
- Identifying, when appropriate, environmentally safe means of generating and storing energy on-site during the early stages of site planning.
- Locating and orienting structures to maximize passive and sustainable energy technologies.
- Developing facilities to anticipate the integration of energy conservation, waste reduction, recycling, and resource conservation into the visitor experience.
- Incorporating local materials and crafts into structures, native plants into the landscape, and local customs into programs and operations.

#### Location Selection

The selection of the location of the visitor center will be based on a detailed analysis and will consist of the selection of two modalities:

- A main Multifunctional Center for visitors which will be selected by the designing team according to two possibilities of location in the city of Tepelena;

- Two information stations in the city of Vlora and Permet, the location of which will be proposed by the design team

When establishing visitor centers, consideration should be given to the natural and cultural features of an area. The inventory and site analysis should clearly identify the quality and extent of these features, the potential impacts on the existing environment, and the potential mitigation measures that may be necessary.

The features that make an area attractive to visitors can also present problems. Some catchment areas may be highly sensitive to disturbance and unable to withstand the impacts of human activity. Other attractive areas may be too remote to justify development for direct visitor use. Some areas may be too close to safety hazards or too developed to be suitable for visitor center development. Conversely, some degraded areas may, in fact, offer opportunities for development, allowing more opportunities for site conservation and ecological restoration. Some areas may have terrain issues that will increase the cost of compliance with accessibility standards.

The site selection process should address the following questions:

- Will the anticipated impacts of development on a site be acceptable?
- What inputs (energy, materials, labor, and products) are needed to support a development option, and are the necessary inputs available?
- Will the terrain increase costs for compliance with accessibility standards (e.g., additional earthworks to meet slope and cross-slope requirements for parking spaces, accessible routes, wheelchair spaces in outdoor areas, necessary clear space for telephones, drinking fountains, waste receptacles, and other facilities)?

The site selection process for a visitor center involves identifying, weighing, and balancing the attractiveness (e.g., compelling natural and cultural features, accessibility, and sense of place) of a site against the costs inherent in its development. The features of a region or country must be described spatially (using conventional or computer-generated maps) to provide an accurate geographic inventory. Spatial areas that meet programmatic objectives within acceptable environmental parameters are potential development areas.

Factors to consider in site selection:

*Site compatibility:* When choosing a visitor center location, consider (a) visual compatibility (whether the visitor center will look like it belongs to that location), (b) cultural compatibility (whether the visitor center will respect the local social and cultural history of the site), and (c) ecological compatibility (whether the visitor center will respect and/or complement the geology, vegetation, and water around it).

*Density:* When placing structures, carefully weigh the merits of concentration versus dispersion. Natural landscape values may be easier to preserve if structures are carefully distributed. On the contrary, concentration of structures leaves more natural areas untouched.

*Climate:* Characteristics of a specific climate should be taken into account when placing structures to maximize human comfort while protecting the facility from extreme weather conditions such as heat or cold, dryness, or unpredictable weather.

*Slope:* In many environments, steep slopes dominate, requiring special placement of structures and costly construction practices. Building on steep slopes can lead to soil erosion, loss of hillside vegetation, inaccessible pathways and trails, damage to ecosystems, and costly land surface modifications to ensure access for persons with disabilities. Generally, appropriate site selection should prioritize more intensive development on gentle slopes, distributed development on moderate slopes, and no development on steep slopes.

*Vegetation:* It's important to preserve as much existing local vegetation as possible to ensure the area's integrity. Natural vegetation can be a significant aspect of the visitor experience and should be conserved as much as possible.

*Views:* Views are critical and enhance the visitor experience. Site location should maximize desired views of natural features and desired views of facilities that support all visitor experiences.

*Natural risks:* When considering site locations, avoid natural hazard situations such as unstable topography, wildlife, and flood-prone areas. Site presentation should allow controlled access to these features.

*Access to natural and cultural features:* Good site placement practices can maximize pedestrian access to a wide variety of resources and recreational activities within and outside the site. Low-impact development is key to protecting critical resource areas.

*Landscaping:* Considering the natural landscape is important during site selection and planning. It is generally less costly to care for the landscape during construction than to restore a poorly degraded landscape after construction. These efforts involve careful zone designation and not "cleaning and grubbing" unnecessarily. Plant placement requires careful planning to allow growth to maturity without compromising accessible pathways. The use of native plant species is highly recommended, with avoidance or control of exotic or invasive species in landscaping and site placement.

*Support facilities and public use areas:* Safety, visual quality, accessibility, noise, and odors are all factors that need to be considered when placing supporting services

and facilities. These areas need to be separated from public use and circulation areas.

*Proximity to supplies, services, and shelter:* Visitor center developments require the delivery and distribution of numerous supplies and services, as well as personnel for normal operation. Site placement should take into account the frequency, availability, and nature of these elements and the costs involved in providing them.

#### Access

Access to the site refers not only to the physical means of entry to the facility but also to the visitor experience along the way. For example, the journey experience can dramatize the transitions between origin and destination with visible guiding gateways and may offer opportunities for interpretation or education along the way. Other considerations to enhance the access experience in a developed area include:

- Selecting corridors to limit impacts on environmental and cultural resources and control development along the corridor leading to the facility.
- Providing reception and drama by framing views or directing attention to landscape features along the entrance route.
- Ensuring a sense of arrival at the destination.
- Ensuring that all visitors have equal or similar opportunities and experiences.

#### Construction Methods and Materialization

Construction methods and materials should be considered during the site selection process. The complexity of construction will be determined by resource value, physical distance, and the availability of labor and materials. The goal is to minimize damage to the surrounding area while developing a visitor facility that contributes to a cohesive, meaningful, and comfortable experience for visitors.

The methods and techniques used should ensure that there will be no unnecessary environmental damage or lasting signs of construction when the project is completed. Where possible, specified products and materials should be non-toxic, renewable or recyclable, and compatible with the chosen environment.

### 3.4.3 Multifunctional Center Building

The design of the visitor center building takes into consideration the process of site location, design, materials, and construction. In this process, visitor access and entry; visitor orientation, information, and comfort needs; and programmatic needs such as education and interpretation must all be taken into account.

#### General considerations for the building design

Once a location for a visitor center is chosen by the design team, the design of the visitor center must:

- Enhance the appreciation of the protected area.

- Use efficient and cost-effective technologies suitable for the functional needs of the visitor center (e.g., lighting, heating, and cooling).
- Strive to design efficient and flexible spaces.
- Plan for possible future expansions and adaptive uses.
- Comply with all required accessibility standards for persons with disabilities.

### Visitor Flow Design

#### *First Impressions*

Visitors form initial impressions during their first encounters with the site and its corresponding facilities. Their initial reactions can influence their overall experience.

#### *Entrance:*

- Road design should follow natural contours and respect topography and landscapes.
- The design should assist in slowing down vehicle entry and increasing awareness of the surroundings.
- Road and entrance signs should be uniform and reflect the overall theme of the visitor center.

#### *Parking:*

- The placement of parking should not obstruct the visitor center and should allow pedestrian passage.
- Adequate space for visitor parking is often necessary and should be provided for buses and individuals with disabilities.
- Service and emergency entrances should be controlled or directed to minimize visual impacts.
- Primary parking areas should offer natural shade and a landscape that is consistent with the surrounding area.
- Lighting should be sufficient to illuminate the pathways to and from the visitor center and parking areas.
- Accessible parking should be positioned to provide the shortest accessible route to the entrance. Multiple accessible parking clusters are allowed to serve various features.

#### *Pathways:*

- Pathways from parking areas to the visitor center should be visible or clearly marked. A view of the visitor center is necessary.
- Pathways to the visitor center and around the site should take into account capacity, grade, and other design elements and should meet requirements.
- A clear view of the entrance to the visitor center should be provided from major pathways

#### *Primary Needs:*



- Visitors will expect to find facilities and services to meet their basic needs for information, orientation, and comfort. These can be provided in several ways.
- Each facility must meet minimum criteria for accessibility in programming and design and ensure that no service intentionally or unintentionally excludes or separates visitors in a discriminatory manner.

*Information/Main Lobby Area:*

- A porch or courtyard should be provided as an informal or formal meeting place outside the main lobby area.
- The visitor lobby should be spacious, open, well-lit, and provide barrier-free access.
- Floors, walls, and ceiling surfaces should be designed to minimize noise. Different surface materials, colors, and creative floor designs can be used to direct visitors to different areas.
- Wayfinding signs should be large enough to be seen and should be placed where they can be seen. Use international symbols to direct visitors.
- The information desk should be well-lit and barrier-free (i.e., include access for wheelchairs and children).

*Comfort Zone:*

- Seating or appropriate areas around the building should be provided for visitors to rest.
- Toilets and drinking fountains should be easily accessible to visitors upon entering the visitor center.
- Consider appropriate areas for a café/restaurant, in secure, comfortable, and well-designed locations.

*Interpretive Media and Program Areas:*

The visitor center should preferably include exhibit room(s), classroom(s), or meeting room(s), for which the following design considerations should be taken into account:

- Exhibit rooms should be visible and inviting from the entrance to the facility.
- Exhibit rooms should be of sufficient size for a large number of visitors.
- Exhibit space should allow for random movement and not just directed and sequential orientations.
- Auditoriums with fixed seating are preferred for visitor centers where program offerings are routine and planned.
- Multi-functional rooms with flexible seating are more suitable for visitor centers used for various and spontaneous programs.
- Carefully consider the amount of interior space needed for circulation and how temporary seating arrangements affect occupancy loads. Wide maneuverability for access is also required in temporary seating arrangements.

- Do not underestimate the amount of space allocated for sales items. Visitors appreciate items related to their experiences. However, sales and information functions can often be combined for efficiency.

#### *Interior or Exterior Spaces:*

- In almost all cases, the visitor experience extends beyond the visitor center. Providing transitional zones outside to enhance visitor experiences is essential.
- Provide transitional zones between spaces. These areas may include viewing areas, trails, interpretive waysides, or information hubs.
- Propose outdoor space design with adventure.
- Provide activity areas in nature and/or exhibits near the visitor center. Create a network of possibilities or paths to explore the site.
- It is essential to offer the same experience and opportunities to all visitors. In the absence of accessibility guidelines for trails, consider providing an accessible loop on a trail for visitors with mobility impairments that may be shorter but just as interesting. Sensory considerations and the provision of assistive devices are especially useful for providing an equally interesting experience for visitors with visual, auditory, or cognitive impairments.

#### *Accessibility Design:*

The aim of accessibility legislation is to address human diversity and, therefore, should be integrated into the design of the visitor center to create facilities and programs that are usable by visitors with mobility, vision, hearing, and cognitive impairments. Developed standards to address the needs of these groups include criteria for signage, color, text, fonts, exhibits, hierarchical text, interactive kiosks, parking, building entrances, restrooms, slopes, and accessible pathways that connect all features and many other considerations.

- Integrate all visitors regardless of abilities. Do not exclude persons with disabilities.
- Provide multisensory experiences throughout the site and within the buildings to effectively communicate information to all visitors, including those with hearing, vision, and learning disabilities.
- Be flexible and creative.

#### *Sensory Considerations*

Sensory considerations not only make the visit more interesting and memorable but will also determine the success or failure of effective communication of information to visitors (especially those with disabilities). The most effective interpretive methods use as many senses as possible. Increasing the number of senses used in communication dramatically enhances the educational experience.

*Sight:* Ensure that visitors, including those with disabilities, have easy access to educational materials to enhance their understanding and appreciation of the local environment and its threats. Include views of natural and cultural resources in everyday activities to provide opportunities for observation, relaxation, and

appreciation. Use principles of scale, rhythm, proportion, balance, and composition to enhance the complementary integration of objects into the environmental context. Provide visual surprises within the design of objects to stimulate the educational experience. Limit the height of development to preserve the visual quality of the natural and cultural landscape. Use muted colors that blend with the natural context, unless environmental considerations (reflection/absorption), cultural values (traditions/taboo), or safety (necessary contrast for people with vision impairments) dictate otherwise.

*Hearing:* Find service and maintenance functions away from public areas. Interpretation of the space stops so that natural or site-specific sounds dominate. Use vegetation to blend sounds between public and private areas and orient openings toward natural sounds, such as the rustling of waves, the noise of streams, and the rustling of leaves. Limit the use or volume of non-relevant sounds such as radios and televisions.

*Touch:* Allow visitors to touch and be in contact with natural and cultural resources of the site. Touchable models, built on a scale, provide a complete experience for many visitors, including those with visual impairments. Change walking surfaces to give different qualities to different spaces. Use contrasting textures to direct attention to interpretive opportunities.

*Smell:* Allow visitors to enjoy the natural scents of vegetation. Fresh air is directly ventilated from service areas away from public areas.

*Taste:* Offer opportunities to taste local products and cuisine.

### Sustainable Design

Sustainable design is future-oriented. The goal of sustainable buildings is to use fewer materials, energy, and resources; produce less waste; and create healthy environments for people who occupy them. Sustainable design is essential because half of the material resources used today are used in construction, and half of all waste production comes from construction.

- Consider the broader context. Is the planned facility compatible with nearby areas?
- Build in already developed areas whenever possible; avoid easily eroded lands, fragile coastal areas, or marine ecosystems; and minimize disturbances to the landscapes around.
- Construct the landscape with local materials.
- Choose locations sheltered from climatic extremes and to maximize natural cooling and heating; locate building sites to take advantage of passive solar energy.
- Use systems that channel, store, and absorb rainwater.

- Create access corridors for multiple purposes for construction and eventual use by visitors and staff after the construction of the visitor center. Use erosion barriers and tree protection during construction, if necessary.

### **3.4. REQUIRED SERVICES AND DELIVERABLES**

The development of "**Multifunctional center and information stations of the National Park**" project will be carried out up to the stage of the final concept design.

#### **3.4.1. Interpretative Masterplan**

Analysis of the project task, consultations, documents gathering (format A3, A4).

i) *Basic Services:*

- Clarification of project design requirements/terms of reference.
- Providing consultation on the necessity and extent of services.
- Formulating requirements for the selection of other necessary specialists in the project process.
- Compilation of results.

ii) *Specialized Services:*

- Study of the existing situation.
- Site analysis.
- Planning of work.

iii) *Vision, Strategies, Objectives, and Actions.*

#### **3.4.2. Urban Project**

(A3 format)

- Development of the interpretive masterplan concept and its translation into drawings.
- Solution for accessibility.
- Integration with existing infrastructure.
- Generation of functional outdoor spaces.

#### **3.4.3. Preliminary design of the Multifunctional Center and Information Stations.**

(A3 format)

For this phase of the project, the consultant must prepare an project idea that will include:

- Description of the project, with explanations for the measures that will be taken to protect the environment, natural heritage and other values of this nature.
- Summary of the entire project with graphical drawings e.g. preliminary design and/or final design (scale according to the nature and size of the structure. For urban areas, the presentation should be on a scale of 1:500 to 1:100, especially with information on improving the environment, measures to be taken, measures for protection and maintenance.

- Forecast of costs according to the price manual, approved by sub-legal acts.
- Cost control, comparing the cost calculation with the preliminary cost.
- Summary of results of all project documentation.

### **Interpretive masterplan (A3/A4 format)**

The first step will consist of clarifying the requirements of the design task, analyzing the existing situation, collecting all the detailed information needed for the project, also drawing up a dedicated vision for the Visitor Center. The documentation needed will include but not be limited to:

- Analysis of the existing situation in the macro plan;
- Analysis of infrastructure;
- Analysis of climate;
- Analysis of the topography;
- Important natural and cultural touristic points, documented in the area;
- Social and cultural analysis;
- Touristic analysis;
- SWOT analysis;
- Proposed objectives, strategies and actions, concepted in a table or graph;
- Interpretative masterplan with the vision/concept of the project.

### **Urban Project (A3 format)**

The urban project will begin firstly with determining the location of the visitor center and the information points. The documentation needed will include but not be limited to:

- Reasoning on the selection of locations;
- Siteplan;
- Accessibility;
- Connection to the infrastructure;
- Solution for the parking areas;
- Solution of external spaces in functions and materials;
- Urban furniture;
- Signage;
- External Lightning;

### **Project idea of the Multifunctional Center and the Information Stations (A3 format) :**

The project consists in the project idea with all the information needed for the visitor center and information station points. The documentation needed will include but not be limited to:

- The concept of the volume;
- Detailed and appropriate functional program;
- Accessibility;
- Mobility;
- Siteplan;

- Siteplan on a larger scale;
- Technical plans;
- Technical sections;
- Technical facades;
- Technical details of the building;
- Furnished plan with detailed information about the functional program;
- Details of special areas;
- Solution of the interior of the object;
- Sustainable strategy for the object;
- 3D visualizations/ Photomontage;
- Conceptual model of the project.

**Technical report (A4 format), should contain:**

- Description of the existing conditions, analysis performed according to the profile experts and the conclusions reached by the study;
- Description of the project concept, design parameters, standards used, methodology, calculations performed;
- Description and special architectural solution;
- Description of the selected materials and signage;
- Conclusions, recommendations and expectations of the designer/group design.

**Implementation budget of the project (A4 – format in excel)**

- Defining and gathering measures to produce the project specifications using the contributions given by all the specialists involved in the project;
- Preparation of the detailed estimate according to the project specifications with the execution program divided by categories and work items;
- Harmonization and coordination of project categories delivered by the experts involved in project planning;
- The implementation estimate (based on Instruction no. 2. dated 8.5.2003. "On the classification and cost structure in construction works);
- The implementation estimate (based on Instruction no. 2. dated 8.5.2003. "On the classification and cost structure in construction works);
- The technical analysis of prices for all items in the estimate based on Decision of KM no. 629, dated 15.7.2015 "On the approval of the technical manuals for the prices of construction works and their technical analyses";
- For the items that are not included in the Manual, get three market offers and make a price analysis.
- 

**Chart of work (A4 – format in excel)**

- Determination of time periods for the implementation of all the items that the project proposes.
- The program of implementation of works divided by categories and items of work;
- Harmonization and coordination of project categories delivered by the experts involved in project planning.

### **Technical specifications (A4 format)**

The contractor must prepare the technical specifications for each of the materials to be used. For each item included in the budget, an analysis must be made according to this scheme:

- Detailed description of the items;
- Placement method;
- The required quality;
- Allowed formats;
- Recommended color;
- Sketches, drawings or photos (where possible).

## **4. PROJECT REALIZATION**

### **4.1. EXPERTS PROFILES, TERMS AND OBLIGATIONS**

The consultant will propose the needed experts according to the necessities to cover the entire scope of work described under these Terms of Reference and to prepare the submitted requirements. Based on the size and complexity of the work to be carried out, the group of experts must have a multi-disciplinary approach and include professionals who will:

- Address the most urgent issues from a multi-disciplinary point of view;
- They offer deep knowledge of the Albanian territory, its challenges and potentials;
- Integrate or adapt their experience in similar projects in other regions.

The Consultant's team will work with the staff of the National Agency of Protected Areas to draft the final idea, so they must build a constructive relationship, as well as a transfer of knowledge and competences.

The Consultant Team and the Working Group will report continuously to the National Agency of Protected Areas on the progress of the project design process.

The expert group will be composed of core and support team.

"Core team" is understood as the technical and managerial staff, which is essential in this task. The core team must be clearly identified as "core team" and support team must be clearly identified as "support team", in the proposals that is being declared by these terms of references.

#### **A. Core team**

##### **Team Leader (Architect)**

Scientific Master's degree in one of the fields related to planning, such as: Territorial Planning, Architect, Urbanist.

At least 20 years of work experience in similar matters as a project coordinator/project manager. Local experience, regional experience or in European Union countries;

At least one similar project described in the CV;

The role of Project Coordinator may also be covered by one of the proposed members of the Core Team. The evaluation of the Project Coordinator will be based on his managerial skills as well as his previous experiences in management.

Assigned Responsibilities:

- Leads the general work group for the fulfillment of the assigned task;
- Provides expertise with design knowledge;
- Leads the development of the agreed results and reviews their quality within an approved time frame;
- The Group Leader will be responsible for formulating the vision and leading the architects and engineers in planning and forecasting the development of the sector;
- Ensures coordination and cooperation between different experts, consultants, specialists and local staff;
- Coordinates and assists in the preparation and management of project activities to ensure the project continuity;
- Supervises the work of group members and manages the compilation of reports
- Assists various advisers in the tasks undertaken;
- Assists the project in all organizational and management matters;
- Participates in the preparation of the project action plans and helps in synchronizing counterparties in budget system planning;
- Is co-responsible for the preparation, implementation and public documentation as well as meetings between the interested parties of the project activities
- Develops and maintains contacts with the interested parties;
- The Team Leader will be present full time.

### **Landscape Architect**

Scientific Master's degree in one of the fields related to planning, such as: Territorial Planning, Architect, Urbanist, Landscape Architecture;

At least 15 years of similar experience;

CV, in which experience in projects or similar responsibilities should be highlighted.

Assigned Responsibilities:

- Will closely assist the Team Leader in the fulfillment of tasks;
- It will be in charge of the design component and the integration of the object with the landscape;
- The Landscape Architect will be present full time.

### **Urban Planner**

Scientific Master's degree in one of the fields related to planning, such as: Territorial Planning, Architect, Urbanist, Landscape Architecture;



At least 15 years of similar experience;  
CV, in which experience in projects or similar responsibilities should be highlighted.

Assigned Responsibilities:

- Will closely assist the Team Leader in the fulfillment of tasks;
- The expert on urban planning will provide specialized knowledge in all the urban solutions proposed by the design group;
- The Urban Planner will be present full time.

### **Construction Engineer**

Scientific Master's degree as a construction engineer;  
Professional license in construction engineering (or similar supporting documents according to the country of origin);  
At least 15 years of similar experience;  
CV, in which experience in projects or similar responsibilities should be highlighted.

Assigned Responsibilities:

- Will closely assist the Team Leader in the fulfillment of tasks;
- It will be in charge of the engineering design component, according to the terms of reference;
- The construction engineer will assist the Group Leader in the design process and will provide the necessary information and analyze engineering issues.
- The expert will draw up general technical specifications and estimate the relevant costs.
- The Construction Engineer will be present full time.

## **B. Support team**

In order to ensure a product that meets the requirements of the Terms of Reference, in addition to the core staff experts, the following experts should be included in the consultant team:

### **Biology expert**

Scientific Master's degree in one of the fields related to biology, environment  
At least 15 years of similar experience;  
CV, in which experience in projects or similar responsibilities should be highlighted.

### **Tourism expert**

Diploma/ professional license;  
At least 15 years of similar experience;  
CV, in which experience in projects or similar responsibilities should be highlighted.

### **Exhibition and interpretation designer**

Scientific Master's degree in one of the fields related to art, design as an architect, interior architect;

At least 5 years of similar experience;

CV, in which experience in projects or similar responsibilities should be highlighted.

### **Marketing expert**

Master of Science Degree in Business and Marketing;

At least 5 years of similar experience;

CV, highlighting experience in projects or similar responsibilities working with the development of marketing and brand strategy for natural/cultural heritage products.

**Signage Consultant** with at least 5 years of experience in analyzing visitor arrival situations, setting up directional signage for various modes of transportation, experience in protected natural sites is preferred

**Audio/Acoustic/Visual Consultant** - at least 5 years experience with interactive display projects, audio signage guidance, experience in nature conservation sites is preferred.

**Information Technology Expert** - at least 5 years experience with data networks, staff and public wifi systems.

**Lighting Designer** - at least 5 years of experience in lighting architecture, natural parks, trails. Experience in energy efficient design is mandatory, experience in nature conservation sites is preferred.

## **4.2. THE COMPETITION PROCESS**

This international design competition is divided into two phases and is organized as part of a procedure that leads to the determination of a winner of a public service contract, where the object is a final project.

### **4.2.1 Phase 1 | Expression of interest, eligibility and preliminary list of winners**

In the first stage of the application, candidates must submit the expression of interest according to the Terms of Reference and STD and will present the legal and technical documents:

- application documents;
- composition of the working group;
- qualifications and experiences;
- work methodology;
- Presentation of the interpretive master plan/preliminary idea project, their vision for the project, including determining the location of the visitor center and information stations, as well as an initial concept.

The contracting authority will check the documentation and draw up a report for the Jury. Candidates who do not meet the requirements cited in the Tender Documents will be disqualified and everyone will be notified immediately.

The jury will evaluate the qualified candidates.

At the end of the first phase, a maximum of 3 (three) candidates/ a minimum of 2 (two) best candidates will be selected, who will continue in the second phase.

#### **4.2.2 Phase 2 | Submission of project idea**

In the second stage, the Jury will evaluate the proposals and following the criteria (of the second stage), the winner will be determined. At the beginning of this phase, the Contracting Authority will send an invitation to each of the winners of the first phase, to submit the proposal:

- Preliminary idea project;
  - a. Accompanying technical documentation
  - b. Urban Analysis;
  - c. Technical Report of the project;
  - d. Preliminary assessment of the value of the investment for the proposal;
  - e. Preliminary assessment of the value of the implementation project.

After receiving the final concept, the contracting authority will perform a documentation check based on the terms of reference and DST. Qualified projects will be evaluated by the Jury. The jury will declare the winner of the competition.

The winning design group will continue working with the final project idea, concluding the contract with the contracting authority, after the negotiations on the estimate, deadlines and documents to be submitted have been made. The winner has the right to use the concepts/proposals/ideas from the 3 qualified projects in the second phase, adapting the project to his idea.

#### **4.2.3 Award**

A maximum of 3 (three) or a minimum of 2 (two) teams selected in the second phase will be awarded 26,000 Euros for the submission of the respective project idea. The winning design group of the competition will have to deduct the reward of 26,000 Euros from the value of the final project idea.

#### **4.2.4 Composition of the jury**

The competition jury will be composed of 7 members, who are experts in the respective fields. The composition of the jury is structured and includes 4 local members/experts and 3 international members/experts.

Jury members will be notified no later than 7 days from the date of project evaluation.

The composition will be announced on the official website. Also, a short biography for

each will be placed on the website. The jury will be assisted by the Technical Secretariat composed of members of the Organizing Authority and experts in the field.

#### **4.2.5 Competition Materials**

All the graphic materials that the applicants will need to work on the project, will be available on the website of the National Agency of Protected Areas and also in a Google Drive folder.

#### **4.2.6 Application documents**

Competition applicants must submit a number of documents in order to comply with competition requirements for Stage 1 and Stage 2 of the competition. These documents are of a legal, informative and technical nature. Any details regarding the documentation that must be submitted to qualify for the competition will be given in Annex 9 of the STD The following list is informative only; please refer to the above document for the complete formal requirements and forms to be submitted.

##### **Phase 1**

Submissions should be well organised in two PDF documents, organized into titled chapters following with the the same structure as listed below, where the Concept Design Drawing and Illustrations (Preliminary) will make up document 1 and the rest will be document 2. Well-organized binders will help the Contracting Authority and the Jury to assess the compliance of each submission with the requirements of the DST.

##### **DOCUMENT 1**

##### **Expression of Interest**

###### **1. Competitor profile**

A detailed overview of the design studio leading the design team, highlighting the competing studio's philosophy, skills and competencies, awards won (if any).

Design studio CV (showing relevant previous experience) and portfolio.

Organizational structure of the design studio.

At least one similar work (realized, built, or in the design phase).

###### **2. Composition of the design team**

Submission of the relevant portfolio and CV of the group members.

###### **3. Comprehensibility of the Project - Approach to the Project - work methodology**

A description from the working group on project understanding, based on the material presented or individual research, outlining what your strategy would be for a project of this type and complexity.

It can be presented in the form of a narrative, images or sketches.

###### **4. Preliminary concept drawings and illustrations - Presentation of the interpretive master plan/preliminary idea project**

Each applicant/bidder shall submit sufficient graphic material to be understood by the concept jury. The clarity of the presentation will support the communication of the idea to the jury

## DOCUMENT 2

### **Qualification documentation**

5. Legal and financial documentation or self-declarations relevant to the application under the DSTs (appendix 9)

General qualification criteria

a. The applicant/bidder must declare that he/she:

i. is/are registered in the commercial register according to the legislation of the country where it carries out its activity, or according to special legislation in the case of a non-profit organization, has/has a procurement object in the field of activity, and has an active status;

ii. is/are not in the bankruptcy process (active status);

iii. has/has not been convicted of any criminal offense, in accordance with Article 76/1 of the Law on Public Procurement (LPP);

iv. the person (persons) who act as a member of the administrative body, director or supervisor, shareholder or partner, or who has representative, decision-making or controlling power within the Economic Operator, is currently not convicted or has not been convicted. with a final decision of the court for any criminal offense defined in article 76/1 of the LPP;

v) has/has not been convicted by a final court decision for professional activity;

vi. there is/are no unpaid taxes and social security contributions or it falls under one of the provisions provided for in Article 76/2 of the LPP;

vii. has/has paid electricity bills and fulfills/fulfills the requirements derived from the legislation in force. This information is required for Applicants/Bidders, who operate in the territory of the Republic of Albania;

viii. is/are not in conflict of interest, according to the legislation in force;

xii. carries out the activity in accordance with the relevant environmental, social and labor legislation;

ix. has submitted an Independent Application, according to the requirements of the legislation in force;

x. carries out the activity in accordance with the requirements of the legislation in force.

xi. there are no persons, who are/have been in this capacity, in a bidder excluded from the right to benefit from public funds, by decision of the Public Procurement Agency, while this decision is in force.

b. The above criteria will be met upon submission of the Summary of the Applicant/Bidder Self-Declaration Form, on the day of submission, as per Annex 10 of the STDs.

c. In the case of a joint venture of bidders, each bidding member of the group must submit the aforementioned self-declaration.

d. In case the Applicant/Bidder will rely on the capacities of other entities, the aforementioned self-declaration must also be submitted by the supporting entity.

e. The General Qualification Criteria must not be changed by the Organizing Authority.

f. In any case, the Organizational Authority has the right to carry out the necessary verifications for the authenticity of the above information stated by the Applicant/Bidder.

g. If the application is submitted by a joint venture of applicants/bidders, the applicants/bidders must ensure:

xi. Cooperation agreement between them, which defines the representative, the percentage of participation in the joint venture and the tasks/responsibilities that each of the members of the joint venture will perform.

q. If an applicant/bidder wants to rely on the capacities of other entities, he/she proves to the contracting authority or entity that he/she will have the necessary resources available, presenting a written commitment of these entities for this purpose.

## II. Special qualification criteria

b. The applicant/bidder must submit:

iv. Summary form of Self-Declaration according to Annex 10 of DST;

v. Economic and financial capacity

- To prove financial and economic capacities, economic operators must present a certificate for the annual turnover for the last financial years 2020, 2021, 2022, where the turnover value for at least one of the years of the requested period must be no less than 2,500,000 ALL. For foreign operators, in cases where the required documents have not been issued in the country of origin to certify the balance sheets/financial statements or the annual turnover, they can submit a declaration for their confirmation.

## Phase 2

The proposal required for Phase 2 submission should include, but not be limited to, the following list of documents.

1. Materials visualizing the proposal (A0 - maximum 10 panels)

- Plans, sections, facades of the proposal;
- Functional diagrams;
- Diagrams and conceptual drawings (mobility/circulation, parking, structures);
- Urban design concepts and plans;
- Landscape design concepts and specifications;
- Diagrams of the main technical specifications;
- Renderings and visualizations.

• PowerPoint/ Keynote Presentations of Proposals (including animations - optional).

2. Accompanying technical documentation:

• Proposal report (A4 or A3 format), including:

- a. Urban analysis;
- b. Technical report of the project;

- The design approach and methodology;
  - Inspirations, precedents, references;
  - Context analysis;
  - Identification of the needs of interested parties;
  - Description and presentation of the proposal;
  - Work Plan;
  - Spaces and capacity specifications (diagrams, descriptions);
  - Functional elements and specifications (diagrams, descriptions)
- c. Preliminary assessment of the value of the investment for the proposal;
- d. Preliminary assessment of the value of the implementation project.

#### 4.2.7 Evaluation criteria

##### Phase 1

The jury will evaluate the applicants who will be listed as winners in Phase 1, based on the following criteria:

Clarity and completeness of documents	10 points
The professional composition of the team	20 points
Previous experience of the team (and its members)	20 points
Clarity and efficiency of the proposed methodology	20 points
Matching the interpretive master plan/preliminary concept based on the objectives of the competition	30 points

##### Phase 2

The jury will evaluate the applicants who will be listed as winners in Phase2, based on the following criteria:

Creativity and project concept solution;	30 points
Rich functional program;	10 points
Fulfillment of functions according to the program	10 points
Applicable project factors	10 points
The connection and impact of the object with the surrounding area	20 points
Cost ratio with environmental impact	20 points

#### 4.2.8 Copyright

All drawings and submissions of competitors become the joint property of the Contracting Authority (Organizer) and the Ministry of Tourism and Environment. They acquire the right to publish, reproduce and use them for various institutional purposes. Copyright for each project submission remains with the author.

#### 4.3. SCHEDULING AND DELIVERIES

##### 4.3.1. Starting period

The estimated date for the start of the international design competition will be September 2023.

##### 4.3.2. Estimated completion period or duration

The duration of the competition and services will be 112 days from the start date.

##### 4.3.3 Delivery calendar

Open call	22 September
First question period	22 - 02 October
<b>Deadline phase 1</b>	<b>12 October (12:00 CET)</b>
Shortlist	16 October
Deadline for appeals	23 October
Invitations for Phase 2	24 October
Second question period	24 - 30 October
<b>Deadline Phase 2</b>	<b>24 November (12:00 CET)</b>
Public presentations – Announcement of Winners	30 November
Signing the contract for the drafting of the final project idea	7 December
Submission of the final project idea	29 December

#### 4.4. REPORTING

##### 4.4.1. Content, language, presentation/number of copies of the report

Reports	Language	Delivery date	Numri i kopjeve	
			Report	CD
Phase 1	AL	20 days	printed – 1 copy	1
Phase 2	AL	30 days	printed – 3 copies	2
Final project idea	AL/ ENG	29 days	printed – 3 copies	2

All reports of the Final Idea Project must be submitted by the consultant in physical and electronic form.



Sources of information should be referenced and included in a complete list.  
The drawings and reports must be in 3 (three) original printed copies and in 2 (two) CDs with all the materials in the relevant formats (acad, word, excel, etc.).  
The submission of the documentation will be done in an official way accompanied by an inventory sheet.  
All documents in physical form (printed) must be signed and stamped in the original.  
All documents in electronic form (CD) must be electronically signed.

Phase 1 Documents must be submitted in 1 (one) printed and signed copy to the postal address of the Organizing Authority, together with a CD of the digital material. 1 (one) electronic copy of the material must be sent to the email address info@akzm.gov.al

Phase 2 The panels must be submitted in A0 format, foam-coated, in 1 (one) printed copy, while the report/booklet must be submitted in A4 or A3 paper format, in 3 (three) printed copies.

All 3 printed copies together with 2 CDs of digital material must be submitted to the postal address of the National Agency for Protected Areas. 1 (one) electronic copy of panels (original/editable format and PDF), report/brochure (editable format and PDF) and presentation (editable format and PDF), should be sent to the email address info@akzm.gov .co.uk

Postal address: Boulevard "Dëshmorët e Kombit" No. 1, 1001, Tirana, Tirana, Albania,  
Email Address: info@akzm.gov.al

## **4.5. MONITORING AND EVALUATION**

### **4.5.1. Determination of indicators**

The Contracting Authority responsible for the management of this contract is the National Agency of Protected Areas.

A project manager will be appointed on behalf of the Contracting Authority.

The National Agency of Protected Areas (AKZM) is the beneficiary of this project. It should be included in all consultations for this project.

#### **Eligibility**

The competition is open to all professional teams, who are able to fulfill the following requirements:

1. Be registered or recognized by an official accrediting body in the applicant's country of origin; OR
2. where the law of recognition or registration does not apply, the applicant is a member of a professional institution in the country of organization.

Each Phase 1 team must consist of at least one key local expert (natural person)/ and/or a local studio.

All team members must be identified on the Team Composition Statement.

All applicants and their team members must be clearly identified and must state the validity of their professional registration, recognition, or membership in the Team Statement of Composition.

#### **4.5.2. Engagement during implementation**

The National Agency of Protected Areas requires the designer to engage during the implementation phase whenever there is a need for clarifications, corrections or details of the project that could and should have been foreseen and made during the design.

#### **4.5.3. Consultant Facilities and Access to Information**

The consultant must have the base office in Albania, so that it is close to the project site. The consultant will be responsible for office rent and said experts.

The consultant will be responsible for international and local transportation, accommodation and expenses for project staff, along with communication materials, printing, report production and translation. Verbal interpretation at meetings will be provided by the consultant.

AKZM will provide access to all existing relevant information, maps, studies, models, legal documents, etc., at its disposal, immediately and at no cost.

#### **4.5.4. Technical and stakeholder meetings**

The activities listed above will be done in consultation with the ACZM through periodic meetings. The implementation project must be approved by the competent authority(ies), in accordance with Law No. 81/2017 "On Protected Areas". Project documents must be made available to the public.

The consultant, MTM and AKZM will organize at least 2 inter-institutional coordination forums, where the last one will present the final product and, if requested by the interested parties, public meetings will also be organized.

#### **4.5.5. Knowledge transfer**

The consultant will work in close cooperation with AKZM, in order for them to participate actively and intensively during the entire process of designing the project, to give a contribution, but also to increase the capacities of the people who will work for the implementation of the plan.

Finally, the consultant will prepare a capacity building and training program along with terms of reference for any technical assistance that may be required.

#### **4.5.6. Confidentiality**

The documents and data that will be made available to the company/consultant by AKZM must be considered confidential and must not be transmitted to third parties.

## **5. REFERENCES | APPENDIX**

All graphic documentation necessary for applicants to work on the project will be available for download on the competition page and also on a shared Google Drive link. List of documents uploaded to the GDrive folder:

- 5.1 Map with the border of the Vjosa River National Park;
- 5.2 Materials of Phase I of the Feasibility Study;
- 5.2 Files of Natural Monuments;
- 5.3 Information on the surrounding Protected Areas;
- 5.4 Maps of RAPA of Fier, Vlora and Gjirokastër;
- 5.5. Proposed sites for project location.