



DRIN DAY 2026

THREE MUNICIPALITIES – ONE RIVER

Community Action for a Living Drin Basin

PREMIUM IMPACT REPORT



Kukës • Has • Tropojë | July 2026



“A river connects landscapes. A shared commitment connects people. Drin Day 2026 brought together three municipalities, one river and one common vision for a sustainable future.”

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A visual record of action, partnership and lasting impact across the Drin Basin.

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Foreword

A shared natural heritage, a shared responsibility.

The Drin River is much more than a shared water resource. It is a living ecosystem, a source of biodiversity, a cultural landscape and a symbol of cooperation among the communities of the Western Balkans.

Protecting the Drin Basin requires more than environmental policies. It requires informed citizens, engaged young people, committed local authorities and strong partnerships capable of transforming awareness into collective action.

With this vision, Drin Day 2026 was celebrated through an innovative regional approach that brought together the municipalities of Kukës, Has and Tropojë under one common message: Three Municipalities – One River.

Over three consecutive days, citizens, students, teachers, environmental clubs, civil society organisations, municipal authorities and volunteers participated in environmental, educational and cultural activities that celebrated the Drin River as a shared natural heritage.

“Protecting the Drin means protecting our shared future.”

Executive Summary

Regional action that exceeded expectations.

Drin Day 2026 transformed a traditional environmental awareness event into a comprehensive regional initiative in Northern Albania. Implemented over three consecutive days in Kukës, Has and Tropojë, it mobilised institutions, schools, environmental clubs, civil society, volunteers and local communities around a common objective: protecting the Drin River Basin through awareness, participation and collective action.

A total of 120 direct participants took part, including 72 women and girls and 48 men and boys, representing ages from 10 to 70. The initiative benefited from strong institutional ownership, including participation by the Prefect of Kukës Region, municipal council leadership and representatives of all three municipalities.

Public visibility exceeded expectations. The Mayor of Kukës issued a dedicated statement, Albanian National Television (RTSH) produced dedicated coverage, and social media communication reached several thousand people. The project also combined environmental education with cultural heritage, local gastronomy, creative arts and biodiversity learning.

The most significant milestone was the revival of Drin Day in Kukës after a ten-year interruption and the first-ever celebration in Has and Tropojë. This created a regional model of cooperation under the vision Three Municipalities – One River.

HEADLINE ACHIEVEMENTS

- 120 direct participants across three municipalities
- 60% female participation
- Drin Day revived in Kukës after ten years
- First-ever celebrations in Has and Tropojë
- National television and extensive digital visibility

The Drin Basin

A shared natural heritage

The Drin River Basin is the largest transboundary river system in the Western Balkans, connecting communities, ecosystems and cultures. It supports drinking water, biodiversity, agriculture, fisheries, hydropower and tourism while preserving exceptional natural and cultural heritage.

For Kukës, Has and Tropojë, the Drin and Lake Fierza are inseparable from local identity, livelihoods and development. At the same time, pollution, improper waste disposal and climate pressures underline the need for stronger environmental education and collective responsibility.



“Because rivers do not recognise administrative boundaries.”

Why the Project Matterred

Building regional cooperation through community action

The concept went beyond organising three independent events. It demonstrated that protecting a shared river requires a shared commitment from institutions, schools, civil society organisations and local communities. The regional approach created a common identity while allowing each municipality to contribute its own strengths.

01
Strengthen environmental awareness

03
Promote youth leadership

05
Promote cultural and natural heritage

02
Encourage active community participation

04
Strengthen institutional cooperation

06
Increase visibility of the GEF Drin II Project

Project at a Glance

Key facts and measurable reach

120 DIRECT PARTICIPANTS	72 WOMEN AND GIRLS
48 MEN AND BOYS	3 MUNICIPALITIES
3 CONSECUTIVE DAYS	10–70 AGE RANGE
1 RTSH PROGRAMME	3 ENVIRONMENTAL CLUBS

Three Days, One Regional Story

A continuous celebration across Northern Albania

7 JULY KUKËS	Opening forum, institutional dialogue, youth engagement and recognition of Environmental Clubs.
8 JULY HAS	Community clean-up, cultural heritage, traditional gastronomy and painting competition.
9 JULY TROPOJË	Biodiversity education, freshwater ecosystems and awareness of fish species.



KUKËS | RECONNECTING THE COMMUNITY WITH THE DRIN

Municipality of Kukës

Reviving Drin Day after a ten-year interruption

The regional celebration began in Kukës, the largest urban centre of Northern Albania and one of the municipalities most closely connected to the Drin River and Lake Fierza. The opening symbolised the revival of Drin Day after a decade and generated renewed enthusiasm among institutions, schools and local communities.

The programme combined an official opening, awareness forum, educational presentations, discussions on the protection of the Drin Basin, interviews, visibility materials, recognition certificates and professional documentation. Young people and Environmental Clubs played a central role, turning environmental education into active public participation.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS – KUKËS

- Drin Day revived after ten years
- Strong participation by regional and municipal authorities
- Active involvement of schools and Environmental Clubs
- Official public recognition by the Mayor of Kukës
- Professional photography, video and national media visibility



Young people as environmental ambassadors



Recognition of Environmental Clubs



HAS | WHERE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION MEETS CULTURAL HERITAGE

Municipality of Has

Nature, culture and community participation

The second day introduced one of the project's most innovative elements: the integration of environmental protection with local cultural identity. Children wore traditional costumes, local families presented traditional dishes, and community participation transformed Drin Day into a celebration of both nature and heritage.

Alongside awareness sessions and practical clean-up activities, a painting competition allowed Environmental Clubs to express their vision of the Drin, biodiversity and a healthier future. Art, education and practical action created one of the most memorable moments of the regional celebration.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS – HAS

- First-ever Drin Day celebration in the municipality
- Traditional costumes and gastronomy linked to environmental awareness
- Painting competition engaging Environmental Clubs
- Intergenerational participation
- Strong collaboration among schools, civil society and local institutions



Young volunteers in practical environmental action



Creative learning beside the Drin

Photo Story: Has

Protecting nature while celebrating identity



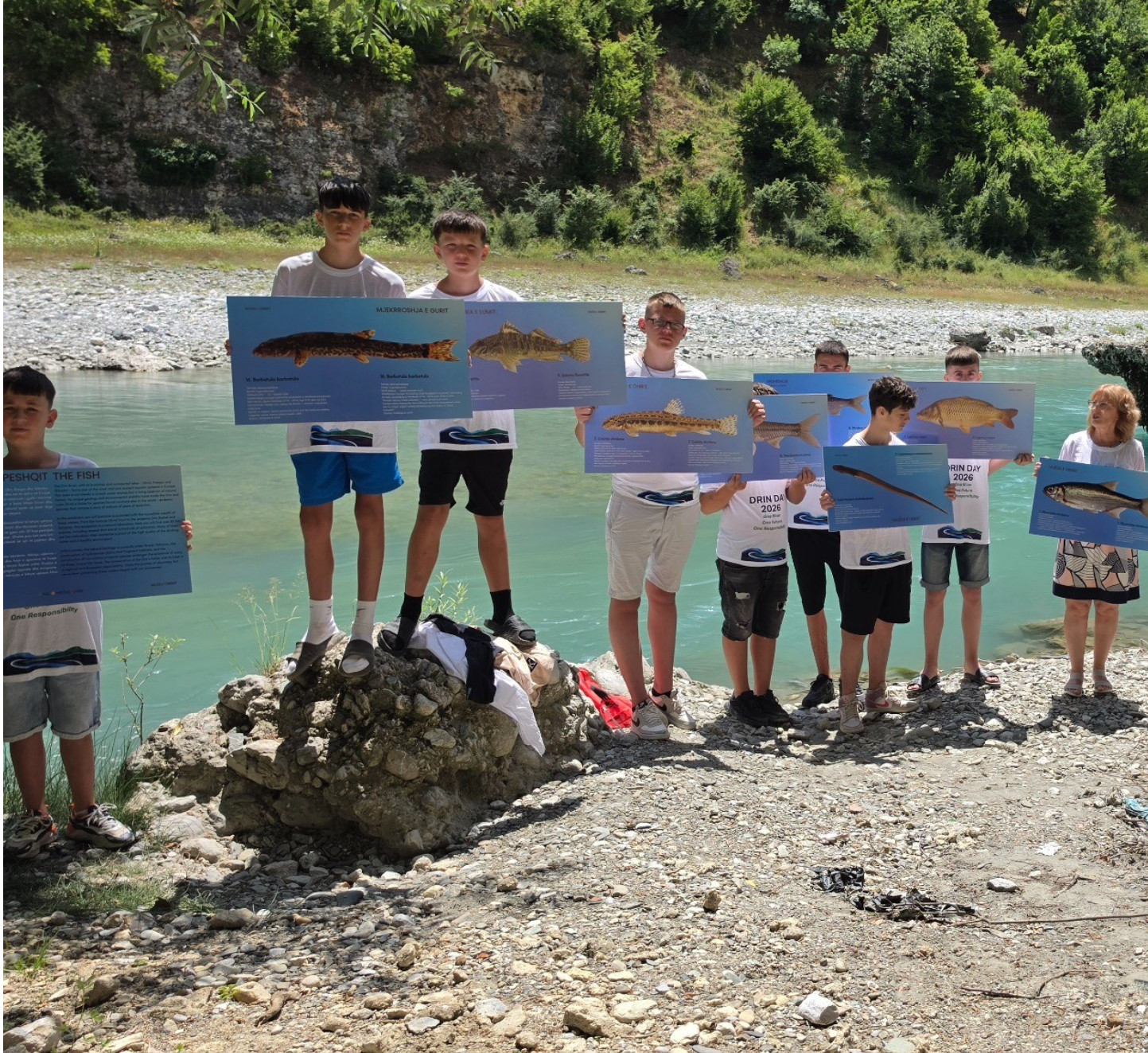
Cultural identity as a bridge to environmental responsibility



Organisers and young participants



A community united around one river and one shared responsibility



TROPOJË | BIODIVERSITY EDUCATION BY THE RIVER

Municipality of Tropojë

Expanding the regional vision

The regional celebration concluded in Tropojë, marking the municipality's first participation in Drin Day. The final event focused on biodiversity, freshwater ecosystems and the ecological importance of the fish species inhabiting the Drin system and Lake Fierza.

Young people, teachers, institutional representatives and community members used educational displays to connect healthy rivers with biodiversity conservation and sustainable local development. The activity confirmed the growing role of Environmental Clubs as local ambassadors for environmental protection.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS – TROPOJË

- First Drin Day celebration in the municipality
- Strong focus on biodiversity and freshwater ecosystems
- Educational promotion of sustainable fish-resource management
- Active involvement of schools and Environmental Clubs
- Successful conclusion of a three-municipality campaign

“The future of the Drin Basin is already in the hands of its next generation.”

Project Results

Delivering more than planned

INSTITUTIONAL	Stronger cooperation among municipalities, regional institutions, councils, schools and civil society.
ENVIRONMENTAL	Practical clean-up action accompanied by messages on continuous community responsibility.
EDUCATIONAL	Students learned through forums, biodiversity materials, creative activities and direct action.
SOCIAL	Children, young people, teachers, officials, volunteers and senior citizens acted together.
COMMUNICATION	National television, local media, social media, photography and an English-subtitled documentary extended reach.

Results Against Objectives

A project that met and exceeded its commitments

PLANNED OBJECTIVE	ACHIEVEMENT
Increase environmental awareness	Fully achieved
Strengthen municipal cooperation	Exceeded
Promote youth engagement	Exceeded
Encourage community participation	Exceeded
Promote environmental communication	Exceeded
Promote cultural values linked to the Drin	Exceeded

Success Stories

Four dimensions of lasting impact

01

Reviving Drin Day

A regional environmental tradition returned to Kukës after more than ten years, restoring community engagement and creating a foundation for an annual celebration.

02

Culture Inspiring Responsibility

Has demonstrated that traditional costumes, gastronomy and local identity can make environmental messages more accessible and meaningful.

03

Young Guardians of the Drin

Environmental Clubs became active leaders through discussion, practical action, biodiversity learning and art.

04

Three Municipalities, One Commitment

Kukës, Has and Tropojë proved that shared environmental challenges are addressed most effectively through regional partnership.

Communication and Visibility

Giving the Drin a strong public voice

Communication was treated as an essential part of impact. A coordinated visibility strategy combined traditional media, digital communication and high-quality visual documentation before, during and after the activities.

VISIBILITY OUTPUTS

- Dedicated coverage by Albanian National Television (RTSH)
- Local and regional news coverage
- Social media reaching several thousand viewers
- Official public statement by the Mayor of Kukës
- Professional photography and interviews
- Documentary video with English subtitles
- Project flags and materials carrying partner visibility



Consistent project branding and youth visibility



Institutional and community dialogue

Partnerships and Stakeholder Engagement

Building strong partnerships for a shared river

GEF Drin II Project	Global Water Partnership – Mediterranean	Ecologists for the Region
Municipalities of Kukës, Has and Tropojë	Prefecture of Kukës Region	Municipal Councils
Schools and Environmental Clubs	Teachers, volunteers and civil society	Local and national media

“Environmental awareness became a shared responsibility rather than the task of a single institution.”

Lessons Learned

What the regional experience confirmed

Regional cooperation creates greater impact

A common vision increased visibility, institutional ownership and shared responsibility.

Young people are strong drivers of awareness

Direct participation proved more powerful than theory alone.

Culture strengthens environmental messages

Local identity made environmental protection more relevant and accessible.

Institutional ownership is essential

Public leadership increased credibility and participation.

Professional communication multiplies impact

Media and high-quality documentation extended the project's value far beyond the event days.

Sustainability

Ensuring long-term impact

Although implemented over three consecutive days, Drin Day 2026 established partnerships, strengthened institutional cooperation and produced communication resources that will remain useful beyond the grant period.

SUSTAINABILITY PILLARS

- Continued municipal cooperation
- Environmental Clubs active throughout the school year
- Volunteer and community engagement
- Reusable photographs, documentary and educational materials
- A replicable regional model for future Drin Day editions
- A foundation for future initiatives, including the planned Drin Museum



Environmental Clubs provide the strongest bridge between one event and long-term change.

Recommendations

Priorities for future editions

1	Expand participation to additional municipalities across the Drin Basin.
2	Give Environmental Clubs and youth volunteers a stronger role in planning and implementation.
3	Develop educational resources and workshops for use throughout the year.
4	Introduce simple citizen-science activities, biodiversity monitoring and water observation.
5	Continue professional media, documentary and digital storytelling.
6	Facilitate exchanges among municipalities to share successful practices.
7	Establish Drin Day as a permanent annual regional event.

Impact Story

Three municipalities, one river, one shared responsibility

Some projects are remembered because of the activities they implement. Others are remembered because they change the way communities work together. Drin Day 2026 belongs to the second category.

For three consecutive days, Kukës, Has and Tropojë transformed environmental awareness into practical community action. Children learned that rivers are living ecosystems. Teachers strengthened environmental education. Municipal leaders reaffirmed their commitment. Citizens participated directly in protecting one of Albania's most valuable freshwater systems.

Although each municipality contributed its own traditions and priorities, all three were united by one regional message: Three Municipalities – One River. This shared identity became one of the project's greatest achievements and a model for future cooperation throughout the Drin Basin.

“Local action can generate regional impact.”

Project Legacy

Creating lasting value beyond the project

Stronger regional cooperation

Closer relationships among municipalities and institutions.

Increased public awareness

Messages reached national and digital audiences.

Reusable communication assets

Photography, documentary and educational materials remain available.

Stronger Environmental Clubs

Greater practical experience and local visibility.

Improved institutional ownership

Environmental protection reinforced as a local development priority.

A model for replication

The approach can be adapted across Albania and the wider basin.

Conclusion

Protecting one river, building one shared future

Drin Day 2026 demonstrated that meaningful environmental change begins with people. The municipalities of Kukës, Has and Tropojë transformed a shared environmental concern into coordinated regional action, combining education, practical engagement, culture, institutional cooperation and professional communication.

The revival of Drin Day in Kukës and its first celebration in Has and Tropojë represent an important milestone for environmental cooperation in Northern Albania. The experience provides a strong foundation for future action under the GEF Drin II Project and for the sustainable management of the Drin River Basin.

The journey does not end with this report. It continues through the commitment of institutions, schools, Environmental Clubs, civil society organisations and every citizen who understands that protecting the Drin means protecting a shared future for generations to come.

“One river. One future. One responsibility.”

Acknowledgements

With appreciation to every institution, organisation and participant who made Drin Day 2026 possible.

The project team expresses its sincere appreciation to the Global Environment Facility, the GEF Drin II Project, Global Water Partnership – Mediterranean, the municipalities of Kukës, Has and Tropojë, the Prefecture of Kukës Region, Municipal Councils, schools, teachers, Environmental Clubs, civil society organisations, volunteers, community members and media partners including RTSH.

Special recognition is extended to every participant whose contribution helped transform Drin Day 2026 into a meaningful regional celebration of environmental responsibility and cooperation.





THE FUTURE OF THE DRIN BASIN IS ALREADY IN THE HANDS OF ITS NEXT GENERATION.

Three Municipalities – One River