

New developments on the planned [airport construction](#) in the Narta lagoon: The [lawsuit](#) filed by our partners against the project was ruled as inadmissible in the first instance, but they are not backing down and have filed an appeal. Additionally, our partners have filed another lawsuit against the Albanian Council of Ministers.

The **Albanian administrative court** ruled as inadmissible the lawsuit against the planned airport in the Narta Lagoon, which the Albanian nature conservation organisations PPNEA and AOS filed with our support at the end of November 2022. Remarkably, the 1,400-page evidenced statement of claim was processed by only one judge in a non-public session in just seven minutes. According to the judge, [NGOs](#) as plaintiffs are not entitled to challenge the **EIA** procedures and the development permit because they are unaffected by it. In December 2022, PPNEA and AOS appealed against the judicial decision.

[The Vlora Airport](#) ruling and reasoning is a surprising deviation from previous successful lawsuits aiming to protect the same lagoon. Incidentally, this is the same judge who had ruled in favour of EuroNatur and our partner EcoAlbania in 2017 in their lawsuit against the planned Poçem hydropower plant on the Vjosa River, including regarding the right to sue. Furthermore, this inadmissibility ruling goes against two recent flagship decisions of the Albanian Supreme Court, which have unequivocally established that the NGOs as public interest representatives, have the right to sue against development projects that entail environmental and nature conservation impacts. There are many indications that the Albanian government might be exerting pressure on the judiciary in the Vlora Airport case. In December 2022, our Albanian partners, with our support, filed another appeal, this time against the revision of the territorial boundaries of the Vjosa-Narta protected area made by the [government](#) in Tirana. This revision was not based on a legally compliant procedure disregarding several legal requirements of the protected areas Law, and there was a lack of effective consultations, and factual justification for reducing the protected area. Our partners evaluated the Geographic Information System (GIS) data, indicating the proposed new boundaries. According to the data, the planned airport is still within the limits of the Narta Conservation Area, which is a clear breach of the law. Moreover, some of the listed coordinates are located far away from Albania in countries of the Middle East.

“The evaluation of the GIS data points to the cumulative incompetence of the responsible authorities. We assume that this is also evident in other places, for example, in the Environmental Impact Assessment on which the construction of the airport is based,” said Annette Spangenberg, head of conservation at EuroNatur. “Actually, we should have good chances in court with this, but how independent the judiciary is in the Vlora Airport case, still is questionable,” said Spangenberg, Euronatur writes.