

Albania: Experts prove serious mistakes in environmental permit for Valbona hydropower plants

A group of nine eminent Albanian environmental experts and university professors conducted an independent expertise whether environmental permit issued in 2013 for the construction of two hydropower plants Dragobia on the Valbona River was based on scientific arguments. Their conclusion is that the Environmental Impact Assessment study has a number of disadvantages.

Based on experts' opinions from various fields it has been concluded that the two cascade hydropower plants could have a powerful impact on flora and fauna.

It was also pointed out that there are serious deficiencies in the structure and methodology of Environmental Impact Assessment study.

Based on the research, independent experts concluded that the Environmental Impact Assessment study does not provide a real possibility of general comprehension of impact on the environmental and social-economic aspects of the project.

Environmental Impact Assessment study for the Project two Hydropower Plants Dragobia was approved in June 2013 and environmental permit was issued on 23rd of July 2013 for a period of two years. The permit may be renewed or canceled after environmental aspects that have not been identified earlier were signified. "We hope that these are the reasons for the Government to reconsider the construction of these hydropower plants", experts said. Experts concluded that water diversion through tunnels and reduced amount of water in riverbed will have irreversible consequences to the environment.

In addition, the expertise within Environmental Impact Assessment study related to environmental protection, eco-tourism and sustainable development is incomplete.