

WWF and SEE Change conducted a detail analysis of EIA ESIA application in South East Europe hydro power plants projects. In Albania four schemes were selected for investigation. They do not represent the most typical cases, but those for which required documents were available and/or provided. The first, Lengarica HPP falls within the boundaries of Bredhi i Hotovës National Park, while the second, HPP Zalli Qarrishtës (consisting of six individual power plants) lies within Shebenik-Jabllanicë National Park. The remaining two, HPP Sheje and HPP Zanore were initiated in 2006 before the current legislation on EIA came into force.

Lengarica HPP has a capacity of 8.96 MW which places it at the upper end of small run-of-river power plants. It was classified as an Appendix (Annex II) development, although based on its location within the Bredhi i Hotovës National Park, it should have been designated as an Annex I site. The EIA referred to a 10 km road reconstructed in advance by the developer, without reference to any adverse impacts occasioned by the construction.

Alternatives for construction of transfer tunnels and overhead pylons were not fully assessed. The EIA stated that “the site lay outside the Protected Areas of the Përmeti zone, including the Bredhi i Hotovës National Park”, despite the fact that when the design work was completed in 2011 the National Park had already been in existence for two years. The Ministry of Environment, Forests and Water Administration (now Ministry of Environment) rejected the EIA in October 2011, and refused a permit on the grounds that the development was within a protected area. However, after discussions and potential additional documentation/information provided, three months later, the Ministry reversed its decision and granted an environmental permit without consultation with stakeholders and without providing any explanation for its decision.

Zalli Qarrishtës HPP consists of 6 individual HPPs all of which are covered by the same EIA report, but the descriptions are generic and individual sites are not discussed. The development area lies within the Shebenik-Jabllanicë National Park, which was proclaimed in 2008, but the EIA written in 2013 states that the HPPs are all outside the National Park. Sheje HPP near Dragostunje is referred to as lying in the Shkumbini River Basin, in the Rrajcë area, although the EIA fails to give any detailed coordinates and the description is highly generalised.

Zanore HPP lies in a different part of the Shkumbini River Basin but it is covered by the same description (provided by the same author) as the Sheje HPP. The only modification in the EIA document is to the names and technical description of the power plants.

Eighty four permits have been granted for construction of hydropower plants in the Librazhd, of which 56% lie within the Shebenik-Jabllanicë National Park. A major national

campaign has been launched by NGOs, led by the Association for Protection and Preservation of the Natural Environment in Albania (PPNEA) and Eco-movement, seeking the prohibition of all future HPPs in the National Park. The campaign commenced in July and will end in October 2015, and is supported by eight leading NGOs: Institute of Nature Conservation in Albania (INCA), Regional Environment Center Albania (REC Albania), Environmental Center for Development Education and Networking (EDEN), Ekolevizja, EcoAlbania, Milieukontakt Albania, Association for Organic Agriculture, Institute for Environmental Policy, Environmental Center for Protection, Education and Rehabilitation (EPER center).

source: WWF SEE Change Net