

The EBRD's Project Complaint Mechanism ruled that the EBRD had failed to properly assess the Boskov Most hydropower plant in the Mavrovo National Park in Macedonia, the Ombla plant in the Vilina Cave-Ombla Spring Natura 2000 site in Croatia, and the Paravani plant in Georgia. In all three cases, the EBRD was found to have violated its own policies by improperly assessing the projects' impact on biodiversity before committing to them and by failing to implement procedures that would ensure meaningful public participation in the decisions about the future of the projects.

In the Ombla and Boskov Most cases, the EBRD approved the projects on the basis of inadequate environmental assessments before it even had detailed information about the fauna living in the protected areas, thus denying the public the right to be involved in decision-making while there was still a chance to make an impact.

Worse still, instead of learning from its mistakes, the EBRD then attempted to water down its Environmental and Social Policy during a subsequent policy revision, so that approving projects prematurely and without all necessary documentation would be allowed more easily. Only thanks to concerted NGO action and some support from key bank shareholders were these rollbacks avoided in the Environmental and Social Policy approved in May 2014 by the bank's Board of Directors.

Finally, in May 2013 the Ombla project - approved in November 2011 - was cancelled after public resistance to the project resulted in an additional nature impact assessment study being carried out. This study found that the project would have serious impacts on the Vilina Cave-Ombla Spring Natura 2000 area near Dubrovnik and the EBRD finally withdrew from the project. A further nature impact assessment has hopefully put the final nail in the coffin as it was rejected by the Ministry of Environmental and Nature Protection in July 2015.

source: Bankwatch