

City council of Bihać cancelled its approval for granting concessions for mini hydropower plants on Una river at locations of Martin Brod and Dobrenica in Bosnia and Herzegovina's west.

Under public pressure on the local level, but also a national one, mayor Emdžad Galijašević initiated the council session just a week after the approval was adopted with 16 votes in favour out of 28. This time the decision to withdraw local authority's support was unanimous. Local activist Aida Sejdić told Al Jazeera the construction of two MHPPs wouldn't benefit the surrounding population at all, nor the river, as the eco-system would suffer. Also, in her words, one such facility needs only one person to operate it, so employment wouldn't rise, and the canton would earn only EUR 25,000. Furthermore, the projects would jeopardize the possibility for the Una National Park to be added to Unesco's list, Sejdić said.

Galijašević told Al Jazeera the public should be aware there is already a 6.46 MW hydro facility Una Kostela, planned for expansion, and that the two disputed facilities would have capacities of 2 MW and 1.2 MW, unlike a now stalled project by national power company Elektroprivreda BiH for a hydro plant of 74 MW. Elektroprivreda BiH's chief executive Elvedin Grabovica signed an agreement with Galijašević on July 6 to implement a programme, within the reconstruction and expansion of Una Kostela hydro project, of co-funding the rebuilding of bridge leading to the facility with EUR 255,900. The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development co-finances the EUR 14 million project with EUR 9 million, Elektroprivreda BiH said on its website.

The process of approving the environmental impact study for small hydropower plants on Hrčavka river in the Sutjeska National Park was blocked in the Sutjeska National Park was blocked in March by the government.

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